Notes:
Below are informal notes taken by a JHU/APL staff member at the Seminar.

Dr. Narel began his talk by discussing his reservations both about the topic (NGOs and National Power) and about the fact of his talking on the subject since he had never worked for any NGO having spent 26 years in the US Army. His research into NGOs has been done from a military perspective and an informal poll indicated that the audience largely shared his non-NGO perspective. He noted that the question of how NGOs could be used to support American power might be considered inappropriate or even insulting to the NGO community. Dr. Narel stated his intention to provide some background on why an NGO professional might take umbrage at that question.

NGO History

Look to the end of World War II as the start of the current era of NGO history
- The war caused such great emergencies that people saw the need for help from organizations other than governments
- It was recognized that some of these problems would be going on for a long time
- Initially the NGOs addressed primarily relief needs (food, shelter, medical care)
- In the 1980s during the Ethiopian famine people began to ask whether doing only relief work was enough
  - If the fundamental problems were not addressed, then a relief emergency would surely reoccur
  - Some groups began to move beyond relief, into development missions
    - Some NGOs now do development exclusively

People often think first of the large NGOs like the Red Cross working in a hostility zone
- There are hundreds of smaller groups each with its own different focus
- Some NGOs are local to a given area and spring up to handle specific problems
- There were over 800 working in Bosnia at the height of the problems there
  - All handled different problems or different aspects of larger problems
- Originally NGOs concentrated on humanitarian issues
  - Now NGOs may work on human rights, women’s issues, health concerns, etc.
• These groups are not homogeneous
  • They have different views and receive different amounts of respect
• The range of NGOs grew as a response to the fact that big government bureaucracies cannot cover everything
  • Some small groups could do small jobs much better than a large organization that might lose track of small issues, problems
• Funding sources have shifted over time
  • Originally, NGOs were primarily funded by private donations
  • Now more funding comes from foundations and increasingly from governments which may almost use NGOs as contractors for work they cannot do

What makes a humanitarian?
• Humanitarian needs are the focus for most NGOs
• The aim is to alleviate human suffering
  • Basic concept: people should not suffer
  • People’s suffering should be relieved no matter what their beliefs or politics
• Humanitarian core values
  • Neutrality – do not align with either side in a hostility situation
  • Impartiality – it doesn’t matter where the suffering are/what they do/who they agree with
  • Independence – from any government or government policy and from one another
    • Their goals may be common only at the broad level only
    • There can easily be conflicts among care-givers
• Staying true to their core values helped NGOs survive in areas where hostility/combat zones
  • This provided them a level of immunity to violence from either side
  • However, this protection is breaking down
• Other NGO-shared values include compassion, respect for individuals, cultural sensitivity

There is also a need to understand the relationship between the NGOs and their donors
• To survive NGOs must do what their donors are willing to pay for
• Donors may only support certain activities
  • If the NGO does not do those activities, their support is likely to dry up
  • Donors can take their funding to other groups which are willing to do those activities

Today NGOs operate in very complex environments with many organizations including governments and military forces
• NGOs are the only organizations interested in alleviating human suffering specifically and primarily for its own sake
• Others may be also involved in relieving suffering but it is only one of their tasks and not the primary one
  • Militaries and governments would support relief but it is not their main function
• Today relief workers must also bring many skill sets – advanced degrees in a myriad of subjects
• NGOs are also committed to working with locals especially for development issues
  • NGOs believe that development is something you do with local people, not to them
  • This is especially true when building sustainable operations
Complex emergencies having been changing a great deal over the last 25 years

- This is a situation that the military is facing, too
- Previously, NGOs working in conflict areas only faced minor threats to their own security
  - Now the conflicts are more fierce
  - Now there is more hostility toward both civilian populations and aid workers
- The scale of emergencies has increased as well
  - Scale grew as sides in the conflict started using civilian populations as part of the hostilities
  - Hostile forces have gone as far as withholding food from civilian populations as part of their strategies
- There has been as significant decrease in the respect for NGO’s neutrality
  - Now aid workers may be attacked simply for coming from the outside and trying to help

The Evolving Humanitarian Agenda

- NGOs have been getting into more development work since there were so many issues that needed to be addressed
  - Without development the possibility for future emergencies will continue to grow since underlying causes remain
- Going a step further, NGOs are also looking at working for human rights which need to be assured before the elements of development can be covered
  - Development cannot occur in a country where basic human rights are not protected
- Conundrum: the humanitarian evolution (relief to development to human rights) may clash with the core principles of humanitarians (neutrality / impartiality / independence)
  - How can an organization be neutral / impartial if only one hostile side is willing to allow the NGOs to get their projects done?
  - There are now debates within the NGO community about what it means to be a humanitarian

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**Evolving “Humanitarian” Agenda**

**Relief**
- Food
- Water
- Shelter
- Medical
- Sanitation

**Development**
- Economic
- Medical/Health
- Infrastructure
- Security
- Government

**Human Rights**
- Personal Security
- Indiv. Equality
- Due Process
- Social Welfare
- Group Rights
Organizational Culture

- Differences exist between the culture of NGOs and other organizations such as the military or government aid organizations
  - This served as the starting point for Dr. Narel’s research
  - Exactly how do they differ?

