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While the US Government has made progress in incorporating the “3Ds” of security--Diplomacy, Development and Defense--this approach has been limited to intra-government relations and has excluded civil society. Most of the interactions between the military and civil society are limited to military contractors. Relations between civil society and military are often fraught with challenges that occur because each sees the other as an obstacle to their goals. However, civil society and the military have many reasons to work together despite challenges.

The work of peacebuilding NGOs often intersects military interests and activities, especially where it is concerned with the driving factors of conflict, countering extremism, holding dialogues, etc. Local civil society often runs into military agendas when addressing human rights, governance, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding. In Iraq and Afghanistan, international and local NGOs have sought more engagement with the military, but have lacked the means to develop these relationships. The military has a need for civil society as well. Local leaders and International NGOs have human access in places where the military does not. Local buy-in to military and NGO programs alike is essential for project success. Civil Society often has expertise that the military lacks and that the civilian government lacks the man power to share. The road to greater military and civil society engagement will be difficult, but may be necessary.

This forum was based on the [Civil Society-Military Roadmap on Human Security](#) published by 3D Security.

**Problems Building Partnerships**

“State building” often refers to the approaches by which the US government looks at state structure in Iraq and Afghanistan. This state-to-state approach fails to include a role for civil society. The World Bank defines participatory governance as requiring a citizen-oriented state, with an active civil society, aspects that a state-to-state approach cannot incorporate.

This problem is compounded by different approaches to security. Governments look to national security while civil society focuses on human security. This is emphasized in tensions between government desires for quick impact approaches to win hearts in minds and accomplish state goals rather than for long term humanitarian projects implemented for human security purposes.

Beyond differences between the military and civil society, there are many different civil societies and there is no one representative of civil society, be it international NGOs or local organizations in a particular country. For this reason it is difficult to organize civil society and develop a structural partnership with the military. These relationships need to be built before conflict escalates because once there is not enough time to do so in an emergency situation.

Building a common purpose will require a greater level of trust. This trust could be built through education programs that bring civil society and military personnel together.

### **Consent of the Local Population and Operational Legitimacy**

Civil society wants to be involved in operational planning rather than act as implementers of government designed programs. The government and the military need to engage with local civil society for legitimacy.

Every project depends on a specific region, village, or population where it is being implemented. The opinions and feelings of the people in a given village are essential to the success of any program. Without local consent, an operation—be it military or NGO—will fail because it lacks legitimacy.

In Afghanistan, development projects have met violent resistance. Afghans were not consulted during the US Military drafting of the National Development Plan. It was not even written in their language. This creates buy-in problems across the board, not just from the Taliban.

The military needs to listen to local civil society and understand what their issues are. This is a matter of communication and human access. There is a real need to create lines of communication. The United States' DOD has a list of Muslim leaders on whom they can call. Embassies need lists for civil society members they can contact when appropriate. These channels of communication need to be created abroad. Civil society needs to be a part of project planning, not just implementation. Human access is critical. The military can storm a beach, but if soldiers don't have access when they knock on a door, they are severely limited in modern conflicts. Civil society has the human access that the military does not.

### **Human Security**

The US military is expanding its National Security Strategy to incorporate the idea of 3Ds, but the gap in language between civil society's concept of human security and the language in the National Security Strategy continues to be a problem. Moving forward, civil society and the military will need to find a common language.

True security should focus on prevention and the creation of an enduring framework rather than just stability. Such a framework will foster human security and people's ability to determine their own lives. As this concept is incorporated into military doctrine, the need for interaction with civil society will become clearer.

The US government currently takes a siloed approach to diplomacy, defense, and security. Government agencies and civil society defend their own spaces and definitions rather than working together. 3Ds (diplomacy, development, defense) tend to refer to the three separate departments within the US government that were designed to perform each discreet role: the Department of State, USAID, and DOD. However, breaking each aspect down to organizational constructs means being wedded to organizational equities. This creates a budget problem. The military has an enormous budget, but USAID has the expertise in development. The challenge is how to get the right blend of capabilities to converge on a problem. The answer will need to transcend the barriers between government entities and the divide with civil society. Currently, the military is missing the opportunities to do the right things or is doing the wrong things because those are the only things it *can* do.

