

Engaging Intelligence Agencies in Supporting Sustainable Peace and Development in Failed States

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Relations between the peace community and official intelligence agencies have never been great. Sometimes they are awful. Natural antipathies can get worse in war zones, where peace activists are generally interested in ending the conflict while intelligence agencies are focused on winning it. Nevertheless there is room for real progress if a common ground can be established that enables collaboration on constructive goals. The emergence of “failed states” as an exceptional national security problem has opened a window of opportunity for cultivating that kind of constructive collaboration. One of the most central objectives should be infusing the concept of sustainable development as a national security goal throughout the ‘thinking organs’ of the nation-states, their intelligence agencies. This correlates internationally with the progressive strategy of some local police forces called “community policing.”

I have spent over twenty years sponsoring various kinds of collaborative education involving peace and military groups, and in recent years intelligence agencies. It is a delicate business, because not ALL differences of worldview and goals are bridgeable. But when the right people are involved, and the topics are truly within the domain of shared goals, many good results can be obtained including one ultimate goal of cultivating military officers and intelligence analysts who genuinely understand and share some of the peace movement’s longer term and generally more global goals.

One example is a panel I am sponsoring next spring at the annual International Studies Association conference in Montreal, Canada. That includes three representatives of a Human Security project headquartered at the University of Hiroshima, Japan, and three representatives of National Security institutions, specifically West Point, the Defense Intelligence Agency and Britain’s Joint Military Intelligence College. The most general difference between those two terms, “Human Security” and “National Security” is the time frame involved (longer versus shorter) and the domain of concern (broader versus more narrow).

If accepted, the paper I would present on this topic would elaborate more fully the predictable problems of such endeavors, solutions that have worked in the past, and the manifold benefits for both peace activists and military or intelligence professionals of such collaborations. In addition to getting some rare but real opportunities to influence both worldview and operations on the other side, the peace community benefits from more detailed and timely access to inside information on military and IC (intelligence community) thinking about contemporary problems. This also helps in many ways to make our efforts to affect real policies effective.