

Keeping the peace

*Multidimensional UN operations
in Cambodia and El Salvador*

Edited by

Michael W. Doyle
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and Robert C. Orr



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1 Introduction

Michael W. Doyle, Ian Johnstone, and Robert C. Orr

Since the end of the Cold War, the community of nations has struggled to redefine the relation between those issues that fall within the realm of a state's sovereignty and those that represent a legitimate concern of the international community. The expanding scope of collective intervention, by coercive means, under chapter VII of the United Nations Charter is one manifestation of this struggle. From the Gulf crisis ceasefire resolution in 1991 to the US-led intervention to restore Haitian President Aristide, the United Nations Security Council has employed an increasingly broad interpretation of what constitutes a threat to international peace and security, authorizing action that would undoubtedly have been seen as unlawful interference in sovereign affairs only a decade ago.

But setbacks encountered in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia have highlighted the difficulties of collective intervention by force. Limited forcible intervention, for humanitarian purposes, remains a viable and often necessary task – although even these operations have been most successful when “contracted out” to multinational coalitions – but efforts to impose peace on recalcitrant parties have either failed or been abandoned before completed. The result has been a retreat from “peace enforcement,” though not a retreat from globalism or UN activism. The future of UN peacekeeping, it seems, lies between the extremes of forcible intervention and absolute respect for sovereignty. That is, the future of UN peace operations lies in “multidimensional peace operations.”

Multidimensional peace operations

The outlines of the middle ground between forcible intervention and absolute respect for sovereignty are readily apparent in the first group of multidimensional operations – those recently completed in Cambodia, El Salvador, and Mozambique, and those underway in Haiti, Angola, and Croatia. These operations, though firmly based on consent, have

embodied a novel relationship between the international community and the states in question. In some instances the UN has closely monitored the state, in others it has become involved in renovating and rebuilding – or building for the first time – the basic structures of the state, while in yet other cases the UN has even substituted for the state. These very new tasks have required the UN to deploy civilian and police components to complement the traditional “blue helmets.”

In the paradigm-setting multidimensional operations in Cambodia and El Salvador, the UN undertook a threefold mission: it served as a peacemaker facilitating a peace treaty among the parties; as a peacekeeper, monitoring the implementation of complex agreements that go to the roots of the respective conflicts; and as a peacebuilder, supporting the political, institutional, and social transformations necessary to overcome deep-seated internal animosities and strife. The goal of the UN was not merely to create conditions for negotiations between the parties, but to develop strategies and support structures that would bring about a lasting peace. In practice this meant that in Cambodia and El Salvador the UN undertook virtually all of the activities identified by the Secretary-General in his “Supplement to *An Agenda for Peace*”: “the supervision of cease-fires, the regroupment and demobilization of forces, their reintegration into civilian life and the destruction of their weapons; the design and implementation of de-mining programmes; the return of refugees and displaced persons; the provision of humanitarian assistance; the supervision of existing administrative structures; the establishment of new police forces; the verification of respect for human rights; the design and supervision of constitutional, judicial and electoral reforms; the observation, supervision and even organization and conduct of elections; and the coordination of support for economic rehabilitation and reconstruction.”¹

Understanding multidimensional peace operations is not only important because of the vast range of new activities undertaken, and what this represents in terms of the relationship of the UN to those countries in crisis, but also because consent-based multidimensional operations appear to be a viable option for addressing future conflicts. In fact, among the three broad categories of peace operations – traditional peacekeeping, multidimensional peace operations, and peace enforcement² – consent-based multidimensional operations like UNTAC and

¹ “Supplement to *An Agenda for Peace*: position paper of the Secretary-General on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations,” para. 21, in Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Agenda for Peace* (New York: United Nations, second edition, 1995).

² “Traditional peacekeeping” is a shorthand term to describe many but by no means all peacekeeping operations established during the Cold War years – UNFICYP in Cyprus and the three Middle East operations (UNDOF, UNTSO, and UNIFIL) being current

ONUSAL are the growth industry for the UN. To understand why, it is worth considering briefly why the other two categories, traditional peacekeeping and peace enforcement, are less likely to shape the UN agenda in the years ahead.

