# Introduction

## A Photograph

On December 31, 1991, in the last few minutes of Javier Pérez de Cuéllar's term in office as UN secretary-general, a photograph was taken. The secretary-general sits at the end of a long conference table. Flanked by Alvaro de Soto, his personal representative for the Central American Peace Process, and representatives of the negotiating delegations of the government of El Salvador and the insurgents in the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), he is signing the agreement that will pave the way for the peaceful resolution of the conflict in El Salvador. Its achievement is one of the signal successes of his tenure as secretary-general.

The photograph is included as the final illustration in Pérez de Cuéllar's memoir, *Pilgrimage for Peace*. Its protagonists are named in the text and said to be accompanying this "midnight signature of the El Salvador Peace Accord."[1] Not identified are the four men standing immediately behind the secretary-general. Hands neatly clasped, heads bowed toward the document on the table, they are, from left to right, the ambassadors to the United Nations of Spain, Mexico, Venezuela, and Colombia—countries that had come to be known as the "Friends of the Secretary-General for El Salvador."

Although some of these ambassadors would later grumble that Pérez de Cuéllar's memoir had paid their efforts on behalf of peace scant tribute (the chapter on Central America included only sparing reference to their countries' role), their anonymity was, in many respects, no less fitting than their inclusion in the picture in the first place. On the basis of a relationship of "solidarity, even complicity" with de Soto[2] and their support of the secretary-general, the Friends had played an important part in helping all gathered in this New York conference room reach the point at which the historic signature they were witnessing was possible. But they had done so as a wholly informal entity—they did not even meet as a group for more than half the period of the negotiations—largely unrecognized in the documents and statements of the United Nations. And exactly what they had done was difficult to quantify, as befits the quiet labor of the diplomacy that attends a complex mediation of an ongoing internal conflict.

Briefed by de Soto on the progress of negotiations throughout their two-year period, the Friends had used the relationships they each enjoyed

with both government officials and insurgents to encourage sometimes recalcitrant parties to move toward an agreement. By their involvement in the process, they had lent credibility to the United Nations and enhanced the secretary-general's leverage with the parties. That their association with the secretary-general had also gained legitimacy for their own role in El Salvador ensured that everyone was happy.

In the years that followed, the original four Friends were joined by the United States, and the group became known as the "Four plus One." During implementation of the agreements, the assistance provided by the Friends took many forms. It ranged from providing security to guerrilla leaders and diplomatic support to successive heads of the United Nations' mission in El Salvador, to funding peace-related programs and managing the issue of El Salvador in the Security Council and General Assembly. Quite properly, the contribution made by the Friends to the peace process in El Salvador was formally acknowledged by Secretary-General Kofi Annan as he closed the door on the United Nations' role in verifying the agreements in December 2002.[3]

## What This Book Is About

*Friends Indeed?* has been written with clear, practical goals in mind. It seeks to further the understanding of how and in what circumstances the UN secretary-general and secretariat can work productively with groups of states to resolve conflict and to arrive at conclusions and recommendations that might be helpful to policymakers in both. A secondary goal is to broaden understanding of informal groups as a little-studied aspect of international conflict resolution in the post–Cold War era. *Friends Indeed?* argues that although such groups have had varying impacts on conflicts, they have developed as a critical element of an incipient system of post–Cold War global security governance.

A narrative, and at times anecdotal, approach to the cases examined within the book reflects both the widely varying roles played by Friends and source material that of necessity has drawn heavily on interviews. Documentation of the little-known phenomenon that Friends represent is complemented by comparative analysis of core factors or variables in each case. This has been complicated by three distinct problems: the self-selecting nature of groups of Friends, which derives from the central importance of individual state interest to the formation of such groups; an essential amorphousness that complicates groups' classification into neatly distinguished categories and, consequently, direct comparison between them; and the

