

Book Reviews

*Exporting Security:
International Engagement,
Security Cooperation, and the
Changing Face of the
U.S. Military*

By **Derek S. Reveron**
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REVIEWED BY SAMUEL A.
WORTHINGTON

In *Exporting Security*, Derek Reveron provides a thorough analysis of the changing security environment within which the U.S. military operates, and throughout the book he makes the case why military strategy and engagement must continue their evolution beyond combat. There is compelling rationale why the face of the U.S. military must change, why the phasing of military operations must include the creation of a stable environment for development efforts, and why different approaches to security cooperation and efforts to promote maritime security are needed to suit 21st-century missions.

Reveron details recent military action within this new security environment that encompasses combat, counterinsurgency

operations, foreign security force training, and foreign development assistance. These actions have changed the face of the U.S. military at times, even without an agreed upon definition of the role the new military should play around the world:

Current views of the security environment require that the United States “address security from a holistic perspective and integrate our efforts across the U.S. government.” But the military has painfully learned that it cannot rely on international organizations, allies, or other government departments to fill the void among national ends, ways, and means. It is accepted in doctrine that civilians should perform civilian tasks, but civilians (NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] included) have limited ability to deploy in sufficient numbers in violent or poorly developed areas of the world. . . . Consequently, the U.S. military has changed to deliver comprehensive solutions through a new model of defense-security cooperation.

Yet from the perspective of the NGO community and, I suspect, many civilians involved in diplomatic and development functions within the U.S. Government, Mr. Reveron takes his case too far.

The framework of the book is based on an expanded definition of security and the concept of exporting security to other realms, from diplomacy to development, that have not traditionally adopted the primacy of a military-defined security frame to shape their strategy and global engagement. While security is

Samuel A. Worthington is President and Chief Executive Officer of InterAction, the largest alliance of U.S.-based international nongovernmental organizations focused on humanitarian assistance, poverty reduction, and sustainable development working in conflict, disaster, and peaceful zones throughout the world.

important, and there is a role for the military to shape a security environment by preventing and preparing the ground during a phase zero of military operations, there are other approaches to U.S. global engagement that are just as valid. Advancing the Millennium Development Goals, promoting economic development, supporting human rights principles, creating democratic institutions, shaping environmentally sustainable growth, or ensuring the space for a diplomatic dialogue are all frames that should shape how the United States engages with the world. While a broader definition of security is part of this list, it is not the overarching frame. Each approach to global engagement has a cadre of professionals within the U.S. Government and public, from diplomats and development experts to environmentalists and human rights activists. The role and importance of these other professions are largely ignored in the book, and the overwhelming resources of the military become the primary reason why the U.S. military must broaden its scope to include, among other skill sets, warrior-diplomats and humanitarian soldiers.

International security has fundamentally shifted twice in the last 20 years, once with the fall of the Berlin Wall and again with the destruction of the World Trade Center. These two occasions, one filled with joy and relief and the other with shock and tragedy, have altered the way diplomacy, foreign and development assistance, and national security are carried out worldwide. Simultaneously, the nature of conflict has been shifting from a framework of interstate aggression to one of intrastate political power struggles and transnational armed networks. All of these complex security and combat shifts need to be reflected in U.S. military strategy.

As a major, if not the primary, global power, the United States has taken the initiative to rapidly adapt its military policy and apply these changes in Iraq, Afghanistan, and throughout Africa. Reveron expertly analyzes this new behavior, which includes maritime security aid in Africa's Gulf of Guinea, security cooperation and training with national armies, and humanitarian assistance under the auspices of regional commands, such as U.S. Africa Command. The community of development-focused NGOs welcomes the U.S. military's involvement in the professionalization of foreign forces. Such activities contribute to respect for civilian rule of law and human rights as well as to the overall stability of the countries receiving the help. These activities prove that the U.S. military has become more than a combat force; it is now also a security trainer, advisor, postwar reconstruction actor, and, if Reveron's ideas are accepted, a diplomat and a development professional. The issue is not whether the face of the military should be altered from active combatant to security advisor to reflect these changes in international security, but where the roles of development actor and diplomat should lie.