In traditional peacekeeping operations, unarmed or lightly armed UN forces are stationed between hostile parties to monitor a truce, troop withdrawal, and/or buffer zone while political negotiations go forward. They were devised by the UN as a practical mechanism to contain armed conflicts and facilitate their political settlement by peaceful means.³ They are based on consent and must be completely impartial, using force only in self-defense and as a last resort. Their success depends on the cooperation of the parties and the ability of the peacekeepers to resolve problems by negotiation rather than coercion.

Traditional peacekeeping operations are normally deployed in situations of inter-state conflict. They were possible during the Cold War years either because the superpowers had no interest in the conflicts, or because they had a mutual interest in ensuring the conflicts did not escalate. They provide transparency to the parties through an impartial assurance that the other party is not violating the truce. They also raise the costs of defecting from, and the positive benefits of abiding with, the agreement by various means: the threat of exposure; the potential resistance of the peacekeeping forces; and the international legitimacy of UN mandates. Their deployment is meant to calm the military situation while a political settlement is pursued. As the thirty-year operation in Cyprus illustrates, however, the deployment of peacekeepers does not necessarily signal an urgent desire among the parties or the international community to achieve a comprehensive settlement.

Times have changed to the point where traditional peacekeeping no longer addresses the challenges of either managing or resolving many complex civil crises. The UN will continue to have a role to play in the monitoring of ceasefires between states, as it is now doing very

examples. "Multidimensional peacekeeping" describes post-Cold War operations such as those in Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique, and Angola, though the term might also include the four-year Congo operation in the early 1960s that had many of the characteristics of more complex current UN missions. "Peace enforcement" refers to post-Cold War operations such as that in Somalia that were undertaken under chapter VII of the UN Charter. These three categories are often called "first, second, and third generation" operations respectively, but this terminology is not used here because it implies a sequential, linear development that recent events have increasingly called into question. For a cogent analysis of the types of peacekeeping operations, see Marrack Goulding, "The evolution of United Nations peacekeeping," *International Affairs*, vol. 69, no. 3, 1993. For a description of the post-Cold War qualitative changes in peacekeeping operations, see "Supplement to *An Agenda for Peace*", paras. 8–22.

³ F. T. Liu, *United Nations Peacekeeping and the Non-Use of Force*, IPA Occasional Paper (Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner, 1992), p. 11.

successfully on the Golan Heights between Israel and Syria. But today conflicts are increasingly within rather than between states. They are typically fought between regular armies and irregular forces, or among irregular forces. Many involve more than two parties, with shifting alliances and allegiances. They are often accompanied by humanitarian emergencies, systematic human rights abuses, and the breakdown of law and order.⁴ In the most extreme cases – influentially described by two commentators as “failed states” – no functioning government exists at all.⁵ The demands upon and dangers to the peacekeeper are considerably greater than those faced by military personnel deployed along a well-defined front line between two states. The UN usually refuses to deploy a force in these circumstances until a negotiated settlement has been reached, or at least until the contours of one are visible. When the UN does deploy a force, the range of tasks it is asked to perform are extensive and complex, combining military, police, and civilian elements.

Peace enforcement operations range from low-level military missions to protect the delivery of humanitarian assistance, to full fledged enforcement action to roll back aggression. Undertaken under chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, their defining characteristic is the lack of consent to some or all of the UN mandate. Militarily, these operations seek to deter, dissuade, or deny success to acts of aggressive force.⁶ By using collective force to preclude an outcome based on the use of force by the parties, the UN seeks to persuade the parties to settle the conflict by negotiation.

The operations in Somalia and Bosnia, both having elements of peace enforcement, were inspired by a global sense of duty (albeit weak and inchoate) to address humanitarian emergencies when they occur. A new-found sense of vigorous capacity in international institutions recently freed from the gridlock of the Cold War made it appear as though the global capacity to intervene could meet the demands of these crises. The dangers and limitations of these new commitments, however, became painfully evident in the streets of Mogadishu and the not-so-safe areas of Bosnia.

In Somalia, the inability of UNOSOM I to stem the humanitarian crisis engulfing the country prompted the Security Council to authorize

⁴ “Supplement to *An Agenda for Peace*”, paras. 12–13.

