



A Crowded Field: Groups of Friends, the United Nations and the Resolution of Conflict

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This paper traces the evolution of groups of Friends—understood as informal groups of states formed to support the peacemaking of the United Nations—from the emergence of Friends of the Secretary-General on El Salvador in 1990, at a moment of post-Cold War optimism regarding the UN’s peacemaking capacity, to the more complex (and crowded) environment for conflict resolution of the mid-2000s.¹ The intervening fifteen years saw an explosion of groups of all kinds to support peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding, a mirror of the extraordinary upsurge in a range of efforts to address global security in this period. Analysis of the groups is complicated by the great diversity they represent, including in the impact they have had on the processes with which they have been engaged. Indeed Annex I distinguishes four different categories of groups engaged with the UN in conflict resolution: Friends of the Secretary-General, Friends of a country, Contact groups and Implementation and/or monitoring groups. This paper’s primary focus is on groups that have supported UN-led mediation efforts; however its analysis and conclusions embrace both issues specific to UN leadership, and broader considerations of the efficacy of group engagement in conflict management.

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create or impose the conditions for peace. Consequently their relationships to the other actors and factors involved in a given process will be key. Although *where* groups of Friends are likely to be found responds to no fixed criteria as to the type of conflict or its geographic location, there are certain circumstances in which a small group of states may be more helpfully engaged than others. These relate to the external context of a given conflict; the nature of its parties; the interests of the group’s members; its composition and the clarity of its leadership; and the phase of the process in which the group is engaged. Implicit in these findings is the observation that there will also be conflicts to which a group will bring little benefit. The paper concludes with recommendations for the future, most fundamentally suggesting that a group of Friends or related mechanism should be at the service of a strategy for international engagement within a peace process, and not a substitute for one, and that the form of a group should follow its function: what a group is expected to do should be an essential factor in its establishment and composition.

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1990s a number of different groups of states have supported, or worked alongside, the United Nations to prevent and resolve conflicts, or keep and build the peace. These groups are difficult to classify. Their titles—Friends of the Secretary-General, a particular process or country; Core Groups and Contact Groups; Troikas, the Quartet and the Quint; and a broad array of Implementation and/or Monitoring Committees—sow confusion.² They also shed little light on the functions they have performed; the different relationships they have led to between the Secretary-General, his representatives and involved member states; or their different impacts on the broad range of conflicts within which they have been engaged.

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A causal relationship between the presence of a group of Friends and a successful peace is difficult to prove, not least because such a group will itself be in part a consequence of significant external interest in a conflict. However the paper suggests that informal groups have the potential to provide a multitude of benefits to the UN, to their members, at times to the parties to the conflict and to the process as a whole. These include leverage, legitimacy, resources and assistance of many kinds. It also demonstrates that this is not always the case. After an overview of the evolution of the mechanism of Friends in the context of the broader arc traced by UN peacemaking, the paper explores why this may be so through analysis of where groups of Friends have been formed; the relationship of this formation to the interests and preferred strategies of the states and individual mediators involved; the importance of composition; and the different roles played by groups in different phases of a peace process.

The paper argues that the evolution of peacemaking in the last fifteen years has complicated the formation of fixed groups of Friends. Reasons for this include the changing nature of the conflicts addressed—which may offer little leverage for external actors, including the statist organization that is the United Nations—a scarcity of cases in which the UN will have a clear lead of the peacemaking effort, and the eagerness for member states to be involved within a group of Friends or other mechanism engaged in the now popular pursuit of conflict resolution. This pressure for inclusion creates sometimes-irreconcilable tension between the efficiency of a group—which will be enhanced by its small size—and its legitimacy, which may be better served by the membership of a larger number of states. Under such circumstances there will be instances in which a group of Friends will not be appropriate; however, there will also be others in which there may be clear benefits to the UN of working in or through informal coalitions. The recommendations with which the paper concludes suggest that when this is the case a number of the lessons derived from earlier experiences with groups of Friends will be relevant.

II. HISTORY AND EVOLUTION

The end of the Cold War transformed United Nations' peacemaking. Cooperation between the Soviet Union and the United States allowed the five permanent members of the Security Council to act on the basis of consensus and underpinned the UN's capacity to help bring an end to conflicts in Southern Africa, South East Asia and Central America. Central to this process was the Secretary-General's evolving relationship with UN member states, acting individually or in concert. In both Namibia and Cambodia, for example, the UN worked alongside a changing cast of states: in Namibia a Western Contact Group composed of Canada, France, the UK, the US and West Germany as well as the Frontline group of African states (Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and in Cambodia, the permanent five

themselves, acting as a group, but also in partnership with interested regional actors. But despite the integral role of the Secretary-General and his representatives in these processes, the peacemaking was led by others: the United States in the decade-long effort to untangle the conflicts of southern Africa, and the permanent five in Cambodia.³ El Salvador, where the first Friends of the Secretary-General were formed to support UN-led negotiations, would raise new hopes of the ability of the UN itself to lead a complex peacemaking effort.

The UN's moment of post-Cold War euphoria was to be short lived. In the years that followed the capacity of the UN and its membership were outstripped by the nature of the challenges in peace and security with which it was presented, and the pace at which they developed. Friends were not exempt from this process. By the mid-1990s doubts as to the efficacy of the mechanism had set in, in parallel to a gradual erosion of the primacy of the Secretary-General's role as peacemaker. These did not slow a propensity to create groups of some kind. As international engagement in conflict resolution escalated rapidly in the late 1990s and early 2000s a multiplicity of mechanisms were formed. Their proliferation reflected the evolving nature of the conflicts addressed by the international community, as well as the challenge presented by the management of the multiple actors involved in efforts to end them. It also contributed to fundamental changes in the ways in which the United Nations, including the Security Council, addressed conflicts.

First Friends: El Salvador

The mechanism of Friends of the Secretary-General was first used in the negotiations on El Salvador conducted under UN auspices between 1990-1992. In this instance Alvaro de Soto, the Secretary-General's Personal Representative for the Central American Peace Process, consulted regularly with a number of countries regarding the course of the negotiations he mediated between the government of El Salvador and the guerrillas gathered in the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN). Some of these—such as the United States and Cuba—had an obvious political stake in the outcome of a conflict whose escalation had been fuelled by its international dimensions and others, such as the Nordic countries, did not. The countries he assembled as Friends of the Secretary-General (Colombia, Mexico, Spain and Venezuela), however, represented states with a demonstrated interest in the region, like-minded in their concern to reach a negotiated settlement of the conflict, but with no direct stake in its outcome. The three Latin American countries had been involved in the earlier efforts of the Contadora Group to foster peace in Central America, while Spain, with its historic ties to the continent, was an important bridge to the European Union. Part of the group's purpose was to provide a counterweight to the United States and other members of the Security Council with clearly defined bilateral positions on El Salvador. As such it both reassured the insurgents engaged in negotiations and bolstered the

independence of the Secretary-General with respect to the power politics of the Council. During implementation of the agreements, with the assistance of a UN peacekeeping operation, ties between the Friends and the Council were strengthened by the addition of the United States to the group of “Four plus One”, as the Friends became known.

The group of Friends brought leverage over the parties to the conflict to the Secretary-General and his representatives; legitimacy to a privileged involvement in the peace process to the Friends themselves; a measure of equilibrium to the parties; and coordination, resources and informal guarantees to the process as a whole.

The group exemplified the functional benefits that can be gained from the involvement of a group of Friends first noted by the work of Michael Doyle and others in the mid-1990s.⁴ It brought leverage over the parties to the conflict to the Secretary-General and his representatives; legitimacy to a privileged involvement in the peace process to the Friends themselves; a measure of equilibrium to the parties; and coordination, resources and informal guarantees to the process as a whole. Implicit and explicit agreement that acceptance of the Secretary-General’s invitation to be a “Friend” precluded unilateral initiatives also ensured that would-be rival mediators were harnessed to the United Nations’ effort. The pressure on the parties exerted by the Friends—reinforced in the latter stages of the negotiations by the United States—proved an important element in the fortuitous confluence of circumstances that led to the signing of agreements in the final minutes of Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar’s term in office on December 31, 1991.

External and internal circumstances aligned to create conditions under which the conflict in El Salvador was “ripe for resolution”, in a textbook example of the concept of “ripeness” developed by I. William Zartman.⁵ But this does not detract from a need to recognize that the skill and acuity demonstrated by de Soto during the negotiations—and not least in his handling of the Friends—was an important aspect of their success. Indeed, one of the FMLN’s lead negotiators, Salvador Samayoa, would describe the Friends as “a phantasmagorical work of art of de Soto’s—it existed, but didn’t exist, like a non-paper”.⁶ From the beginning de Soto had been wary of the tendency of any group to take on a life of its own. He thus invested much time in separate meetings with the Friends, who

indeed did not meet as a group until April 1991. This facilitated the development of relationships of “solidarity, even complicity” amongst them and support of the UN’s efforts that was, for the most part, remarkably disciplined.⁷ Meanwhile linguistic and cultural affinities bound the Friends together, as did the group’s ties to the first Latin American Secretary-General, the undoubted frisson involved in helping solve a conflict in the backyard of the United States and the fact that several of the Friends had a long acquaintance with political representatives of the Salvadoran guerrillas and at least a degree of sympathy with their cause, if not the methods by which it had been pursued.

A proliferation of groups

So positive an example did the Friends for El Salvador represent for all concerned that the idea of “Friends” was quickly replicated. The waning of the Cold War had seen the advent of a cooperative form of peacemaking by which the old adversaries on the Security Council worked through the United Nations to resolve their regional conflicts. Subsequently, informal “core groups” of ambassadors in Phnom Penh and Maputo and their counterparts in New York worked closely with the representatives of the Secretary-General heading peacekeeping operations in Cambodia and Mozambique. In the process they demonstrated the utility of such groups to the implementation of peace agreements even in circumstances in which the UN had not had the leading role in their negotiation.⁸ Between 1992 and 1995, as the post-Cold War demand on the United Nations rose, Friends were established to support the organization’s efforts to reach and sustain peace in a range of situations including Georgia, Guatemala, Haiti, Tajikistan and Western Sahara.⁹

Less auspicious circumstances for peacemaking than those presented in El Salvador contributed to the mixed performance of some of these groups, but were not the only factor. The powerful group on Haiti was dominated—and at times divided—by the demands of the United States. US policy on Haiti was driven by domestic concerns that eventually led it to return the exiled President Jean Bertrand Aristide to power and set the parameters for the UN role in the years ahead. But a Friends group unified in its support of the UN’s efforts to promote security and stability could not overcome flaws in the process as a whole.¹⁰ In contrast to the group on Haiti, the Friends in Guatemala started life as the Friends of President Jorge Serrano, a formulation that did not promise well. Reframed as “Friends of the Guatemalan Peace Process”, they came to provide essential support to the UN’s “moderation” of the country’s slowly ripening peace process.¹¹ However, diverging bilateral priorities contributed to the Friends’ rebuttal of the Secretariat’s preference for Security Council authorization of the UN mission in Guatemala (for political and budgetary reasons the Friends insisted on the General Assembly)¹² and undermined the utility of the Friends to the implementation of the far-reaching peace agreements signed in late 1996.

Other groups formed on the initiative of member states prioritized their own interests over the resolution of the conflict concerned, as was demonstrated by both the Friends of Western Sahara and the Friends of Georgia, created in 1993 on the initiative of the United States and France, respectively. The big powers within the Friends of Western Sahara (France, Spain, Russia, the UK and the US were its core members) placed more emphasis on their relationships with Morocco and Algeria than on the implementation of the Settlement Plan with which the UN was charged. Meanwhile progress towards settlement of the conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia was not helped by divisions amongst the Friends. Although the Secretariat worked hard to ensure the utility of the Friends—which played a progressively active role after 1997, when they became Friends of the Secretary-General for Georgia¹³—Western states (France, Germany, UK and US) were indeed friends of Georgia, staunchly opposed to the aspirations of Abkhaz forces one “Friend” would describe as a “repellent secessionist regime”.¹⁴ Meanwhile Russia itself—both a Friend and “facilitator” of the peace process—was primarily a regional hegemon with complex and abiding interests of its own that contributed to its role as the Abkhaz’ protector.

