

Pulled in All Directions:
The UN Secretary-General and the Evolution of UN Democracy Promotion

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and the Evolution of UN Democracy Promotion**

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Dedication

For my parents, Drew and Barbara, the intellectual giants of my world,
and my grandmother, Susan Bluman, the epitome of persistence and hope

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Abstract of Dissertation

“Pulled in All Directions: The UN Secretary-General and the Evolution of UN Democracy Promotion”

The United Nations (UN) talks a lot about democratization. The Secretary-General (UNSG) declares it a priority, and the Security Council and General Assembly resolve to support new and restored democracies. However, action does not always follow. The UN has an Electoral Assistance Division, but it rarely observes elections and largely limits itself to sending an electoral expert or two. In 2009, advocates of democratization even accused the UN of withholding evidence of electoral fraud in Afghanistan. That the UN would promote democracy at all is far from obvious. The UN Charter makes no reference to democracy, the US and EU prefer to fund other democracy assistance providers, and many members guard their absolutist view of noninterference closely. Given these constraints, it is unsurprising that UN talk about democratization is not always consistent with action. This dissertation investigates the causes and consequences of disparate talk and action by the UNSG when it comes to promoting democracy. It finds that irreconcilable member conflicts cause disparate talk and action, and it identifies an overlooked source of conflict—the changing preferences of an influential member. It also finds that disparate talk and action carries significant risks. Pseudo-democrats exploit a disparity to legitimize fraudulent elections, and action without talk signals that the UNSG *is not* committed to supporting democratization. Consequently, the disparity itself creates pressures from UN members that value democratization to align talk and action—even if member conflicts are pulling talk and action apart. These findings show that the UNSG’s democracy talk is not cheap, but a costly signal to important subsets of states. At the

same time, talk is not valuable enough to be a substitute for action, and without action, talk threatens the UNSG's legitimacy.

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Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym	
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CIVS	International Verification and Follow-Up Commission (Nicaragua)
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement (Sudan)
CSCE	Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe
DPA	United Nations Department of Political Affairs (United Nations)
DPKO	United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
EAD	United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (formerly Electoral Assistance Unit)
EAS	Electoral Assistance Secretariat
EAU	United Nations Electoral Assistance Unit
FUNCINPEC	National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia (Cambodia)
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IFES	International Foundation of Electoral Systems
IHRLG	International Human Rights Law Group
IO	International Organization
IRI	International Republican Institute
JIOG	Joint International Observer Group
KPNLF	Khmer People's National Liberation Front
NAM	Needs Assessment Mission
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NED	National Endowment for Democracy (US)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OAS	Organization of American States
OAU	Organization of African Unity
ONUMOZ	United Nations Operation in Mozambique
ONUVEH	UN Observation Mission in Haiti

ONUEN	United Nations Observer for the Verification of Elections in Nicaragua
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
SGSR	United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organization
UAMIR	United Nations Mission in Rwanda
UNAMA	UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNAVEM	United Nations Angola Verification Mission
UNAVEM II	United Nations Angola Verification Mission II
UNCOK	UN Commission on Korea
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNDPI	United Nations Department of Public Information
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHCRC	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UNITAF	Unified Task Force
UNMIH	United Nations Mission in Haiti
UNMOT	United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan
UNO	National Opposition Union (Nicaragua)
UNOMSA	United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNOSOM	United Nations Operation in Somalia
UNOSOM II	United Nations Operation in Somalia II
UNPROPOR	The United Nations Protection Force
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSG	United Nations Secretary-General
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
UNTAES	The United Nations Transitional Authority in Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium

UNTAG	United Nations Transition Assistance Group
UNTCOK	UN Temporary Commission on Korea
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Chapter 1

The Causes and Consequences of Disparate Talk and Action

1.0 Introduction

The United Nations (UN) talks a lot about democratization. The Secretary-General (UNSG) declares it a priority, and the Security Council and General Assembly resolve to support new and restored democracies. However, action does not always follow. The UN has an Electoral Assistance Division, but it rarely observes elections and largely limits itself to sending an electoral expert or two. In 2009, advocates of democratization even accused the UN of withholding evidence of electoral fraud in Afghanistan. That the UN promotes democracy at all is far from obvious. The UN Charter makes no reference to democracy, the US and EU prefer to fund other democracy assistance providers, and many members guard their absolutist view of non-interference closely. Given these constraints, it is perhaps unsurprising that talk about democratization is not always consistent with action.

The UN is hardly alone when it comes to disparate talk and action. Scholars have observed it in private corporations, municipal governments, sovereign states, and international organizations (IOs). These scholars build on Nils Brunsson's (2002) seminal finding that disparate talk and action is an understandable response to irreconcilable stakeholder conflicts—while talk satisfies one group of members, action satisfies another with contradictory interests. Ideally, the membership would agree on a course of action that the leadership could implement. However in practice, various subsets of members want the organization to do radically different things. In this

situation, saying one thing and doing another is the leadership's 'least bad' option because it allows the organization to muddle through.

This dissertation argues that an important subset of states will pressure the UNSG to align talk with action, even if conflicts with member states are pulling talk and action apart. It investigates the periodic disparities in the UNSG's democracy talk and action, and it finds support for this argument. In particular, my dissertation reaffirms that conflicts with member states cause disparate talk and action, but it finds that previous studies overlooked a key source of conflict. At the UN, disparate talk and action can be caused by a sudden change in the preferences of powerful states, especially the US. US-UN relations fluctuate, and US decisions when relations are good often conflict with US decisions when relations sour. For example, the success of the first election observation mission in Nicaragua (1990) raised US expectations, and the US wanted the UN to observe more elections and appoint as UNSG an outspoken supporter of democratization. When US-UN relations later declined, funding and mandates disappeared, but the UNSG did not. As a result, the outspoken UNSG continued to talk up action, even as UN officials took less action to avoid overstretching scarce resources.

This dissertation also finds that there are significant risks with disparate talk and action: It legitimizes hypocritical state leaders who pay only lip service to UN action, and it raises doubts about the UNSG's commitment to UN action. As a result, the disparity itself creates pressures for alignment from members who support UN action. This finding is important because no scholar directly investigates the consequences of disparate talk and

action. The assumption is that an organization's members consider the disparity a failure of leadership or bureaucratic malfeasance, they demand talk align with action, and they punish the organization by withholding resources and legitimacy if they do not.

For example, World Bank officials fear that the Bank loses credibility as a development organization when anti-corruption efforts fall short of talk (Weaver, 2008). But do these officials worry that the Bank's credibility suffers because the Bank did not keep its promise? Or might its credibility suffer simply because the Bank took no action—regardless of whether or not it promised to do so? Indeed, principal-agent theory suggests that disparate talk and action will carry few risks for many organizations. Members may not detect the disparity because monitoring organizational action is costly. Alternatively, they may detect the disparity, but find it too costly to punish the organization (Hawkins et al., 2006). A group of members may even encourage the organization to take action quietly (*action without talk*) if it helps circumvent opposition. Conversely, a group of members may prefer that the organization pays lip service (*talk without action*) to action to legitimize the group's agenda without committing the group to funding expensive action.

I find that disparate talk and action is risky and subsets of members do pressure the UNSG to align them. Of course, a UNSG could accept the risks, but he will be under pressure to align talk and action as long as the disparity persists. The particular risk of disparate talk and action differs depending on whether the disparity is *talk without action* or *action without talk*.

Talk without action leads to accusations that the UN is facilitating and legitimizing state hypocrisy. This risk emerges when the UNSG talks up action, in this case democracy promotion, which reinforces a preexisting *and inaccurate* belief that the UNSG will take action. For example, when Boutros-Ghali celebrated past electoral observation missions, he reinforced an inaccurate belief held by advanced democracies that the UN was still observing elections. This inaccurate belief was exploited by hypocritical state leaders. For example, pseudo-democrats invited the UNSG to observe their elections, knowing that the UNSG would likely send a handful of officials not authorized to discuss publicly the election's fairness. However, the advanced democracies believed that UN officials were official observers. As such, pseudo-democrats used the invitation to claim that they wanted international scrutiny and intended to hold fair elections. As instances of exploitation accumulated, UN electoral assistance officials pressed the UNSG to correct this inaccurate belief before the UN was accused of undermining official international observers and legitimizing fraudulent elections.

Second, *action without talk* raises doubts about the UNSG's commitment to UN action. That action without talk is likened to talk without action may seem peculiar. After all, we usually call talk without action hypocrisy, and scholarship on disparate talk and action describes talk without action as '*organized hypocrisy*.'¹ However, action without talk is also organized hypocrisy; it is a way to manage irreconcilable conflicts with member states. For example, Chapter 3 shows that Perez de Cuellar's reluctance to champion

¹ It should be stressed that these authors do not use 'hypocrisy' in the pejorative sense or to imply immoral behavior. Instead, they use it as an analytical description of the relationship of action to talk.

electoral observation weakened opposition to a request from some Central American states to send UN electoral observers to Nicaragua—the first major UN electoral mission.

However, action without talk is ultimately risky. States that want UN action will accept silence only temporarily and will eventually press the UNSG to champion action. To this group of states, the UNSG's talk is 'costly talk' because it is unwelcome by states who oppose UN action. The UNSG's willingness to confront this group sends a costly signal about his commitment to taking action—a signal a less committed UNSG would not send. For instance, in 1991, a UNSG who advocated for expanding democracy assistance risked losing the support of China and other undemocratic states. However, for states that want action (like democracy assistance), this costly talk reassures them that he will take more action if they delegate him more authority, make more requests, or give him more resources. Boutros-Ghali made democratization a key theme of his 1991 campaign for UNSG, hoping this would demonstrate his commitment to democratization and lead the US to drop its opposition to his candidacy. By contrast, if a UNSG does not send this signal, he fails to reassure these states and risks losing resources, requests for further assistance, and authority.

These findings are based on an investigation of why the UN alternated between periods of hypocrisy (disparate talk and action) and periods of alignment during the first thirteen years of UN democracy promotion (Fig. 1.1). From 1989 to 1991, the UNSG acted without talking; he cautioned against expanding UN electoral observation while observing elections in a number of states. However, pressure from the US led talk and

action to align in 1992; electoral assistance continued its rapid expansion just as the new Secretary-General introduced a bold democratization discourse. US-UN relations then deteriorated in 1993, and US support for electoral assistance declined. The result was talk without action; the UNSG talked *as if* the UN authorized new observation missions while electoral observation declined. This disparity was exploited by pseudo-democrats, and UN officials sought to reduce talk before the UN was accused of legitimizing fraudulent elections. In 1997, they persuaded the new UNSG to realign talk and action; electoral assistance and the statements of the UNSG both emphasized technical assistance over observing elections.

Figure 1.1
Four Periods of UN Democracy Promotion
Year(s) and Secretary-General

	Talk		
Action		High	Low
	High	No Disparity 1992 Boutros-Ghali	Disparity 1989-1991 Perez de Cuellar
	Low	Disparity 1993-1996 Boutros-Ghali	No Disparity 1997-2001 Kofi Annan

These findings are important to anyone interested in strengthening the UN and understanding the value of talk in an international organization. First, they challenge the claim that UN bureaucrats are unaccountable, difficult to control, and pay insufficient attention to powerful states like the US.² I show that UN electoral assistance officials expected to be held accountable for undermining democracy and tried to rectify the problem before a major crisis or policy failure developed.

Second, they challenge conventional views about the value of talk in international relations (Krebs and Jackson, 2007; Crawford, 2002). On one hand, they suggest that the UNSG's talk is neither cheap nor limited to coordinating action (Moravcsik, 1999). The UNSG can strategically use talk to credibly commit to the interests of important member states. By making this commitment, these members should be less worried that he will act against their interests and thus be inclined to delegate more authority and provide more resources (Hawkins et al, 2006). On the other hand, these findings also suggest that the UNSG's talk is not so valuable that it is a substitute for UN action. The Council often presses the UNSG to speak out on an issue without allocating the necessary mandate or resources to back up his words (Lipson, 2007). Alternatively, some constructivist approaches suggest that the bully pulpit is inherently useful as a tool to shame and persuade states (Price, 1999). My research shows that talk without follow-up action is risky for the UN, even where *action* is politically infeasible and *silence* is morally

² This view is prevalent among the UN's critics in the US like John Bolton (2008). These criticisms are also leveled by non-Western states. Indeed, one UN diplomat told the General Assembly that the UN risks becoming a "mere talk shop, an unwieldy amalgam of bureaucracies..... [T]alk is cheap, even when it is the heady talk of billions of dollars. Commitments made must be commitments kept. And we must hold to account those who repeatedly make empty promise." UN General Assembly, 65th Sess. *Statement by the Permanent Representative of St. Vincent's and the Grenadine* A/65/PV.14. September 29, 2009.

undesirable. In some extreme instances—like speaking out against atrocities—it is absolutely worthwhile for the UNSG to take such risks. Yet, in most instances, talk without action may do more harm than good as it risks the UN’s legitimacy by sending unwelcome signals, facilitating state hypocrisy, and making the UNSG seem ineffective.

2.0 Literature Review: States, IOs and Organized Hypocrisy

The statist view held by many realists and neoliberal institutionalists treat IOs as rules that reflect converging state interests or the distribution of power—IOs are structures not agents (Keohane and Martin, 1995; Mearsheimer, 1994/1995; Krasner, 1991). Similarly, intergovernmentalists argue that even formal international organizations have little agency beyond coordinating state action (Moravcsik, 1998). However, studies carried out over the last twenty years give us good reason to reconsider this view. These studies offer a wealth of evidence that IO officials have agency, and occasionally pursue personal and organizational interests without a clear directive from member states. IO officials promote certain cosmopolitan values like human rights, protect the organization’s internal values and culture, and seek out more funding and mandates (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004). To do so, these officials draw on their expertise and delegated authority to diffuse new social categories and norms that empower themselves and their allies.

In much of this literature, IO talk facilitates agency. For example, UN scholars observe that the Post Cold War Secretaries-General are more inclined to use the bully pulpit as

the space for autonomous action narrows.³ Similarly, talk can occasionally constrain state behavior or change state preferences. IO leaders use their bully pulpit to assemble supportive policy coalitions (Moravcsik, 1999), to persuade and teach (Finnemore, 1996; Crawford, 2002), shame (Schimmelfennig, 2000; Klotz, 1999; Keck and Sikkink, 1998) and coerce (Jackson and Krebs, 2007) states. Principal-agent theory demonstrates that IO officials can talk about complying with state wishes to increase the space for autonomous action, if there are information asymmetries and weak oversight mechanisms (Hawkins et al., 2006). At the same time, they show that this strategy works better in some organizational contexts than others. Many IOs are constrained by states, and IO officials are incentivized to anticipate and accommodate state interests. States deter or punish unwanted behavior by not re-appointing IO leaders, withholding material resources or mandates, establishing competing organizations, mobilizing opposition, or undermining the organization's legitimacy in the eyes of key audiences (Hawkins et al. 2006) .

The scholarship on 'organized hypocrisy' offers another avenue for investigating how states interact with IOs. The theoretical insights developed in this scholarship are drawn from studies of both domestic and international organization. Scholars identify hypocrisy in private corporations (Zajac and Wesphal, 1998), municipal governments (Brunsson, 2001; 2007), sovereign states (Krasner, 1999; Finnemore, 2009) as well as IOs such as the World Bank (Weaver, 2008), the World Trade Organization (Bukovansky, 2005) and the UN (Lipson, 2007). This literature generally builds on the work of Nils Brunsson (2002). Brunsson challenged the conventional view of how talk relates to action in

³ See Franck and Nolte, 1993; Trinh, 2007; Traub, 2007. For classic accounts of the role of the UNSG see Gordenker, 1959; Claude, 1971.

organizations. The convention was that talk served a simple purpose—to reflect past action and plan future action. This view suggests that talk and action are tightly coupled; the more an organization talks about doing something, the more action it is likely to take. As Brunsson (2007, 111-112) put it, organizations:

[a]re assumed to be bounded, coherent, coordinated and sovereign entities with intentions, who are able to talk, decide and act and who control their own actions...Decisions are a special type of talk that indicates a will to act and a choice of action...There is also talk without decisions. Management presents visions, business concepts, objectives, policies, political programmes that are not regarding specific actions but are aimed at convincing members of the organization to act in accordance with management talk. *According to traditional administrative wisdom, this talk is expected to have the same effect as decisions – it assumed to increase the probability for corresponding action.*”

[Italics added]

Brunsson found that this hypocrisy is an understandable and even a necessary response for a local government that faces contradictory societal demands. Hypocrisy is often ‘organized’ to manage a contradiction. Talk satisfies some stakeholders, action satisfies others. Specifically, organizations take action favorable to stakeholders most directly affected by the action, but talks favorably to stakeholders with conflicting interests.

While Brunsson investigates domestic institutions, a growing body of scholarship applies his insights to international organizations. IO scholars find that hypocrisy is organized in two ways (Lipson, 2008). First, talk and action can be *counter-coupled*, meaning the more an IO talks about taking action, the less action it will take. For example, the Security Council reduces public pressure to stop mass atrocities by resolving to send a large peacekeeping force without allocating adequate resources. Talk and action can also be *decoupled*, meaning talk has no effect on action. Decoupling is caused by internal organizational structures that prevent management's talk from being implemented. These internal structures include a resistant informal culture or formal procedures that insulate different sub-units so 'talk' units are disconnected from 'action' ones. For example, Weaver (2008) offers a detailed account of how the World Bank's bureaucratic culture effectively resisted its leader's efforts to fight corruption because that culture prized technocracy and considered corruption a 'political' matter.

These scholars generally confirm and expand on Brunsson's finding that conflicts with stakeholders cause hypocrisy. Organized hypocrisy often occurs because member states cannot agree on a course of action (Steinberg, 2002; Bukovansky, 2005). Alternatively, transnational advocates may demand action that member states are unwilling or unable to take (Lipson, 2007). Weaver (2008) also traces organized hypocrisy to a clash between US interests and a well-entrenched bureaucratic culture. Furthermore, studies of domestic corporations added that disparate talk and action arises from disputes between a company's shareholders and its leadership (Zajac and Wesphal, 1995; 1998).

However, the scholarship does not adequately address the consequences of organized hypocrisy (Lipson, 2007; Bukovansky, 2005). In particular, it fails to explain whether hypocrisy itself creates pressures to align IO talk and action. Most scholars end up sidestepping this question—ultimately showing that hypocrisy persists as long as the conflict that initially caused it persists. Thus, IOs will eliminate hypocrisy because internal structures change or the causal conflict was resolved, not because past hypocritical behavior is self-defeating. In particular, talk is more likely to align with action if conflicting parties agree on a course of action (Brunsson, 2001, 2007); the resistant bureaucratic culture is weakened (Weaver, 2008); or hypocrisy no longer serves the interests of the most powerful states (Steinberg, 2002; Krasner, 1999).

That said, the scholarship suggests some plausible but contradictory answers about whether hypocrisy itself creates pressures to align talk and action. On one side of the debate, hypocrisy may create such pressures. Brunsson points out that an organization's stakeholders often see hypocrisy as an indication of shirking, immorality and bureaucratic dysfunction. Moreover, the benefits of hypocritical institutions to powerful states may decrease over time as other states recognize the hypocrisy and either rhetorically 'trap' powerful states into taking the corresponding action or they start ignoring the institution (Schimmelfennig, 2001). Weaver (2008, 10) finds that World Bank officials are "incredibly sensitive" to accusations of hypocrisy because they threaten the institution's legitimacy. Other research suggests that disparate talk and action can also contribute to policy failures. For example, ambitious but under-funded UN peacekeeping missions contributed to high profile failures in Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda (Lipson, 2007). Yet,

these studies do not link the policy failure directly to the effects of hypocrisy, or investigate whether hypocrisy creates pressure to align short of a massive policy failure.

On the other side of the debate, the application of Brunsson's work to IOs suggests why a state might accept IO talk as a substitute for action and hence not pressure the IO to eliminate disparate talk and action. A subset of stakeholders may encourage the organization to take action quietly (*action without talk*) if it helps circumvent opposition. A subset may even prefer that the organization pay lip service (*talk without action*) to legitimize the stakeholder's agenda, rather than take expensive action that these stakeholders are unable or unwilling to pay for. Inexpensive talk at least lends the IO's credibility to the state's agenda. Indeed, states value IOs because they have moral authority and they can confer this moral authority on the actions or agendas of states (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004). Other states may prefer action but talk partially satisfies them. Still others may prefer action but fail to realize it is not forthcoming. States pay less attention once a favorable decision is announced by the IO; they expect decisions to take time to implement; and they may find it costly to monitor an IO's actions.

3.0 The Causes and Consequences of Disparate Talk and Action

I argue that the disparity itself causes important subsets of states to pressure the UNSG to align talk and action, even if conflicts with member states are pulling talk and action apart. As a result, the causes of organized hypocrisy differ from the causes of alignment. Disparate talk and action is caused by member conflicts. At the UN, the conflict can involve subsets of member states. For example, in 1989, democratizing states in Central

America argued that the UN was uniquely suited for observing elections in divided societies, while China and other authoritarian states argued that observing elections would excessively interfere in a state's domestic affairs. In response, the UNSG acted one way but talked another way. He started observing elections in a number of democratizing states, while rhetorically reassuring the opposition that the missions were exceptional because electoral observation could infringe on a state's sovereignty.

Disparate talk and action can also result from changes in the preferences of a powerful state, particularly the US. US-UN relations fluctuate, and policies adopted by the US during periods of good relations can conflict with policies adopted when relations sour. A period of good relations brings the expansion of UN mandates and the appointment of outspoken UN leaders. When US-UN relations decline, funding and support disappear but mandates and leaders do not, thus creating new conflicts for UN officials to manage. For example, in 1992, the US wanted to make democratization a UN priority, and it successfully pressed for a new UNSG who would trumpet democratization and expand electoral assistance. However, US-UN relations deteriorated in 1994. When they did, the US reduced support and funding for electoral assistance but it did not change the UN's leadership. As a result, the UNSG was forced to decrease electoral assistance, but the outspoken Boutros-Ghali would not moderate his democracy rhetoric.

Member conflicts cause the disparity between talk and action, but the same members are also pressuring the UNSG to eliminate the disparity. Very few states will accept disparate talk and action, and those who do, will so only temporarily (Fig. 1.2). Most

states insist that the UNSG back action with talk and talk with action. This insistence, however, is not because hypocrisy is immoral. Below, I lay out two strategically-grounded explanations for why states that support democratization want the UNSG to align talk and action: *Talk without action* facilitates state hypocrisy and *action without talk* signals that the UNSG is not committed to democratization.

Figure 1.2 Preferences of Subsets of UN Member States

(UN Democracy Assistance Example)

Action		High	Low
	High	States wanting UN Action Democratizing States (1991-2001)	States wanting UN Action (temporary) Democratizing states (1989-1990)
	Low	Hypocritical states Algeria, Zambia, Gambia	<i>Modest: State wanting non-UN action</i> EU, US (1993-2001)
			<i>Minimal: States not wanting UN Action</i> Cuba, Yemen, China (1989-1992)

UNSG Talk Sends a Costly Signal to States who Want UN Action. I argue that the subset of states that wants UN action will find *action without talk* unacceptable. Talk is necessary for the UNSG to overcome a commitment problem: A subset of states wants him to take action, but it is uncertain of his future intentions, and it will not delegate more resources or authority until they are convinced that he is committed to taking action. The UNSG's talk helps him commit because it is 'costly talk'—it carries a risk for the speaker—as long as some UN members find this talk unwelcome (Gartzke and Li, 2003). For example, some states would prefer that the UN did not promote democracy at all. Therefore, the UNSG risks losing support from powerful authoritarian states like China when he publicly calls democratization a UN priority. His willingness to accept this risk sends a costly signal about his commitment to democracy because a less committed UNSG would be unwilling to accept the risk. Trinh (2008) argues that the risks of unwelcome talk means “the choice to enter the particular debates must be carefully weighed.” These risks vary based on how many states oppose promoting democracy, which states oppose it, and how strongly these states oppose it. At the least, the opposition will question the UNSG's impartiality, thus precluding him from being an honest broker in the conflict. In extreme cases, unwanted talk might contribute to the opposition withholding funds, denying mandates, or seeking his replacement.

When the UNSG engages in costly talk, he reassures the subset of states that wants action that he is committed to it. As a result, this subset will delegate the UNSG more authority, make more requests, and provide more resources. In fact, costly talk can send a clearer

signal than the actions the UNSG has previously taken. The UNSG usually decides if he wants to make democratization a central theme in speeches. By contrast, the UNSG's previous actions are often unreliable as an indicator of his commitments because high profile (and easily monitored) UN actions are often chosen by the Council or the Assembly rather than the UNSG. For example, the Council or the Assembly authorizes the large electoral observation missions that attract media and non-governmental organization (NGO) attention. Since states select these actions, they may or may not reflect the commitments of the UNSG. Conversely, the UNSG does authorize technical assistance programs, but these programs seldom receive media coverage so most states do not notice them.

The importance of talk to the subset that wants UN action is illustrated by US efforts to find a more vocal advocate of democratization when Perez de Cuellar retired. By mid-1991, the Bush Administration directed the UNSG to monitor multiple elections, proposed the creation of a Focal Point for Electoral Assistance, and encouraged the expansion of electoral assistance to meet the rise in requests from new and restored democracies.⁴ To take these actions, the Administration wanted a UNSG who was committed to democratization. Perez de Cuellar had resisted championing democracy partially because it risked undermining his credibility with authoritarian states. When Perez de Cuellar did not seek a third term, the US initially opposed Boutros-Ghali's candidacy and put forward several candidates with a demonstrated record of promoting democracy. Boutros-Ghali responded by making democratization a major theme of his

⁴ Democratizing states valued UN electoral assistance because the UN was considered more impartial than 'Western' states and NGOs or a regional organization, especially one dominated by a handful of powerful neighbors. See Stoetling, 1992.

campaign. This theme made him more appealing than other African candidates to the Administration, and the Administration eventually agreed not to veto his candidacy. Once in office, the Council, with American support, invited Boutros-Ghali to recommend ways to improve UN peace operations. Boutros-Ghali eagerly accepted this invitation and his *Agenda for Peace* urged that (i) future peace operations include building democratic institutions and (ii) electoral assistance be expanded to prevent civil wars. In turn, the Administration supported the establishment of a new Electoral Assistance Unit and sponsored a new Trust Fund for Electoral Assistance.

And UNSG Silence Sends a Costly Signal to States Who Do Not Want UN Action.

There are two subsets of states that want the UNSG to limit talk and action. The first subset wants action but prefers that organizations other than the UN take most of it.⁵ For example, EU states preferred to support electoral assistance by regional organizations and the US preferred that NGOs provide substantial electoral assistance—especially after 1992.⁶ The second subset of states opposes all action. For example, when the Assembly first considered electoral assistance, it was opposed by entrenched authoritarian states led by China, Cuba, and Yemen. In 1987, this group successfully forced the US to withdraw an Assembly resolution supporting elections. Support for this group gradually diminished over time, but the remaining members delayed the authorization of the first electoral observation and vocally opposed the UN Focal Point for Electoral Assistance.

⁵ States oppose all action because it constitutes interference in domestic affairs and threatens the national interests of group members. States that prefer non-UN action find action valuable but argue that alternative organizations should take it because opposition to action is lower, the requisite capabilities and expertise already exist, or any action would be easier to monitor and control.

⁶ For example, the US has supported election observation by the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, and the Carter Center. See Carothers, 2004.

What both subsets of states share is an interest in the UNSG not talking up action. When the UNSG refrains from talking, he sends a costly signal because this restraint is unwelcome by states that want the UN to take action. To this end, states opposed to UN action pressure the UNSG to refrain from talking. For example, many authoritarian states initially encouraged Perez de Cuellar to discuss the limitations of UN electoral assistance, and they publicly criticized Boutros-Ghali for releasing *An Agenda for Democratization* in 1996. The US also increasingly dismissed Boutros-Ghali's democracy talk after it reduced support for electoral assistance. In particular, US officials criticized his *Agenda for Democratization* as further evidence that the UNSG was using his bully pulpit to badger the US to pay for expensive new electoral programs. By contrast, they were supportive when Annan shifted the rhetorical focus from democratization to good governance. I found no evidence that US officials criticized Annan for scaling back the democracy talk. Instead, US officials praised the work of the UN's Electoral Assistance Division, agreed to strengthen the Division, and even offered to fund more technical assistance projects.

Action Without Talk Facilitates 'Exceptional' Action by the UNSG. Most of the time, states that want the UNSG to take action, also want that action backed by talk. However, these states may *temporarily* tolerate the absence of talk, *if* this talk facilitates action that could not otherwise be taken. For instance, the UNSG's silence might allow the UNSG's actions to go unnoticed by the opposition. Alternatively, opposition to action weakens because the UNSG reassures it that any action is exceptional.

That said, action without talk is eventually self-defeating, and the UNSG will face pressure to increase talk or decrease action. The accumulation of ‘exceptional’ UN actions may lead the opposition to block further exceptions—quickly bringing talk and action into alignment. Conversely, some opposition members may switch sides and favor more UN action. As exceptional actions accumulate, scholars find that the preferences of an organization’s membership can change. Early exceptions lead members to develop informal rules about when they can legitimately violate formal limits on action, and these informal rules identify other situations that qualify for ‘exceptional’ action. Over time, members come to see deviant actions as normal ones that are desirable or at least acceptable—what Diane Vaughan calls the ‘normalization of deviance’.⁷ Such changes can result in the balance of member interests favoring UN action. If so, this new coalition will expect the UNSG to engage in costly talk that signals his commitment to further action.

The normalization of deviance is illustrated by early UN electoral observation missions. At the end of the Cold War, several developing states invited UN election observers and requested UN electoral assistance. However, these requests were declined by the UNSG, opposed by sovereignty-sensitive Chinese officials, and discouraged by US and EU officials who preferred non-UN missions. Despite opposition, a group of Central

⁷ Vaughan (1996) concludes that such a process explains why officials in the NASA space shuttle program repeatedly agreed to compromise safety rules. Though officials still paid lip service to formal safety rules, they negotiated informal new rules that legitimized deviating from those safety standards, ultimately contributing to the *Challenger* shuttle crash. Barnett and Finnemore (2004) note a similar process in the relaxation and replacement of the formal rule of non-refoulement that prohibited UNHCR from repatriating refugees despite evidence it was unsafe to do so.

American states successfully pressured the reluctant UNSG to send UN election observers to post-conflict Nicaragua. In turn, the UNSG persuaded the rest of the Assembly that (a) there were no acceptable alternatives to UN observers; (b) these observers were necessary to consolidate peace (rather than democracy); and (c) they could be sent on an exceptional basis. In making this exception, the Assembly also set out informal rules that other democratizing states used to justify making further exceptions. As the exceptions accumulated, the membership changed its attitude toward electoral assistance. By 1991, most of the membership (including China) accepted that the UNSG could provide electoral assistance if requested, and it acknowledged that UN election observation was valuable under certain conditions. The Bush Administration went one step further. It called for the creation of a Coordinator for Electoral Assistance, directed Perez de Cuellar to expand electoral assistance, and joined with democratizing states to pass an Assembly resolution formalizing the informal rules for authorizing assistance.

Talk Not Backed by Action Facilitates State Hypocrisy. Talk without action also carries risks for the UNSG. States that value UN action will seldom consider talk alone as a substitute. However, talk without action carries a substantial, additional risk for the UNSG: It can lead to accusations that the UN is legitimizing state hypocrisy. Moreover, legitimizing state hypocrisy also undermines the work of organizations that actively seek to expose and punish state hypocrisy. As a result, the UNSG will face accusations from any state that wants state hypocrisy exposed and punished. For example, when UN

democracy promotion was talk without action, UN officials worried that any advocate of electoral observation could accuse the UNSG of legitimizing fraudulent elections.

This risk exists because talk without action leads different member states to hold different expectations about whether the UNSG will back up talk with action. Most states will assume the UNSG is taking action if the UNSG's talk reinforces a pre-existing belief that the UN is a focal point for action. A focal point is a shared belief among states about which institution takes action (Keohane and Martin, 1995; Voeten, 2005). For example, members make the UNSG a focal point because they perceive the UNSG as less politicized and more impartial, making it the only institution that all states agree can take *some* action. This focal point becomes more prominent if early actions are successful. Indeed, early successes sustain the shared belief among states that the UN *can* take action but also create a shared belief that the UNSG *does* take action.⁸

The UNSG's talk can reinforce these beliefs by signaling his commitment to action and reminding states of successful past missions. In doing so, states have little reason to scrutinize action, and member states believe the UN is taking action even if action declines. This inaccurate belief is exploited by hypocritical state leaders. For several reasons, hypocritical leaders are better positioned than other states to know when talk will not be backed by action.⁹ As a result, hypocritical leaders invite the UNSG to take

⁸ Different states may prefer different institutional focal point but when states fail to get agreement on an alternative, they turn to the UN. For example, at the end of the Cold War, most states on the Council agreed to make the UN (not regional organizations) the focal point for peacekeeping in post-conflict states. See Lipson, 2007.

⁹ Hypocritical states are better positioned to monitor action than others, especially those who fund UN action, because (a) their regional neighbors are recipients, and (b) they are incentivized to search out talk without action because they can benefit from it. See Hyde, Forthcoming.

action. If other states assume the UNSG is taking action, then they will also assume that a leader's request for UN action is sincere—the leader is not a hypocrite. Indeed, hypocritical leaders will claim as much to discredit its critics.

That said, hypocritical leaders cannot exploit the UNSG's talk without action indefinitely. Eventually, the UNSG will face pressure to align talk and action because the hypocritical state leaders who most require a UN stamp of approval are the same ones who face the most media scrutiny. These leaders invite UN action precisely because the UNSG receives media coverage and is credible among the subset of states that value action. The media coverage, however, also gives an advocate of action (like NGOs) an incentive to 'pull the fire alarm' and accuse the UNSG of legitimizing hypocritical leaders. To these organizations, the UNSG is failing to take action *and* he is undermining their actions.

For example, in 1995, UN officials feared that Western audiences would accuse the UN of legitimizing fraudulent elections if Boutros-Ghali did not tone down his rhetoric. For the past three years, pseudo-democrats—leaders who pay lip service to fair elections—had been exploiting the prevailing Western view that the UNSG was still observing elections. In practice, the UNSG had stopped authorizing new election observation missions. However, most Western audiences still considered the UN a focal point for electoral assistance, and they mistakenly believed that any UN officials present during an

election were there to observe it.¹⁰ Boutros-Ghali's rhetoric reinforced this inaccurate belief by talking up UN past election observation and his commitment to democratization. Pseudo-democratic leaders exploited this false belief; they invited the UNSG to observe their elections knowing that the UNSG would decline, or more likely, send a symbolic mission where a few UN officials were prohibited from talking to the press or publicizing evidence of electoral fraud. These leaders hoped a UN 'observer' presence would give elections some credibility. This tactic worked on several occasions, especially ones where the Western media inaccurately reported the presence of UN 'observers.'

Eventually, Western diplomats began privately pressing UN electoral assistance officials to stop sending symbolic missions. These officials asked the UNSG to decline all election observation invitations, clarify to Western audiences that the UN did not monitor elections, moderate the democratization rhetoric, and replace symbolic missions with technical assistance. Boutros-Ghali's resistance to these reforms led to strains in his relations with the bureaucracy. Kofi Annan, by contrast, was more responsive to this pressure. He aligned democracy talk and action and distanced himself from pseudo-democratic leaders. He ended the practice of sending small, symbolic missions to elections, openly criticized pseudo-democratic behavior, and emphasized that the UN provided technical assistance not election observers.

4.0 Why Study Democratization and the UN?

¹⁰ The UN had previously observed elections and it was the only institution that most member states accepted as a legitimate provider. After 1992, even China reduced its opposition to electoral assistance and tolerated UN electoral observers in some post-conflict settings.

The empirical section of the dissertation examines UN democracy promotion from 1989 to 2001. This thirteen year period starts just before the first electoral observation mission in a sovereign state and then follows how electoral assistance changed across three Secretaries-General. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing research on the role of IOs in promoting democracy. Recent studies have concluded that IOs have positive effects on democratic transitions (Pevehouse, 2005; Kelley, 2008). Yet, we still have little understanding of why some IOs promote democracy while others do not.

This is especially true of the UN. The Assembly agreed to send election observers to Nicaragua (1989) and Haiti (1990) without even taking a vote. Likewise, it authorized the creation of a Focal Point for Electoral Assistance and a year later endorsed the new Electoral Assistance Unit with the support of 89% and 88% of member states respectively.¹¹ These actions were puzzling because many influential actors, including the US and the UNSG, were initially reluctant to support them. Moreover, the scholarship on UN democracy promotion does not adequately address this puzzle. Most studies of democracy promotion at the UN concentrate on describing the different types of assistance or the effects of specific missions (Ludwig, 1995; 2004; Morphet, 1993; Newman and Rich, 2004). Many of these studies provide only a cursory discussion of the emergence of UN democracy promotion, and even then, tend to attribute its rise strictly to the end of the Cold War (Jakobsen, 2002; Joyner, 1996; Gershman, 1993; Fox, 2004). Other scholars offer more detailed historical accounts of the rise UN democracy promotion but their studies do not cover its evolution beyond the first few years (Franck,

¹¹ Erik Voeten and Adis Merdzanovic, "United Nations General Assembly Voting Data," <http://dvn.iq.harvard.edu/dvn/dv/Voeten/faces/study/StudyPage.xhtml?globalId=hdl:1902.1/12379>.

1992; Fox, 1994/1995). For example, Rushton (2008) concludes that it was Boutros Boutros-Ghali who legitimized a democratization discourse inside the UN but neglects the fact that it was also under Boutros-Ghali that UN election observation went into decline. Overall, these studies fail to explain why the UN decided to be a supplier of electoral assistance in an increasingly crowded market or how assistance changed over time. My studies hope to fill this gap in the literature.

5.0 Research Design

To empirically test my argument, I examine how UN democracy promotion fluctuated between periods of disparate talk and action (1989-1991; 1993-1996) and periods of alignment (1992; 1997-2001). The advantage of using this thirteen year period is that it covers four different configurations of UNSG talk and action: talk without action; action without talk; moderate talk and moderate action; and substantial talk and substantial action. The decision to study how the same organization changes over time also has benefits. Most important, some alternative explanations are ruled out that explain changes to UN talk and action based on changes to institutional design. For example, the UN's universal membership, its Charter, the rules governing decision making in the Council and Assembly, and the 'official' role of the UNSG did not change across the four periods.

Studying this period does have drawbacks. At first glance, the 1993-1996 disparity between talk and action does not support the argument that the UNSG faced pressure to keep talk and action aligned. This problem is precisely why detailed case studies are necessary. Historical events have multiple causes. Consequently, a cause may influence

events in the expected direction but a host of other causes may still push the final outcome in the opposite direction. For example, the disparity may have resulted despite pressure to keep talk and action aligned. Case studies help untangle the different effects of each countervailing pressure (George and Bennett, 2005). In addition, they determine whether theorized causal logics were present.

To determine if and when there is pressure to align talk and action, case evidence is collected from scholarly works, official UN documents, UN voting records, statements by member state officials, media reports and memoirs. This evidence is used to determine what influenced UN democracy talk and action in each period. More specifically, the case evidence teases out (a) whether there was pressure to keep talk aligned with action during the two periods of alignment and (b) whether there was pressure to align talk and action during the two periods of disparate talk and action. Moreover, if there are countervailing pressures, the case evidence examines the effect of each one, or whether talk and action changed due to some third factor.

To pay careful attention to the rules of falsification, I look for evidence that disconfirms my argument. First, my argument is rejected if there is no evidence that the UNSG was under pressure to avoid disparate talk and action during periods of alignment. Moreover, the periods of alignment (1992; 1997-2001) should not contribute to a subsequent disparity (1989-1991; 1993-1996). Thus, I search for indications that state dissatisfaction with past UN electoral assistance led states to press the UNSG to reduce electoral assistance in 1993. Additionally, evidence that states pressed Annan (1997-2001) to be a

more vocal advocate of democratization without providing additional funds to expand electoral assistance undermines my argument.

My argument is disconfirmed if the evidence shows that a disparity was seldom detected by powerful states or powerful states were indifferent to it even after they detected it. It would be weakened if states detected a disparity and expressed displeasure with it but failed to apply pressure. For example, the UNSG was able to preempt pressure and perpetuate the disparity by paying lip service to aligning talk and action without implementing the necessary reforms.

I also searched for the presence of evidence that supported the specific proposed risks of disparate talk and action—signaling commitment and facilitating state hypocrisy. To support the general theory, states should be expressing their displeasure with inconsistent UNSG talk and action during periods of disparate talk and action. If there was more talk than action, they should have demanded more action or less talk of the UNSG. If there is more action than talk, they should have demanded less action or more talk. However, an expression of displeasure alone would not suggest states are exerting substantial pressure. To this end, states should also be applying pressure on the UNSG by (i) threatening to withhold (or increase) resources and mandates, (ii) restricting the UNSG's autonomy or (iii) replacing senior members of the UN's leadership. Furthermore, each specific mechanism implies a particular sequence of empirical events (Bennett and George, 2005). If talk signaled a lack of commitment, then a significant group of states including the US should talk about expanding electoral assistance even if the UNSG talked about

reducing it. Second, these states should refer to recent action as justifying more action. Third, state talk should have influenced state action; if these states expected more UN observation missions, they should have made more requests and provided more resources to accommodate those requests. Finally, states should press the UNSG to talk more by looking to replace the Secretary-General with a more vocal advocate of democratization and, once in office encouraging him to develop a democratization discourse.

If talk without action facilitates state hypocrisy, then we should observe a different sequence of events. First, there should be evidence that hypocritical leaders—pseudo-democrats—are incentivized to invite international election observers. Second, requests for UN observers from pseudo-democrats should increase after the UN sends the first symbolic missions. Third, these requests should continue because there is some evidence that this strategy works. For example, the symbolic UN presence should be mentioned in Western media sources. Fourth, there should be little evidence of Western states initially complaining about a decline in UN electoral assistance. Fifth, as the number of symbolic missions deployed to non-democratizing states increases, UN officials should face accusations of legitimizing pseudo-democrats.

My argument would be further strengthened if there was pressure to align during periods of disparate talk and action (1989-1991 and 1993-1996), but this pressure was overwhelmed by countervailing ones that sustained the disparity. This requires showing that some UN officials felt pressure to align talk and action—even if the UNSG chose to ignore this pressure. Where talk and action did align, I need to demonstrate that talk and

action did not do so exclusively for reasons besides the risks associated with disparate talk and action. Three factors in particular might explain change at the UN: Changes in the market for electoral assistance, changes in US preferences, and changes in the personal beliefs of the Secretary-General. The market for electoral assistance changes in response to state demand for assistance or in the number of organizations supplying assistance. Demand shifts when the number of states transitioning to democracy changes or the types of assistance they find useful changes. The UN will also compete with more NGOs and regional organizations if donor states increase funding for assistance. Even in the absence of shifts in funding availability, the UN may be forced to change the way it provides electoral assistance and steer away from areas in which it cannot compete with NGOs. For instance, the UN has a harder time in the electoral observation market than NGOs because it has to be more sensitive to accusations of interference.

US preferences toward UN democracy promotion can change for domestic reasons when, for example, a change in the members of Congress or the Presidency empowers the UN's proponents or critics *or* empowers supporters or detractors of US democracy promotion. Alternatively, these preferences may change if high profile UN policy successes or policy failures—ones not directly involving UN democracy talk or action—have spillover effects. Finally, a UNSG may change his beliefs about UN democracy promotion over time or different UNSGs may hold different beliefs about it. A UNSG may come to believe democratization is critical to achieving other goals or building his legacy. A UNSG may also value democratization more than the others. Additionally, he may turn

to his bully pulpit more often than others because he believes it influences state behavior regardless of whether the UN takes action to back up his words.

To this end, I reject my argument about the risks of disparate talk and action if some combination of these factors accounts for the alignment of talk and action. For example, talk and action may have aligned in 1992 because the number of states transitioning to democracy increased and a vocal advocate of democratization became Secretary-General. Similarly, the alignment of talk and action in 1997 may have resulted from a change in US preferences, namely that technical assistance was cheaper and democratizing states needed the UN to help strengthen electoral institutions more than they needed UN observers. That said, these explanations weaken my argument only if the relevant actors were not themselves reacting to the UNSG's past disparate talk and action.

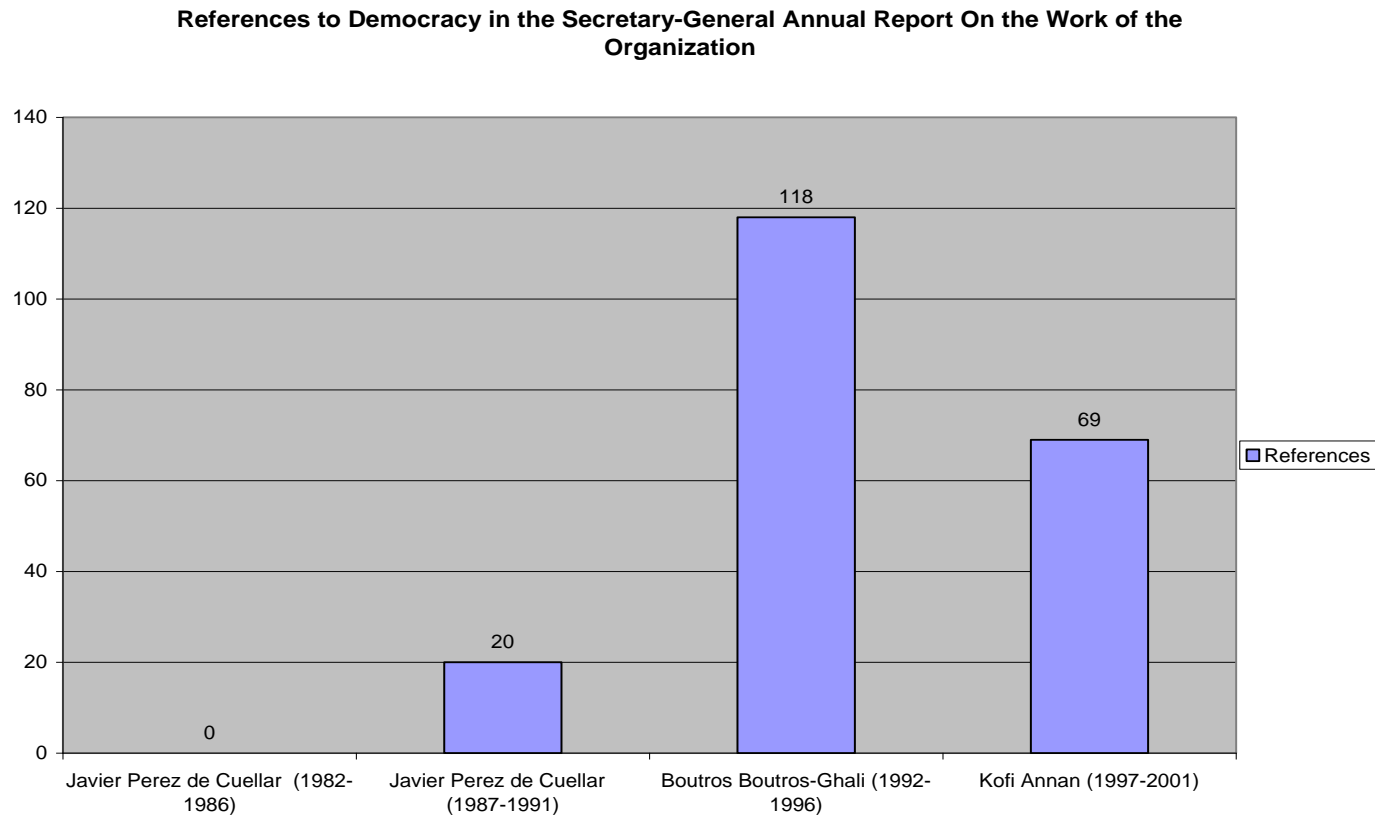
6.0 Democracy Talk and Action at the UN: 1982-2001

Democracy Talk: 1982-2001

Democracy talk by the Secretaries-General has changed significantly over twenty years. Talk includes public pronouncements, interviews, speeches, reports and proposals.¹² In quantitative terms, these differences can be dramatically illustrated by looking at the frequency of references to democracy in the annual reports of the UNSG on The Work of the Organization (Fig. 1.3). References increase nine-fold when Boutros-Ghali succeeds Perez de Cuellar then decrease by nearly fifty percent under Annan.