**Figure 1:** Number of Groups of Friends and Other Mechanisms, 1946–2006*
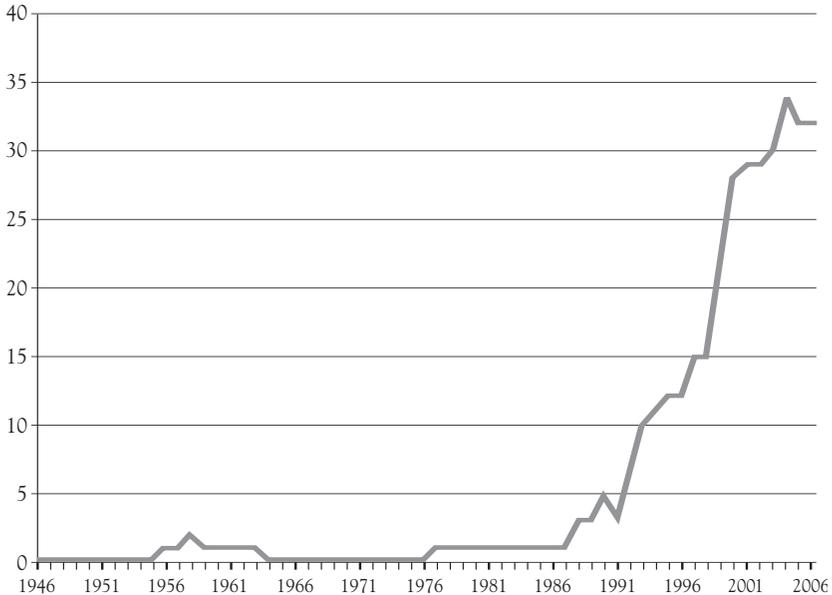


*Reflects data contained in Appendix: UN Groups of Friends and Other Mechanisms

difficulty of determining their impact on the outcomes of the peace processes. Brief discussions of each of these three issues present the necessary context to the description of case selection and the book's organization contained in this introduction.

With the evolving role of the United Nations as a background, the chapters that follow trace the evolution of groups of Friends from the cooperative climate for peacemaking that emerged at the end of the Cold War to the more complex environment for conflict resolution of recent years. From the mid-1990s, a natural shift away from peace processes in which the UN secretary-general had a clear lead limited the creation of groups of "Friends of the Secretary-General" as conceived in the early part of this decade. But, as figure 1—based on data derived from the list of groups contained in the appendix—demonstrates, between 1990 and 2006 groups of states created to support UN peacemaking and peace operations multiplied

exponentially. With a growth from four to more than thirty such mechanisms, a larger than sevenfold increase developed in parallel to the surge in conflict prevention, conflict management, and post-conflict peacebuilding activities by the United Nations and others in the international community in this period. Many of these activities—like some of the groups of Friends—fell far short of the expectations held out for them individually. However, together they have been credited by the *Human Security Report 2005* as being the single best explanation for a decline of more than 40 percent in armed conflicts and 80 percent in civil wars in this period.[4]

Groups of Friends represent but one small component of the United Nations' increased involvement in conflict management. But it is one that in some circumstances brought clear and specific functional benefits. These were first identified by work conducted on Cambodia and El Salvador by Michael Doyle and others in the mid-1990s.[5] Among the benefits were leverage, information, and practical help to the secretary-general and his representatives, including through coordination of action in the Security Council; legitimacy and influence to the states in the groups; a level of equilibrium, as well as technical and other assistance, to parties to the conflict; and attention, resources, and strategic coordination to the peace process as a whole.

Such results, however, have been by no means guaranteed. Internal differences or other factors related to some of the groups' composition limited their utility in a process, creating a layer of interests to be managed and negotiated in addition to those of the parties to the conflict. Groups assumed an identity of their own that was at times at cross-purposes to the good offices of the secretary-general and complicated the delicate relationship between the United Nations and fractious parties to an internal conflict. Strong groups led members of the Security Council to fear that their authority might be undermined, while competing national interests caused Friends' sometimes fragile unity to crack and be exploited by the parties. Meanwhile, sensitivities regarding composition—reflecting a perennial balancing act between the efficiency of a small group and the legitimacy offered by a broad representation of states—led in some circumstances to the creation of large groups that did no harm but were not well placed to do the good that was intended.

