Civil Society-Military Roadmap on Human Security

The 3D Security Initiative at Eastern Mennonite University led this Roadmap project, cooperating with the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at University of Notre Dame, the Alliance for Peacebuilding, and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict. Hundreds of civil society organizations and military personnel participated or were consulted in a series of large and small dialogues between civil society organizations and military personnel to gain clarity on the issues and to identify steps to address the tensions in the US. The US Institute of Peace, the US Army War College, the National Defense University, and the International Security Assistance Forces in Afghanistan helped to convene these dialogues.

Overview of Civil Society-Military Relations

The challenges and frustrations of U.S. military efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq stimulate discussion of how U.S. security requires more effective civil military cooperation. Both Secretary of Defense Gates and Secretary of State Clinton call for strengthened civilian capacities. Operationalizing these concepts requires a frank and thorough discussion between military and international and local civil society organizations.

Goal of this Document: This Roadmap provides an orientation to the perceptions, misgivings, opportunities, and tensions between civil society organizations and military actors in conflict-affected regions. The “Agenda for Civil Society-Military Dialogue on Human Security” at the end of this Roadmap details a set of research topics, ideas to address the tensions between groups, and issues for further focused discussion, with the hope that civil society organizations and military leaders will use this Roadmap to identify next steps in addressing their different interests. The Roadmap is a work in progress, and looks for U.S. military leadership to work with civil society to address the agenda.

Lack of Specific Guidance for Civil Society-Military Relations: There are many different types of civil-military relationships. Civilian government, civilian contractors, civil society organizations and the civilian public are very different kinds of “civilians.” The intense challenges of coordinating government civilians with military actors and the increasing use of civilian contractors confuses and overshadows the distinct nature of civil society-military relationships. While a number of civil-military guidelines exist to clarify NGO and military interaction in the context of short-term humanitarian relief, guidance in contexts that go beyond humanitarian relief to development and peacebuilding is missing. Second, existing humanitarian NGO-military guidelines tend to leave out the perspectives of local civil society organizations. Finally, despite high-level endorsement, there is still minimal wider understanding or monitoring of these existing guidelines.

Shared Values: People who join the military or civil society organizations share some similar values. They see themselves as making personal sacrifices to serve the public or a larger principle that puts their own self-interest and security at risk when they put themselves on the front lines.

Shared Context: In countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America, US military personnel along with international security forces are conducting humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities under a new Department of Defense Directive 1 that puts stabilization and reconstruction activities on par with war-fighting. Civil society organizations are working on these same activities in the same areas. Increasingly, military leaders list “building civil society” and “local ownership” in their counterinsurgency and stabilization strategies and seek NGOs as “implementing partners.”

Role of the UN and Civilian Governments: Government policies shape civil society-military relationships. Finding solutions to the issues identified in this Roadmap will require the active leadership of the United Nations, governments, military, and civil society organizations.

**Tensions:** While both military and civil society personnel conduct similar activities, their goals and procedures often differ. NGOs are largely critical of civil-military efforts to do development and peacebuilding. Many NGOs are withdrawing from all contact with military actors. Neither military services nor civil society organizations receive sufficient training on how to approach and conceive of the other. There are increasing tensions between civil society organizations and diverse military actors due to conflicting interests and perceptions and pervasive mutually negative stereotypes.

**Characterizing “Military”**

Civil society organizations often lump all armed actors together as “belligerent forces” or may not distinguish between the local national security police and military personnel and international forces. This is offensive to US military personnel who see important differences.

**Military or armed security forces are diverse.** Military forces in some countries like the US have strict codes of conduct related to human rights and civilian protection. Other military services lack discipline or human rights codes. Rogue military actors can be repressive or corrupt.

**Military forces conduct a wide variety of activities,** from coordinating and delivering humanitarian aid in the midst of natural disasters, to protecting civilians, to waging war.

**Civil-military relations differ according to the local context.** In many countries, civilian governments control the military. In others, the military controls the government. Context, history, as well as each specific mission, shape the quality of civil society-military relations.

**Military Challenges:** U.S. military operations and support for local security forces have been subject to allegations of human rights violations in places like Cambodia, Colombia, Indonesia and Iraq. U.S. military personnel may consider human rights scrutiny offensive but respect for rights standards is mission critical for civil society organizations.

**US military services follow civilian orders.** US military personnel are not always in agreement with US policy makers but are forbidden from speaking about these differences publicly. Military personnel find it frustrating when CSOs blame military actors for a mission they did not choose.