¹² The UNSG, the Council, the Assembly and the specialized agencies all make public statements. However, it is the UNSG that most audiences expect to speak for the Organization

Figure 1.3



Note: Includes all references to some variation of “democracy,” “democratization,” election,” or “electoral.” Excluded are references to an election simply taking place, elections within the UN system, and to the democratization of the UN system.

The 1996 *Annual Report on the Work of the Organization* in which Boutros-Ghali included his *Agenda for Democratization* is also excluded.

Source: UNGA, *Reports of the Secretary on the Work of the Organization*, 1982-2001

Furthermore, there were important differences in the themes and messages stressed by each Secretary-General. Javier Perez de Cuellar rarely talked about democratization or UN democracy promotion. In his Reports on the Work of the Organization, neither is mentioned until 1988. Furthermore, he downplayed invitations to expand electoral assistance. “It was not UN practice to monitor elections in sovereign states” he declared in 1983 in response to a request for observers from the government of Grenada.¹³ He reiterated his position to reporters in 1988 by bluntly stating that the UN “does not send observers to elections...it does not take part in political elections.”¹⁴ Even after observing elections in Nicaragua (1990) and Haiti (1991), he maintained that election observation was an “exceptional” activity.¹⁵ He supported the view that as “a general rule” observing elections would infringe upon Article 2, Paragraph 7 of the UN Charter which prohibited interference in internal matters.¹⁶

By contrast, Boutros Boutros-Ghali made democracy a central theme in public pronouncements. The best illustration of his rhetorical commitment to democracy was an elaborate position paper entitled an *Agenda for Democratization* (1996). However, rhetorical support for democracy can be found throughout his tenure. The Secretary-General noted that, “Cooperation for democratization was one of the most promising

¹³ Claude Robinson (1984), “Grenada: UN Turns Down Request for Election Observer Team.” *IPS—Inter Press Services*, November 26.

¹⁴ UN Department of Public Information. *Press Conference of the Secretary-General*. New York July 5, 1988.

¹⁵ UNGA, Annual Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization (A/46/1). Sept. 13, 1991.

¹⁶ United Nations Office of Legal Affairs (1990), *United Nations Juridical Yearbook*, 1990. Retrieved from http://untreaty.un.org/cod/UNJuridicalYearbook/html/volumes/1990/dtSearch/Search_Forms/dtSearch.html : 255.

initiatives for progress” creating “new momentum for this great United Nations project.”¹⁷ “New and revitalized democracies,” he pointed out, “have appeared in every part of the globe.”¹⁸ Moreover, countries requesting electoral assistance “particularly value a UN role as a means of obtaining needed assistance while avoiding the perception of outside intervention.”¹⁹ As a result, democracy was now an “essential objective”²⁰ and “a UN priority.”²¹ To this end, he proposed “a new integrated vision of peace and progress, encompassing international peace and security, economic and social development and democracy and respect for human rights.”²²

The tone and content of the rhetoric shifted again under Kofi Annan. Unlike his predecessor, he took for granted that democratic governance was “universally recognized.”²³ When heads of state gathered at the 1997 Organization for African Union (OAU) meeting, he publicly proposed they commit to non-recognition of governments who overthrow elected governments. Authoritarian leaders who only paid lip service to

¹⁷ Boutros-Ghali, “Address to the UN General Assembly,” New York. October 25, 1995. The argument that there was a growing acceptance of the UN role in democracy promotion was consistent throughout his term. For example, on election to the Office, he declared that the UN has “a role in strengthening fundamental freedoms and democratic institutions.” See Boutros-Ghali, “Inaugural Address to the General Assembly on Appointment to Secretary-General” (A/47/PV.83). New York. Dec. 3, 1991. Speech. At roughly the middle of his term, he noted that “the United Nations must play a role in favour of peace, development and democracy.” See Boutros-Ghali, 1994, Address to the Olof Palme Foundation,” Stockholm, Sweden. April 20, 1994. Speech. And in his final day in office, he wrote that “the phenomenon of democratization has had a marked impact on the United Nations... virtually no area of United Nations activity has been left untouched.” Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 1996, *An Agenda for Democratization*, New York: Department of Public Information: 2.

¹⁸ UN Department of Public Information, *Press Statement of the UN Secretary-General*, New York. November 19, 1995.

¹⁹ Boutros-Ghali, *Letter to the G7*, June 15, 1995.

²⁰ Boutros-Ghali, “Address on Restoration of Aristide government in Haiti,” Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Oct. 18, 1995. Speech.

²¹ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, “Address to the General Assembly on the Occasion of the United Nations 50th Anniversary Ceremony,” New York, USA. June 26, 1995. Speech.

²² Boutros-Ghali, “Address to the Twelfth World Assembly of Youth,” Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. April 3, 1993. Speech.

²³ Kofi Annan. “Address to the First Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies,” Warsaw, Poland. June 27, 2000. Speech.

democratization were also targeted. These so-called “fig leaf democracies” were “attempts to gain international recognition...by pretending to observe democratic principles.” Member states, he argued, “must be no less vigilant in condemning those who would overturn democracy in more subtle, yet equally destructive ways.”²⁴ To undermine ‘fig leaf’ democrats, Annan also talked about changing the focus of how the international community supported democratization. He argued that early UN programs had been too narrowly focused on elections. Consequently, these programs failed to consolidate gains by strengthening the democratic institutions that constrained pseudo-democrats. This meant re-thinking electoral assistance. “The focus was shifting,” he wrote in his first report on electoral assistance, “away from specific events surrounding Election Day to the consolidation of institutions and processes that are essential to viable democracies.”²⁵

Democracy Action: Electoral Assistance: 1982-2001

To trace changes in UN democracy action, I use electoral assistance as a proxy for UN democracy action. Like most proxies, it paints an imperfect picture. UN agencies take a wide range of actions that could justifiably be called democracy assistance. Moreover, elections are just one element of democratization, and elections do not ensure a successful democratic transition or consolidation (Carothers, 2004). Since the early-1990s, UN agencies have acknowledged as much and provided assistance to boost civil society participation, promote human rights, strengthen democratic institutions and the

²⁴ Kofi Annan. “Address at the UN to the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments,” New York. Aug. 31, 2000. Speech.

²⁵ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/52/474). October 16, 1997.

rule of law, empower women, implement decentralization processes, and build-up political parties (Newman and Rich, 2004; Ponzio, 2004).

Though electoral assistance is an imperfect proxy, it is nonetheless the most reliable one. First, elections are *sine qua non* for democracy. Second, electoral assistance is central to other forms of democracy assistance from an organizational standpoint. As Newman and Rich (2004, 16) note, electoral assistance provides the UN system,

with a strategic entry point for broader, long-term democratic governance programming. Successful elections are critical in establishing political legitimacy within countries seeking to make a transition towards democracy and away from more authoritarian (and sometimes violent) rule. Effective civic and voter-education programmes, both prior to and following elections, help expand democratic participation.

Third, the data on electoral assistance are more reliable. Throughout the thirteen year period, the UNSG listed for the Assembly each request for UN electoral assistance, any assistance he offered, and the type of assistance he provided. Over this period, the UNSG received over 240 requests—making it the most common form of democracy assistance. The high volume of electoral assistance (combined with data availability) makes it possible to identify fluctuations in ‘action.’ Finally, states can make multiple requests for electoral assistance. Other forms of democracy assistance are requested infrequently or solely during the transition or consolidation stage of democratization. By contrast,

democratizing states request electoral assistance during all stages, so demand should not increase or decrease because most democratizing states are at one stage or another.

Like democracy talk, electoral assistance varied significantly across the Secretaries-General. That said, variation in action is not well captured by looking strictly at the total volume of electoral assistance authorized annually. For example, the volume of assistance expanded drastically in 1992 under Boutros-Ghali. However, some types of assistance are more costly and politically sensitive than others.²⁶ Under Boutros-Ghali, much of this assistance was low cost and involved one or two UN officials—especially after 1992. In fact, the UN essentially stopped authorizing electoral observation missions after that year. Thus, I considered how the volume of different types of assistance changed to better capture how action changed. Briefly, there are five types of assistance (see Chapter 2 for a more complete description).

Organize and Conduct are the most expensive and intrusive form of electoral assistance. The UN essentially acts as a national election authority and is responsible for designing electoral laws, registering voters, and administering and certifying the election.

Observation (or verification) missions are the second most costly and politically sensitive type of assistance. UN observers must monitor the widest possible geographic region and all phases of an election process. These missions are politically sensitive because UN

²⁶ Politically sensitive is defined as requiring the UNSG to administer or publicly judge the quality of domestic political institutions and processes like elections. Much of this discussion is from the UN Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) website found at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa/ead/> and from an overview of the types of assistance in Ludwig, 1995; 2004.

officials make a public statement on the election, and therefore, the UN confers or denies its legitimacy on a government.

Coordination and Support is a low cost and moderately intrusive form of electoral assistance. In most cases, a handful of UN officials form a temporary Electoral Assistance Secretariat (EAS) that coordinates international observers from other states as well as regional and non-governmental organizations.²⁷ It is a low cost mission because states pay for their own observers, and an additional fee to cover the cost of the EAS. The UN does not make a public statement about whether the election was free and fair.

Follow and Report missions are the least costly and least politically sensitive. These missions involve one or two UN officials following the election and submitting an internal report to the Secretary-General. According to the Secretary-General, follow and report “lends the largely symbolic presence of the United Nations” to the election.²⁸

Technical Assistance is more costly than follow and report but is seldom politically sensitive. It includes assisting national electoral authorities on matters such as drafting electoral laws, voter registration, poll-worker training and civic education. The costs are lower than observation but vary widely depending on the duration of assistance and the services provided. Assistance is low profile and seldom politically sensitive because UN officials do not publicly assess the actual election.

²⁷ More rarely, the UN has helped to train and financially support domestic NGOs responsible for monitoring elections. Support for domestic observers has occurred in Mexico, Kenya and Indonesia.

²⁸ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/48/590). November 18, 1993.

Table 1.1
Types of Electoral Assistance

	Mandate Required from Security Council or General Assembly?	Cost	Political Sensitivity	Most Authorized Under (% of all assistance)
1. Observation and Organization	Yes	High	High	Perez de Cuellar (50%)
2. Coordinate and Support	No	Low	Moderate	Boutros-Ghali (26%) and Annan (29%)
3. Follow and Report	No	Low	Low	Boutros-Ghali (28%)
4. Technical Assistance	No	Moderate	Low to Moderate	Annan (60%)

Source: Ludwig, 1995; 2004 and UNGA. Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections. 1991; 1992; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1996; 1997; 1999; 2001; 2003.

I collected and analyzed data on electoral assistance authorized from 1982-2001 listed in Secretariat reports.²⁹ The data suggests that the dominant types of electoral assistance varied significantly across the Secretaries-General (Table 1). When Javier Perez de Cuellar (1982-1991) became Secretary-General, the UN did not monitor elections in sovereign states and very rarely offered even technical assistance. Indeed, electoral observation was strictly limited to observing elections in non-sovereign territories. However, the situation changed in 1989 when the UN sent observers to Nicaragua. Over the next three years, the UN authorized the most complex, costly and politically controversial missions of the entire twenty year period. In addition, electoral assistance became a permanent part of the Secretariat in 1991 when the Assembly instructed the UNSG to appoint a Focal Point for Electoral Assistance supported by a small staff.

Electoral assistance initially continued to expand under Boutros-Ghali. In 1992, the UN authorized new observation missions in Eritrea and Mozambique and technical assistance grew six-fold from 1991 (Fig. 1.4). However, electoral assistance declined thereafter. Few new observation missions were authorized after 1992 and the number of technical assistance missions dropped significantly. Though the UNSG seldom rejected requests for assistance, the UNSG usually authorized a different type of assistance than the one requested. This was particularly true of the numerous requests for observers. Requesting

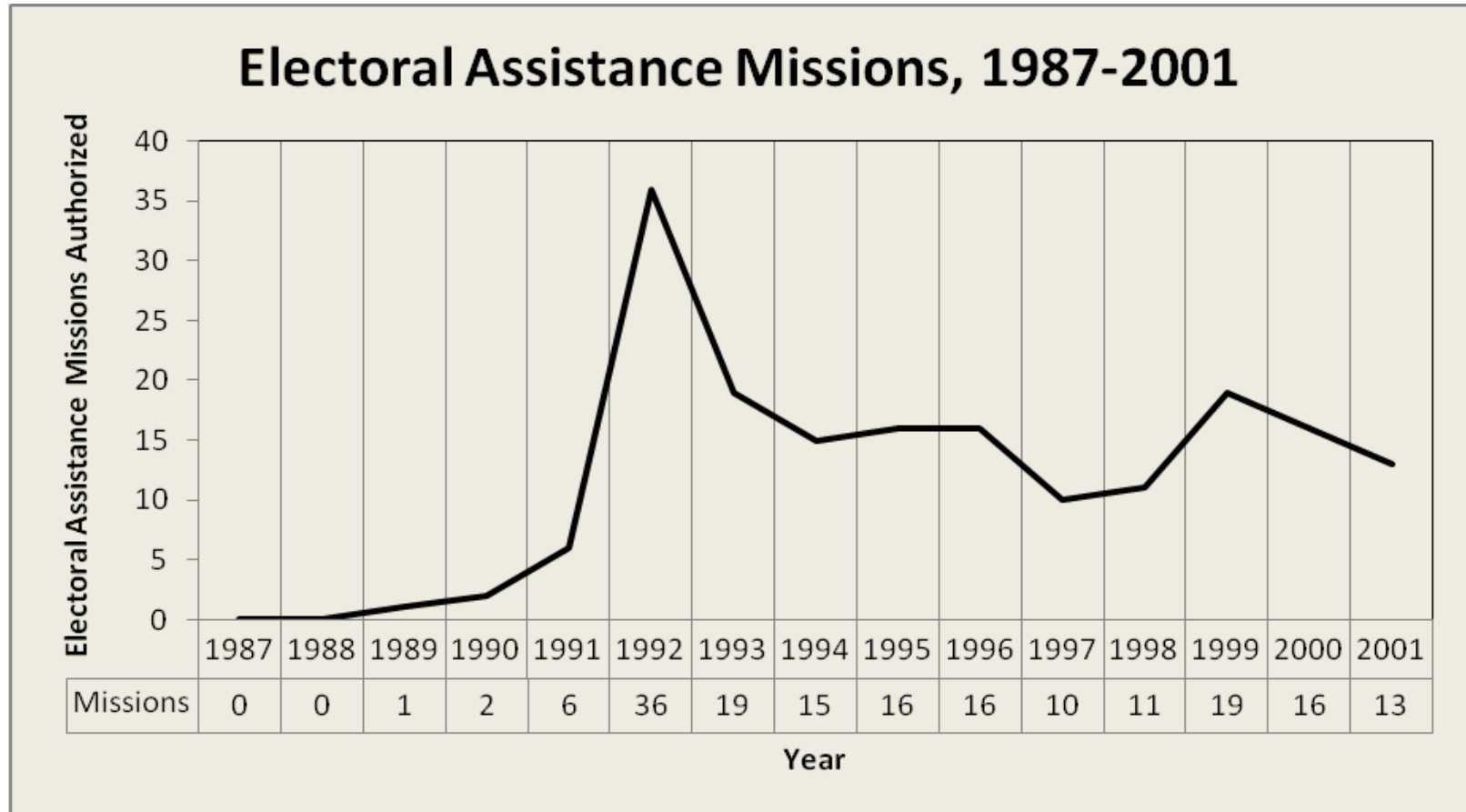
²⁹ In 1991, the Assembly directed the UNSG Secretary-General catalogue all requests for electoral assistance and any assistance provided. *See UNGA.Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections*. 1991; 1992; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1996; 1997; 1999; 2001. After 2001, these reports substituted illustrative examples of missions for the list of requests for assistance and responses to those requests.

states frequently received less costly and politically sensitive assistance: most often follow and report (Fig. 1.5).

In Kofi Annan's (1997-2001) first term, demand for assistance stayed high but the type of assistance changed again. Observation was still rare but so was follow and report. In fact, follow and report was essentially eliminated as a form of electoral assistance. Instead, technical assistance constituted a larger proportion of electoral assistance (Fig. 1.6). Technical assistance missions also grew more complex as they moved beyond assisting states prepare for upcoming elections towards longer-term projects designed to strengthen electoral institutions.

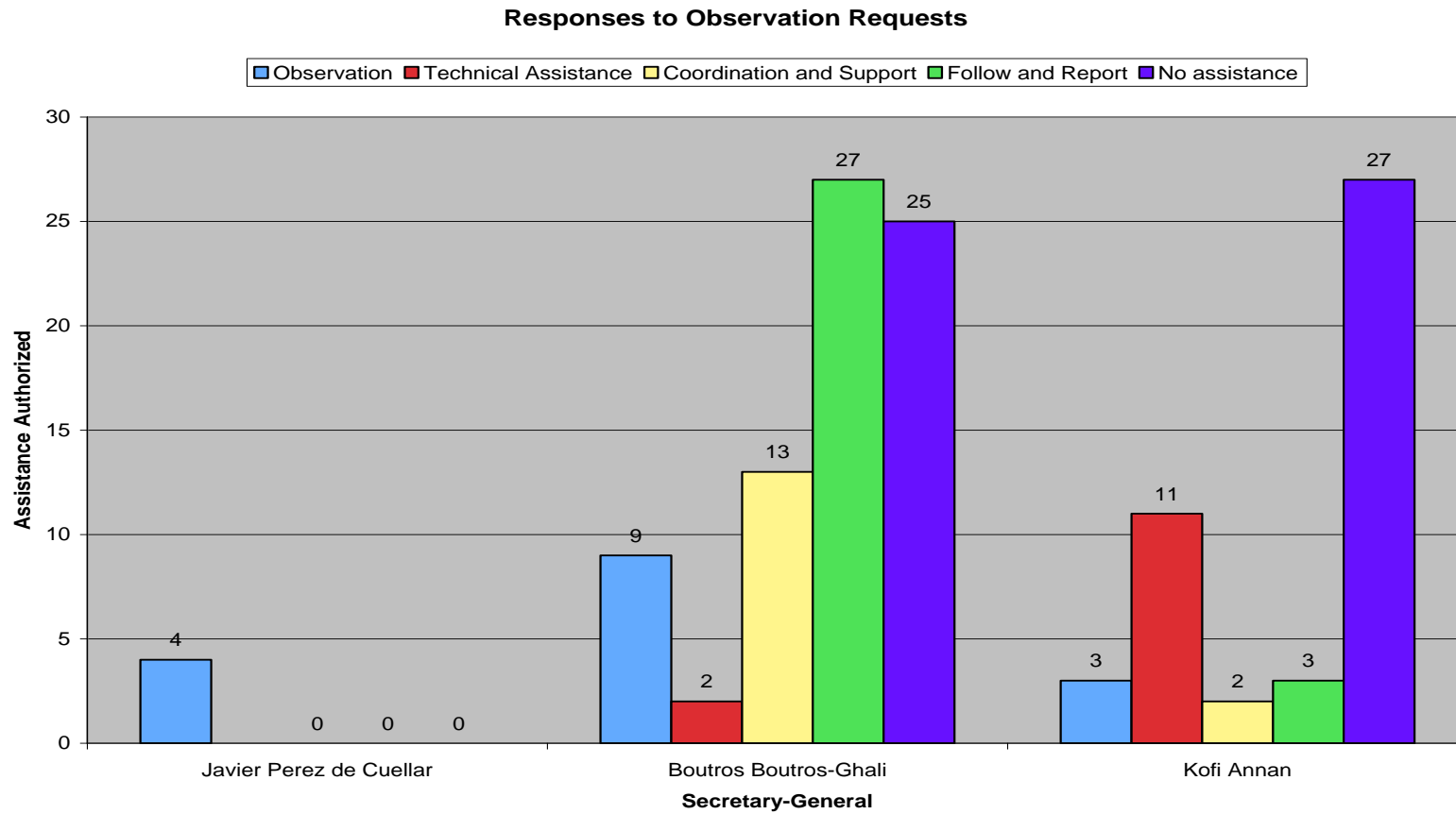
To summarize, the combination of talk and action differed in each period. For the majority of Perez de Cuellar's term, the Organization avoided democratization talk and action. That said, the end of his term was characterized by action without talk. The UN authorized a number of large observation missions in his last three years even though he cautioned against expanding electoral observation. Under Boutros Boutros-Ghali, talk and action initially aligned in 1992. However, disparate talk and action re-emerged in 1993 as a decline in action did not result in a proportional decline in talk. Finally, the gap between talk and action narrowed significantly under Kofi Annan (1997-2001).

Figure 1.4



Source: Ludwig, 1995; 2004 and UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections*. 1991; 1992; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1996; 1997; 1999; 2001; 2003.

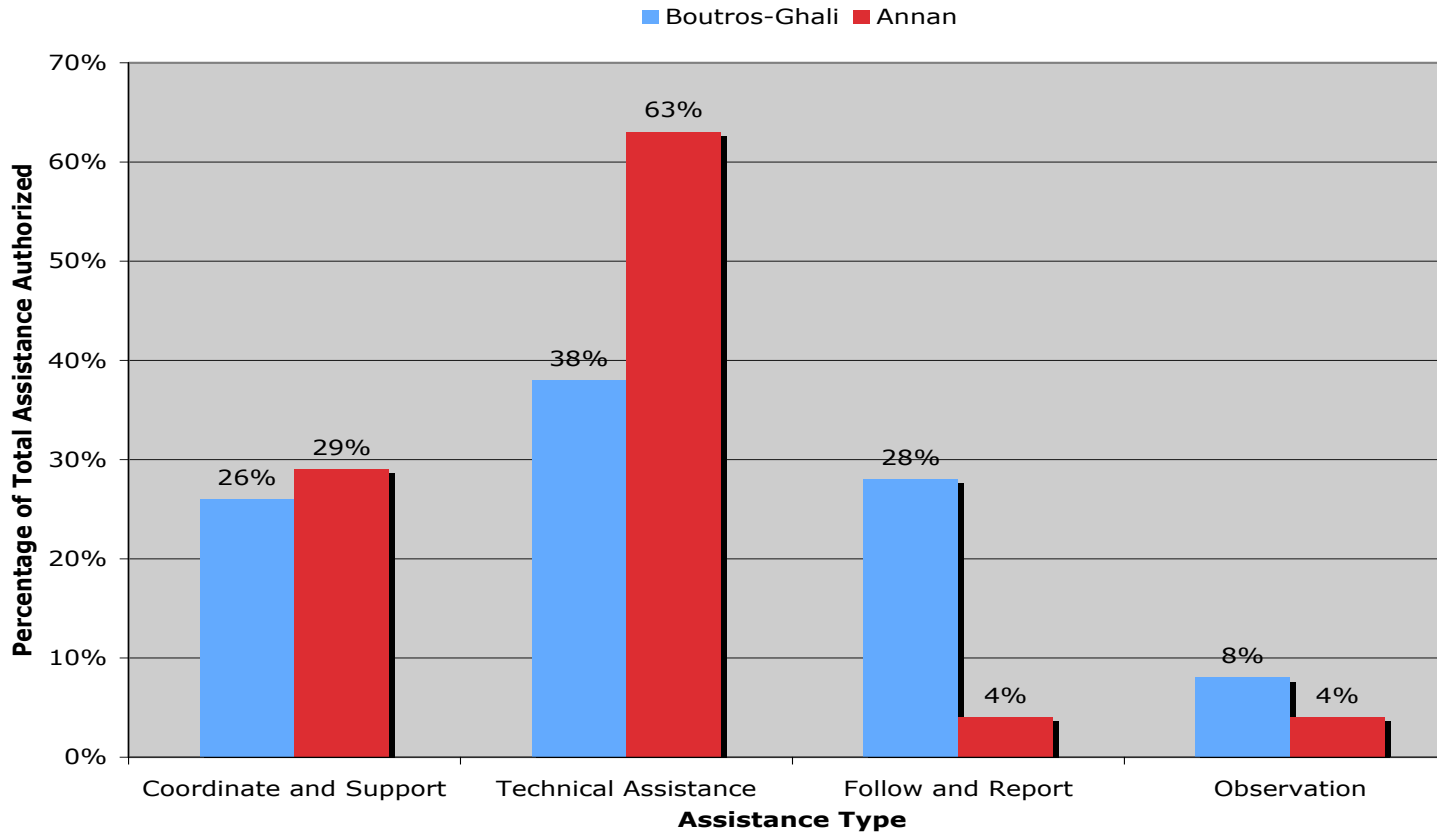
Figure 1.5



Source: Ludwig, 1995; 2004 and UNGA. Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections. 1991; 1992; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1996; 1997; 1999; 2001; 2003

Figure 1.6

Assistance Type as Percentage of Total Assistance



Source: Ludwig, 1995; 2004 and UNGA. Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections. 1991; 1992; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1996; 1997; 1999; 2001; 2003.

6.0 Overview of the Dissertation: Empirical Chapters

The empirical chapters investigate what caused UN democracy promotion to fluctuate between hypocrisy and alignment. Overall, they demonstrate that there was pressure on the UNSG to keep talk aligned with action, even as conflicts with member states often pulled talk and action apart. At times, the pressure to align talk and action was stronger—and alignment followed. At other times, conflicts with member states were stronger than the pressure to align—and disparate talk and action resulted. Unfortunately the empirical chapters do not suggest a generalizable theory of when one pressure will be stronger than the other. However, they support the two primary arguments of this dissertation. First, disparate talk and action is caused by irreconcilable conflicts with member states—particularly the contradictory demands of different subsets of states and the changing preferences of the most powerful state. Second, disparate talk and action weakens the UNSG’s commitment to action, and it risks facilitating state hypocrisy.

Chapter three examines why the UN started observing elections despite the cautious talk of Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar. From 1982 to 1988, Perez de Cuellar regularly declined observer requests and generally avoided advocating for democratization. Even after the first observers were sent to Nicaragua (1989), the UNSG labeled the mission ‘exceptional,’ warned against rapidly expanding UN electoral observation, and made few statements supporting democratization. Despite this cautious rhetoric, a small group of Central American states persuaded the UNSG to recommend that the Assembly authorize an electoral observation mission in Nicaragua. States wary of UN electoral observation, including China and the US, agreed to make an exception only after the UNSG assured

them that they would not be setting a precedent. However, Nicaragua triggered a process of normalizing deviance. The Nicaraguan exception created informal rules that would legitimize deviating from the formal rule prohibiting election observation. Consequently, these informal rules helped identify and legitimize other ‘exceptions.’ As these exceptions accumulated, the informal rules became formalized, and by the end of 1991, electoral assistance was a ‘normal’ UN activity.

Chapter four investigates what happened once electoral assistance was a normal activity. Specifically, talk and action aligned in 1992 because the US and democratizing states pressured the UNSG to eliminate disparate talk and action. When electoral assistance became a normal activity, this group of states changed their expectations. Action without talk was not good enough because it implied that the UNSG was not committed to expanding electoral assistance. To this end, the US wanted a Secretary-General with a demonstrated record promoting democracy—and Boutros-Ghali did not have that record. In response, Boutros-Ghali successfully persuaded US officials not to veto his candidacy partially by making democratization a central theme of his campaign. Once in office, the UNSG used his bully pulpit to reaffirm this commitment and strengthen US-UN relations. The Council invited Boutros-Ghali to recommend ways to improve UN peace operations. Boutros-Ghali eagerly accepted this invitation and his (1992) high profile *Agenda for Peace* urged that (a) future peace operations include building democratic institutions, and (b) electoral assistance be expanded as a means of preventing civil wars. In turn, the Administration supported the UNSG’s Electoral Assistance Unit, sponsored a

new Trust Fund for Electoral Assistance, and sought additional funding from Congress specifically for UN electoral assistance.

Chapter five explores why the alignment of talk and action (1992) gave way to a period of talk without action (1993-1996). In other words, what pulled talk and action apart? I show that talk without action emerged because earlier US decisions conflicted with later ones. In 1992, the US successfully pressed for the expansion of UN electoral assistance and the appointment of the outspoken Boutros-Ghali as Secretary-General. In 1993, US funding cuts forced the UN to take less action, but they could not force a change in UN leadership. The outspoken Boutros-Ghali remained, and the deterioration in US-UN relations convinced him to keep talking about democratization. This talk would signal that he shared American values and interests, or failing that, it would be his “swan song” at the UN.

Chapter six explores how talk without action (1993-1996) was exploited by pseudo-democrats to legitimize fraudulent elections. After 1993, most Western audiences still considered the UN a focal point for electoral assistance, and they mistakenly believed that if UN officials were sent to an election, these officials were observing that election. Boutros-Ghali’s rhetoric reinforced this inaccurate belief by talking up past observation missions and his commitment to democratization. Pseudo-democrats invited the UNSG to observe elections, knowing that the UNSG would decline or send a few UN officials prohibited from publicizing evidence of electoral fraud. Then they used these UN ‘observers’ as evidence that they were holding fair elections. By 1995, UN electoral

officials were concerned that the UN was legitimizing fraudulent elections. A few Western diplomats had already asked the UNSG privately to avoid pseudo-democratic elections, and other international election observers had good reason to complain publicly that the UN was undermining their work. Consequently, these officials pressured the UNSG to align talk and action. Boutros-Ghali largely resisted, and relations with the bureaucracy grew tense. However, this pressure produced some modest reform, including a reduction in symbolic follow and report missions.

Chapter seven examines why talk and action aligned under Kofi Annan, and why it stayed aligned. By 1997, the US did not want the UNSG to expand electoral assistance, so there was a smaller incentive for the UNSG to send costly signals about his commitment to democratization. Indeed, modest amounts of talk would suffice. Annan sent a weak but important signal by condemning pseudo-democratic practices. Pseudo-democrats responded by openly criticizing Annan's comments. These criticisms helped disassociate the UN from pseudo-democrats. Similarly, modest amounts of talk about the value of technical assistance reassured democratizing states that the UN was not abandoning them, while reassuring the US that it would keep costs down. In return, the US, EU, and democratizing states rewarded the UNSG. Democratizing states requested more technical assistance and donor states funded more technical assistance. For the first time in years, the membership even approved additional resources for the Electoral Assistance Division to hire new staff and election experts.

Besides the case study chapters, two other chapters are included. Chapter two offers a broad overview of the mechanics of UN electoral assistance. It describes the UN's earliest electoral assistance to non-sovereign territories as well as the administrative structures and the different types of electoral assistance that make-up the electoral assistance currently provided to sovereign states. In the concluding chapter, I re-examine the key theoretical findings. In addition, these findings are applied to more recent developments in electoral assistance. In particular, I offer preliminary evidence that UN democracy promotion is increasingly action without talk.

7.0 Conclusion

That the UN promotes democracy at all is far from obvious. The UN Charter makes no reference to democracy, the US and EU prefer to fund other democracy assistance providers, and many members are wary that promoting democracy violates the principle of noninterference. Given these constraints, it is perhaps unsurprising that disparities between talk and action periodically emerged during the first thirteen years that the UNSG promoted democracy.

This dissertation investigates the causes and consequences of these disparities. It shows that disparate talk and action, or organized hypocrisy, was an understandable response to irreconcilable conflicts with member states. Ideally, the UN membership would have agreed on a sustained course of action. However in practice, interest conflicts were common; members disagreed on a course of action and powerful states like the US did not provide sustained support for democracy assistance. Under these conditions, saying one thing and doing another was often the 'least bad option.' That said, disparate talk and

action risked legitimizing hypocritical pseudo-democrats and raising doubts about the UNSG's commitment to democratization. As a result, the disparity itself created pressures for alignment from members who valued UN action.

Future research should examine whether the same pressures to align talk and action also apply to human rights, peacekeeping or development—at the UN and in other IOs. It would also be helpful to understand whether there are pressures to align talk and action in more sociological institutions—ones where member states do not delegate action, and there is no leader to speak on the institution's behalf. For example, Krasner (1999) has pointed out that the hypocrisy of state sovereignty has been going on for centuries. State leaders want sovereignty rules that provide some predictability in their daily interactions, but do not want rules that constrain them when pressing national interests are at stake. However, there is good reason to revisit this finding. This study suggests that states seldom want hypocrisy, and Finnemore (2004) observes that the hypocrisy of sovereignty is less persistent than Krasner claims—sovereignty talk and action are often aligned.³⁰

Furthermore, scholars have new cases for studying whether there is pressure to eliminate hypocrisy as the rules of sovereignty change. This is particularly true of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). Hypocrisy has been a central feature of this emerging norm. The UN membership talks about intervening to protect vulnerable populations. Yet, as the tragic events in Darfur, Congo, and Sri Lanka make clear, the Council and Assembly do not always take forceful action to prevent mass atrocities. Few Great

³⁰ Finnemore finds that the Great Powers created norms about when military intervention was justified, and took action consistent with those norms. For instance, Great Powers justifying intervention to collect debts generally took over custom houses.

Powers back up talk with action, and the UN membership remains divided on whether R2P legitimizes humanitarian intervention. Given this division, disparate talk and action seems unsurprising, and perhaps helps the R2P muddle through its tumultuous first years. That said, it is tempting see the Council's recent actions in Libya (2011) as evidence that action is finally aligning with talk. Alternatively, this action could potentially deepen the conflict between states—producing more hypocrisy. Regardless, it will test how institutions change when they are being pulled in all directions.

Chapter 2

An Overview of UN Electoral Assistance

1.0 Introduction

On June 26, 1995, Boutros-Ghali stood before a large gathering of dignitaries in San Francisco and declared that “democracy has become a UN priority.”³¹ The Secretary-General had looked forward to this opportunity. It was the 50th Anniversary of the signing of the UN Charter and many of the world’s leaders, including US President Clinton, were in attendance. Much was on the line. The end of Boutros-Ghali’s first term was approaching and the Clinton Administration had hinted that it might oppose giving him a second. His speech needed to persuade the President that he shared the President’s commitment to democracy. It needed to persuade the President that under his command, the UN was actively promoting democracy and would continue to do so.

Boutros-Ghali, his predecessors, and his successors had much to talk about. Since decolonization, the UN had assisted colonial peoples hold free and fair elections and plebiscites. Under Perez de Cuellar, UN observers helped Nicaragua and Haiti hold their first truly multi-party elections. When Boutros-Ghali took office, the Security Council asked him to provide substantial electoral assistance in hopes of establishing democracy in post-conflict Cambodia, Angola, Mozambique and El Salvador. To meet the growing demand for electoral assistance, Boutros-Ghali had even established a new agency to offer a wider assortment of electoral assistance.

³¹ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, “Address to the General Assembly on the Occasion of the United Nations 50th Anniversary Ceremony,” New York, USA. June 26, 1995. Speech.

Since then, a number of other UN activities came to be associated with the promotion of democracy. For example, UN mediators press armed groups that peace could best be achieved by agreeing to create a democratic post-conflict state. The High Commissioner for Human Rights helps states strengthen the rule of law and democratic institutions to improve human rights. In the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, monitoring ceasefires, strengthening civilian oversight of the military, and disarming and reintegrating former rebels became necessary conditions to hold elections and build democratic institutions. Outside the Secretariat, the UN Office of Project Services, the UN Development Fund for Women, the UN Volunteers, the UN Capital development Fund, the UN Center for Human Settlements and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees all claim some form of democracy promotion in their operational activities. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) has cited democracy promotion as critical to their development mandate (Ponzio, 2004).

Yet, electoral assistance remains the foundation of UN democracy promotion. The UN responded to 240 requests for electoral assistance between 1989 and 2001. Since then, the EAD has received another 150 requests. Of these 391 requests, the EAD has provided assistance 289 times (about 74% of all requests).³² Other agencies frame their democracy promotion activities as a means to other important ends—like human rights, peace or development. By contrast, electoral assistance is associated primarily with the promotion of democracy. In 1993, the Assembly resolved that electoral assistance should be considered crucial to the consolidation of democratization. Two years later, the title of the annual resolution re-authorizing UN electoral assistance was amended to recognize

³² Economic and Social Council (2007), “Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of political affairs: electoral assistance.” E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.1, March 29.

that the goal was “the promotion of democratization.” Elections are the *sine qua non* of democracy and electoral assistance was needed both in the transition to and consolidation of democracy.

That said, UN electoral assistance is one of the most overlooked and misunderstood parts of the UN system. It is overlooked because few academics or journalists have covered it. For example, there are few articles that have examined the workings of the Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) since it was created back in 1992. The EAD’s obscurity is hardly surprising. Since the mid-1990s, electoral assistance has largely involved UN officials working behind the scenes to provide expert advice or coordinate other observers. In many instances, UN officials have left when foreign media gather to cover Election Day. When they are present, their activities—improving voter registration; carrying out civic education programs; or distributing handbooks to other observers—are less visually compelling than watching citizens exercise their democratic right to vote under the careful watch of official observers from other organizations. Moreover, while these observers publicize their findings, UN officials are barred from talking to reporters. Indeed, UN officials are uncomfortable with the UN presence being mentioned by the media.

It is misunderstood because casual observers tend to associate UN electoral assistance with UN election observation. As I show in a later chapter, this misunderstanding is partially a result of Boutros-Ghali talking *as if* the UN was active in observing elections throughout the 1990s. This rhetoric better captures an earlier period of electoral assistance; a period that ended in the early 1990s. During this early period, the UN had prominently monitored elections first in non-sovereign states and then in sovereign ones.

In fact, public interest intensified when UN observers were sent to observe the 1990 Nicaraguan elections—the first observation mission in an independent state. This mission marked the beginning of modern UN electoral assistance. Over the next few years, the UN continued to draw significant attention when it sent hundreds of observers to monitor elections in Haiti, Angola, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Mozambique and South Africa. Since these missions, the UN has authorized few others. Indeed, when Kofi Annan agreed to send a large number of UN election observers to Cote D'Ivoire in 2005, he noted it was an “exceptional measure” not seen since the UN had monitored the Mozambique election over a decade earlier.

Given that electoral assistance is overlooked and misunderstood, this chapter provides a primer on UN electoral assistance. The first section offers a brief overview of the UN's earliest experiences observing elections in non-sovereign states with a special emphasis on the largest and one of the most recent in Namibia. The second section examines the types of assistance, procedures and administrative structures that constitute modern electoral assistance. It describes how UN electoral assistance typically works. The intention is to help the reader appreciate the fundamentals of electoral assistance as she navigates the subsequent chapters that explain how and why electoral assistance evolved.

2.0 The Early History of UN Electoral Assistance

“While the involvement of the UN in the verification of electoral processes was relatively new and still a matter of debate,” wrote the UNSG in 1991, “the history of the Organization's involvement in the conduct of popular consultations or elections in colonial territories is rich and varied and of long-standing.” In fact, the earliest

observation missions preceded even decolonization. In 1947, the Assembly supported a US proposal to create a UN Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) that would, among other things, monitor upcoming legislative elections. It was the Assembly's hope that elections would end US and Soviet occupation of Korea by establishing a unified and independent state. Unification, however, never occurred. The UN observed the elections that brought Syngman Rhee to power in the south, but the Soviet military authority in the north refused to cooperate and Korea remained divided (Gordenker, 1959; Stoetling 1992).

Interestingly, UN electoral assistance did not end with South Korean statehood. In 1949 the Assembly created a new UN Commission on Korea (UNCOK) whose mandate included a vague provision to "be available for observation and consultation in the development of representative government based on the freely elected will of the people." This mandate left open the possibility of the UN observing elections in a sovereign state. However, the possibility quickly evaporated when the UNCOK considered monitoring provincial bi-elections in May 1949. One commissioner protested that observation in a sovereign state "would violate the domestic jurisdiction reservation of the UN Charter" (Gordenker, 1959, 157).³³ Three years later, this argument was reaffirmed when the Assembly rejected a proposal to add election observation to a new UN Commission for Rehabilitation and Unification of Korea because it infringed on Korean sovereignty.³⁴

³³ Though the UN did ultimately follow the elections at the invitation of the South Korean government, it avoided making judgments about the fairness of the election or investigating possible violations. See Stoetling, 1992, 371.

³⁴ Despite this proscription, UNCURK monitored elections on its own initiatives and without an invitation from the South Korean government. It found "no irregularities." This is the only instance of UN

2.1 Decolonization: Electoral Assistance in Non-Sovereign States

Consequently, UN electoral assistance shifted to colonial societies in the mid-1950s.

Over the next three decades the UN would observe elections, plebiscites and referenda thirty times in non-sovereign territories across Africa and Asia.³⁵ Since the first missions in Togoland (1956, 1958) and Cameroon (1959), these missions were understood in the context of the right to self-determination. Exercising this right, the Assembly concluded, required non-self-governing peoples to “freely determine their political status” through elections.³⁶ To this end, the UN decided in its Resolution 1641 that “the UN could, when it deems it necessary, supervise [democratic] processes.”³⁷

In some respects, these missions varied significantly from modern electoral assistance missions. Most important, UN observers were only deployed in non-sovereign territories under the administration of the UN Trusteeship Council or member states. The missions also faced fewer difficulties securing funding. Missions were funded directly through the UN regular budgets or, more rarely, special peacekeeping assessments. Much of the cost was absorbed by the administering state responsible for organizing the election or referendum. Moreover, the UN typically sent less than thirty observers—a comparatively small number which made for an inexpensive mission by today’s standards.

At the same time, modern electoral assistance carried over many of the procedures used during decolonization. To send observers, the UN required a formal invitation from the

observation in the absence of a mandate and/or an invitation from the government or administering authority See Stoetling, 1992.

³⁵ The list of territories in which the UN has monitored elections is available in the Annex of UNSG report UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/46/609). November 22, 1991.

³⁶ Ibid. The basis for UN involvement was the right of peoples to self-determination found in the Charter, human rights treaties and multiple Assembly resolutions.

³⁷ Assembly Resolution 1541 of Dec. 6, 1960.

relevant administering authority of the territory. Depending on the specific circumstances, the UNSG or the Chairman Trusteeship Council would then deploy a preliminary mission to assess the situation and submit recommendations to the relevant UN political organ—the Assembly, the Council or the Trusteeship Council. The political organ would then mandate a range of possible electoral tasks. The most elaborate missions were led by a UN-appointed Commissioner who could help the administering state to draw up impartial electoral rules, develop ballot questions, provide electoral education and enforce electoral rules. More commonly, the UN was tasked with observing all phases of the electoral cycle to ensure fairness and impartiality. UN observers monitored the voter registration process, the political campaign, Election Day and electoral security. Once the polls closed, the UN watched the vote count and arranged for appeals and review. The mission concluded when the UN made public its observations and its approval (or disapproval) of the election to the relevant UN organ. These missions were generally considered effective. Many transitional plebiscites or elections took place in an atmosphere of mistrust and conflict. Impartial observers like the UN helped mitigate fears of electoral manipulation. In turn, more credible election facilitated a more orderly transition to self-government or independence. UN observers, therefore, “gradually came to be an accepted element in legitimizing those crucial transitions” (Franck, 1992).

2.2 Namibia

The decolonization mission that most influenced modern electoral assistance was also the largest and one of the last—the UN Transitional Assistance Group (UNTAG) in Namibia.

On March 21, 1990, Perez de Cuellar swore-in Sam Nujoma as Namibia's first president. For the UN, it was the end of a long journey. UN involvement in Namibia stretched all the way back to disputes in the immediate post-War over the territory's future. The dispute centered on South Africa's attempt to unilaterally end its mandate in Namibia by incorporating it as a South African province. In response, the Assembly and later the Council declared the move illegal and demanded authority over Namibia be turned over to the UN.³⁸ In 1976, Council Resolution 385 called for free elections in the territory under UN supervision. Shortly thereafter, a Contact Group of the Council's Western states was formed to explore ways of implementing the resolution through negotiations with South Africa, the indigenous SWAPO liberation movement and the African Front Line States.³⁹

Two years later, the Council adopted the Contact Group's Settlement Proposal. The proposal was a negotiated compromise that outlined a seven-month timetable and series of steps leading to elections and statehood. To verify each step was completed and supervise the election, the UNSG would appoint a Special Representative (SRSG) assisted by the UNTAG. However, the seven month timetable was quickly abandoned when a ceasefire never materialized. Instead, implementation remained stalled as South Africa, (with the support of the Reagan Administration) demanded any ceasefire be 'linked' to the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola—a condition not met until 1988.

³⁸ On Oct. 27, 1966, the Assembly passed resolution 21/245 terminating the South African mandate. In its 1967 Resolution 2248, the Assembly established a UN Council for South West Africa (ie Namibia) to "administer South West Africa until independence, with maximum possible participation of the people of the Territory." The Council affirmed these decisions in its Resolutions 264 (1969), 269 (1969), 276 (1970) and 301 (1971).

³⁹ The Contact Group included the US, UK, Canada, France and the Federal Republic of Germany. The Front Line States included Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania and Botswana. See Melber, 2004.

In 1989, UNTAG was finally established with a mandate to observe and verify elections that would lead to Namibian independence. This mission was both a continuation and a departure from past practice. On one hand, the legal basis for sending election observers to Namibia was hardly new or precedential. The mission was consistent with the rule that election observation be restricted to non self-governing territories. In other words, the purpose of UNTAG was not officially to support democratization. As Melber (2004, 236) puts it, “Independence and democracy are by no means identical. It was independence for Namibia that guided the UN intervention in the first place. Democracy figured at best as a complementary issue only.” Moreover, the mission was also procedurally consistent with its predecessors: It had the support of the Assembly and Council; a formal request was made by the South African government; a preliminary assessment mission was conducted; and observers would monitor all stages of the electoral process.

On the other hand, the UNSG (1998) rightly pointed out that the scope of mission made it “a category in itself.” Although officially South Africa was the administering authority, the local population’s deep mistrust meant the UN was given *de facto* authority to help organize the elections in hopes of increasing voter and international confidence in the election process. Perez de Cuellar’s appointed Special Representative, Marti Ahtisaari, not only monitored but also certified every stage of the electoral process – from the registration of voters to the tallying of votes. In addition, UNTAG monitored the demobilization of armed groups, mediated disputes, monitored South Africa security forces, reformed electoral laws and carried out a massive voter education campaign. The mission cost \$416m, and at its height, it included almost 8000 military and civilian

personnel including with 1753 UNTAG observers covering 358 polling stations on Election Day.

Despite security and demobilization problems, assessments of UNTAG were largely positive. The former Under-Secretary-General Marrack Goulding (2003, 139) recalled that UNTAG was, “of great importance in the evolution of the UN’s new role, for it was a conspicuous success and set high standards.” Perez de Cuellar himself reported that, “the electoral supervision was very thoroughly carried out.”⁴⁰ The SGSR was able to certify that all pre-election stages were relatively free of bias. Over 700,000 voters were registered and the civilian police monitors helped prevent voter intimidation. On Election Day, ninety-seven percent of voters turned out. In its independent report on UNTAG, the US-based National Democratic Institute (1989) concluded that “despite widespread pre-election concerns about the potential for violence, fraud and delay, balloting and vote counting were conducted in a peaceful and administratively fair manner.” The NDI report continued with a lengthy statement about the value of UNTAG and the prospects of UN electoral observation:

UNTAG played a critical role in ensuring the conduct of free and fair elections...The *sui generis* character of the Namibian situation notwithstanding, the successful UN effort in Namibia suggests that UN-supervised elections can play a role in resolving conflicts elsewhere, even longstanding ones.

⁴⁰ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/46/609). November 22, 1991.

UNTAG, therefore, first raised the possibility that UN electoral assistance might play a key role in future peacekeeping missions. As later chapters will demonstrate, UNTAG was explicitly the model for future missions, particularly one in Cambodia.