New groups and mechanisms reflected the UN’s attempt to cultivate international frameworks that would be favorable to its peacemaking, but also the increased engagement in conflict management of other multilateral institutions, regional organizations, individual states and non-governmental actors.

From the mid-1990s on there was a natural shift away from peace processes in which the Secretary-General had a clear lead, and, with the notable exception of East Timor (discussed below), groups of “Friends of the Secretary-General” as conceived in the early part of the decade. The UN’s success in resolving the proxy conflicts of the Cold War had been facilitated by the strings these conflicts left to be pulled by the powerful states on the Security Council.¹⁵ But the internal—and often regionally entwined—conflicts that it then confronted, contested by weak states and non-state actors and sustained by lootable resources, brought different challenges. New groups and mechanisms reflected the UN’s attempt to cultivate international frameworks that would be favorable to its peacemaking, but also the increased engagement in conflict prevention, mediation, peacekeeping and peacebuilding of other multilateral institutions, regional organizations, indi-

vidual states and non-governmental actors. This extraordinary upsurge in international activity was encouraged in part by the sharp decline in the numbers of wars, genocides and international crises after a steady rise for more than four decades.¹⁶ But it also reflected a global environment in which the culture, distribution and use of power and influence was, perhaps paradoxically, both dominated by the assertion of US might and diffused by the emergence of new actors and forces on the international scene. One result was a flowering of groups of all kinds: more Friends formed to address conflicts as diverse as Angola and Kosovo, Guinea-Bissau and Iraq, but also Core groups, Contact groups and troikas, the “six plus two” on Afghanistan and the Quartet on the Middle East, as well as a slew of monitoring mechanisms established within peace agreements as a means of engaging key external actors in their implementation.¹⁷

Outside the United Nations groups ranging from the Group of Eight (G-8), the major industrialized nations plus Russia, to shifting configurations of states within the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) took leading roles in conflict resolution themselves. The Contact Group on the former Yugoslavia, originally created as a Franco-German initiative in February 1994, had a long and varied history as a central actor in efforts to address the Balkan wars, and is perhaps the closest equivalent to the great power Concert of the past.¹⁸ Its six members (France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States) divested themselves of Russia to address the Kosovo crisis in 1999 as the “Quint”, but re-emerged in the mid-2000s as the driving force behind efforts to move Kosovo towards talks on its final status.¹⁹ Meanwhile states worked together in the Minsk Group on the Nagorno-Karabakh and the Friends of Albania to support peacemaking conducted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Four Guarantor States successfully oversaw the peaceful resolution of a long-standing border dispute between Ecuador and Peru.²⁰ Even non-governmental peacemakers derived expertise and the leverage necessary to counter their inherent “weakness” as mediators from the use of groups. Both a group of “Wise Men” (former statesmen from a variety of countries acting in their personal capacities) and a heavyweight “Tokyo Group” composed of the European Union, Japan, the United States and the World Bank came to support the facilitation of dialogue by Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue between the government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement in 2000-2003.²¹

Within the United Nations the late 1990s and early 2000s saw an extraordinary number of groups formed as a result of initiatives taken by UN officials, member states and even the parties to a conflict themselves. The groups’ formation responded to no clear criteria or even consensus within the Secretariat as to whether and under what circumstances a group represented a desirable policy option to pursue. Indeed only in Africa, where Kofi Annan had encouraged the forma-

tion of groups as a means to marry the clout and resources of international actors with the legitimacy and expertise of the region—most notably through a suggestion endorsed within the African Action Plan adopted by the G-8 in 2002—were groups of any kind openly advocated.²² Initiatives variously taken by the Secretary-General and, more often, member states led to groups' appearance on Angola, the Central African Republic, Guinea Bissau and Ethiopia-Eritrea. These groups, like those that would follow them—the International Contact Group on Liberia, co-chaired by the European Union and ECOWAS, or the informal Troika on Sudan—differed in many respects from Friends groups elsewhere. One, that in Ethiopia-Eritrea, was formed in support of a peacekeeping operation; others, such as that on Guinea Bissau, had a broader interest in promoting international support for peacebuilding. The groups were rarely configured around a UN lead or directly responsible for the drafting of Security Council resolutions. Instead their relationship to the efforts of the Secretary-General and his representatives reflected the diffuse and fluid nature of the United Nations' own role in Africa and the complex interplay of interests amongst members of the Security Council and African actors.

The Core Group on East Timor was formed to support the UN-led political process leading up to the popular consultation on the territory's future in August 1999. Meanwhile, the proliferation of peace operations established in circumstances in which the UN had not had the lead of the peacemaking was accompanied by a variety of mechanisms to channel the efforts of the external actors involved. The Friends of UNMEE (the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea) espoused formal "friendship" of a peacekeeping operation. This reflected not only the objections of Ethiopia and Eritrea to a group more tightly aligned to the political process, but also the priorities of the group's progenitor, the Netherlands, which established the Friends in order to safeguard its own interests in an operation to which it was contributing troops.²³ Other groups articulated with peace operations bear a more direct relation to Friends of the past. Indeed the Core Group established for Haiti in mid-2004 was seen as an extension of the earlier Friends. By including representatives of the international financial institutions as well as relevant regional and sub-regional organizations, it sought to broaden the sense of ownership of the international effort to restore security and stability to Haiti.²⁴

These varied groups emerged to work with and alongside the United Nations in a largely unstructured manner. Within the Security Council, the subject of groups was taken up by an Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa that had been formed in February 2002 under the chairmanship of Mauritius. The working group held several discussions on the establishment of groups of Friends and even arrived at a set of recommendations on their composition and attributes.²⁵ But no review of the use of groups took place within the United Nations Secretariat, nor

was much attention paid to them within the academic literature.²⁶ Expertise on the potential and risks attendant on the use of Friends remained concentrated in those with first-hand experience of the mechanism. This had direct consequences for the incidence of Friends' groups. On the one hand carefully modulated uses of Friends or similar mechanisms were instigated by some of the officials with experience of the practice in the past. On the other there was a proliferation of groups created with broader purposes in mind: they might represent a positive avenue for the coordination of multilateral efforts or, less ambitiously, the marshalling of attention to otherwise neglected conflicts.²⁷

Inside the Security Council

The proliferation of informal groups was reflected in the evolution of the working methods of the Security Council, with profound, but somewhat contradictory consequences for its legitimacy.²⁸ As the Council's workload increased throughout the 1990s—between January 1990 and December 1999 it adopted 638 resolutions, at an average of 64 a year, compared with an average of 14 a year in the 44 years since 1946²⁹—decision-making became increasingly determined by discussions amongst some or all of its five permanent members. Elected members who had won influence in the past felt marginalized. Meanwhile states representing the broader membership of the UN were themselves shut out of Council deliberations by a tendency for the real work of the Council to be done in informal consultations. In the mid and late 1990s a number of steps were taken by the Council to improve its transparency, even as cooperation amongst the permanent members on central issues on the Council's agenda—notably the Balkans and Iraq—began to erode. But the more pragmatic states remained unconvinced. "Everyone knows that the more you make public the more the real decision-making will get moved elsewhere", was the comment of a representative of one Western state who served on the Council in 2001-2002, "it is not always even in informals anymore. Somebody has to make the decisions and in many cases it's the Friends".³⁰

This remark reflected the fact that, by the early 2000s, most issues within the Council were "staffed" by identifiable groups under the coordination of a lead nation, whether explicitly acknowledged as such or not.³¹ These groups facilitated the work of the Council in a variety of ways, including the preparation of draft presidential statements, resolutions and other texts. Some of the groups were Contact or Friends groups. Other practices reflected either the reluctance of the permanent five to relinquish control of the issues of most pressing international urgency (Iraq, Kosovo in 1998-1999, Afghanistan after September 2001 and the Middle East peace process being examples), their individual leadership of issues of national—in many instances post-colonial—priority, seen in the role fulfilled by the UK in Sierra Leone or France in the Central African Republic and Côte d'Ivoire, or internally agreed procedures whereby an elected member is conceded a

coordinating position on a particular region or file (Norway's lead on the Horn of Africa from 2001-2002 being a case in point).

Opinions of groups of Friends from within the Security Council were decidedly mixed.³² As groups of all kinds mushroomed in the late 1990s and early 2000s, so did criticism of their composition and actions. Those who criticized the work of the groups were generally elected members of the Council, such as Bangladesh, Colombia, Ireland, Jamaica, New Zealand and Singapore, concerned with the usurpation of their authority as Council members by elite ownership of specific issues.³³ They objected that the groups were opaque, included too few developing countries and perpetuated the sense of “us” and “them” already present in the Council's two-tiered structure. In early 1999 frustration with the control exercised over a number of the processes under the Council's authority—in particular the tight hold on Cyprus maintained by the permanent five, the monopolization of Georgia by its Friends, and the behavior of the Contact Group on the former Yugoslavia, which was at the time considered by many to be in the first instance an effective tool for the prevention of Security Council engagement—led to the issuance of a Note by the President of the Council (Canada) on February 17, 1999. The Note pointed out that “contributions by members of groups of friends and other similar arrangements” are welcome, but emphasized that “the drafting of resolutions and statements by the President of the Council should be carried out in a manner that will allow adequate participation of all members of the Council” (S/1999/165).

States had little to lose from being a member of even an ineffective group of Friends. For international and domestic audiences alike, the appearance of making a contribution was almost as relevant as actually doing so.

Perhaps paradoxically, opposition to the power exercised by groups within the Council underscored the extent to which the UN had—notwithstanding long-running debates about the illegitimacy of the Security Council's membership—grown as a legitimate actor in conflict resolution. And indeed one aspect of this increased legitimacy was the influence exerted on situations under the Council's purview in which they had a justifiable interest by states—such as Mexico, Canada, Germany or Australia, on Central America, Haiti, Georgia and East Timor respectively—that were not Council members. This perhaps explains why opposition to Friends did not stop elected members and non-members

alike (including some of those who had been most vocal in their criticism) from trying to get on them.³⁴ Indeed many states came to see a two-year stint on the Security Council as an ideal opportunity to win a place within a Friends or other group steering Council action. In some cases this would help ensure the state's relevance within a particular file for the duration of its presence on the Council; in others it was hoped that it would maintain it in the period following its departure. The practice also reflected the curious fact that, in the public sphere at least, states had little to lose from being a member of even an ineffective group of Friends. For international and domestic audiences alike, the appearance of making a contribution was almost as relevant as actually doing so.

Variable Geometry

A more crowded field for conflict resolution has placed new demands on the United Nations as a peacemaker, principally with respect to its readiness to play distinct roles within different peace processes, in reflection of the different configurations of actors involved.³⁵ Under such circumstances Friends as conceived in the past have given way to more varied structures. Some of these, as in Cyprus, were formed in situations in which the UN's long history in the conflict had left it in the lead of complex processes involving numerous bilateral and multilateral actors. In others, such as the Middle East and Liberia, the UN cultivated international frameworks favorable to peacemaking even when it had no clear lead of the effort. The peace process for southern Sudan offered yet another model, in that the UN gradually engaged with an intricate structure supporting negotiations from which it had itself been excluded. Within a slow opening of Sudan's future to international involvement the role played by an informal group of states—the Troika of Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States—in support of a mediation effort led by Kenya, was notable.³⁶

Alvaro de Soto's experience of Friends groups had left him keenly aware of the benefits to be gained from the leverage of key interested states, but also of the risks posed by a proliferation of would-be mediators or too formally a constituted group. Consequently when he assumed responsibility—as the Secretary-General's Special Adviser—for the UN's good offices on Cyprus in late 1999, he viewed the multiplicity of special envoys already in place with some trepidation.³⁷ The international context of the new effort offered conditions more favorable to a negotiated settlement than had been seen in the past.³⁸ But de Soto chose not to create a “group” of Friends, as to do so would have involved a large and incoherent structure or potentially damaging exclusion. Instead he worked closely with layers of unspecified “Friends of the Secretary-General”, as well as with the European Union.³⁹ The United Kingdom and the United States were the UN's closest partners and, as such were asked by Kofi Annan, as David Hannay, the UK's Special Representative would write, to “respect the UN's inde-

pendence and impartiality and . . . accept at every stage that the UN was in the lead”.⁴⁰ This they did with remarkable consistency—not least, as Thomas Weston, Hannay’s US counterpart recalled, because they thought the UN offered the only possible chance of a success.⁴¹ That this was thwarted by Greek Cypriot rejection of the UN plan for Cyprus in April 2004 provided a sober reminder of the limits of even a carefully managed process, strongly backed by the coordinated support of powerful states and multilateral actors.