This mixed experience can be traced in part to the fact that the varied groups that assembled over the years did so in an unstructured manner, in many cases belying the strategic intent that lay behind the earliest mechanisms. In 2002 a Security Council working group came up with "recommendations" on groups of Friends in the African context that bore no

relationship to the development of the mechanism outside the region and had little effect within it.[6] Meanwhile, no systematic review of the use of groups took place within the secretariat, nor, despite significant work by the United States Institute of Peace on the perils of "multiparty mediation," was much attention paid to them in the academic literature.[7] Exceptions included the discussion of groups of Friends by Michael Doyle and his colleagues cited above, firsthand accounts by Alvaro de Soto and others directly involved in El Salvador and Haiti, Chester Crocker's analysis of his interaction with the Western Contact Group on Nambia—an important antecedent of the Friends—when peacemaking in the "rough neighborhood" of Southern Africa in the late 1980s, and the work of Jean Krasno and Jochen Prantl, writing separately and together.[8] Krasno's work derived from an early paper written for the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, and drew largely from the ample documentation available on the Friends of the Secretary-General for El Salvador, Haiti, and Namibia.[9] Prantl's work, on the other hand, focused on the implications of informal groups for the governance of the Security Council, notably in a book published in May 2006, *The UN Security Council and Informal Groups of States,* that represented the first full-length treatment of the subject.[10]

Through an analysis of three contrasting cases—the Western Contact Group on Namibia, the Friends of the Secretary-General for El Salvador, and the different mechanisms engaged in Kosovo—in which the respective groups had widely varying relationships to the UN Security Council, Prantl argued that informal groups "increasingly complement or even compete with" the Council. He saw their development as representing a "variant" of collective security comparable to those identified by Adam Roberts as evolving over the years in response to the Council's Cold War paralysis. These variants were the tendency to regional alliances and military action in a multilateral framework; the delegation of enforcement powers of the Security Council to coalitions of states or regional arrangements sanctioned to use force on behalf of the United Nations; and peacekeeping operations carried out under the authority of the United Nations.[11] However, while informal groups certainly evolved "as part and parcel of the development of UN crisis response," as Prantl puts it, they differed from the other three "variants" in a number of respects. Most obvious, they did not involve the operational deployment of forces. Indeed, the trajectory of Friends analyzed in *Friends Indeed?* suggests that a significant feature of informal groups is precisely that they have emerged alongside other developments in collective security, and that much of their potential utility lies in their flexibility.

Indeed, a single mechanism may support peacemaking activities that run the gamut from the quiet consultations preceding negotiations to mediation and implementation of a peace agreement, regardless of what combination of actors may be carrying out the intervention.

An apparent neglect of Friends as they relate to the diplomacy practiced by the UN secretary-general and his staff reflected both the poor capacity of the secretariat to learn from its own experience and the fact that the informal nature of the groups meant that very little documentation of their work was available in the public realm.[12] Expertise on the potential of and risks attendant on the use of Friends instead remained concentrated in those with firsthand experience of the mechanism. This led, on the one hand, to carefully modulated uses of Friends or similar mechanisms by some of the officials with experience of the practice in the past, and on the other, to a proliferation of groups created, inside the United Nations and out, with broader goals: as a positive avenue for marshaling attention on otherwise neglected conflicts or sharing information among the multiple external actors involved. Formal acknowledgment of the need for strategic coordination of international actors was seen in the final days of 2005 with the United Nations' creation of an intergovernmental Peacebuilding Commission, capable of meeting in country-specific configurations to encourage "a coordinated, coherent and integrated approach to post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation."[13] But this could not deny the continuing utility of smaller and more informal mechanisms to support complex processes of peacemaking and implementation.