3.0 Modern Electoral Assistance

Shortly after UNTAG, the UN agreed to monitor elections in Nicaragua—the first observation mission in a sovereign state. Yet, Nicaragua was the tip of the iceberg with the UN agreeing to send observers to Haiti, Angola, and Cambodia over the next two years. There were few formal rules and procedures regulating the activity during these early years. Any member government could invite the Secretary-General to observe an election. Yet the Assembly and Council had not agreed on the criteria for accepting an invitation and there was no bureaucracy dedicated to coordinating the UN's response or implementing a decision.

For the most part, the UNSG followed the same procedures that were developed for observation in non-sovereign territories. The UNSG would dispatch a small team of UN officials to gauge public support for UN observers. In addition, the UNSG would request that the UN Development Program (UNDP) or the Center for Human Rights provide initial technical assistance—assistance that did not require a mandate from the Council or the Assembly. This technical assistance tended to help states prepare for elections. If the Assembly or Council authorized a mission, the UNSG negotiated terms of reference with the country. These terms of reference clarified the status of observers, what they were expected to monitor, and the responsibilities of the government. Funding for these missions was equally uncertain. In Nicaragua, the Assembly agreed to make an

additional assessment to the regular budget. In Haiti, the Assembly split over how to fund the mission, forcing Perez de Cuellar to pay for the mission out of his own budget. When the Council authorized electoral observation, it is paid for by a special peacekeeping assessment in addition to voluntary contributions.

3.1 Electoral Assistance under the EAU

Structures

These informal arrangements were eventually formalized starting in 1991 when the Secretary-General designated the Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs (DPA) to be the Focal Point for Electoral Assistance and re-assigned a few Department of Political Affairs (DPA) officials to assist him. A year later, the Electoral Assistance Unit (EAU) was established within the DPA. In 1994, the EAU was renamed the Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) and transferred to the Department of Peacekeeping (DPK). It was returned to the DPA the following year.

The EAD is responsible for recommending how the UN should respond to requests, designing electoral assistance programs, developing institutional memory, writing the annual report on electoral assistance to the Assembly, and coordinating implementation with other UN agencies. In addition to coordinating electoral assistance with regional organizations, the EAD has also set up a variety training workshops, conferences and information-sharing networks in collaboration with NGOs, other IOs, democratic states and UN agencies.

The EAD sets policy and occasionally the EAD staff will be sent to the field. The sixteen full-time EAD staff is supplemented by 1200 experts from the EAD's Roster of Electoral

Experts.⁴¹ Like other UN agencies, the EAD contracts out to experts where missions require technical skills unavailable within the UN system. To this end, part of the EAD's responsibility is administering the Roster and identifying appropriate candidates for specific assistance projects. In addition, the EAD may call on officials from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UN Development Program (UNDP), UN Volunteers (UNV) or UN Operations (UNOPS). Alternatively, the EAD can designate the UNDP as lead implementing agency, and in these cases, the UNDP helps the EAD design the program, identify donors, contract experts and manage funds for the project.

Funding

Most missions are funded through the Trust Fund for Electoral Observation administered by the EAD.⁴² Contributions to the fund are made voluntarily by member states that can choose to earmark their funds for a particular mission or give the UNSG discretion over how their contribution will be used. In practice, the available funds have seldom reflected demand for assistance. Indeed, the fund has gradually diminished since its creation in 1992. In October, 1994, the Trust sat at over \$8 million. A year later, the fund had been reduced to less than \$1.5 million, and by 2001 it sat at slightly over \$1 million.⁴³

Even these numbers are misleading. In most instances, UN and state officials are forced to seek out contributions to the Fund for the specific project rather dipping into a pool of

⁴¹ Economic and Social Council (2007), *Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of political affairs: electoral assistance*. E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.1, March 29.

⁴² UN General Assembly, 46th Sess. *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly. 46/137. Strengthening the Role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization* (A/RES/46/137) Dec. 17, 1991.

⁴³ See UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections*. 1991; 1992; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1996; 1997; 1999; 2001

existing funds. As a result, most contributions are earmarked for certain projects, leaving the EAD with few discretionary funds. For example, more than twenty five percent of the funds available in 1994 were earmarked by the US for upcoming elections in Haiti, and much of the remaining seventy five percent of the funds were pegged for Mexico and Mozambique. Ninety percent of the Trust by 2001 was earmarked for elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Requesting Assistance

To initiate any assistance, the Focal Point for Electoral Assistance must receive a written request from a recognized government. States can make a request at any time, but two months is generally required for most missions. Once a request is received, the EAD dispatches a small needs assessment mission (NAM) to make recommendations to the Focal Point. Over a period of seven to ten days, the NAM investigates whether assistance should be provided, and if so, the form of that assistance. UN officials meet with a variety of sectors of government, electoral authorities, civil society, opposition parties and the private sector. These meetings are predominantly to gauge whether there is broad societal support for UN assistance. However, these meetings are also used to work with local actors to design an assistance program to reduce implementation time if the mission is green lighted.⁴⁴

It is ultimately the UNSG, in consultation with the Focal Point, who gives the green light. In fact, the UNSG has three choices; he can (a) authorize assistance as requested, (b) deny the request, or (c) offer an alternative form of assistance than requested. The

⁴⁴ Ludwig 1995; 2004.

exceptions to this rule are invitations to observe elections or organize them. These forms of assistance are considered too costly and politically sensitive to be provided without a mandate from the Council or the Assembly. At the same time, the UNSG does have some discretion; he can choose to forward an invitation to a political organ, to reject it, or to offer an alternative form of assistance. The latter is not uncommon. For instance, starting in 1992, follow and report missions were often offered where states requested electoral assistance.

Forms of Assistance

The forms of assistance have changed dramatically over time. In his 1991 report to the Assembly, the UNSG specified two types of assistance: Technical assistance and electoral observation.⁴⁵ A year later, Boutros-Ghali added follow and report and coordinate and support missions.⁴⁶ However, follow and report was essentially abandoned when Kofi Annan took office in 1997.⁴⁷ At about the same time, the EAD and UNDP focused technical assistance on strengthening the long-term capacity of electoral institutions.⁴⁸

Organize and Conduct are the most extensive and intrusive form of electoral assistance.

The UN essentially acts as a national election authority and is responsible for designing

⁴⁵ UN General Assembly, 46th Sess. *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly. 46/137. Strengthening the Role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization* (A/RES/46/137) Dec. 17, 1991.

⁴⁶ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/47/688). November 19, 1992.

⁴⁷ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/49/675). November 30, 1994; UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/52/474). October 16, 1997.

⁴⁸ The descriptions below were drawn from Ludwig, 1995; 2004 and an older version of EAD website. UN Electoral Assistance Division (2001). "Types of Electoral Assistance." Retrieved from http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa/french/electoral_assistance/ea_content/ea_types_of_assist.htm

electoral laws, registering voters and administering and certifying the election. As such, the missions are expensive and generally require a large number of personnel. These missions are authorized exclusively by the Council in the context of a larger peacekeeping or peacebuilding operation. As a result, the Secretariat does not have the authority to determine when such missions will take place, though the Secretariat may influence the Council's decision by advising the Council on current prospects for holding an election and the resources required to carry-out the mission.⁴⁹ The budget for the mission is determined by the Council and state contributions are assessed through the peacekeeping budget formula.

UNTAG (1989) in Namibia, UNTAC (1991) in Cambodia and UNTAES (1996) in Eastern Slavonia (Croatia) are all examples of such missions.⁵⁰ In fact, since Eastern Slavonia, the UN has only organized certain aspects elections, and even then, this is a relatively new development. For example, the UN organized voter registration for the 2003 Afghanistan elections and an Electoral Commission for the 2004 Iraqi elections. These were much smaller than the earlier organize and report missions. UNTAC provides a good example of the complexity of these missions.⁵¹ The UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia was set up as part of the Paris Peace Accords signed in October 1991. Under the accords, the UN was named the interim administering authority and tasked with organizing national elections for a new government. UNTAC and its

⁴⁹ See Electoral Assistance Division (2008). "Types of Electoral Assistance." Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa/ead/overview.html>

⁵⁰ If the parties can agree to a set of electoral rules, the UN would also organize elections in the disputed territory of Western Sahara currently under Moroccan control. In 2001, the Council established a UN Interim Administration in Kosovo. Organizing and supervising elections did fall under UNMIK's mandate but the UN officially delegated the organization and supervision of elections to the OSCE which set up a Democratization and Institution Building Pillar.

⁵¹ See Ratner, 1995; Howard, 2008. See also UN Department of Peacekeeping, "Past Peacekeeping Missions." Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/untac.htm>.

Japanese head of mission spent fifteen months organizing elections. During this time, UNTAC registered over 4.6 million voters and twenty political parties; helped draft, enforce and occasionally revise electoral laws; held multi-party meetings and voter education sessions; investigated violations of electoral laws and mediated disputes during the campaign; and even set up a broadcasting facility to ensure all parties had media access.

At each stage of the electoral process, Akashi certified that conditions of fairness justified moving to the next stage of the electoral process. Finally, 4.2 million Cambodians voted in May 1993 at one of the 1400 polling stations and 200 mobile units set up by the UN. Despite a few irregularities and ongoing intimidation from the Khmer Rouge, Akashi declared the elections free and fair. In the end, UNTAC cost over a billion dollars. It involved over 21,000 officials and the UN electoral component alone trained and coordinated 50,000 Cambodians to serve as electoral staff in addition to 900 foreign officials directly under UNTAC.⁵²

Observation (or verification) missions are the second most costly and politically sensitive type of assistance. Under Assembly-approved rules, UN observers must monitor the widest possible geographic region and all phases of an election process. These missions are politically sensitive because UN officials make a public statement on the election meaning the UN confers or denies legitimacy to a government. Observer missions require a mandate from the Council or Assembly though the Secretariat generally decides whether to seek a mandate to a given request. Missions can be funded

⁵² Like in Cambodia, UNTAES in the Eastern Slovenia region of Croatia organized regional and municipal elections. The electoral component involved 5000 personnel and 150 “static election observers.” See United Nations Transitional Authority in Eastern Slavonia. “History.” Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/untaes.htm>.

through (a) voluntary state contributions to a UN Trust Fund for Electoral Assistance, (b) a supplemental funding request from the SG to the Assembly, or (c) the peacekeeping budget authorized by the Council. UN electoral observation was most often authorized in the early 1990s. Though most observation missions—like Nicaragua (1989), Angola (1991), El Salvador (1991), Mozambique (1992), and Eritrea (1992)—were tied to peace operations, others—like Haiti (1990) and South Africa (1994)—were not. Since these early missions, the UN has seldom monitored election though more recently exceptions have been made to send UN observers to Cote D’Ivoire (2005), Haiti (2004), and a small observer team was sent to the 2010 referendum on independence for southern Sudan.

A number of electoral observation missions will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters. However, it is worth briefly describing a few here to provide some sense of the size and scope of these missions. In October 1992, the government and rebels in Mozambique signed the General Peace Agreement which provided for a UN peacekeeping force that verified the ceasefire and disarmament, provided humanitarian assistance, and monitored elections.⁵³ Two months later, Council Resolution 797 established the UN Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ). Though the National Elections Commission organized the election, the UN monitored and assessed all stages of it—voter and party registration, the campaign, the polls and the vote count. The electoral component of ONUMOZ included 148 UN election officers with an additional 900 observers on Election Day.

The head of the mission, Aldo Ajello, would also act as *de facto* mediator as disputes arose. This latter role would prove important. The mission came on the heels of an

⁵³ For more detailed discussion of Mozambique mission see Ajello, 1999; Howard, 2008.

Angolan one (UNITA II) in which one of the parties had refused to disarm, rejected the UN certified election results, and restarted the civil war. UN officials worried ONUMOZ would meet the same fate. In the end, Mozambique was not a repeat of Angola despite early difficulties and an atmosphere of distrust. In October 1994, the Council acted on Ajello's recommendation and declared the conditions were met for holding elections. After the vote was conducted, Ajello's preliminary statement declared that voting took place "without any major irregularities," and a few weeks later stated that the elections had "confirmed the will of the people." In the end, ONUMOZ had cost \$486m.

An example of a non post-conflict mission was the UN Observation Mission in South Africa (UNOMSA) (Ndolo, 1995). Over the years, the Assembly had passed countless resolutions calling for an end to the apartheid system. When South Africa did eventually start transitioning to majority rule, it did so in atmosphere of distrust and confrontation. Consequently, in August 1992, the Secretary-General sent thirteen UN officials to South Africa to observe political gatherings and monitor human rights abuses. The Council expanded the mission to 199 observers a month later, and the Assembly endorsed the Council's decision shortly thereafter.

In December 1993, the South African transitional government requested UN election observers. Since the elections were scheduled for the following April, the UN had significantly less lead time in South Africa than in Mozambique. However, the smaller earlier mission did give the UN a presence in the earliest stages of the electoral process. In early 1994, the Council officially expanded the mission mandate to include electoral observation. More than \$30m was added to the UNOMSA budget—an amount financed

by the regular UN budget through an additional appropriation.⁵⁴ The UNSG, with the help of UN Volunteers, deployed 500 observers and support staff to South Africa to monitor the work of the Independent Electoral Commission and the final three months of the campaign. The UN had deployed 2,120 observers by the time polls had opened. In addition, UNOMSA also agreed to coordinate with other international observers from the EU, the OAU and the Commonwealth. Over four days, over 22.7 million South African voted. On May 6, UNOMSA jointly declared with the OAU, EU and Commonwealth that, despite some shortcomings, the voting was free and “reflect[ed] the will of the people” (Ndolo, 1995, 236).

Coordination and Support is a low cost form of electoral assistance. Overall, the UN maintains “a low political profile” which is “the least intrusive of national sovereignty while at the same time providing the benefits of an international observer presence.”⁵⁵ In most cases, a handful of UN officials form a temporary Electoral Assistance Secretariat (EAS) that coordinates a Joint International Observers Group (JIOG) from other states as well as regional and non-governmental organizations.⁵⁶ The EAS helps maximize poll coverage, provides common observation materials, and acts as a conduit between the national electoral authority and international observers. It ensures that election observers are accredited and participate in a pre-election briefing.⁵⁷ These missions can be authorized by the Secretariat without a mandate and without much lead time. Ideally, the

⁵⁴ See UNGA. *Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Financing for the Expansion of the United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa* (A/48/7/Add.5) February 8, 1994. See also Anglin, 1995.

⁵⁵ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to Promote and Consolidate New or Restored Democracies* (A/50/332). August 7, 1995.

⁵⁶ See Ludwig, 1995; 2004. More rarely, the UN has helped to train and financially support domestic NGOs responsible for monitoring elections as it did in Mexico, Kenya and Indonesia.

⁵⁷ UNGA. *Note by United Nations Secretary General: In-Depth Evaluation of the Electoral Assistance Programme* E/AC.51/1999/3 March 13, 1999.

JIOG would cover the entire electoral period and ensure a presence in all regions of the country. It is low-cost mission because states pay for their own observers and an additional fee to cover the cost of the EAS. Likewise, it is much less politically sensitive. Although the JIOG generally makes a public statement, Robin Ludwig (2003, 129), the Director of the EAD notes that “since the JIOG was not composed of UN employees, no statements made can be attributed to the United Nations.” There were forty-two coordinate and support missions carried out between 1992 and 2001 in countries as diverse as Armenia (1995), Niger (1996) and Nepal (1999).

For example, the UN coordinated electoral observers for Malawi’s 1993 referendum on the issue of one party v. multiparty democracy. In late 1992, the government requested that the UN send electoral observers the following June. Over the next few months, the EAD sent three needs assessment missions to Malawi to meet with government officials, opposition members and societal groups to assess prospects for a free and fair referendum. As a result of these preliminary missions, the UNSG authorized a coordination and support mission and established an EAS to help coordinate the JIOG. In the months leading up to the June election, the EAS—which included the UNDP resident coordinator, two UN officials and an outside expert—provided technical advice to the National Referendum commission, offered poll worker training and civic education.⁵⁸ The JIOG also monitored and made statements at the end of the registration and campaign period. When the government changed technical procedures, the EAS procured the necessary election materials (such as ballot envelopes). On the referendum

⁵⁸ Ibid.

day, the UN coordinated over 200 observers to ensure that observers maximized geographic coverage. After the vote, the JIOG (not the UN) offered a final statement.⁵⁹

Follow and Report missions are the least costly and least politically sensitive. These missions involve one or two UN officials following the election and submitting an internal report to the Secretary-General. The cost of follow and report is low because tasks are limited, staff is small, and the UN often uses officials already in-country like UN Resident Coordinators. Moreover, they can be authorized without a mandate and they can be deployed quickly. For example, the UNDP Resident Coordinator in Uzbekistan followed the December 1994 elections after the government of Uzbekistan requested electoral observers.⁶⁰ Similarly, when the Guinea government belatedly requested observers in 1995, the UNSG sent an officer from the Department of Political Affairs to follow and report on the election.⁶¹

This type of assistance is not politically sensitive as officials make no public statements about the quality of elections. Indeed, according to the Secretary-General, follow and report “lends the largely symbolic presence of the United Nations” to the election. These missions were predominantly carried out in the early to mid 1990s. By 1997, this type of assistance had fallen into disfavor with one report noting that “the cost, albeit small, is not justified by the results.” As a result, it was to be used only in “special

⁵⁹ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to Promote and Consolidate New or Restored Democracies* (A/50/332). August 7, 1995.

⁶⁰ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/50/736). November 8, 1995.

⁶¹ Ibid.

circumstances.”⁶² In total, twenty-seven follow and report missions were conducted between 1992 and 1996 while only three more were conducted the following five years.

Technical Assistance can be more costly than follow and report or coordinate and support, but it is seldom politically sensitive. The Secretary-General can authorize assistance without a mandate from the Assembly or Council. Though the EAD responds to requests, technical assistance projects are most often carried out by the UNDP and, occasionally, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR). In many instances, the UN draws on its roster of electoral experts to contract out projects. These projects include the procurement of election materials, voter registration, computerization of registration rolls, poll-worker training, civic education, preparation of election budgets and calendars, and drafting electoral laws. Technical assistance also involves efforts to strengthen the capacity of electoral institutions.

The costs are lower than observation and organization missions but can still vary widely depending on the duration of assistance and the services provided. Assistance is low profile and seldom politically sensitive because it often takes place before or after elections and UN officials do not publicly assess the actual election. These missions are funded through voluntary state contributions to the UN Trust Fund for Electoral assistance, and in some instances, through the budget of the UN specialized agency that

⁶² UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/49/675). November 30, 1994.

carry out the mission. Technical assistance has always been a core part of UN electoral assistance and over ninety missions have been carried out between 1989 and 2001.⁶³

For example, the UNDP assisted the Bangladesh Election Commission to “institutionalize an efficient and transparent electoral system.” The project started in 1997, and over the next five years, cost over \$1m. Assistance included creating a national electoral database and an updated IT system to improve voter registration, strengthen the management skills of officials in the Election Commission, expand civic education, and establish a local electoral training institute for poll workers and electoral officials.⁶⁴ In Kyrgyzstan, UNDP assistance focused on strengthening political parties and increasing the participation of women in the electoral process. More specifically, the major phase of the project involved civic education programs and a consultant to advise the government on a new election law. The total cost of the project was \$650,000.⁶⁵

Conclusion

In conclusion, electoral assistance has become a well-established activity at the UN. It is a ‘normal’ part of the UN system—it has its own structures, rules and funding sources. Like many UN activities, the constituent elements have evolved over time. Many of these rules were first articulated in early observation missions designed to help colonial peoples exercise their self-determination. These rules were then informally applied when the UN started providing assistance to sovereign states. Later, these rules were codified, amended and expanded. A new bureaucratic structure was also created to implement

⁶³ Economic and Social Council, *Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of political affairs: electoral assistance*. E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.1 March 29, 2007.

⁶⁴ UNDP, (2001) *Electoral Assistance: Ten Years Experience*. Geneva: 14-17.

⁶⁵ Ibid. pp. 31-34.

these rules and coordinate the activities of various agencies. Initially, this bureaucracy was expected to provide two types of assistance: technical assistance and electoral observation. However, in the first year of its existence two new forms of assistance were added.

In some ways, this chapter is misleading because it presents electoral assistance as a rationalized, rule-governed activity. As such, it might give the reader the impression that electoral assistance changes to meet the changing electoral needs of member states. The next four chapters examine what drove the evolution of electoral assistance. They show that the changing needs of transitioning states did matter. However, they tell only part of the story. Instead, changes to electoral assistance were driven by the political considerations of the states that funded electoral assistance, particularly the US. And as these political considerations changed, so too did electoral assistance.

Chapter 3

1989-1991: UN Electoral Assistance: Normalizing Deviance

1.0 Introduction

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar was not a vocal advocate for democratization. He cautioned against the rapid expansion of UN electoral assistance. He told member states that the UN should only observe elections under the most exceptional circumstances.⁶⁶ When the government of Grenada asked the UN to monitor elections in 1984, he flatly declined the invitation as it “was not normal practice...to witness elections in member states.”⁶⁷ He also declined observation requests from the governments of Haiti (1988) and Romania (1989). Many members appreciated the UNSG’s restraint. China, for example, considered electoral assistance a violation of the principle of nonintervention. Nonetheless, UN electoral assistance expanded rapidly between 1989 and 1991. In 1990, the UN observed Nicaraguan elections marking the first observation mission in a sovereign member state. Over the next three years, the UNSG agreed to organize or observe elections in a number of states including Haiti (1990), Cambodia (1991), Angola (1991), Haiti (1991) and El Salvador (1991). In 1991, the Assembly even instructed the UNSG to appoint a Focal Point for Electoral Assistance.

⁶⁶ United Nations Office of Legal Affairs (1990), *United Nations Juridical Yearbook*, 1990. Retrieved from http://untreaty.un.org/cod/UNJuridicalYearbook/html/volumes/1990/dtSearch/Search_Forms/dtSearch.html : 255.

⁶⁷ Claude Robinson (1984), “Grenada: UN Turns Down Request for Election Observer Team.” *IPS-Inter Press Services*, November, 26.

It is tempting to argue that the end of the Cold War caused the surge in electoral assistance. It did contribute by weakening opposition to electoral assistance and facilitating democratic transitions in a number of states. However, the opposition did not disappear, and it remained unlikely that the US and EU would support and fund electoral assistance as they already funded other providers. In fact, the US was resistant to UN electoral assistance until essentially 1991.

I show that these missions took place partially because the UNSG did not champion UN electoral assistance. Perez de Cuellar's cautious rhetoric reassured the opposition and a reluctant US, and it initiated what Diane Vaughan calls the normalization of deviance. In 1989, a group of Central American states successfully pressured the reluctant UNSG to send UN election observers to post-conflict Nicaragua. In turn, the UNSG persuaded the rest of the Assembly that (a) there were no acceptable alternatives to UN observers; (b) these observers were necessary to consolidate peace (not democracy); and (c) they could be sent on an exceptional basis. This early exception led the Assembly to develop informal rules that could be used to identify other elections that qualified for 'exceptional' action. Indeed, other democratizing states wanting UN electoral assistance cited these informal rules to justify making an exception for themselves. As the exceptions accumulated, the membership's expectations changed. Many members came to value UN electoral assistance, and most of the membership (including China) accepted that the UNSG could provide electoral assistance if requested. The Bush Administration went further; it called for the creation of a Coordinator for Electoral Assistance and introduced an Assembly resolution formalizing the informal rules.

2.0 The Emerging Market for Electoral Observation

In the late 1970s, the third wave of democratization was gathering momentum.

Democratic transitions were taking place across Southern Europe and Latin America.

Yet, outside of Latin America, election observers participated in only a small percentage of elections (Santa Cruz, 2005; Kelley, 2008). Transitioning states were skeptical of the practice. Foreign observation could be interpreted as a violation of state sovereignty (Newman, 2004, 193). Election observers also brought few benefits since American foreign assistance during the Cold War was seldom conditional on democratizing and some leaders worried that inviting observers signaled the regime lacked domestic credibility (Franck, 1992).

These concerns dissipated when Cold War ended. By the end of the 1980s, it was beneficial for a democratizing state to invite foreign observers. Reformist governments no longer felt that electoral observers violated a state's sovereignty if the government invited them. The invitation alone also sent a 'democratic signal' that encouraged greater voter participation, deterred electoral fraud, and mobilized international support (Hyde, 2006; McCoy, Garber and Pastor, 1991). If observers endorsed the elections, the elected government gained domestic legitimacy and foreign aid. Kelley (2008) finds that election observation passed a tipping point around 1989 as the proportion of monitored elections quadrupled from ten to over forty percent between 1988 and 1990.

For many IOs and NGOs, the demand for election observation was one reason to enter the market. Another reason was the availability of US funding. US policymakers in

Congress, and to a lesser extent the Administration, were eager to support new democracies (Jason, 1991/1992). Democratization was expected to promote regional stability and reliable allies and trade partners (Newberg and Carothers, 1996). The US Agency for International Development (USAID) announced its “Democracy Initiative,” and the budget of the quasi-governmental National Endowment for Democracy (NED) grew from \$15m in 1989 to \$39m by 1991. In total, IOs and NGOs competed for \$125m in US government funding (Madison, 1991; Jason 1991/1992).

Given these market conditions, there was good reason to expect the UN to play a leading role. Few organizations had significant experience observing elections in sovereign states prior to 1991. No regional organizations monitored elections besides the Organization of American States (OAS) in Latin America.⁶⁸ Additionally, only a handful of US-based NGOs including the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), the International Human Rights Law Group (IHRIG) and the Carter Center had any significant experience. The UN also held some important advantages over its competitors. Many democratizing state leaders preferred a UN presence to ‘Western’ NGOs, as UN officials were considered more impartial observers (Ebersol, 1992; Jason, 1991/1992). Indeed, some commentators suggested that soon “only elections monitored by the UN would come to be deemed free and fair in countries with troubled democratic records” (Malone, 1998, 51).

3.0 Support for UN Electoral Observation: Why not Delegate to the UN?

⁶⁸OAS election monitoring dated back to 1962, and in 1990 a new Unit for Democracy Promotion was created. See Santa-Cruz, 2005; Beigbender, 1994; Kelley, 2008. The Commonwealth had monitored only the 1980 election in Uganda. By contrast, the OSCE (then the CSCE) did not establish An Office for Free Elections until July, 1991, and it did not monitor elections until 1992 (Beigbender, 1994). Likewise, the Organization for African Unity (OAU) had monitored only two elections before 1992. See Anglin, 1995.

3.1 Divisions in the Assembly

Despite the favorable circumstances, neither the US nor the UNSG tried to centralize election observation under the UN. The conventional explanation for this outcome is that these actors anticipated strong opposition from the developing world (Gershman, 1993; Rushton, 2008; Joyner, 1999; Kelley, 2009). In this view, developing states opposed strengthening UN electoral assistance out of fear it would weaken the principles of sovereignty and nonintervention. However, this explanation is inadequate. Though a core group of states did consistently oppose expanding electoral assistance, a second group of developing states were enthusiastic supporters.⁶⁹ For example, Czechoslovakia told the Assembly that the UN should “provide assistance to the organization and monitoring of elections,” and Costa Rica noted that observers “reinforced the moral authority of the UN.”⁷⁰ Besides these two groups, most developing states were ambivalent. In 1990, the majority of developing states voted for a resolution that strengthened electoral assistance as well as one limiting it.⁷¹ The following year, these same states expressed reservations about appointing permanent Focal Point for Electoral

⁶⁹ This group includes Cuba, Colombia, China, Burma, Uganda, Mexico and Yemen. Among these states, a few, including China, agreed that electoral observation was acceptable on an ‘exceptional’ basis. See Member State views in Addendum 1 in UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/46/609). November 22, 1991. For example, Haiti, Nicaragua, Romania, Zambia, and Lesotho all requested UN monitors between 1989 and 1991. In the Assembly’s Third Committee debates on the issue, many Latin American and Eastern European states were particularly supportive. See UNGA. *Summary Record of the Third Committee of the General Assembly*. A/C.3/46/SR 51; 55; 57; 58; 59 and A/C.3/45/SR.38; 42; 57; 60; 61.

⁷⁰ See UNGA. *Summary Record of the Third Committee of the General Assembly*. A/C.3/46/SR 51; 55; 57; 58; 59. See also UN General Assembly, 45th Sess. *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly*. 45/150. *Strengthening the Role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections* (A/RES/45/150) Dec. 18, 1990. and UN General Assembly, 45th Sess. *Respect for the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States in their electoral processes* (A/RES/45/151) Dec. 18, 1990.

⁷¹ UNGA. (1990) *Summary Record of the 45th Meeting of the Third Committee*. A/C.3/45/SR. 38; 57; 61.

Assistance, but they nonetheless voted for a resolution that instructed the UNSG to do so.⁷²

3.2 US-UN Relations and UN Democracy Promotion

Regardless, the US did not support the expansion of electoral assistance at first. In the US, Congress considered the UN bureaucracy too inefficient and the Assembly too untrustworthy (Gregg, 1993; Perez de Cuellar, 1998; Bolton, 2008). This perception was cultivated by some Reagan Administration (1980-1988) officials who, according to Perez de Cuellar (1998, 367), viewed the Assembly as a body that “limited American freedom of action and compromised its capacity to defend democracy.” To these officials, the Assembly was a place where developing states criticized Israel, undermined the spread of economic liberalization, and coddled autocrats.

Similarly, the Secretariat was seen as a bureaucracy replete with officials who refused to distance themselves from home governments hostile to US interests. The most hawkish US officials, like first Permanent Representative to the UN Jeanne Kirkpatrick, argued that the US needed to assert itself more forcefully. If the Assembly and UN bureaucracy would not support US values and interests, then the US should reduce the UN’s ability to take action. Kirkpatrick wanted to transform the UN into “a machine [the US] could drive” (Gregg, 1993, 73), and failing that, into a machine that was smaller and cheaper to operate. The UN Ambassador and likeminded officials pressed the Secretary-General to cut operating costs and staff positions. To add pressure, they failed to stop (if not

⁷² UNGA. (1991) *Summary Record of the 46th Meeting of the Third Committee*. A/c.3/46/sr. 51; 55; 57;58; 59.

encouraged) Congress to withhold part of the country's share of the UN budget. Over two years, US arrears at the UN grew to \$253m.

When George H.W. Bush took office, US-UN relations improved. Superpower cooperation in the Council led to new peace operations in Namibia (1989), Afghanistan (1988), and Angola (1988). In the Assembly, an agreement on a new budget resulted in President Bush, himself a former Permanent Representative to the UN, deciding to pay US arrears. Yet many key officials, led by Assistant Secretary John Bolton at the Department of State, remained hostile to the UN bureaucracy and the Assembly. To Bolton (2007, 33), "little had really changed at the UN" which was still captured by "third world radicalism" and plagued by "ineffectiveness, corruption and mismanagement." Other officials like the new Permanent Representative Thomas Pickering were less hostile, but insisted that the UNSG should focus on administrative reform.

Consequently, the US did not embrace UN electoral assistance at first. The President used his annual Assembly speech to expound on democracy's universal appeal and support democratic opposition movements.⁷³ In the Assembly's Third Committee, the Administration passed an annual 'Election' resolution starting in 1989—a resolution the Administration held up to domestic audiences as evidence of the Administration's commitment to democratization. As Pickering told Congress during his confirmation hearings, the resolution marked "the General Assembly's endorsement for the first time

⁷³ George H.W. Bush, 1990, *Address to the UN General Assembly*, New York. Oct. 1.

of such vital democratic concepts as the right to own private property and the holding of genuinely free elections.”⁷⁴

In late 1990, President Bush called for a UN Special Coordinator for Electoral Assistance. This call, made during the President’s annual address to the Assembly, suggested the US was warming to UN electoral assistance. That said, when Pickering explained the idea to Congress, he made clear that “we want to be careful about not setting up a huge bureaucracy. We already have a lot in the UN.”⁷⁵ Moreover, the US continued to fund a substantial number of NGOs including the Carter Center, the International Human Rights Law Group (IHRLG), the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI).⁷⁶ For US policymakers, NGOs had some advantages over the UN. These NGOs could increasingly pursue their normative mandate while “acting on behalf of US foreign policy” (Jason, 1991/1992, 1829). They also actively marketed themselves to the US government as competition in the electoral assistance market intensified (Madison, 1991).

3.3 Javier Perez de Cuellar: The Cautious Diplomat

Javier Perez de Cuellar was also initially reluctant to support UN electoral assistance. This reluctance reflected his diplomatic style, his personal beliefs, and the constraints facing the UN. He was not a particularly entrepreneurial or charismatic leader. As one US official quipped, “the Secretary-General couldn’t make a splash by falling out of a

⁷⁴ US Senate. *Hearings of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee* (testimony of Thomas Pickering). March 23, 1989.

⁷⁵ US House of Representatives. *Hearings of the House Subcommittee on Human Rights of the Committee for Foreign Affairs* (testimony of Thomas Pickering). September 19, 1990.

⁷⁶ In Latin America, the Bush Administration also supported OAS observers.

boat” (Traub, 2007, 24). He preferred quiet diplomacy—a low key approach he used to some effect in Afghanistan, the Iran-Iraq war, Cambodia, and El Salvador.⁷⁷

Perez de Cuellar (1986; 1998) interpreted his authority more narrowly than his successors. He could offer his good offices to mediate international conflicts; use the annual report to “galvanize other parts of the UN system” in pursuit of mandates; and bring matters of peace and security to the Council’s attention. Yet he also wanted to avoid committing himself and his successor to expensive and inappropriate missions. More generally, he argued that sovereignty remained the cornerstone of the international legal order set out in the Charter. He privately questioned the Council’s renewed interest in UN peacekeeping in domestic contexts. Moreover, in his 1990 Report on the Work of the Organization, he cautioned that “we need fidelity to the principles clearly articulated in our Charter...It is important to maintain a rigorous analysis of what the UN can and cannot do and how it should do it.”⁷⁸

In his view, the UN was asked by the membership to do too much with too little. The fiscal crisis had grown worse despite his dramatic efforts to slash administrative and staff costs. In 1991, member states had failed to \$536m to the UN’s regular budget and \$456m to its peacekeeping one.⁷⁹ Many of the peacekeeping missions that the Council authorized were unprecedented in their scope and complexity. The UN would not just monitor ceasefires; it would demobilize soldiers, assist with reconstruction, restructure state institutions, strengthen the rule of law, and monitor human rights. For example, the

⁷⁷ See Newman, 1998. Perez de Cuellar (1986) argued that public condemnation “though morally satisfying...can aggravate the situation.”

⁷⁸ UNGA, *Annual Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization* (A/44/1). Sept. 12, 1989.

⁷⁹ (1991) “UN Scraping to Get By As Nations Fail to Pay.” *Associated Press*. December 9.

UNSG was tasked with reconciling the Afghan factions—a task he (1998, 194) felt was “very much a domestic question, one which the UN should not be involved.” Likewise, the decision to have the UN organize elections in Cambodia was “unreasonable.” As he recalled, “I was concerned that some of the tasks envisioned, particularly organizing elections, were beyond the UN capacity and could infringe on Cambodian sovereignty.” Electoral observation was a costly and politically sensitive task that drained resources, undermined the UN’s role as neutral mediator, and potentially aggravated member states.

Not surprisingly, Perez de Cuellar pressed to keep electoral observation an “exceptional activity.” He (1998) privately supported the “ever growing acceptance of freedom as an ideology of choice,” but he was more cautious in public. He congratulated newly elected democratic leaders, but he usually refrained from encouraging non-democratic leaders to embrace democracy. He left it up to his successors to decide whether they wanted to be “a persuasive proponent of these ideals.”

4.0 Explaining the Rise of Electoral Observation: The Normalization of Deviance

So why did the UN start observing elections given the reservations of the US and the UNSG? And how did electoral assistance come to be a normal activity? This section demonstrates that these developments were unintended consequences of the US, Perez de Cuellar and the Assembly ‘making an exception’ in Nicaragua. The actors found it necessary to send observers to Nicaragua because of the specific circumstances there. However, it triggered a process that Diane Vaughan (1996) called the *normalization of deviance*. Vaughan found that widely-accepted organizational rules, practices and procedures can dramatically change even if organizational officials are still committed to

the status quo. Officials negotiate small exceptions to existing rules, and these exceptions redefine acceptable risk, identify other exceptions, and legitimize informal rules about when formal rules can be broken. As the process unfolds, the organization deviates more and more from the status quo until deviant rules, practices or procedures become normal.

A similar process describes UN electoral observation. Briefly, the UNSG initially persuaded member states that sending election observers to Nicaragua would not set a precedent. However, the criteria used to justify this exception became informal rules for identifying and legitimizing election observation in other countries transitioning from civil war. Other democratizing states expansively reinterpreted these rules to send observers to Haiti—a country not transitioning from civil war. In turn, the Haitian mission raised the possibility that the UN should accept an invitation from any state transitioning to democracy. This possibility concerned the UNSG who requested that states agree to formal rules governing electoral assistance. Ultimately, the Assembly formalized the previously informal rules and established a Focal Point for Electoral Assistance to implement them.

4.1 The ‘Exceptional’ Case of ONUVEN: Election observation in Nicaragua

Therefore, the Nicaraguan mission was particularly important because it set out these informal rules. Perez de Cuellar did not take this decision lightly. He had rejected similar requests for observers in the past, and he readily acknowledged that, “there is no precedent whatsoever for carrying out such supervision in an independent country.”⁸⁰

⁸⁰ UNGA. *Letter from Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly: The Situation in Central America: Threats to International Peace and Security* A/44/210. April 5, 1989.

Still he reasoned it would be nearly impossible to bring peace to the country in the absence of UN election observers. Thus, he spent months persuading and cajoling reluctant members to support—or at least not oppose—making an exception. Finally, on July 5, 1989, the UNSG announced he was establishing the UN Mission for Verification in Nicaragua (ONUVEN). Over the next eight months, UN officials observed all aspects of the electoral process—from preparation of electoral rolls to carrying out a parallel ‘quick’ vote count. When it was over, the Secretary-General declared that based on reports from UN observers, Nicaragua had held national elections that were free and fair.

The election ended a civil war that had raged for over a decade. In 1979, leftist rebels overthrew the Somoza dictatorship only to find themselves fighting a well armed, US-backed Contra insurgency. From their camps in neighboring Honduras, the Contra rebels and Sandinista government launched a series of attacks and counterattacks. The violence would last over a decade and spread across much of Central America.

However, the violence was increasingly costly to sustain, and the prospects for peace improved by the end of the decade.⁸¹ In 1986, a Central American-led peace process replaced an earlier one led by Latin American states.⁸² The following August, the presidents of Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala agreed at Esquipulas to a series of provisions designed to end the conflict. The agreement committed the presidents to end cross-border incursions, start rebel demobilization, and

⁸¹ The Sandanista government sought peace because it realized that even a weakened insurgency could carry out attacks at a time when Soviet support was declining; a painful US embargo continued; and the economy was paralyzed by the government’s inflationary policies. Likewise, the Contra insurgency found it difficult to hold any significant amount of territory just as the US Congress was threatening to cut-off military assistance and Honduras was threatening to dismantle Contra bases. See Pastor, 1990; and Peceny and Stanley, 2001.

⁸² The first such efforts had taken place in 1983 when the Contadora Group of Latin America countries tried and failed to gain US support for a proposed peace accord.

initiate national reconciliation and regional consultation. Moreover, the agreement required that all signatories hold internationally-monitored elections (Peceny and Stanley, 2001). In the US, the Reagan Administration initially resisted supporting the agreement. By 1989, however, the new Bush Administration faced mounting Congressional pressure to reduce US assistance to the Contras. To this end, Esquipulas could be supported if it led to an electoral defeat for the Sandanista regime.

In Nicaragua, the Sandanistas (who signed at Esquipulas) and the opposition UNO (who did not) supported elections. Both were convinced they could win a free and fair election, but they were equally convinced the other side would cheat (Pastor, 1990). Of course, such mistrust is common after a protracted period of violent conflict. However, the mistrust was particularly acute in Nicaragua (Peceny and Stanley, 2001; McConnell 2000). For one, the exclusion of the UNO, the Contras, and their US allies from Esquipulas precluded using the negotiation of a mutually acceptable agreement to build trust. To make matters worse, the Contras (with US support) would not fully demobilize until *after* free and fair elections. In many peace processes, demobilization builds the trust necessary to hold elections; in Nicaragua, elections were expected to build the trust necessary to demobilize.

International election observers were expected to moderate some of this distrust, increase the winner's domestic and international legitimacy, and pressure the loser to accept the outcome. The problem was identifying observers that would be acceptable to all sides. The UNO and the US wanted OAS observers. The Sandanista government opposed OAS observers—an organization they believed was too deferential to US interests. It preferred UN observers given that much of the UN's membership had historically been

sympathetic. To bridge the two positions, the parties eventually agreed that the UN and OAS should jointly observe the elections.

On March 3, 1989, Perez de Cuellar received a letter requesting UN observers from the Nicaraguan government. The request significantly expanded the UN's role in the conflict. Throughout most of the 1980s, the UNSG (1998, 400) recalled, few of the key players wanted the UN involved: "The Contadora powers were jealous of their initiatives; the US would likely be unenthusiastic about UN involvement; the central American governments other than Nicaragua had not asked for UN involvement, the OAS traditionally had been reserved to say the least about UN activities in 'its territory;' and finally I had no mandate from the Security Council to act and probably would not receive one if I asked."

In 1986, the UNSG's envoy to the region, Alvaro de Soto, persuaded him to approach the OAS SG about "insinuat[ing] themselves into a diplomatic role" (Perez de Cuellar, 1998, 400). De Soto, a confident and experienced Peruvian diplomat, felt the UNSG was being under-utilized, and he successfully urged the UNSG to be more assertive. Member states were unenthusiastic, but they acknowledged that the UNSG's involvement was necessary given he would likely be asked to help implement any future peace agreement.

Shortly thereafter de Soto joined the International Verification and Follow-Up Commission (CIVS) tasked with implementing the agreement. De Soto wasted little time inserting himself into a leadership role. Within weeks, he had publicly suggested that the UN might send officials to verify security arrangements and the forthcoming elections. He pressed signatories to meet their security obligations and criticized them where they

failed to do so. The signatories responded by challenging the reports and essentially disbanding the CIVS.

On November 15, 1988, the Assembly passed Resolution 43/24 in support of the Esquipulas peace process. The resolution included a vague provision requesting the UNSG to “afford his fullest possible support to the Central American governments, especially by taking measures necessary for the development and functioning of the essential verification machinery.” Though verification was not defined, most members assumed it referred to security arrangements—a reasonable assumption given that the UN had never verified elections in a sovereign state. Regardless, the resolution gave the UNSG a formal mandate.

Four months later, the UNSG received the request for election observers along with a letter of support from the other four Central American presidents. Perez de Cuellar (1998, 412) was initially “hesitant to recommend [to the membership] compliance.” His hesitancy was understandable. US officials were suspicious that Secretariat officials like de Soto and his aide Fransesc Vendrell were sympathetic to the Sandanista regime. The Organization was still financially overstretched, and many non-democratic states, particularly China, expressed concern that the mission would set an unwanted precedent. That said, many developing states supported the Sandanista regime, and if the regime wanted UN assistance, they were inclined to provide it.

Inside the Secretariat, de Soto and Vendrell pressed Perez de Cuellar to consider accepting the invitation. By the start of April, De Soto’s efforts were paying off and “in the course of extensive discussions with Secretariat colleagues, [the UNSG] came to the

conclusion that, *at least in this case*, the action was justified and desirable” (Perez de Cuellar, 413). That said, Perez de Cuellar would not accept the invitation without consulting member states.

In a letter to the President of the Assembly, Perez de Cuellar outlined why the membership should support sending observers.⁸³ As de Soto (2000) explained the strategy: “We had to build a case very carefully that observance by the UN, especially in Nicaragua, could play a role in assisting the general peace effort in the region.” This case had four components. First, the mission took place “in the strict context of [Charter] Article 2(7).” Electoral observation, in this case, had a “clear international dimension” because it “belongs in the context of the Central America peace process.” The Central American governments had made this clear in their letter of support: Democratization was not for the sake of democratization but for the sake of peace and national reconciliation.

Second, the UNSG did not need a new Assembly mandate; the “verification” provision in Assembly Resolution 43/24 authorized him to send observers. Third, the mission would mirror those sent to non-sovereign territories in many ways: Nicaragua involved a formal request from the recognized authority (the state), broad societal support for a UN presence, a formal agreement between the UNSG and government on observation modalities, and a UN insistence that all stages of the election be subject to observation. Finally, and perhaps most important, the mission was not precedential. The UNSG wrote that if a mission was authorized, *“there would be no effect on established practice, nor*

⁸³ UNGA. *Letter from Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly: The Situation in Central America: Threats to International Peace and Security* A/44/210. April 5, 1989.

would a precedent be set for possible further requests.”⁸⁴ “This cannot be considered a routine matter,” the UNSG later wrote, “given its novel aspects” and “special factors.”⁸⁵

For the next two months, Secretariat officials continued to cajole reluctant states. In early June, the Nicaraguan government had grown impatient, and it publicly criticized “those opposed to carrying out the observation process out of fear of setting a precedent.” If these states continued to delay the mission, the government would have no choice but to designate the OAS alone as official observers despite its pro-US bias.⁸⁶ Secretariat officials used the threat to press its case, and the UNSG reaffirmed his personal support for a joint UN-OAS mission. In addition, he reminded states that the Resolution 43/24 was “a sufficient legislative basis” for authorizing electoral observers.⁸⁷ He also began making preparations by scheduling regular coordination meetings with the OAS and sending a high level delegation to negotiate potential terms of reference with the Nicaraguan government.

By July, the UNSG was ready to announce the mission. Though a few members remained hesitant, they would not publicly oppose the mission. In a letter to the Assembly president, the UNSG informed the membership that he was establishing ONUVEN.⁸⁸ A few weeks later, the Council welcomed the UNSG’s decision and the Assembly followed suit when it reconvened in October. It was, the Assembly resolved, an “extraordinary measure.”

⁸⁴ Later that year, as the Assembly prepared to debate the matter, the UNSG in a letter dated October 17 reminded members that the mission “would not create a precedent.”

⁸⁵ UNGA. *Letter from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly: The Situation in Central America: Threats to International Peace and Security* A/44/304. June 6, 1989.

⁸⁶ “Nicargua: UN Chief Backs Monitoring of Electoral Process.” IPS Inter-Press Service. June 8, 1989.

⁸⁷ UNGA. *Letter from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly: The Situation in Central America: Threats to International Peace and Security* A/44/304. June 6, 1989.

⁸⁸ UNGA. *Letter from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly: The Situation in Central America: Threats to International Peace and Security*. A/44/375 July 7, 1989.

What followed is widely considered one of the Organization's most successful missions. To lead the mission, Perez de Cuellar appointed a former US cabinet member, Elliott Richardson, as his Special Representative. The mission took place in four stages. During the first stage, seventeen UN officials observed the national electoral authority and the organization of political parties. A few months later, twenty-two more officials were added to monitor the electoral campaign followed by an additional 200 UN observers to observe the final days of the campaign, the polls and the counting. Besides observing the polls, ONUVEN also conducted a parallel quick vote count to be reported alongside the official count carried out by the national electoral authority. When the UNO won, Richardson privately appealed to the Sandanista regime to step aside. Over the following days, the UN declared the campaign and elections free and fair—a declaration corroborated by the OAS and other observers.

ONUEN drew praise in a number of policy circles. There were some problems, and for example, disagreements between the OAS and UNSG essentially resulted in two parallel missions rather than one joint one. Yet UN supporters pointed to Nicaragua as evidence of just how much the UN had changed. As Pastor (1990, 21) argued, “just being there—almost everywhere—provided tranquility and confidence by voters.” Elliot Richardson even suggested that Nicaragua could be a model for similar missions in the future. In his final report, Richardson called it a “precedent-setting performance.”⁸⁹

4.2 Cambodia: The Council Makes an Exception

⁸⁹UNGA. 1990 *Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General: Fifth and Final report of the UN Observation Mission in Nicaragua* A/44/927 March 22, 1990.