In very different circumstances in the Middle East and Liberia, the UN encouraged the formation of groups from “below”. The Secretary-General never aspired to lead a mechanism binding the Middle East’s “little three”, as Quartet members referred to the European Union, Russia and the United Nations, to the dominant “one” of the United States.⁴² However, the creation of the mechanism by his Personal Representative, Terje Rød-Larsen, in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 2001, underlined the importance to his office of strategic partnerships in circumstances in which the UN might otherwise be relegated to a process instrument. The Quartet, as Rød-Larsen has argued, matches the “power of the US, the money of the EU and the legitimacy of the UN”, with a political need to respect Russia’s role in the region. Although the US lead in the Middle East is unquestioned, in practice the Quartet’s actions have often been coordinated by the UN, allowing it to quietly broker the sometimes-diverging views of the US and the EU.⁴³ A “back room” aspect of the Quartet has also held some utility for the US itself, as it provided a forum within which the State Department could work to bridge—and cover—differences between positions emanating from the White House of George W. Bush and what was acceptable to its international partners.⁴⁴ These somewhat hidden functions maintained the utility of the Quartet during the years (2002-2004) in which the broader political process it had advocated in the Roadmap agreed in 2002 showed little progress.

The UN had encouraged the creation of the International Contact Group on Liberia, initially as a group to address the escalating conflict threatening to engulf the countries of the Mano River Union (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone).⁴⁵ But officials in New York had no desire for the nominal lead of a mechanism they had little hope of controlling, given the UN’s limited influence in Liberia and the deep divisions within the international community on the way ahead.⁴⁶ The group that finally emerged in the latter part of 2002 was co-chaired by ECOWAS and the EU and including members from inside the region and beyond.⁴⁷ During 2003 a series of ICGL meetings held in the region and outside helped build consensus on the need to engage directly with Liberia’s renegade President, Charles Taylor, and engineer his departure from the country. This process was facilitated by the partnership that developed between the EU Special Representative Hans Dahlgren, the State Secretary of Sweden, and Nana Addo Dankwa, the Foreign Minister of Ghana and chair of ECOWAS, and their

willingness to impress jointly upon Taylor the gravity of his situation.⁴⁸ By mid-2004, discussion within the ICGL had returned again to the region. However, opposition to a regional mandate from the fragile state of Guinea and the complexity of the issues to be addressed limited the scope of what a group such as the ICGL could achieve.

The events of 2003 in Liberia demonstrated the validity of international support for peacemaking that had hitherto been hindered by differences amongst regional actors and a lack of leverage from outside. These were overcome by regional and international consensus on what should be done, actively pursued through emphatic diplomacy. In this respect, the Liberian peace process in 2003 resembled the evolving peace process in southern Sudan, where the Troika of Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States—both more informal and more operationally engaged than the ICGL—helped create a structure of incentives and disincentives that made the momentum to reach agreement all but irresistible.⁴⁹ The Troika itself had evolved from a donor structure, the IGAD Partners Forum (IPF), established in the mid-1990s to support the faltering efforts of the sub-regional organization, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGAD), to promote peace.⁵⁰ Its success could be attributed to a number of factors: a shift in policy within the US towards determined engagement with Sudan; the effective division of labor demonstrated by the Troika states and between the Troika and other actors; and an underlying commitment to work in support of the able Kenyan mediator, General Lazaro Sumbeiyu, while keeping other potential mediators at bay. In this instance partnership with the UN—which was prevented from assuming a formal role in the process by the fears of the Sudanese government—was a discreet matter, although one well managed to ensure UN input and advice on an agreement that all involved expected to be implemented with the support of a peace operation mandated by the Security Council.⁵¹

III. WHERE FRIENDS ARE FOUND

This history is one that demonstrates that there are no clear criteria of regional location or type of conflict determining the occurrence of Friends groups, although factors that are likely to influence their success can be identified. Groups have been formed on the initiative of the Secretary-General, of their member states, and even of the parties to a conflict. They have been present in conflicts recognizably “easier” than others to settle, such as Central America, but also amongst the most intractable, involving issues of territory as well as government and sustained by the presence of illicit resources as well as ideology and other factors. In some instances they have been formed at an early stage in a crisis’s development, while in others their formation responds to a new development within a long-stalemated situation, and a consequent assessment that the timing may be ripe for a new initiative. However, groups of Friends have not played prominent roles

in the efforts to resolve many of the most deadly conflicts of the post-Cold War period (such as Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Balkans). They have also struggled to engage effectively in conflicts over territory that lack what Zartman has termed a “single salient solution.”⁵² This, of course, is not a surprising observation, in that secessionist and other conflicts that offer only zero-sum solutions present all those who might seek to end them with a particular set of obstacles.

These challenges are indicative of a broader problem: the significant obstacles that Friends may encounter with respect to their interaction with non-state armed actors. These limitations are even more marked than those intrinsic to the United Nations itself, which will always face obstacles in establishing a relationship between a government and rebel forces. In such situations UN mediators can assert—and demonstrate—the impartiality that is proper to their representation of the Secretary-General and the ideals of the UN Charter. But Friends, who may also entertain bilateral relations with governments “party” to an internal conflict with actors they hold as illegitimate, subversive and perhaps terrorist as well, are in a more complex situation. Consequently, the extent to which Friends may provide substantive support in interaction with parties to the conflict will depend on the nature of those parties. As the widely divergent conflicts in Central America, East Timor and southern Sudan demonstrate, engagement by international actors through a Friends or other mechanism may be facilitated in cases in which the rebel and/or resistance movements can draw on significant sympathy in the international community. In other circumstances, and in an international climate colored by the global war on terrorism prosecuted since September 2001, effective communication between Friends and rebel or secessionist forces may be restricted.⁵³

Meanwhile, although certain geographic tendencies can be discerned in the occurrence of Friends—a predisposition towards them in Latin America, away from them in Europe, the Middle East and Asia and towards groups of some kind, although not necessarily Friends, in Africa⁵⁴—they are not so consistent as to constitute a determining factor for their formation. This is not to deny the essential relationship between a group of Friends and a conflict’s regional environment. Conflicts at the heart of what Barnett R. Rubin and others have dubbed “regional conflict formations”—such as Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)—or those that take place under the shadow of the pronounced interests of a larger and more powerful neighbor—such as Somalia or Sri Lanka—create evident obstacles to the formation of groups of Friends.⁵⁵ The “six plus two” group of neighboring states, plus Russia and the United States, on Afghanistan was very far from a group of Friends. Some of its members, who were actively arming and supporting the warring factions within Afghanistan, were better described as friends of individual parties than of a negotiated solution.⁵⁶

No group of Friends was formed on the DRC during the active years of the conflict, and discussions of the creation of a possible “Committee of Friends” of Somalia fell prey to Somali complaints that some of the regional states considered for the group were more enemy than Friend.⁵⁷ Meanwhile Norway, as the facilitator of the peace process in Sri Lanka, considered and then rejected the creation of a Friends group, on the grounds that it might compromise a bilateral relationship with India that was central to Norway’s engagement.⁵⁸

As this discussion suggests, rather than geographic location or conflict typology, the presence of Friends reflects less quantifiable factors. Foremost among these are the interests of the states concerned and the preferred diplomatic strategy and skill of the officials involved. Together these will have a significant effect on the utility of Friends within a peace process.

Interests

It is difficult to generalize about interests.⁵⁹ They may be determined by historical or ideological allegiances deriving from colonialism, the Cold War or geography; security concerns related to direct threats, strategic location, the flow of arms and/or armed actors across borders or the attractiveness of a failed state to criminal and terrorist networks; economic concerns related to trade and investments and the presence of oil or other resources; and a variety of issues, ranging from the escalating costs of humanitarian assistance to concern about immigration, raised by large scale flows of refugees. But since the end of the Cold War other, “softer” interests, including values such as human rights and democracy (if, as Joseph Nye has pointed out, “the public feels that those values are so important to its identity to that it is willing to pay a price to promote them”) have also emerged.⁶⁰ These reflect what the veteran British diplomat Robert Cooper has identified as the perhaps the most important change in foreign policy in this period, “the invention of peace as a foreign policy goal.”⁶¹

The trick is to ensure that the varied interests of the actors engaged can be successfully channeled to support a single peace process and, in doing so, at least equal or preferably exceed other interests that these same states may maintain in the conflict arena.

A decision to become involved within a peace process, whether as a mediator or in the supporting role of a Friend, will be taken as a consequence of a choice made on the basis of sometimes competing interests.⁶² But while a state’s strate-

gic or economic interests may be entirely consistent with the resolution of a particular conflict, this is not always the case. “Mediation will not flourish”, as Chester Crocker and his colleagues have pointed out, “in an environment where the major powers—for understandable and strategically cogent reasons—have other priorities”.⁶³ And even a normative interest in the promotion of peace and security will not be clean of all others. States impelled by the most exemplary of motives will—like the UN Secretariat, or indeed non-governmental peacemakers—have an interest in raising their international standing through successful participation in a peace process.⁶⁴ The trick is to ensure that the varied interests of the actors engaged can be successfully channeled to support a single peace process and, in doing so, at least equal or preferably exceed other interests that these same states may maintain in the conflict arena. Geopolitical realities, however, clearly limit the instances in which this is likely to be possible. “We should not imagine”, as Stephen Stedman has put it, “that all civil wars are equally likely to have Friends”.⁶⁵

Interests explain why Friends have been most helpfully engaged in conflicts that fall somewhere within the middle ranks of international attention—arguably the circumstances in which the UN itself is best placed to be effective. The major powers are not likely to relinquish a driving role within conflicts at the top of the international agenda to an informal group of states working in support of a UN peacemaker. A group of “Friends of Iraq” was convened but—like the “Friends of Kosovo” before it—morphed into a large and unwieldy body, upwards of 45 states, that had no aspirations to influence the big states involved. At the other end of the spectrum, a conflict of little or no significance to outside powers will not retain the level of interest that is represented by sustained participation in a group of Friends. In contrast to these two extremes, groups of Friends working closely with UN officials have provided a welcome opportunity for major powers, including the United States, to work multilaterally on issues that have not been of primary importance to them, but nevertheless are perceived to matter. In many instances they have—as was noted above—also proven effective fora within which regional powers and other states that do not sit permanently on the Security Council, but may be directly vested in the outcome of a particular conflict, can be centrally engaged.

