

## **Discussion Questions for May 19 Policy Dialogue on Mapping the Security Environment**

The data in the new Tufts report suggests that international security agendas increasingly dictate the terms of outside engagement in insecure settings. It also suggests that local communities are not seized with distinctions about whether their security is enhanced by peace support operations or by assistance agencies, as long as it is enhanced.

1. When responses to human need are driven by security concerns rather than by the severity of human need, cardinal principles of humanitarian action are imperiled. What, if anything, can be done to infuse security-driven decision-making with a greater respect for human need?
2. The report notes that “the short attention span of the international community itself constitutes as security hazard.” To what extent should this be accepted as a given, or can alternatives be devised that would ensure more durable international commitments to a given country over time?
3. Discussions in donor agency and military hqs often draw distinctions between the provision of assistance by military and civilian institutions, establish hard-and-fast boundaries to separate relief from reconstruction, specify exit strategies with such precision as to delay entrance onto the scene. To what extent are international agencies able to be guided by the dynamic realities in-theatre, where a “creative blurring” of the categories imposed on reality by international actors may be essential?

The report notes that relationships between PSO forces and AAs have become less ideologically polarized and more pragmatic: it is now accepted as a given that the two sets of players will have to interact. Yet tensions remain as to how one set of players conceptualizes security and the role of the other, and also as to the degree of interaction that is advisable or desirable.

4. PSOs and AAs each employ the language of “security” to establish and pursue their respective objectives. But to what extent are their objectives and modus operandi mutually consistent or compatible?
5. Some international actors, whether AAs or PSOs, are more flexible and adaptable in accommodating changes in the security environment. What are their respective comparative advantages? Should governments factor such considerations into policy choices of which kinds of agencies to fund? Would it be fair to say that, as a group, PSOs have a better track record of post-Cold War adaptation than AAs?
6. Different aid agencies have different understandings of security and different approaches to promoting it. One of the case studies notes that some NGOs seek security by blending into local communities, while other actors highlight their international persona. Is it possible to generalize about which approaches to security are most conducive to success?

An assumption behind the latest study was that if PSOs and AAs were more diligent in listening to and analyzing the views of local communities, they would be more effective in reaching their objectives. The reality suggested by the data is more complex in that local communities may not share international agendas. Communities by and large have holistic views of issues, including security, while PSOs and AAs have narrower, more institutionally driven approaches. The degree of PSO/AA interest in the perspectives of communities also varies considerably; their objectives are more a function of what they have (protection, material aid) than what may be actually needed in the circumstances.

7. What might be the best ways of encouraging approaches by outsiders more in sync with community needs? What are the comparative advantages of PSOs and AAs in working with communities? Is there scope for more interaction between the PSOs and AAs in assessing the views and perspectives of communities?
8. Most humanitarian and development agencies are fully committed, at least in theory, to enhancing local capacity. In actual practice, however, many local communities are not consulted by outside actors, whether in the design, conduct, or evaluation of activities. There is also data that suggests that were such consultations held, outside actors might not be in a position to provide what local communities requested. Is there any point in encouraging greater consultativeness if the international menu offers standard and lackluster entries?