Analysis developed in this study's six case chapters and extended into the varied cases more briefly examined in chapter 8 attempts to elucidate the mixed direction that Friends have taken. Consideration of five core factors or variables—the *regional environment* in which the conflict takes place; the *conflict parties'* demands, practices, and interaction with the secretariat and the Friends; a group's *composition* and the resources that this may bring with it; questions of *leadership* encompassing a group's relationship to the secretary-general and/or his representative; and *timing* or *phase of the process* with which the Friends are involved—underlines a series of questions pursued throughout the book: Do Friends work better in some regions or regional environments than others? To what extent does the nature of the conflict or conflict parties affect the role they may play? What do different kinds of states—members of the Security Council, regional actors, other "helpful fixers"—bring to a group of Friends? What relations between Friends and the secretary-general and Security Council have proved most effective? Are Friends better suited to a particular phase in a peace process

than others? And are there circumstances in which it may be best not to assay a group of Friends at all?

# Self-Selection and the Friends

A central methodological problem in analyzing groups of Friends is that the cases are to a certain extent self-selecting. "We should not imagine," as Stephen John Stedman has put it, "that all civil wars are equally likely to have Friends."[14] The sustained involvement of a group of Friends is a result of significant external interest in a peace process. But it also indicates the absence of an overriding interest in a conflict's outcome from the major powers, which are not likely to relinquish a driving role in conflicts at the top of the international agenda to an informal group of states working in support of a UN peacemaker. Policy toward the Balkans, the Middle East, and Iraq has been driven by direct diplomacy by the powers most immediately involved. Large groups of Friends may be formed for briefing purposes, but no one will be under any illusion that these will be able to influence the directions taken by the major states involved acting bilaterally, through mechanisms such as the Contact Group on the former Yugoslavia (France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) or, in the case of the Middle East, the Quartet of the European Union, Russia, the United States, and the United Nations. Consequently, conflicts in which Friends are found are neither those in which "high politics" are engaged nor the true orphan conflicts such as Burundi and Somalia, where the big powers have no security and other interests.[15] Rather, it is those conflicts that command a middle level of international attention that have left room for the development of a substantive role for the United Nations and its secretary-general.

Certain geographic tendencies can be discerned in the occurrence of Friends. This has, on one hand, been a consequence of the perceived success of the earliest mechanisms in Central America; on the other, it has to some extent reflected (as could be expected) the incidence of UN peace operations. Thus, there has been a predisposition toward Friends in Latin America; away from them in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia; and toward groups of some kind, although not necessarily Friends, in Africa.[16] However, geography alone has no more determined a group's formation than the type of conflict to be addressed. Friends have rarely been engaged in the "hottest" phase of a conflict's activity, nor have they played prominent roles in resolving many of the most deadly conflicts of the post–Cold War period (such as Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo [DRC], and the Balkans). But they have been present both in conflicts recognizably

easier than others to settle, such as those in Central America, and in some of the most intractable (Georgia-Abkhazia, Colombia, and Cyprus), involving issues of territory as well as government and sustained by the presence of illicit resources and ideology.

It is as axiomatic that that there are no disinterested peacemakers as it is difficult to generalize about the interests themselves.[17] These 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 issues involving 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. Since the end of the Cold War, other "softer" interests, including values such as human rights and democracy, have also emerged.[18] These reflect the "gradual normative shift against the use of violence in human relationships" that is described by the *Human Security Report*.[19] In policy terms, this has translated into what the veteran British diplomat Robert Cooper identifies as "the invention of peace as a foreign policy goal."[20]

A decision to become involved in a peace process, whether as a lead mediator or in the supporting role of a Friend, will be taken as a consequence of a choice. Indeed, Chester Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, in their study, *Taming Intractable Conflicts*, find that states and interstate groups decide to engage in mediation under the "guiding motive of obtaining a settlement" and on the basis of three distinctive and sometimes overlapping rationales—humanitarian, strategic, and regional security and governance—as well as a variety of political reasons.[21] These may be entirely consistent with the peaceful resolution of a particular conflict. However, this will not always be the case.

Participation in a group of Friends offers a significant opportunity to maintain a front-row seat in the diplomatic process without any hard undertaking to commit resources, troops, or diplomatic muscle to the effort. There is thus no basis to suggest that the mere fact of being a Friend will, in itself, alter patterns of allegiance or the pursuit of outcomes prioritized by national interests. In some cases these may actually subvert the cause of peace. In many others even a normative interest in the promotion of peace and security will not be without a degree of self-interest. States motivated by the most exemplary of motives—like the UN secretariat, or nongovernmental peacemakers—will always, for example, have an interest in raising their international standing through their successful participation

in a peace process.[22] Pressure to be included as a Friend will therefore be high, and the potential for cooperation will be vulnerable to institutional and other rivalries as well as the capability of conflict parties to shop around among multiple actors vying to engage them.

