

In El Salvador's situation, the twelve-year civil war that lasted from 1981 to 1992, demonstrated the degree of social, political, ideological and cultural polarization that deeply divided the country. Torres-Rivas asserts, "the struggle against the FMLN was a war against part of El Salvador's society." (Torres-Rivas, 1994:16) The Army killed more civilians than guerrillas, and more people died as a result of political repression than in actual fighting. As characteristics from the fifth stage indicate, the war resulted from a long history characterized by social exclusion maintained by force. It was a war fraught with inhumane massacres, incidences of torture, oppression, and countless human rights violations.

By the end of the civil war, over 75,000 civilians and combatants were killed; economic development had regressed to levels found in the 1960's. The war destroyed crops, communication, transport infrastructures, and other essential components of agrarian and export economies. In addition, approximately 555,000 (more than 10 percent of the population) were relocated internally, while close to the same number escaped the country to the US or elsewhere in Central America. (Hampson, 1996:132)

Foreign Intervention

Three types of foreign intervention in El Salvador will be considered, involving catalysts for conflict, dispute mediation, the search for truth and justice. Each intervention played a distinct role in the country's transition from a *legacy of fear* to a *legacy of fear*. Some actions aided in the perpetuation of violence, while others worked towards establishing stability. Specifically, first, I will explore the significance of US involvement in El Salvador as a catalyst for military activity. It will consider the impact of changing US foreign policy directives on the civil war in El Salvador, beginning with the Reagan Administration's goal of containing the expansion of communism, to the post-Cold War era where interest in military involvement in the country diminished. US military and humanitarian aid were key instruments used to maximize its foreign policy interests.

Second, I will examine the involvement of the United Nations in the peace process. At a point where El Salvador was 'ripe' for resolution, pressures and conflict mediation assistance -- from the UN and its neighbours in the region -- played a significant role in the eventual establishment of peace. It was an international effort to encourage the transformation of a *legacy of fear* to *peace*. Third, the paper will consider the effectiveness of the Truth Commission in El Salvador as a tool for the promotion of peace and justice.

US Involvement

In the examination of the United States' historic involvement with El Salvador, one must not only question how it impacted the civil war, but also why. This section will examine US intervention in relation to its evolving foreign policy interest, which changed significantly during the pre- and post-Cold War era.

During the Cold War, the Third World was the host of many protracted proxy wars, where superpower interests prolonged civil conflicts through military and financial aid. The civil war