



**Non-Governmental  
Public Action  
Programme**

## **Preliminary Research Findings Brief**

The 'Global War on Terror', Non-Governmental Public Action and Aid'.

### **Project aims, objectives, methods**

The overall aim of the research is to analyse the politics of aid policy and practice as it relates to the support of civil society in the changing context of the global war against terror. The specific objectives are:

- i) to describe and analyse the effects of the global war on terror on aid policy and practice as it relates to supporting non-governmental public action around poverty, rights and social justice in aid-recipient countries. By focussing on the cases of Afghanistan, Kenya and India the research will yield detailed, new material about the effects of the war against terror on non-governmental public action in different political contexts and shifts in aid policy and practice around supporting civil society.
- ii) To advance theoretical work on the politics of civil society and development, and more specifically of the complex processes whereby global politics, international security and international aid policy intertwine with national politics and the shaping of local civil societies.
- iii) To contribute towards the development of practical strategies and policies for non-governmental organisations to pursue their activities effectively in the context of a global war on terror.

The research uses a multi-method approach, including a critical review of relevant academic and grey literatures, content analysis of policy documentation, country case-studies of Afghanistan, India and Kenya, and semi-structured interviews with donor and aid agency officials, civil society activists, human rights defenders, and religious leaders and networks. The research will be primarily qualitative as the research questions demand in-depth investigation that draws out the contours, nuances and details of complex political processes.

## Key research findings

The securitisation of aid has intensified in the aftermath of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks and the declaration of the global war on terror:

- This has led to an increasing convergence between security and development goals, objectives, institutions, discourses and actors. This in turn has led to an increasing concern with national security at the expense of human security.
- The securitisation of aid has reinforced a growing trend amongst donors towards state-building and governance processes. This has involved the positioning of civil society actors foremost as deliverers of services, supporting an otherwise minimal state. This, in turn, has implications for the notion of civil society as an independent realm.
- The argument of non-governmental humanitarian organisations that intensifying civil-military ties in the persecution of the war on terror have led to an erosion of humanitarian space has not withstood the clearly political stance of many organisations in practice.
- The global war on terror has cast suspicion over civil society as a potential terrain for terrorist organising, with knock-on effects on aid programming on civil society and the types of groups that are supported.

The response of civil societies to the introduction of new counter-terrorism structures has been muted:

- Human rights defenders, Muslim organisations and civil liberties groups have led the challenge against the introduction of counter-terrorism measures and laws in different political contexts.
- Marginalised groups, dissident and opposition groups have been the primary subjects of the application of counter-terrorist measures
- With few notable exceptions, 'mainstream' civil society has failed to respond to new pressures and threats in the post-9/11 regulatory context.
- The responses of non-governmental actors in different political contexts to the establishment of post-9/11 counter-terrorism regimes shows that civil society is a site of power relations and inequality, in contrast to dominant frameworks of civil society and popular assumptions that civil society is a realm of harmony and equality.

## Policy and practice implications

- The global war on terror has intensified the merging of boundaries between development and humanitarianism as well as between civil and military actors.
- The fine distinctions that aid actors may wish to make between civil and military, humanitarian and political, governmental and non-governmental, are very difficult to maintain and establish in the first place.
- Civil society is part of the politics of aid and the dynamics of conflicts in which they operate and seek to work on and within.
- Thus, civil society needs to better define its own roles and positions in relation to shifting politics and the models of state building promoted through development aid, security assistance and diplomatic ties.
- This includes undertaking more thorough analysis of conflicts and political tensions.
- The effective efforts of the few organisations and groups that have taken up the challenge of documenting and exposing government counter-terrorism practices shows there is scope for civil society to organise more determinedly and coherently around new and emerging counter-terrorism measures, laws and security practices.
- There is a need to revisit understandings of what is implied conventionally by the term 'civil society' and the placement of Muslim actors and groups within this.
- There needs to be a renewed effort to establish the primacy of human security over national security.

## Key publications and outputs

Howell, Jude and Lind, Jeremy. In preparation. *Civil society, security and aid post-9/11*.

'Civil society, security and development aid in eastern Africa since 2001.' Briefing report of a workshop organised by the Centre for Civil Society. December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Nairobi, Kenya.

'Humanitarian aid and independence: do no harm?' Briefing report of a roundtable organised by Medicines Sans Frontieres and the Centre for Civil Society. November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007. London School of Economics.

'Aid, security and civil society in the post-911 context.' Briefing report of an international workshop organised by the Centre for Civil Society. June 28-29<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Goodenough College, London.

'Civil society and the securitisation of aid in Europe.' Briefing report from a roundtable organised by the Centre for Civil Society. November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2006. Goodenough College, London.

'The Global War on Terror, Development and Civil Society', Journal of International Development, 18, pp 121-135, 2006

## For further information

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