Precedent and preference

Even more difficult to quantify than “interests” are the preferred diplomatic techniques of individual mediators and diplomats, whose personalities and skills directly influence how peace is made, or attempted. A propensity to create or join more Friends by those with experience of the mechanism has undoubtedly had an effect on their incidence. The success of the group in El Salvador, for example, contributed directly to the Secretary-General’s gathering of the four primary external actors on Haiti around him as his Friends.⁶⁶ The util-

ity of the Haiti group to the United States in turn led to the creation of the Friends of Western Sahara.⁶⁷ Meanwhile, the formation of the Friends in Guatemala responded in the first instance to the enthusiasm of the Salvadoran Friends, who, flush with success from that effort, suggested a similar mechanism to President Serrano.⁶⁸ A decision by the United States to participate within the Friends—a development the UN moderator, Jean Arnault, would view as crucial to the negotiation’s success—was taken on the basis of an internal assessment that the US had not benefited from the distance it had maintained from the FMLN in the case of El Salvador.⁶⁹ Subsequently Norway’s positive assessment of the Guatemalan Friends would contribute directly to the encouragement of groups of Friends in Colombia by the Secretary-General’s Special Adviser Jan Egeland—who, as his country’s State Secretary, had played a prominent role as one of the Guatemalan peace process’ leading Friends.⁷⁰

A degree of skepticism as to the risks represented by either a too strong or divided a group of Friends was more marked in the use of the mechanism by some officials than others (while others again were reluctant to create them at all). De Soto, for example, had been wary of the over formalization of groups from the earliest days on El Salvador. Francesc Vendrell had served as de Soto’s deputy on Central America and, in that capacity was closely involved with the development of the Salvadoran Friends as well as the official UN “observer” of the Guatemalan process in its earliest stages. (He was also involved in the formation of the Friends for Haiti, although he became uneasy with what he perceived as the overbearing role of the United States within the group.) Subsequently, his responsibilities shifted to East Asia. He resisted suggestions to form a group of Friends on East Timor—fearing that it would be little more than a pressure group on Portugal to let the territory go—until circumstances changed in 1999, at which point he conceived the carefully structured Core Group.⁷¹

Vendrell’s tendency to work with groups was again in evidence when in 2000 he assumed responsibility for the UN’s peacemaking in Afghanistan. Although conditions for any peace process were not auspicious, on his own initiative he encouraged the creation of a variety of mechanisms that might bring leverage, support and the promise of resources to his efforts. These ranged from an informal “luncheon group” of Islamabad-based ambassadors of donor states to a series of meetings amongst the international sponsors of exile groups (Germany, Iran, Italy and the United States) that became known as the Geneva Initiative.⁷² These were not able to make much headway within an essentially intractable situation, but served a subsidiary purpose in providing a more discreet opportunity for discussion between representatives of Iran and the United States—which had no formal diplomatic relations—than that given by meetings of the “six plus two”.

But Afghanistan after the transforming events of September 2001 notably lacked a Friends group. This reflected not a lack of interest in Afghanistan—on the contrary, after

many years of neglect, Afghanistan was at the forefront of international attention—but the tradecraft of Lakhdar Brahimi, who was re-appointed the Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Afghanistan in October 2001. Brahimi had worked closely with the Friends in Haiti while heading the peacekeeping operation in the country in the mid-1990s. In Afghanistan, however, he was to demonstrate a marked preference for less structured arrangements through which to interact with the UN's many more diverse partners.⁷³ Suggestions to form a group of Friends came up “periodically”, as Jean Arnault, who served as Brahimi's deputy and then succeeded him as SRSR recalled, but were consistently resisted. Although Arnault admitted that his own experience in Guatemala might have pre-disposed him towards “Friends”, in this instance he agreed that any small—and therefore effective—group would have involved costly political exclusion.⁷⁴ Accordingly, more flexible methods of consultation, with different interlocutors, sounding boards and partners for different issues, were pursued.

IV. COMPOSITION IS KEY

In any group of Friends, composition is all-important. It will determine the group's relationship to the Secretary-General, to the Security Council, to the conflict in question and to the likelihood of it fulfilling a constructive role within a process. Most groups have involved some mixture of Security Council members (including the permanent five), interested regional actors, and mid-sized donor states or helpful fixers with experience of the conflict but without direct interests in its outcome. Exactly what combination of leverage, assistance, resources and expertise these may contribute to the process in question will vary greatly, but the composition of any group designed to be operational will (or should) reflect a clear sense of what each member may be able to deliver:

- With the notable exception of El Salvador, the *United States* has been a member of almost all groups of Friends.⁷⁵ Indeed, given its preeminent power in the post-Cold War period, an effective group of Friends on an issue on the agenda of the Security Council that did not count upon the US among its members is, in the mid-2000s, not conceivable. (Conflicts that have not or will not reach the agenda of the Council may be a different matter.) However, neither the utility to the US of Friends, nor the possibilities that a small group may offer to shape or influence the stance the US may take on specific issues should be underestimated.⁷⁶
- *Other members of the permanent five*, with the exception of China, have routinely been members of Friends formed to address conflicts in which they maintain an interest. Like the US they bring with them the promise of heavy-lifting within the Security Council and significant resources. The UK—with its mastery of Security Council procedure and bridging role between the US and other states—has been

particularly effective in managing relations between groups of Friends and the Council as a whole. It has consequently benefited from its membership of groups even in circumstances—such as East Timor—in which it has no direct interests at stake. However, a dominance of permanent members of the Security Council among the Friends may limit the opportunities presented to the Secretariat in a peace process unless their interests align with the expressed goals of the UN.

- *Regional actors* with much to gain from the peaceful settlement of a conflict have played leading roles within groups of Friends (Mexico in Central America; Canada in Haiti; Australia, New Zealand and Japan in East Timor; Nigeria, South Africa and other states in a variety of African mechanisms). However, in regionally-entwined conflicts, such as many of those in Africa, the engagement of neighboring countries may be problematic. Neighbors might favor stability in the country in conflict, but, in the absence of stability on their terms, may opt for increased instability rather than stability on the terms of others. Under such circumstances they will be more “spoiler” than “friend” and may be counterproductive as partners in the quest for peace.
- *Helpful fixers* have played effective roles within groups of Friends, not least because their freedom from interests associated with other actors well places them to represent “honest brokers”. Norway has been most successful in this regard, with the role it has played as a Friend in Guatemala or Troika member in Sudan complementary to the peacemaking it has undertaken bilaterally elsewhere. Switzerland—which like Norway has adopted peacemaking as a central pillar of its foreign policy—was an active member of the groups formed in Colombia (and worked in parallel to the Troika in Sudan to negotiate an agreement on the Nuba mountains). Such cases illustrate that a deep understanding of the conflict and its primary actors will substantially enhance the leverage that states otherwise divorced from the dynamics of a conflict can bring into play.

In practice, a group that includes a balanced mixture of members, able to complement each other in the support they bring to the mediation, may be difficult to identify. Indeed in several instances—among them Georgia and Western Sahara—the Secretariat has been presented with a group formed on member states' initiatives and had to work to develop its utility. This has been complicated in these two cases both by the preponderance of permanent members of the Security Council and by the inclusion of states with an overriding strategic interest in the outcome of the conflict. A group of this kind may come to fill a helpful role as a mechanism by which to manage, and even negotiate differences between the most important external actors to a conflict, but

it is less likely to contribute directly to the conflict's resolution. Such problems cannot be remedied by a change in a group's composition (divesting a group of such powerful Friends is rarely a practical option); rather they relate to the delicate, but central, question of which conflicts lend themselves to the presence of a group of Friends in the first place.

Selection and leadership

Opinions within the Secretariat have been divided as to whether a group should be formed at all and, if so, whether it should be essentially self-selecting or identified by the Secretary-General.⁷⁷ Wariness of the latter course of action stems from the difficulty of the Secretary-General's distinction between those that are his "Friends" on a particular issue and those that—by implication—are not. In this respect the experience of the group of Friends of Angola formed in 1999 was a bad one. By this stage Angola had sunk back into full-blown war, and the UN's capacity to exercise leverage over either side in the conflict had been eroded by the failures of the past. The Secretary-General decided to form a group of Friends to counter the weight of the Troika of Portugal, Russia and the United States, whose support for the government was perceived to be driving UN policy on Angola, and exert collective pressure on both the government and UNITA (Union for the Total Independence of Angola) to resume the peace process.⁷⁸ However an uncontrolled process of selection within the Secretariat, and an unseemly press for membership by states that had little to offer, allowed the group to grow to over twenty. In this format it met infrequently and achieved little. When the Angola dossier passed to Ibrahim Gambari, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Africa, he took the diplomatically uncomfortable step of culling the group by half, to a somewhat more manageable (but still unwieldy) eleven.⁷⁹

A better example of the creation of a group is provided by East Timor. During the latter part of 1998, Francesc Vendrell had taken to "nagging" representatives of a number of countries to pay more attention to East Timor, which had languished on the UN agenda as a mangled case of decolonization for years.⁸⁰ Change within Indonesia precipitated by the departure of President Suharto promised movement within Tripartite Talks between Indonesia and Portugal long brokered by the UN. Exactly how much was not evident until late January 1999, when President B.J. Habibie suddenly announced that if the Timorese rejected a proposed autonomy plan, he would let the territory go. The Secretariat moved rapidly to ensure unified support from member states, creating a two tier structure of a large Support Group, designed to be as inclusive as possible, and a smaller steering committee, or Core Group. That its members—Australia, Japan, New Zealand, United Kingdom and the United States—had already been meeting in distinct combinations for several months lent the group the appearance of being self-selecting, a valuable asset that belied the group's careful crafting. Two permanent

members of the Security Council were joined by states with a strong regional interest in East Timor's future and prepared to commit a substantial amount of diplomatic capital and resources to the UN effort. The Core Group met frequently and confidentially with the Secretariat and also conferred in Jakarta and at the capital level. Although it, like the Secretariat, was unprepared for the violence that followed the popular consultation held in August 1999, the trust that had developed amongst its members, and the strong support they received from their capitals greatly facilitated the Security Council's prompt response to the crisis. It would also help sustain support for the Timorese transition to independence in the years that followed.⁸¹

What individual states within a group of Friends may have to offer may vary. But the positive examples of uses of Friends have in common their support of a peace process structured around a widely accepted lead.

The question of selection is closely related to that of leadership. What individual states within a group of Friends may have to offer may vary. But the positive examples of uses of Friends have in common their support of a peace process structured around a widely accepted lead. In this respect a group of Friends offers the possibility of remedying one of the principal challenges posed by what the US Institute of Peace has termed "multiparty mediation": "almost an inverse relationship between the number of participants and issues in a multiparty mediation and the likelihood of developing and sustaining a coordinated intervention strategy."⁸² The successful management of Friends will require broad agreement on the goals sought by the United Nations, or other lead actor in the process, as well as the disposition to address differences that may arise in a transparent manner. Whether the model of the UN impresario suggested by El Salvador is repeated—and in most circumstances it will not be possible—trust, respect, mutual commitment to a settlement of the conflict, continuity and a degree of complicity (sometimes employed with respect to each official's parent bureaucracy) amongst the individuals involved are likely to be required.

Without clarity in the leadership of the mediation effort, groups may struggle to maintain and define their role. This was certainly the case in Colombia, where the UN's contribution to the peace process pursued by President Andrés Pastrana—in reality a series of dialogues and talks, limited almost exclusively to procedural questions, fitfully undertaken with Colombian guerillas between 1999-2002—was constrained by a number of factors. These included the lack of a

format mandate, Colombian sensitivities (on the part of the government no less than the guerrillas) towards international involvement, the weakness of the process and the ambivalence towards it of the United States, the principal international actor in Colombia.⁸³ Numerous states with conflicting goals, experience and expectations of what could be achieved pressed for involvement within groups encouraged by the UN. A group supporting the talks with the smaller of two insurgencies with which the Colombian government was engaged, the National Liberation Army (ELN), for a time appeared to be making headway. But the disarray amongst the Facilitators of talks with the larger Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) after the process broke down in early 2002 exemplified the risks of a group that did not know what it was doing interacting with conflict parties who did not know what they wanted from it.⁸⁴

V. PEACEMAKING TO IMPLEMENTATION

The relationship between the United Nations and a group of Friends will change as a peacemaking effort moves forward from a period of pre-negotiation and confidence-building to substantive negotiations and then again upon signing of an agreement and the establishment of a peace operation mandated by the Security Council. On the one hand the agreement or mandate will give the international community an established process whose implementation has become a common goal; on the other international actors will face new challenges in coordinating their actions and strategies to promote implementation and peacebuilding. Both factors increase the argument for the introduction of some kind of coordination structure or established division of labor. This may differ in form, as it does in function, from a group of Friends created to support negotiations.