Development actors and senior U.S. military personnel in Washington, DC, have noticed the civilian capabilities gap uncovered by the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates highlighted this issue when discussing U.S. civilian agency efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and more specifically the "ad hoc and on the fly" manner in which the interagency Provincial Reconstruction Teams were created, which is untenable in a "climate of crisis." The lack of civilian expertise has created a burden for the U.S. military as it attempts to fill the gap between development needs and capabilities.

These reflections and warnings have not stopped at Secretary Gates's desk, but they have rather reverberated throughout the foreign policy community in Washington. Aid to many frontline states such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan, and Pakistan increased in 2008, but as this aid increased, the responsibilities for oversight shifted to, or have been shared by, the Department of Defense (DOD).¹ This has led DOD to grow into a major development funder at the expense of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which was once the foremost foreign assistance agency in the world. As aid programs have become increasingly fragmented across the U.S. Government, the USAID staff has decreased to less than half the size of 15 years ago. Recent studies by the RAND Corporation and the Government Accountability Office show that the lack of trained and experienced diplomatic staff has resulted in inexperienced U.S. diplomats filling positions in conflict zones instead of seasoned professionals or aid experts. This diminished civilian capacity led the military to take action to fill a perceived vacuum.

The expansion of the military to traditionally civilian activities complicates civilian efforts as well as the foreign perception of the U.S. military. In 2007, Secretary Gates warned of the "creeping militarization" of U.S. diplomacy and development functions, and emerged as a leading advocate for increased civilian-led development funding. This included voicing the need for increased funding for the Department of State and USAID. During the annual Landon Lecture at Kansas State University, Secretary Gates observed that "one of the most important lessons of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is that military success is not sufficient to win." At a later event Gates stated, "America's civilian institutions of

diplomacy and development have been chronically undermanned and underfunded for far too long—relative to what we traditionally spend on the military, and more important, relative to the responsibilities and challenges our nation has around the world."² While Reveron may not agree, it is apparent that U.S. development agencies and senior military staff believe that civilians should be the diplomats and should be taking the lead on U.S. development and humanitarian assistance projects.

It is important, however, to recognize that the U.S. military does have a critical role in humanitarian relief and, to a lesser extent, development efforts. In large-scale natural disaster emergencies, such as the recent Haiti earthquake and in the aftermath of the December 2004 tsunami in Indonesia, the U.S. military often plays a crucial role in disaster response by providing logistical resources, air and marine transport capabilities, and engineering services. Relations and operational norms between the military and NGOs have become increasingly routine in such settings. Beyond this critical role, as a general rule, experienced civilian agencies, especially USAID with its professional development and humanitarian staff, are best placed to support effective development, humanitarian assistance, and reconstruction activities that address the needs of the poor.

While the U.S. military provides tireless assistance in these emergency situations, its involvement in complex humanitarian environments can be deeply problematic. The U.S. military's chief focus is security, so its relief and development activities emphasize winning the "hearts and minds" of a population, not the humanitarian imperative of saving lives, doing no harm, and ensuring local ownership of reconstruction efforts. Moreover, the military

generally lacks specialized humanitarian and development expertise, so quick-impact projects and other activities motivated by security objectives often undermine sustainable development projects, community participation and ownership, and relationships built by the United Nations (UN) and NGO workers over years or decades. Quick-impact projects address the symptoms of development ills such as poverty instead of the causes. This is further complicated when well-intended projects may have negative consequences and may be unsustainable due to the military's short-term goals and high turnover. Relief activities by the military can also compromise the security of U.S. NGOs in or near conflict areas by blurring the lines between humanitarian and military personnel, which can heighten insecurity for NGO staff, local partners, and beneficiaries and restrict access to the communities served.

This diminishing security for humanitarian NGOs is a major factor that shapes the views of the broader NGO humanitarian community and its relationship with an evolving U.S. military. Sadly, humanitarian workers have been directly targeted in armed attacks. Some 260 humanitarian aid workers were killed, kidnapped, or seriously injured in violent attacks in 2008. That year's fatality rate for international aid workers exceeded that for UN peacekeeping troops and the 155 American soldiers killed that year in Afghanistan. Whether it is the direct targeting of NGOs by radical groups or the shrinking of neutral humanitarian space by the U.S. military, the safety of NGO staffs in war zones continues to deteriorate. Aid groups are now being attacked because they are perceived as Western or in partnership with Western governments and militaries, even though the majority of NGO staffs are of local or national origin. NGOs have begun to cooperate with militaries

and private security contractors in order to address these issues.