**Congress delegates the US military budget.** Even though many military personnel would like to see more funds going to civilian agencies to do development and diplomacy, the political process in the US makes it difficult for Congress to fund civilian agencies given their need to respond to constituent pressures shaped by the military industrial complex that provides local jobs. Civilian agencies do not have the same number of constituent supporters urging Congress to fund them. The defense industry lobby significantly shapes military spending. Even military leaders point out that this dynamic is sometimes contrary to US security interests.

**Characterizing “Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)”**

Military actors often lump all CSOs together, misunderstand the concept of civil society, or are not aware of CSOs’ long-term work on development and peacebuilding in conflict-affected regions. Some military actors perceive civil society organizations as naïve “tree-huggers” lacking patriotism, as illegitimate or corrupt, and as unwilling to be part of a military-led solution. CSOs may be seen as program implementers of government plans rather than independent bodies capable of offering policy advice. This is offensive to CSOs, many of whom are also on the front lines of conflict and have years of experience in their profession. CSOs do not want military representatives to call them “force multipliers” noting this makes them soft targets for armed groups.

**Civil society organizations (CSOs) are groups of citizens not in government that organize themselves on behalf of some public interest.** CSOs include religious, educational, media, community-based organizations (CBOs), business and trade associations, traditional and indigenous structures, sports associations, musicians, or artists. There is no single representation for civil society’s vast diversity.

**Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are a type of CSO.** There are several types of NGOs: humanitarian, development, human rights, research, environmental and peacebuilding. There are both local NGOs (LNGOs) and international NGOs (INGOs). Many NGOs hold several mandates.
An active local civil society is an indicator of a functioning and democratic state. Civil society both works in partnership with the state to complement and supplement its capacity and to hold the state to account for its responsibilities and transparent governance. “The legitimacy of civil society organizations derives from what they do and not from whom they represent or from any kind of external mandate. In the final analysis, they are what they do. The power of civil society is a soft one. It is their capacity to argue, to propose, to experiment, to denounce, to be exemplary. It is not the power to decide. Such legitimacy is, by definition, a work in progress…”2

CSOs conduct a wide variety of activities including economic development, health, agriculture, human rights, conflict resolution, participatory governance, security sector reform, as well as disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and fostering moderation and coexistence.

CSO challenges include dealing with incapable and corrupt CSOs operating in the midst of legitimate CSOs, maintaining consistent funding despite donors’ shifting priorities, addressing internal democratic principles, evaluating and being accountable for their work, and dealing with growing government repression of civil society around the world via War on Terror legislation that restricts CSO activities. Civil society organizations are often a training ground for effective government leaders while others create parallel structures that some say have the effect of weakening local government capacity. Along with others in the international community, INGOs often hire the country’s best and brightest at salaries higher than local government or local CSOs can afford, which can undermine local capacity and sustainability. While some CSOs do not have trust with local populations, many CSOs are widely respected. Some CSOs exacerbate conflict and violence, thus requiring a vetting system to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate CSOs.

Internal CSO tensions: Local and international NGOs often differ in their analysis and long-term commitment to the local context. For-profit entities and nonprofit NGOs also conflict over the missions and motivation guiding their work. Local CSO’s strengths lie in their cultural, linguistic, and socio-political knowledge of and long-term commitment to the local context. International CSO’s strengths lie in their technical knowledge, capacity building, comparative experience across contexts, and access to advocate to international policy makers.

“Humanitarian space” refers to NGO’s ability to pursue their missions independently, with freedom of movement and without fear of attack. The term does not refer to physical space.

CSO humanitarian principles help ensure CSO access to and security with local populations who view them as humanitarians, not military agents. Not all CSOs follow these principles. CSOs that do development and peacebuilding work lose their neutrality as they begin to support national development and peace strategies. However, these CSOs continue to make program decisions independently, serve populations impartially, and follow other guiding principles. These CSOs fall on a spectrum of those wanting complete neutrality and to collaborate when shared goals exist.

**CSO Humanitarian & Guiding Principles**

**Humanitarian Imperative:** to save lives, alleviate suffering, and uphold dignity.

**Independence:** to make decisions, program plans, and strategies free from political goals.

**Impartiality:** to provide resources regardless of the identity of those suffering.

**Partial to Human Rights:** to work in support of the human rights of all people.

**Neutrality:** to not take sides in political or military struggles.

**Do no harm:** to avoid harming others intentionally or unintentionally.

**Accountability:** to consult and be accountable to local people and long-term sustainability.

**Respect for rights:** to ensure that local populations are able to exercise their human rights.

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Key Tensions: Human Security and National Security

In conflict-affected regions, key tensions and differences between CSOs and US military and government center on how they define and pursue security. All actors see the need for stability and security. But when asked “stability for whom and for what purpose?” their perceptions diverge.