Writing on the strategic coordination of peace implementation, Bruce D. Jones noted the use of a Friends group or other deliberate process to bring together key governments as “one of the striking commonalities among cases of successful implementation.”⁸⁵ Friends or related mechanisms did indeed contribute positively to the performance of peace operations in Central America, Cambodia, Mozambique, Haiti, East Timor and even Georgia, where the Tbilisi-based Friends provided consistent support of UN’s peacekeeping operation alongside a more complex interaction with the political process. The various groups represented a degree of continuity that maximized the potential to coordinate bilateral strategies.⁸⁶ Although the very great differences in the implementation environment inhibit direct comparisons, the impact of the Friends appears particularly favorable in the light of the unwieldy coordination mechanisms in the Balkans, where the competing organizational cultures of the UN, OSCE, NATO and the EU complicated international efforts already confused by differences amongst the key bilateral actors.⁸⁷

In the more successful cases the fact that the Friends were relatively few in number, and acted in support of a clear UN

lead helped promote a unified approach. Groups were able to reinforce and multiply the limited influence of an SRSG heading a peace operation, thereby increasing the international credibility of the UN’s effort to sustain peace. Exactly how Friends helped individual SRSGs varied from case to case and according to the individual dispositions of the officials involved (some work harder to “cultivate the Friends” as one former SRSG put it, than others).⁸⁸ But they fulfilled a number of functions. These included exerting political influence on the parties to the conflict; sharing information regarding local developments as well as thinking in their capitals and New York; acting as a sounding board for new ideas and initiatives; and helping build and maintain consensus within the Security Council.

A more complex issue, and one that extends beyond a closed group of Friends—who may not always represent the primary donors, let alone other multilateral organizations or the international financial institutions (IFIs)—is that of donor coordination. Individual donor priorities and tensions between the political and economic demands made by the international community render this extraordinarily difficult to achieve.⁸⁹ In El Salvador, for example, implementation of the peace agreements proceeded on a different track from the program of rigorous macroeconomic reform pursued by the international financial institutions; indeed the government of El Salvador cited prior commitments to the IMF as a reason for foot-dragging on issues such as reintegration of guerrilla combatants and police reform.⁹⁰ In Guatemala, lessons from El Salvador were reflected in the extent to which, during the negotiations, Jean Arnault worked with the banks and other donors to build an international consensus around agreements that included specific commitments regarding socio-economic reform. However, a rejection of the continued involvement of the Friends by the government, the emergence of successive Consultative Group meetings as the focal point for international engagement with Guatemala, and differences amongst the most powerful Friends and between the Friends and the UN led to the absence of the Friends as a central actor in the agreements’ implementation.⁹¹ By the early 2000s a new group of donors, the “Dialogue Group”, determined strictly by levels of assistance (thereby excluding the Latin members of the Friends) had eclipsed the Friends comprehensively. This group worked closely with the UN’s verification mission to assume the voice of the international community within Guatemala, in part through protection of the peace agenda within Consultative Group meetings.

The proliferation of peace operations established in circumstances in which the UN had not had the lead of the peacemaking has been accompanied by a variety of mechanisms to channel the efforts of the various external actors involved. These mechanisms are not Friends, but in some cases—such as the Core Group in Haiti—they have come to fill a somewhat similar role. In contrast to Haiti, efforts to end

the brutal conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had not involved any group of Friends. Countries of the region were actively participating within the conflict or clearly aligned with its contenders, while competing allegiances had also prevented a greater degree of cooperation within the Security Council.⁹² However the peace agreement signed in December 2002 provided for the establishment of an International Commission to Accompany the Transition (CIAT). Convened by the Secretary-General's Special Representative, William Swing, the CIAT combined the key actors on the Security Council with the major regional players and organizations.⁹³ It rapidly became a leading actor in the political process, although was not immune to tensions among its members that had long characterized international engagement in the Congo.

While the transition from a group of Friends formed to support peacemaking to a group designed to encourage implementation may be complicated, different problems are presented by long-lasting groups of Friends fated, instead, to accompany a situation that may be stalemated in political terms. Such groups, however theoretically "informal", become institutionalized as a means to manage the conflict at hand. This, of course, may serve a useful purpose in itself. However, the involvement of Friends may also be among the factors that help sustain an impasse, as their presence represents a set of informal or other guarantees that helps maintain the conflict in abeyance, but also ensures that a continuing stalemate can be comfortably accommodated by all parties.

The circumstances in which a small group of states analogous to the original Friends of the Secretary-General may be formed may be unlikely to repeat themselves, yet informal groups of states show no signs of disappearing.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The mechanism of Friends of the Secretary-General, first seen in the negotiations on El Salvador, was particular in its conceptual design, in its purpose and in the unwritten rules that established a disciplined support of a peace process led by the United Nations. In the fifteen years since its creation an explosion of groups of all kinds to support peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding activities has taken place, a mirror of the extraordinary upsurge in a range of efforts to address global security in this period.⁹⁴ Analysis of these groups is complicated by the great diversity they represent: groups have been small and large; formed by the Secretary-General and by their member states; operationally

engaged at the heart of a peace process, or little more than talking-shops for the exchange of information; they have met in New York, or in flexible combinations of New York, the field and their national capitals; they have provided coherent support to clearly structured process led by the UN, and they have gone their own way with equanimity. While the circumstances in which a small group of states analogous to the original Friends of the Secretary-General may be formed may be unlikely to repeat themselves, informal groups of states show no signs of disappearing.

With a concentration on the utility of informal groups of states to peacemaking, this paper has argued that *where Friends groups are likely to be found responds to no fixed criteria*. Their formation is determined by the more unquantifiable factors of interests and diplomatic preference. It also suggests that there are certain circumstances in which a small group of states may be more helpfully engaged than others.

- The *external context* of which any group of Friends will form a part will be central to its efficacy, with a supportive regional environment—seen in Cambodia, El Salvador, East Timor and latterly in southern Sudan—more important a factor than either in which region the process is located or the kind of conflict to be addressed. Regionally entwined conflicts, or conflicts that take place under the shadow of neighbors with strong interests in their outcome, may not be well suited to the formation of closed groups of Friends, as the question of what to do about the neighbors will consistently arise.
- The role played within a conflict by a group of Friends will be determined by the nature of the *parties to the conflict*. Under some circumstances the characteristics of the parties can overcome the limitations that Friends, as states, are likely to encounter in interacting with non-state armed actors. Like the external context these characteristics are not determined by the conflict's typology, but by the particular political circumstances of each situation.
- The *interests* of members of a group of Friends or similar mechanism within a given conflict may be diverse, but in order for such a group to be effective they should hold a peaceful settlement of the conflict as the highest goal. Situations in which individual Friends have a greater interest in the stability or continuing existence of one or other of the parties to the conflict, or their own influence within the conflict arena, than in the resolution of the conflict itself will be complicated by these national priorities.
- The *composition* of a group of Friends will determine the group's relationship to the Secretary-General, the Security Council and to the conflict, country or region in question. Most groups have involved some mixture of Security

Council members (including the permanent five), interested regional actors, and mid-sized donor states with experience of the conflict. A benefit of groups of Friends has been the opportunity they represent for the central involvement in a UN effort of interested states who may *not* be members of the Security Council.

- *Relation to the UN:* Friends have been most successful when like-minded enough to work together, and, if working in support of the Secretary-General or his representative, willing to follow a UN lead, foregoing unilateral policy objectives or initiatives. Informality, flexibility and discretion have proven a group's best avenue for action. In this respect the importance of clear leadership, and the particular capacities of the individuals involved is salient.
- *Phase of the process:* Friends and other groups will fulfill distinct but interrelated roles during peacemaking, in implementation of a subsequent agreement and in support of peacebuilding. Donor coordination—both before and after an agreement is reached—will extend beyond the confines of a small group of states formed to support a negotiation effort. Close collaboration with IFIs and other multilateral donors, as well as bilateral actors, particularly in the preparations for Consultative Group and other donor conferences, should be part of any strategy for peace, whether these important actors are located inside a group structure or not.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Changes in the peacemaking environment—among them the fewer cases in which the UN will have a clear lead of a peacemaking effort, the multiplicity of actors involved in conflict resolution and the more complex nature of the internal conflicts with which the international community is now involved—are likely to determine the occurrence and shape of groups of Friends or related mechanisms in the future. The small and closed groups of states seen in the early 1990s and in the exceptional circumstances of East Timor may be few and far between, but recommendations regarding the formation of informal mechanisms to support peacemaking and implementation remain highly pertinent to the more crowded arena for conflict resolution of the mid-2000s.

- A group of Friends or related mechanism should be *at the service of strategy for international engagement within a peace process*, and not a substitute for one. Due consideration should be paid to the decision to create or join such a group in the first place, with particular regard to the readiness and suitability of the conflict concerned for the direct involvement of such a mechanism. In reaching such a decision, UN mediators or other lead actors in a process should recall that a group of Friends—like mediation itself—is not a panacea and that a group formed without a clear

strategic function may complicate efforts to move the process forward.

- *Form should follow function:* what a group is expected to do is an essential element of its formation. In circumstances in which the mediator has direct control, or more discreet influence over the formation of a group, efforts should be made to ensure that its membership is results-oriented. This involves an awareness of who brings what to the table, as well as a commitment from the member states involved to sustain their diplomatic engagement and invest resources of other kinds in the outcome of a peace process. It also suggests that it may be necessary to distinguish between a group formed to support negotiations and mechanisms specifically created to encourage coordinated support of implementation.
- Groups intended to provide operational support to peacemaking have been most *successful when they remain small* and represent a natural grouping of like-minded states that has the appearance of being self-selecting (diplomatic “pre-cooking” of the membership is recommended when possible). In cases where a large number of states press for inclusion within Friends or Support Groups, a Core Group of states has been a helpful device by which to balance the competing demands for efficiency and legitimacy. Large groups of states may serve their own purposes: bringing attention to forgotten conflicts; sharing information regarding external actors' actions and priorities; and encouraging the provision of resources to a peace process.
- Although a peacemaker may choose his or her Friends with a view to their potential utility as *partners in implementation*, a lack of financial or material resources should not preclude the involvement of a regional or other actor with political leverage over one or more parties to the conflict. Nor should membership of the Security Council, whether permanent or temporary, be taken as a determining criterion in membership of a group. States or other actors with a lack of direct interest in the outcome of a conflict may offer certain advantages, not least the perception of representing an “honest broker”. Personal experience and capacities can be centrally important to the efficacy of a group of Friends.
- There may be occasions when the formation of a closed group of Friends will bring little benefit (and indeed could create problems of its own). Consideration of a strategy involving Friends may need to include more informal coalitions, or time spent testing potential Friends in separate and non-committal meetings before a group is constituted. In either case *the conception and practice of “friendship” in a peace effort is the priority, and should prevail over a desire to create a group for a group's sake.*

ANNEX I

Distinguishing the Friends

An attempt to classify even those groups that have been active within the orbit of United Nations efforts to manage and resolve conflicts is a complex undertaking, as the broad array of “Groups of Friends and other mechanisms” included in Annex II suggests. However with a nod to Ludwig Wittgenstein’s suggestion that the instances of a concept will bear resemblance to each other only as family members do, sharing certain traits but not others,⁹⁵ it may be helpful to distinguish between the following four categories of group:

- *Friends of the Secretary-General* are understood as informal groups of states formed to support the peacemaking of the Secretary-General or his representatives. They tend to be small (4-6 members) and will usually have the capacity to function in distinct locations, most commonly some combination of New York, the field and capitals. This recognition of the Friends as a group distinguishes the mechanism from standard diplomatic practice, in which a senior UN official will regularly consult with the representatives of the states most closely involved. A group of Friends may be engaged throughout a peace process, although it will fulfill different functions during peacemaking and in helping to implement any subsequent agreement. Its interlocutors will be the Secretary-General or, more commonly, his representative or envoy; it is also likely to be involved in the coordination of Security Council and/or General Assembly action on the conflict in question.
- *Friends of a country* are usually somewhat removed from the Secretary-General and his representatives and thus from the operational process. Like the Friends of the Secretary-General, they have been formed both on the initiative of the Secretariat and of the member states themselves. However, they tend to be larger and concentrate their activity in New York. Their purposes have ranged from the sharing of information in situations at the top of the international agenda, to briefing and attempts to mobilize attention and resources towards conflicts further removed from “high politics”. Although Friends of a number of African countries—Angola, the Central African Republic and Guinea-Bissau, for example—have drawn attention to conflicts that were otherwise forgotten, their impact has nevertheless been less than was hoped of them. A related phenomenon in recent years has been the creation by ECOSOC of Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on countries emerging from conflict (Haiti, Burundi and Guinea-Bissau).
- *Contact groups*, like groups of Friends, have come in different forms, but generally reflect a more distant relationship to the United Nations. They have represented vehicles for the direct diplomacy of member states, centered on

communication between capitals and unmediated by “friendship” of the Secretary-General. A Contact group made its first appearance in Namibia, where a Western Contact Group worked outside the Security Council—while keeping the Secretary-General informed of its efforts—to craft the plan that became the basis for the Namibian settlement. The Contact Group on the former Yugoslavia was created in 1994, in part to circumvent the United Nations, and since then has allowed for differences within the Security Council to be hammered out between the states with the most obvious interests in regional stability. Different again are the Contact groups that have come and gone in Africa, and West Africa in particular. These larger, more irregularly convened groups have generally included the UN as a member. They have combined regional actors, permanent representatives of the Security Council and other donor states for the purposes of information exchange, coordination and, occasionally, fundraising.

