

Memorandum on Civil-Military Relations:  
*Cultural Understanding and Institutional Change*

**As the scope and responsibility of the U.S. government changes, so too should the relationship between civilian and military actors.**

No single agency or institution currently has the resources to solve present or future problems on its own. As we move into the future and anticipate further cooperation and collusion between the two spheres of personnel, we must define a clear mission to minimize the challenges of cooperation. Historical precedents make it evident that cultural and institutional paradigms have perpetuated the disunity in civil-military relations. The manner in which we perceive one another and the goals we wish to achieve in the future of this relationship are essential to success. As the 9/11 Commission reports,

“The U.S. government has access to a vast amount of information. But it has a weak system for processing and using what it has. The system of ‘need to know’ should be replaced by a system of ‘need to share’.”

Soldiers, the State, IGOs and NGOs should utilize a system in which these institutions will work together to ensure that stability operations, natural disaster, and humanitarian relief will occur efficiently and effectively.

**IMMEDIATE GOALS**

As a result of our discussions in the roundtable on civil-military relations at SCUSA 60, we have identified the following short-term objectives:

- Utilize existing and create new networks to increase civil-military interactions by:
  - a) Expanding the Alliance Linking Leaders in Education and the Services (ALLIES), an undergraduate-led initiative dedicated to bettering civil-military relations through joint education, joint training, and relationship building.
  - b) Bringing distinguished speakers in the civil service and the military to campuses to foster better understanding.
- Initiate a public-private information technology project aimed at streamlining open-source information sharing among NGOs, the military, and government agencies. This system would be designed to:
  - a) Allow NGOs to share information among each other on regional and operational capacity.
  - b) Be used as an information sharing tool by NGOs, the military, and civilian agencies.
  - c) Provide daily briefings regarding the security situation on the ground.
  - d) Be easy to use, low cost, and accessible to the general public.
- Promote cultural understanding through joint civil-military ventures such as inter campus semester exchanges and internships in civilian government agencies for cadets and midshipmen.

## **RESTRUCTURING INSTITUTIONAL INTERACTIONS**

We recognize that grassroots initiatives should also be concurrent with broader institutional policy changes, while maintaining the cultural integrity of both civilian and military organizations. To that end, we recommend:

- Expanding the precedent of the Goldwater Nichols Defense Reorganization Act to both civil and military agencies in the government, by requiring joint department experience for civilian and military organizations.

## **SOLUTIONS FOR TACTICAL CHALLENGES**

It is important for the military to interact with local actors and NGOs in situations of humanitarian crises and state building, while at the same time maintaining the independence of these organizations. In order to bridge this operational gap, we propose two new mechanisms to better facilitate cooperation between local actors, the military, and civilian government agencies.

- Establish US embassy-affiliated liaison offices on the ground to enable:
  - a) Sharing of information about NGOs with the military to give a clearer battlespace picture.
  - b) NGOs to contact liaison offices on their activities, and in return the liaison offices to provide security briefings about threats on the ground.
  - c) NGOs to maintain their autonomy and serve as an intermediary to solve possible disputes between the military, civilian agencies, and NGOs.
- Using the Provincial Reconstruction Team model to enable cooperation among the military and civilian agencies in areas of operations.

## **IDENTIFYING OBSTACLES**

Convincing civilian and military institutions of the necessity of these changes remains our biggest challenge. The problems therein lie in creating incentives for cooperation as well as ensuring that appropriate funds are allocated. We recommend the following as possible ways to tackle these obstacles:

- Inter-agency experience is made a prerequisite for career advancements, especially within government agencies.
- Monetary incentives for inter-agency civil-military cooperation.
- OMB and Congress prioritization of budgetary appropriations for interagency cooperation.
- Fund for the Office of Personnel Management, to encourage inter-departmental personnel exchanges.

Each participant in a civil-military partnership must have clear lines of command and communication. Furthermore, they must recognize that this responsibility is situation-dependent and could fall to either civilian or military command. Thus, we recommend developing a flexible framework for determining which agency will take the lead in a given situation, recognizing that both civilian and military actors can function in active and support roles.