**Human Security Defined:** Human security emphasizes the safety of individuals and communities around the world. Human security includes civilian protection, fostering stable, citizen-oriented legitimate governments with participatory democracy, human rights, human development and peacebuilding. It requires a locally led, bottom-up approach including civil society and local government that works, when necessary, with civilian-led, legitimate, multilateral actors.3

**National Security Defined:** National security traditionally prioritizes political and economic interests of the state deemed central to the nation’s survival or way of life. There is a lack of clarity on US national interests and what happens when US values in freedom, human rights and democracy conflict with US economic and geopolitical interests.

**Merging Threats:** National security and human security paradigms are merging as transnational threats from natural disasters, diseases, and trafficking of humans, weapons, extremist groups, and drugs increase. While “national security” drives military interventions, threats to “human security” challenge both military and CSO missions. CSOs want military services to focus on population-centric security and argue that national security and human security need not contradict. With wider consultation, the two approaches could better complement each other.

**Military personnel contribute to a comprehensive approach to human security** when they are sensitive to inter-group dynamics, use conflict management skills with local populations, provide logistical support to reconciliation efforts such as transporting tribal elders to a dialogue, and when the military responds directly to stop mass atrocity.

**Legitimacy and Consent:** Both local and international CSOs question the legitimacy of security missions, national or international, when military forces act without the consent of local populations, and when no legally enforceable mechanism exists to hold forces accountable to legitimate local political decision-making bodies. CSOs cite a long legacy of military forces acting against the interest of local citizens to achieve access to resources or geo-political gains. Greater consultation with CSOs could help achieve greater legitimacy, consent and collaboration.

**Enemy Centric vs. Population Centric “Do No Harm”** The US government gives military services the authority to use both kinetic (violent) and non-kinetic (nonviolent) measures to detect, deter and destroy an enemy. US military actions are subject to international laws such as the Geneva Convention that include provisions to do the least amount of harm and reduce civilian casualties. Counterinsurgency emphasizes population-centric security, focusing on the safety of local citizens. Many CSOs focus exclusively on human security and make explicit commitments to ‘do no harm’. Civilian casualties and human rights violations increase CSO-military tensions.

**Control vs. Empowerment** Current US counterinsurgency guidance identifies empowering local populations to interact effectively with their own government as key.4 Residual military references to more widespread “population control and pacification” as well as the metaphor of “human terrain” raise suspicions, misunderstandings or confusion of military objectives. While CSOs and military articulate the goal of “local ownership,” both struggle to operationalize it.

**Short-term vs. Long-term Time Horizon** US policies direct military actors to focus on short-term, quick-impact relief and development efforts to reduce immediate national security threats. CSOs generally take a long-term, relationship-based approach. CSOs claim that these different time horizons more often undermine rather than complement each other.

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Civil Society & the Comprehensive Approach

A comprehensive approach, according to US military stability operations doctrine, integrates cooperative efforts of the departments and agencies of the United States Government, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, multinational partners, and private sector entities such as CSOs to achieve unity of effort toward a shared goal. A whole of society approach recognizes the key roles civil society plays in building security from the ground up.

Governments and military forces look for cooperation with CSOs. The NATO CIMIC policy states “The immediate purpose of CIMIC is to establish and maintain the full co-operation of the NATO commander and the civilian authorities, organizations, agencies and population within a commander’s area of operations in order to allow him to fulfill his mission.”

CSOs integrate cooperative efforts of the departments and agencies of the United States Government, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, multinational partners, and private sector entities such as CSOs to achieve unity of effort toward a shared goal. A whole of society approach recognizes the key roles civil society plays in building security from the ground up.

A whole of society approach to countering extremism and terrorism by conducting conflict assessments, providing aid, development, and de-radicalization to vulnerable groups, helping reconcile divided groups, and fostering participatory governance and security sector reform. A comprehensive approach that respects the independent roles of civil society is most likely to enable their contributions to stability and security.

Any “comprehensive approach” or “unity of effort” requires unity of understanding and unity of mission. Local CSOs often complain that international actors do not take the time to consult with local civil society to discuss local social, political and economic factors. They balk at military “human terrain teams” and complain that the “we know best” attitude ignores democratic principles and the will and capacity of local CSOs to provide cultural advice. Military actors on the other hand, may wish to consult CSOs, but have no way of identifying whom they should consult. Underfunded and understaffed USAID offices are also often not aware of local NGO capacity.