⁵ Gerald Helman and Steven Ratner, “Saving failed states,” *Foreign Policy*, vol. 89, 1992–3, pp. 3–20.

⁶ See John G. Ruggie, “The United Nations: stuck in a fog between peacekeeping and enforcement,” in *Peacekeeping: The Way Ahead?*, McNair Paper 25 (Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 1993). See also John MacKinlay and Jarat Chopra, *A Draft Concept of Second Generation Multinational Operations* (Providence, RI: Watson Institute, 1993).

UNITAF, a chapter VII, US-led operation, to create a secure environment for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. When the USA was ready to withdraw UNITAF, the back of the famine had been broken but the factions were still fully armed and the environment was far from secure. The Secretary-General therefore recommended, and the Council agreed, to endow UNOSOM II with chapter VII enforcement powers to prevent a resumption of violence and disarm the parties, among other objectives. UNOSOM II's vigorous pursuit of its mandate turned General Aidid's United Somali Congress/Somali National Alliance (USC/SNA) faction against the UN, resulting in an attack on a Pakistani battalion that left twenty-five dead. The Security Council responded with a resolution affirming the right to take "all necessary measures" against those responsible for attacks on UN personnel, including the power of arrest and detention. Several months of intensive efforts to capture Aidid and his aides culminated in the disastrous raid on a USC/SNA stronghold by US Rangers, under US command, in which eighteen Americans died. US troops were withdrawn shortly thereafter, as were other Western contingents, and UNOSOM II essentially reverted to functioning as a humanitarian relief operation, coercive methods having been abandoned. As an effort to impose peace, the UN operation in Somalia had failed.⁷

An almost opposite dilemma emerged in Bosnia, where the UN was criticized for employing too little force. A peace operation with enforcement powers, UNPROFOR was tasked with monitoring a "no-fly-zone", protecting relief convoys and deterring attacks on "safe areas" for Bosnian civilians. But with almost half the population in UNPROFOR-protected areas directly dependent on UN convoys for vital supplies of food and medicine, military action against the predominantly Serb aggressors would be met by a complete cut-off of humanitarian assistance by those same Serbian forces, who maintained control of the vital access routes. General Sir Michael Rose's reluctance to cross what he called "the Mogadishu line" captured the dilemma well. Determined to maintain the neutrality of the peacekeepers, and ill-equipped for

⁷ This is not to say that the UN effort as a whole failed. In late 1992, 3,000 men, women, and children were dying of starvation daily – a tragedy that the international relief effort ended. Two major conferences on national reconciliation were held, both of which continue to serve as a frame of reference in discussions of a political settlement. The UN helped to establish a number of district and regional councils, which may facilitate rehabilitation and development when the security situation permits. The UN also administered a police training program and a judicial training program. For a thorough internal assessment of UNOSOM's achievements and setbacks, see Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Somalia, March 28, 1995 (S/1995/231). See also Eric Schmitt, "Somalia's first lesson for military is caution," *New York Times*, March 5, 1995.

major military action, UNPROFOR went to great lengths to avoid the use of force. And as long as no major outside power was willing to do more militarily than support pinprick NATO airstrikes, UNPROFOR could only muddle along by providing as much protection as possible without getting drawn into the war. This fragility of this position was dramatically highlighted in May and June 1995, when 370 UN peacekeepers were taken prisoner by Bosnian-Serb forces. Another round of airstrikes by NATO in late August and early September 1995 eventually did help drive the Serbs to the negotiating table where the Dayton Agreement was produced. However, care should be taken not to overestimate the precedent-setting value of NATO's actions in Bosnia.⁸ By mid-1995, the successful Croatian government offensive in the Krajina had dramatically altered the balance of military power in the region, prompting the USA to launch a major diplomatic offensive to secure a comprehensive peace agreement. Meanwhile, the fall of the safe areas of Srebrenica and Zepa, and the inability to find troop contributors for Gorazde, virtually eliminated the risk of hostage-taking.

