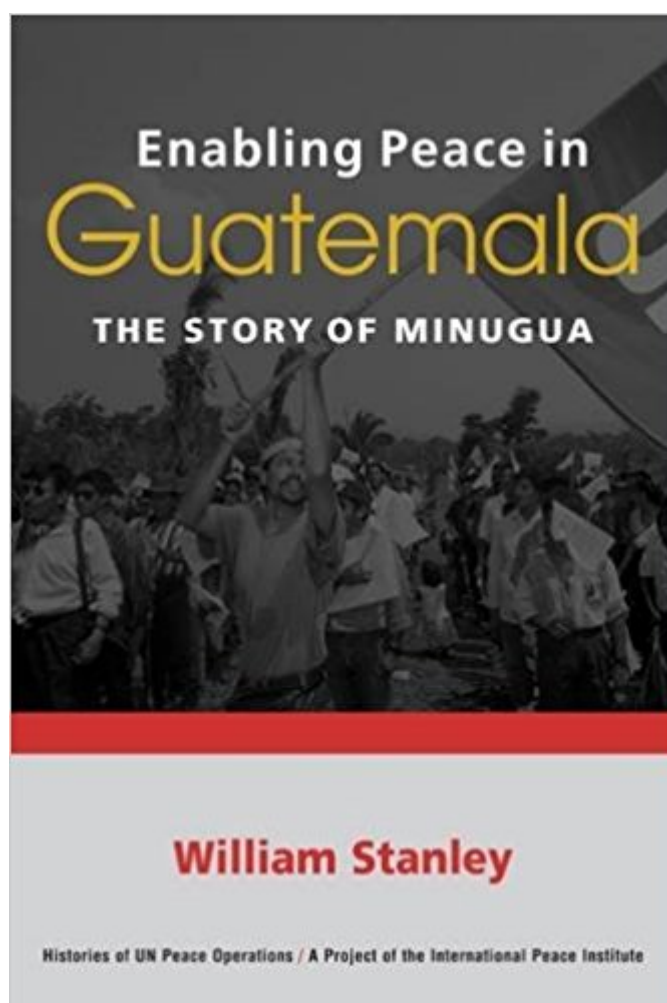


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Enabling Peace In Guatemala: The Story Of MINUGUA (Histories Of Un Peace Operations)



Synopsis

William Stanley tells the absorbing story of the UN peace operation in Guatemala's ten-year endeavor (1994-2004) to build conditions that would sustain a lasting peace in the country. Unusual among UN peace efforts because of its largely civilian nature, its General Assembly mandate, and its heavy reliance on UN volunteers to staff field offices, the mission (MINUGUA) focused initially on human rights. Beginning in 1997, however, its scope expanded to include verification of the full range of peace accords designed to end nearly four decades of civil war between the government and the revolutionary insurgency. MINUGUA faced a challenging political context. The government that signed the peace accords proved unable or unwilling to implement them, and the progress of successive governments was modest at best. The mission also grappled with uncooperative political elites and persistent state corruption, organized crime, and social inequality. Stanley chronicles a series of strategic and sometimes experimental choices from the UN's point of view and provides a cautionary tale about the limits of international benevolence.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

An astonishingly outspoken book on the history of MINUGUA.... The author is very accurate and detailed, and never loses sight of the general context of the complicated peace process.... Written with sympathy for the mission but maintaining the necessary distance to be able to evaluate and criticise. It is the kind of publication that the UN and the bilateral donor community really need[s].

(Dirk Kruijt European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies) One of the major strengths of this work is that it not only tells for the first time the detailed story, as billed, of UN involvement in Guatemala ... but it also provides the reader with a necessary understanding of the complexities of Guatemalan politics.... The book makes a valuable contribution to the political history of Guatemala during these tumultuous transitional years. (Philip Chrimes International Affairs)

William Stanley is professor of political science at the University of New Mexico. His publications include The Protection Racket State: Elite Politics, Military Extortion, and Civil War in El Salvador.

This is a fascinating political history of the United Nations peace operation in Guatemala. MINUGUA came to Guatemala in 1992 when the army-guerrilla confrontation had the sorry distinction of being the last civil war in Central America. Bill Stanley's analysis shows that the peace accords signed four years later were not inevitable. Continuing the war served the interests of both army commanders and guerrilla commandantes because it was the only way they could claim to represent the Guatemalan people. The 1996 accords were brokered thanks only to sustained pressure from Guatemalan public opinion, the European Union, and the United States. By focusing on MINUGUA and its archives, of which he is obviously a master, Stanley sometimes goes along with MINUGUA's errors of judgement on particular cases in which vying conspirators threw up thick smokescreens. But he provides much that is new to me on the bargaining strategies of the different parties involved and, following the accords, the obstructionism of the Alvaro Arzú administration. In terms of ending the shooting war between soldiers and guerrillas, the peace accords were a big success and MINUGUA shared the honors. Other accords did not fare as well and, although mainly the fault of feuding Guatemalan power brokers, MINUGUA shared in the disgrace.

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