There needs to be a fundamental shift from the 20<sup>th</sup> century concept of kinetic warfare to a 21<sup>st</sup> century concept of conflict enterprises. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, armies fought armies, but in the 21<sup>st</sup> century's modern conflict there are many stake holders, military and civilian, with a vested interest in continuing the conflict and drawing in civilians, transnational corporations, and criminal organizations. Dealing with this kind of conflict requires a new security narrative tied to the concept of Human Security. This is a unique challenge facing the military today and it will require new partnerships with civil society to overcome it.

### **Vanishing Humanitarian Space**

Many NGOs worry that when they work with the military or when the military works on development projects, the line between NGO and military operations blurs and humanitarian space is lost. NGOs worry that this vanishing humanitarian space is their protection when working in war zones and dangerous places and, as the lines between civilians and the military blur, they will lose their perceived neutrality.

However, the blurriness between military and civilians has always existed. In the last 150 years these distinctions were more distinct, but that is changing. The idea of a neutral space outside of politics and the coercion is false. The world has never been so tidy that armies and nations are clearly marked as different from civilians. The blurry lines between states, armed forces, militants who use force, civilians who might take up arms to defend themselves and corporations are not new and they are changing again. This shrinking of humanitarian space needs to be acknowledged. There is no neutral space, but there are moral and immoral choices. In these complicated situations the military and humanitarian organizations need to make choices that are messy and unsatisfying.

The blurriness between military and civilians creates real problems of role confusion, coordination, and real danger to human lives. These problems are not going away. NGOs need to focus less on lamenting the vanishing of humanitarian space and more on how to deal with it. They need to focus on core values and build on those to develop coordination mechanisms.

Beyond the blurriness of distinctions, the military is fulfilling much of the role that was once preserved for civilians. DOD delivers huge amounts of aid in Iraq and Afghanistan, but it is often not effective. DOD knows it is not the expert on development. The military is asked to do things for which it does not have the experience or expertise. However, the US Government has gone so far in deconstructing and defunding State and USAID that these agencies no longer have the capacity to perform the tasks that DOD now carries out. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has been a vocal supporter of increased support for the Department of State, and USAID. However, Congress has not allowed refunding and rebuilding of civilian agencies and the constraints of the current economy do not help. Generals are requesting civilian assistance but the Department of State does not have the manpower to provide it. Rebuilding civilian agencies are a long term project. The short term challenge is to deal with the budgetary restrictions and find ways for civilian agencies and civil society to work with the military to build human security.

### **War on Terror and Humanitarian Space**

The War on Terror has created a real and different limitation on important humanitarian spaces that needs to be addressed. Laws developed in the War on Terror prevent NGOs from engaging with any organization that has been labeled as a “terrorist organization.” This makes negotiations very difficult as it does not make sense to engage only with groups that are already peaceful actors. Real negotiations need to engage with those who are perpetuating violence. This is a place where civil society has a special role because of the personal relationships that exist between rebel or terrorist groups and civilians who may be their friends and families.

### **Neutrality**

NGOs make a mistake in imagining that their actions have a neutral effect. Aid to refugees can increase their status above locals. Hiring locals as drivers creates haves and have nots. For example, when Cordaid works in Pakistan as a Catholic organization it may perceive itself as providing relief aid, but the religious dynamic creates an obvious point of tension. NGOs need to acknowledge that they have an impact that is never neutral. It is necessary for NGOs and all actors to take care to explain themselves and work within local situations with local partners.

NGOs can be neutral in respect to governments and they can work closely with local population, establishing neutrality towards larger organizations outside of that community. However, being unaligned is different from being neutral. An organization can be non-affiliated, but cannot say “we are with the local actors” because there are many kinds of local actors: men, women, religious leaders, etc. Much can be hidden under the cloak of “working with local actors.” What “civil society wants” depends on who is regarded as having legitimacy.



There is no single group called “local actors” and thus no single “civil society” and no *one* human security perspective. These perspectives will depend on the particular individuals consulted. Women’s groups will have a different perspective than religious leaders, but there will also be disagreement within women’s groups and among religious leaders. Individuals have differing opinions and by selecting an individual or a group to represent the will of civil society, players are already not neutral. In this context, the framework of “neutrality” obscures more than it reveals.

Furthermore, in places where there are strong power dynamics, neutrality translates to supporting the status quo, which is not truly neutral and often is not desirable.