

elections, the military stuffed the ballot boxes to ensure their victory. The party thus attained and held power behind a facade of legitimacy. (Christian, 1986:95) With the dominance and increasing immunity of the ruling military, El Salvador fits accordingly in the fourth stage of the Continuum of Conflict.

The 1970's marked a period of socio-economic transitions, and the emergence of popular struggles for participation in Latin America. Social exclusion became more visible, and greater threats were posed on the elite hierarchical structure of society and political culture. The Salvadoran majority finally began to question and de-legitimize the power of the state. Yet, exclusion continued to occur, through severe socio-economic polarization and a mutually reinforcing authoritarian relationship based on political domination and subordination. (Torres-Rivas, 1994:14)

Several civilian and guerrilla groups were formed during the 1970's, but were initially divided by differing political interests and goals. However, the government's repression led to the solidification of the links between popular organizations and guerrilla groups. (Leiken, 1986:191) In April 1980, the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) was created. The civilian coalition was composed of 80 percent of the trade unions, church people, professionals, students, small-business people and the National and Catholic universities. It was the largest political movement in El Salvador's history. (Gettleman, 1986:56)

In November 1980 the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) was officially formed. It became the political-military arm of the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), and brought together four Marxist and a Leninist group: Popular Liberation Forces, National Resistance, Central American Workers' Party, the Communist Party, plus the People's Revolutionary Army. The unified guerrilla force consisted of approximately 6,000-8,000 people. (LeMoyne, 1989: 105) They were considered the best trained, best organized, and most committed Marxist-Leninist movement ever seen in Latin America. (LeMoyne, 1989: 106) According to statistics published in 1989, the FMLN had about 50,000 committed supporters, and perhaps up to 10% sympathy from a population of over five million Salvadoran. Evidently, the majority of Salvadoran did not support them. (LeMoyne, 1989: 114) Their guerrilla strategy was based on sabotage, terrorism, military attack, and negotiation. (LeMoyne, 1989:116)

Inequities, human rights violations, military abuse, and social exclusion continued to worsen over time. By 1980, El Salvadorans were mobilized, and prepared to fight for revolutionary changes in the corrupt system, which were long overdue. The result led to stage five on the Continuum of Conflict: civil war.

Rupesinghe specifically defines the fifth stage as 'civil war -- high-intensity conflict.' This is characterized by the emergence of high-intensity or full-scale civil war. The entire population may be become polarized along group lines, while countless others are displaced by the violence and destruction of their homes, and the economy reaches a breaking point. Militias, rebels and death squads are unrestricted by any pre-existing laws or regulations. (Rupesinghe, 1998:63)