# Distinguishing the Friends

An attempt to introduce conceptual clarity to a classification of even those Friends, Core, Contact, and other groups that have been actively engaged in issues of peace and security within the orbit of the United Nations is a complex undertaking. With a broad brush, Friends' groups can be described as ad hoc, informal, issue-specific minicoalitions of states or intergovernmental organizations that become involved in and provide support for resolving conflicts and implementing peace agreements. Beyond this, however, there are many differences between them that their titles do little to explain. Indeed, groups discussed in this book differed in the circumstances of their creation, in the mix of states of which they were composed, and in their functions; they have led to different relationships between the secretary-general, his representatives, and involved member states; and they have had widely different impacts on the broad range of conflicts with which they have been engaged. Moreover, in several cases groups have varied considerably during the period of their engagement or have been complemented by supplementary mechanisms.

With these caveats in place, and with a nod to Ludwig Wittgenstein's suggestion that the instances of a concept will resemble each other only as family members do, sharing certain traits but not others,[23] it may be helpful to distinguish between the following categories of groups:

1. *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 (four to six 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 or other mediator will regularly consult with the representatives of the states most closely involved. A group of Friends may be engaged throughout a peace process, although the group 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 coordinating Security Council and/or General Assembly action on the conflict in question. Although not all the groups analyzed in this study bear the moniker "of the Secretary-General," most of them fall in this category, as it is in these groups that the issues of the interplay between the secretariat and the United Nations' member states are most evident.

2. *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 on the initiative of both the secretariat and 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 on 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 the United Nations' Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on countries emerging from conflict (Haiti, Burundi, and Guinea-Bissau).[24]

3. *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 unhampered by "friendship" of the secretary-general. A Contact Group made its first appearance in Namibia, where the 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 between the states with the most obvious interests in regional stability to be hammered out away from the glare of Security Council attention. Different again are the Contact Groups that have come and gone in Africa. These larger, more irregularly convened groups have generally included the United Nations—meaning a representative of the secretariat—as a member. They have combined regional actors, representatives of the

five permanent members (the P-5) of the Security Council (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States), and donor states for the purposes of information exchange, coordination, and occasionally, fundraising.

4. *Implementation and monitoring groups* have increasingly been established in peace agreements whose implementation is to be monitored by UN peacekeeping operations. They can be distinguished conceptually from the previous categories of groups by a mandate establishing their responsibilities in a foundational agreement, but they vary greatly in the extent to which they are directly engaged in monitoring activities. 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. However, in some instances, such as the International Commission to Accompany the Transition (CIAT) in the DRC, the mechanism has not included the parties and bears a closer resemblance to a group of Friends.

Further complicating the picture are the many other kinds of groups that meet at the United Nations. These range from the regional groups of member states through which much day-to-day business is conducted[25] to thematic groups of Friends ("of rapid reaction," "of conflict prevention," "of the rule of law," "of the High Level Panel") formed to promote consensus for a somewhat random selection of individual issues.[26] Countries that contribute troops to particular peacekeeping operations meet for regular briefings by the secretariat in the format of "troop-contributing countries," while the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission provided for large and formal country-specific meetings held at the invitation of its Organizational Committee.[27] These groups manifest as a logical expression of the need for the organization's almost two hundred disparate members to caucus and consult outside the structures established by the General Assembly and Security Council. But they are distinct from the hands-on interaction with conflict parties and the diplomacy of peacemaking that has characterized groups of Friends engaged more directly with conflict resolution.

