

Introduction

In some places in the world, the only 'reality' people have known for a lifetime has been enshrouded in fear and violence. Military and brute strength were used instead of laws and democracy to give ruling powers *legitimacy*. Innocent people were victimized instead of being protected by their own government. In El Salvador, these conditions eventually degenerated into a 12-year civil war. Several actors, both inside and outside El Salvador, influenced the evolution and protection of this internal dispute.

This paper will consider the influence of foreign intervention in the transition of El Salvador from a conflict-torn society disillusioned by 12-years of civil war into a peaceful stable state that strives to provide human security for its citizens.² By looking at the catalysts, instruments, constraints, and possibilities in El Salvador in separate sections, the essay will reveal some of the challenges to the shift of society from a *legacy of fear* to a *legacy of peace*. It is important to understand the strategy behind using *fear* and threats of violence -- particularly in the form of extreme human rights abuse -- as a means to instil obedience and cooperation by the political elite. What is the relationship between *fear* and the promotion or prevention of conflict? Ultimately, this essay will examine the impact of foreign involvement in enhancing and undermining El Salvador's ability to build long-term peace and stability.

More specifically, section one will briefly examine the catalysts of fear and conflict -- with particular reference to human rights violations -- and its impact on the institutionalization of fear. Section two will examine El Salvador's history to understand why certain instruments of violence were used, and to provide background on the country's bloody struggle for a legitimate democracy. The third section will address the constraints and challenges, and impact of foreign intervention from the United States, the United Nations and the Truth Commission in pursuit of the establishment of a *legacy of peace*, and the formation of a legitimate democracy.

The term '*legacy of fear*' is used to emphasize the impact of the war on El Salvadorans' livelihoods for over twelve years. It is a conflict that used fear and violence as tools of war to infiltrate into every part of society. Through military led massacres, countless 'disappearances', and an atrocious human rights record, silence and obedience became a choice of survival, instead of will. Fear is rooted in violence, among other tactics of coercion. Both became effective, yet inhumane, ways to coerce compliance. Alternatively, a *legacy of peace* is an ambitious goal, which represents a long-term goal of stability and human security.

² Human security is defined as, "the creation and maintenance of the minimum conditions which would allow for 'human development'." (Bush, 1999:7).