As Nicaraguans headed to the polls, the Permanent Five members of the Council (P5) were hammering out the details of a larger, more complex UN electoral mission—organizing post-conflict elections in Cambodia. Initially, the P5 had leaned towards UN electoral observation. In the end, they raised the stakes and essentially placed Cambodia under *de facto* UN trusteeship. UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) would be responsible for all aspects of the election—from registering voters, to addressing complaints, to organizing the polls, to certifying the results. It also played an important role in the emergence of modern UN electoral assistance. It reinforced the view among states like the US that large-scale UN intervention into an electoral process helped consolidate the peace. Of course, not all states shared this view, and these states agreed to support UNTAC only after they were assured it was an exception worth making. In fact, UNTAC, much like ONUVEN, required a policy entrepreneur to frame the mission as a solution to a unique policy problem—one with a clear international dimension. In the Cambodian case, the international dimensions were twofold. First, the regional dynamics meant the Cambodian civil war threatened international peace and security. Second, the Assembly had repeatedly resolved that the presence of Vietnamese troops denied Cambodians their right to self-determination.

The roots of the Cambodian conflict dated back to 1979, when Vietnam invaded Cambodia to curtail cross-border raids and ostensibly to end the mass killings committed by the Khmer Rouge regime. After seizing the capital, Vietnam installed a new regime led by a former Khmer Rouge cadre, Hun Sen. With the support of Vietnamese troops, the new regime fought both the remnants of the Khmer Rouge and two smaller resistance groups—the monarchist FUNCINPEC and the pro-Western KPNLF. By 1981, the

military conflict had reached a stalemate; the puppet regime controlled most of the country but proved unable to remove the rebels from a number of smaller areas.

Yet, the prospects of a negotiated peace remained low until 1998 when the Soviet Union reduced support for the Vietnamese regime supporting Hun Sen. In response, the US and China began encouraging their clients to negotiate an end to the war (Howard, 2008; Ratner, 1995). The resulting negotiations gained momentum after Indonesia brought the parties, the ASEAN states and Vietnam together in a series of “cocktail parties.” In July 1989, Vietnam announced its intent to withdraw from Cambodia, and an International Conference on Cambodia was convened in Paris to exploit this opportunity and the leverage of the P5.⁹⁰ At Paris, the parties sought agreement on a set of guiding principles: (a) the total withdrawal of Vietnamese troops; (b) the prohibition of the Khmer Rouge from the transitional government; (c) the cessation of foreign military aid; and (d) respect for Cambodian territorial integrity. Finally, negotiators agreed that the exercise of Cambodian self-determination required *internationally observed free and fair elections*.

Negotiations, however, stalled over who should participate in the transitional government. Hun Sen, Vietnam and the USSR insisted the Khmer Rouge be excluded while China, the US and the loose coalition of resistance groups rejected this idea and demanded Hun Sen be left out. Although the P5 states sought a solution among themselves, they continued to disagree about who could create a “neutral political environment in which no party would have an advantage.”⁹¹ By November, the search

⁹⁰ Australia, Japan, Canada, India and Zimbabwe (as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement) participated.

⁹¹ (1990), “Cambodia: Here’s UNTAC.” *The Economist*, March 17.

for a solution intensified. Vietnam had withdrawn its 26,000 troops, and the US and USSR announced an end to military assistance. Consequently, the P5 worried their leverage over their clients would soon decline, and the Cambodian factions worried they would lack the resources to keep fighting.

To exploit this so-called moment of ripeness, the Australian government dusted off a proposal first introduced almost ten years earlier.⁹² Cambodia, the Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans proposed, should be administered by the UN until UN-organized elections were held. Hence, the proposal sidestepped the sticky problem of who would form an interim government. As the *Economist* put it, the Evans plan was a clever (if controversial) way to “blur the contradiction that has caused all previous peace attempts to fail.”⁹³ Under the Evans plan, the factions would delegate control of key state agencies to the UN so it could establish a “neutral political environment” in which credible elections could be held. The UN mission would be headed by a special representative (SRSG) appointed by the UNSG. The Cambodian factions would form a Supreme National Council that embodied Cambodian sovereignty but delegated policy control to the UN. UNTAC would follow the direction of the SNC when its members could agree on a course of action, but the SRSG was authorized to take a decision when they could not (Ratner, 1995).

This plan dramatically expanded the UN role from the one initially envisioned by the P5. The P5 and the Assembly agreed the UN should assist the Cambodian people exercise their right to self-determination, but the form of assistance was contested. From the

⁹² The basic idea of the proposal was first articulated by King Sinahouk in 1981 but it was US Congressman David Solarz who added further detail and pressed the Bush Administration to support it. When he failed to do so, he took it to the Australian Foreign Minister. See Ratner, 1995.

⁹³ (1990) “Cambodia: Here’s UNTAC.” *The Economist*, March 17.

outset of the negotiations, the P5 called for the UN to have an “enhanced” role in implementing any peace agreement. The most likely scenario was modeled on UNTAG in Namibia (see Chapter 2); the UN would observe and verify elections organized by a Cambodian transitional authority (Howard, 2008). This plan was attractive particularly to sovereignty-sensitive Cambodian factions, like Hun Sen, and UN member states like China, and this group called for a “Namibia-style” mission or a “Namibia formula.”⁹⁴

Therefore, the Evans plan was more warmly received in some capitals than others. As one commentator quipped, “there is more than a bit of desperation and unreality in the proposal...nobody has fully said yes to it yet, nobody wants to say no either.”⁹⁵ Indeed, the entire P5 and much of ASEAN were initially reluctant to support it. As a result, Australian officials spent months shuttling between US, European and Asian capitals.⁹⁶ The Australians sympathized with concerns that the UN lacked the capacity or the authority to carry out such a complex mission. At the same time, they argued, success in Namibia suggested that it was feasible. Moreover, there were few alternatives. The parties looked unwilling to compromise on a transitional government, and no other organization had the reputation or capacity to “create a neutral political environment.”

The Australian’s first success came in early December when the UK agreed to privately back the proposal. Over the following months, the US, the USSR and Indonesia all

⁹⁴ (1989), “Sihanouk, China OK Australian Peace Plan,” *The Washington Times*. 19 December: A2. ECOSOC, *Note by the Secretary General: The Right to Self Determination and Its Application under Colonial or Alien Domination or Foreign Occupation: Letter From Socialist Republic of Vietnam*. E/CN.4/1990/64 13 February 1990.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Steven Erlanger, (1989) “Diplomats Step-Up Drive in Cambodia,” *The New York Times*, Dec 17.

gradually warmed to the plan.⁹⁷ China remained skeptical but its resistance was softening as it hoped to avoid isolation in the Council and weakening Sino-American relations.⁹⁸ Chinese officials also saw few alternatives—a point reinforced by Australian officials visiting Beijing. Finally, Chinese officials were growing increasingly frustrated by the intransigence of their Khmer clients, and after several visits from the Australian delegation, they relented.

Inside the Secretariat, the Australian proposal met with strong resistance. The UNSG argued that it was “unreasonable” that Australia expected the UN to administer elections, and he instructed his legal counsel to remind the parties that conducting elections “would inevitably involve the UN in aspects internal administration” and ask them “how far would this go?” (Perez de Cuellar, 1998, 163-164) Though the UNSG had previously acted as peacemaker in Cambodia, he had been largely sidelined since the ‘cocktail parties.’ Now the Council was asking the Secretariat to run an independent country and conduct elections in a society deeply divided by years of violent conflict.

Despite his concerns, the P5 was moving toward agreement on the Evans plan.⁹⁹ By March, the European Community and ASEAN added their support. Only the Khmer Rouge and the Hun Sen government resisted what they saw as a UN violation of Cambodia sovereignty. However, these factions found themselves increasingly isolated and under pressure from their patrons. Eventually they relented and accepted the

⁹⁷ Christopher Gilbert (1990), “Australian Envoy Begins Tour to seek End of Cambodian Conflict,” *The Independent*, January 4.

⁹⁸ (1989) “Chinese Foreign Minister Responds to Australian Proposals on Cambodia,” *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, Dec. 21.

⁹⁹ John Edwards (1990), “Cambodia: US Backs Australian Plan,” *Sydney Morning Herald*. Jan 11. Steven Erlanger, (1990) “UN seeks an expanded Cambodian Role,” *The New York Times*. Jan 11; John Phillips, (1990) “Powers Call for Greater UN role in Cambodia,” *UPI*, Jan. 16.

agreement with only minor modifications. On September 20, the Council passed Resolution 668 calling for the framework to “be the basis for a comprehensive political settlement in Cambodia.” Though elections would not be held for almost three years, the Council had officially authorized the UNSG’s second large-scale electoral mission in a sovereign state.

4.3 The Exceptions Accumulate: Haiti and Angola

In Nicaragua, the UNSG did not set out to create a precedent. Likewise, Australia did not anticipate the UN organizing elections elsewhere. ONUVEN and UNTAC were intended to resolve very specific conflicts with very unique problems. Yet along with UNTAG in Namibia, they firmly established that elections should be considered an element of conflict resolution. Put another way, elections were as much about peace as democracy. As such, member states, sometimes begrudgingly, agreed that electoral assistance was acceptable under exceptional conditions.

Nicaragua in particular was important because the criteria used to make the exception could be used to make other exceptions. Without realizing it, the UNSG had laid out a set of informal rules to justify electoral observation elsewhere. These informal rules did not yet constitute and regulate a legitimate organizational activity; rather they were informal rules for legitimately violating the formal rule proscribing electoral observation in independent states. In turn, each new mission authorized under these rules reinforced the legitimacy of the rules.

Over the next few years, these rules were applied five more times in sovereign states, thus totaling seven large electoral missions authorized in less than four years. This

section traces how the informal rules were applied in two cases: Angola (1991) and Haiti (1990). The former was selected because it is representative of most UN electoral observation—electoral observation was incorporated into a peacekeeping mission. Other such missions included El Salvador (1991), Mozambique (1992), and Eritrea (1992). Electoral observation in Haiti was different. Haiti was not emerging from civil war, and there was no obvious ‘international dimension.’ Consequently, the mission required reinterpreting the rules in a way that suggested the UN might accept an invitation from any state transitioning to democracy.

Table 3.1

Informal Rules for Authorizing ‘Exceptional’ UN Electoral Observation

Informal Rule	Perceived Value of Rule
Election has “international dimension”	Ensure consistent with UN Charter
Election lacks “neutral political environment”	Ensure UN impartiality required
Formal invitation for UN observers	Ensure consent
UN invited to monitor all stage of election	Ensure UN effectiveness
Extensive societal support for UN observers	Enhance consent and UN effectiveness
Assembly or Security Council Mandate	Give procedural legitimacy

UNAVEM II: Electoral Observation in Angola

In June 1988, the Council tasked the UNSG with observing the withdrawal of the 50,000 Cuban troops who had supported the Soviet-backed Angolan government against a US-backed UNITA insurgency. Under the watchful eye of the UN Verification Mission in Angola (UNAVEM), Cuban troops gradually withdrew. Next, the ‘troika’ of mediating states—the US, the USSR and Portugal—turned their attention to resolving the internal conflict. Over the next two years, protracted negotiations led to the signing of the Bicesse Accords in May 1991. The accords included a ceasefire, demobilization of UNITA, the integration of UNITA into Angola’s police and military as well as internationally observed national elections. To implement these provisions, the Council established UNAVEM II and directed the UNSG to monitor the security provisions while hinting that he would eventually observe elections.¹⁰⁰

Perez de Cuellar (1998, 327) was unenthusiastic about the “formidable prospect” of observing elections in Angola. His Special Representative, Margaret Antsee (1999) pointed out that electoral observation would add “extreme complexities” to the mission. It was a deeply divided and heavily armed country the size of Germany, France and Spain combined. Moreover, the agreement specified that demobilization should precede elections, but the factions, especially UNITA, were reluctant to demobilize until after they had won the election.

The problem was exacerbated by the absence of a formal invitation for UN election observers. By October, the Angolan government had privately approached the UNSG

¹⁰⁰ See Antsee, 1999; Perez de Cuellar, 1998; Beigbeder, 1994. In addition, see United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (2010), “UNAVEM.” Retrieved at <http://www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/unavem1/unavemii.htm>.

about a mission but did not make a formal request. Frustrated, the UNSG wrote to the Council that “any request for UN involvement be received as quickly as possible.”¹⁰¹ With elections scheduled for the following year, UN officials feared they would be required to monitor elections without adequate time to prepare. Finally on December 5, the Angolan government invited the UNSG to observe elections. Despite his reservations, Perez de Cuellar had little choice but to recommend that the Council add an electoral component to UNAVEM II. During an informal Council meeting, he noted a set of “relevant considerations” that explicitly referenced the informal rules used to justify other missions:

First, the request clearly pertained to a situation with an international dimension with which the Council has been seized...Second, the conduct of internationally supervised elections constituted the central element in the implementation of the Peace Accords. Third...the observation should cover the entire electoral process. Fourth, the introduction of a UN presence in the electoral process has been officially requested by the Angolan Government. And, fifth, there was broad public support in Angola for the UN to assume such a role.¹⁰²

The Council agreed and officially authorized observers in its Resolution 747. For the next six months, the SRSB struggled to complete the assigned tasks. The country’s infrastructure, devastated after years of war, made it difficult to register voters (Antsee, 1999). Moreover, the parties continued to delay demobilization and the threat of violence loomed over the election. In spite of these problems, the presidential election was held in

¹⁰¹ UNSC, *Report of the Secretary-General on the UN Angola Verification Mission II*, S/23191, October 31, 1991.

¹⁰² UNSC, *Secretary-General Letter to the President of the Security Council* S/23556. February 7, 1992.

September. Though UNAVEM declared the election relatively free and fair, UNITA's leader, Jonas Savimbi, refused to accept the result, withdrew from a runoff, and restarted the armed conflict. For almost ten years, the violence continued.

ONUSUVEH: Electoral Observation in Haiti

The UN Observation Mission in Haiti (ONUSUVEH) was unique because the UN membership was divided on the mission's international dimension (Franck, 1992; Stoetling, 1991/1992; Beigbeder, 1994; Fox, 1995). Even though the Assembly agreed to send observers, it could not agree about why it was doing so. As a result, Haiti raised the possibility that the UN might observe elections in any state transitioning to democracy.

The roots of ONUSUVEH date back to November 1987 when the military regime held the country's first elections after years of dictatorship under the Duvaliers. Though the military invited UN observers, Perez de Cuellar politely declined by citing the Organization's long standing proscription against observation in independent states. The decision was prescient as the electoral process triggered widespread violence by supporters of the former Duvalier regime. Though two million Haitians turned out to vote, the military regime used the violence to crack down on opposition and cancel the election (Malone, 1998; Perez de Cuellar, 1998, 426).

In March 1990, a new civilian, transitional government organized more credible elections. As part of its preparations, the government asked the UNSG to provide technical assistance, security monitors, and election observers. Only the UN's presence, the Haitian government argued, could deter Duvalier supporters from disrupting elections. Electoral observation coupled with security assistance would "dissipate voters'

fears,” “ensure voter participation,” and “produce a valid independent assessment.”¹⁰³ In addition, the Haitian government had carefully worded the request to maximize compliance with the informal rules on electoral observation: most societal and government institutions supported the request for UN observers; the UN would monitor all stages of the electoral process; and UN observers were necessary to overcome the deep societal mistrust of the population and create a “neutral environment.”¹⁰⁴

Most member states were sympathetic because they felt for the Haitian people suffering from chronic poverty and decades of brutal dictatorship, or they commiserated with a small state that had historically been the target of US interference. The US shared these humanitarian concerns, and additionally, it worried about the flow of refugees.¹⁰⁵ The UNSG was also sympathetic, but he did not insert himself into the Assembly debate.¹⁰⁶ This decision was understandable after his initial decision to forward the observer request from the Haitian government to the Council rather than the Assembly generated substantial opposition. Developing states feared the Council was trying to undermine the Assembly’s authority, and the UNSG was helping it.¹⁰⁷ During informal Council meetings, China and the non-permanent Council members—Colombia, Cuba and Yemen—insisted the request be returned to the Assembly, and they made clear they

¹⁰³ UNGA. *Letter from the Interim President of Haiti to the Secretary-General* A/44/965. June 23, 1990.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ See Franck, 1992; Stoetling, 1992, 381-384; Malone, 1998. See also UNGA. *Debates of the General Assembly* A/45/PV.26; A/45/PV.27, October 23, 1990; A/45/PV. 28; A/45/PV.29 October 24, 1990.

¹⁰⁶ UNGA. *Statement Submitted by the Secretary-General in Accordance with Rule 153 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly to the Fifth Committee: Electoral Assistance to Haiti: Programme Budget Implications*. A/C.5/45/13. October 5, 1990. See also Perez de Cuellar, 1998.

¹⁰⁷ The latter was ostensibly because Haiti had requested security assistance as well as election observers. This was an expansive interpretation of the Council’s mandate, given that electoral observation was clearly the Assembly’s responsibility, there was no civil war, and security assistance did not mean peacekeepers. Some commentators argue that Perez de Cuellar hoped a Council mandate meant a better funded mission. Regardless, the US, UK and France wanted the request sent to the Council. See Malone, 1998; Franck, 1992.

would oppose any Council resolution. Eventually, the US, UK and France relented after Haiti announced that security assistance would be “in no way comparable to Blue Helmets,” but the Council President still added that the Assembly should accept the invitation (Stoetling, 1992, 384).

In the Assembly, the request met with significant opposition which delayed even starting debate on it. Though sympathetic, a core group of states—including China—opposed making another exception for election observers without a clear link to regional security or foreign occupation. This group was joined by other developing states that wanted to accept the mission but dismissed the US argument that the flow of refugees from Haiti constituted an ‘international dimension.’

In response, Haiti and its Latin American supporters sought a more persuasive rationale. The Haitian government argued that the violence of the last election meant that “there was no alternative because of the chaotic situation.”¹⁰⁸ To increase the pressure, Haiti, Colombia and the Bahamas requested that the UNSG convene the Assembly, and they submitted a draft resolution to the President of the Assembly.¹⁰⁹ The draft resolution argued that elections would not be possible in the absence of UN election observers; the presence of factions with “the intent to destabilize” meant only UN observers alongside OAS ones would allow the Haitian people to exercise “the sovereign right of the people

¹⁰⁸ (1990) “Haiti: UN Expected to Provide Electoral Assistance,” *IPS Inter Press*. July 13.

¹⁰⁹ UNGA *Letter from the Permanent Representatives of the Bahamas, Colombia, and Haiti to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General A/44/965*. July 17, 1990.

to choose their own destiny.” On August 20, a second draft resolution also reminded the Assembly that the mission the Haitians requested was “analogous” to Nicaragua.¹¹⁰

In late September, the Assembly finally debated the draft resolution.¹¹¹ The US agreed to support the mission on the grounds that refugee flows constituted an international dimension. The developing states roundly criticized this position. Instead, they took a more novel one. They argued that observers could be considered an extension of the technical assistance already being provided. In doing so, they sidestepped the ‘international dimension’ problem, but raised a new one. Technical assistance and electoral observation had previously been distinct forms of assistance. Technical assistance was an apolitical activity while electoral observation was a political one. For the sake of political expediency, many developing states were now setting this distinction aside. In doing so, however, they raised the possibility of mission creep; the UN might end up observing elections in any state already receiving technical assistance.

In October, the resolution passed without a vote. Over the following months, the UN observed all stages of the electoral process—the second such mission completed in a sovereign state. In early 1991, ONUVEH declared Jean-Bertrand Aristide the winner of a relatively free and fair election, though Aristide’s government would last less than a year. However, the prognosis at the time was more optimistic, and most states looked approvingly on the UNSG’s work. As US Secretary of State, James Baker, wrote the UN “deserves much credit for Haiti’s first free and fair elections” (Perez de Cuellar, 1998, 442).

¹¹⁰ UNGA. *Letter from the President of the Provisional Government of Haiti to the Secretary-General*, A/44/973. August 9, 1990.

¹¹¹ UNGA. *Debates of the General Assembly* A/45/PV.26; 27 October 23, 1990; A/45/PV. 28;29 October, 24, 1990.

4.4 Formalizing Institutional Change: Bureaucratizing UN Electoral Assistance

For the UNSG, Haiti had blurred the distinction between technical assistance and electoral observation.¹¹² It also left unclear whether electoral observation required an international dimension or could be provided to any state transitioning to democracy. The UNSG agreed to send observers to Haiti while denying requests to Zambia and Romania (Hodgson, 1992/1993). A growing group of democratizing states wanted UN election observers, and they did not seem concerned if a clear international dimension did not exist. The UNSG feared a surge of new requests for observers that would leave him with the unenviable task of disappointing emerging democratic members. To avoid such a scenario, the UNSG encouraged member states to “reflect on the possible extension of principles of UN [electoral] operations to other situations not identical with those in which they have been mounted so far.”¹¹³ Clear limits were necessary. Electoral assistance should not be authorized “in a situation of indeterminate character,” and all observation should have a clear international dimension, be authorized by the Council or Assembly, have broad societal support, and cover the entire electoral process.

These recommendations were debated in the context of Assembly’s annual ‘Election’ resolution. This was the fourth such ‘Election’ resolution, and earlier ones were limited to reaffirming elections as a human right. Even these resolutions were controversial, and the first ‘Election’ resolution that the US introduced in 1987 was withdrawn after

¹¹² UNGA, *Annual Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization* A/46/1. Sept. 16, 1990.

¹¹³ Ibid.

developing states passed an unfavorable amendment.¹¹⁴ In subsequent years, the US had more success, but the membership was divided over the future of electoral assistance.¹¹⁵ In the US, the President now supported electoral assistance, and the US introduced a draft resolution that provided for a new Coordinator for Electoral Assistance. The provision dominated the debate and overshadowed the UNSG's recommendations.¹¹⁶ Though opposition to electoral assistance had weakened, many states remained hesitant to grant electoral assistance a permanent presence in the Secretariat. Ultimately, the provision was dropped in return for one allowing the UNSG to gather and report member state views on "ways the UN can respond positively to member requests."¹¹⁷

State views were presented in the UNSG's first report on electoral assistance in late 1991.¹¹⁸ Overall, the UNSG reported, the membership supported "continued and, indeed, expanded UN involvement in electoral processes." Most states agreed to the expansion of technical assistance and even electoral observation if there was a clear international dimension. China and other authoritarian states insisted that observation required an international dimension and supported the "ad hoc" approach. The US noted that "UN support for elections could be instrumental in resolving a broad range of difficult

¹¹⁴ To force the US to withdraw the draft resolution, these states successfully added provisions supporting self-determination for Palestine and Namibia. See UNGA. *Draft Resolution of the United States of America: Genuine and Periodic Elections and Freedom of Association* A/C.3/42/L.15 October 16, 1987.

¹¹⁵ Moreover, the opposition organized a second 'sovereignty' resolution. This resolution – and the ones passed in subsequent years - dubbed elections a domestic political process. See UN General Assembly, 43rd Sess. *Respect for the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States in their electoral processes* (A/RES/43/157) Dec. 8, 1988. And UN General Assembly, 44th Sess. *Respect for the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States in their electoral processes* (A/RES/44/146) Dec. 15, 1989.

¹¹⁶ UNGA. *Debates of the Third Committee Debates* A/C.3/45/SR.38. November 12, 1990; A/C.3/SR. 41, 42 November 14, 1990; A/C.3/SR. 57 November 29, 1990; A/C.3/SR. 60 December 3, 1990.

¹¹⁷ UN General Assembly, 45th Sess. *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly. 45/150. Strengthening the Role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections* (A/RES/45/150) Dec. 18, 1990.

¹¹⁸ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/46/609). November 22, 1991.

situations,” and it supported a Special Coordinator and the expansion of electoral assistance. Many Eastern European and Central American states favored removing any restrictions on electoral assistance so the UNSG could accept their requests.

For his part, the UNSG cautioned against loosening the informal rules that had guided past observation missions. Technical assistance should be separated from electoral observation as technical assistance “does not as a rule require a decision of a political nature by the UN.” Though technical assistance could be expanded, electoral observation should remain an “exceptional” activity. He also intended to appoint a Focal Point for Electoral Assistance. Finally, electoral observation should be funded through the regular budget to avoid a “dire budgetary situation,” though technical assistance could rely on voluntary contributions.¹¹⁹

In the ensuing debate, the core opposition was preoccupied with the appointment of a Focal Point for Electoral Assistance.¹²⁰ However, most states accepted the idea, and the subsequent resolution passed by a vote of 115-3. There was little opposition to the UNSG’s recommendations, and the resolution adopted most of them.¹²¹ The UNSG could authorize technical assistance and refer requests for electoral observation to the Assembly or Council. Yet, the resolution diverged from the UNSG’s recommendations in two important ways. First, it authorized observation “primarily” (but not exclusively) in situations with a clear international dimension. Second, it stated that both technical assistance and electoral observation were to be funded exclusively using contributions to

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ UNGA. *Debates of the Third Committee Debates* A/C.3/46/SR.49 November 25, 1991; A/C.3/SR.55 November 29, 1991; A/C.3/SR. 57 December 9, 1991; A/C.3/SR.58; 59 December 10, 1991.

¹²¹ UN General Assembly, 46th Sess. *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly. 46/137. Strengthening the Role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections* (A/RES/46/137) Dec. 17, 1991.

a voluntary Trust Fund for Electoral Observation. Nonetheless, the resolution made electoral assistance a legitimate and permanent part of the UN's mandate.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this period witnessed a significant disparity between talk and action.

Throughout the period, talk was low as Perez de Cuellar generally refrained from overtly championing democratization. In fact, the UNSG urged caution even as more and more member states wanted to expand UN electoral assistance. While talk was stable, action was not. From 1982 until 1989, the UNSG did not monitor a single election in a sovereign state. Indeed, he declined the few invitations he received. However, some of the largest and most complex electoral missions were authorized in his final three years.

The rise of this disparity cannot be attributed strictly to changing US preferences, the personal beliefs of the Secretary-General, or the third wave of democratization. There is little evidence that the UNSG was under pressure to talk up electoral assistance until 1991. Nor can the sudden rise of election observation be explained to a sudden policy change in the US and the Assembly. The US did not want the UN observing elections even after changes in the international system made it a viable option. Though a number of developing states did want the UN to monitor elections, these states were too small and too few in number to push for a significant expansion of election observation.

Instead, the rise of this disparity is best described as the normalization of deviance. The decision to first send observers to Nicaragua was historically contingent; the UNSG and member states intended to carve out a single exception. To do so, the UNSG laid out informal rules in Nicaragua that justified deviating from the formal rule prohibiting

election observation. These informal rules were then used to identify and legitimate other exceptions in other states transitioning to democracy. In turn, these new exceptions further legitimized the informal rules. Ultimately, deviance was normalized and the informal rules became formal. Nicaragua had triggered a process that resulted in UN electoral assistance becoming a permanent and legitimate organizational activity. As Perez de Cuellar (1998, 416) himself recalled, Nicaragua proved so important because in Nicaragua “the precedent was thus established that has become commonplace, no longer requiring such special circumstances.”

Chapter 4

1991-1992: Surging Talk, Surging Action

1.0 Introduction

UN democracy promotion was more action than talk when Perez de Cuellar left office.

The departing Secretary-General was seldom outspoken, but he was particularly reserved when discussing democracy. He did not declare democratization a priority and he cautioned against expanding UN electoral assistance. Despite his cautionary words, electoral assistance was growing. The UN Secretariat had monitored or organized elections in Nicaragua and Haiti, and it was preparing to do the same in Angola, El Salvador, and Cambodia. Moreover, a number of democratizing states were asking the UNSG to assist with elections. The US even wanted a few UN officials dedicated to providing electoral assistance.

In 1992, a new UNSG, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, started talking up democratization. For the next year, democracy talk and action were aligned. The UNSG pressed his case that democratization was good for the UN, and the UN was good for democratization. He celebrated successful recent missions, invited democratizing states to make more requests, and championed a new Electoral Assistance Unit. In response, the UN authorized more electoral assistance in 1992 than previous or subsequent years. It implemented existing mandates for electoral observation, authorized new ones, and provided technical assistance.

What caused this alignment? I show that talk and action aligned under pressure from the US, and to a lesser extent, democratizing states. The last chapter showed that the success

and accumulation of ‘exceptional’ actions changed the expectations of this group of states. By mid-1991, this group increasingly wanted the UN to expand electoral assistance. Many in the Bush Administration now believed that UN electoral assistance helped end civil wars and demonstrated that the UN was now a more liberal institution. Democratizing states added that if the UN could send electoral observers to Haiti, it could send observers to any state—not just post-conflict ones.

Once expectations changed, action without talk was unacceptable. Democratizing states wanted a UNSG who would accommodate their requests for electoral assistance. In the US, the Bush Administration wanted a UNSG committed to UN reform, which also included institutionalizing electoral assistance. The Administration doubted that Boutros-Ghali shared these commitments, and it initially opposed his candidacy for UNSG and put forward candidates with a better record on democratization. Boutros-Ghali responded by making democratization a principal theme in his campaign rhetoric. This was a risky decision. Many African states had yet to endorse him, and their support would be helpful. Some of these states were undemocratic, and most believed that talk of democratization drew attention away from peace and development concerns. In addition, China opposed expanding electoral assistance and wanted a UNSG who would not endorse a particular political system or openly criticize a state’s domestic policies. Thus, Boutros-Ghali signaled his commitment to democratization by risking the support of these states, and this costly democracy talk made him more appealing to the Administration than other African candidates. Eventually, the US dropped its opposition to his candidacy. Once in office, the UNSG used his bully pulpit to reaffirm his commitment to democratization and strengthen US-UN relations. The Council invited

Boutros-Ghali to recommend ways to improve UN peace operations, and Boutros-Ghali eagerly accepted this invitation. In his high profile (1992) *An Agenda for Peace*, he urged that (a) future peace operations include building democratic institutions and (b) electoral assistance be expanded as a means of preventing civil wars. In turn, the Administration supported the UNSG's Electoral Assistance Unit, sponsored a new Trust Fund for Electoral Assistance, and sought additional funding specifically for UN electoral assistance.

2.0 What Changed in 1992? The Alignment of Democracy Talk and Action

Boutros-Ghali wasted little time aligning talk and action. On his election to office, he declared that promoting democracy would now be a priority alongside security, human rights, development and administrative reform.¹²² This declaration left little doubt that he was breaking from the cautious rhetoric of his predecessor. For example, the retiring Perez de Cuellar had made no mention of democracy in his final speech to the Assembly. Rather, the outgoing Secretary-General asserted that “when asked what should dominate the concerns of the UN in the coming years, the answer is easy: an agenda for justice” that addresses the “divide between rich nations and the poor” and “the universalisation of the human rights regime.”¹²³ By contrast, Boutros-Ghali proclaimed that such goals could only be met if the UN pursued democratization: “I wish to stress the United Nations role in strengthening fundamental freedoms and democratic institutions which constitute an essential and indispensable stage in the economic and social development of

¹²² Boutros Boutros-Ghali. (1991) “Inaugural Address to the General Assembly on Appointment to Secretary-General” (A/46/PV.83). New York. Dec. 3. Speech.

¹²³ Perez de Cuellar, (1991) “Final Address to the General Assembly.” (A/46/PV.73). New York. December 30. Speech.

nations. If there is no development without democracy, there can also be no democracy without development.”¹²⁴

Over the next year, the Secretary-General honed this theme. Although the Charter made no mention of democracy, he argued that democratization was central to realizing the Charter’s aspirations. Time and again he reiterated that democratization was the best way to secure a sustainable peace, reduce under-development, and strengthen human rights. That said, this discourse was not exclusively about why the UN could and should help states democratize. Equally important, there should be democratization among states—the democratization of decision making in international institutions. Democracy among states, he repeatedly proclaimed, would create a more stable international order. In turn, a more stable order would make it possible for states to focus on consolidating democracy inside their borders (Rushton, 2008).

This was not just talk. While Perez de Cuellar tried to restrict action, Boutros-Ghali broadened it. As one commentator observed, “The new Secretary-General has made election verification a top priority, and under his leadership, the UN is poised for a new era of electoral activism” (Stoetling, 1992, 372). The democracy business was a promising one in a world where a “democratizing wave” was “sweeping away authoritarianism” (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). States with minimal experience holding elections sought foreign expertise. International observers kept careful watch as more and more people cast ballots. Demand for UN electoral assistance skyrocketed. In 1991, four states requested UN electoral assistance; in 1992, thirty-six requested it.

¹²⁴ Boutros Boutros-Ghali. (1991) “Inaugural Address to the General Assembly on Appointment to Secretary-General” (A/46/PV.83). New York. Dec. 3, 1991. Speech.

The UNSG took a number of steps in response to growing demand. The UNSG's 1992 report on electoral assistance laid out "more flexible" guidelines to better accommodate member requests.¹²⁵ New types of electoral assistance were created to make sure that no requesting state would be turned away. UN officials were observing and organizing elections in Angola and Cambodia respectively and preparing to monitor elections in Mozambique, Eritrea and El Salvador. The Assembly was taking the first steps toward sending observers to South Africa. Technical assistance also flourished. In 1992, the UN carried out eighteen technical assistance missions—a six-fold increase from the previous year. In most instances, the UNDP contracted one or two electoral experts to advise governments on preparations for upcoming elections. For example, the UNDP helped modernize Guyana's information- technology to improve logistical planning and manage its electoral register in anticipation of upcoming elections.

Inside the Secretariat, the new Secretary-General built-up the organization's institutional capacity. Boutros-Ghali assigned electoral assistance to the Under-Secretary-General for the new Department of Political Affairs. Moreover, the UNSG established a permanent administrative unit dedicated to UN electoral assistance. This was a controversial decision. The 1991 Resolution had authorized the UNSG to designate a senior UN official as the Focal Point for Electoral Assistance. There was no mention of creating a new office. Yet, in April 1992, the UNSG created the Electoral Assistance Unit (EAU). Thus, talk and action aligned in 1992. The new Secretary-General set aside many of his predecessor's reservations, and he developed an ambitious conceptual framework that justified UN democracy promotion and welcomed states to turn to the UN for assistance.

¹²⁵ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/47/688). November 19, 1992.

3.0 Alternative Explanations for Why Talk and Action Aligned

3.1 The Entrepreneurial Secretary-General

What causal stories might explain the alignment of talk and action? Unfortunately, there are few studies dedicated to the promotion of democracy under Boutros-Ghali. One exception is Rushton's (2008) argument that Boutros-Ghali epitomized a norm entrepreneur—an agent of normative change—who effectively framed democratization as a solution to the longstanding problems of violent conflict and underdevelopment. Consequently, Rushton (p.104-106) concludes that Boutros-Ghali's efforts (a) made it “politically difficult for states to openly oppose democracy promotion” by the UN, (b) pushed UN electoral assistance “far beyond the more limited electoral assistance that had previously been provided,” (c) integrated democratization into peace operations, and (d) shaped the democracy rhetoric of his successor.

This chapter shows that Rushton assigns too much causal weight to the UNSG's norm entrepreneurship. First, Rushton's description of how talk and action changed is problematic. To be sure, the introduction of a democracy discourse did develop under Boutros-Ghali. That said, his description of the expansion of UN electoral assistance is misleading. The UN authorized many of the largest, most costly and most controversial missions prior to Boutros-Ghali's arrival. Furthermore, the amount of assistance fluctuated significantly under Boutros-Ghali. It is true that electoral assistance expanded rapidly in 1992. However, it was an exceptional year, and electoral assistance declined thereafter.

Second, Rushton leaves the link between structural change and agency unclear. He (p.100) points out that the UNSG “made no secret of his own strong preference for democracy, nor his desire to further it internationally.” Yet the UNSG’s personal conviction would have been insufficient without the more permissive international context that followed the Cold War. The end of ideological divisions, renewed support for a revitalized UN, and a rapid increase in the proportion of democratic states together created an opportunity for norm entrepreneurship. These structural changes may have played a larger causal role than Rushton assumes. For example, was Boutros-Ghali elected Secretary-General partially because of his public support for democratization? Subsequently, was he pressured to speak out and take action by member states? Until these questions are addressed, we cannot assess whether the UNSG was an autonomous agent of change rather than an agent of states who wanted change.

3.2 Structural Explanations: The End of the Cold War

A second causal story emphasizes how changes in the international system resulted in the alignment of democracy talk and action at the UN. In this view, there is little path dependence—the disparity under Perez de Cuellar had little impact on alignment under Boutros-Ghali. Rather, the end of the Cold War empowered those states that supported UN democracy promotion. One plausible variant of this story suggests that the ‘wave of democratizing states,’ particularly with the break-up of the Soviet Union, led to a surge in Assembly support for democratization. A second variant suggests that the US and its Western allies pressed for more democracy talk and action following the collapse of communism. As a result, even a pragmatist like President Bush encouraged the expansion of UN electoral assistance.

I argue that these causal stories help explain why some states pressured the UNSG to take more action. However, they do not explain why they would pressure the UNSG to talk up democratization.

a. The Growing Demand of Democratizing States for Electoral Assistance

The first structural explanation focuses on how the UN adapted to the growing global demand for electoral assistance. Though few commentators have argued that demand alone drove the expansion of UN democracy promotion, many list it as one of the primary causes (Gershman, 1993; Ludwig, 1995; Joyner, 1998; Newman and Rich, 2004). Even before the collapse of the Soviet Union, a substantial number of Central and South American states were organizing multiparty elections, and by 1992, they were joined by others from Eastern Europe and Africa. Consequently, the demand for electoral observation jumped significantly in 1992 (Kelley, 2008).

To some extent, democratizing states did put pressure on the UNSG to expand electoral assistance. The wave of democratizing states strengthened the democratic bloc in the Assembly. These states were outspoken supporters of UN democracy promotion. The UN, they insisted, was not interfering in a state's domestic affairs by accepting a state's request to provide assistance—indeed they were helping strengthen the state. To this end, a number of these states even withdrew their support for the Assembly's third annual 'Sovereignty Resolution' which declared elections a domestic matter (Fig. 4.1), while support for the twin 'Election' resolution increased to roughly ninety percent (Fig. 4.2). These democratizing states also supported the decision to appoint a new Focal Point for Electoral Assistance in 1991, and they welcomed the Electoral Assistance Unit (EAU)

the following year.¹²⁶ In Assembly debates, many Eastern European and Latin American states argued that electoral observation had strengthened the moral authority of the UN, and the UN had an obligation to accommodate member states requests. For example, Poland argued that, “Ecologically sustainable development, with democracy and the market economy at its core, should be the focal point and the principal goal of the United Nations system as it prepares itself for the future: the year 2000 and beyond.”¹²⁷

These democratizing states had their most direct impact by simply making more requests for electoral assistance. As a 1999 review asserted: “The number of requests [for UN assistance] was highest in 1992 due to the number of countries, particularly in Africa, which were holding their first democratic election.”¹²⁸ That year, the UN received nearly forty requests for assistance including sixteen for electoral observation and eighteen for technical assistance—a seven-fold increase over the previous year and twofold increase over the following one (Fig. 4.3).¹²⁹

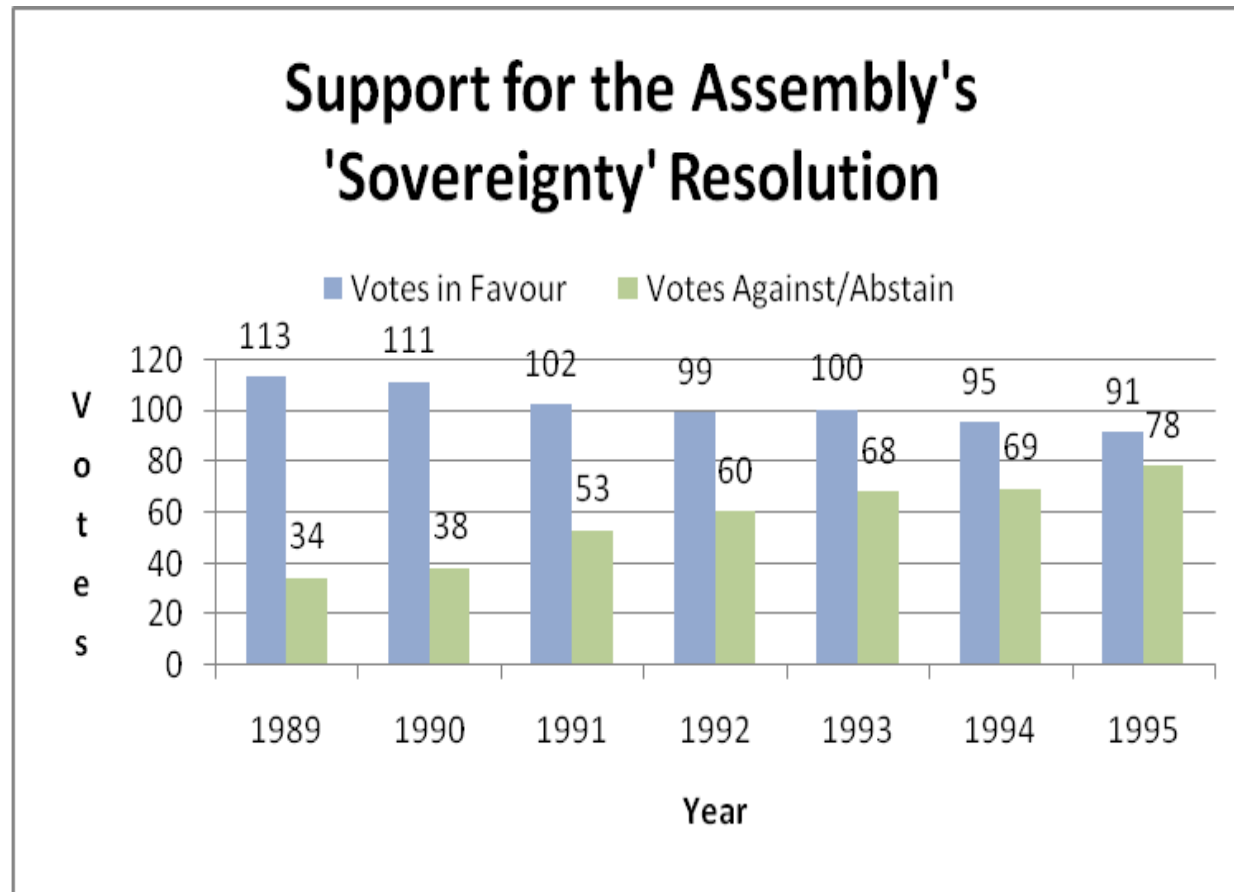
¹²⁶ In the 1992 debate on the ‘Election’ resolution, countries such as Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Argentina welcomed these new developments in the Assembly. UNGA. *Debates of the Third Committee* A/C.3/47/SR.52; 54; 57; 58 December 2-4, 1992. In 1991, Cuba was the sole Group of Latin American States and Caribbean states to vote against the ‘Election’ resolution. In the Eastern European Group, all members voted for the 1991 and 1992 resolutions. By contrast, only seventy five percent of the Asian Group voted for the ‘Election’ Resolutions in 1991 and 1992.

¹²⁷ UNGA. *Statement by the Permanent Representative of Poland at the 47th General Assembly* A/47/PV.6, September 22, 1992.

¹²⁸ UNGA. *Note by United Nations Secretary General: In-Depth Evaluation of the Electoral Assistance Programme* E/AC.51/1999/3 March 13, 1999.

¹²⁹ The remainder of the requests were ‘unspecified.’

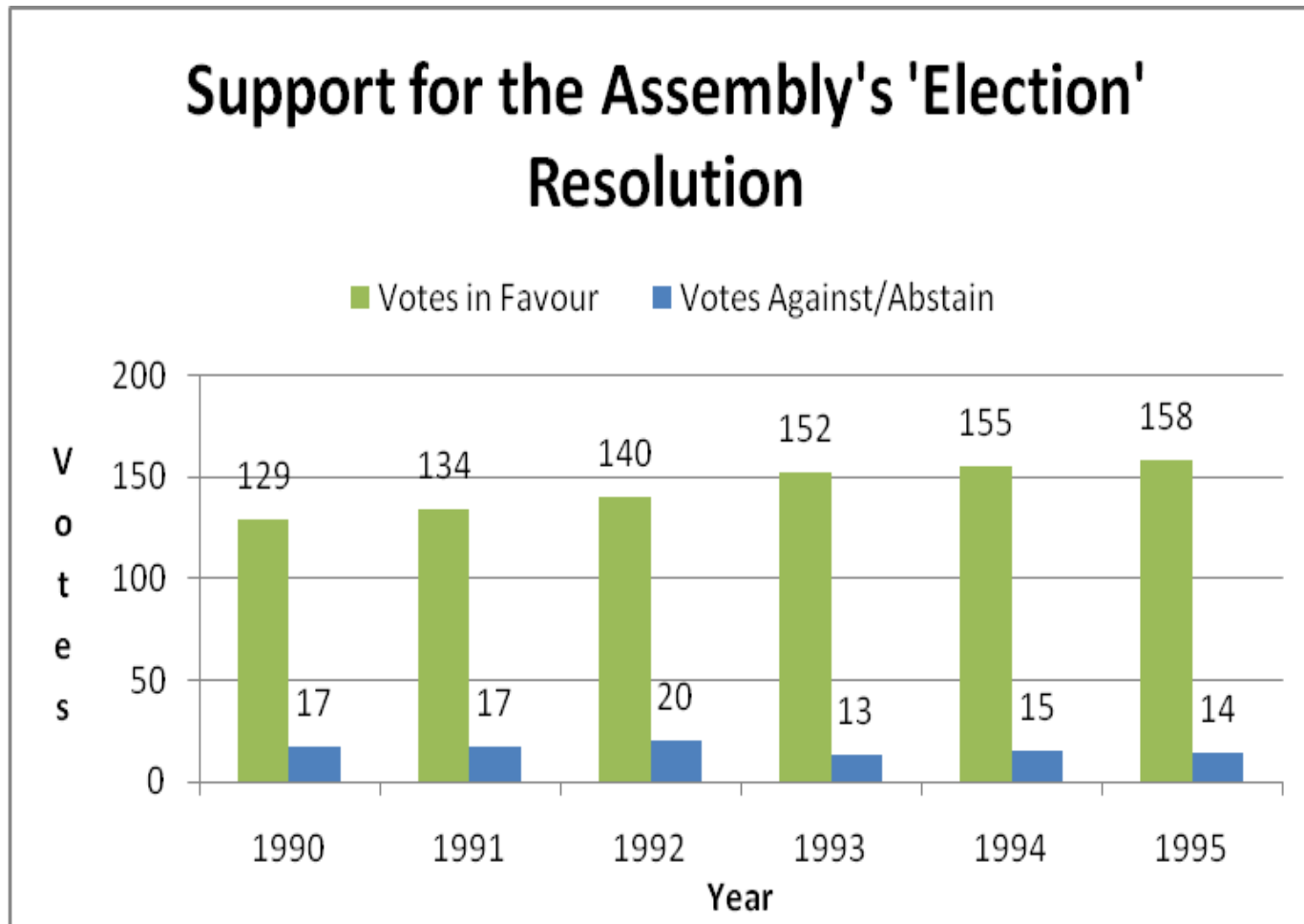
Figure 4.1



Source: Erik Voeten and Adis Merdzanovic, "United Nations General Assembly Voting Data,"

<http://dvn.iq.harvard.edu/dvn/dv/Voeten/faces/study/StudyPage.xhtml?globalId=hdl:1902.1/12379>.