Somalia and Bosnia have painfully exposed the limitations of peace enforcement. Forcible intervention may help overcome humanitarian emergencies, but typically only in short, sharp actions. At the same time, however, neither the UN nor any other outside body is in a good position to impose a peace on recalcitrant parties or reconstruct failed states. Even short-term humanitarian interventions – demand for which is likely to continue to increase – may be beyond the current capacities of the UN if they are likely to require significant military force. Thus in recent cases the Security Council has “contracted out” chapter VII actions, not only to the USA in Somalia and Haiti, but also to the French in Rwanda and the NATO-led Implementation Force in Bosnia.

In Haiti, the Council again authorized “all necessary means” to create a secure environment, this time to permit the return of democratically elected President Aristide. Fortunately, the intervention succeeded with barely a shot fired, and in January 1995 the UN took over. Unlike Somalia, however, the US-led intervention force withdrew only when it and the Secretary-General had certified that a secure environment had been created and a UN peacekeeping operation could safely take over. In the peacekeeping phase of the Haiti operation, despite the concerns about the capacity of the local forces to control violence, force was used only in self-defense, not to disarm the parties, maintain law and order, or rebuild the state. Although the circumstances in Haiti are unique, the case does suggest a pattern that may be replicated in the future: a

⁸ Shashi Tharoor, “Should UN peacekeeping go ‘back to basics?’,” *Survival*, vol. 37, no. 4, 1995–6, p. 58.

“contracted out” enforcement action to end the violence followed by a consent-based UN operation to consolidate peace.

Multidimensional, chapter VI operations are a substantial step beyond traditional peacekeeping and a significant step short of peace enforcement. They are based on the consent of the parties, but the nature of and purposes for which the consent is granted are qualitatively different from traditional operations. Complex peace agreements cannot possibly provide for every contingency, nor completely define the scope of UN involvement. Implemented over an extended period, gaps in the accords materialize, problems of interpretation arise and circumstances change. The original consent granted, therefore, is open ended and in part a gesture of faith that later problems can be worked out on a consensual basis. Within the framework of the agreement, international norms, and the degree of commitment of the parties, the UN acts as an independent agent, helping to bring about extensive social and political transformations.

Cambodia and El Salvador, the first comprehensive cases of multidimensional peacekeeping, proved to be fruitful laboratories for the unprecedented tasks the UN was asked to perform. Having recently been terminated, these missions also provide a timely yet sufficiently “complete” view of multidimensional peacekeeping, from which lessons can be learned concerning the roots of success and failure.

War and peace in Cambodia

Settling the Cambodian conflict required the participation of local, regional, and global actors and the participation of the UN in a crucial implementing role. Following years of Cold War deadlock, it took three years of negotiation and a number of false starts before the Paris Agreements of 1991 were finally agreed upon as the best route for pursuing peace.

Following the devastating bombing Cambodia suffered during the Vietnam War and the deaths of as many as a million Cambodians at the hands of the Khmer Rouge, the conflict entered a new stage in December 1978 when, responding to repeated provocations, Vietnam invaded Cambodia. As David Chandler explains in his chapter “Three visions of politics in Cambodia,” Vietnam’s installation of the Heng Samrin–Hun Sen regime in 1978–9 gave rise to a guerrilla movement of the three major resistance groups: Prince Norodom Sihanouk’s party – National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC) – Son Sann’s Khmer People’s National Liberation Front (KPNLF), and the Party of Democratic

Kampuchea (PDK, or the Khmer Rouge). Each of the four, including the Hun Sen regime itself (later called State of Cambodia, or SOC), contested the others' claims to legitimate authority over Cambodia. In 1982, at the urging of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the United States, and China, the three groups opposing the Hun Sen regime formed the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK), headed by Prince Sihanouk.

The conflict was shaped by the collapse of the legitimacy of the Cambodian state following the "auto-genocide" inflicted by the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and 1979 and the ensuing installation of the Heng Samrin–Hun Sen regime by the Vietnamese. The regime developed an effective (albeit dictatorial) authority over more than 80 percent of the national territory.⁹ What it lacked was legitimacy, international recognition outside the Soviet bloc, and voluntary domestic support.