CSOs see communication, not integration, as necessary for a comprehensive approach. Many CSOs resist terms that name them as “force multipliers” or requests for them to “coordinate” with a mission and strategy perceived as different from their own. However many CSOs do recognize the benefits of policy dialogue and “communication” with government and military actors. Yet few consultation structures exist to engage with those CSOs willing to provide policy advice, share conflict assessments, or to discuss overlapping human security goals.

CSOs can maintain their principles while sharing their insights into conflict assessment and possible solutions

CSOs do not want to be implementing partners in the final COIN “Build” stage, for example, when they have had no part in shaping the mission

Government Conflict Assessment

Government Planning

Implementation: eg COIN's Shape, Clear, Hold, Build

Shared Understanding

Shared Mission

Unity of Effort


Types of and Mechanisms for Civil Society-Military Relations

A spectrum of civil-military relationships exists at the operational level. The type of CSO-military relationship depends on whether missions align or there is sufficient humanitarian space for CSOs to maintain their principles. The first category, “curtail presence” refers to situations such as the height of the Iraq war when civil society-military relations disappear when it becomes impossible for CSOs to operate in the same space as armed actors because of a lack of security and humanitarian space. The second category represents the situation in Afghanistan today, where there is minimal contact or communication between representative CSOs and military actors.

| Curtail Presence | Where it becomes impossible for CSOs to operate safely, international CSOs may pull out and local CSOs may go into hiding |
| Communication | Where CSOs, government and military operate in the same space but their missions do not align, only basic communication on logistical details takes place. |
| Coordination | Where CSOs, government and military missions partially align, there may be some basic coordination by command or by consensus. |
| Collaboration | Where CSOs, government and military missions partially or fully align, there may be collaboration on joint projects, particularly in oversight of SSR and DDR. |

CSO-military communication happens informally and formally. Where there is no coordinating body, groups coordinate informally when working in the same area, or groups coordinate via “Heineken diplomacy” as individual people build relationships in informal settings. **Coordination by command** refers to some type of government (CMOC or Civil Military Operations Center) or international coordinating agency (UN OCHA) that has legitimacy over other organizations either through formal authority or through the rewards for being coordinated (e.g. funding) or the punishments for not following commands (e.g. denial of access to certain areas or refugee camps) or both. Given CSO humanitarian principles of independence, coordination by command has not worked in places like Afghanistan, Haiti or Rwanda. More often, there is minimal **coordination by consensus** when a recognized coordination body facilitates and builds consensus among diverse actors. Coordination by consensus requires decentralized decision making as groups come to understand different points of view and activities, and learn how to work in ways that complement rather than conflict. Many if not most people tasked with coordination have no training in facilitation or consensus building.

**Examples of Coordination and Collaboration Models**

**In Rwanda**, the United Nations Rwanda Emergency Office (UNREO) successfully led this type of coordination by consensus. Co-leaders from UN and NGO backgrounds were able to facilitate participatory style of meetings in a neutral location separate from UN military offices.

**In Ghana**, CSOs, government, and security forces coordinate rapid response to potential violence through a “National Architecture for Peace,” which emphasizes finding local solutions through mediation teams deployed by joint committees. During the 2008 elections civil society leaders mediated between political candidates and worked with the media to deescalate impending violence, staving off election-related violence.

**In the Philippines**, Filipino military leaders attended training at a civil society-led peacebuilding institute on negotiation, mediation and peace processes. Following this, military leaders asked for a special peacebuilding training program for thousands of military personnel. CSO-military relationships developed in this training context led to ongoing exchange of communication favorable to the interests of both civil society and military actors.

**In Thailand**, civil society worked with the military to write the national security policy for the southern border provinces from 1999 to 2003. The process of developing this strategy together changed how top military leaders saw their role in supporting a human security agenda.

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In Afghanistan, the US State Department and International Security Assistance Forces in Afghanistan have a staff person with the title “NGO Liaison.” The ISAF NGO Liaison helped build momentum around a successful CSO pilot police program to improve SSR and police-community relations. Other Afghan NGOs are playing essential DDR roles in reintegration and reconciliation.

In the US, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties consults with a group of approximately 20 Arab, Muslim, Sikh, South Asian, and Somali community leaders. DHS draws on this group for crisis rapid response phone consultations, broader community consultations to identify concerns and brainstorm solutions, and to develop DHS cultural competency.

An Agenda for Civil Society-Military Dialogue on Human Security

This Roadmap project seeks high-level leadership from the US military, State Department, USAID, Administration, and Congress to create and participate in problem-solving forums, identify needed research, address dilemmas and tensions, and create interest-based solutions on these 10 issues.