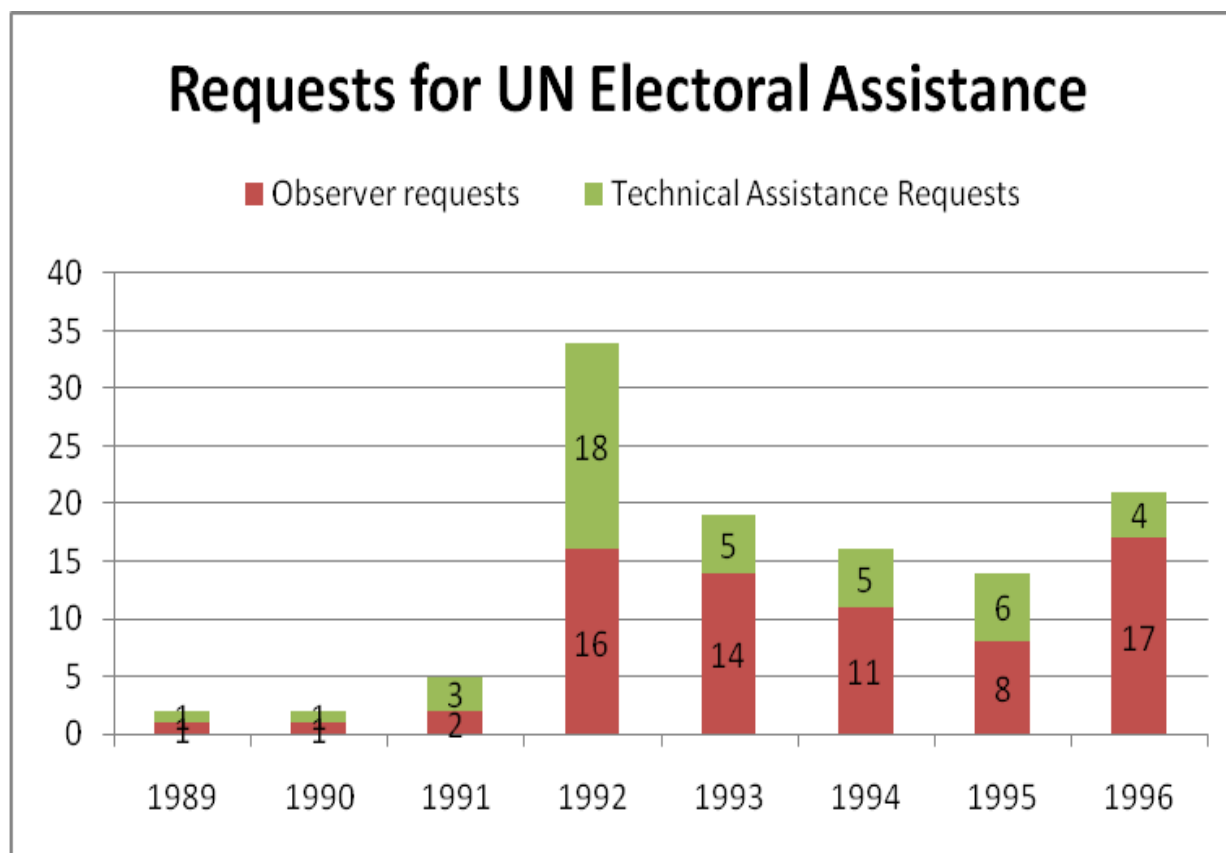
Figure 4.2



Source: Erik Voeten and Adis Merdzanovic, "United Nations General Assembly Voting Data,"

<http://dvn.iq.harvard.edu/dvn/dv/Voeten/faces/study/StudyPage.xhtml?globalId=hdl:1902.1/12379>

Figure 4.3



Source: Reports of the Secretary General on Enhancing Periodic and Genuine Elections: 1991; 1992; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1997; 1999; 2001

However, this explanation leaves two questions unresolved. First, why did so many democratizing states turn specifically to the UN for electoral assistance? After all, Perez de Cuellar tried to dissuade states from making observation requests. In 1991, he had declined invitations to monitor elections in Zambia and Lesotho (Franck, 1992). That winter, he recommended to the Assembly that electoral observation be an “exceptional” activity. Finally, few of the requests for observers in 1992 met the criteria for UN observation laid out by the UNSG, particularly the need for a “clear international dimension.”

The leaders of democratizing states could have turned to other electoral assistance providers. After all, the number of NGOs, states and IOs providing technical assistance and electoral observation was growing. The OSCE started observing elections in Europe and the OAS continued to observe elections in Latin America. The International Federation of Electoral Systems (IFES) had experience with technical assistance, and the NDI and IRI offered a range of electoral services.

In many Europe, Central Asia and Latin America, many leaders did use these alternatives. However, African leaders invited the UN. In 1992, two thirds of states requesting UN electoral assistance were African, and most of these requests were for electoral observers. At times, a government was financially and physically unable to continue fighting insurgents and agreed to internationally-observed elections as part of peace agreements. More commonly, a one-party or military regime agreed to internationally-observed elections to legitimize the government in the eyes of the population and the international donor community. These African states turned to the

UN once electoral assistance was a ‘normal’ activity. African states were well positioned to observe the normalization process. The UN had observed a number of plebiscites in African states transitioning from colonialism including Namibia in 1989.¹³⁰ It was also tasked with observing a referendum in Western Sahara, and two of the earliest UN observer missions were authorized in Angola and Mozambique (See Chapter Three). In addition, African leaders had strategic reasons to support UN electoral assistance. Unlike observers from the Organization of African Unity (OAU), UN ones had more credibility with Western publics; and unlike US-based NGOs, the UN Secretariat was considered more sensitive to state sovereignty.

b. Changes in the Bush Administration’s UN Democracy Promotion Policy

A second structural explanation centers on how the collapse of communism and the ‘victory’ of democracy freed the US and its Western allies to promote democracy through the UN. Scholars often point to US leadership to explain the expansion of UN electoral assistance (Fox, 1995; Gershman, 1993). By 1992, the policy of President H.W. Bush had substantially changed. The last chapter described how his Administration was reluctant to give the UN a leading role in electoral assistance prior to 1991.¹³¹

However, US policy had shifted by the start of Boutros-Ghali’s term. The US applauded the newly-elected UNSG for declaring that democratization was an organizational priority. Moreover, the Administration supported his plans to expand electoral assistance. It welcomed the appointment of a new Focal Point for Electoral Assistance, and the creation of a new Electoral Assistance Unit. In fact, it was the President that had

¹³⁰ The UNSG will also organize a referendum on independence in Western Sahara, if it takes place. See chapter two and Anglin, 1998.

¹³¹ US House of Representatives. *Hearings of the House Subcommittee on Human Rights of the Committee for Foreign Affairs* (testimony of Thomas Pickering). September 19, 1990.

first called for the UNSG to appoint a Coordinator for Electoral Assistance, and UN officials secured Assembly support for the proposal over the objections of some developing states and even key Western allies.¹³² The Administration also pressed the Secretary-General to strengthen the UN's electoral work in post-conflict settings. The UN was expected to take responsibility for implementing peace agreements and doing so increasingly required UN electoral observation or organization (Paris, 2004; Jakobsen, 2002; Peceny and Stanley, 2001). To this end, the Administration supported Council decisions to send observers to Angola, Eritrea, and El Salvador, and it even pressed the reluctant government of Mozambique to request UN observers (Hume 1994).

Finally, the US seemed willing to fund the expansion of electoral assistance. In its 1992 proposed budget, the State Department requested that Congress allocate 2.5m to fund the new Electoral Assistance Unit. The following year, it requested an additional million dollars—the same amount it requested for the OAS Democracy Governance Unit.¹³³ In fact, the State Department estimated that UN democracy promotion received between ten and twenty million in US government funding.¹³⁴

The sudden surge in US support for UN electoral assistance is partially explained by broader structural changes that accompanied the end of the Cold War. The collapse of

¹³² Japan argued that the new unit would be underfunded and ineffective, while Germany and France wanted Center for Human Rights strengthened rather than a new unit in the Secretariat. UNGA. *Debates of the Third Committee A/C.3/47/SR.58*.

¹³³ House Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations, Committee on Appropriations. *Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations for 1993. Part 1: Justification of Budget Estimates*. 102-2 sess., 1992; House Committee on Appropriations. *Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill, 1994*. 103 HR 2295. 103 sess. (June 10, 1993).

¹³⁴ This amount does not include contributions for election monitoring missions that were paid through assessments for peacekeeping missions. *Promoting Democracy: Foreign Affairs and Defense Agencies Funds and Activities - 1991 to 1993*. Washington, DC: National Security and International Affairs Division of the United States General Accounting Office, 1994.

the communist Soviet Union removed America's greatest strategic and ideological competitor. As a result, the lone super power expected the UN to better serve its interests and values. In many ways, the UN membership acquiesced. More developing states voted for the US-introduced 'Election' resolution in the Assembly, and a more cooperative Council supported the expansion of UN peacekeeping. This cooperation peaked when a US-led coalition forcibly removing Iraq from Kuwait in 1991.

That said, Council cooperation did not immediately translate into support for electoral assistance. Instead, US support for electoral assistance largely coincided with electoral assistance becoming a 'normal' activity. In particular, US policymakers increasingly considered democratic reconstruction the best way to rebuild post-conflict societies, and the UN was the best institution to build democracies (Ottoway, 2008; Paris, 2004). The UN, officials argued, (a) was impartial, (b) was already implementing other aspects of peace agreements, and (c) could reassure post-conflict societies that international involvement would not lead to occupation.¹³⁵ This view grew out of the UN's recent experiences in Nicaragua and Namibia. The early proponents of democratic reconstruction drew on these successful missions to persuade others to support UN democratic reconstruction elsewhere (Jakobsen, 1996; Paris, 2004). Likewise, these high profile successes changed US expectations about electoral assistance. As Assistant

¹³⁵ Other policymakers supported this view for more strategic reasons. UN electoral operations in post conflict settings served US interests by moderating collective action problems and ensuring some cost sharing among states. Elections were also an ideal endpoint for costly UN peacekeeping operations. See Paris, 2004.

Secretary of State John Bolton acknowledged to Congress, UN observers “convince citizens that they are going have free and fair elections.”¹³⁶

4.0 1991: The Election of a ‘Democratizing’ Secretary-General

However, US officials acted as if action alone was not enough. In late 1990, the US pressed the Assembly to instruct the UNSG to discuss (a) the steps the UNSG would take to accommodate more requests, (b) a new set of guidelines for addressing future requests, and (c) all missions taken over the past year.¹³⁷ Moreover, they started looking for a UNSG who would be a more vocal advocate for democratization when Perez de Cuellar elected not to seek a third term. In late 1991, the selection of a new Secretary-General attracted significant attention in the US. With commentators talking about a ‘revitalized’ UN, the UN Association of the USA declared that “there is broad agreement that the post-cold war and post-gulf war era will demand more of the U.N.’s executive office than ever before, making the coming elections perhaps the most critical in U.N. history.”¹³⁸ In particular, the Permanent Five were “looking for a more charismatic leader.”¹³⁹

Officially, the Charter stated that the UNSG “shall be appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council.” To make its recommendation, a formal Council vote was taken but only after informal voting determined which candidate would get the necessary nine votes without a veto from one of the P5. In essence, the P5

¹³⁶ US House of Representatives. *Hearings of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs* (testimony of John Bolton). March 25, 1992.

¹³⁷ UN General Assembly, 46th Sess. *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly. 46/137. Strengthening the Role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections* (A/RES/46/137) Dec. 17, 1991.

¹³⁸ Quoted in Rajiv Tawari, (1991) “United Nations: African Prospects for UN’s Top Post.” *IPS-Interpress Service*. Aug. 29.

¹³⁹ Frank J. Prial, (1991) “The World’s No. 1 Guessing Game is Coming the Fall,” *New York Times*, Aug. 7: A4.

determined who would be the next UNSG. However, there was also a general understanding that the office would rotate between nationals of different regions. In 1991, African leaders were claiming their ‘turn.’ At the annual OAU meeting, they recommended six candidates to the Council including Boutros Boutros-Ghali of Egypt. In many diplomatic circles, Egypt’s Deputy Prime Minister was highly regarded as an experienced statesman. This experience left him with a dense network of contacts throughout Africa, Europe, Asia and Latin America. He was fluent in French, English and Arabic and an accomplished legal scholar with over a hundred academic publications.

Boutros-Ghali, out-spoken and self-confident, was eager to campaign. He worked his contacts, publicized his accomplishments, and outlined an expansionist vision of the UN. The job, he argued, had the potential to be about much more than bureaucratic management and the implementation of directives. In the emerging international order, “there was a real role to play and a chance to put into effect ideas I had been working on for years” (Boutros-Ghali, 1999, 8). The UNSG had a bully pulpit he could use to articulate a framework for cooperation on a range of issues, and the members would be well served by giving the UNSG more autonomy and resources.

Boutros-Ghali first had to persuade states, especially the US, that they should support his candidacy. First and foremost, the Bush administration wanted an assertive administrator that would further re-organize the bureaucracy and eliminate unwanted programs.¹⁴⁰ A commitment to promote democracy was a secondary priority. However, it was important as evinced by the Administration’s strategy of proposing candidates with strong

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

‘democratic’ credentials while with-holding support for Boutros-Ghali and the other African candidates.

In particular, the Administration supported Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, a citizen of France, Iran and Switzerland. As the former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Prince Sadruddin had dedicated most of his career to human rights and humanitarian relief. He had a long record advocating for political and economic liberalization. Indeed, his vocal support for these causes ultimately doomed his candidacy as he was viewed as “too Western” for China, the Soviet Union, and other developing states.¹⁴¹ With their first choice eliminated, the Administration hoped that the Council would deadlock. If so, it would put forward a compromise candidate with strong democratic credentials. Specifically, the Bush Administration supported Krzysztof Skubiszewski, a democratic reformer and the foreign minister in Poland’s first post-communist government, and Brian Mulroney, the Canadian Prime Minister.

The Administration was unenthusiastic about the candidates put forward by African states. Among them, Boutros-Ghali was the least risky choice, but only because he was seeking a single term.¹⁴² Over time, however, Boutros-Ghali became more appealing. For one, he talked openly about democratization despite his senior position in Hosni Mubarak’s authoritarian government. Some of his academic writings also suggested that developing states would be well served by political liberalization.¹⁴³ In the US, his support for democratization drew the media’s attention. One press report observed,

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Paul Lewis, (1991) “Security Council Selects Egyptian for UN Top Post.” *The New York Times*. November 22.

¹⁴³ Judith Miller, (1991) “Man in the News: Boutros Boutros-Ghali; A ‘Born’ Secretary General.” *New York Times* November, 22.

“Boutros-Ghali has always been an advocate of democracy and multi-party system of government in the third world.”¹⁴⁴ Likewise, a *Washington Post* op-ed argued that Boutros-Ghali “could be expected to reflect rising world interest in human rights, democracy and development.”¹⁴⁵

However, the Administration wondered if Boutros-Ghali was too old at sixty-nine, and some conservative commentators questioned whether he was genuinely committed to political liberalization.¹⁴⁶ Boutros-Ghali worked tirelessly to persuade American policymakers and public opinion that he was sensitive to the interest of the world’s sole superpower. “Without the Americans,” he (1999, 12) told John Bolton, “the United Nations would be paralyzed.” In September, he visited Washington to deliver the same message to the President, Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, NSA Brent Scowcroft, congressmen, and journalists.¹⁴⁷

By mid-October, Boutros-Ghali had a growing number of supporters. He could count on Arab states, France and much of francophone Africa. By mid-August, a number of European countries as well as China and the Soviet Union were also supportive.¹⁴⁸ However, the US (and the United Kingdom) continued withholding its support. Moreover, the non-aligned movement was reluctant to back his candidacy given that

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ (1991) “Search at the UN,” *The Washington Post*, Nov. 14: A22.

¹⁴⁶ John M. Goshko, (1991) “World’s Diplomats Begin Jockeying To Pick New UN Secretary-General,” *The Washington Post*, August 4: A24.

¹⁴⁷ Jim Hoagland, (1991) “Run for the UN Roses,” *The Washington Post*, October 1, 1991: A21.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

black African leaders still preferred Zimbabwe's Finance Minister Bernard Chidzero, whose candidacy focused on development rather than democratization.¹⁴⁹

Over the next months, Boutros-Ghali failed to secure enough votes in informal Council polls to eliminate Chidzero.¹⁵⁰ While the Bush Administration was non-committal, it considered Chidzero an "unimaginative technocrat." US officials still hoped that Council deadlock might allow them to push through a compromise candidate. At the same time, the President and Secretary of State James Baker did not want to appear obstructionist, and Boutros-Ghali's vision of a more democratic order assuaged some of President's doubts.¹⁵¹ As the Council prepared to take a formal vote, the US Permanent Representative to the UN received no instructions, thus implying he abstain (Boutros-Ghali, 1999, 12). Boutros-Ghali received 11 of 15 Council votes without a veto, and with the Assembly's approval, he became the new Secretary-General.

5.0 1992: Taking Office: Administrative Reform and An Agenda for Peace

The selection process taught the new Secretary-General that promoting democracy was important to US-UN relations. As a reminder, the right-leaning Washington Times criticized Boutros-Ghali's commitment to democracy just four days into his new term. The editorial cited the UNSG's earlier comments in an Egyptian journal in which he cautioned against using democratization to interfere in a state's domestic affairs. "For the first Officer of a World Organization supposedly dedicated to the promotion of

¹⁴⁹ Paul Lewis (1991) , "Security Council Selects Egyptian for Top UN Post," *New York Times*, Nov. 22: A1.

¹⁵⁰ John M. Goshko, (1991) "Field Narrows in race for Top UN Job.," *The Washington Post*, November 14: A47.

¹⁵¹ Judith Miller, (1991) "Man in the News: Boutros Boutros-Ghali; A 'Born' Secretary General." *New York Times* November, 22.

democracy and human rights,” the editorial argued, “these do seem like rather surprising views...he may be making soothing noises for the benefit of his third world constituency...For Mr. Ghali to begin his tenure by discouraging the fragile consensus that has emerged at the UN, as well as the general spread of multi-party systems among Third World Nations, would be a bad move indeed.”¹⁵²

Of course, the editorial criticized Boutros-Ghali for expressing the same view he had expressed a month earlier in a speech to the Assembly—a speech in which he also declared democratization a UN priority. Yet, the editorial was indicative of the continued reluctance of American conservatives to see the new UNSG as ‘their man.’ They worried that UNSG’s support for democracy was a campaign strategy to weaken US opposition, and once in office, the democracy talk would evaporate.

The new Secretary-General moved quickly to quell doubts about his commitment to democratization. On his first day at work, he announced that he wanted the United Nations to play “a more important role in peace-keeping, peacebuilding, economic and social co-operation, and above all defending human rights and the democratic institutions all over the world.”¹⁵³ Indeed, he told the Washington Post that “after 30 years we discover that without the participation of the people there can be no economic development. For that we need democracy. The International Monetary Fund and the G-7 have adopted a new conditionality: assistance in proportion to democracy. But what are we doing to assist in building democracy?”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² “The UN According to Boutros Ghali.” *The Washington Times*, January 4, 1992.

¹⁵³ Leopold, Evelyn. “Ghali Takes Over as UN Chief.” *The Herald (Glasgow)*, January 3, 1992.

¹⁵⁴ Rosenfeld, Stephen S. “A New Age for the UN” *The Washington Post*, March 11, 1992.

Democratization was also integrated into the two major institutional initiatives he undertook in 1992: Administrative reform and *An Agenda for Peace*.

a. Administrative Reform

In his first meeting with President Bush, the President reminded the new Secretary-General (1998, 13) that reducing bureaucracy and unwanted programs was a “major priority.” Boutros-Ghali largely agreed. The Secretariat was top-heavy, inefficient and bloated, and the UNSG saw an opportunity to strengthen US-UN relations. The UN desperately needed the US to repay its arrears. Cash reserves were exhausted, and the UNSG was forced to reallocate funds from the few solvent peacekeeping operations to pay for other programs. The UNSG invited the President to appoint a new Under-Secretary-General (USG) for Administration and Management, and he promised to “support whatever [the President’s appointment] recommended.” In the end, the UNSG reduced the number of departments from thirty-five to eight and abolished eight high level positions.

Electoral assistance played a minor but important role in this re-organization. As part of the restructuring, the new Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, James O.C. Jonah, became the Focal Point for Electoral Assistance. Moreover, a small Electoral Assistance Unit (EAU) was established in the Department of Political Affairs in April 1992. Horacio Boneo, the Deputy SRSG of ONUVEH was named its director and allocated a handful of staff. The creation of the EAU was controversial. In the 1991 ‘Election’ resolution, the Assembly had authorized the appointment of a UN official as Focal Point; it did not authorize a permanent administrative office dedicated to electoral assistance. Indeed, such a suggestion was strongly opposed by a few states—including

China. Many developing states were smarting after the recent re-organization eliminated positions once held by their nationals, and now the UNSG was reallocating funds to an unauthorized electoral assistance bureaucracy.

Inside the Secretariat, the Secretary-General's activism created concerns about a possible backlash. To date, some UN officials argued, the small group of states staunchly opposed to expanding electoral assistance had found it difficult to mobilize wider opposition. However, this group might find more support if the UNSG was perceived to be undermining the Assembly's authority in order to advance programs sponsored by the US (Boutros-Ghali, 1999). Many officials shared Perez de Cuellar's view that the UN should proceed cautiously when it came to electoral assistance. Although these officials applauded the spread of democracy, they questioned whether the UN should actively promote it. The Secretariat was most effective when it played to its strengths—its impartiality and its technocratic expertise (Ludwig, 1995; 2004). In this period of systemic change, the Secretariat should stick to these strengths. It should minimize involvement in deciding 'who' should receive electoral assistance, delegate technical assistance to the specialized UN agencies, and direct requests for observers to regional organizations. In other words, the UN should concentrate on expanding technical assistance and ensure electoral observation remain an 'exceptional activity.'

The UNSG was less risk averse. According to the new Focal Point for Electoral Assistance, Boutros-Ghali had little sympathy for a bureaucracy that he believed "had developed its own way of doing things."¹⁵⁵ To be sure, Boutros-Ghali (1999, 168)

¹⁵⁵ *The Complete Oral History Transcripts of UN Voices* (Interview with James O.C. Jonah) CDROM New York: United Nations Intellectual History Project, 2007. (30 August 2001)

argued that developing states would be suspicious of any attempt to create a ‘Special Representative for Democratization.’ Yet, these states would tolerate the creation of a small bureaucracy dedicated to electoral assistance. Besides, his credibility would suffer if he made no effort to integrate democracy into his first major reforms after announcing repeatedly it was a UN priority. The bureaucracy would simply have to adapt.

Six months later, Boutros-Ghali released his first report to the Assembly on electoral assistance. Unlike subsequent years, the Secretary-General actively participated in drafting the report so he could lay out his vision for electoral assistance. The report reflected the tensions between the more expansion-minded Secretary-General and the more cautious bureaucracy. On one hand, the report highlighted the appointment of the new Focal Point, the establishment of a new Trust Fund for Electoral Assistance, and the creation of the EAU. It also set out guidelines specifically designed to help the UN address the high demand for assistance. Perez de Cuellar had already laid out some guidelines the previous year. Yet, the Boutros-Ghali argued that these rules were inadequate because the criteria for sending observers were too strict. Under the old guidelines, too many requests for observers would have been rejected. In doing so, the UN missed its chance to help “build confidence” in elections the UN could not observe. Consequently, the UNSG added two types of electoral assistance—follow and report and coordinate and support. The addition of these two types of assistance gave the Secretariat the “flexibility” it needed to meet demand, and without such flexibility, he “could not be as positive or supportive as otherwise might have been the case.”

On the other hand, the report also stressed the UN’s strengths were its technical expertise and impartiality. “The United Nations,” the report noted, “must not fail to fulfill its new

role as a supportive and neutral party, qualified and dedicated to providing expertise and assistance which Governments may request.”¹⁵⁶ To this end, the new EAU was necessary to improve the quality of assistance, not just the quantity of assistance. “The requests received in the early 1990s,” the EAU’s first director recalled, “came from countries lacking experience in the organization of elections...most countries required support in establishing and sustaining basic institutions...The Secretariat did not have, at the time, specific structures or expertise” (Boneo, 1997, 103) A new unit was the only way to develop such expertise.

Though the Bush Administration asked Congress to fund UN electoral assistance, UN officials were skeptical that any funding would be sustained. The US was still insisting that contributions were voluntary, and the Administration was under pressure to restrict UN spending. In October, the Secretariat convened a four-day *United Nations Conference on the Coordination of Assistance in the Electoral Field* to find sustainable ways to expand electoral assistance. At the conference, attendees decided that the EAU would help identify donors for specific assistance projects, bring-in outside experts, and delegate implementation to other UN agencies. The new unit would receive requests for assistance, provide fact finding and evaluation missions, and then “step aside and focus on building institutional memory.” Improved IT capabilities and “modularized knowledge” through training manuals were also expected to bring efficiency gains.

¹⁵⁶ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/47/688). November 19, 1992.

Finally, the UN would help “support the creation of networks of electoral organizations in Africa similar to those existing Latin America and Europe.”¹⁵⁷

b. An Agenda for Peace

Boutros-Ghali’s (1992) *An Agenda for Peace* also demonstrates how talk was used to signal the UNSG’s commitment to democratization. On January 31, 1992, the Council held its first meeting at the level of heads of government or state. The purpose of this summit was to demonstrate support for the new UNSG and reinforce the image of a cooperative Council dedicated to strengthening the UN.¹⁵⁸ In the summit’s final statement, the UNSG was tasked with defining the new security environment, and given this environment, recommending ways to improve the UN’s capacity for peacekeeping, peacemaking and preventative diplomacy.

The Council’s statement also noted that this new security environment was emerging in a democratizing world:

Rapid progress has been made, in many regions of the world, towards democracy and responsive forms of government... The members of the Council note that United Nations peace-keeping tasks have increased and broadened considerably in recent years. Election observation, human rights verification and the repatriation of refugees have in the settlement of some regional conflicts, at the request or with the agreement of the parties concerned, been integral parts of the Security Council’s effort to maintain

¹⁵⁷ “The United Nations Conference on Coordination of Assistance in the Electoral Field.” Ottawa, Canada. October 5-8, 1992.

¹⁵⁸ *The Complete Oral History Transcripts of UN Voices*, (Interview with Virendra Dayal) CDROM New York: United Nations Intellectual History Project, 2007. July 15, 2002: 36.

international peace and security. [The Council] welcome these developments.¹⁵⁹

Some individual participants went even further by explicitly stressing the need to support democracy. President Bush exclaimed that, “In Asia, in Africa, in Europe, in the Americas, the United Nations must stand with those who seek greater freedom and democracy.” Likewise, the Russian president noted that “the principles [of a new order] are clear and simple: primacy of democracy, human rights and freedoms, legal and moral standards.”¹⁶⁰

The UNSG welcomed the Council’s instructions, and he outlined a vision for a more democratic global order:

Democratization at the national level dictates a corresponding process at the global level...For national societies, democracy means strengthening the institutions of popular participation and consents political pluralism and the defense of human rights, including those of minorities. For global society, it means the democratization of international relations and the participation of all states in developing new norms of international life...At both levels, democracy is a delicate plant that needs the nourishing of the soil of peace, security and economic development...¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ UNSC. *Statement of the First Security Council Meeting at the Level of Heads of Government and State*. S/24111 January 31, 1992.

¹⁶⁰ UNSC. *Debates of the First Security Council Meeting at the Level of Heads of Government and State*. S/PV.3046 January 31, 1992.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* Though the Chinese leadership privately reminded the UNSG that it stood for ‘strict non-intervention,’ they too went along with this statement. See also Boutros-Ghali, 1999.

Though this vision was presented as a coherent conceptual framework, it also served as a grand bargain designed to widen member state support for democratization (Lombardo, 2001). Most member states would get something they wanted and something they did not. Member states suspicious of democratization would accept UN democracy assistance in return for institutional reforms that gave them a greater role in UN decision making. The reverse was true for the US and other powerful Western democracies.

After the summit, the Secretary-General set about writing his report. Though senior advisors drafted it, the UNSG determined its content—particularly when it came to democratization. It was Boutros-Ghali that decided to include peacebuilding as a separate element of peacekeeping. Though recent peacekeeping missions included tasks like election observation, the UN had not articulated how such tasks fit with peacekeeping which was developed to address inter-state wars. To Boutros-Ghali (1999), the concept needed updating to guide future missions and learn from past experiences.

To this end, *An Agenda for Peace* was to be organized around two claims (Barnett, 1997). The first claim was that the Council had the authority to intervene in intra-state conflicts that affected regional peace and security. The second one proposed that UN intervention in such conflicts should parallel the conflict's life cycle. Preventative diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping (as well as peace enforcement) covered the first three stages of the life cycle. Yet, Nicaragua and Namibia suggested there was a fourth peacebuilding stage that started "once the guns fall silent" (Karns, 2008). In this final

stage, UN electoral assistance was one of a set of tasks to bring about a liberal democratic state that made a recurrence of violent conflict less likely.¹⁶²

Peacebuilding was a concept, Boutros-Ghali recalls, “without false modesty, [that I] invented.”¹⁶³ As one senior adviser remembers, it was “an intellectual epiphany” that the UNSG had while reviewing an early draft of *An Agenda* on a trip to Latin America.¹⁶⁴ “Where is El Salvador in this?” the Secretary-General asked. “It doesn’t fit the established categories. It’s not peacemaking or peacekeeping. This is post-conflict and it is really peacebuilding” (Karns, 2008, 22). “Boutros said to me,” Virendra Dayal remembers, “I would rather like something on peacebuilding also. It is not included in the agenda. It is not included in the resolution itself, but it’s a concept which I want to bring to the UN as my concept.”¹⁶⁵

While his advisers made revisions, Boutros-Ghali took to his bully pulpit to find support for the concept in Washington. Overall, the President was supportive, but public opinion and Congress needed further convincing. Polls showed more Americans held favorable views of the UN, yet most Americans preferred that US contributions to the UN be dedicated to drug control rather than democratization or development.¹⁶⁶ And though

¹⁶² Peacebuilding involved a range of tasks from disarming and reintegrating combatants, reforming civilian police, to strengthening the rule of law and state institutions, market reforms, constitutional reform and holding elections. These tasks were thought to contribute to the establishment of a liberal-democratic state. See Paris, 2004; Ottoway, 2008; Barnett, 1997.

¹⁶³ *The Complete Oral History Transcripts of UN Voices*, (Interview of Boutros Boutros-Ghali) CDROM New York: United Nations Intellectual History Project. (5 May 2001): 37. Translation by Karns, 2008.

¹⁶⁴ Alvaro de Soto quoted in Karns (2008, 22).

¹⁶⁵ Dayal, along with James Sutterlin, were the responsible for drafting *An Agenda for Peace*. *The Complete Oral History Transcripts of UN Voices*, (Interview with Virendra Dayal) CDROM New York: United Nations Intellectual History Project, 2007. July 15, 2002: 36.

¹⁶⁶ (1992) “New Poll Finds Rightward Shift in Public Backing for UN as Secretary-General Meets with President Bush.” *PR Newswire*. May 12.

public opinion acknowledged recent peacekeeping successes, it also worried about the efficiency and cost of future missions (Yankelovitch, 1992).

To reassure US public opinion, the UNSG marketed UN reform, peacekeeping and democratization. The UNSG argued that US-UN values and interests were aligning and the UN could efficiently manage expanded levels of activity if given adequate resources.

On May 12, he went to Capitol Hill to deliver the message that:

Every day we receive demands from member states asking to intervene in their dispute, to send technicians to supervise their elections, and practically we have not the financial possibility or even the technical possibility to be able to cope with those, I will say, dozens and dozens of request. So the problem here is how we maintain our credibility, and this needs more financial assistance from the member state.

He also reaffirmed that if the US wanted the UN to support peace, the UN had to support democracy: “In today’s multipolar world, economic and social developments and the promotion and reinforcement of democratic institutions are an essential part of maintaining peace.”¹⁶⁷

Less than a month later, the UNSG presented *An Agenda for Peace* to the Council and the Assembly. To maximize coverage in the press and policy circles, he insisted that the Department of Public Information publish it as a Blue Book to separate it from other

¹⁶⁷ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, (1992) Address to the *Center for Security and International Studies*, Washington DC. May 13. These speeches did draw some attention in the US, and one media report declared that “United Nations peacekeepers are the darlings of the new world order... Among other things, UN officials are preparing for elections in Angola, overseeing political and military reforms in El Salvador and trying to lay the foundations of a democratic society in Cambodia.” Tim Zimmerman, Susan Lawrence, Tom Gibb, (1992) “The UN to the Rescue.” *US News and World Report*. May 18: 52-55 See also Senator Lee Hamilton in Foreign Affairs (1992).

documents published under his name. In the introduction, the UNSG argued that his recommendations for strengthening the UN were tailored to a world where “authoritarian regimes have given way to democratic forces and responsive governments.” After discussing ways to improve preventative diplomacy, peacekeeping and peacemaking, the Secretary-General turned to peacebuilding: “Peacemaking and peace-keeping operations, to be truly successful, must come to include comprehensive efforts to identify and support structures which will tend to consolidate peace and advance a sense of confidence and well-being among people.” This comprehensive effort included a number of tasks related to democratization including “monitoring elections, advancing efforts to protect human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation.”

Though *An Agenda* largely reiterated previous statements, it added one recommendation. Specifically, he recommended that the UN be given the resources and authority to help all states—not just post-conflict ones—trying to develop stable democratic institutions.

There is a new requirement for technical assistance which the United Nations has an obligation to develop and provide when requested: support for the transformation of deficient national structures and capabilities, and for the strengthening of new democratic institutions. The authority of the United Nations system to act in this field would rest on the consensus that social peace is as important as strategic or political peace.

To get sovereignty-sensitive states to accept this recommendation, *An Agenda* linked UN support for democracy within states to UN support for democracy among states.

There is an obvious connection between democratic practices - such as the rule of law and transparency in decision-making - and the achievement of true peace and security in any new and stable political order. These elements of good governance need to be promoted at all levels of international and national political communities.

Thus, *An Agenda for Peace* served multiple purposes. First, it was a planning document for future peace operations. Second, it gave the UN a voice in a policy discourse prevalent among the growing bloc of democratic states on how to build a more liberal international order (Barnett, 1997). It set out what role the UN should play in advancing this order and why even illiberal states should support this role. It highlighted the UNSG's efforts to align democracy talk and action, and how he planned to keep it aligned by widening member support for democracy building, entrenching a new democratization discourse, and institutionalizing peacebuilding.

An Agenda for Peace generated significant debate among the UN's membership. Many developing states like India saw it as "an interventionist document" that handed too much power to the Council.¹⁶⁸ In the US, *An Agenda* was generally well-received. The Administration dismissed some of *An Agenda's* more ambitious ideas—like keeping US troops on standby for UN operations. However, it pledged to support the UNSG's efforts to strengthen peacemaking, peacekeeping and even peacebuilding.¹⁶⁹ This support was particularly satisfying for the Secretary-General. He had made it a priority to build a good relationship with the President. He had been pleased when the President had

¹⁶⁸ *The Complete Oral History Transcripts of UN Voices*, (Interview with Virendra Dayal) CDROM New York: United Nations Intellectual History Project, 2007. July 15, 2002: 36.

¹⁶⁹ Robert M. Levitt, (1992) "US has long Supported UN's Work." *New York Times*. October 2.

declared the UNSG was “off to a fantastic start” after implementing administrative reforms (Boutros-Ghali, 1999). Now, the President was recommitting to pay US arrears over the next three years. Boutros-Ghali believed that US policymakers were realizing they had a UNSG who shared their values, and if given resources and autonomy, could advance their interests.

5.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, there was pressure from the US and democratizing states to align talk and action. By the start of 1992, the UN was expected to explain how electoral assistance could be expanded and take action accordingly. Previously, this pressure to align talk and action did not exist. Member states expected electoral assistance to be exceptional so there was little reason to demand more talk from Perez de Cuellar. These expectations changed when electoral assistance became a normal activity, and action without talk was no longer acceptable. The US and democratizing states pressured the UNSG to declare democratization a priority, and discuss how he planned to expand electoral assistance. State pressure was manifest three ways. First, developing states, especially in Africa, turned in large numbers to the UN for electoral assistance. Second, the Bush Administration sought a new UNSG who would be a stronger advocate for democratization. Finally, the US gave the UNSG an opportunity to demonstrate his commitment to democratization. The Council requested that the UNSG explain how the UN could help build democratic post-conflict states and re-organize the Secretariat while strengthening electoral assistance.

The Secretary-General was responsive to this pressure. As a candidate, Boutros-Ghali used his democratization rhetoric to stand out from other African candidates. Once in office, he immediately turned to the bully pulpit to declare democratization an organizational priority. He also set about re-organizing the bureaucracy. While Boutros-Ghali cut staff from most Secretariat departments, a new Electoral Assistance Unit was created in the Department of Political Affairs, and new types of assistance were developed so the UN could accommodate more requests for assistance. He even gave democratization a prominent place in the UN's security discourse by including it in his *Agenda for Peace*.

Chapter 5

1993-1996: Losing Superpower Support

1.0 Introduction

The alignment of talk and action was short-lived. By mid-1993, the UNSG's strong rhetoric was increasingly at odds with UN electoral assistance. The Assembly seldom authorized electoral observation and the Council did not ask the UNSG to observe post-conflict elections in Guatemala or Bosnia. Moreover, the US stopped asking Congress for additional electoral assistance funding after 1992. The decline in US support was not caused by US displeasure with UN electoral assistance *per se*, but from domestic political changes in the US, disagreements with the UNSG, and high profile peacekeeping failures in Bosnia, Rwanda, and Somalia—none of which involved electoral assistance.

However, Congress and the Clinton Administration cut funding and mandates for a range of UN programs including electoral assistance. The loss of funding and mandates forced the UNSG to decline requests or rely on cheaper forms of assistance. Electoral assistance increasingly involved sending a few officials to offer moral support, give technical advice, or coordinate other international observers.

This decline did not stop Boutros-Ghali from talking about democratization. He declared that democratization “has found a home in the United Nations” where “it has become a UN priority.”¹⁷⁰ He insisted that “virtually no area of United Nations activity has been

¹⁷⁰ Boutros Boutros-Ghali. “Address to Sao Paulo Institute for Advanced Study,” Sao Paulo, Brazil. February 28, 1996. Speech. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. “Address to the General Assembly on the Occasion of the United Nations 50th Anniversary Ceremony,” New York. June 26, 1995. Speech.

left untouched,”¹⁷¹ and announced that democratization was “one of the most promising initiatives for progress.”¹⁷² On his final day in office, he even released *An Agenda for Democratization* over the objections of other UN officials and member states.

Why did action decline without a proportional decline in talk? Was there even pressure on the UNSG to reduce talk in-line with action? If so, what other pressures pulled talk and action apart? The next chapter shows that advanced democracies and UN officials did pressure Boutros-Ghali to moderate democracy talk even though the UNSG did not give-in. This chapter explains why this pressure was bound to fail, and what was pulling talk and action apart. Specifically, there was talk without action because early US policies conflicted with later ones. In 1992, the US successfully pressed for the expansion of UN electoral assistance and the appointment of the outspoken Boutros-Ghali as Secretary-General. In 1993, US funding cuts forced the UN to take less action, but they did not force a change in the UNSG. The outspoken Boutros-Ghali remained, and deteriorating relations with the US only reinforced his belief that he should keep talking about democratization to signal that he was committed to democratization or failing that, to be his “swan song” at the UN.

2.0 The Return of Disparate Talk and Action: Talk without Action

UN electoral assistance declined sharply after 1992, but it was initially hard to notice because the UN was carrying out electoral observation missions that had been authorized earlier for Mozambique, Cambodia, El Salvador, and Eritrea. However, the decline after 1992 was steep. The UN authorized fewer missions, and the Council authorized just

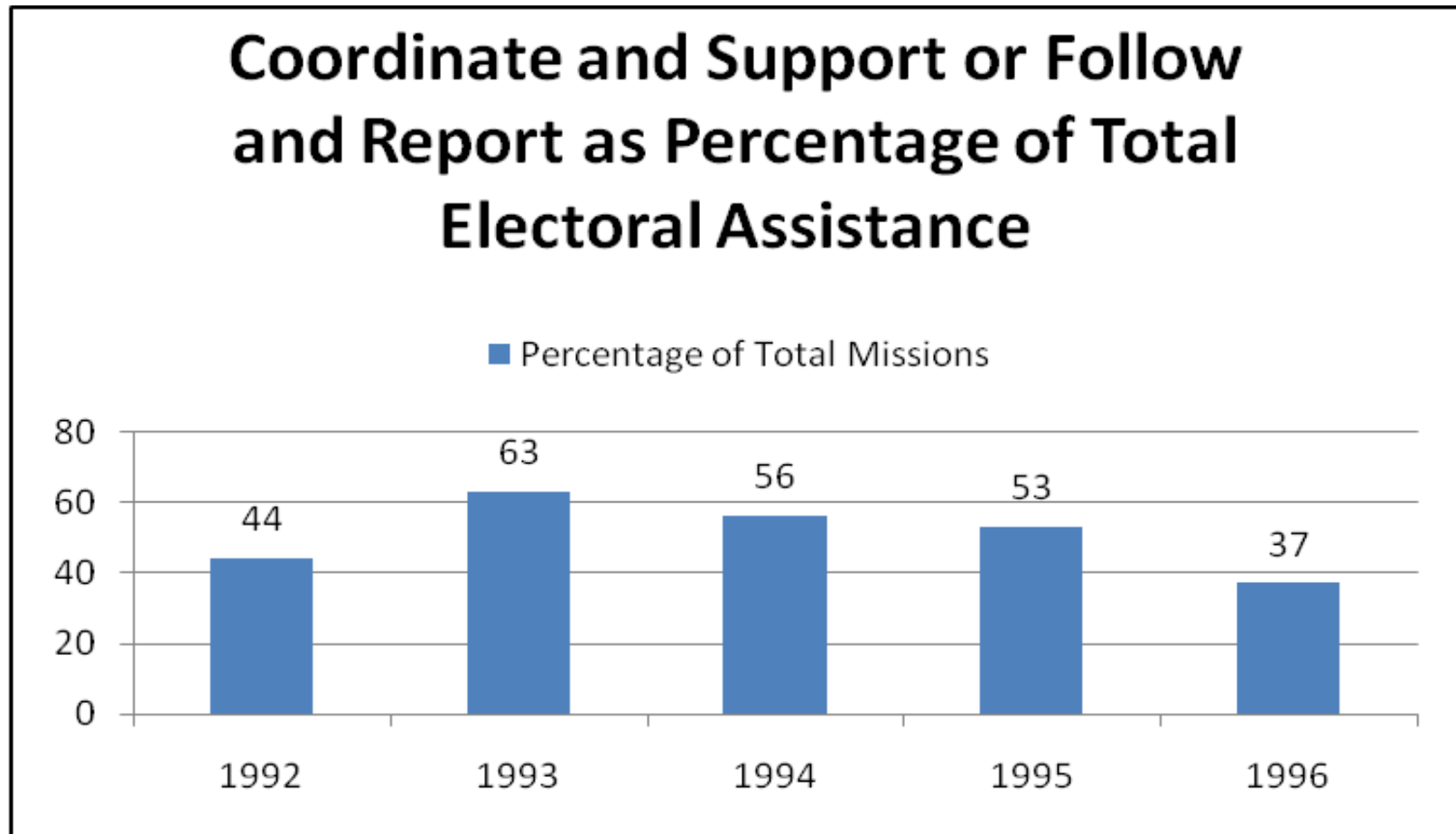
¹⁷¹ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 1996, *An Agenda for Democratization*, New York: Department of Public Information: 2.

¹⁷² Boutros-Ghali, “Address to the UN General Assembly,” New York. October 25, 1995.

three observation missions.¹⁷³ The Council excluded UN observers from elections in Bosnia and El Salvador despite the UNSG's previous efforts to bring peace to these countries. The electoral assistance provided during this period was also cheaper, less politically sensitive, and shorter in duration. In particular, coordinate and support and follow and report missions made up a substantial proportion of assistance (Fig. 5.1). These forms of assistance gave the UN a presence on Election Day, but they required less than a handful of UN officials and precluded these officials from making any public statement about the election.

¹⁷³ In two of the three instances, the UN mission dated back before 1993, but was expanded to include electoral observation. In 1994, electoral observers bolstered the UN human rights observation mission in South Africa. In 1993, an observation mission was added to an existing peacekeeping mission in Liberia. In 1996, the UNSG was forced to organize elections in the Croatian province of Eastern Slavonia.

Figure 5.1



Source: Reports of the Secretary General on Enhancing Periodic and Genuine Elections: 1991; 1992; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1997.

While action declined, talk did not. For Boutros-Ghali, democratization was not just a task, but “an essential objective.”¹⁷⁴ Major policy statements suggested that Boutros-Ghali expected electoral assistance to keep growing. As he (1993, 325) wrote in one journal:

The United Nations is taking on a wide variety of tasks in assisting progress towards democratization in states...I created a new office to deal with electoral assistance by Member States. In the short period of its existence, this office has handled nearly fifty requests. It should be borne in mind that until recently...the United Nations regularly turned down all but technical assistance requests. We have since successfully monitored several elections and others are in preparation.

Two years later, he reminded audiences that over sixty electoral assistance operations had been conducted.¹⁷⁵ As he told the Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Since 1992, we have been able to organize, conduct, supervise, coordinate and verify elections in some three score countries."¹⁷⁶ Indeed, “the UN is viewed as a primary source of electoral assistance” for democratizing states “that have appeared in every part of the globe.”¹⁷⁷

174 Boutros-Ghali. “Address on Restoration of Aristide government in Haiti,” Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Oct. 18, 1995. Speech.

¹⁷⁵ In 1995, he declared that, “The United Nations now provides real electoral assistance to States that request it... Since 1992, the United Nations has conducted more than 60 electoral assistance operations.” Likewise, he told a conference at Colombia University: “The time is not far in the past when the idea of the United Nations actively promoting democracy would have seemed shockingly improper to many governments. But since I entered office as Secretary-General, the United Nations has received requests for electoral assistance from nearly 60 Member States.” See Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Address to the Tenth Annual Conference of the Freedom Forum*, Columbia University, New York. March 19, 1995

¹⁷⁶ Thalif Deen, “United Nations: UN Helps Democratize the Third World.” *IPS Inter-Press Service*. August, 30, 1995.

¹⁷⁷ UNDPI. Office of the Secretary-General, Press Statement, UN Department of Public Information, New York. November 19, 1995.

These democracies “particularly value a UN role as a means of obtaining needed assistance while avoiding the perception of outside intervention.”¹⁷⁸

While he celebrated UN electoral assistance, he also urged member states to embrace democratization. The UN and its member states should aspire to a “new diplomacy of democracy and human rights.”¹⁷⁹ This aspiration was consistent with “a new integrated vision of peace and progress, encompassing international peace and security, economic and social development and democracy and respect for human rights.”¹⁸⁰ He repeatedly returned to this theme: Democracy, human rights, peace and development are “inter-locking and mutually reinforcing.”¹⁸¹ Though he conceded that “democracy is not a word that appears in the Charter, with the opening words, ‘We the Peoples of the United Nations’, democratization is built into the world Organization.”¹⁸² It was “democracies enemies” that mischaracterized even legitimate concerns about UN democracy promotion.¹⁸³ “The universal nature of democracy”¹⁸⁴ meant it “does not belong to anyone.”¹⁸⁵ “It is an outcome to be shaped and achieved by peoples in their own distinctive ways.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁷⁸ Boutros-Ghali, “Letter to the G7,” June 15, 1995.

¹⁷⁹ Boutros-Ghali, “Address to University of Bucharest on being Awarded Honorary Doctorate,” Bucharest, Romania. November 2, 1994. Speech.

¹⁸⁰ Boutros-Ghali, “Address to the Twelfth World Assembly of Youth,” Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. April 3, 1993. Speech.

¹⁸¹ Boutros-Ghali, “Address to the General Assembly,” New York. December 13, 1993. Speech.

¹⁸² Boutros-Ghali, “Address to Boston World Affairs Council,” Boston, USA. March 16, 1993. Speech.

¹⁸³ Boutros-Ghali, “Address to the Swedish Parliament,” Stockholm, Sweden. Jan. 13, 1995. Speech.