- *Implementation and/or monitoring groups* have increasingly been established within peace agreements whose implementation is to be monitored by UN peacekeeping operations. In most circumstances, these mechanisms have followed a model established in Namibia, where the Joint Monitoring Commission was chaired by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and included representatives of the parties to the conflict as well as key external actors. In some instances, however, the mechanism has not included the parties and bears a closer resemblance to a group of Friends. An example of a group of this kind is presented by the International Commission to Accompany the Transition (CIAT) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These mechanisms generally meet only in the field. They have in common a mandate establishing their responsibilities in a foundational agreement, but vary greatly in the extent to which they are directly engaged in monitoring activities.

ANNEX II

Groups of Friends and other mechanisms

CONFLICT	GROUP AND CORE MEMBERS	INITIATIVE	PHASE OF PROCESS
AFRICA			
Angola	Troika: Portugal, Russia, US, 1990- Friends of Angola: Over 20 states, reduced to a Core Group of 11: Brazil, Canada, France, Namibia, Nigeria, Norway, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, UK and US 1999-2002	States Secretary-General (SG)	Peacemaking Peacekeeping
Burundi	NGO Friends of Burundi 1994-1995 ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Burundi: Belgium, Burundi, Ethiopia, France, Japan, and South Africa (chair), plus President of ECOSOC and chair of SC Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa. 2003-	SRSG Burundi and ECOSOC	Peacemaking Peacekeeping Peacebuilding
Central Africa Republic	Friends of CAR: Canada, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, France (chair), Gabon, Germany, Japan, Kenya 1998-2002	France	Peacekeeping Peacebuilding
Côte d'Ivoire	ECOWAS Contact Group: Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Togo (lead) and AU. 2002-2003 Follow-up Committee: UN, AU, ECOWAS, European Commission, Francophonie, Bretton Woods Institutions, G-8 military representatives of troop contributors and France. 2003- UN-AU-ECOWAS Monitoring Group. 2004-	States Linás-Marc. agree- ment, Jan 2003 Accra III agree- ment, July 2004	Peacemaking Peacekeeping
Democratic Republic of the Congo	International Commission for the Support of the Transition (CIAT): P-5, Angola, Belgium, Canada, Gabon, South Africa and Zambia, plus the African Union and the European Union and Commission. UN convenor. 2002- Three plus two: France, UK and US, Belgium and South Africa. 2004-	Agreement Dec 2002 States	Peacekeeping
Ethiopia-Eritrea	Friends of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea: Initially Algeria, Canada, Denmark, India, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, the Netherlands, Norway and the United States; but the membership expanded, and varies in NY, Addis Ababa and Asmara. 2000-	Netherlands	Peacekeeping
Great Lakes Region	Friends of the Great Lakes Conference: co-chaired by Canada and the Netherlands. 28 states and 10 multilaterals attended first meeting. 2003-	UN initiative, self-constituted	Peacebuilding
Guinea-Bissau	Friends of Guinea Bissau: Brazil, Canada, France, Gambia (chair), Germany, Guinea, Italy, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Portugal, Senegal, Sweden, Togo, US 1999- ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group: Brazil, Guinea-Bissau, the Netherlands, Portugal, and South Africa (chair), also attended by ECOSOC President, Gambia (as chair of Friends), and chair of SC Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa. 2002-	Gambia Guinea-Bissau and ECOSOC	Peacebuilding Peacebuilding

Liberia	<p>International Contact Group on Liberia I: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, US, ECOWAS, EC, OAU, UN (in lead) 1996-1997</p> <p>International Contact Group on Liberia II: France, Morocco, Nigeria, UK, US, AU, ECOWAS, EU (co-chairs) and UN. 2002-</p> <p>Implementation Monitoring Committee: Chaired by ECOWAS, also includes UN, AU, EU and ICGL (a Joint Monitoring Committee, also including the parties, was established in connection with the ceasefire). 2003-</p>	<p>UN/US</p> <p>States with UN</p> <p>Accra agreement June 2003</p>	<p>Peacekeeping</p> <p>Peacemaking</p> <p>Peacekeeping</p> <p>Peacekeeping</p>
Mozambique	<p>Core Group: France, Germany, Italy, OAU, Portugal, UK and the US. 1992-1994</p>	<p>SRSG</p>	<p>Peacekeeping</p>
Namibia	<p>Western Contact Group: Canada, France, Germany, UK, US. 1977-1990</p> <p>Joint Monitoring Commission: chaired by SRSG, included parties and Angola, Cuba and South Africa, with Russia and US as observers</p>	<p>States Agreement (1988)</p>	<p>Peacemaking</p> <p>Peacekeeping</p>
Rwanda	<p>Five Musketeers: France, Belgium, US, Germany, papal nunciature (lead). 1992-1994</p>	<p>States</p>	<p>Peacemaking</p>
Sierra Leone	<p>International Contact Group on Sierra Leone: Bangladesh, Mali, Nigeria, UK (in lead), ECOWAS, US, and UN. 1998-1999</p> <p>Friends of Sierra Leone (or Core Group): Bangladesh, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Pakistan, UK (lead), and US. 2000-2002</p>	<p>UK</p> <p>UK</p>	<p>Peacekeeping</p>
Somalia	<p>Core Group/Committee of Friends: Arab League, OAU, OIC, UN</p> <p>Contact Group: Large membership reflecting previous</p> <p>Meetings of External Actors on Somalia. 2002-</p> <p>Friends of the Somali National Reconciliation Conference: convened by Norway, members include China, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Sweden, UK, US and the European Union. 2002-</p>	<p>Members</p> <p>SG</p> <p>Norway (with UN support)</p>	<p>Peacemaking</p> <p>Peacemaking</p> <p>Peacemaking</p> <p>Peacebuilding</p>
Sudan	<p>IGAD Partners' Forum (IPF) Core Group: Canada, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, UK, US and UN</p> <p>Troika: Norway, UK and US. 1999-</p>	<p>States</p>	<p>Peacemaking</p>
Western Sahara	<p>Friends of Western Sahara: France, Spain, Russia, UK, US 1993- In its early years, other states, including Argentina, Cape Verde, Egypt, Kenya, Gambia and Venezuela also served as members of the group as they rotated through the Council.</p>	<p>US</p>	<p>Peacemaking</p> <p>Peacekeeping</p>
AMERICAS			
Colombia	<p>Friends of the Government of Colombia and ELN: Cuba, France, Norway, Spain, Switzerland. 2000-2003</p> <p>Verifiers of the Government of Colombia and ELN: Canada, Germany, Japan, Portugal, Sweden. 2001</p> <p>Friends of Talks between the Government of Colombia and the FARC: a large group of twenty-five plus states of whom Canada, Cuba, France, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Venezuela formed a Facilitating Commission.</p>	<p>SASG/parties</p> <p>States</p> <p>SASG/parties</p>	<p>Peacemaking.</p>

	2001-2002 Informal group/Brussels group: Canada, Mexico, US, UN and European countries. 2000-2004	SASG/states	
El Salvador	Friends of the Secretary-General for El Salvador: Colombia, Mexico, Spain, Venezuela, plus US, in implementation. 1990-1997	SG	Peacemaking Peacekeeping Peacebuilding
Guatemala	Friends of the Guatemalan Peace Process: Colombia, Mexico, Norway, Spain, US, Venezuela. 1993-2004 Grupo de Dialogo (Dialogue Group): Canada, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, US, the EU, Inter-America Development Bank (IADB) and the World Bank, with UNDP and MINUGUA as observers. 2000-	Parties States	Peacemaking Peacebuilding
Haiti	Friends of the Secretary-General on Haiti: Canada, France, US, Venezuela (then Argentina and Chile; in 1999/2000 Spain and Germany joined in Haiti). 1992-2001 Friends of OAS Secretary-General: established in October 2001 as Argentina, Bahamas, Belize, Canada, Chile, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Mexico, the U.S. and Venezuela, with France, Germany, Norway and Spain as Permanent Observers, but its membership was not closed. 2001- Friends of Haiti: Brazil, Canada, Chile, France, United States (Argentina from 2005). 2004- Core Group: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, Mexico, Spain and the US, EC, Inter-American Development Bank, IMF, World Bank, OAS, CARICOM, UN (chair). 2004- ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti: Benin, Brazil, Canada (chair), Chile, Haiti, Spain and Trinidad and Tobago, with participation of ECOSOC president and SRSG. 2004-	SG OAS States SG/SCR 1542 Haiti/states ECOSOC	Peacemaking Intervention Peacebuilding
Venezuela	Friends of Venezuela: Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Portugal, Spain, US, with the OAS and UN as observers. 2003-	States	Internal dispute
ASIA			
Afghanistan	Six plus Two: China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Russia, US. 1997- Group of 21: member states "with interest" in Afghanistan. 1997- Geneva Initiative: Germany, Iran, Italy and US, convened by UN. 2000-2001 Luncheon Group: France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Sweden, Norway and the UK. 2000-2001	SG/Special Envoy SG PR of SG PR of SG	Peacemaking Peacebuilding
Cambodia	P-5: China, France, UK, USA, USSR. 1988-1991 Extended P-5 (in Phnom Penh) and Core Group (in New York): P-5 plus fluid membership of leading troop contributors, including: Australia, France, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Thailand and the US. 1992-1993	States SRSG	Peacemaking Peacekeeping
East Timor	Core Group: Australia, Japan, New Zealand, UK and US (plus Portugal from 2001 and Brazil from 2004). 1999- Support Group including: Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, Thailand, UK, US. 1999-2000	SG SG	Peacemaking Intervention Peacekeeping

Myanmar	Informal Consultation Mechanism/Group: Australia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Sweden UK, US (grew to include Korea, Norway. EU, France, India and more). 1995-	SG	Peacemaking
EUROPE & FORMER SOVIET UNION			
Cyprus	Representatives of UK and US (especially), but also other interested states. 1999-2004	SG	Peacemaking
Kosovo	Friends of Kosovo: including Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, UK, US, OSCE, EU, OIC. 1999- Contact Group: France, Germany, Italy, Russia, UK, US. 1994- (Quint – the Contact Group without Russia - from 1999) Coordination and Drafting Group (CDG): UK, US, France, Russia, Germany, Italy, Western members of the SC. 1994-	SG States States	Intervention Peacebuilding Peacemaking
The Former Yugoslavia	Contact Group: France, Germany, Russia, United Kingdom, United States. 1994- Coordination and Drafting Group (CDG): France, Germany, Russia, UK, US, plus Western members of the SC 1994-	States States	Peacemaking Peacekeeping Peacebuilding
Georgia	Friends of Georgia/of the Secretary-General on Georgia: France, Germany, Russia, UK, US and (temporarily and only in NY Ukraine and Bulgaria). 1993-	States	Peacemaking
Tajikistan	Friends of Tajikistan: Afghanistan, Iran, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, US, OSCE and OIC. 1995-97 Contact Group: Afghanistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, UN, OSCE and OIC	SG Agreement, 1997	Peacemaking Peacekeeping Peacebuilding
MIDDLE EAST			
Iraq	Friends of Iraq: more than 45 states. 2003-	SG	Intervention
Middle East	Quartet: EU, Russia, UN and US. 2001 -	SG	Peacemaking

