

Window of Opportunity

In leading up to this grand bargain, however, two structural conditions created a window of opportunity for negotiations. Neither of these conditions made a settlement inevitable, but they did create an important opportunity. First, the end of the Cold War created an opportunity for peace negotiations. As elsewhere in Central America, the war in El Salvador had evolved into a proxy conflict between the United States and Soviet Union. The Reagan administration viewed El Salvador as a place to draw the line against communist aggression and provided more than \$6 billion in economic and military assistance to El Salvador's government over the course of the war.¹⁸ But the end of the Cold War had a significant impact on the impetus for negotiations. The Soviet Union's withdrawal of support for Marxist movements in Latin America eliminated an important source of supply of arms and logistical support to the FMLN.¹⁹ And the new administration with the election of George H. W. Bush as president put significant pressure on El Salvador's government to negotiate a peace settlement.²⁰ It threatened to withdraw aid if there was no settlement and offered financial assistance if a settle-

¹⁸ Benjamin Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador: The Frustrations of Reform and the Illusions of Nation Building*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, R-4042-USDP, 1991, p. 2. Also see Michael Childress, *The Effectiveness of U.S. Training Efforts in Internal Defense and Development: The Cases of El Salvador and Honduras*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MR-250-USDP, 1995; U.S. Department of State, *Communist Interference in El Salvador: Documents Demonstrating Communist Support of the Salvadoran Insurgency*, Washington, D.C., 1981.

¹⁹ The FMLN also received economic and military assistance from Cuba and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua (Paulo S. Wrobel and Guilherme Theophilo Gaspar de Oliverra, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Nicaragua and El Salvador*, New York: United Nations, 1997, p. 124). Also see Mark Levine, "Peacemaking in El Salvador," in Michael W. Doyle, Ian Johnstone, and Robert C. Orr, eds., *Keeping the Peace: Multidimensional UN Operations in Cambodia and El Salvador*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 227–255, pp. 230–231; and Gerardo L. Munck and Dexter Boniface, "Political Processes and Identity Formation in El Salvador: From Armed Left to Democratic Left," in Ronaldo Munck and Purnaka L. De Silva, eds., *Postmodern Insurgencies: Political Violence, Identity Formation, and Peacemaking in Comparative Perspective*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000, pp. 38–53.

²⁰ Terry Lynn Karl, "El Salvador at the Crossroads: Negotiations or Total War," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 2, April 1989, pp. 321–355; Wood (2000, p. 81).