For the Hun Sen regime and its Vietnamese and Soviet backers, the conflict was a counter-insurgency waged against a genocidal opponent (the Khmer Rouge). For the CGDK and its ASEAN, Chinese, and US supporters, the conflict represented an armed international intervention and occupation of a sovereign country by Vietnam. Conflicting claims to authority between CGDK and the Hun Sen government created problems of recognition for the international community. Cambodia's internal conflicts were compounded by each faction's external allegiances. The United States had supported a military coup in 1970, the Chinese backstopped the Khmer Rouge, and the Vietnamese installed the Hun Sen regime in 1979 (finally withdrawing their military forces in 1989). Though the UN seated the CGDK delegation as the representative of the legal government of Cambodia, the Hun Sen faction controlled the country.

From the very beginning the UN was involved in the search for peace. The Secretary-General's envoy, Rafeuddin Ahmed, in consultations with the Cambodian parties and regional states between 1982 and 1985, developed the outlines of a comprehensive solution that would engage all four factions, establish a ceasefire, supervise the withdrawal of all foreign forces, guarantee Cambodia's independence and neutrality, repatriate refugees, demobilize military forces, provide for genuine national self-determination through free and fair elections, and institute a human rights education program to help insure "a non-return of the policies and practices of a recent past" (the diplomatically polite code

⁹ For background on these issues, see Ben Kiernan and Chantou Boua (eds.), *Peasants and Politics in Kampuchea 1942–1981* (London: Zed Press, 1982), and Michael Vickery, *Kampuchea: Politics, Economics and Society* (Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner, 1986) and David Chandler's chapter in this volume, "Three visions of politics in Cambodia."

words for the Khmer Rouge's actions which led to the death of more than a million Cambodians).¹⁰ By this point, however, the UN had moved far ahead of the parties themselves. It was not until December 1987 that Prince Sihanouk and Hun Sen informally met, and the Cambodian factions began to demonstrate a willingness to discuss peace.

Following the encouragement of the Secretary-General, regional actors – and particularly Indonesia's foreign minister Ali Alatas – began to take the lead. In July 1988, all four Cambodian factions were brought together for the first time, joined by Vietnam, Laos, and the states of ASEAN. At that meeting and another in February 1989, the participants succeeded in identifying the need for an international control mechanism to supervise the transition to peace, but they could not reach an agreement on how such a mechanism would operate. Thus French foreign minister Roland Dumas joined Mr. Alatas to co-sponsor the first Paris Conference on Cambodia in July 1989. Eighteen countries attended, including the five permanent members of the Security Council (the P5), plus the Secretary-General. Progress was made on a number of key issues, but the sticking point proved to be the interim control mechanism. Disappointing the expectations of the co-chairs, the Hun Sen regime rejected Khmer Rouge participation in an interim quadripartite government.¹¹ Regional talks resumed among the four factions and various alternatives to “power-sharing” were proposed, the most ambitious of which came from US representative Stephen Solarz, who called for a trustee-like authority for the UN in Cambodia during the period between a political settlement and the installment of freely, democratically elected leaders.¹² With the withdrawal in September 1989 of Vietnamese forces and the failure of the peace process, however, war resumed.

Beginning in January 1990, the P5 took the initiative by convening a series of monthly meetings alternating between Paris and New York. Working with drafts from Gareth Evans, Australia's foreign minister, and papers of the UN Secretariat, the P5 steadily crafted the outlines of a comprehensive settlement featuring a strong controlling role for the UN. When they reached a consensus, they asked the co-sponsors of the Paris Conference (France and Indonesia) to convene an informal

¹⁰ See Report of the Secretary-General, *The Situation in Cambodia*, UN Document A/40/759, October 17, 1985, para. 13. Ahmed's informal negotiations leading to the 1985 report came to be called the “Cocktail Party” talks.

¹¹ See Tommy T. B. Koh, “The Paris Conference on Cambodia: a multilateral negotiation that ‘failed’,” *Negotiation Journal*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1990, pp. 81–7.

¹² Stephen Solarz, “Cambodia and the international community,” *Foreign Affairs* vol. 69, no. 2, 1990, pp. 99–115.

meeting of the four factions in Jakarta. There, on September 10, 1990, the four accepted the framework and announced the formation of the Supreme National Council, consisting of all four factions and embodying Cambodian sovereignty during the transition process. Eleven months later, the framework was turned into a workable accord, known as the Paris Agreements.