## Friends and Outcomes

Success in the mediation of a peace agreement and its subsequent implementation is determined by many different factors. Quantifying the precise

contribution made by a mechanism such as a group of Friends—which is structurally limited to playing an auxiliary role, takes different forms and functions in different circumstances, and is rarely established by any agreed mandate—is harder still and probably impossible. This is not least because of the difficulty of analyzing the counterfactual (the impact of the secretariat's efforts, Mexican diplomacy in Central America, or Russia's policy toward Georgia in the absence a group of Friends, let alone, say, what peacemaking in the DRC might have looked like if the key external actors had been able to work together from an early stage in a unified group of Friends). That individual Friend states are likely to see the success of the collective effort in terms of its utility to their own national interests complicates analysis even further, and lies behind the question in this book's title—*Friends Indeed?*

Rather than attempt a quantitative approach, the book seeks to establish under what circumstances Friends stand the best chance of contributing to the success of peace processes in which the United Nations is centrally involved. Analysis in the six case chapters and in the varied cases more briefly discussed in chapter 8 is rooted in consideration of core factors or variables relating both to the internal aspects of the groups themselves and to the conflicts with which they are engaged. These bear some relation to the framework for evaluating peace implementation developed by George Downs and Stephen John Stedman for *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements,* the first comprehensive work on this subject.[28]

Downs and Stedman accept relatively modest standards for success: stopping large-scale violence in the short term and ending the war on a self-sustaining basis. With a universe of cases in which, between 1990 and 1997, warring parties reached an agreement in which international actors were expected to play a major role in implementation, their evaluation is derived from two sets of variables, one related to conflict environment and the other to international involvement. They find, unsurprisingly, that the greater the difficulty of the conflict environment, the higher the likelihood that implementation of a peace agreement will fail, and the greater the degree of international involvement, in terms of both resources and coercive capacity, required to overcome a conflict's inherent difficulty. The three most significant environmental obstacles to successful implementation emerge as the presence of spoilers (understood as factions or individuals who oppose a peace agreement and use violence to undermine it), neighboring states (or networks operating within or from them) opposed to the peace agreement, and the presence of disposable natural resources, such as gems, minerals, or timber. Meanwhile, international involvement

varies with a "willingness" to provide resources and troops that is itself a function of whether a major or regional power sees its own security and other interests at stake.[29]

Although not a subject of Downs and Stedman's analysis, the presence of a group of Friends might be considered a relevant indicator of "willingness." However, Friends' amorphous nature and the varied factors involved in both a group's formation and its performance—not least the preferences, commitment, and abilities of the individuals concerned—suggest the risks involved in treating the fact of their engagement as a measurable variable. Such considerations also inform any consideration of what relationship Friends may have to an outcome of a peace process. It is as easy to dismiss the role of Friends in a successful process as negligible, given a benign set of underlying conditions, as it is to lower expectations of what Friends might be expected to contribute in more adverse circumstances. That said, it is a central argument of this book that lessons from the past can be applied to the use of such mechanisms in the future in order to maximize their potential to contribute to a given peace process. For this reason the variables briefly introduced below—and running through the case studies—help ground *Friends Indeed?*'s attempt to further understand what configuration of Friends has worked best where and why.

The importance of *regional environment* to the successful implementation of a peace agreement identified by Downs and Stedman is of direct salience to groups of Friends. Indeed, conflicts at the heart of what Barnett Rubin and others have dubbed "regional conflict formations," such as Afghanistan and the DRC—like those that take place under the shadow of the pronounced interests of a larger and more powerful neighbor, such as Somalia or Sri Lanka—have generally been Friend-less.[30] (The "six plus two" group of neighboring states, plus Russia and the United States, on Afghanistan was very far from a group of Friends, as it was composed of states actively arming and supporting the warring factions in Afghanistan.) Where the regional environment is more propitious to the conflict's settlement, Friends, on the other hand, have been found to be highly effective vehicles for engaging regional actors, as the role played by Mexico in the Central American cases, or by Australia and other regional actors in that of East Timor, demonstrate. Indeed, the provision of a vehicle for the central involvement of regional actors not consistently present on the Security Council emerges from the case studies as one of the principal benefits of the mechanism.