RESEARCH

1. **The Relationship between “Security” and “Development”** A wide array of research demonstrates an association between low levels of development and the likelihood of violent conflict. Yet the underlying assumption that development contributes to security is not yet proven. CSO efforts in war zones over many decades have often had little impact on conflict dynamics. Research suggests that harnessing development programs for counterinsurgency goals is often counterproductive, endangering and undermining long-term development and peacebuilding, wasting development funds, and inadvertently fueling both corruption and insurgency. Local CSOs ask: “Do they think we’re stupid?” suggesting that local people tend to see through simplistic hearts and minds programs. Military personnel, on the other hand, cite specific positive outcomes from their development and peacebuilding activities, such as gaining access to communities or facilitating reconciliation between tribes. What shared research could illuminate further the complex relationship between development and security and if and how development contributes to either short term stabilization or longer term human security?

2. **Integration vs Humanitarian Space** The comprehensive approach assumes development must be integrated with security efforts. Is this assumption based on research? Can development better contribute to both national and human security goals when it is free from short-term political and security imperatives as CSOs suggest? Is it possible to design effective short-term development programming that contributes toward long-term goals? What are the real benefits of the integration model to security, the costs of this model to humanitarian space, and the alternatives to the existing civil military “integration” model?

3. **The Relationship between Military Development Efforts and NGO Insecurity** The number of NGO personnel targeted and killed each year is increasing. Many assume shrinking humanitarian space and blurred lines between integrated military and civilian actors are making NGOs the “soft targets” or front lines of the military forces. Military personnel question this assumption, pointing to the increased attacks by insurgents against all kinds of civilians. Military actors ask: Where is the research documenting the direct relationship between military development efforts and threats to NGO security?

OPERATIONAL MECHANISMS

4. **Mechanisms for Multi-stakeholder Consultations:** CSOs, civilian government, and military personnel do not have adequate forums for information exchange, monitoring of civil-military...
guidelines or general discussion of issues related to conflict assessment, planning, and implementation. This Roadmap detailed a range of civil society-military structures. Which mechanisms could provide a space for CSOs to share conflict assessments, advise on policy options, or address field-level issues with the US government and military?

5. **Mechanisms for Funding CSOs** The Department of Defense administers up to 25% of US development assistance. The US Commanders Emergency Response Fund and the Provincial Reconstruction Teams ask CSOs to implement development programs with military funding. This places some CSOs in a dilemma of balancing their need for resources with humanitarian principles, which they perceive as essential to their security and access to local populations. Many CSOs will only accept funds from civilian donor agencies that allow CSOs to independently identify program plans through impartial needs assessments. What alternative funding mechanisms - such as channeling development dollars through Embassy development offices, national governments, or international donor pools - could best address this dilemma?

6. **Development of Shared Standards** CSOs, governments, and military actors engaged in development all share similar challenges of fostering local ownership, accountability, and monitoring what is working and what is not. Development programs can foster corruption and unintentionally legitimate unpopular local leaders and armed groups. Could shared standards help to build civil-military transparency on program effectiveness, cost, and sustainability?

7. **Comparative Advantage** The 2010 UN CIMIC Policy calls for military actors to support the creation of “an enabling environment ... maximizing the comparative advantage of all actors operating in the mission area.” CSOs want military actors to focus on population-centric security, not development. CSOs and military actors generally agree that civilian agencies do not yet have the capacity to address all the development and peacebuilding needs in complex conflict settings. CSOs believe there is no quick military fix to this problem, as development assistance is not an “add-on” skill, but requires extensive expertise to be effective and to avoid negative impacts. What can CSOs and military officials do together with Congress to create an institutional plan and funding mechanisms to address the lack of civilian capacity?

**TRAINING**

8. **“Do No Harm” Training for Military** Despite decades of development expertise, even many CSO development projects still fail to address causes of poverty and do more to fuel local conflict than mitigate it. Development and peacebuilding CSOs have undergone extensive training in a “Do No Harm” methodology to avoid negative impacts of their work.10 Would it be possible to develop a “Do No Harm” training for the US military?

9. **Training on CSO-Military Relations** Both CSOs and military suffer from a lack of training and capacity for managing their interactions. What curricula and training opportunities could assist both CSOs and military to advance their understanding of the issues outlined in this Roadmap?

**DIALOGUE**

10. **Broader Research and Dialogue on Human Security** Addressing the tensions between CSOs and military actors in the US requires a dialogue including Congress, the Administration and civilian agencies, the international community, as well as the many for-profit contractors who also work on security and development. How does the US balance its own national interests when they conflict with broader global human security? How does the US define national interest without the distracting influence of those motivated by profit or power? Could a whole of society dialogue process examine the nature of national security and global human security?

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