¹⁸⁴ Boutros-Ghali, “Interview with the Russian Press Nezavisimaya Gazeta,” TASS Press Review. Sept. 17, 1993.

¹⁸⁵ Boutros-Ghali, 1996, “Address at University of Bordeaux,” Bordeaux, France. March 26, 1996.

¹⁸⁶ Boutros-Ghali, “Address to 48th Annual Conference for Non-Governmental Organizations,” New York. Sept. 19, 1995. Speech.

The most elaborate example of democracy talk was a position paper entitled an *Agenda for Democratization* (1996) that Boutros-Ghali released on his final day in office.¹⁸⁷

The *Agenda* emphasized four themes. First, it reaffirmed the link between peace, development and democracy, but it added (p.8) that the UN should consider the difficulties of “prioritization and timing” among them. Second, the UN viewed democratization (p.1) as a process not an outcome so that “individual societies decide if and when to begin democratization” and whether to request assistance. Third, it highlighted the development of democracy assistance and the major contributions made by past missions. Finally, he forcefully reiterated that democracy within states should also be met by democracy among states. Thus, he elaborated on earlier statements that more states needed more say in the UN decisions.

3.0 The Effect of Past Failures on the Decline of Electoral Assistance

So why did electoral assistance decline? One plausible explanation would be the sudden mobilization of opposition to electoral assistance. Some authoritarian states may have viewed the rapid expansion of electoral assistance and the Electoral Assistance Unit as a threat to state sovereignty and noninterference. To this end, the handful of states that consistently opposed electoral assistance may have mobilized more opposition to large electoral missions from developing states. Yet no major opposition bloc developed. Most states seemed to have accepted that electoral assistance would be a permanent UN activity. Developing states continued to make a modest but not insignificant number of requests for UN electoral assistance. The UN received approximately twenty requests for

187 An *Agenda for Democratization* was released to the Assembly on December 20, 1996 (A/51/761) and as a ‘Blue Book’ by the Department of Public Information on December 31, 1996.

electoral assistance per year for a total of eighty-one requests between 1993 and 1996. Furthermore, past recipients of electoral assistance did not complain that electoral assistance undermined their sovereignty. In fact, the UNSG reported in 1994 that, “In providing electoral assistance in over 50 cases to date, the United Nations has never received a complaint from a Member State regarding interference in its internal affairs.”¹⁸⁸

Consequently, opposition in the Assembly to electoral assistance shrank rather than grew. In 1991, seventy-five percent of the membership voted for a ‘Sovereignty’ resolution; in 1995, only fifty-four percent voted for it.¹⁸⁹ Moreover, the Assembly adopted a new resolution in February 1996 that instructed the UNSG to find novel ways to support “the Efforts of Governments to Promote and Consolidate New or Restored Democracies.” The resolution—adopted without a vote—also applauded the Secretary-General “for the activities undertaken to support the efforts to consolidate democracy.”¹⁹⁰

Alternatively, the decline of UN electoral assistance could have been a reaction to setbacks in recent observation missions. For three years, the UN was unable to restore the democratically-elected Haitian government following a military coup in late-1991. In Angola, the UNITA rebel leader Jonas Savimbi resumed fighting after refusing to recognize the outcome of UN-observed presidential elections.¹⁹¹ In many policy circles, there were fears that the UN observation mission in neighboring Mozambique may meet

¹⁸⁸ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/49/675). November 30, 1994.

¹⁸⁹ Unlike support for the ‘Sovereignty’ resolution, there was no sign of a decline in support for its twin—the ‘Election’ resolution. In fact, there was a slight increase in support for the Election resolution from eighty-nine percent in 1991 to ninety-one percent in 1995.

¹⁹⁰ See General Assembly Resolution, (1995) “Support by the United Nations System of the Efforts of Governments to Promote and Consolidate New or Restored Democracies.” A/RES/50/133, February 16.

¹⁹¹ See Antsee, 1999. In Angola, the rebel UNITA group had little interest in accepting electoral defeat or even disarming in preparation for that possibility.

the same fate. Finally, the UN faced delays and complications while organizing Cambodian elections.

However, member states did not blame the UN for past failures, nor did they reduce support for struggling missions. In Haiti, few commentators challenged the prevailing view that UN-observers could not have prevented the military from overthrowing Aristide.¹⁹² In Cambodia, the US helped pass five pre-election Council resolutions condemning pre-election violence and reaffirming support for UNTAC (Ratner, 1995). After the election, the Council strongly backed the weak and divided government, and it provided additional support for UN peacebuilding. In Angola, the US Assistant Secretary of State helped the head of the UN mission secure more resources, and when UNITA refused to recognize the results, the Council provided additional resources to the electoral mission in Mozambique to prevent a similar result (Antsee, 1999, Hume, 1994; Howard, 212-215; Ajello, 2004).

Moreover, policymakers and scholars supported further expanding UN electoral assistance at the start of 1993. In February, the Clinton Administration boasted that the EAU, now renamed the Electoral Assistance Division (EAD, represented “the culmination of a 4-year effort on the part of the US to enhance and coordinate UN efforts on electoral assistance.”¹⁹³ Prominent American scholars and policymakers like Larry Diamond and Morton Halperin joined others to advocate for further expanding UN electoral assistance.¹⁹⁴ As President of the NED Carl Gershman (1993) concluded, recent

¹⁹² See Malone, 1998; Pezzullo, 2006.

¹⁹³ House Committee on Appropriations. *Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill, 1994*. 103 HR 2295. 103 sess. (June 10, 1993).

¹⁹⁴ Diamond a leading democratization scholar, told Congress that “the democracy assistance functions of the UN, including prominently its capacities for election monitoring, electoral administration and conflict

actions suggested “the emergence of the United Nations as the most significant global institution embodying democratic ideals and aspirations associated with the new world order.”

4.0 Declining US Support for UN Action

This chapter argues that action declined when the UNSG learned that the US would not provide the mandates or financial resources necessary to meet the demand for electoral assistance. Specifically, the US stopped supporting electoral assistance as part of widespread restrictions placed on a range of UN activities. This reduced support for electoral assistance had little to do with past UN electoral assistance. Instead, it grew out of a series of historically contingent events and domestic political changes in the US including the rising cost of peacekeeping (Fig. 5.2); high profile peacekeeping failures in Somalia, Bosnia and Rwanda; the rise of anti-UN rhetoric among a powerful group of Republicans in Congress; personality clashes between the Clinton Administration and the outspoken Secretary-General; and a general decline in support for promoting democracy abroad.

4.2 1993: ‘Dragged’ into Somalia

A series of peacekeeping failures in Somalia, Bosnia and Rwanda led many to question whether the value of UN peacekeepers justified the rising costs. In early 1993, US troops

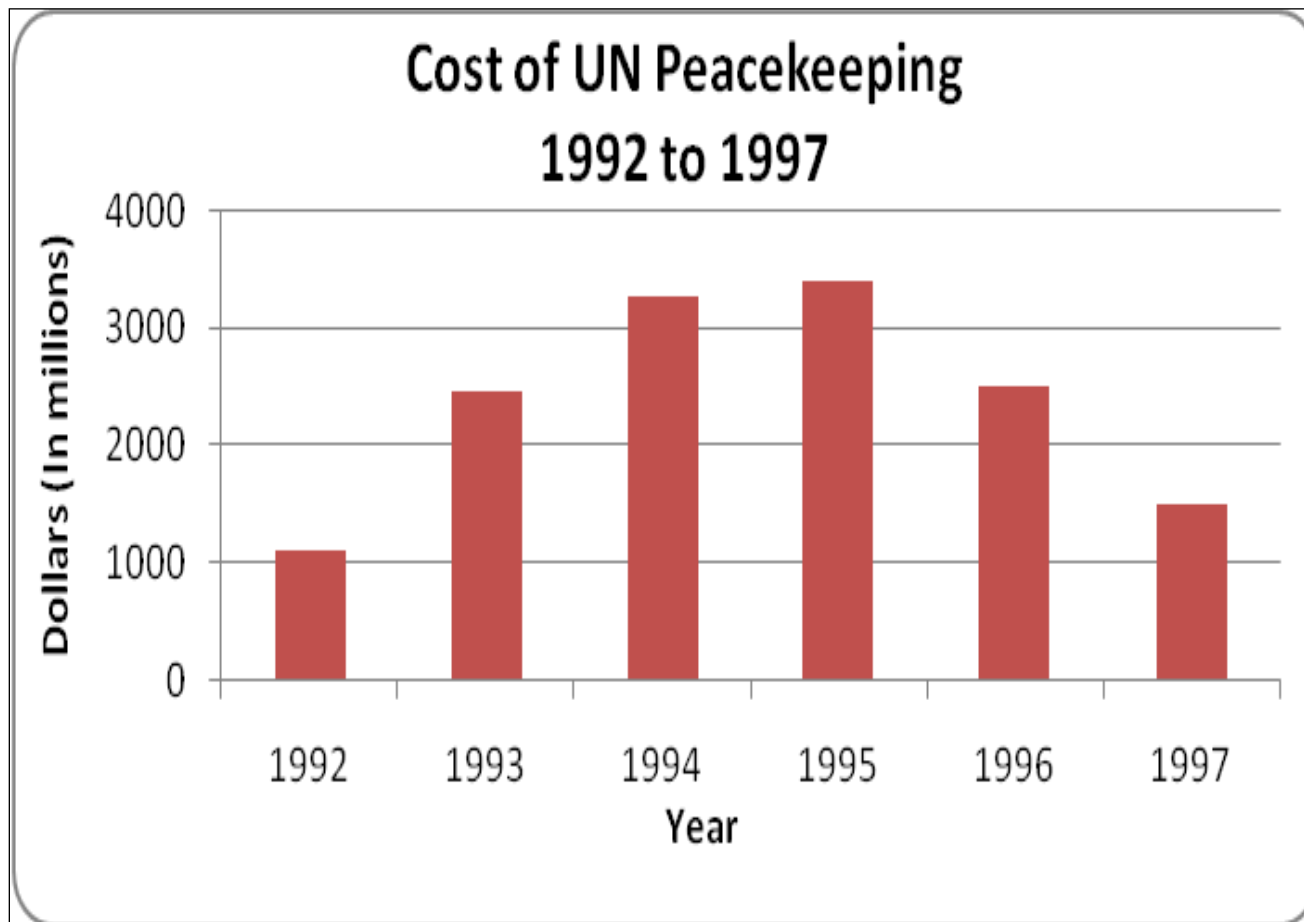
mediation should be enhanced. See House of Representatives, *House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs: Hearings on Future of US Foreign Policy: Functional Issues* (Testimony of Larry Diamond) (Y4.F76/1:F98/Pt.2). March 6, 1993. In addition, Morton Halperin argued that “The United Nations, no longer a prisoner of Cold War politics, has also become more active in advocating democracy... In particular, two recent UN missions represent the most forceful and persistent efforts to implement the principles of constitutional democracy.... UN supervision of elections is crucial to the trend toward constitutional democracy.” See Morton Halperin (1993), “Guaranteeing Democracy,” *Foreign Policy* June 22: 105.

had forcefully opened humanitarian relief routes in Somalia before handing off the humanitarian mission to a UN peacekeeping operation. The mission's early success fed the Council's growing optimism and emboldened the Council to call for the "the establishment of representative democratic institutions in Somalia" (Fox, 2005). For the first time, the Council called on a member state to re-organize itself as a democracy. However, the Council's optimism was short-lived. That summer, one of the Somali factions led by General Farah Mohammed Aidid attacked and killed UN troops. The Council and UNSG immediately condemned the attack and authorized the use of US troops to punish Aidid. What was once a humanitarian relief mission was now a combat mission against a powerful local warlord. The Clinton Administration insisted that this new mandate was necessary; the failure to punish Aidid risked permanently weakening the credibility of UN peacekeeping. A successful mission demonstrated the international community's capacity to help democracy even under the most difficult circumstances (Goldgeier and Chollet, 2008, 74).

However, US forces in Somalia started taking casualties within months. On October 3, eighteen US Army Rangers were killed after their Blackhawk helicopter was shot down over the capital of Mogadishu. Americans watched horrified as the bodies of servicemen were dragged through the streets. Suddenly, the mission was criticized as the start of another Vietnam War. With domestic opposition mounting, President Clinton vowed to remove all US troops from Somalia within six months. The whole incident had left Americans skeptical that UN peacekeeping was in the country's national interest (Boutros-Ghali, 1999). Polls showed public approval for the UN declining dramatically. Many Americans believed that the UN had dragged the US into Somalia, and as

Goldgeier and Chollet (2008, p.83) put it, “the UN came to be seen as a place where US power was manipulated to serve other’s ends in places where the nation had few interests.

Figure 5.2



Source: The United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Available at www.un.org/en/peacekeeping.

4. 3 *Rwanda*

With Somalia fresh in the minds of most Americans, a civil war in Rwanda took a horrific turn as an ethnically-based Hutu militia began a genocide against the Tutsi and moderate Hutu population. Though much of the public's attention remained focused on Bosnia, there were growing reports of genocide from human rights groups like the International Committee of the Red Cross. As such, some commentators demanded that the US press the UN to take more action.¹⁹⁵ The international community, human rights advocates argued, had a legal obligation to stop genocide (Powers, 2003). However, the Clinton Administration had no stomach for intervening in another civil war and avoided even labeling the violence as genocide. US policymakers feared that if it agreed to expand the small existing UN peacekeeping force, the mission would inevitably creep beyond the "Mogadishu line" and the US would find itself with an open-ended commitment to fight a brutal civil war. Albright told Congress that it would be "folly" to send UN peacekeepers to Rwanda.¹⁹⁶ Without a clear chance of success, the UN had to learn to say no—even where there was human suffering. To this end, the Council agreed to withdraw most of the peacekeeping mission and prohibited the mission from intervening except to mediate and provide humanitarian assistance (Boutros-Ghali, 1999, 133).

Initially, there was little domestic criticism of the Administration's inaction. After Somalia, many policymakers and commentators were weary of supporting a military

¹⁹⁵ For example, see "Horror in Rwanda, Shame on the UN," *New York Times*. May 3, 1994.

¹⁹⁶ House of Representatives, *Hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Committee*. (testimony of Madeleine Albright) May 13, 1994. In internal deliberations, Albright advocated for a stronger UN response.

intervention in a “far-away place.”¹⁹⁷ The genocide continued for nearly four months as what remained of a small UNAMIR force watched helplessly. When it finally subsided, the genocide had claimed nearly two thirds of Rwanda’s Tutsi population. The human rights community was outraged. In the media, editorials criticized the Administration and the UN’s unwillingness to stop the genocide.¹⁹⁸ These criticisms started to resonate inside the Administration. Some officials, including the President, now regretted their policy choices. As National Security Adviser, Anthony Lake conceded, the US response had “been pathetic” (Power, 2002, 334).

The finger pointing began as criticism from human rights advocates mounted. Relations between the UNSG and the Clinton Administration deteriorated quickly. The Administration argued that Boutros-Ghali and the Secretariat had kept the Council inadequately informed about the scope of the violence. In particular, they condemned the Secretariat for withholding a memorandum from the UN’s field commander in which the commander requested permission to seize weapons stockpiles. By contrast, the UNSG countered that the US was well aware of the genocide, and the Administration had opposed strengthening the UN mission and mobilized opposition against doing so. The Administration was especially infuriated when Boutros-Ghali took his accusations public. The UNSG openly labeled the violence as genocide and complained that the international community preferred debate to action. When the genocide ended, Boutros-Ghali (1999, 141) continued his public attack on member states “who hesitated so long to intervene,” and asked why the US was more concerned about a few dissidents in China than the large scale killing of Rwandans.

¹⁹⁷ See Clinton, 2004; and “Look Before Plunging into Rwanda,” *New York Times*, May 18, 1994.

¹⁹⁸ Alison Des Forges, “Genocide: It’s a Fact in Rwanda,” *New York Times*. May 11, 1994.

4.4 Bosnia

However, no conflict did more to undermine relations between the UNSG and the Clinton Administration than the civil war in Bosnia. Bosnia, a constituent part of Yugoslavia, was populated by ethnic Serbians, Croatians and Muslims. When Yugoslavia dissolved, nationalist leaders stoked ethnic fears. Civil war followed. Though all sides committed brutal acts, the *de facto* Bosnian Serb government—with help from the Serb-dominated Former Yugoslavian army—initiated an ethnic cleansing campaign. The Council authorized a new UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) as images of the humanitarian crisis spread across the world. Though the mandate eventually expanded, the mission was primarily tasked with supporting humanitarian relief efforts, protecting designated civilian safe areas, enforcing the no-fly zone and monitoring ceasefires. Additionally, the European Commission and the United Nations jointly mediated between the Bosnian factions. (Burg and Shoup, 1999; Owen, 1995)

The crisis had drawn significant attention inside the US. President George H.W. Bush insisted Europe was responsible for resolving the conflict—a policy then-Governor Clinton used to suggest the Bush Administration had lost its moral compass. Clinton promised to play a more active role in ending the conflict and reverse any ethnic cleansing (Goldgeier and Chollet, 2008). Yet once in office, President Clinton's foreign policy team had to choose between two unappealing options. The American public and Congress opposed deploying US troops into a civil war, but they were equally opposed to a UN-EC peace plan that they considered too generous to the Bosnian Serbs (Burg and Shoup, 1999).

Thus, the Clinton Administration felt pressure to act, but it was internally divided on what to do, and for two years, it failed to develop a coherent Bosnia policy. It insisted that the Bosnian Serb militia be punished with NATO air strikes but precluded any intervention that involved US ground troops. This policy was not well received by Boutros-Ghali who feared NATO air strikes would lead Bosnian-Serbs to retaliate against UN peacekeepers (Holbrook, 1998). As the conflict dragged on, US-UNSG relations further deteriorated. On multiple occasions, the UNSG forced the Administration to defend its Bosnia policy and criticized US officials for drawing attention to Bosnia at the expense of Africa's "orphaned conflicts." Later, he made the unwanted recommendation that (a) only US forces could withdraw UN ones and (b) protecting designated civilian 'safe areas' would require over 700,000 troops (Boutros-Ghali, 1999; Holbrooke, 1998).

In mid-1995, the Administration changed course and played a more active role in Bosnia.¹⁹⁹ For the next six months, US envoy Richard Holbrooke led protracted negotiations that ended with the Dayton Accords—an agreement brokered after the Bosnian Serb leadership faced military setbacks, punitive NATO air strikes and declining support from their Serbian patron (Holbrooke, 1998). In many US foreign policy circles, the episode suggested that the UN and UNSG was an ineffective impediment when it came to international security (Goldgeier and Chollet, 2008, 133). As one report noted: "Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda. Every day seems to bring another place ripped apart by

¹⁹⁹ President Clinton realized that US troops – through NATO – would be required either to implement a potential peace agreement help withdraw UN troops with only a strategic defeat to show for past efforts. Moreover, the human suffering continued in Bosnia with nearly 300, 000 people had been killed with over a million displaced.

internal violence where the world—and by extension, the United Nations—is unable to cope.”²⁰⁰

As a result, the Council tasked the UNSG with implementing only a small portion of the Dayton Accords. UNOPROFOR was to be replaced by a NATO-led, Russian-supported peacekeeping force. Likewise, the US tapped the OSCE rather than the UN to monitor and organize elections. This departed from earlier proposals like the Vance-Owen Peace Plan where the UN would supervise elections jointly with the OSCE.²⁰¹ Under Dayton, the OSCE alone would head up a multi-party electoral commission that would draft electoral laws, organize political parties, and address complaints (Holbrooke, 1998).

5.0 The Implications of Declining US Support

These peacekeeping failures generated widespread disillusionment with the UN and the UNSG. Some in Congress saw the bureaucracy as one more example of ‘big government;’ others saw it as diverting funds better spent on domestic priorities. By 1994, a group of ‘Contract for America’ Congressional Republicans railed against a US taxpayer that was over-charged by a UNSG committed to commanding US troops and dragging them into far-away wars. They criticized President Clinton for strengthening a UN that constrained American freedom of action. As Goldgeier and Chollet (p.89) point out, “the new generation of Contract republicans mainly saw the dangers of entanglement with the organization and sought to restrict cooperation and limit American support,

²⁰⁰ Stephen Seplow, “UN Flounders Amid Conflicts It wasn’t Ready For The Violence that Erupted after the Cold War.” *Philadelphia Enquirer*, August 14, 1994.

²⁰¹ UNSC, *Resolution on the Situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina* S/3479. December 14, 1994.

especially for peacekeeping.” When this group gained control of Congress, Congress imposed a cap on US peacekeeping contributions and approved sharp cuts to the UN budget.²⁰² Moreover, few democrats saw any political advantage in defending the UN, and many joined the call to reduce the UN budget and peacekeeping missions.²⁰³ As a result, the President agreed to renegotiate a new funding formula in the Assembly and minimize new peacekeeping commitments (Fig. 5.3). In fact, President Clinton announced Presidential Decision Directive 25 in May 1994—a directive requiring all UN peacekeeping operations to satisfy highly restrictive criteria.

Peacekeeping was not the only activity that fell into disfavor. The Clinton Administration also distanced itself from an earlier policy to aggressively promote democracy abroad. President Clinton had campaigned on the promise that he would restore US values to the country’s foreign policy. In 1993, the Administration floated the idea of making “democratic enlargement” the successor to the US Cold War policy of “containment”. “In a new era of peril and opportunity,” the President declared in his first speech to the Assembly, “our overriding purpose must be to expand and strengthen the world’s community of market-based democracies.” The Administration initially allocated considerable resources to democratization, especially in Russia, Latin America and Haiti (Goldgeier and Chollet, 2008, 119). The US Agency for International Development (USAID) even made democratization one of four ‘pillars’ of its work.²⁰⁴

²⁰² The Senate Appropriations Committee made these cuts on Sept. 12, 1995. The cuts were so sharp that Warren Christopher warned that the US would be violating its obligations under the UN.

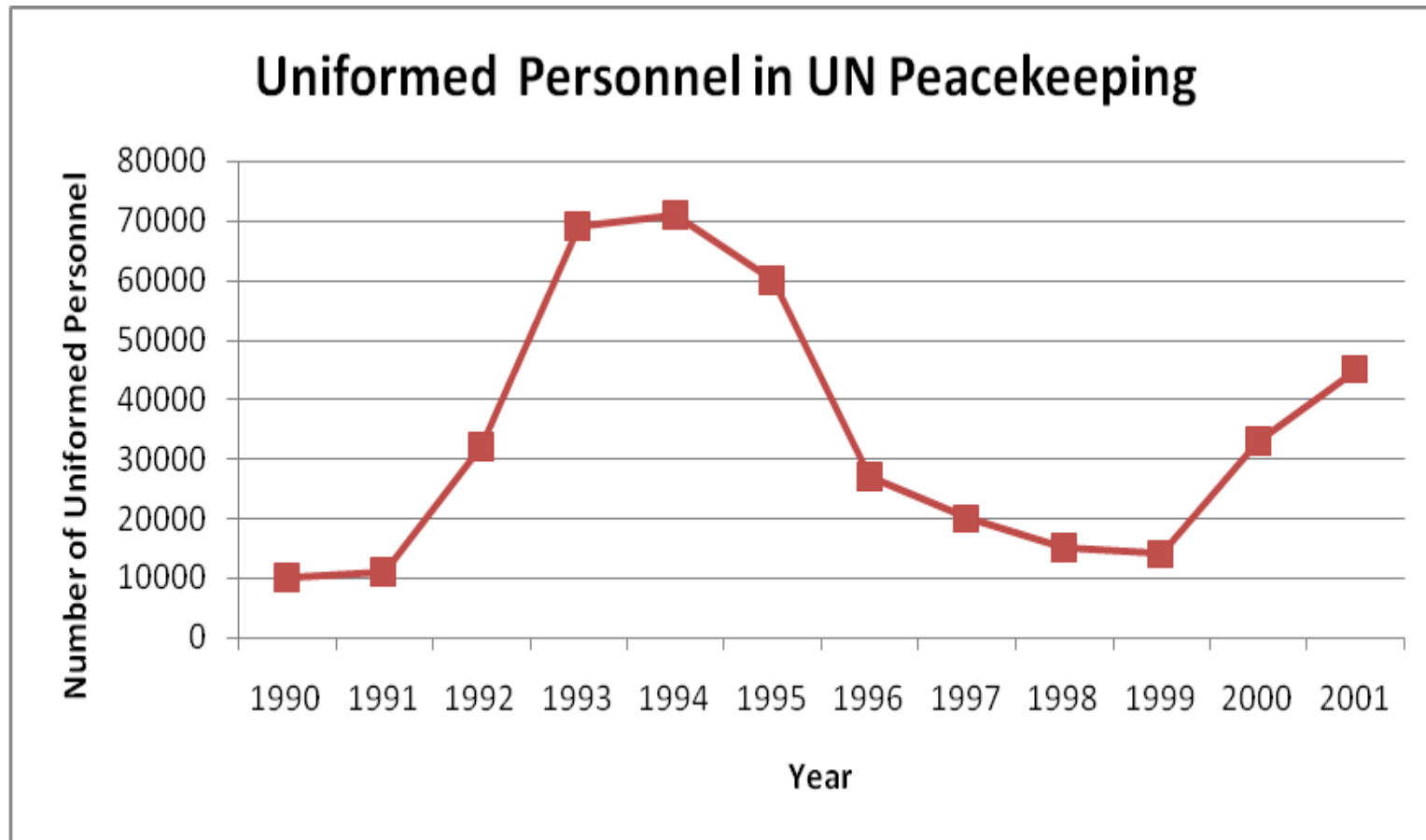
²⁰³ In particular, they called on the UNSG to appoint a new Inspector General.

²⁰⁴ According to the GAO report, democracy assistance increased from \$225m in 1992 to \$296m in 1993. Similarly, electoral assistance increased from \$30m to \$35m. *Promoting Democracy: Foreign Affairs and Defense Agencies Funds and Activities - 1991 to 1993*. Washington, DC: National Security and International Affairs Division of the United States General Accounting Office, 1994.

Yet, the Administration backed away from this policy over the course of the year. The President himself called ‘democratic enlargement’ a “weak” and “pathetic” policy that “just didn’t grab.”²⁰⁵ Instead, the US would focus on economic liberalization and pursue political liberalization more selectively. Democracy promotion, Carothers notes, was a “rhetorical framework of their foreign policy” but “a semi-realist policy in practice” (Carothers, 2004, 7).

²⁰⁵ President Clinton quoted in Goldgeier and Chollet, 2008, 80.

Figure 5.3



Source: The United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Available at www.un.org/en/peacekeeping.

This shift mirrored the declining enthusiasm for democracy promotion in Congress and public opinion. Many Americans felt the US was already spending too much on foreign policy. In 1993, USAID funding for democracy assistance had more than tripled since 1991, and the GAO reported that \$10-20m of State Department funds to the UN could theoretically be considered democracy assistance. However, public opinion polls showed that fewer Americans considered democracy promotion a top foreign policy priority. As a result, Congress and the Administration started to reduce financial support for electoral assistance. They curtailed the rapid growth in the budget of the National Endowment for Democracy, and in 1996, USAID reduced its funding for electoral assistance (Finkel, Perez-Linan, Seligson and Azpuru, 2006).

More important for the UN, Congress twice rejected the Administration's request to appropriate funds for the new UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Electoral Observation—a \$2.5m request in 1993 and a \$1m one in 1994. In fact, Congress outright “prohibited” any new funding for electoral assistance. If the UNSG wanted to provide electoral assistance, it would have to be funded “under existing UN or bilateral programs.”²⁰⁶

6.0 Accommodating Resource Scarcity and The Return of Hypocrisy

The US decision not to make a contribution to the Trust Fund for Electoral Assistance made it impossible for the UNSG to provide electoral assistance at 1992 levels. In 1993, the UNSG was already struggling to cover regular budget programs and peacekeeping missions. The UN already owed a record \$3.25b to states and vendors by the end of August, and the debt remained at \$2.5b by the summer of 1995. The UNSG pleaded

²⁰⁶ I found no evidence that the State Department even made a request in subsequent years.

with member states to pay off unpaid membership fees. The US was particularly behind in its payments, and by spring 2005, it owed more than \$1.2b. Boutros-Ghali (1996) argued in *Foreign Affairs* that “the world body has been given vast responsibilities, but it lacks the political, military, material and financial resources required to accomplish these tasks.” The deteriorating financial situation created significant pressure to reduce costs. The UN, he argued, previously “managed to scrape through...this year the situation is different, because the amounts involved are unprecedented.”²⁰⁷ For example, the UNSG recommended that the Council authorize fewer peacekeeping missions, terminate ones early where ground conditions were unfavorable, and redirect funds from the few solvent peacekeeping missions to pay for non-peacekeeping programs.²⁰⁸

Electoral assistance also faced serious resource shortages. A handful of wealthy democracies made voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund for Electoral Assistance. However, these contributions were small, one-off payments that were usually earmarked for specific technical assistance projects.²⁰⁹ In 1993, the Trust Fund received just \$570,000 in voluntary contributions, and more than half of that total was earmarked for the upcoming referendum in Eritrea. Similarly, the Trust Fund received \$5.9m the following year, but states allocated the bulk of these funds to programs in just three countries: Mozambique, Mexico and Haiti.²¹⁰ By 1996, the Trust Fund had been reduced to just \$1.3m—a fraction of the amount required to maintain its earlier activism.

²⁰⁷ Barbara Crossette, (1995) “UN Juggles Funds to Stay Afloat, Expert Says.” *New York Times* Sept. 13.

²⁰⁸ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, (1995) “Peacemaking and Peacekeeping for the Next Century,” *Address to the Vienna Seminar*. 2 March. Vienna.

²⁰⁹ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/52/474). October 16, 1997.

²¹⁰ The US redirected almost \$2.7m to electoral assistance that year, but almost exclusively earmarked it to for Haiti.

This financial pressure was partially relieved by a drop in demand for UN electoral assistance after 1992. However, the EAD still received more than eighty requests over the next four years.²¹¹ The volume of requests, the UNSG told the Assembly, meant that “the demand on the [EAD] at times exceeds its resources.”²¹² EAD officials also protested that they did not have the time to complete assignments, and field missions were too reliant UN Volunteers that lacked the necessary expertise.²¹³ At one point, the EAD was forced to temporarily second thirty-seven officials from other UN agencies just to respond to member requests.²¹⁴

Thus, the UNSG and EAD faced a precarious position. On one hand, they wanted to accommodate member states requesting assistance. On the other hand, they had few resources to do so, and few seemed forthcoming. To address the problem, “the activities of the Division will focus increasingly on a high volume of smaller electoral assistance missions unrelated to peace-keeping.”²¹⁵ The EAD started providing more low cost forms of assistance such as follow and report or coordinate and support—particularly to states requesting election observation. Likewise, it forwarded state requests for UN observers to regional organizations. Finally, if a state requested technical assistance, the EAD recommended a project that (a) would be cost effective and (b) was more likely to find a willing donor.

²¹¹ The EAD was initially created with three staff, a director and the Focal Point for Electoral Assistance.

²¹² In 1993, the Electoral Assistance Division was still called the Electoral Assistance Unit. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/48/590). November 18, 1993.

²¹³ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/50/736). November 8, 1995.. In 1994, one new staff member was added.

²¹⁴ See UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/48/590). November 18, 1993.

²¹⁵ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/50/736). November 8, 1995.

6.1 Standing Firmly on the Bully Pulpit

While the EAD reduced costs, the UNSG did not talk less about democratization.

Boutros-Ghali had long been a vocal advocate for democracy and a firm believer in the power of the UNSG's bully pulpit (Boutros-Ghali, 1996; Lombardo, 2001; Rushton, 2008; Luck, 2007). He (1999, 26) argued that his words could "force concepts into life...I knew that policy was made by the written word that texts made things happen in the realm of high diplomacy and statecraft." The UNSG could "play the role of think tank for the global future." It hardly mattered if the bureaucracy could not translate his words into action because they lacked concrete directives or the necessary resources.²¹⁶

At times, his words caused friction with powerful members like the US. The US media regularly reported on his "abrasiveness," his "assertiveness," and his unwillingness to play the "humble civil servant of the Security Council" (Luck, 2007). Some Secretariat officials thought he occasionally turned to his bully pulpit without adequately consulting them or the Council.²¹⁷ In a number of instances, he publicly disagreed with member states, criticized those states that were in arrears, and drew attention to conflicts to which the Council seemed to turn a blind eye. His words particularly frayed his relations with the Clinton Administration. As one commentator observed, "Mr. Boutros-Ghali complains publicly that the Americans are making his work more difficult, that the members of the Security Council are giving him impossible tasks and that they are trying to escape responsibility for their own failures by laying them at the door of UN

²¹⁶ For example, one senior official noted that he had failed to give any explicit instructions to the Secretariat concerning the implementation of post-conflict peacebuilding. See Karns, 2008.

²¹⁷ Victoria Graham, "New UN Chief Praised," *Associated Press*. August 3, 1992.

officials.”²¹⁸ Those complaints turned policy disagreements into finger pointing in Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia, and the UN’s critics used the UNSG’s criticisms as evidence of UN efforts to constrain US foreign policy and intrude in domestic politics. In the end, the Clinton Administration successfully campaigned to deprive Boutros-Ghali of a second term.

Denied a second term, the UNSG turned to his bully pulpit and finished writing his *Agenda for Democratization*. “The key theme of my term as Secretary-General was democracy, and early in my term of office, my conviction had deepened that democracy is crucial for the betterment of peoples in every sphere of life” (Boutros-Ghali, 1999, 319). *An Agenda for Democratization* was an ambitious political project that would attempt to set out in a single document an organizing framework for democratization at the UN. It was a vehicle to “clarify his policy positions, and test his ideas” (Lombardo, 2001, 253). His *Agenda* was intended to “stimulate policy debates and decisions from the UN member states,” and he hoped to bring about “increased and more effective political and financial commitments to an expanded UN role.”

According to Boutros-Ghali (1999, 320), the *Agenda* “was risky business within the context of the politics and culture of the UN system,” and nobody “had asked for anything like what I had written in my report.” *The Agenda for Peace* and *the Agenda for Development* were mandated by the Council and Assembly respectively.

Democratization lacked such a mandate. Many UN officials were equally skeptical and on reading the introduction, “the counterblast against this idea was of hurricane force.”

²¹⁸ Eric Rouleau, “Why Washington wants rid of Mr Boutros-Ghali.” *Le Monde Diplomatique*. November, 1996.

Some officials found the early drafts “patronizing” and wanted the project terminated, while others insisted on entirely rewriting it.

The growing internal opposition to the *Agenda* meant its development fell to the UNSG and a small group of aides. Eventually, the group produced a fifty-page policy statement outlining how member states could further democratization, and how the UN system could expand recent successes that had made democratization a UN priority (Lombardo, 2001). To attract more attention to the *Agenda*, he released it as a stand-alone Blue Book. In the end, Boutros-Ghali noted, the *Agenda* was “his swan song.”

7.0 Conclusion

As Boutros-Ghali prepared to leave office, UN democracy promotion was more talk than action. Electoral assistance missions were smaller and less costly even as the UNSG staunchly reaffirmed the UN’s commitment to democratization. However, the disparity was not caused by US disapproval of the way the UN had conducted electoral assistance in the past. Instead, the decline of electoral assistance was a side effect of high profile peacekeeping failures, the deterioration in US-UNSG relations, and a deepening financial crisis.

Nonetheless, the Secretary-General continued to talk *as if* the UN was still a leader in the field of democratization and electoral observation. Boutros-Ghali was a committed democrat who was not dissuaded by the reduction in funding. If the UN could no longer observe elections or expand electoral assistance, then his bully pulpit alone would demonstrate his commitment to democratization, and perhaps increase member support for a more democratic order.

Chapter 6

Pseudo-Democrats and Internal Divisions

1.0 Introduction

The previous chapter showed how deteriorating US-UN relations pulled talk and action apart in 1993. Though UN electoral assistance did not cause this deterioration, electoral assistance suffered nonetheless. The Administration rarely supported UN election observation, and Congress resisted contributing to the electoral assistance trust fund. Without funding and mandates, the UNSG declined a request for electoral assistance, or offered a cheaper form of assistance like follow and report or the coordination of other international observers. However, talk did not decrease accordingly. The outspoken Boutros-Ghali remained, and the deterioration in US-UN relations further convinced him to keep talking about democratization.

This chapter examines how talk without action hurt the UN by facilitating state hypocrisy. In particular, pseudo-democrats—leaders who pay lip service to fair elections—exploited disparate UN talk and action to legitimize fraudulent elections. After 1993, most advanced democracies still believed that the UN was a focal point for electoral assistance and mistakenly expected that any UN officials present at an election were there to observe it. Boutros-Ghali's rhetoric reinforced this false expectation by talking up UN past election observation and his commitment to democratization. Consequently, pseudo-democrats invited the UNSG to observe elections, knowing that the UNSG would decline or send a few UN officials prohibited from publicizing

evidence of electoral fraud. However, pseudo-democrats used these UN ‘observers’ to support claim that the election was legitimate.

Eventually, UN electoral assistance officials pressured the UNSG to align talk and action—even though Boutros-Ghali did not to give in to that pressure. By 1995, these officials became concerned that the UN was legitimizing fraudulent elections. The UNSG was sending small symbolic missions to controversial elections; advanced democracies were scrutinizing these elections; and the Western media seldom clarified that UN officials were not election observers. A few Western diplomats had already asked the UNSG privately to avoid pseudo-democratic elections, and other international election observers had good reason to complain publicly that the UN was undermining their work. As a result, these officials asked the UNSG to decline all election observation invitations; clarify to Western audiences that the UN did not monitor elections; moderate the democratization rhetoric; and stop sending symbolic missions on Election Day. Instead, the UN electoral assistance should provide technical assistance to the growing number of countries trying to consolidate democratic gains.

This pressure produced modest reforms, including a reduction in symbolic follow and report missions. UN officials also emphasized technical assistance while downplaying follow and report missions in their reports to the Assembly. Yet Boutros-Ghali was reluctant to moderate talk or speak out against pseudo-democrats, and his relations with the EAD grew tense. In 1995, these tensions became public when EAD officials challenged Boutros-Ghali’s decision to follow and report on elections in Algeria.

2.0 Changes in the Market for Electoral Assistance: Technical Assistance

The market for electoral assistance had changed by 1993 as a growing proportion of democratizing states sought technical assistance from the United Nations. Having held founding elections, these states requested assistance with “democratic consolidation,” to “discuss plans for post-election assistance,” and to “contribute to the building of democratic institutions.”²¹⁹ Some states wanted technical assistance in preparation for upcoming elections. For example, the UN helped Burundi acquire new electoral equipment, and it trained domestic observers in Mexico. Others had recently held elections and turned to the UNSG to help strengthen electoral institutions. In Brazil, UN technical assistance helped the government set up a new electronic voting system.²²⁰ As the Philippine delegate explained, “once the euphoria of elections dissipates... [the UN] should assist technically and financially in helping states achieve stability and self-reliance.” Indeed, EU members emphasized that the UN would be best served by strengthening democratic structures.²²¹

These demands found support in the US and other advanced democracies where frustration followed the breakdown of Haitian democracy and the rejection of election

²¹⁹ See UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/49/675). November 30, 1994; UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/48/590). November 18, 1993.

²²⁰ See UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/50/736). November 8, 1995; UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/49/675). November 30, 1994; UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/48/590). November 18, 1993.

²²¹ UNGA. *Statement of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation: Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies* A/50/PV.56. November 13, 1995.

results by the losing party in Angola, in Burundi and in Burma. They concluded that the UN could not withdraw after an election; it had to strengthen the electoral institutions that legitimize elected leaders and constrain reluctant parties.²²² “The UNSG should “expand UN activity,” the US delegate explained, “to assist States in post election institution building” like improving electoral management bodies and reforming electoral laws.²²³ The US even redirected funds from other UN programs to support technical electoral assistance projects in Mozambique and Mexico as well as contributing over \$2m—25% of all funds in the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Electoral Assistance—to projects in Haiti.²²⁴

The advanced democracies along with democratizing states successfully proposed a to expand technical assistance. In 1993, the Assembly instructed the UNSG to recommend ways to “contribute to the consolidation of the democratization process.”²²⁵ Over the next four years, further instructions were given to focus on strengthening electoral institutions and to develop the capacity for longer-term technical assistance projects. The

²²² France, for example, suggested that building up institutions after elections was the best way to ensure “compliance for the results [of elections].” UNGA. *Debates of the Third Committee: Strengthening the Role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections* A/C.3/48/SR.42 Nov. 24, 1993.

²²³ UNGA. *Debates of the Third Committee: Strengthening the Role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections* A/C.3/48/SR.42 Nov. 24, 1993. A year later, the US delegate told the Assembly that “UN agencies should increase cooperation in the area of institution-building and governance, in particular through strengthening capacity building of democratic institutions.” UNGA. *Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United States: Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies* A/50/PV.56 November 13, 1995.

²²⁴ As a result, a seventeen-person UN team initially helped Haiti’s Provisional Electoral Council develop the infrastructure and materials to register voters in preparation for legislative, municipal and later presidential elections. See UNSC, *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Haiti*. S/1995/305, April 13, 1995.

²²⁵ UN General Assembly, 48th Sess. *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly. 48/131. Strengthening the Role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections* (A/RES/48/131) Dec. 20, 1993.

UNSG was being asked to find new ways to accommodate “the increasing number of requests from Member States for advisory services.”²²⁶

This state pressure to expand technical assistance was compounded by more indirect pressure from the development community. This community embraced technical electoral assistance as a critical component of ‘good governance’—a fashionable concept in development circles. In 1993, an OECD committee proposed that sustainable development required a “good government” with efficient and accountable institutions.²²⁷

The concept quickly gained traction as a way to “attenuate[e] two undesirable characteristics that had been prevalent earlier: the unrepresentative character of governments and the inefficiency of non-market systems” (Weiss, 2000). In this view, democratic institutions played multiple roles: they were normatively desirable but they also increased state capacity to deliver basic services to its citizens, reduce corruption, foster a vibrant market, support civil society and efficiently use foreign aid.

International development agencies were quick to embrace the concept. The USAID redirected a substantial portion of democracy assistance to a newly-established Center for Democracy and Governance (Table 6.1) and the World Bank formally included ‘the political dimension’ of good governance in their lending practices.

²²⁶ UN General Assembly, 51st Sess. *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly. Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies* A/RES/51/31 Dec. 6, 1996.

²²⁷ OECD, (1993) *Development Assistance Committee Report: Orientations on Participatory Development and Good Governance*.

Table 6.1

USAID Assistance for Good Governance, 1992-1995

Year	Total Good Governance Assistance (in millions)
1992	23.6
1993	28.3
1994	60.8
1995	68.5

Source: Thomas Carothers (1999), *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: 50

2.1 Bureaucratic Efforts to Expand Technical Assistance

In New York, the Assembly's directives produced modest changes in UN electoral assistance. By the end of 1993, the UNDP, under pressure from G7 states on its Executive Board, had adopted good governance as an organizing framework.²²⁸ As part of its restructuring, the UNDP took a longer-term 'developmental' view to democracy assistance that emphasized building-up accountable and representative state institutions (Ponzio, 2004). Technical electoral assistance was vital to this new approach; it was the "entry point" for more sensitive governance projects like protecting human rights, legislative support, judicial reform and addressing corruption (Weiss, 2000, 805). Conversely, member states and UNDP officials found democracy assistance more appealing when it was subsumed under good governance. As Zanotti (480-481) finds, "governance translates the abstract and controversial notion of democracy into a plurality of technical problems and issue-specific programs of institutional reform.... It provided the United Nations with a framework and a neutral technical language."

EAD officials in the UN Secretariat were also eager to reorganize electoral assistance around technical assistance. Technical assistance was supported by the Assembly, requested by members and funded by donors. The EAD was also searching for a way to shore up its position in the UN system. State requests for electoral assistance had dropped from their 1992 peak, and the Council was authorizing few new electoral observation missions. The EAD's budget remained small and its staff was over-

²²⁸ As early as 1993, the UNDP bureaucracy had started incorporating good governance into its approach to democratization. Its report on 'Government for Human Development' in Latin America noted that "good government is the challenge that, if successful, will permit the building of democratic orders." UNDP (1993). *A Government for Human Development*. June 7. UNDP. *Executive Board Decisions* 94/14 (1994); 95/22 (1995). See also Santiso, 2002, 577.

stretched. Technical assistance was appealing. It could be expanded with few additional resources because the EAD itself designed the missions. Thus the staff could keep costs down, and if necessary, contract out projects to external experts. It also ensured the division's relevance. Technical assistance missions required extensive needs assessment missions, the development of a set of best practices, and the expansion of the roster of electoral experts—all EAD responsibilities.

This objective was given momentum when the EAD was transferred to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) in 1994, where Kofi Annan became the new Focal Point.²²⁹ Outside the UN, this transfer reinforced the view that the UN primarily observed elections. Inside the UN, it had the opposite effect: it strengthened the EAD's commitment to technical assistance. Annan, a UN civil servant for most of his career, was sympathetic to the argument that the UN should emphasize technical assistance. He knew the UN system, valued UN technical expertise, and understood which programs were most likely to attract voluntary state funding. For Annan, states “turn to the United Nations because, since the end of the Cold War, our expertise has expanded greatly.”²³⁰

Boutros-Ghali returned the EAD to the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) the following year. Nonetheless, the division had already started to focus on technical assistance. Such change, the EAD wrote, was necessary because states demanded “more economical forms of electoral assistance such as technical assistance and the provision of

²²⁹ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/49/675). November 30, 1994.

²³⁰ Kofi Annan. “Address to the Assembly’s International Conference on Governance for Sustainable Growth and Equity,” New York. July 29, 1997. Speech.

coordination and support for international observers.”²³¹ Under Annan, ten technical assistance missions were authorized—more than double the previous year. These actions and the underlying approach were explained at length in an Assembly report written by the EAD:

The focus of international efforts is shifting from short-term preoccupation with the events of a particular election day to more longer-term considerations related to the development and strengthening of electoral institutions and processes....Recent experience has indicated that the need for large-scale electoral assistance missions is declining...it is hoped that electoral assistance will shift increasingly to smaller, more supportive and capacity-building projects...By maintaining flexibility with regard to approach and by coordinating with other organizations, it will be possible to respond effectively and efficiently to the new demands anticipated for the future.²³²

The following year, the EAD worked with the UNDP to further expand technical assistance and a Roster of Electoral Experts. Fourteen new technical assistance projects were authorized. These projects differed from earlier ones in that they frequently took place *after* the country had held an election. In fact, eleven post-election projects were authorized over the next two years. In some instances, this was the first assistance provided by the UN. In most others, the UN provided additional support after having

²³¹ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/50/736). November 8, 1995.

²³² Though the annual reports on electoral assistance are released in the UNSG’s name, they are written by the EAD. However, the UNSG often provides input, especially into the introduction. Boneo, 2004.

assisted with recent elections.²³³ The EAD also began recommending technical assistance when states asked for UN observers. For example, observer requests from Niger, Kyrgyzstan, and Bangladesh resulted in the deployment of UN technical consultants, and a request from Uganda resulted in assistance updating the country's information technology infrastructure.

However, the expansion of technical assistance was a moderate one. As one internal review put it, the EAD had “not fully adjusted to broader realities and mandates.”²³⁴ Two factors restricted policy reform. First, the EAD lacked strong leadership. The EAD's first director retired in mid-1995 and Boutros-Ghali did not appoint a replacement. This weakened it when it came to inter-agency bargaining, and as I describe below, in disagreements with the UNSG. Second, the EAD lacked the resources to aggressively expand technical assistance. The UNSG froze the division's operating budget at just \$1.8m, leaving the small staff scrambling to write responses to state requests and the UNSG's annual report on electoral assistance.²³⁵

3.0 The UNSG's Hypocrisy Facilitates Hypocrisy by Pseudo-Democrats

The EAD hoped that expanding technical assistance signaled that that the EAD could contribute to democratization even with limited resources. However, these contributions would be devalued if UN electoral assistance regularly undermined democratization, and disparate talk and action did just that. Until the end of Boutros-Ghali's term, EAD officials worried that states would eventually figure this out and punish UN electoral

²³³ An example of the former would include Honduras (1994) and Argentina. The latter includes El Salvador (1995), Mozambique (1995), Bangladesh (1996), Bangladesh, Mexico (1995) and Malawi (1994).

