REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS IN LATIN AMERICA

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El Salvador's FMLN & Peru's Shining Path

Cynthia McClintock

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The views expressed in this book are those of the author alone. They do not necessarily reflect views of the United States Institute of Peace.

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To my daughter,
Jeannette Alicia McClintock,

in the hope that one day her native land
will be peaceful and prosperous

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FOREWORD

Cynthia McClintock's remarkably well-written book, *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America,* has much to say to a variety of readers, and says it with precision and an engaging candor and clarity.

At first glance, one sees that the author concentrates primarily on the formidable revolutionary movements in Peru and El Salvador between the late 1970s and early 1990s, and one might conclude that the book is meant mostly for students of the politics of those two countries. At second glance, however, one finds that McClintock also discusses the politics, revolutions, and regimes of Ecuador, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Bolivia. This comparative perspective broadens the book's audience to include scholars of Latin America generally and anyone with an interest in revolutionary movements and regime stability.

Indeed, Professor McClintock's book makes a significant contribution to the literature on theories of revolution. Displaying great breadth and depth of reading, and the ability to marshal armies of facts and arguments into clear and purposeful order, McClintock tests the well-known theory that revolution occurs when a certain type of authoritarian regime denies its political opponents the space to compete for power. She finds this theory persuasive in the case of El Salvador, but not in the case of Peru. It was not regime type that precipitated the emergence of Peru's brutally effective Shining Path, but rather an economic structure that devastated the peasants of the rural highlands and dashed the middle-class expectations of new university graduates who became revolutionary leaders. The case she makes is a strong one, and the book is sure to find many readers among students and scholars of theories of revolution.

The book also seems certain to appeal to those interested in examining the details of the practice, as distinguished from the theory, of revolution. Not only has McClintock sifted through an enormous amount of data to arrive at what are probably the most reliable figures available on such controversial topics as the death tolls inflicted by rebels and government forces, but also she has undertaken significant new research on the opinions of a wide variety of groups within Peru and El Salvador, including the revolutionaries themselves. The aims, strategies, and ideologies of the two guerrilla movements differed significantly: the fundamentalist Shining Path was a highly authoritarian and rigidly Maoist organization that extolled the use of violence and sought to sweep away Peru's existing political and social system; the FMLN was a fractious, relatively democratic grouping of five movements that adhered to a variety of Marxist and social democratic views, did not regard political terror as a primary tactic, and looked to overthrow El Salvador's regime but wanted primarily to reform its political and economic system.

This solid empirical base makes the book pertinent to policymakers in Latin America but also—indeed, especially—to U.S. policymakers. The readiness of the United States to support beleaguered Latin American regimes has been critical to their survival. The FMLN posed probably the most severe military challenge faced by any Latin American regime in recent decades, yet because of massive U.S. economic and military support, conditioned on opening of the political process, the El Salvadoran regime survived. This fact, underscored by McClintock's analysis, is widely known. What is less well known, however, is how serious was the challenge posed to the more-or-less democratic regime in Peru by the Maoist Shining Path, and how (according to the author) U.S. policy, which stressed free market reforms and anti-drug efforts, failed to bolster the Peruvian government's counterinsurgency efforts. Only fairly late in the day, with the Shining Path poised to topple Peruvian democracy, did the United States apparently play a key but covert role by dint of CIA support for the police unit that ultimately captured the Shining Path's leader, Abimael Guzmán.

Perhaps McClintock's most interesting conclusion is that "revolutionary conflict of the kind that emerged during the Cold War is over; revolutionary conflict is not." Post–Cold War revolutionary movements, of the kind we have seen in Chiapas in Mexico and in Colombia, are not

mere throwbacks to the Cold War era, but rather attest to other long-standing problems. Those problems include regimes that are judged "democratic" by the often loose standards of foreign observers but that enjoy only limited legitimacy in the eyes of their people; and economies that have been opened to free market forces but that have spawned greater dissatisfaction among frustrated aspirants to the middle class, as well as greater abject poverty. New revolutionary movements, says McClintock, "are likely to reject elections . . . and rather base their claims to legitimacy on quasi-religious and ideological grounds. The Shining Path sought to present itself as a group of virtually 'born-again' Peruvians: honest, dedicated, and effective, fighting against a hopelessly corrupt state." The author suggests that the kind of U.S. support traditionally provided to endangered regimes may no longer be appropriate, and she offers U.S. policymakers a variety of practical recommendations for helping to combat both these new-style movements and the conditions that foster them. McClintock urges that priority be given to alleviating hunger and poverty, to promoting economic and democratic development, and to reducing levels of government cronyism and corruption.

Finally, we can add yet another category of reader for McClintock's book: the informed lay reader. *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America* is a challenging book to be sure, but it is also a distinctly intelligible, engaging, and illuminating one. For the reader who would like to learn something about the recent history of Latin America, about the motives, strategies, and actions of two quite different kinds of revolutionaries, and about the prospects for peace and stability in the Western Hemisphere, there is no more reliable and readable a guide than Professor McClintock's.

We are pleased to have given Cynthia McClintock the opportunity to begin drafting her study during her year as a Jennings Randolph fellow at the United States Institute of Peace in 1990–91. As might be expected of a book that speaks to so many different audiences, *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America* complements a range of Institute-sponsored work on Latin America, including the analysis of the negotiation and implementation of the peace treaty in El Salvador in Fen Hampson's book *Nurturing Peace;* Francisco Villagrán de León's two reports on the OAS and democratization and the OAS and regional security; and Raymond Cohen's assessment of U.S.-Mexican negotiating encounters in

Negotiating across Cultures. In addition, Institute grants have supported work on such topics as indigenous protest and democratization, the role of NGOs in El Salvador, transitions to democracy, and a comparison of peace processes in the region.