In considering the conditions for the successful involvement of Friends, more important than the conflict's typology is the nature of the *conflict*

*parties*. Interaction with Friends has varied to reflect both the relative importance of the states in conflict to the interests of the Friends and the characteristics of the nonstate armed actors. Individual Friends are representatives of governments with bilateral relations with the governments involved, often with clearly held positions on the issues at stake. In most cases, they are likely to encounter problems in engaging directly with nonstate armed actors.[31] As composite bodies with ill-defined roles in the process, these have been even more marked in the case of groups of states than those met by the UN secretariat or individual state mediators, both of which regularly run into government reluctance to accept parity at the negotiating table with rebel or secessionist forces they hold as illegitimate, subversive, and perhaps terrorist as well. However, critical factors for the constructive engagement of Friends emerge from the case studies. These include the nonstate actors' demands (ideological, decolonialist, or secessionist), practices (more or less abusive of human rights or identified as "terrorist"), and the degree of international engagement they have pursued in the conflict and efforts to end it (bringing with it the potential for leverage).

The *composition* of a group of Friends will be all-important. Like its formation in the first place, it will also be directly related to the interests of its members. In an attempt to establish how these relate to a state's contribution as a Friend, the case studies dedicate considerable attention to each group's inception, the strategic purposes pursued by its architects, and the distinct contributions made within each process by different Friends and kinds of Friends. In most cases the question of size has been perceived to be key to a group's efficacy. Groups have involved some mixture of Security Council members (including the five permanent members), interested regional actors, and midsized donor states or helpful fixers with experience of the conflict. Such a membership brings the promise of different combinations of resources to the table: diplomatic leverage with one or more of the conflict parties, financial assistance for relief and reconstruction, and the possible commitment of troops in a UN peace operation or alongside it.

Issues of *leadership* go to the heart of what or who Friends are created for, as well as the delicate relationship between the secretary-general as a peacemaker acting with the implied consent or overt support of the Security Council and the United Nations' member states. Groups have interacted in distinct manners with the secretary-general or, more common, the senior official representing him in a peace process. In some circumstances they have (as was one of their purposes in El Salvador) helped to bridge the gap between the fragile independence of the secretary-general and the power politics of the Security Council. Sustained support of the

secretary-general has involved a commitment to work behind a clearly identified UN lead and brought recognizable benefits to the coherence of the international effort. But in other processes this has not proved possible, and states' conflicting interests at times have complicated the relationship with the secretary-general, his representatives, and other members of groups of Friends.

The *timing* of a group's formation has had a central bearing on both its functions and incidence in a given process, as distinct operational needs have led to varied relationships with the actors involved. The emphasis of *Friends Indeed?* is on peacemaking. However, cases in which this has contributed to a settlement and its implementation—such as in El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, and East Timor—as well as in those instances discussed in chapter 8 in which a Friends or related mechanism has been created at an early stage provide opportunities to assess the viability of Friends' mechanisms at *different phases of the process*. Most obvious, the relationship between the UN secretariat and a group of Friends that has been involved in peacemaking will change upon the signing of an agreement and establishment of a peace operation mandated by the Security Council. Meanwhile, a separate set of challenges may be faced by Friends' involvement in processes that become stalled.

## Case Selection and Organization

The self-selecting nature of Friends is openly acknowledged in the structure of this book. Chapter 1 places the emergence and evolution of groups of Friends in the context of peacemaking in the post–Cold War era. In so doing, it provides a framework in which the core case studies addressed in the chapters that follow can be assessed. These cases—El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Georgia, Western Sahara, and East Timor—were selected to illustrate the utility and limitations of groups of Friends where they were centrally involved. All six groups were formed to support processes in which the secretary-general had a leading role; at least some of their members considered themselves as Friends of the Secretary-General even in the cases in which the mechanism did not carry that name (Guatemala, Western Sahara, and East Timor).