²³⁴ Economic and Social Council (1999), “Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of political affairs: electoral assistance.” E/AC.51/1999/2/Add.1, March 29.

²³⁵ For example, EAD officials failed to find time to put together ‘lessons learned’ and best practices.

assistance by further reducing its budget, programs and staff. Consequently, EAD officials made considerable efforts to align talk and action to preempt any accusations that it was supporting pseudo-democrats and undermining democratic transitions.

The main problem was that pseudo-democratic leaders were turning to the UN to help legitimize fraudulent elections. With the end of the Cold War, many authoritarian leaders could no longer count on foreign aid from a superpower patron. Without this aid, some leaders held internationally-observed, free and fair elections to legitimize their rule and placate Western donors. Others, however, refused to democratize but held fraudulent elections and invited international observers in hopes of moderating criticism and securing foreign aid (Hyde, 2008; Kelley, 2008). This led to the rise of pseudo-democratic leaders who paid lip service to democracy while stuffing ballot boxes, rigging election campaigns, writing biased election laws and suppressing the opposition and the media. They also manipulated international observers by inviting (a) credible but ineffective organizations or (b) multiple observation organizations to use favorable observer reports to offset more critical ones. For pseudo-democrats, the ideal observation organization had some credibility internationally but lacked the resources or the political will to scrutinize the elections and publish their observations.

For these leaders, the UNSG was an appealing choice and almost half the requests for election observers between 1993 and 1996 came from pseudo-democratic leaders—especially in Africa (Fig 6.1).²³⁶ Requesting UN observers was appealing because many

²³⁶ African states made fifty eight percent (24/46) of all requests for UN observers and of the thirty requests made three quarters came (18/24) from regimes I define as pseudo-democratic. In the cases of Gabon (1993), Equatorial Guinea (1993), Guinea (1995), Cote D'Ivoire (1995), Uganda (1995) and Algeria (1995), the UNSG authorized a UN presence despite concerns of electoral fraud prior to the elections. In three other cases—Senegal (1993), Tanzania (1995), Zambia (1996)—UN officials were present in pseudo-

Western policymakers and commentators believed that the UN was still observing elections. In March 1993, Larry Diamond, a leading scholar on democratization, told Congress that the UN had effectively monitored past elections and its capacity to do so should be expanded.²³⁷ Similarly, former Assistant Secretary of State Morton Halperin (1993) argued in *Foreign Policy* that, “UN supervision of elections is crucial to the trend toward constitutional democracy because in order to be considered ‘free and genuine,’ elections must meet certain criteria.” Even Administration officials joined in the praise for UN electoral observation.²³⁸ As late as 1995, the Administration itself welcomed “the provision of experts *and* electoral observers [italics added].”²³⁹

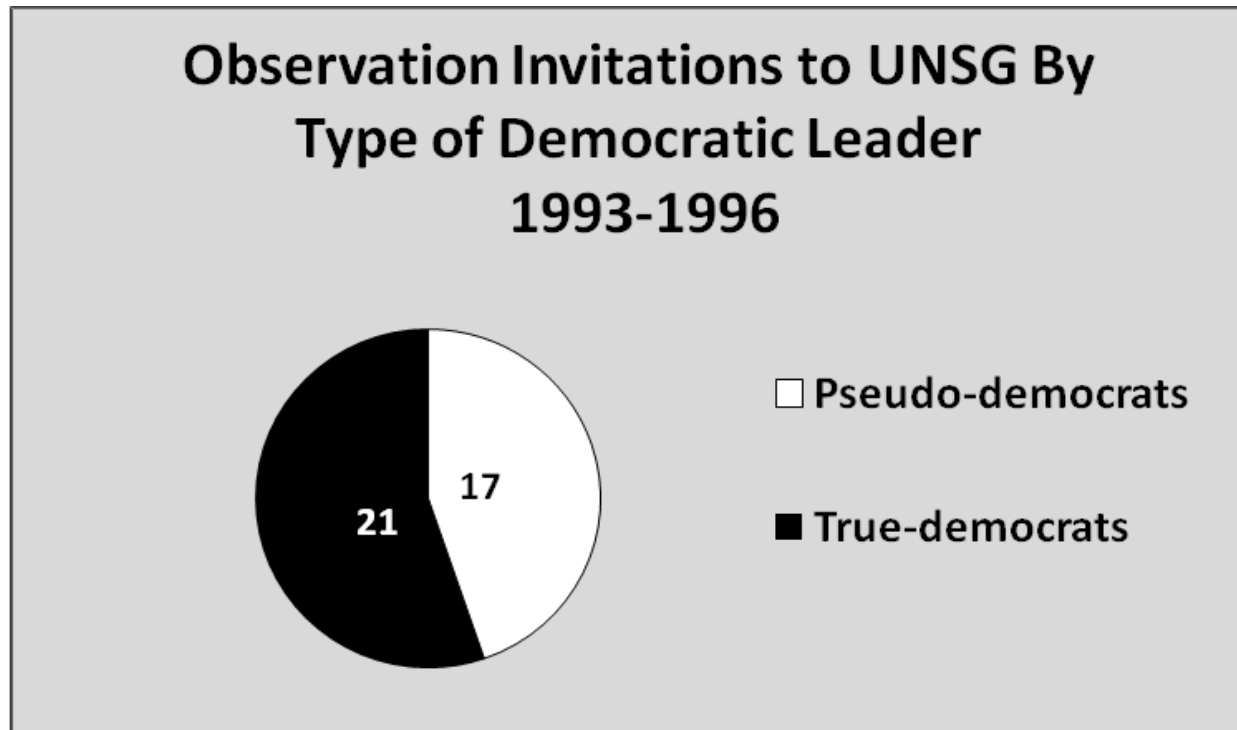
democratic elections but where no such concerns were raised prior to the election. See Hyde and Marinov, 2010.

²³⁷ US House of Representatives. *House Committee on Foreign Affairs: Hearings on Future of US Foreign Policy: Functional Issues* (Y4.F76/1:F98/Pt.2). March 6, 1993.

²³⁸ In the Assembly’s 1994 debate on electoral assistance, the US Representative praised the UNSG for telling the World Conference on Human Rights that, “democratization was essentially what was at stake at the end of the Century.” UNGA. *Debates of the Third Committee A/C.3/49/SR.61* December 9, 1994.

²³⁹ This statement was included in the original draft resolution that the US introduced during the Third Committee’s annual ‘Election’ debate. UNGA, 50th Sess. *Draft Resolution: Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization A/C.3/50/L.59* December 5, 1995.

Figure 6.1



Source: Gleditsch, Kristian Skrede. 2008. Modified Polity P4 and P4D Data, Version 3.0., URL: <http://privatewww.essex.ac.uk/~ksg/Polity.html>

Note: Pseudo-democrats defined as authoritarian/transitional regimes where regime score did not witness a significant and democratic (6-point) regime score change after elections. Change is measured from the score the year prior to requesting electoral assistance to the score the year after the election. Regimes that had 'democratic' scores the year after the election were also excluded.

The Western media held a similar view. It often reported that UN officials present on the day of a country's election without clarifying that these officials were not there to observe elections. In fact, the media inaccurately referred to these UN officials as 'observers' in pseudo-democratic elections in Togo (1992), Senegal (1993), Algeria (1995) and Zambia (1996). Likewise, a single UN official was assigned strictly to follow and report on the constitutional referendum in Djibouti—a referendum most observers claimed was marred by voter intimidation, fraud and opposition boycotts.²⁴⁰ Yet, the Associated Press reported that, "observers from the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and the Arab League said the balloting proceeded above-board, and attributed rare irregularities to the inexperience of voting officials."²⁴¹

These inaccurate beliefs about UN electoral assistance were partially a product of the UNSG's talk. The UNSG's words failed to clarify that electoral observation was declining, and in fact implied that the UN considered democratization a priority and electoral observation an expanding activity. For instance, Boutros-Ghali told the Inter-parliamentary Union in 1994 that, "Until recently, the world body regularly turned down all but technical assistance requests, but we have since successfully monitored several elections and have several others in preparation."²⁴²

Furthermore, his descriptions of electoral assistance were ambiguously worded and did not consider the relative frequency of different types of assistance. In an op-ed that

²⁴⁰ Two months later, the UN Resident Coordinator was also instructed to follow and report on the December legislative elections.

²⁴¹ "Voters Approve New Multiparty Constitution," *Associated Press*. September, 6, 1992. The so-called UN endorsement contradicted the findings of other election observers. Thus, the same AP report also notes that, "The Nairobi-based Association for the Defense of Human Rights and Liberties in Djibouti claimed widespread fraud and demanded that the results of the referendum be declared void."

²⁴² Thalif Deen, "United Nations: More Nations Opt for Multiparty Democracy," *IPS-Inter Press Service*, March 9, 1994.

appeared in the *Washington Post* and the *Cleveland Plain-Dealer*, Boutros-Ghali highlighted how the UN responded to over 46 requests for assistance without detailing the form of those responses.²⁴³ In a slightly more nuanced description in *Orbis* (1993, 325), the UNSG explained that:

The United Nations is taking on a wide variety of responsibilities in assisting progress towards democratization within States. The most frequent requests are for electoral assistance in: organization and conduct of elections; supervision; verification; observation; coordination and support of the activities of other international observers; technical help... It should be borne in mind that until very recently, when it was decided that the organization should accept a request to monitor the elections in Nicaragua, which opened the door to peace in that country, the United Nations regularly turned down all but technical assistance requests. We have since successfully monitored several elections and others are in preparation.²⁴⁴

Such comments reinforced the belief among Western audiences that the UN was a focal point for electoral observation. This belief was quite understandable. Western audiences relied heavily on the UNSG to tell them what the UN was doing. After all, the UNSG's report on electoral assistance was released only once a year and it was debated in the Assembly's Third Committee rather than the higher profile Plenary Session. Moreover, technical assistance usually took place in less strategically important regions and away

²⁴³ Boutros-Ghali, "Rights Based Democracy," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 12, 1993. He (1995, 6) also wrote in the journal, *Global Governance*, that the UN had received requests from 52 countries.

²⁴⁴ In the journal *Global Governance* (1995, 6) he stressed that electoral assistance covered a broad range of operations including the organization and conduct of an electoral process, the supervision of an electoral process, the verification of an electoral process, the provision of support for national observers, the coordination and provision of support to international observers, and technical assistance.

from the media frenzy that surrounded Election Day. Besides, these statements were not lies—the UN had been asked to observe elections in the recent past. In addition, though observation mandates were rare after 1992, several earlier mandates were not completed until 1994. The UNSG’s talk reminded the membership of these past missions.

By contrast, audiences in developing regions like Africa were better positioned to see the decline in electoral observation and the rise in smaller missions. First, developing states leaders had an incentive to monitor different observer organizations because they were the ones under pressure to invite international observers. Second, electoral assistance was taking place in their neighborhood. Africa received many of the early follow and report missions, and as Hyde (2008) finds, election observation is prone to clustering and imitation effects. Third, Boutros-Ghali seemed reluctant to disappoint states, and he rarely made the prospects for fair elections an overriding consideration when deciding to send a UN presence. This presence, he argued, encouraged political liberalization even if the elections were imperfect. Besides, the support of Africa leaders was crucial if he wanted a second term as UNSG.

In sum, pseudo-democrats saw inviting UN observers as a low-risk way to legitimate fraudulent elections. The UNG often provided a small, symbolic mission in response to these invitations—missions that were prohibited from criticizing elections. Yet the Western media had a poor understanding of these missions, and on multiple occasions the UN mistakenly claimed that UN observers had participated—or even endorsed—the election.

5.0 The Bureaucratic Response

From 1993 to 1996, the UNSG sent UN officials to follow (but not observe) twenty-four elections where the media reported serious concerns about the electoral process including ones in Algeria, Zambia and Gambia (Hyde and Marinov, 2010). EAD and UNDP officials responsible for electoral assistance worried about these missions. The UN had so far escaped accusations of undermining democracy but the probability of such accusations rose as the number of missions accumulated. If states associated UN electoral assistance with fraudulent elections, its moral authority would suffer and it risked losing the minimal resources it had left. These concerns were understandable. Donor states were increasingly intolerant of pseudo-democrats and those that shielded them. As one commentator observed, “in many retrenching countries, the US and other Western donors had closed down most of their democracy-related programs because of legitimate concerns about wasting funds legitimating the illegitimate, or being associated with failure” (Carothers, 1997, 97).

Consequently, EAD officials took steps to end the exploitation of UN electoral assistance by pseudo-democrats. They complained that the UNSG was “bowing to pressure,” and they appealed to Boutros-Ghali to minimize follow-and-report missions (Anglin, 1998, 474). They also recommended that requesting states demonstrate their commitment to free elections before receiving electoral assistance. On rare occasions, their appeals succeeded. For example, the UNSG declined a request from Equatorial Guinea after the government banned all opposition.²⁴⁵ However, the UNSG was generally reluctant to moderate talk and fully embrace technical assistance, particularly since Western states

²⁴⁵ Under significant scrutiny, the UNSG not only declined the invitation but his representative took the rare step of publicly explaining that the current human rights conditions were not conducive to free and fair elections. See “Equatorial Guinea: President asks UN for observers for September elections,” *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, July 27, 1993. “UN envoy doubts fair elections can be held unless Obiang regime changes,” *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, Sept. 14, 1993.

were not yet directly applying pressure. EAD officials met resistance from the UNSG and his aides when they protested that sending officials to follow the flawed elections in Gambia (1996) and Zambia (1996) would hurt the UN's reputation and give these elections credibility (Anglin, 1998, 484). Likewise, the EAD and UNSG clashed when the latter's personal representative in Togo told reporters that although he was not an observer, he had seen not witnessed any voting irregularities.²⁴⁶ This statement contradicted the position of the Carter Center and the NDI who had already withdrawn their observers.

The escalating conflict between the UNSG and EAD peaked after the Algerian government requested UN observers for the 1995 presidential elections. Boutros-Ghali appointed a former Egyptian diplomat, Hussein Al-Kamel, to lead a seven-person UN mission to follow and report on the election. The EAD strongly opposed the decision, argued that fair elections were impossible, and pointed out that most Western observers were refusing to participate. The election was drawing significant attention in the West, and so too would the presence of UN officials. Unable to persuade the UNSG, the EAD quietly enlisted Western diplomats to press Boutros-Ghali to reverse himself and terminate the mission.²⁴⁷ The growing chorus of protests failed to convince the UNSG. UN electoral officials followed the elections alongside official observers from the OAU and the Arab League. As a small consolation, the UNSG's aides agreed to tell reporters that "the team would not rule on the fairness of voting but would submit an internal

²⁴⁶ Konda made this observation even though he stated, "When the UN observes, it endorses. We are not endorsing the outcome of this election. The UN is completely neutral and impartial." Konda also noted that they were not officially observing because, "We knew all along these kind of things were going to happen." Peter a Costa, (1993) "Togo" Low Election Turnout Mars Incumbents Near Certain Victory." *Ips-Interpress Service*. August 25.

²⁴⁷ Rym Brahimi, "UN Sticks it Neck out On Algeria." *UPI*. November 15, 1995.

report to Boutros-Ghali on its mission.” Within days, however, the mission’s head also told reporters that he was “satisfied that everything is being done correctly”²⁴⁸ to prepare for the election, and after polls closed, that “the election was free. We congratulate the Algerian people on completing their democratic process.”²⁴⁹ The Algerian government even used the UN presence to rebut its critics. As one senior Algerian diplomat wrote in London’s *Observer* newspaper, the elections “took place in the presence of observers from the OAU, the Arab League and the United Nations.”²⁵⁰

For the EAD, this follow and report mission undermined its efforts to reorient state expectations toward longer term technical assistance. As one EAD official explained “the emphasis of UN assistance has always been to support the efforts of the requesting government as appropriate—not to highlight its own presence unless it serves a broader political purpose such as confidence-building.”²⁵¹ In fact, a UN presence “can result in controversy or a degree of risk” because UN officials following an election are under pressure from various external parties to make a statement about the election.²⁵²

Since under the follow and report procedure the United Nations does not issue a public report or statement, all sides in an election tend to see this approach as either useless or provocative. A further consideration is the status of the Resident Coordinator as a public figure who is often seen or heard in the national media. The neutrality of the Resident Coordinator

²⁴⁸ “Algerian Elections will be Free: Observers,” *The Agence-France Presse*, Nov. 16.

²⁴⁹ “International Observers Happy with Algerian Election,” *The Agence France Presse*, Nov. 17.

²⁵⁰ Ahmed Benyamina, (1997) “Letter: The Truth About Algerian Elections,” *The Observer*, June 1.

²⁵¹ The EAD drafted most of the report though occasionally the UNSG often put his own ideas into the introduction to those reports. The EAD did not write the UNSG’s reports on Support for New and Restored Democracies, which were written by the Office of the Secretary-General. See Ludwig, 2004, 174.

²⁵² UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/48/590). November 18, 1993.

might be jeopardized if he or she were required simultaneously to observe an election on behalf of the Secretary-General and to refrain from making public comments.²⁵³

The EAD recommended that the Assembly should terminate the practice of follow and report or at least limit the assignment to low-level officials.

The Assembly did not adopt this recommendation, but it instructed the EAD to provide assistance only when “*conditions exist to allow a free and fair election.*”²⁵⁴ By late 1995, the EAD was implementing this provision. As it told the Assembly, “all requests are given serious consideration; however, in some cases the Division may recommend against a United Nations role, particularly if its contribution is considered primarily symbolic, the lead time too short or the electoral context inappropriate.” This was not just talk. In 1996, the UN more readily declined requests for assistance than in previous years (Fig. 6.2). In Africa, the UN was becoming “increasingly discriminating,” where:

Of 18 requests in 1996, none received a positive response. In half of the cases, the official explanation given was that the invitation was received too late.

²⁵³ A year later, the EAD reiterated this criticism noting that, “A Member State has insisted on the need for a United Nations presence at the time of the election. The United Nations is clearly dedicated to supporting countries requesting assistance for their further democratic development. The weaknesses of the approach, however, include the minimal impact of a single observer on the electoral process, the ultimate value of an assessment report provided after the election and the time and travel costs of organizing a United Nations mission that may ultimately be more symbolic than substantive.” UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/49/675). November 30, 1994.

²⁵⁴ This provision was a controversial one, and a small group of states, including China, complained that the UN Secretariat should not determine whose elections were worthy of electoral assistance. The provision overwhelmingly passed by the Assembly by a vote of 129 to 5, and suggests that member states signaled their agreement with the EAD—the UNSG should be selective in offering a UN presence.

Nevertheless, concerns over costs and the absence of an acceptable 'enabling environment' often proved the crucial considerations.²⁵⁵

The UNSG himself even agreed to substitute follow and report missions for coordinate and support ones. In doing so, the UNSG could still provide assistance on the day of a country's election if states requested it. However, it was more difficult for pseudo-democrats to exploit UN officials coordinating other observers. If the media mistook coordination for observation, the statement of official observers would also be attributed to the UN. Consequently, the media would not ask the UN to make another statement or contrast the UN's silence with the critical observations of official observers.

6.0 Conclusion

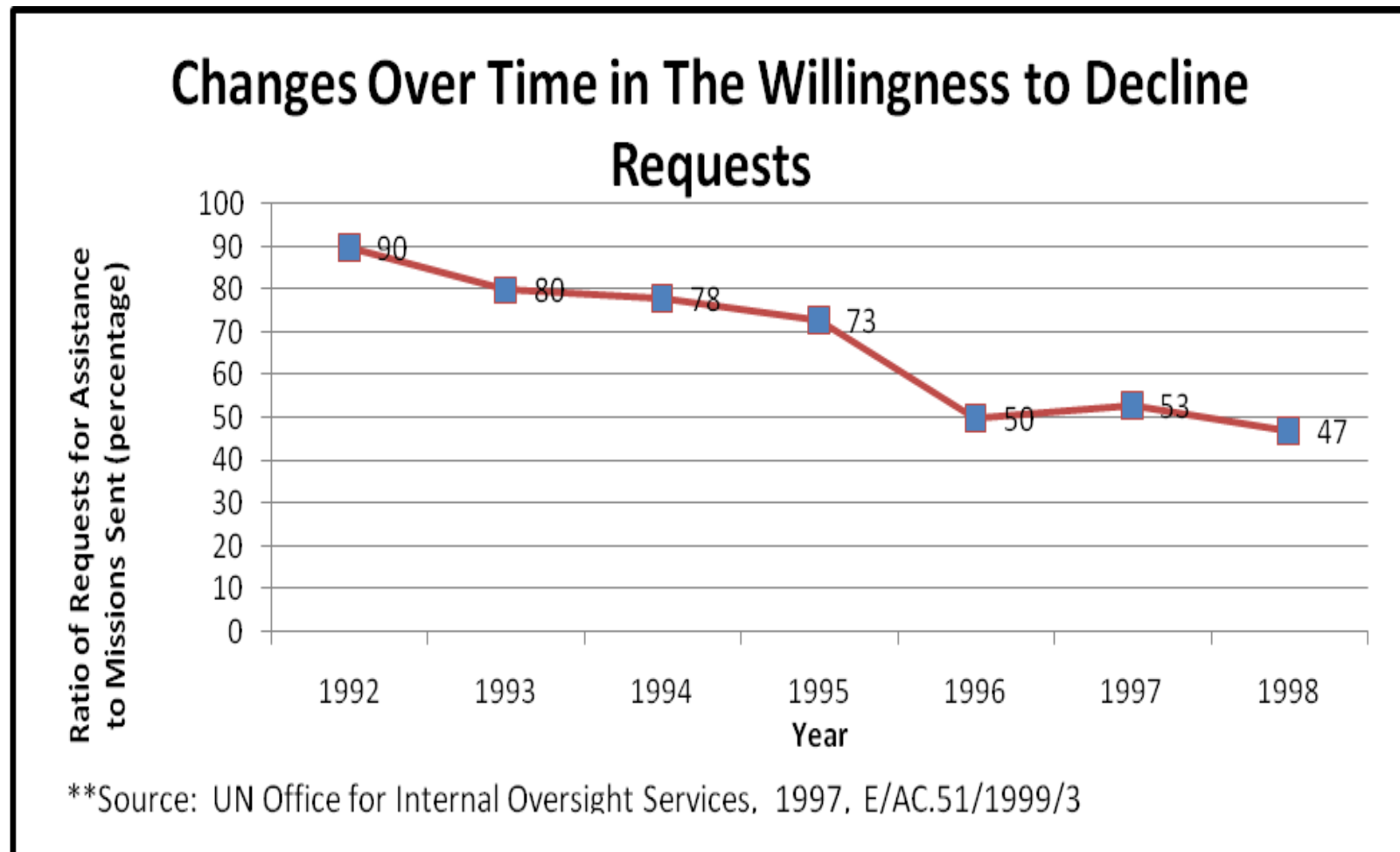
In closing, talk without action created pressure to align talk and action. The UNSG's democracy talk sustained the UN's reputation for electoral observation among the advanced democracies. However, its reputation was exploited by pseudo-democratic leaders who had no interest in holding fair elections. These leaders would invite UN observers knowing only a small number of non-observers would be sent. The presence of these non-observers would then give fraudulent elections some sense of credibility. The problem was often exacerbated by the media who mistook UN officials for official observers, but UN officials had no authority to observe or comment on an election's fairness. These developments concerned the EAD. Consequently, EAD officials protested sending UN officials to follow fraudulent elections, lobbied to eliminate follow and report missions, and discouraged UN officials from making statements about an

²⁵⁵ Anglin, 1998, 484.

election. Such changes, they argued, were necessary to ensure the UN was not undermining democratization.

As the same time, the EAD also sought to demonstrate to states that the UN could still make positive contributions to democratization. It seized on changes in the market for technical electoral assistance. These changes were part of a conceptual shift that emphasized longer-term projects over short-term assistance and helped align talk and action—a shift that would intensify when Boutros-Ghali left office.

Figure 6.2



Chapter 7

1997-2001: A New Approach to Promoting Democracy

1.0 Introduction

In late-1996, the Clinton Administration declared it would veto a second term for Boutros-Ghali. He was too outspoken and too critical of US foreign policy. The Clinton Administration wanted a Secretary-General that gave measured public statements; that was sensitive to US domestic political constraints; and that valued US-UN relations as highly as his independence. It wanted someone who would keep down costs and implement administrative reform. Kofi Annan was ‘Washington’s guy.’ He had supported US airstrikes in Bosnia, and he had the experience to push through reform. In late 1997, the Administration threw its full support behind Annan, and within weeks, the membership elected him Secretary-General.

Democratization was now a low priority for the Clinton Administration. It did not want to pay for more UN programs, and it preferred funding other democracy assistance providers. That said, it was not indifferent to democratization. The Administration still expected the UNSG to support democratization—and certainly not to undermine it. To this end, UN officials worried that the US would accuse the UN of undermining democracy. For three years, pseudo-democrats had been trying to exploit the UNSG, and the UNSG had facilitated this exploitation by talking up democratization and past electoral missions.

Annan was more sensitive to the concerns of UN officials. He toned down the rhetoric and ratcheted up the technical assistance. He clarified to the advanced democracies that the UN was playing a more modest role in democratization—one that did not involve electoral observation. He also condemned pseudo-democrats and abandoned an *Agenda for Democratization*. Instead, he talked about the importance of offering longer-term electoral assistance and building strong electoral institutions capable of sustaining democratization and good governance. UN electoral assistance would use its technological expertise and network of electoral experts to support capable, transparent and accountable domestic institutions. The EAD immediately stopped sending follow and report missions and authorized more projects that trained electoral administrators and domestic election observers, empowered civil society, improved electoral laws and advanced electoral information-technology.

This chapter examines why Annan aligned talk and action. By 1997, the US did not want the UNSG to expand electoral assistance, so there was a smaller incentive for the UNSG to send costly signals about his commitment to democratization. Indeed, modest amounts of talk would suffice. Annan sent a weak but important signal by criticizing pseudo-democrats. On several occasions, these pseudo-democrats publicly criticized Annan, and this criticism helped disassociate the UN from them. Similarly, talk about technical assistance reassured democratizing states that the UN would still help, while reassuring advanced democracies it would keep costs down. In return, advanced democracies and democratizing states rewarded the UNSG. Democratizing states requested more technical assistance and donor states funded more technical assistance. For the first time in years,

the membership even approved additional resources for the EAD to hire new staff and election experts.

2.0 What Changed? The Realignment of Talk and Action

As we saw in the last chapter, democracy promotion was more talk than action for most of Boutros-Ghali's sole term in office. Democratization was "a UN priority" that required its own *Agenda for Democratization*. As evidence, the UNSG pointed out, one only had to look at how UN electoral observers helped the citizens of South Africa, Mozambique, Namibia, Nicaragua and Haiti exercise their vote. All this democracy talk led audiences to assume that the UN still observed elections. Yet electoral assistance peaked in 1992, and thereafter the Assembly and Council seldom agreed to send UN election observers. Instead, the UNSG agreed to send a few officials on the day of an election to coordinate other observers or follow the election and report back to him.

The gap between talk and action closed rapidly when Kofi Annan succeeded Boutros-Ghali in 1997. A more modest democracy discourse emerged that dovetailed with the modest electoral assistance missions the UN now provided. The new approach to democracy promotion was an "ideological and political project...that is far weaker than the one put forward by his predecessor" (Archibugi et al, 2000, 138). The new UNSG essentially ignored the *Agenda for Democratization*, and made no mention of democracy in his initial address to the Assembly or his first major policy statement, *Renewing the*

United Nations.²⁵⁶ In fact, Annan's language was reminiscent of the cautious Javier Perez de Cuellar:

Once the Cold War ended, the UN rushed, and was pushed, to respond to a vast increase in demand for its services. The Organization began to aid transitions to democracy, national reconciliation and market reforms...Mistakes were made along the way – in many cases because the means given to the Organization did not match the demands made upon it.²⁵⁷

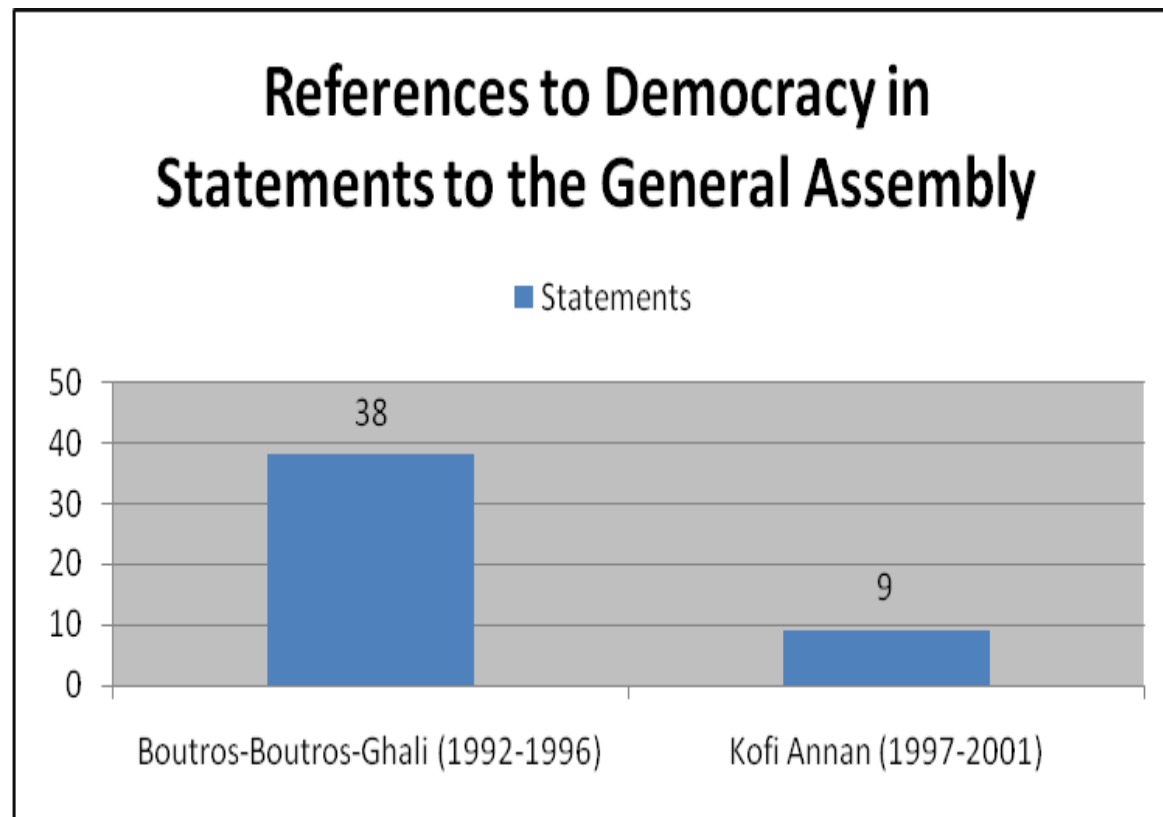
Overall, the democracy discourse shrank under Annan, who made fewer references to democratization in his public speeches, his annual reports on the Work of the Organization, and statements to the Assembly (Fig. 7.1).²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ See Archibugi, Balduino and Donati, 2000, 138. Annan's only comment on the matter was that "this agenda should be understood as a flexible conceptual framework. UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General: Support by The United Nations System of the Efforts of Governments to Promote and Consolidate New or Restored Democracies*. A/52/513, 21 October 1997.

²⁵⁷ This list was extensive and covered areas as diverse as human rights, peace operations, development, humanitarian assistance, transnational crime, terrorism, management, human resources, and UN finance. UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General: Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform*, A/51/950 July 14, 1997.

²⁵⁸ Kofi Annan, 1997, "Address to the National Press Club in Washington DC," Washington, DC: January 27. Speech.

Figure 7.1



Source: The United Nations Bibliographic Information System: Index to Speeches. Available at <http://unbisnet.un.org:8080/ipac20/ipac.jsp?profile=speech&menu=search&submenu=power#focus>.

Note: Includes all references to variants of ‘democracy,’ ‘democratization,’ ‘election,’ or ‘electoral’ made to the General Assembly Plenary and to the Fifth Committee for Budgetary and Administrative Matters. The references are counted in 26 statements by Boutros Boutros-Ghali to the Assembly and in 40 statements by Kofi Annan to the Assembly.

Though the democracy talk decreased, it did not disappear. Annan reaffirmed that the UN would support democratization, predominantly because it was inextricably linked to peace, human rights and development. This made democracy so universally appealing that “no one claims to govern on any principle other than democracy”²⁵⁹ as illustrated by “a new drive to democracy in much of Africa.”²⁶⁰ The UN therefore, would do its part to support democratic transitions but member states needed to do their part. States had a responsibility to isolate leaders who sought to stop or reverse democratization. In mid-1997, Annan asked African leaders not to recognize an armed group that overthrew a democratically-elected government. Later, he pointed out the “troubling number of cases where democracy has been subverted or maintained in name only.”²⁶¹

Indeed, Annan proved a more vocal critic of pseudo-democrats than his predecessor—a notable exception to the broader trend toward less talk. “Fig leaf democracies,” he declared, “attempt to cloak the outright subversion of democracy in the mantle of defending it.”²⁶² They “squashed the rule of law” and used elections to “gain international recognition for illegitimate rule by pretending to observe democratic principles.”²⁶³ Indeed, “elections can be misused by those wanting to create an appearance of democracy without permitting its substance.” Member states, he argued, “must be no less vigilant in condemning those who would overturn democracy in more

²⁵⁹ Kofi Annan, 1997, “Statement to Danish Foreign Policy Society.” Copenhagen: Sept. 4. Speech.

²⁶⁰ UNSC, *Statement by the Secretary-General to the Security Council Meeting on Africa S/PV.3819* September 25, 1997.

²⁶¹ Kofi Annan, “Address to the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments,” August 31, 2000. Speech.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Kofi Annan, 2000, “Address to the First Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies,” Warsaw, Sept. 27. Speech. Kofi Annan, 2001, “Address to the Conference on “The Challenges of Democratic Governance in a Globalizing World,” Oslo, August 21. Speech.

subtle, yet equally destructive ways.”²⁶⁴ They needed to “see through these ploys,” and “ostracize those who would claim a place in the community of democracies on false pretences.”²⁶⁵ International observers played a particularly pivotal role because “the public statements made by observer missions, both before and after an election can have enormous political significance.”²⁶⁶

While he was careful to vocalize some support for democratization, he also made clear that the UN was playing a more modest role in promoting it. In particular, UN activities would no longer focus on assisting a country on the day it held an election. “We are moving from old ideologies to a new pragmatism,” he argued, and electoral observation was a remnant of “the later 1980s and early 1990s.” Today, “this task is more commonly carried out by regional organizations and international NGOs, frequently in conjunction with national groups.”²⁶⁷ Consequently, “our efforts are more modest.”²⁶⁸ The UN would limit itself to “enhancing the effectiveness of international observers” by coordinating and supporting their efforts.²⁶⁹

However, Annan suggested that such modest actions would still make a valuable contribution to democratization. Specifically, the UN would help consolidate democracy by promoting programs that advanced good governance. Democracy assistance, he pointed out, should be “based on the concept of governance” which would “inspire the

²⁶⁴ Kofi Annan. “Address at the UN to the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments,” New York. Aug. 31, 2000. Speech.

²⁶⁵ Kofi Annan, 2000, “Address to the First Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies,” Warsaw, Sept. 27. Speech.

²⁶⁶ Kofi Annan, 2005, “Endorsement Ceremony for the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation,” New York: October 27.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ See also UNGA, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization* A/54/1. August 31, 1999.

²⁶⁹ UNGA *Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization* A/52/1. September 3, 1997.

work of civil society, governments and the UN system.”²⁷⁰ After all, “the principles of good governance also reflect the fundamental principles of a democratic society.”²⁷¹ More specifically, a pragmatic approach would leverage the UN expertise in electoral assistance to strengthen other good governance programs. Electoral assistance would act as an early entry point for the “long-term undertakings that will lead to strengthening of national institutions and democratic processes.”²⁷² In turn, good governance would be “an essential building block for meeting the objectives of sustainable development, prosperity and peace.”²⁷³

To meet these goals, UN electoral assistance would undergo a series of reforms. As electoral assistance “shifted away from specific events surrounding Election Day,” it would move to “consolidating institutions and processes that are essential to viable democracies.”²⁷⁴ Annan lamented that the focus on electoral observation had resulted in a “concentration on elections to the relative exclusion of other aspects of the democratic processes.” Moreover, “observation in isolation from other activities provides a very narrow framework.”²⁷⁵ Democratizing states “turn to us, not just for electoral assistance

²⁷⁰ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to Promote and Consolidate New or Restored Democracies* (A/52/513). October 21, 1997.

²⁷¹ Ibid. See also UNGA *Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization* A/52/1. September 3, 1997.

²⁷² UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to Promote and Consolidate New or Restored Democracies* (A/55/489). October 13, 2000.

²⁷³ See also UNGA *Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization* A/52/1. September 3, 1997..

²⁷⁴ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/52/474). October 16, 1997

²⁷⁵ Annan’s report to New or Restored Democracies argued that “by the end of the decade, there has been a growing realization that elections are not all that there is to democracy. The idea that electoral assistance alone could resolve the problems of transition to stable and sustainable democracy has increasingly been called into question.” See UNDPI, “Report of the Secretary-General to the Fourth Conference on New and Restored Democracies,” Dec. 4, 2000. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/events/facts.htm>.

but for a wide range of governance and human rights tasks, and [they] turn to the United Nations because, since the end of the Cold War, our expertise has expanded greatly.”²⁷⁶

As such, the UN “would require a significant shift in the way electoral assistance is provided.”²⁷⁷ Planning would focus on technical assistance. Over the next three years, the “main objective” would be increasing “the provision of necessary technical and advisory support.”²⁷⁸ As the US stopped sending election observers, funds would be used to develop new institution building programs. Indeed, the UN was “building sustainable local democratic institutions” by training female candidates, improving post-conflict electoral institutions in Guatemala, and strengthening electoral bodies in Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

In 1999, he highlighted how much had changed at the UN:

As the ‘age of democratization’ has entered into a new phase, the Organization has shifted its electoral assistance strategy... Elections that have in the past served predominantly as an exit strategy are now seen as providing an opportunity for institution-building and the introduction of programmes of good governance.

Elections are a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for creating viable

²⁷⁶ Annan, 2002, 139. For other examples of see See, Kofi Annan. Statement at the Security Council Meeting on Conflict Prevention (s/pv.4174). UN Headquarters. New York, USA. July 20, 2000 speech; UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the Work of the Organization* A/54/1 Oct. 1999. See also Kofi Annan. “Speech to Dinner Banquet hosted by Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan, Pakistan.” March 13, 2001. Speech.; “Statement to OAU Africa Day Conference,”. London, UK. May 27, 1999; “Speech to World Economic Forum.” Davos, Switzerland. Feb. 3, 1998; “Speech at Harvard University.” Cambridge, USA. Sept. 18, 1998; “Speech to the Chicago Council of Foreign Relations.” Chicago, USA. Oct. 21, 1997

²⁷⁶ See, UNSC. *Statement by the Secretary-General to the Security Council Meeting on Conflict Prevention* S/PV.4174 July 20, 2000 and UNGA, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization* A/54/1. August 31, 1999.

²⁷⁷ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/52/474). October 16, 1997.

²⁷⁸ UNGA, *Report of the Secretary General: Medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001* A/51/6/Rev.1 1997.

democracies. That requires the establishment or strengthening of democratic infrastructures such as electoral commissions, electoral laws and election administration structures and the promotion of a sense of citizenship and its attendant rights and responsibilities.²⁷⁹

UN technical workers were the “heroes of democracy” because they “enabled [electoral] commissions to come into being as effective institutions that were seen by the bulk of the populace to be above politics. The technical workers concentrated on ensuring the integrity of the apparatus needed to hold free and fair elections — arranging the nuts and bolts of registration, voting and counting ballots.”²⁸⁰

This statement was largely consistent with what the UNSG was doing. Under Annan, the UN was less frequently present on the day an election was held. Indeed, the UNSG authorized no follow and report missions in his first two years and only three over the entire five year period.²⁸¹ The UN declined five of nine requests for electoral observers during his first year. In total, the UNSG outright rejected almost sixty percent of requests for election observers—nearly double the proportion of requests rejected by his predecessor. For many states, the best they could hope for was the UNSG agreeing to coordinate other elections observers.

However, the UN provided more technical assistance designed to strengthen electoral institutions. During this period, Robin Ludwig (2004 p.174; 176) wrote, “although

²⁷⁹ UNGA, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization A/54/1*. August 31, 1999. See also Kofi Annan, “Address to the Heritage Foundation.” Washington, DC: June 18, 1997. Speech.

²⁸⁰ United Nations Support for Democratization is Growing, UN DPI Information Press Release November <http://www.un.org/events/facts.htm>

²⁸¹ The UN did agree to observe four elections during this period: Two referenda in the non-sovereign territories of Kosovo and East Timor as well as sending a handful of election observers to Fiji (2001) and the Solomon Islands (2001) The three follow and report missions were Ukraine (2001) and Senegal (1999; 2001).

election observation is the best-known and most visible form of assistance, technical assistance is requested most frequently. The trend toward technical assistance has become increasingly pronounced.” The UN authorized over forty technical assistance missions during Annan’s first term. These forty missions constituted sixty-three percent of all assistance—a twenty five percent increase from his predecessor. In nine instances, the UN recommended technical assistance in response to requests for the UN to observe elections or coordinate other observers. In 1999, the UNSG declined a Guatemalan request to send observers, but he offered to finance and assist with a comprehensive study of voter participation after the elections. Likewise, the UN approved a civic education project in Armenia, and it helped Armenian election authorities computerize their voter list.

Though most technical assistance required few officials, many missions involved complex institution-building tasks that lasted several years. In Peru, Cameroon and the Central African Republic, UN experts strengthened national election commissions. The UN also helped Albanian authorities improve voter registration by computerizing voter lists, creating more reliable voter ID cards, and setting up a data center for collecting, storing and analyzing electoral information. In 1998, the UNSG sent legal experts to help Macedonian authorities draft new electoral laws. The UN also provided a “long-term technical advisor” to Nigeria to support civic education in the lead up to 2001 national elections. After the election, Nigeria received a new assistance program to train officials of its electoral commission and strengthen the commission’s capacity for civic education.

Thus, UN democracy talk was consistent with democracy action throughout Annan’s first term. The new Secretary-General was a less vocal advocate of democratization but took

more effective action in support of democratization. The UN was disinclined to take part in high profile missions but more inclined to help strengthen electoral institutions before and after elections. And these changes, the Secretary-General declared, would strengthen good governance.

So what caused talk and action to align and stay aligned? Why did alignment look the way it did? In other words, why did talk decrease rather than action increase? And why did the emphasis shift from assistance on the day a country held an election to technical assistance before and after an election? In the rest of this chapter, I show that the answers lie in the market for electoral assistance and the pressures for change created by past hypocrisy.

3.0 The Changing Market for Electoral Assistance

3.1 The Persistent Problem of Pseudo-Democrats and Illegitimate Elections

A prominent feature of the UN's membership during this period was the substantial proportion of pseudo-democratic state leaders. By the mid-1990s, few regimes openly challenged the view that elections and democratic institutions were the best way to legitimize a government and organize state-society relations (Carothers, 1997). Across the world, most state leaders held elections in hopes of legitimizing their rule.

However, a number of state leaders paid little more than lip service to free and fair elections. These leaders exploited the advantages of incumbency to repress the political opposition, control the media, restrict individual freedoms and manipulate polls and vote counting. In one study, Schedler (2002) found that fifty-eight states—thirty-eight percent of the total—were ruled by undemocratic leaders who held elections. Likewise, Levitsky

and Way (2002, 61) conclude that, “the roots of this recent proliferation lie in the difficulties associated with consolidating both democratic *and* authoritarian regimes in the immediate post–Cold War period.” In some cases, pseudo-democracy was the result of a newly-elected leader who feared losing the next election and the spoils of office. In other cases, a ruling authoritarian leader paid lip service to democracy and held fraudulent elections to secure foreign aid and improve domestic credibility (Kelley, 2008; Hyde, 2008). Regardless, the rule of these leaders “became a balancing act in which they impose enough repression to keep their opponents weak and maintain their own power while adhering to enough democratic formalities that they might just pass themselves off as democrats” (Carothers, 1997, 160).

Many of the traditional international observation organizations were wary of lending any credibility to a democratic façade. In response, pseudo-democrats invited organizations that were ineffective or sympathetic to their rule. For example, organizations with fewer democratic members like the Organization for African Unity (OAU) were invited because they seldom issued critical reports on an election.²⁸² Alternatively, these leaders invited multiple observation organizations and used more favorable assessments to offset more critical ones (Hyde, 2008). For example, Ghana, Benin and Malawi all requested La Organization Internationale de la Francophonie and the Commonwealth to send observers as well as the European Union.

That said, advocates of democratization were drawing increasing attention to such practices. One senior NDI official criticized international observers who “put a stamp of

²⁸² Kelley (2008). Kelley notes that IOs with fewer democratic members are the most likely to endorse elections. She concludes that this finding would have been even stronger if she could have obtained electoral observation assessments from the OAU and ECOWAS but neither made such reports available.

legitimacy on Potemkin-village democracies in Cambodia, Egypt, Armenia, and other countries” (Bjornlund, 2001). Likewise, some young democracies worried that pseudo-democrats would weaken Western support for democracy assistance. At a 1997 conference of new and restored democracies, the Philippine foreign minister criticized pseudo-democratic leaders that “made a mockery of democracy” by justifying their rule as “democracy with adjectives.”²⁸³ Other committed democrats from transitioning countries shared this frustration. In 1988, the first meeting of new and restored democracies was convened by eighteen of them to share experiences, offer advice on consolidating democracy, increase positive coverage in the Western media, and generate additional financial support. The positive coverage received by successive conferences over the next ten years ultimately resulted in the Assembly’s resolution to support new and restored democracies. It also resulted in the rapid growth of participating states, and a number of pseudo-democrats joined. To many of the founding members, the participation of such states threatened to undermine the movement’s credibility.

In the US, the Clinton Administration was also frustrated with pseudo-democratic leaders. The Secretary of State Madeleine Albright used a trip to Central Asia to express frustration with democratic backsliding. The Administration reduced its support for the increasingly autocratic Haitian President, and it pressed the presidents of Yugoslavia and Peru to resign after evidence of widespread voter fraud. Similarly, the State Department publicly criticized the fairness of elections in Albania (1996), Algeria (1998), Togo (1998), Gambia (1996), Zambia (1996), Croatia (1996), Azerbaijan (1998), Armenia

²⁸³ UNGA, *Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Philippines: Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to Promote and Consolidate New or Restored Democracies* A/56/SR.58 November 12, 1997.

(1998), Georgia (1999) and Belarus (2001).²⁸⁴ The Administration also reconsidered how it funded democracy assistance. It was more careful in deciding who should receive assistance and what type of assistance should be received. There were two reasons for doing so. First, a skeptical Republican-controlled Congress sought to reduce funding for democracy assistance, and in 1997, USAID's electoral assistance budget was briefly cut to \$28.7m—less than half the 1995 total—before rebounding to \$60m the following year (Carothers, 1999, 45-50). The Administration even found it difficult to secure democracy assistance for Indonesia and Nigeria, two countries where democratization was a strategic priority. Second, the Administration wanted to ensure democracy assistance was going to true democrats and not pseudo-democrats. As a result, “in retrenching countries...the US and other Western donors have closed down most of their democracy-related programs because of legitimate concerns about wasting funds legitimating the illegitimate, or being associated with failure” (Carothers, 1997, 164).