Revolutionary Movements in Latin America is a prime example of the efforts by the Institute of Peace to overcome the intellectual tunnel vision that often clouds our understanding and obscures the lessons of experience. This book is a much-needed remedy for the ailment of overspecialization.

Richard H. Solomon, President
United States Institute of Peace

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I am also very grateful to the United States Institute of Peace; without the Jennings Randolph Peace Fellowship I was awarded for 1990–91, this book would not have been undertaken. The Institute was an excellent scholarly home that enabled frequent travel to both El Salvador and Peru during my fellowship year. At the Institute, I benefited greatly from the able research assistance of Jocelyn Nieva and from the thoughtful insights of Vice President Charles Nelson. Last but far from least, the Institute's editor, Nigel Quinney, offered both the encouragement and the prodding that were essential to the completion of the book.

When I began this research, my knowledge about El Salvador was relatively limited. I am very grateful that Hugh Byrne spent many hours making comments, asking questions, and sharing information that greatly sharpened my analysis of the Salvadoran revolutionary movement and its trajectory. Salvador Cortes, William Stanley, and George Vickers also played critical roles in advancing my understanding of Salvadoran politics. While I was in El Salvador, I was fortunate to be welcomed and helped by Roberto Codas, Alberto Enríquez, Tom Gibb, Leonel Gómez, Marta Guevara, David Holiday, Ian McNabb, Margaret Popkin, and especially Antonio Orellana, who coordinated most of my survey work in El Salvador.

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I have dedicated this book to my daughter, Jeannette Alicia McClintock, who was born in Peru. For most of my research trips to El Salvador and Peru, she accompanied me. Of course, there was agony in these countries at the time. Thousands of Salvadorans and Peruvians, including numerous friends and acquaintances of mine, lost their lives or feared losing their lives. For me, to look at Alicia's resplendent smile and see her optimism was to know that a different future was possible.

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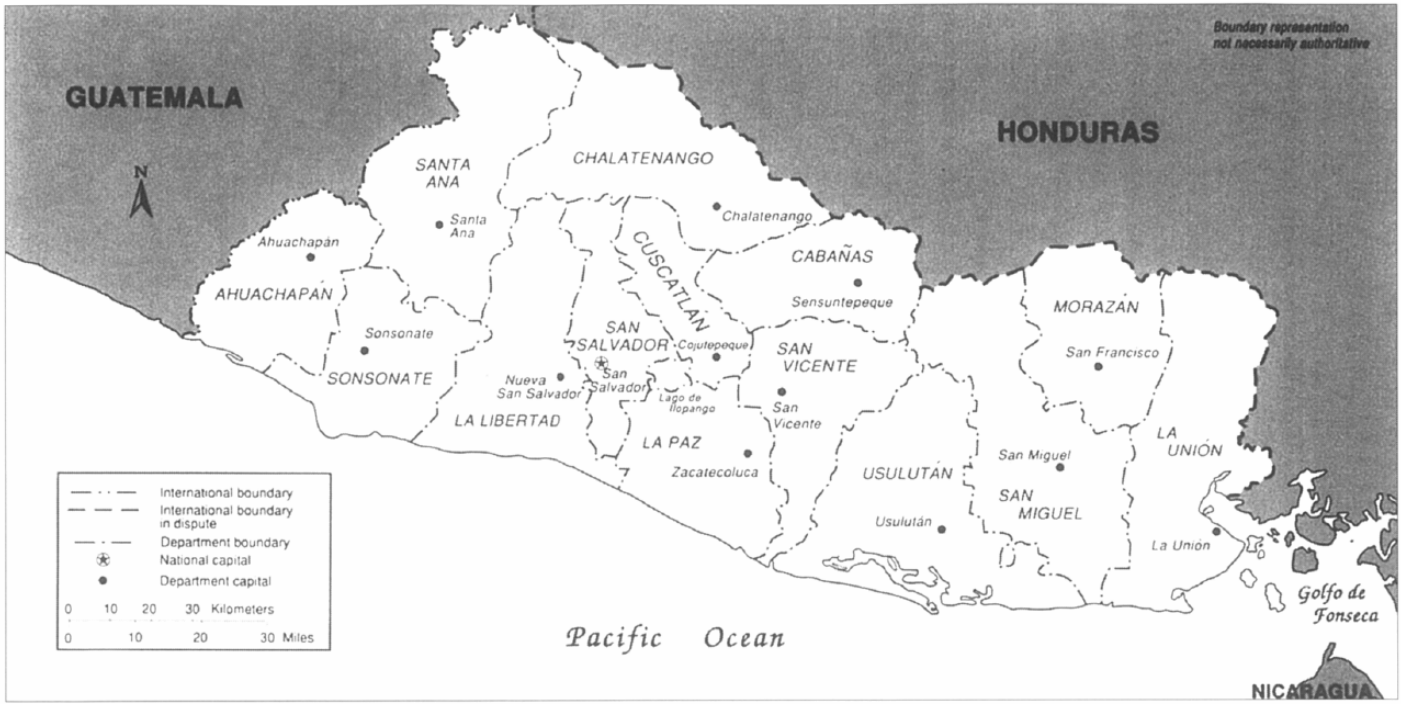

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