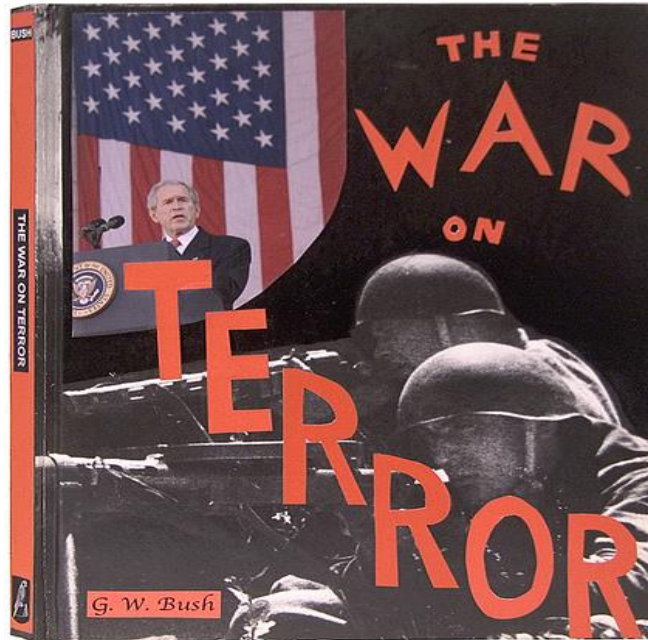# The Securitisation of NGOs post-9/11

Securitisation of NGOs

"We can address directly three of the most dangerous sources of terrorist finance – the abuse of charities, the abuse of money service businesses and the abuse of financial transactions. We know that many charities and donors have been and are being exploited by terrorists."

Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer, October 2006.

Securitisation of NGOs

"And I want you to know…that I am serious about making sure we have the best relationship with the NGOs who are such a force multiplier for us, such an important part of our combat team"

Colin Powell, Remarks to the National Policy Conference for Leaders of NGOs, October 2001, Washington, D.C.

Securitisation of NGOs

`*[T]here is probably no success in this area that can happen without civil society. So many of the societies we need to engage in,*

it's the NGOS that have the ground knowledge which is vital important. ..

We need to confront the political social and economic conditions that our enemies exploit to win over the new recruits…'

Ambassador Daniel Benjamin, State Department's Co-ordinator for Counter-terrorism, January 2010.

3 Key Arguments

- Development NGOs have become a `second-order associated threat' requiring extra-ordinary measures

- Securitising an issue involves not only negative, repressive measures but also positive, inclusionary measures

- Strategies of containment and engagement evoke a spectrum of responses from NGOs

State-development NGO relations

- 3 periods of relations:

  Cold War period

  Post-Cold War period

  Post-9/11

During all three periods a strategy of containment and engagement of development NGOs has been deployed by security and development institutions

Australian Colombo Plan for Economic and Technical Co-operation

Engagement of NGOs in Vietnam and anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan

Post-Cold War Era

- The 1990s – the Golden Decade for NGOs
- Politics of embrace
- Role of NGOs extended into conflict prevention work, security sector reform, transitional justice
- But doubts emerging by the end of the 1990s about the strategy of working with development NGOs

Development NGOs post-9/11

- War on Terror launched
- Shadow of suspicion and mistrust cast over development NGOs
- NGOs become associated as second-order threat in struggle against terrorism
- NGOs once again positioned as subjects of surveillance and as adjutants in co-producing security and development

Institutionalising second-order threat of development NGOs

Key ways of institutionalising this strategy of bifurcation:

- Discursive

- Extra-ordinary legal and regulatory measures

- `hearts and minds work'

- Anti-radicalisation work

"War on Terror", civil society and aid: security at whose cost?

- The then Secretary of State for International Development, Rt Hon Hilary Benn, stated: *"In recent years, DFID has begun to bring security into the heart of its thinking and practice. But we need to do more"*

- *Prime Minister Tony Blair, "it is absurd to choose between an agenda focusing on terrorism and one on global poverty" (DFID 2005:3*).

Marrying development, defence and aid

"There are three legs to the stool of American foreign policy: defense, diplomacy, and development. And we are responsible for two of the three legs. And we will make clear, as we go forward, that diplomacy and development are essential tools in achieving the long-term objectives of the United States."

H.Clinton, 2009

"War on Terror", civil society and aid: security at whose cost?

"Indeed, it is a measure of the holistic manner in which strategic issues are now understood in Australia that an AusAID representative would be invited to address a 'Defence and Security' forum on a topic of this kind. It was not too long ago that aid and development lay firmly on the periphery of serious considerations of Australia's security and strategic interests. Aid was often regarded as a somewhat ill-defined process of 'doing-good', a process which had little tangible impact on the strategic environment faced by Australia and its policy makers. These times are now over."

(Bruce Davis, AusAID, speech to Australian Strategic Institute, 2005)

Extra-ordinary measures

Extra-ordinary legal and regulatory measures:

- Lists of terrorist organisations
- Patriot Act - `material support' clause
- FATF Special Recommendation VIII
- Anti-terrorism certificates and partner-vetting

The problem of the `material support' phrase

"Under OFAC's [Treasury] most recently issued regulations for Somalia...you can't in fact build a well for water for a drought-stricken area because someone from Al-Shabab might draw a cup of water from that well. That would be material support"

(Ellen Willmott, attorney with Save the Children Fund)

Institutionalising second-order threat of development NGOs

- `hearts and minds' work, PRTs, development projects

- Anti-radicalisation work, community-based projects and programmes

UK and soft measures

"We will not win the battle against this global extremism, unless we win it at the level of values as much as force".

Tony Blair, August 2006, World Affairs Council, Los Angeles.

Hearts and Minds:
Building schools in Afghanistan

Hearts and minds

'If you look at the engagement of donors with Muslim civil society, it is greater now (2007) than it was before and this is because of 9/11. You don't see us engaging to this extent with Hindu groups, or Buddhist groups, for instance. We wouldn't engage with Muslim groups as we are doing if there wasn't a problem of Islamic extremism" – UK government official

Hearts and minds

Why do we really want to engage with Muslim communities? It is because of the threat of terrorism.

- (EU official, Nairobi)

"Military and development."

The presence of military actors in the provision of humanitarian assistance endangers our relationship with communities. Military personnel providing relief blurs the lines since communities are not able to differentiate between military and aid agency actors.

(NGO worker, Kabul)

- We were a bit afraid of linking with the PRT. If we bring them to our awareness programmes, people would be afraid and wondering why they are sitting with people with guns.

- (NGO director, Herat)

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CIVIL SOCIETY RESPONSES

- Human rights groups, Muslim groups, human rights activists, anti-war protestors
- Mainstream civil society has been quiescent at first
- But some resistance once mainstream civil society feels the strains – non-compliance and litigation
- Silence of 'mainstream' civil society to targeting of Muslim organisations – raises questions concerning impacts of government funding on civil society's independence and willingness to speak out
- But also emergence of new NGOs monitoring counter-terrorism effects

Challenges for Civil Society Actors

- How to maintain principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence as humanitarian actors become harnessed into military agendas
- How to maintain trust of partners when under pressure to comply with security requirements – e.g. partner vetting and Anti-Terrorist certification
- How to foster solidarity amongst civil society actors that are being positioned differently by the state
- How to engage with security agendas in a way that does not compromise priorities, values and independence
- What to do with the scaffolding of measures targeting development NGOs?