While the US cut assistance to pseudo-democracies, it expanded assistance to true democrats trying to consolidate democracy. USAID funding for democratic governance programs increased dramatically—from \$110m in 1997 to over \$200m by 2001 (Carothers, 2004). These programs supported the rule of law, human rights, democratic institutions (such as parliaments, political parties or the judiciary), civil society, and an independent media. When it came to elections, democratic governance offered technical assistance to build up electoral commissions, reform electoral laws, work with political parties and civil society groups, and educate voters and poll workers. For example,

²⁸⁴ “Missed Chance to Baku,” *The Washington Post* October 17, 1998; Scott Peterson, “Belarus Dreams of Union with Wary Russia,” *Christian Science Monitor*, September 12, 2001; “Togo: US Observer Disappointed By State Department Position,” *Africa News* June 26, 1998.

USAID provided \$30m to educate voters and train electoral administrators for the 1999 Indonesian election (Bjornlund, 2001, 22).

These programs met a growing demand from newly-elected leaders for assistance before and after elections rather than on Election Day. For democracy assistance providers, the market for observers was saturated, while the market for technical assistance was expanding. Regional organizations observed elections alongside NGOs like the IRI, NDI, Carter Center and Asia Foundation, as well as a plethora of smaller and newer ones. However, many democratizing states now wanted help consolidating democracy. These leaders needed access to new technologies to improve voter registration and funds for voter education. They also needed experts to train domestic observers, help draft new electoral laws and strengthen autonomous electoral authorities.

As demand for technical assistance increases, a number of organizations rushed to meet it. As one senior NDI official asserted, “Shifting attention from Election Day to the months before and after voters go to the polls is a matter of common sense” (Bjornlund, 2001, 24). Likewise, the EAD and UNDP had started modestly expanding technical assistance prior to 1997. In addition, regional organizations like the OSCE and EU increased technical assistance, and state electoral authorities like Elections Canada and the Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico developed international programs. Finally, some electoral observation NGOs like the Carter Center, the Asia Foundation, the IRI and the NDI developed new technical assistance programs while others like International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) expanded existing ones.

Overall, the electoral assistance market under Annan looked much as it did at the end of Boutros-Ghali's term. The supply and demand for technical assistance grew as many newly elected democratic leaders tried to consolidate their democratic systems and donors agreed to fund democratic governance programs. By contrast, the saturated electoral observation market seemed increasingly unappealing, especially given that pseudo-democratic leaders sought to exploit observers to legitimize undemocratic rule.

4.0 Re-Committing to Democratization: Rule Changes and Confronting Pseudo-democracy

4.1 The UN Distances Itself From Pseudo-Democratic Regimes

Inside the UN system, officials were increasingly concerned that electoral assistance would inadvertently associate the UN with pseudo-democratic leaders. As one senior EAD official diplomatically described it:

A basic concern for the United Nations is to ensure that the Organization is not used to legitimize a substandard electoral process. One might argue, however, that the United Nations should assist particularly in cases where the validity of an election may be in doubt. This is true if a government demonstrates a desire and willingness to make changes that will contribute to a credible process. If such willingness is absent, assistance will be a waste of resources and send a message of international support when none is warranted (Ludwig, 2004, 172).

In the early 1990s, these officials recognized that state leaders—democratic and pseudo-democratic—had a strong incentive to request UN observers. “Aside from a desire to

receive a UN ‘stamp of approval’ for an electoral process,” Ludwig (2004, 173) continued, “some governments also consider a request for assistance as a means of obtaining international donor support and finances” (Ludwig, 2004, 173). The UNSG seldom officially denied an observer request due to concerns about the quality of the electoral process. Additionally, where the UNSG did authorize coordinate and support or follow and report, the Western media inaccurately referred to these officials as observers and occasionally the UNSG’s representative gave a disputed elections a positive public endorsement.

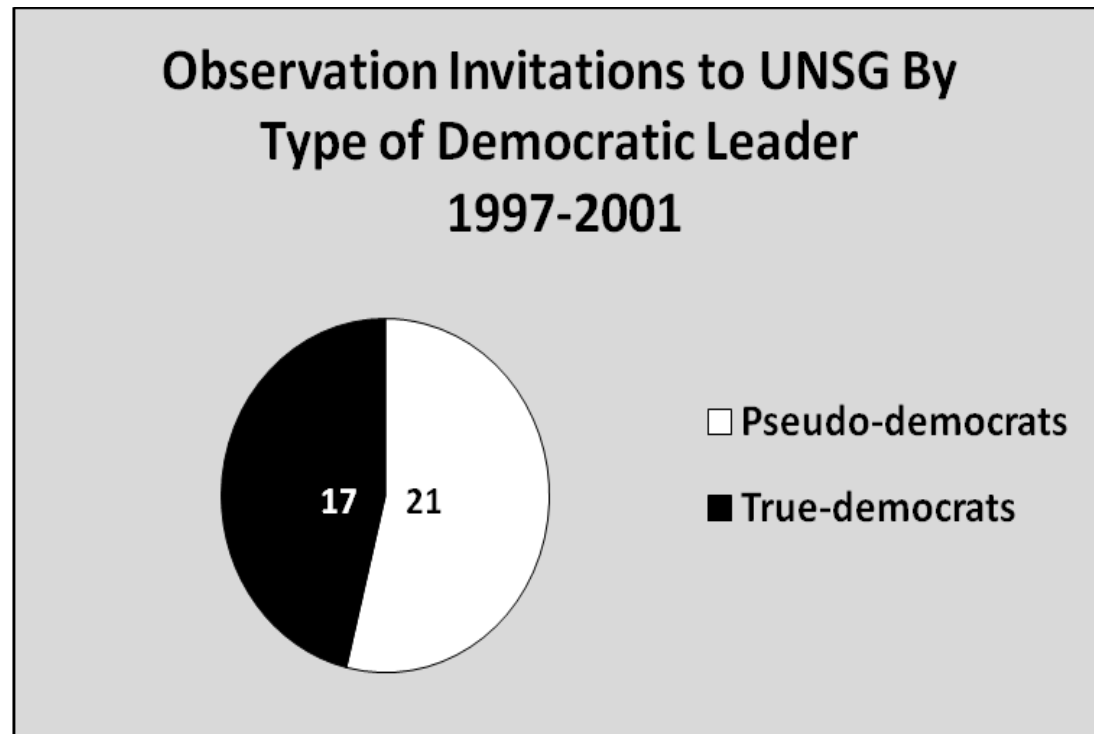
Given the low risk and the potential benefits, pseudo-democrats continued to request UN observers during Annan’s first term (Fig. 7.2). For example, pseudo-democratic regimes in Croatia, Russia, Haiti, Armenia, Mexico, Zambia and the Gambia all made at least one request. These regimes hoped Annan, like his predecessor, saw little reason to reform electoral assistance or moderate the democracy talk. This was not strictly wishful thinking. Annan needed to maintain good relations with developing states to implement administrative and peacekeeping reforms or receive a second term. Moreover, the US and advanced democracies still talked about promoting democracy, looked favorably on the EAD, and had not openly accused the EAD of undermining democratization.

Yet, UN officials were under pressure to avoid associating the Organization with pseudo-democratic regimes. In 1993, the Assembly instructed the UNSG to “attempt to ensure, before undertaking any electoral mission...that conditions exist to allow a free and fair election.”²⁸⁵ Publicly, some Western governments were shutting down democracy

²⁸⁵ UN General Assembly, 48th Sess. *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly. 48/131. Strengthening the Role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections* (A/RES/48/131) Dec. 20, 1993.

programs in pseudo-democratic states. Privately, they thought Boutros-Ghali should have been more selective in providing electoral assistance, and occasionally they opposed sending a UN presence for fear of legitimizing fraudulent elections.

Figure 7.2



Source: Gleditsch, Kristian Skrede. 2008. Modified Polity P4 and P4D Data, Version 3.0., URL: <http://privatewww.essex.ac.uk/~ksg/Polity.html>

Note: Pseudo-democrats defined as authoritarian/transitional regimes where regime score did not witness a significant and democratic (6-point) regime score change after elections. Change is measured from the score the year prior to requesting electoral assistance to the score the year after the election. Regimes that had 'democratic' scores the year after the election were also excluded.

Boutros-Ghali seemed unwilling to criticize Africa's undemocratic leaders, or back a UN-led mission to forcefully restore democracy in Haiti (Malone, 1998, 107-108). In 1996, the Clinton Administration's frustration spilled into the public when Boutros-Ghali openly opposed a US proposal that the UN organize post-conflict elections in the Croatian province of Eastern Slavonia. After the UN experience in Bosnia, the UNSG was against organizing elections, and he was skeptical that the Council would allocate adequate resources. Instead, the Council should authorize a multinational mission independent of the UN. The Clinton Administration dismissed these concerns and insisted that the UN's impartiality, experience in Cambodia and Namibia, and commitment to democracy made it uniquely suited to carry out the mission. As a frustrated Albright told the media, "it is misguided and counterproductive to argue that the UN should avoid this operation."²⁸⁶

Thus, the Administration was hopeful that things would change under Kofi Annan. Annan was "Washington's guy" as the US had single-handedly orchestrated his election to the office. As Secretary of State Albright put it, Annan "seemed born for leadership," capable of implementing tough reforms, and sensitive to US values and interests—especially after his earlier support for airstrikes in Bosnia (Luck, 2007, 1991). The Administration was not disappointed with the UNSG's early reform efforts.²⁸⁷ As Thomas Pickering, the nominee for Under-Secretary of State, told the Senate Foreign

²⁸⁶ John M. Goshko, "UN Security Council Creates Balkan Force; Mission Is to Demilitarize Eastern Slavonia," *The Washington Post*, January 16, 1996.

²⁸⁷ UNGA, *Report of the Secretary-General on Management and Organizational Measure A/51/829* March 1997, 1997. Also UNGA, *Secretary-General Report on Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform A/51/950* July 14, 1997.

Relations Committee: “I was very disappointed, personally, that Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali was not willing to pick up what a large number of permanent representatives, 50 or 60, presented him as a very effective reform program. And I’m pleased and delighted the elements of that have reappeared now in what Secretary-General Annan is espousing for the future of the organization.”²⁸⁸

For his part, Annan hoped his reforms would improve America’s relations with the Secretariat. As he told the Heritage Foundation:

I am an optimist, and I think some day the UN and the US will go back to the days when they had an excellent relationship, where we worked together, and you criticized us, you steered us, you led, but you were firmly in the fold, working with like-minded member states to move the UN forward.²⁸⁹

Democracy promotion played a small but not insignificant part in building this relationship. Reforming electoral assistance was a lower priority than peacekeeping and administrative reform. However, the UNSG could not afford to ignore it. First, the Clinton Administration rhetorically considered democracy promotion a foreign policy priority. Second, it considered democratization an inextricable part of UN peace operations, and officials insisted that post-conflict states hold elections. To this end, any peacekeeping reforms needed to ensure that peacebuilding incorporated UN assistance

²⁸⁸ “Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: Nomination of Thomas Pickering as Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs,” *Federal News Service*. Washington, DC. April 18, 1997. Likewise, Albright declared that Kofi Annan “has done a great deal already to reform the secretariat. “Remarks by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to Center for National Policy.” *Federal News Service*. January 21, 1999.

²⁸⁹ Kofi Annan, “Address to the Heritage Foundation.” Washington, DC: June 18, 1997. Speech.

for democratization. In addition, the US could task the UNSG with another large-scale electoral mission—as it recently did in Eastern Slavonia or would do in non-sovereign Kosovo and East Timor (1999). Finally, Annan was particularly interested in Africa where the Administration was committed to promoting democracy (Carothers, 2001; Goldgeier and Chollet, 2008; Paris, 2004).

To this end, Annan was careful to remind US audiences that he was a committed democrat. He hoped his statements would assure US policymakers that he shared their values. In a speech to the Council on Foreign Relations, he described his efforts to “make the Office of Secretary-General a pulpit...I have sought to use it as a vehicle for the promotion of the values of tolerance, democracy, human rights and good governance that I believe are universal.”²⁹⁰ Similarly, Annan told the Heritage Foundation that:

[W]e also have to accept that the UN and the US share a lot... We both are dedicated to certain universal principles. I think we are all dedicated to the rule of law, equal opportunity, human rights, and democracy.²⁹¹

Yet his talk would seem hollow without action. After all, Boutros-Ghali advocated for democratization but many US policymakers still assumed he coddled undemocratic leaders. Annan learned quickly that he could meet the same fate if the UN did not reform electoral assistance. In 1993, the Council tasked the UN with observing post-conflict elections in Liberia. Four years later, elections were finally held, and the UN Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) declared the former rebel Charles Taylor the winner. Fearing a return to war, the Council and Annan welcomed the results. Yet Annan

²⁹⁰ Kofi Annan, “Address to the Council of Foreign Relations, New York, January 20, 1999. Speech.

²⁹¹ Kofi Annan, “Address to the Heritage Foundation.” Washington, DC: June 18, 1997. Speech.

privately worried about Liberia's democratic future and acknowledged that Taylor's electoral success was largely due to voter fear that Taylor would react violently if he lost the election.²⁹²

Additionally, a serious problem arose in 1997 when the UN coordinated election observers for high profile Algerian legislative elections. Few expected elections to meet international standards given the growing incidence of violence and the ban on a leading Islamist party. As *The New York Times* reported, "the extent of real parliamentary democracy appears strictly circumscribed."²⁹³ However, Annan agreed to send three UN officials to coordinate one hundred observers representing twenty-five states. The EAD, fearing a repeat of the 1995 Algerian election, was more reluctant, and it successfully lobbied against sending a prominent envoy to head the mission. Instead, the UNSG chose Fransico Cobos, an elections expert that had worked with the UN since 1989. On his arrival in Algeria, Cobos made clear to reporters that this was not a UN observer mission but a "UN-coordinated mission."²⁹⁴

However, some news outlets continued to refer to "UN monitors" and pressed the UN mission to offer its assessment of the elections.²⁹⁵ This put UN officials in an awkward position. Observers from the OAU and Arab League had endorsed the election despite widespread claims of fraud. UN officials were reluctant to follow suit. Even if inclined to make a statement, the small group of UN officials "could only certify the regular operation of democratic procedures, but beyond this façade of legality everybody knew

²⁹² Similarly, when UN had provided assistance ahead of 1998 Cambodian elections, many commentators believed that President Hun Sen's repression helped explain his victory on Election Day. The EU and Australians saw Hun Sen as stabilizing, and used election to push UN to support his rule Bjornlund, 2001.

²⁹³ Roger Cohen, "Algeria Vote Nears, With Democracy in Ruins," *The New York Times*, June 5, 1997.

²⁹⁴ "UN Press Conference on Algeria Polls Cancelled," *Agence France Presse*, June 08, 1997.

²⁹⁵ "UN monitors expect "good idea" of Algerian poll fairness," *Agence France Presse* May 30, 1997.

that all parties were allowed to participate and that parliament was actually deprived of its powers” (Archibugi et al, 2000, 131). Consequently, the UN was better-off distancing itself from others’ endorsements. In fact, a public statement reaffirmed the media’s view that UN officials were observing the election.

The UNSG felt the mission could not stay silent as media pressure intensified. The mission released an ambiguous written statement declaring that UN officials had not received major complaints of irregularities, but it was nonetheless declining to endorse the election results. This statement failed to satisfy the media, who continued to push until the UN relented and called a press conference. However, UN officials failed to agree on a statement. A critical statement would alienate the Algerian government and send the message that the UN would evaluate publicly the quality of an election. A supportive statement would send the latter message, but furthermore, the UN might be accused of giving cover to a pseudo-democratic regime. Unable to resolve the problem, the mission sidestepped it; it cancelled the press conference at the last minute and released a second written statement reaffirming the ambiguous conclusion of its first written statement.²⁹⁶

4.2 Taking a More Confrontational Approach to Pseudo-Democrats

Hoping to remove any doubt about the UN’s attitude to pseudo-democrats, the new UNSG confronted pseudo-democracy from his bully pulpit. Shortly after the Algerian episode, Annan drew the Algerian government’s ire for publicly pressuring it to negotiate

²⁹⁶ Alain Bommenel, “International observers critical of Algeria poll,” *Agence France Presse*, June 8, 1997; “UN press conference on Algeria polls cancelled,” *Agence France Presse*, June 8, 1997; Alain Bommenel, “UN doubts on Algeria poll add weight to opposition allegations of fraud,” *Agence France Presse*, June 10, 1997.

with the leading Islamist party, reduce the violence, and improve the electoral environment ahead of municipal elections.²⁹⁷ That year, he also asked African leaders not to grant recognition to regimes who overthrew elected governments like in Burundi or Sierra Leone. He spoke openly of democratizing Nigeria, and he criticized the slow pace of democratic reforms in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The prospects of fair elections were slim unless President Kabila accelerated institutional reforms, and to this end, the UNSG was offering to “help restore the national institutions, including the electoral process.”

His 1998 report to the Council on *The Causes of Conflict in Africa* was indicative of his more confrontational approach. Annan was deeply concerned with reducing conflict in Africa. He was born and raised in Ghana and was partially elected Secretary-General because it was still ‘Africa’s turn’ to hold the position. Furthermore, as head of UN peacekeeping, he had had seen up-close the brutal violence associated with conflicts in Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo and Liberia. To this end, he pushed for a special Council meeting at the level of foreign ministers to address African conflict and welcomed the Council’s request for recommendations on reducing the incidence of civil war.

The resulting report concluded that conflict was best addressed through “genuine and lasting prevention” of its root causes—human insecurity and underdevelopment. Given this conclusion, one might expect the UNSG would recommend that the UN should pursue democratization to advance development and protect human rights. Yet it was not

²⁹⁷ In addition, Annan declared that the violence meant the dispute was “no longer be deemed an internal affair.” The Algerian government retorted that the UN was interfering in a domestic matter and criticized Annan for his statement. “UN denies Annan interfered on Algeria violence” *Agence France Presse*, Sept. 2, 1997; “Algeria blasts UN chief’s massacre comments” *Agence France Presse*, August 31, 1997.

a prevalent theme. Annan did not mention democratization in the introduction and only two paragraphs (out of more than a hundred) were specifically devoted to strengthening democratic governance (Annan, 1998).

That said, he singled out undemocratic behavior as a source of conflict. Like previous UN reports, he identified the colonialist legacy, structural inequalities in the global economy, and external interference as causes of violence. But he also cited domestic ones. “Africa must look at itself,” he argued, including “the nature of political power in African States.” A “Winner-take-all” political culture had bred “centralized and highly personalized forms of governance” with “insufficient accountability of leaders, lack of transparency in regimes, inadequate checks and balances, non-adherence to the rule of law, absence of peaceful means to change or replace leadership or lack of respect for the rule of law.” Founding elections were not enough. The “real test” for African states was whether founding elections “are followed by others in accordance with an agreed electoral timetable.” States needed accountable and efficient governing institutions to pass this test—they needed to “take good governance seriously.” Other African states could help by withholding recognition of any group that overthrew democratically-elected governments (Annan, 1998).

Inside the Secretariat, EAD officials saw an opportunity to preempt accusations that UN electoral assistance legitimized pseudo-democrats. This was not the first time they had tried to distance themselves from unfair elections. Previously, EAD officials had recommended against sending a UN presence to elections they expected to be fraudulent. However, these officials were overruled by Boutros-Ghali and his advisers in some

instances. Now these officials were confident things would change. As one commentator noted:

The differences between Annan and his predecessor are stark...[Boutros-Ghali] never really tried to work with the UN staff, preferring instead to rely on a tight circle of advisers. By contrast, Annan knows how the system works and knows the people who make it work—or prevent it from working. There was an obvious sense of relief among the staff at UN headquarters after the selection of one of their own.²⁹⁸

These officials had other reasons for optimism. First, Annan's statements suggested he planned to confront pseudo-democrats. Second, Annan had temporarily been head of EAD in 1994, and during this period, he had introduced some reforms recommended by EAD staff including a reduction in follow and report missions.

Finally, Annan agreed to strengthen the EAD and improve coordination with other UN agencies. He empowered the EAD by appointing Carlina Pirelli as its director in 1998—giving it a voice at the director-level for the first time since 1995. Its regular operating budget finally increased to \$2.6m (from \$1.8m). Consequently, the EAD hired more staff (bringing the total to 12) and announced an expansion of the 'Roster of Electoral Experts.'²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸ Jim Wurst, "Bye Bye Boutros," *Washington Post*, January 6, 1997.

²⁹⁹ UNGA. *Note by United Nations Secretary General: In-Depth Evaluation of the Electoral Assistance Programme E/AC.51/1999/3* March 13, 1999.

Annan also set out assistance implementation procedures to allow overextended EAD officials to spend less time in the field and spend more time setting electoral policy and standards, organizing needs assessment missions and coordinating with non-UN organizations providing electoral assistance. These actions, one internal review found, meant “the EAD now appears to be positioned to find useful roles in the new circumstances.”³⁰⁰ To allow them to do so, the UNSG even pleaded that member states do more than just declare their support for electoral assistance: “I believe that the whole United Nations system stands ready to see democracy-building and democratization assistance placed among its foremost priorities. But for this to happen in practice, we need the political, administrative and financial support of all Member States.”³⁰¹

With Annan’s help, EAD officials implemented administrative changes to prevent UN electoral assistance from associating with fraudulent elections. These changes empowered the EAD when dealing with requests from pseudo-democrats. First, they eliminated follow and report as an official type of assistance and authorized only two such missions during Annan’s first term. Second, electoral assistance was conditional on the requesting state demonstrating its commitment to free and fair elections. Longer lead times were required to prevent pseudo-democrats from making a last-minute request in hopes of receiving a symbolic UN presence. Moreover, the EAD would only send a UN presence if the conditions for free and fair elections existed. The Assembly had authorized this new rule three years earlier, but Annan encouraged the EAD to follow it

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to Promote and Consolidate New or Restored Democracies* (A/55/489). October 13, 2000.

(Ludwig, 2004). In practice, these rules increased the authority of needs assessment missions (NAMs), and as a senior EAD official explained, NAMs were no longer “a simple technical evaluation:”

In some of these cases, national officials are surprised by the extent of the discussions and assessment made by a NAM. Their assumption that a request for assistance and the hosting of a NAM will automatically result in a reward of international donor funding has frequently proven erroneous. In other cases, officials have requested assistance for a specific component of elections such as the budget, again with the goal of obtaining donor support, while insisting that important procedural elements such as freedom of the media or the vote count remain untouched. Their requests for assistance are often dropped when the NAM offers assistance for election components that they may not wish to change. Although all NAMs generally have the same basic format, their results may range from the provision of one or more types of UN assistance to no assistance and they may engender difficult and sensitive negotiations (Ludwig, 2004, 172).

In fact, state requests for UN observers were declined more than half the time. Pseudo-democrats were particularly likely to find their requests denied. The EAD declined observer requests from five states with the worst democratic records, and from states like Burkina Faso (1998), Armenia (1999) and Cameroon (1997) where foreign observers

reported serious concerns during the campaign.³⁰² In a few instances, the UNSG even denied non-observer requests; the DRC (1997) and Zimbabwe (1999) were both denied technical assistance because conditions were not conducive to free and fair elections.

In 2000, Annan even reported to the Council that he was withdrawing all UN electoral assistance from Haiti. For six years, the UN provided technical assistance and coordinated other election observers. However, this assistance would be terminated early due to "the widely held perception among opponents of Family Lavalas—and shared by many former supporters—that the party might establish a dictatorial and repressive regime."³⁰³ As Director of the EAD put it, there was "no possibility whatsoever of upholding the principles of free and fair elections,"³⁰⁴ and without such a possibility, the EAD had no interest in participating.

5.0 Recommitting to Democratization: A Commitment to Institution Building

5.1 Pressure to Expand Technical Assistance

These reforms showed states that the UN was not undermining democratization; other reforms showed them that the UN was making a positive contribution to it. Specifically, the UNSG was strengthening the UN's position in the growing market for technical assistance. At the 1997 Conference of New and Restored Democracies, participants emphasized the importance of "post-transition" tasks, particularly "institutional

³⁰² Azerbaijan (1998; 2000), Belarus (2000), Sudan (2000), Djibouti (1999), Equatorial Guinea (1999; 2000). See Hyde and Marinov, 2010.

³⁰³ Don Bohning, "Annan Recommends Ending Pro-Democracy Assistance Missions to Haiti," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 25, 2000.

³⁰⁴ Nicole Winfield, "UN ends Haiti mission, says development efforts will continue," *Associated Press Worldstream*, Feb 5 2001.

improvements” and “good governance.”³⁰⁵ Later that year, the Assembly agreed and resolved that democratizing states should “pay due attention to the conduct of elections from an administrative and organizational point of view, usually with the help of outside resources and expertise.”³⁰⁶ To add pressure, these states also made more requests for technical assistance. Democratizing states made ten requests the year before Annan took office—the most since 1992. This trend continued after he took office and, by 2001, the EAD had received forty five requests for technical assistance in just five years—accounting for more than forty percent of all requests.

The US and other advanced democracies also wanted the UN to be a supplier in this increasingly crowded market. In 1993, the Clinton Administration had introduced the Assembly Election resolution directing the UNSG to help states “consolidate democracy,” and in subsequent years, the resolution specified longer-term post-election assistance. By 1997, the US and EU officials supported a “democratization and governance agenda,” and that year the ‘Election’ resolution highlighted:

the need for strengthening national capacity-building, electoral institutions and civic education in the requesting countries in order to consolidate and regularize the achievements of previous elections...first-time democratic elections have already been held in many Member States, creating a need for reassessment and adaptation of the forms of assistance routinely provided previously, in particular to meet the needs of supporting

³⁰⁵ UNGA, *Debates: Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to Promote and Consolidate New or Restored Democracies* A/56/SR.58 November 12, 1997.

³⁰⁶ UNGA, *Note Verbale from the Permanent Representative to the United Nations to the UN Secretary-General: Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to Promote and Consolidate New or Restored Democracies* A/52/334 September 11, 1997.

subsequent elections... including the provision of technical advice on such issues as, *inter alia*, election organization and budgets, electoral laws, domestic procurement, training, computerization and comparative electoral systems, before and after elections have taken place, as well as needs-assessment missions aimed at recommending programmes that might contribute to the consolidating of the democratization process, and requests that such efforts be strengthened...³⁰⁷

To support such a change, advanced democracies made funding available for specific projects that targeted democratic institutions. For example, the UN received substantial support to train domestic observers in Mexico and help the Haitian electoral authorities.

These external pressures reinforced internal ones. In 1999, an internal review recommended the EAD draft new guidelines for requesting states that “fully reflected the broader and longer-term mandates given to the Secretariat over the last few years, including post-election assistance.”³⁰⁸ Similarly, a 2001 UNDP review concluded that “preparing democratic institutions for responsible governance, even prior to the casting of ballots, can be as important for maintaining legitimacy as executing a free and fair election.”³⁰⁹ The UN should “concentrate more attention on long-term electoral assistance capacity building, giving particular emphasis to the development of permanent

³⁰⁷ U.N. General Assembly, 52nd Sess. *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly. 52/129. Strengthening the Role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization* A/RES/52/129 Feb. 4, 1998. . In 1999, the US recommended that “the EAD continue to provide technical advice before and after elections...in order to contribute to the sustainability of their electoral processes and consolidation of the democratization process.” UNGA, *Third Committee Debate on Strengthening the Role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization* A/C.3/54/L.83 November 12, 1999.

³⁰⁸ ECOSOC. *Note by United Nations Secretary General: In-Depth Evaluation of the Electoral Assistance Programme* E/AC.51/1999/3 March 13, 1999.

³⁰⁹ UNDP (1999). “Electoral Assistance: Ten Years Experience.”

and independent electoral commissions.” Overall, the UNSG faced significant pressure to expand technical assistance.

5.2 The UNSG Expands Technical Assistance

Given these pressures, one group of observers noted, “The Secretary-General’s only possible choice was basically to tackle the issues of the UN on more pragmatic grounds...as a result is far more considerate of states’ concerns and might therefore be more appealing to governments” (Archibugi, Balduini and Donati, 2000, 138). Besides direct pressure from states, there were five other reasons for focusing on ‘pragmatic activities’ like technical assistance. First, the growth in technical assistance could partially offset the decline in UN observers and follow and report missions. As such, the UNSG could report to the Assembly that he was actively providing electoral assistance. Since 1992, the Assembly required the UNSG to list periodically individual state requests for assistance and any action taken, and it also expected the UNSG to cite examples of UN activities in a second report on UN support for New and Restored Democracies.

Second, technical assistance for elections could increase demand for other forms of UN democracy assistance. Electoral assistance was “an entry point” and, if carried out effectively, states would request technical assistance to strengthen the rule of law, build up other democratic institutions and work with civil society. “Electoral assistance,” Annan wrote to the Assembly, “should be undertaken in the context of governance with programmes in the two areas increasingly developed and implemented together.”³¹⁰ To this end, the UNSG convened regular meetings of senior officials from nineteen UN

³¹⁰ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections* (A/52/474). October 16, 1997.

agencies—including electoral assistance—to coordinate ‘governance’ activities.³¹¹ This group recommended that NAMs consider how electoral assistance could be tied to other governance assistance. At UNDP headquarters, the Management and Administrative Services and Electoral Assistance became part of a new Democratic Governance Group. Meanwhile, UNDP Resident Coordinators developed country-program plans that linked governance to democratization.

Third, the UN could expand technical assistance despite the EAD’s weak financial position. The US (and to a lesser extent other advanced democracies) was skeptical of large-scale UN peace operations and preferred that Annan trim the bureaucracy and the budget. The UNSG and EAD had to accept that funding for electoral assistance would take place on a case-by-case basis—discretionary funds would be limited. The Trust Fund dropped from \$1.5m in 1994 to \$1.3m when Annan took office to \$750,000 by September, 1999. States had also earmarked the bulk of these funds for specific projects, leaving little to expand the UN’s institutional capacity. Technical assistance was useful because it was easier to find donors, funded on a case-by-case basis, and by 2002, the UNDP’s Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund (DGTTF) had raised \$15.3m for over ninety projects.³¹²

Technical assistance also required few staff and could be contracted out to experts or other UN agencies. In turn, the small and overextended EAD staff was not required to implement projects—something they often did with coordination and support or follow and report missions. With technical assistance, the division of responsibilities between

³¹¹ ECOSOC. *Note by United Nations Secretary General: In-Depth Evaluation of the Electoral Assistance Programme E/AC.51/1999/3* March 13, 1999.

³¹² UNDP (2005), “Report on Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund,” Retrieved from <http://www.pogar.org/publications/other/undp/governance/dgg/dem-gov-brochure-e.pdf>.

the EAD and the UNDP was clear; the EAD organized a needs assessment mission (with UNDP input), recommended a particular project for approval, and stepped aside while UNDP implemented the project.

Thus, technical assistance allowed the UNDP and EAD to collaborate with each other and with external organizations to identify and share ‘best practices.’ In 1998, the two agencies joined seven others to establish the African Election Administrators (ACE). The EAD also help set up the Cost of Elections project to provide “comprehensive information and analysis on technical alternatives.”³¹³ The ACE included both a repository for expert advice and a database of electoral models and practices. A year later, the EAD and UNDP convened a group of electoral experts to create the Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections curriculum—a professional development curriculum for electoral administrators.

Fourth, UN officials also found technical assistance accommodated an organizational culture that prized impartiality and technocracy. Technical assistance insulated officials from ‘political’ tasks like assessing elections, and it expanded activities like advising and training governments and civil society. These activities could be framed as a problem solving exercise whereby experts drew on “a series of techniques for optimizing institutional arrangements” (Zannotti, 2008, 690). In other words, UN officials were offering expertise. This framing reached new proportions when the UNSG labeled the longstanding electoral operation in Tajikistan as “technical observation.” Since the early 1990s, the UN had been mandated to observe elections as part of the UN Observation

³¹³ Two NGOs, the International Foundation of Electoral Systems (IFES) and International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) were also founding partners.

Mission in Tajikistan (UNMOT). By the late 1990s, however, the OSCE was doing most of the observing while UN “technical observers” submitted “technical reports that provided clear guidance for future improvement of the electoral process.”

Finally, technical assistance was consistent with the fashionable concept of good governance. Technical assistance, like good governance, emphasized building up democratic institutions. This focus gave UN electoral assistance more credibility in democratization and development circles. More important, it changed what activities could be counted as ‘democracy assistance.’ Annan argued that members were too preoccupied with elections to appreciate how other UN projects improved government efficiency, decentralization, and the rule of law. As a result, member states undercounted UN democracy assistance.

Despite some setbacks, these reforms were largely successful and member states applauded this combination of talk and action. As an internal UNDP report concluded, Annan’s new approach is “transcending the organization’s previously narrow focus on electoral democracy.” For instance, “country offices are increasingly adopting a holistic approach to electoral assistance, where high profile support for elections serves as a key entry point to strengthening the institutions of democratic governance.”³¹⁴ These changes helped the UNSG carve out a solid position in the competitive market for technical assistance—a market member states including the US had encouraged him to enter.

³¹⁴ Economic and Social Council (1999), “Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of political affairs: electoral assistance.” E/AC.51/1999/2/Add.1, March 29.

6.0 Conclusion

Electoral assistance had undergone significant reform by the end of Annan's first term. For the first time since 1992, talk and action had converged around the view that the UN was most effective when focusing on democratic institutions. This was a modest approach; one that received less attention than observing Nicaraguan elections or calling for an *Agenda for Democratization*. Nonetheless, the UN was able to satisfy powerful democratic donor states like the US and democratizing states trying to consolidate democratic gains. Technical assistance projects—from training electoral administrators to assistance drafting electoral laws—gave the UN a stake in the electoral process, not just on the day the country held an election. It also ensured that the UNSG had much to say about what the UN was doing, what it planned to do, and why it was doing it. For the UNSG, the alignment of talk and action served another purpose. After telling states the UN was committed to democratization, the UNSG's credibility would be seriously weakened if the UN was supporting predictably fraudulent elections. Alignment preempted such accusations and increase member support for a more modest and technically-driven democracy assistance program.

Conclusion

1.0 The Causes and Consequences of Disparate Talk and Action

Observers and analysts of organizations have found that disparate talk and action is a ubiquitous feature of organizational life. More recently, scholars have investigated its causes and concluded that disparate talk and action is an understandable response to irreconcilable member conflicts. Ideally, the membership, the leadership, and the bureaucracy could agree on a course of action. However, in practice different groups want the organization to do radically different things. If so, saying one thing and doing another is the ‘least bad’ option because it allows the organization to muddle through.

This dissertation has investigated the causes and consequences of disparate democracy talk and action by the UNSG. It found that member state conflicts caused disparities. In 1989, democratizing states in Central America insisted that the UN observe elections in deeply divided countries, while China and other authoritarian states insisted that observing elections required excessive interference in a state’s domestic affairs. The UNSG responded by doing one thing saying another. He observed elections in a number of democratizing states, while reassuring the opposition that these missions were exceptional.

This dissertation also found that scholars have overlooked a key source of member state conflict. Disparate talk and action was produced when the preferences of a powerful member changes—the US in the case of UN democracy promotion. US-UN relations fluctuated, and the policies adopted by the US when relations were good conflicted with the policies adopted by the US when relations soured. Good relations brought the

expansion of UN mandates and the appointment of an outspoken UN leader, while deteriorating relations led to funding and mandate cuts without replacing the UN leader. Specifically, in 1992, the US successfully pushed for a UNSG that would trumpet democratization and expand of electoral assistance. However, US-UN relations deteriorated in 1994, and the US reduced funding for electoral assistance. As a result, there was a reduction in electoral assistance without a corresponding reduction in the UNSG's democracy talk.

This disparate talk and action was risky, and democratic members, particularly the US, pressured the UNSG to align talk and action. Very few states accepted disparate talk and action, and those who did, did so temporarily. Most states insisted that the UNSG back action with talk and talk with action. This insistence was not because the disparity is hypocrisy and hypocrisy was immoral. Instead, I found evidence for two strategically-grounded explanations: *Talk without action* facilitated state hypocrisy by legitimizing fraudulent elections and *action without talk* would have signaled that the UNSG was not committed to democratization.

Talk without action led UN officials to worry about accusations that the UN was facilitating and legitimizing state hypocrisy. This risk emerged when Boutros-Ghali talked up action that reinforced an *inaccurate* belief that the UNSG was still observing elections, when in fact UN officials following a given election were prohibited from publicly discussing its fairness. Pseudo-democratic leaders exploited this inaccurate belief. They invited the UNSG to observe their elections, knowing that the UNSG would likely send a handful of non-observers that Western audiences would confuse for

observers. As such, pseudo-democrats used the invitation as evidence that they intended to hold free and fair, internationally-observed elections. These developments concerned UN electoral assistance officials, and they pressed the UNSG to correct this inaccurate belief before Western audiences accused the UN of undermining official international observers and legitimizing fraudulent elections.

Second, *action without talk* raised doubts about the UNSG's commitment to UN action. The group of states that valued UN electoral assistance also wanted the UNSG to champion it. To this group of states, the UNSG's democracy talk was 'costly talk' because the UNSG risked losing support from states like China who opposed UN democracy promotion. In other words, this group expected Boutros-Ghali to talk up democratization as a costly signal that he was committed to democratization—a signal that the less committed Perez de Cuellar would not send. This signal reassured the group that he shared their interests, and he would take more action if they delegated him more authority, made more requests, and gave him more resources. To this end, Boutros-Ghali weakened US opposition to his candidacy by making democratization a key theme of his 1991 campaign for UNSG.

The dissertation also contains two secondary findings that are tentative because the research design does not directly investigate the theoretical claims. First, disparate talk and action did not always reduce the UN's effectiveness as an electoral assistance provider. The conventional wisdom suggests that organized hypocrisy should hinder UN effectiveness because talk is a substitute for action. However, this dissertation showed that a disparity could facilitate action. Early electoral observation missions in Nicaragua

and Haiti were possible precisely because the UNSG interpreted and framed them as exceptions that would not be repeated in the future. As exceptions, these missions were more acceptable to sovereignty-sensitive states and a skeptical US.

An additional finding is that UN officials were sensitive to pressure from powerful states. UN electoral assistance officials tried to align talk and action *before* the UN was accused of facilitating state hypocrisy. Indeed, they were more sensitive to pressure than Boutros-Ghali. UN officials worried that the UN would be accused of undermining democratic transitions unless the UNSG clarified that he no longer observed elections. They pressed the UNSG to moderate the democracy talk, end follow and report missions, and stress to audiences that UN electoral assistance had moved to technical assistance. Moreover, they kept pressing the UNSG until the disparity was eliminated.

2.0 Recent Developments in UN Democracy Promotion

These findings can help us understand more recent developments in UN democracy promotion. Since 2001, the UN has gradually moved from modest talk and action to action without talk. At the start of Kofi Annan's second term, there was no disparity between democracy talk and democracy action. The Department of Political Affairs emphasized that, "electoral observation, once a core activity in early UN support, is now rare, and technical assistance has grown exponentially."³¹⁵ Likewise, Annan reminded the Assembly that, "technical assistance was being provided in numerous countries to improve their electoral processes — work that is less visible but no less

³¹⁵ See United Nations Department of Political Affairs. (2011). "Electoral Assistance." Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/undpa/main/issues/elections/overview.html>

important.”³¹⁶ These actions contributed to the consolidation of democracy and the advancement of ‘good governance.’ This was not just talk. The EAD regularly offered logistical support, advisory services, and other technical assistance to democratizing states. In return, advanced democracies agreed to fund these technical projects and undemocratic states did not oppose them.³¹⁷

However, the Council started to carve out exceptions in the mid-2000s. In 2003, the Council gave the UNSG the complicated, politically-sensitive, and costly task of organizing voter registration in post-conflict Afghanistan.³¹⁸ Afghanistan was only the beginning. Over the next two years, the Council instructed the UNSG to organize the Iraqi Electoral Commission, added electoral supervision to the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (UNMIH), and tasked the UNSG with verifying all stages of the 2005 elections in Cote D’Ivoire.³¹⁹

Annan cautioned against these actions. He told that Council that the security environment in Afghanistan impeded the UN from registering voters. He also insisted that electoral verification in Cote D’Ivoire be “an exceptional measure,” and reminded

³¹⁶ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization* (A/60/431). October 14, 2005.

³¹⁷ For example, the Security Council authorized substantial technical assistance for Sierra Leone, Congo, Burundi and Liberia. UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization* (A/60/431). October 14, 2005; UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization* (A/58/212). August 4, 2003.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization* (A/60/431). October 14, 2005; UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization* (A/62/293). August 23, 2007.

the membership that “the United Nations has not been called upon to ‘verify’ an electoral process of such magnitude since the [1993] elections in Mozambique.”³²⁰

At first, this cautionary talk seemed counterproductive. In 2006, the UN helped organize Iraqi elections, and 8.4 million Iraqis exercised their vote after decades of dictatorship, a recent invasion, and an ongoing insurgency. When the polls closed, US officials praised the UN. The President even singled out the UN Electoral Assistance Division and its head Carina Perelli in his State of the Union.³²¹

However, in 2009, the UNSG was asked to assist with presidential elections in Afghanistan. The Council mandated UN officials to provide technical assistance and collect evidence of voter fraud on behalf of national authorities. After the elections, the UN was accused of withholding evidence of voter fraud, being indifferent to vote rigging, and conferring the UN’s legitimacy on a corrupt regime. The International Crisis Group alleged that UN actions gave cover to an unpopular president, Hamid Karzai.³²² Likewise, the former US Ambassador, Peter Galbraith, condemned UN officials for facilitating fraudulent elections. In the press, he argued that the head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Kai Eide, was “too close” to the incumbent and withholding evidence of voter fraud was a deliberate decision to protect

³²⁰ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization* (A/60/431). October 14, 2005.

³²¹ Column Lynch, 2005, “Report Cites Mismanagement in U.N. Elections Office,” *Washington Post*, March 31.

³²² (2009) “Afghanistan: Elections and the Crisis of Governance,” *International Crisis Group Policy Briefing* 96, November 25

Karzai.³²³ In response, Eide stressed that the UN lacked the authority to judge the elections or publicize evidence of fraud in the absence of a request from the national authorities.³²⁴

A second controversy emerged shortly thereafter. As Eide packed his boxes, the Council mandated Annan's successor, Ban Ki-moon, to support Sudanese elections in 2010 and 2011. This mandate dated back to 2005 when the Sudanese government and southern rebels signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The agreement hinged on two elections: A national election in April 2010 and a referendum on southern secession in January 2011. The organizational challenges were formidable. The International Criminal Court had issued an arrest warrant for Sudan's president—the very same president expected to implement the CPA. In Darfur, elections took place against the backdrop of a recent genocide and a surge in violence. Finally, many electoral issues, including the make-up of two electoral commissions, were not addressed in the CPA. When the electoral commissions were eventually established, they faced intra-commission mistrust, a short electoral timeline, a large swath of territory, and a weak infrastructure.³²⁵

³²³ Colum Lynch, (2009) —Top U.N. envoy in Afghanistan to step down in March, *Washington Post* December 12; Richard Oppel Jr. (2009) "U.N. Afghan Mission Chief to Resign," *The New York Times*, December 11.

³²⁴ Lynch, 2009. UNSC, *Resolution to Extend UNAMA Mission S/2008/1806*, October 31, 2009.

³²⁵ "UNMIS Press Conference." *UN Mission in Sudan*. 2010 Retrieved from <http://unmis.unmissions.org/Portals/UNMIS/2009Docs/Elections%20press%20conference%20-%20Transcript%20-%205%20August%202009.pdf>; Colum Lynch (2010) "Sudan elections put U.N., U.S. in an awkward spot." *Foreign Policy*, March 23. Retrieved from http://turtlebay.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/03/23/sudan_elections_put_un_us_in_an_awkward_spot#commentsspace?sms_ss=email; "UN official voices hope for peaceful Sudanese polls." *United Nations Department of Public Information*. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=33869&Cr=sudan&Cr1=>

Foreseeing these challenges, Annan had persuaded the Council to initially limit the UN mandate to technical assistance. Since 1996, over one hundred UN officials have distributed election materials, trained political parties and civil society groups, and advised the National Electoral Commission.³⁶² Furthermore, Council expectations started to creep up as the 2010 national election approached. In particular, the Council wanted the UNSG to publicly oppose calls to delay the election. At first, UN electoral officials resisted this pressure and tried to moderate expectations. The UN's chief electoral officer reminded reporters to: "highlight the word *support*—UNMIS is here to *support* the process—and that the responsibility for planning, organizing, and conducting these elections rests with the Sudanese authority established for that purpose."³⁶³ Six months later, he reiterated that, "UNMIS does not have a role in observing or monitoring the polls, which falls to international and domestic observers."³⁶⁴

In the end, however, Ban Ki-moon did intervene to push elections along. Weeks before the polls opened, his SRSG publicly recommended against delay despite complaints of electoral fraud. Likewise, the UNSG rushed to his bully pulpit to welcome the election results, and he appointed a three-member electoral observation panel for the subsequent referendum. This talk and action met with approval from most members. In many policy circles, even imperfect elections moved Sudan closer to the referendum and prevented the CPA from completely unraveling. Yet, democracy activists were more critical and argued that the UNSG was helping return an alleged war criminal to power and legitimize elections where "basic freedoms are not guaranteed, press censorship remains in place, and government continues to control radio and television."³⁶⁵

4.0 The Way Forward

In the future, it will be tempting for the UNSG to keep talking up democratization and agreeing to large electoral missions. For example, Ban Ki-moon (2010) has told UN officials that, among other things, the UN supports “election observation and monitoring processes.” Major electoral missions in post-conflict states are an appealing way to grab headlines and shine a light on the current work and future trajectory of the organization. They may also secure more human and financial resources. Even Annan recognized that such missions occasionally generated lucrative opportunities: The first Iraq mission improved frayed US-UN relations, and the US created a UN Democracy Fund to fund technical projects carried out by UN and non-UN agencies.³²⁶

Yet this approach could be misguided in the medium to long-term. High levels of talk and action are hard to sustain given the transitory preferences of the Council. As UN officials learned under Boutros-Ghali, the members can stop authorizing major electoral missions for any number of reasons. Alternatively, UN electoral assistance may become ‘too successful.’ The Council could give the UNSG increasingly complicated missions without providing additional resources. As early as 2005, Annan warned member states, “We continue to risk becoming the victims of our own success. Effectiveness increases demand, but the latter is not followed by a concomitant increase in resources to maintain that effectiveness.”³²⁷

³²⁶United Nations. “UN Democracy Fund.” Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/democracyfund/>

³²⁷ UNGA. *Report of the Secretary-General on Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization* (A/60/431). October 14, 2005.

To pre-empt this problem, this dissertation suggests that we need to rethink the current propensity to ask more of UN democracy promotion. At some point, the UNSG should persuade states to let the UN move away from observing and organizing elections. States should listen. They should not dismiss the messenger or seek to replace him (or her) in favor of someone who will tell them what they want to hear. This dissertation suggests that UN democracy promotion works best when it combines modest talk and modest action. The UNSG should continue to provide technical assistance at the request of states. At the same time, he should stress that the UN plays a supporting not leading role in international efforts to promote democracy. Such a combination is useful for three reasons. First, it reinforces the emerging international right to democratic governance while reaffirming domestic ownership of the democratization process. Second, technical assistance plays to the UN's strength of technocracy. Finally, technical assistance is more self-sustaining because it is easier to secure funding and state requests.

This lesson can be applied beyond the limited realm of democracy promotion. The UNSG can faithfully serve some values better than others. Talk and action should play to the UN's core strengths: Its universal membership, technocracy and its impartiality. In areas where there is a political consensus, the UN should talk and act forcefully. Where there is no political consensus, the membership should accept moderate talk and action. If member states ask for more, the result is likely to be disparate talk and action. And disparate talk and action is risky for the UN, even where *action* is politically infeasible and *silence* is morally undesirable. In some extreme instances—like speaking out against atrocities—it is absolutely worthwhile for the UNSG to take such risks. Yet, in most instances, talk without action may do more harm than good as it risks the UN's

legitimacy by sending unwelcome signals, facilitating state hypocrisy, and making the UNSG seem ineffective.

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