ENDNOTES

- ¹ The author would like to thank Neil Briscoe, Michele Griffin, Ian Johnstone, Bruce D. Jones, Thant Myint-U and Alvaro de Soto, all of whom, in their personal capacities, provided helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. She remains, however, wholly responsible for the views expressed within it. Thanks are also due to Nick Wunder and the Social Science Research Council for invaluable help in the production of this paper.
- ² See Annex I, "Distinguishing the Friends"
- ³ See Chester A. Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighborhood* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992) and Thomas Olson and Stephen John Stedman, *The New is Not Yet Born: Conflict Resolution in Southern Africa* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1994) on Southern Africa and Richard H. Solomon, *Exiting Indochina* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute for Peace Press, 2000) and Jin Song, "The political dynamics of the peacemaking process in Cambodia", in *Keeping the Peace: Multidimensional UN operations in Cambodia and El Salvador*, ed. Michael W. Doyle, Ian Johnstone, Robert C. Orr (Cambridge UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 53-81 on Cambodia.
- ⁴ Doyle et al, ed. *Keeping the Peace*; Michael W. Doyle, "War Making, Peace Making and the United Nations", in *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, ed. Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela Aall (Washington: USIP Press, 2001), 529-560. For first hand accounts of the Friends of the Secretary-General for El Salvador, see Alvaro de Soto, "Ending Violent Conflict in El Salvador", in *Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World*, ed. Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela Aall (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001); and Diego Arria, "Bringing Leverage to the Peace Process in El Salvador and Central America", in *Leveraging for Success in UN Peace Operations*, ed. Jean Krasno, Bradd C. Hayes, Donald C.F. Daniel (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 55-80
- ⁵ I. William Zartman, "Ripening Conflict, Ripe Moment, Formula and Mediation" in *Perspectives on Negotiation: Four Case Studies and Interpretation*, ed. Diane B. Bendahmane and John W. McDonald, Jr (Washington, D.C.: Foreign Service Institute, U.S. Department of State, Foreign Service Institute, 1986), 205-207
- ⁶ Interview, Salvador Samayoa, December 2, 2002
- ⁷ An attempted "hijacking" of the process by one of the Friends, Venezuela, was undercut by the fidelity to the United Nations maintained by the other Friends, de Soto, "Ending Violent Conflict in El Salvador", 368-369
- ⁸ On Cambodia, see Doyle et al, ed. *Keeping the Peace*; Aldo Ajello describes his relationship with the Core Group in Mozambique in "Mozambique: Implementation of the 1992 Peace Agreement", in *Herding Cats*, ed. Crocker et al, 615-642
- ⁹ Only the Haiti group was constituted as Friends "of the Secretary-General" from the outset. The "Friends of Georgia" became the "Friends of the Secretary-General for Georgia" in 1997
- ¹⁰ Lama Khouri Padova, "Haiti: Lessons Learned", Discussion Paper, United Nations Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, March 2004. Available on www.un.org/dpko
- ¹¹ Susanne Jonas, *Of Centaurs and Doves: Guatemala's Peace Process* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000)
- ¹² Only a small and short-lived military component of the mission fell under the Security Council. UN officials had argued in vein that implementation of Guatemala's agreements would have benefited from the more flexible and consistent oversight provided by the Security Council.
- ¹³ Incarnations in New York, Tbilisi and Moscow have been complemented since 2003 by the engagement of high-level envoys within the Geneva Process.
- ¹⁴ Interview, May 13, 2003
- ¹⁵ The low-key group of Friends of Tajikistan was established by the UN in early 1995 as a forum to bring the states of the region together to exert their influence on the Tajik parties to move forward in negotiations. That a settlement was favored for strategic reasons by both Russia and Iran underpinned the effectiveness of the group and the viability of the process as a whole.
- ¹⁶ See the Human Security Centre, *Human Security Report* (forthcoming, Oxford University Press, 2005); and Mikael Eriksson and Peter Wallensteen, "Armed Conflict, 1989-2003, *Journal of Peace Research* 41:5 (2004), 625-636; Havard Hegre, "The Duration and Termination of Civil War", *Journal of Peace Research* 41 (3), 2004, 244; and Monty G. Marshall, and Ted Robert Gurr, 2003, *Peace and Conflict 2003: A Global Survey of Armed Conflicts, Self Determination Movements and Democracy* (College Park: University of Maryland Center for International Development and Conflict Management, 2003).
- ¹⁷ See Annex II, "Groups of Friends and other mechanisms"
- ¹⁸ Christopher Schewgmann, "Modern Concert Diplomacy: The Contact Group and the G7/8 in Crisis Management", in *Guiding Global Order, G8 Governance in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. John J. Kirton, Joseph P. Daniels and Andreas Freytag (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2001)
- ¹⁹ The origin of the Quint was the staunch opposition by Russia to the positions taken by the western members of the Contact Group on the Kosovo crisis, notably the authorization of NATO's military action in the spring of 1999.
- ²⁰ The Guarantor States had been established as such within the Rio de Janeiro Protocol of 1942 agreed between Ecuador and Peru as a means to resolve their border dispute in 1942. See Luigi R. Einaudi, "The Ecuador-Peru Peace Process", in *Herding Cats*, ed. Crocker et al, 405-429
- ²¹ Interview, Martin Griffiths, September 20, 2004
- ²² The Africa Action Plan endorsed Annan's proposals "to set up with the Secretary-General and other influential partners, contact groups and other similar mechanisms to work with African countries to resolve specific African conflicts". Available on <http://www.g7.utoronto.ca>. Annan had noted in 1998 that "The establishment of contact groups of interested countries, whether in the form of groups of 'Friends', or a special conference as in the case of Liberia, can be effective in mobilizing international support for peace efforts". Report of the Secretary-General, *The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa*, S/1998/318, April 13, 1998
- ²³ The Netherlands had been so traumatized by the experience of its peacekeepers as powerless bystanders to the atrocities perpetrated in Srebrenica in 1995 that it had withheld contributing troops to any UN operation since that time. The decision to take part in UNMEE, taken alongside a number of northern states that rarely sent peacekeepers to Africa, was made on the basis that "UNMEE looked safe". But, even in an environment of relative safety, the Netherlands was concerned that it would never again be caught up in a peacekeeping operation in which it had no control. It therefore led the effort to create the Friends of UNMEE. Interview, December 12, 2001
- ²⁴ The suggestion to form the Core Group was made by the Secretary-General

in his report of April 16, 2004 (S/2004/300). The Core Group, which met in Haiti and, more infrequently than was intended, in New York, was chaired by the UN and included Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Canada, France, Germany, Mexico, Spain and the U.S., World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, IMF, CARICOM and the OAS as its members.

²⁵ Groups of Friends were among the issues discussed at an Open Meeting of the Security Council on May 22, 2002. See S/PV.4538 of May 22, 2002. The recommendations suggested that groups could provide an informal framework for in-depth discussion; that they should be “relatively small (about 12-15 members), but would remain open to all members”; that they have a lead nation; and that they would work best if they focused on implementation of agreements already agreed to by the parties to a conflict. Annex to the letter dated 29 August 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the President of the Security Council, S/2002/979 of 30 August 2002

²⁶ Exceptions include the discussion of groups of Friends within Doyle et al, ed. *Keeping the Peace*, first hand accounts by Alvaro de Soto and others cited above, analysis of the role of the role played by the Friends in Haiti in David M. Malone, *Decision-Making in the Security Council: The Case of Haiti* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) and the work of Jean Krasno and Jochen Prantl, notably, Jean Krasno, “The Friends of the Secretary-General: A Useful Leveraging Tool”, in *Leveraging for Success in UN Peace Operations*, 235-247 and Jean Krasno and Jochen Prantl, “Informal Groups of Member States,” in *The United Nations: Confronting the Challenges of a Global Society*, ed. Jean E. Krasno (Boulder, Co.: Lynne Rienner, 2004). The author contributed a chapter on “Groups of Friends” to *The UN Security Council: from the Cold War to the 21st Century*, ed. David M. Malone, (Boulder, CO.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 311-324

²⁷ Examples include the Contact Group established in New York to exchange information on Somalia in New York and a very large group of international Friends of the Great Lakes region (some 28 states and 10 multilateral institutions) formed as a concrete manifestation of international “partnership” to a process—the Great Lakes Conference—“owned” by the states of the region themselves.

²⁸ Some of the arguments in this section were previously developed by the author in “Groups of Friends”, cited above.

²⁹ Figures cited by Susan Hulton, “Evolving Council Working Methods”, *The UN Security Council*, ed. Malone, 239

³⁰ Interview, January 9, 2003

³¹ Pascal Teixeira, “Le Conseil de sécurité à l’aube du XXIème siècle”, UNIDIR/2002/7, 12-15

³² They are also blurred by a somewhat indiscriminate use of the term “Friends”. Some representatives of member states will describe as “Friends” any group of states, or sub-group of the Security Council that assumes a leading role on an issue on the Council’s agenda.

³³ See for example, the remarks of Ireland, Jamaica and Singapore in the Wrap-up discussion on June 2001, S/PV.4343; Singapore in the Wrap-up on November 2001, S/PV.4432

³⁴ Singapore, for example, actively pursued (but did not achieve) a position within the Friends of Western Sahara while it was on the Council in 2001-2002; New Zealand was an energetic member of the Core Group on East Timor. Jamaica, however, refused a late 1999 invitation from the Secretariat to serve on the Friends of the Secretary-General to Haiti on the grounds that it was “too close” to Haiti.

³⁵ This point is made by Martin Griffiths, “Talking of Peace in a Time of Terror:

United Nations Mediation and Collective Security” (Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, March 2005), 6. As Director of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Griffiths writes as one of the most prominent of the “new mediators”, working outside, but at times also alongside the United Nations.

³⁶ J. Stephen Morrison and Alex de Waal, “Can Sudan Escape Its Intractability?”, in *Grasping the Nettle*, ed. Crocker et al, 161-182

³⁷ These included envoys or other emissaries from Australia, Canada, Finland (President of the European Union at the time), Germany, Russia, Sweden, the UK and the US. Interview, Alvaro de Soto, June 12, 2003

³⁸ See *Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus*, S/2003/398. April 1, 2003

³⁹ The Secretary-General reported to the Security Council that, “The question of Cyprus was frequently raised in my consultations with the leaders of many supportive governments. Several have acted, in effect, as Friends of the Secretary-General, providing advice as well as diplomatic and practical support, and avoiding the temptation to duplicate or supplant my efforts—the bane of any enterprise of good offices”. S/20003/398, para. 149

⁴⁰ David Hannay, *Cyprus: the Search for a Solution* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2005), 119

⁴¹ Interview, Thomas Weston, January 19, 2005

⁴² Interview, UN official, September 2, 2004

⁴³ See *Policy or Process? The Politics of International Peace Implementation*, Report of the Peace Implementation Network (PIN) forum on *International Co-operation in Peace Implementation: the policies and practices of peacemaking and peacebuilding*, held in the Holmekollen Park Hotel, Oslo, January 29-30, for which the author served as rapporteur. (Oslo: Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies, 2004)

⁴⁴ Interview, senior UN official, July 14, 2004

⁴⁵ The idea of a regional Contact Group, which officials from DPA had discussed with individual Security Council members in the first half of 2002, received further reinforcement from a Security Council workshop on the Mano River Union in July 2002

⁴⁶ The UN had maintained a small peacebuilding office in Liberia since 1997 but it was not widely respected within the country. A policy of isolation of Liberia pursued by the Security Council—which imposed sanctions in March 2001—was opposed by ECOWAS’ states (with the exception of Liberia’s immediate neighbors Sierra Leone and Guinea) which believed that resolution of the region’s intertwined conflicts demanded engagement with Taylor through a combination of pressure and dialogue.