The notable aspects of the Paris Agreements included the comprehensiveness of the settlement plan; the identification of the Supreme National Council as the “unique legitimate body and source of authority in which, throughout the transitional period the sovereignty, independence and unity of Cambodia are enshrined”; and the unprecedented civilian role of the UN in the settlement process.¹³

In the Paris Agreements, the parties agreed not only to the terms of a ceasefire and the disarming of the factions, but also to the maintenance of law and order; the repatriation of refugees; the promotion of human rights and principles for a new constitution; the supervision and control of certain aspects of the administrative machinery by a UN body; and the organization, conduct, and monitoring of elections by the UN. UNTAC was required to assume traditional peacekeeping responsibilities (monitoring the ceasefire and withdrawal of foreign forces, and supervising the cantonment and demobilization of local forces), as well as new civilian duties (controlling and supervising civil administration, organizing elections, coordinating refugee repatriation, promoting human rights, and facilitating economic rehabilitation). It was not successful in every area – the military forces did not abide by the ceasefire or disarm – but considering the fundamental lack of cooperation between the main antagonists in Cambodia, the Vietnamese-installed government, and the radical Khmer Rouge, UNTAC’s achievements were remarkable. Most significantly, the UN went beyond monitoring – which it has done many times before – to organize a nationwide election from beginning to end, in which 90 percent of the Cambodian electorate voted in the face of intimidation and violence.

FUNCINPEC won 45.5 percent of the vote in the May 1993 elections, followed by Hun Sen’s CPP, with 38.2 percent. The two agreed to form a coalition government, sharing the prime ministership and dividing the ministries, with Prince (now King) Sihanouk reigning

¹³ For valuable background on the new features of the UN mandate in Cambodia see Steven Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995); Trevor Findlay, *The UN in Cambodia* (Stockholm: SIPRI, 1995); Jarat Chopra, *United Nations Authority in Cambodia* (Providence, RI: Watson Institute, 1993); and Janet Heininger, *Peacekeeping in Transition: The United Nations in Cambodia* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1994).

as head of state. The Khmer Rouge did not participate in the elections, planning to hold out for a negotiated seat in the future coalition. In fact, they were not given a seat and the government has pursued a policy of interdiction ever since. The Khmer Rouge have weakened steadily but, as of early 1996, remain a force to be reckoned with. Meanwhile, UNTAC withdrew in September 1993, leaving behind a small human rights center and various UN development agencies to help consolidate the fragile peace.

During 1994 and 1995, Cambodia continued to experience significant progress in the consolidation of civil society, but the coalition government was charged with complicity in a series of attacks on opposition political parties, restrictions on the freedom of the press and interferences with the privileges of the National Assembly. Leading ministers – including Sam Rainsy, the finance minister, and Prince Sirivuddh, the foreign minister – were forced to resign after they accused the government of financial corruption and the government accused them of subversion. Much of the government's efforts went into a continuing military offensive against Khmer Rouge forces. As of early 1996, the Khmer Rouge have weakened substantially, but small forces remain in arms in the remote areas of the western provinces. Major challenges to the principles of “liberal pluralism” embodied in the Paris Peace Agreement lie in economic and social development where progress, stymied by the continuing civil war and governmental strife, has been extremely slow.

War and peace in El Salvador

As Edelberto Torres-Rivas explains in his chapter, “Civil war and insurrection in El Salvador,” the roots of the eleven-year civil war in the Central American nation date back at least to the last century.¹⁴ A program of state intervention in the economy at that time led to substantial economic growth, based mainly on the production and export of coffee. In the mid-1800s the government decreed that an ever-increasing proportion of land should be devoted to coffee, and by the end of the century the best land was concentrated in the hands of the wealthiest “fourteen families.” Most of the presidents of the country during the period – who were generals prior to their elections – came

¹⁴ For thorough discussions of the background of conflict in El Salvador, see Tommie Sue Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, second edn., 1994); Christopher C. Coleman, *The Salvadoran Peace Process: A Preliminary Inquiry* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Research Report no. 173, 1993); Terry Lynn Karl, “El Salvador’s negotiated revolution,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 71, no. 2, 1992, p. 147.

from that oligarchy. By 1931, the social cost of this concentration of wealth and power had precipitated a series of peasant and worker uprisings, culminating in an attempted insurrection led by Augustín Farabundo Martí. The uprisings were brought to a bloody end in December 1931 by a number of young military officers who seized power in a coup d'état.

