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FOR THE STUDY AND RESOLUTION OF GLOBAL CONFLICTS

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Part IV. Restoring Social Order**

Electing Peace Featuring Aila Matanock, Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of California, Berkely.

AILA MATANOCK: In 1992, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, the FMNL rebels, and the government in El Salvador signed a peace agreement that ended over 12 years of civil conflict in that case. In this case, we know that the rebel group and the government were concerned about whether or not they could trust each other as they implemented their peace agreement. The rebels, in particular, based on their strategy documents at the time, as well as my interviews with them, were concerned that the government would [inaudible 07:49:38] on this process. They were especially concerned because during the process of implementation, they would be disarming, while they were being incorporated into the structures of the state. And so, it would a moment at the government had an advantage and could take advantage of that advantage. How did these actors in this case overcome this trust efficiency? There were a couple of different mechanisms, but one of them was a presence of international actors. International actors were able to monitor and provide incentives, conditional on continued compliance with this peace agreement. What the international community did not do, however, is send a large armed peace keeping force that threatened violent sanctions for violations of the peace agreement.

Instead, what they sent was an observation mission. In consisted of just 300 initial observers, as part of a peace keeping mission. And, in this photo you can see driving alongside a rebel caravan as they head into a demobilization point.

The international community instead used one of the feature of the design of this peace agreement, participatory elections, in which the government and the rebel group agree to participate as political parties. And when they did so, they opened up a process of power distribution between them, that allowed for repeated monitoring and offering of incentives by the international community.

In this case, the UN in particular, established an electoral division that sent hundreds of observers into the country. And, other partners also participated so that by the time the elections came in 1994, there were over 4000 observers in the country. These actors also provided substantial aid, in this case. They provided all kinds of reconstruction aid, as well as party funds, to these new political parties formed by the combatants. This was another crucial piece of the process because receiving this aid, in many cases, was conditional on continued compliance with the peace agreement as monitored by the UN and other actors here.

So, there were instances in which both sides violated the terms of peace agreement. For example, in the case of the government, we saw this in a number of instances where they did not fully offer sufficient



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voter access, particularly to rebel supporters in this case. The UN and the US in particular then exerted their pressures on these actors in order to get them to comply.

Let me give you an example. In the lead up to the elections, the government was slow to register voters. Most of the voters were not registered in EL Salvador where rebel supporters because they had been boycotting the elections in the previous years. During this process, the government was dragging its feet and the UN registered on this front.

It then went to every municipality to investigate these claims, and whether or not they were valid. Once they issued a report that they were in fact valid, and reported this to their partners. The US brought \$70000000 in development assistance. And, on the floor of congress, at the time they explicitly stated that this was due to the slow voter registration process that was not in compliance here.

This was a really important moment for the international community but it was one of many in the lead up to the elections in 1994. We also saw a time in which the government saw to move polling stations from FMNL rebel strongholds, into the department capital, which would've also disadvantaged rebel supporters. Because they would have had to travel to a half a day then to vote. This is another moment at which the government could've gained more power, than it was provided under the terms of the agreement, and the rebel group would've lost some of that power.

In this case, the US and UN also applied pressure. Here, the UN in particular, stepped in and offered to provide additional logistic and security support to these polling station so that the government could be sure that they would be peaceful and the government continued with their operation. The rebels also violated the agreement at time during this process. And we say similar international leverage during the electoral participation of both sides.

Civil wars are really difficult to end. In fact, notoriously difficult to end. Most complex find it hard to just find an agreement that both sides will sign, let alone sustain. In the data that I'll show you, about 40% of all civil wars, in the modern era, will turn to civil conflict within five years of signing a peace agreement.

There are reasons for this. The trust issue that we see in the El Salvador case, are not merely because the two sides have been fighting each other, often for decades, but also because of the incentives that I described there. There is this period during implementation, one side or the other may become relatively stronger. And the concern is that, during that moment, it can grab more power than it was [inaudible 07:54:59] during the peace agreement, and the other side has very little that they can do about that.

These trust issues can bind, even if we have an agreement that both sides would otherwise be happy with, one that could stop the war, providing a peace dividend, and distribute power between the two sides in a way that they agree reflects their relative capabilities.



What I argue in book, *Collecting Peace*, is that the design of peace agreements can help overcome these commitment problems, these trust issues; in particular, in cases where you are set to hold post conflict elections, in which both the government and rebels group parties agree to participate. We have a mechanism for engaging international actors. International actors are crucial in many of these contexts because they offer this mechanism for monitoring and providing incentives conditional and compliance with the peace agreement. That's what we see in the case of El Salvador, and that holds more broadly.

What we don't see very frequently is international community deploying large forces, many armed troops, in these post conflict context, to punish violations to the peace agreement with force. Instead, many of these violations are harder to detect, and they're about the distribution of political power in these cases. What we then see instead is a political mechanism here. When the rebel group and the government are both participating in these peace agreements, they offer an opportunity for international community to have sustained monitoring at each moment of power distribution.

The electoral processes are also specially useful because they set up benchmarks and milestones, that make it easier to detect whether both sides are complying with the agreement, and they offer a moment at which both sides are vulnerable, as they establish power distribution between them. They're vulnerable to shaming, but also removing party funds or other development assistance. Things that are often popular with their constituencies. So, in this way, the international incentives interact with local incentives. But, the international community is in many ways driving the compliance and then monitoring of this compliance around these electoral participation provisions.

There are other implications of this. For example, these elections may not always be so democratic, I'm happy to talk about that, or you can read about it in my book. But what I wanted to do with this book was actually test the theory more broadly. So, I developed a theory that I've just described to you very briefly, and then in the El Salvador case. I then also tested across that ended the end of the cold war, including two [inaudible 07:57:42] El Salvador, Guatemala.

I also look at cross national data between 1975 and 2005, tracking all 125 peace agreements that are signed in the 388 civil conflicts that exist in this period. This cross national data shows us that this type of settlement is fairly common. The white bars here are all peace agreements. In this period, between 1975 and 2005, and the gray bars represent those that have combatant parties established to participate in these post conflict elections. So, as you can see, they don't occur during the cold war, only afterwards. But they then occurred in almost half of these cases.

The cross national evidence also gives up some sense of optimism, as I described in the El Salvador case. This chart shows that we don't see 100% stability of peace, in any of these cases, that would be a flat line across the top of this chart. Instead, some conflicts were turned to fighting, not long after they're signed. But, what's striking about this chart, I think is that the solid line, those agreements that do not have these electoral participation provisions that provide for these combatant parties to participate in



post conflict elections, drop off much more quickly, return to violence, much more quickly than those that do have these provisions, the dash line in this case.

The data in the book, also show that this is, especially the case that we get they the stabilizing effect. When international actors are expected to be engaged in the monitoring and providing of conditional incentives in these context. And, I measure that in a few different ways, which I don't have time to share with you today. But, that is the other crucial component here.

So, overall, I think this study demonstrates a couple of things. First, there are some post conflict elections that can be beneficial to peace, assuming we believe the results of this work. They're not every post conflict election. They're very specific type in which you get rebel group and government participating, and in which you get this type of international observations and conditional incentives provided around these political processes. But, there are a number of cases of civil wars in which this type of settlement maybe an option, and could potentially stabilize these context into the future.

Thank you very much.