⁴⁷ France, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, UK and US, in addition to the African Union and UN. Ghana would replace Senegal as ECOWAS’ chair from 2003-2004.

⁴⁸ Interview, Hans Dahlgren, September 16, 2004

⁴⁹ See “Prospects for Peace and Security in the Horn of Africa”, paper prepared by the Inter Africa Group/Justice Africa for a meeting jointly organized by the Center on International Cooperation and Justice Africa in Addis Ababa in April 2004, available at www.nyu.edu/pages. The argument is also developed by Morrison and de Waal, in “Can Sudan Escape its Intractability?”, 174-179

⁵⁰ Interview, Alan Gouly, November 18, 2003

⁵¹ Interviews, Gouly; Halvor Aschjem, January 29, 2004; Kieran Prendergast, July 14, 2004. The Sudanese government held that the UN was overly beholden to US influence on the Security Council.

- ⁵² I. William Zartman, "Analyzing Intractability", in *Grasping the Nettle*, ed. Crocker et al, 47-64
- ⁵³ In Western Sahara, acceptance of the legitimacy of the Saharawi demand for self-determination is countered by considerations of realpolitik that mirror those that pertained with respect to East Timor before the changes within Indonesia in 1998-1999.
- ⁵⁴ This pattern, unsurprisingly, bears some resemblance to the incidence of UN peacekeeping operations. The significant differences are with respect to Europe and the Middle East, where Friends groups have not been much in evidence in reflection of a preference of the major Western powers to address conflicts in these high priority areas bilaterally, or through mechanisms such as the Contact Group on the former Yugoslavia unencumbered by "friendship" of the United Nations. Michael Gilligan and Stephen John Stedman, "Where Do the Peacekeepers Go?", *International Studies Review* (2003) 5 (4), 37-54
- ⁵⁵ The Center on International Cooperation's work on "Regional Conflict Formations", led by Barnett R. Rubin, is available on www.nyu.edu/pages
- ⁵⁶ An unstated function of the group was the cover it provided for the US to renew contacts with Iran, with which it had no formal diplomatic relations, however these were more effectively pursued through the Geneva Initiative, described below.
- ⁵⁷ Interview, UN official, June 16, 2004
- ⁵⁸ Interview, Norwegian official, March 2, 2004
- ⁵⁹ William Zartman has warned that, "writers about interests in international politics have always found it hard to make statements that are both significant and generalizable". I. William Zartman, "Systems of World Order and Regional Conflict Resolution", in *Cooperative Security: reducing Third World wars*, ed. I William Zartman and Victor A. Kremenyuk (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 11-15
- ⁶⁰ Joseph S. Nye Jr., "Redefining the National Interest", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 4, July–August 1999, 22-35
- ⁶¹ Robert Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003), 111
- ⁶² Crocker, Hampson and Aall, in their study of intractable conflicts, find that states and interstate groups decide to engage in mediation under the "guiding motive of obtaining a settlement" but on the basis of three distinctive and sometimes overlapping rationales—humanitarian, strategic and regional security/governance—as well as a variety of political motives. Chester Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela Aall, *Taming Intractable Conflicts: Mediation in the Hardest Cases* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2004), 21-43. See also Bruce W. Jentleson's description of power, peace, prosperity and principles as the four core goals of U.S. foreign policy, *American Foreign Policy: the Dynamics of Choice in the 21st Century* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, second edition, 2004) and Saadia Touval and I. William Zartman, "International Mediation in the Post-Cold War Era" *Turbulent Peace*, 427-443
- ⁶³ Crocker et al, *Taming Intractable Conflicts*, 33
- ⁶⁴ The example of Norway is telling in this respect. Its small size, geographic position and oil wealth determine that its own strategic or economic interests in distant conflicts are limited. However a track record as a peacemaker, developed in the wake of its role in the Oslo accords on the Middle East and evident in its subsequent involvement in peace processes in Guatemala, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Sudan, has assured it a place on the world stage that it had otherwise lost with the demise of the Cold War, during which its border with Russia and membership of NATO had assured an Atlantic focus to its foreign policy.
- ⁶⁵ Stephen John Stedman, Introduction to *Ending Civil Wars: the Implementation of Peace Agreements*, ed. Stephen John Stedman, Donald Rothchild and Elizabeth M. Cousens (Boulder Co.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 16
- ⁶⁶ Canada, France, the United States and Venezuela had already begun meeting as a "Quadripartite Group" outside the United Nations.
- ⁶⁷ Telephone interview, Edward Walker, former Deputy Permanent Representative of the US to the UN, August 2, 2004
- ⁶⁸ This occurred at a meeting in Caracas hosted by President Carlos Andrés Pérez. It was Serrano's idea to make the Friends "his". Diplomats with the experience in El Salvador saw this as a mistake (invalidating the mechanism with the guerrillas) and patiently worked to reverse it. E-mail from Alvaro de Soto, who recalled several accounts of this meeting, April 10, 2005. Marilyn McAfee "The Search for Peace in Guatemala: Ending a 36 Year Conflict", March 1997, mimeo (McAfee served as US Ambassador to Guatemala from 1993-1996). Serrano also met in this period with President Cristiani of El Salvador and, having been reassured of the Friends' utility to Cristiani, expressed the view that he needed some too. Interview, Oscar Santamaria, December 3, 2002
- ⁶⁹ Telephone interview, John Hamilton, June 18, 2003; McAfee, "The Search for Peace in Guatemala"
- ⁷⁰ Interview, Jan Egeland, January 15, 2004
- ⁷¹ With Alvaro de Soto, who served as the Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Myanmar from 1995-1999, Vendrell would also be involved in the decision to establish a low-key group that became known as the "Informal Consultation Mechanism" on Myanmar. The formation of a group of Friends had been dismissed on the basis of both Asian concerns at the degree of intervention it might represent and the UN's own doubts that any group might successfully bridge the extensive differences between interested Western and Asian states. Interviews, de Soto; Francesc Vendrell, November 19, 2003
- ⁷² Interview, Vendrell
- ⁷³ Interview, Lakhdar Brahimi, October 1, 2004
- ⁷⁴ Interview, Jean Arnault, January 6, 2005. In New York, however, Germany spearheaded the creation of a Core Group on Afghanistan to provide a role in New York for the key bilateral actors in the field and help inform the Security Council in its deliberations on Afghanistan.
- ⁷⁵ The US was not a member of the Friends of the Central African Republic. Although not a member of the groups formed within Colombia, the US took part within a series of meetings of a distinct "Informal Group", sometimes referred to as the Brussels Group, that brought the US, Canada and Mexico together with several European states on a periodic basis from 2000 on.
- ⁷⁶ US appreciation for the leading role taken by Australia on East Timor, for example, allowed Australia and other Core Group states considerable influence on US positions. Arnault recalled the US in Guatemala as "ideal friends—responsive and low profile", e-mail, February 6, 2003
- ⁷⁷ In an interview, Iqbal Riza, at the time the Secretary-General's Chief of Staff expressed the view that it was "generally better" if groups were "self-generating". June 17, 2003. Officials within the Department of Political Affairs tended to prefer a model by which groups are in some way "pre-cooked" within the Secretariat.
- ⁷⁸ An earlier British initiative to form a group of Friends had been rebuffed by Portugal and Russia, who were anxious not to have their influence on Angola

eroded. See Paul Hare, “Angola: the End of an Intractable Conflict”, in *Grasping the Nettle*, ed. Crocker et al, 209-230

⁷⁹ Interview, Ibrahim Gambari, March 31, 2003

⁸⁰ Interview, Stewart Eldon, November 14, 2002. In 1995 former British Ambassador Anthony Parsons wrote of “the shame of East Timor”—its violent annexation by Indonesia in 1975 had been condemned, but then ignored by the Security Council for twenty years—as one that “shadows” the Council. Anthony Parsons, *From Cold War to Hot Peace: UN Interventions 1947-1994* (London: Michael Joseph, Ltd., 1995), 183

⁸¹ Stewart Eldon, “East Timor”, in *The UN Security Council*, ed. Malone, 551-566 and Penny Wensley, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the UN, “East Timor and the United Nations”, speech delivered in Sydney on February 23, 2000

⁸² Crocker et al, *Herding Cats*, 40

⁸³ See Adam Isacson, “Was Failure Avoidable? Learning From Colombia’s 1998-2002 Peace Process” (Miami: Dante B. Fascell North-South Center, Working Paper Series, Paper No. 14) as well as Cynthia J. Arnson and Teresa Whitfield, “Third Parties and Intractable Conflicts,” in *Grasping the Nettle*, ed. Crocker et al, 231-268

⁸⁴ See Arnson and Whitfield, “Third Parties and Intractable Conflicts”, 256-257

⁸⁵ Bruce D. Jones, “The Challenges of Strategic Coordination”, in *Ending Civil Wars*, ed. Stedman et al, 99

⁸⁶ The Core Group on East Timor was never established as such in Dili—in part in reflection of the disparity between the UN’s Transitional Administrator and the relatively junior diplomats present in Dili—however, UN officials interacted on a constant basis with representatives of the Core Group in New York and its component states, as well as other donors.

⁸⁷ Elizabeth M. Cousens, “From Missed Opportunities to Overcompensation”: Implementing the Dayton Agreement on Bosnia”, in *Ending Civil Wars*, ed. Stedman et al, 531-566

⁸⁸ Interview, Enrique ter Horst, January 24, 2002

⁸⁹ See Shepard Forman and Stewart Patrick, eds., *Good Intentions: Pledges of Aid for PostConflict Recovery* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001); Joanna Macrae, *Aiding Recovery: the Crisis of Aid in Chronic Political Emergencies* (New York: Zed Books, 2001) and Susan L. Woodward, “Economic Priorities for Successful Peace Implementation”, in *Ending Civil Wars*, ed. Stedman et al, 183-214

⁹⁰ Alvaro de Soto and Graciana del Castillo, “Obstacles to Peacebuilding in El Salvador”, *Foreign Policy* 94, Spring 1994, 69-83

⁹¹ Jean Arnault, interview conducted by Connie Peck as part of the UNITAR Programme for Briefing and Debriefing Special and Personal Representatives and Envoys of the UN Secretary-General, November 2001. Consulted with the permission of Jean Arnault. Ricardo Stein, who served as Peace Secretary to President Alvaro Arzu in this period recalled that, “contrary to what we had hoped, each one of the diplomats had his own independent idea of what peace was and how he should contribute to it. There was no coincidence either with the peace agreements or with national priorities”. Interview, Ricardo Stein, December 6, 2002

⁹² During 2002 Secretariat officials discussed the possibility of the formation of some kind of Friends group to promote a more coordinated approach to the conflict with member states. Although France, which led on the DRC within the Council, did gather together a group, it met only once or twice. Interview, November 14, 2002

⁹³ The five permanent members of the Security Council, who had long been

active in Kinshasa, Angola, Belgium, Canada, Gabon, South Africa and Zambia, plus the African Union and the European Union. An account of the work of the CIAT is given by Ugo Solinas, “Le Comité International d’Accompagnement de la Transition: Son rôle y ses activités”, accessed from MONUC website, www.monuc.org on May 10, 2004

⁹⁴ See the work of the Human Security Centre (and especially the forthcoming *Human Security Report*), of the Liu Institute for Global Issues, University of British Columbia, on this point.

⁹⁵ I am grateful to Barnett R. Rubin for pointing me in Wittgenstein’s direction. Rubin cites Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), in *Blood on the Doorstep, The Politics of Preventive Action* (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2002), 10



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