To establish mutually acceptable boundaries, InterAction and DOD, working through the United States Institute of Peace, negotiated "Guidelines for Relations between U.S. Armed Forces and Non-Governmental Humanitarian Organizations in Hostile or Potentially Hostile Environments."³ The guidelines determine how the military is to work with other stakeholders on the ground, including NGOs and inter-agency colleagues. The publication provides recommended processes to improve the nature of the military-NGO relationship. The recommendations for the military include the wearing of uniforms or distinctive clothing to avoid confusion with NGO representatives, avoidance of interfering with relief efforts toward civilian populations considered unfriendly by the military, and respecting NGO views concerning the carrying of arms in NGO sites. The guidelines' recommendations for NGOs are equally critical and shape the behavior of humanitarian NGOs working in war zones to ensure the U.S. military can conduct its operations effectively. These guidelines have been integrated into U.S. military field manuals⁴ and have facilitated greater cooperation between military and civilian organizations throughout the world.

Even though action is being taken to improve civilian-military relations and to limit humanitarian worker kidnapping, it should not be forgotten that Reveron's vision of warrior-diplomats and development workers exceeds the military's capabilities and core skill set. As Secretary Gates stated, the militarization of U.S. foreign policy and civilian activities is not the solution to underfunded civilian agencies. Allowing the expansion of the U.S. military into civilian sectors will not only continue the understaffing of civilian agencies and

complicate the mission of the military, but it will also contribute to a variety of obstacles, including insecurity, within the development community.

While the U.S. military provides much-needed technical and operational assistance to other nations during military training, humanitarian disasters, and transnational operations, the effectiveness of DOD as a development and diplomatic actor remains very much in question. Even after years of programs in Iraq and Afghanistan, DOD does not appear to have a methodology for measuring the effectiveness of its development, humanitarian, and diplomatic activities. Best practices and sensibilities of the 21st century require that development organizations assess the community's needs for the type and placement of buildings and for goods and services, including education and skill development, prior to taking any action. The military lens is necessarily different and often cannot be the same as the lens through which U.S. civilian aid workers and the NGO community view their tasks. The unfortunate result can be unusable buildings that feed the very "hard" feelings the military's diligent work was intended to transform. The civilian diplomat is similarly shaped by a different skill set and broader orientation to diplomatic relations between states or with nonstate actors. Reveron's argument for changing the nature of military and security in the world is well founded and unavoidable, but the expansion of the military into development and broader diplomatic fields requires skills and flexibility the military does not have, nor are they skills it should develop. Civilian agencies should lead development operations, and Reveron's warrior-diplomats should adopt the more focused roles of ensuring better security cooperation, training peacekeepers, and building armed forces in the developing world that respect rule of law and human rights. As the U.S. military evolves and adapts to the lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan, it must cooperate with and help strengthen the U.S. State Department and USAID to align diplomatic, development, and defense policies and capacity. [PRISM](#)

Notes

¹ The largest increases by far have been for Iraq, which received \$11.2 billion in 2005 and \$4.7 billion in 2006 (including about \$4 billion in debt relief). Aid to Iraq accounted for nearly one-third of all U.S. foreign assistance during those 2 years. Funding for Afghanistan reached \$1.3 billion in 2005 and \$1.4 billion in 2006, making it the second largest recipient of U.S. assistance. See Sheila Herrling and Steven Radelet, "Modernizing U.S. Foreign Assistance for the Twenty-first Century," in *The White House and the World: A Global Development Agenda for the Next U.S. President*, ed. Nancy Birdsall (Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, 2008), available at <www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/16560/>.

² U.S. Global Leadership Campaign Tribute Dinner, July 15, 2008.

³ See <www.interaction.org/document/interaction-us-civilian-military-guidelines-july-2007/>.

⁴ Joint Publication 3-08, *Interagency, Intergovernmental Organization, and Nongovernmental Organization Coordination During Joint Operations*, vol. I; Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*; Army Field Manual 3-07 (new edition forthcoming), *Stability Operations*.