Together, these six case studies offer rich material for comparison of what a Friends' group, once constituted, may offer in widely different circumstances. They document (1) a variety of conflicts: ideological conflict fanned by the Cold War in Central America, civil conflict rooted in centuries of repression in Haiti, secessionist conflict following the collapse of

the Soviet Union in Georgia, and self-determination after mangled decol-
onization in Western Sahara and East Timor; (2) a variety of regions: Latin
America and the Caribbean, the former Soviet Union, and North Africa
and Southeast Asia; and (3) a variety of outcomes: negotiation and imple-
mentation of comprehensive peace agreements, international interven-
tion and failed transition in Haiti, a stalemate in Georgia and Western
Sahara, and a newly independent state in East Timor. They also provide
clear contrasts with respect to the capacities and performance of the indi-
viduals involved, and the constraints imposed on peace efforts by the ex-
traneous interests of the states engaged as Friends.

    In El Salvador and Guatemala, groups of Friends supported the nego-
tiation and implementation, under UN auspices, of far-reaching peace
agreements between the respective governments of each country and in-
surgent forces. In Haiti, Friends dominated by the United States were cen-
trally located in a fifteen-year saga centered on the polarizing figure of
Jean-Bertrand Aristide. This period saw elections, a coup, sanctions, inter-
national intervention, and peacebuilding before a return to internal
unrest, Aristide's second departure from the presidency, and a new round of
UN peacekeeping from 2004, supported by a variety of group mechanisms.
In Georgia, a group of Friends formed by member states was hampered
from the beginning by the clear alignment of its members with the parties
to the conflict. Although the group was gradually transformed into a mech-
anism more directly affiliated with the United Nations, even as "Friends of
the Secretary-General" it remained circumscribed by the extensive inter-
ests of Russia in the outcome of the conflict. In Western Sahara, a group of
Friends was formed to preserve the interests of the key external actors in
the region, the United States, France, and Spain. These were clearly dis-
tinct from the goal pursued by the United Nations: the implementation of
a referendum in fulfillment of the population of Western Sahara's right to
self-determination. The group controlled action in the Security Council
but differences among its members prevented it from providing active sup-
port to the United Nations in its attempt to break the stalemate in the
political process. The Core Group on East Timor, in contrast, was formed
by the secretariat only when it became clear that the interests of key states
would align with the United Nations' long-drawn-out effort to secure the
self-determination of the people of East Timor.

    A more crowded field for conflict resolution placed new demands on
the United Nations as a peacemaker, principally with respect to its readi-
ness to play distinct roles within different peace processes, reflecting the
different configurations of actors involved.[32] Friends as conceived in the

past gave way to more diverse structures, some of which are assessed in chapter 8. Secretariat officials engaged with groups established for a variety of purposes. In some instances they did so from a position of leadership—Myanmar, Afghanistan, Angola, and Cyprus—but were thwarted in their efforts by obstacles created by the regional environment and the essential unwillingness of the conflict parties. In others they interacted with processes in which a leading role for the United Nations was either not desirable or possible, or was clearly proscribed (Colombia and across Africa), yet group mechanisms emerged nonetheless. The chapter builds on the findings of the case studies to underline the importance of a disciplined yet "variable" approach to the use of groups and coalitions. Despite the wide variety of the cases considered, its conclusions are surprisingly consistent with those that emerged from the individual case chapters, with the variables of regional environment, the conflict parties, a group's composition, leadership, and timing determining the extent to which it might be well placed to play a constructive role.

The concluding chapter summarizes findings related to the five core factors identified in this introduction as they are manifested in the six case studies and the more varied UN peacemaking discussed in chapter 8. These lead into recommendations regarding circumstances in which a group of Friends may or may not be formed or other more informal coalitions pursued. The chapter argues that the collective approach to peacemaking epitomized by the emergence of groups has been a significant characteristic of post–Cold War peacemaking. It has been encouraged by recognition that national interest can be affected by distant conflict and turmoil and of the benefits of a multilateral approach. But it has also been complicated by the competing interests that individual states will bring to the table. Although an increasing number of nongovernmental peacemakers, states, and multilateral organizations recognize the virtue of coordination and complementarity, in many situations it remains an elusive goal. The formation of a group analogous to a group of Friends will, like mediation itself, not be a panacea. But when the circumstances are right Friends may represent the best available option to harness the considerable resources that concerned representatives of the international community can bring to bear on the complexities of conflicts.