By the end of 1932, the military was firmly in control. It ruled to preserve its own position and to serve the interests of the oligarchy – goals that were often, but not always, compatible. The years 1932 to 1979 were characterized by cycles of repression and reform, dominated by the army and the oligarchy although, after 1960, the church and popular organizations began to make their presence felt.¹⁵ These new actors wielded more influence after the election of 1972, which by all accounts was stolen from the Christian Democrat José Napoleón Duarte.¹⁶ The period of repression that ensued throughout most of the 1970s was fertile ground for the growth of so-called “political-military organizations,” who came increasingly to believe in the necessity of armed revolution. Four of these organizations were formed in the 1970s and, joined by the communist party of El Salvador, they united in 1980 to become the FMLN. By this point, full-scale civil war had already erupted.

Throughout the 1980s, a number of presidential, legislative, and mayoral elections were held, but political developments were determined more by what happened on the battlefield than at the ballot box. Salvadoran society was militarized, with civilian rule constrained and undermined by widespread right-wing violence, military will, and active US government involvement. Acts of political violence by right-wing “death squads” increased dramatically, and untold human rights abuses were committed.¹⁷ In the end, over 75,000 lives were lost and more than 1 million people – almost one-quarter of the population – had been displaced.

Regional peace efforts in Central America began in 1983, when the members of the Contadora Group (Columbia, Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela) initiated a series of consultations with five governments of the region. What has been called the “official birth” of the Central American peace process did not come until August 1987, however, when the presidents of the five nations signed the Esquipulas II

¹⁵ Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, p. 79.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 62–5; Coleman, *The Salvadoran Peace Process*, p. 11.

¹⁷ See Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador, *From Madness to Hope: The 12-Year War in El Salvador*, S/25500 (1993), p. 27 (hereinafter, Truth Commission report).

Agreement.¹⁸ In it, they requested all governments concerned to terminate support for irregular forces and insurrectional movements in Central America, and reiterated their commitment to prevent the use of their own territories to destabilize their neighbors. The Security Council endorsed the Agreement in July 1989, and lent its full support to the Secretary-General's good offices efforts.

The first UN operation to be deployed in the region was ONUCA, in November 1989, with a mandate to monitor compliance with Esquipulas II by patrolling the borders of the five countries. Meanwhile, in September 1989, the government of El Salvador and the FMLN agreed to a dialogue to end the armed conflict. Given the rapprochement that was taking place between the USA and the USSR, it seemed that real progress was possible. However, following the murder of a key trade union leader at the end of October 1989, the FMLN launched a major offensive, which for the first time brought the war to the capital of the country.

The parties fought to a stalemate, becoming convinced that a military victory was impossible.¹⁹ With the backing of the five Central American presidents, they separately requested diplomatic intervention by the Secretary-General. His personal representative, Alvaro de Soto, spent the next three years helping to hammer out a series of six accords between the parties, culminating in the Chapultepec Agreement signed in Mexico City on January 16, 1992.

The cumulative effect of the six agreements was a profound transformation of Salvadoran society, what the new Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali called "a revolution achieved by negotiation." In a nutshell, the accords brought an end to the war by drawing the FMLN into the political process in exchange for extensive institutional and legal reforms designed to "demilitarize" Salvadoran society. The overarching objectives of the negotiations were set out in the framework agreement reached in Geneva in April 1990: to end the armed conflict by political means; to promote the democratization of the country; to guarantee respect for human rights; and to reunify Salvadoran society. One month later, an agenda and timetable for the negotiations were agreed upon in Caracas, identifying seven substantive topics for negotiation.

The San José Agreement on Human Rights was the first substantive agreement reached by the parties, in July 1990. It set out a number of rights both sides had to respect and, most importantly, provided for the

¹⁸ *The United Nations and El Salvador 1990-1995* (United Nations Department of Public Information, 1995), p. 9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.