- Start with a basic theoretical model of organizational culture (one of many theories)
  - Any organization must respond to two types of challenge
    - Internal – how to organize to do what it is they are supposed to do
    - External – what needs to be done in a marketplace of other similar organizations: must adapt to situations and grow
  - The effort to meet these challenges forms the organizational culture

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**A Theoretical Model of Organizational Culture**

*Part 1*

**The Function of Culture in an Organization**

- **Survival**
- **Adaptation**
- **Growth**

- **Organization**
  - Daily functions
  - Ability to adapt

- **Organization’s Environment**

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- There are three levels of cultural indicators
  - Artifacts – those things which are most easily seen but are not really substantial to the working of the organization (e.g., uniforms and salutes vs. Dockers and handshakes)
  - Espoused Values – what the organization needs to do to be successful, based on its history of successes and failures
  - Basic Underlying Assumptions – how each organization sees itself, its shared views of its missions, etc.
Culture can be defined by shared underlying assumptions that fall into categories about:

- **Space** / **Time** / **Reality and Truth**
- **Human Nature** / **Human Activity** / **Human Relationships**

Organization members generally share the same views on these underlying assumptions:

- Based on the group’s history of success, each decides what is right, what should be done in what ways
- Organization members might be shown that there are other ways of thinking/doing but it would not be “our way” or would not fit the “way we do it”
- Both sides fear failure in their missions if they let the other view prevail

Comparing and contrasting these underlying assumptions can highlight some of the difficulties involved in getting NGOs and the military to work together (see next slide):

- **Space**: The military sees battlespace as something to be controlled
  - NGOs want open humanitarian space so they can go to those who need help
  - People should not suffer just because they are in a specific place
- **Time**: The military wants planning time which is linear and comes with goals
  - Must not waste it
  - Development time: things take as long as they take – can’t predict length
  - Must be culturally sensitive to such issues (e.g., You might need to sit and drink tea with the elders before they will identify what the village needs.)
- **Truth/Reality**: Decisions must be made about who to trust and when to trust them.
  - What is knowledge as opposed to something less certain?
  - High context – the need to get so many doses of vaccine to so many children versus needing to do that but only if it is done by the correct local authorities
  - Requires a sensitivity to local culture
- **Human Nature**: Military view would be that there are bad actors in the world who need to be dealt with to protect others
- Humanitarian view: all people have some worth as a starting point
- Military wants to start with a process that will identify friends from foes

**Human Behavior:** a rather fuzzy concept but central to an organization’s behavior
- One group will choose to be the best at some function
  - A smaller group will recognize that it cannot compete on that level and will choose to look for a more comfortable niche to succeed
- Military assumes that it will be in charge and will do what needs to be done
  - NGOs see that they make a difference but they also realize that they can’t change the world
  - NGOs believe it is more important to get locals involved in a project than to get it done

**Human Relationships:** Involves the degree of power between two entities
- Militaries are primarily autocratic which is appropriate to their mission
  - We can get together and talk about the solution to a problem but the decision will be made at the top and passed down
- NGOs see themselves as coming in to a situation to support others
  - They don’t respond well to autocratic leadership
  - Believe that good ideas can come from any source
  - This is the norm in their environment
  - Development must be done with the people involved – outsiders may be there only as consultants

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### CONTRASTING ASSUMPTIONS

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<th>Military</th>
<th>NGOs</th>
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<td><strong>Space</strong></td>
<td>Battle space</td>
<td>Humanitarian space</td>
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<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td>Planning time</td>
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<td><strong>Truth/Reality</strong></td>
<td>Low Context</td>
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<td><strong>Human Nature</strong></td>
<td>Some people bad (confront threats)</td>
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<td><strong>Human Rltnshps</strong></td>
<td>High power distance</td>
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Working together despite cultural differences
- The military and the NGOs often face the same set of challenges and goals
- Seems that they should be able to collaborate with each other
• NGOs: believe they cannot work with military and still succeed with their goals
• Cooperation should be possible but it has limitations – neither side wants to be locked into it
• In some situations there is an element of “We can’t share with you because you won’t share with us.”
  - NGOs fear that would do harm to their impartiality core value
  - They fear that the information they shared might become intelligence

Stresses on Conflicting Cultures
• Both sides need new ways of thinking
• Military trains for combat operations in areas where everyone but the combatants should be out of the way
  - Now adversaries hide among civilian populations
  - No longer facing only trained combatant forces
  - Situations tend to challenge all six basic assumptions (Space, time, etc.)
  - Military must now learn about development time
• NGOs are also expanding their views on what is involved in their missions
  - Going beyond relief to development and then to human rights
  - Security problems growing – not everyone is a good person
  - More often forced to do work in areas where militaries are working
• Relationships had intransigencies that stopped militaries and NGOs from working together
  - But both may share the same sense of what ultimately needs to be done
  - Basic problem: If we can’t do what we are supposed to do, then we wouldn’t be who we are supposed to be.
  - There was little room to come together but now seeing the need to try
  - Because of the growing size of NGO operations and the need for them, governments are now paying NGOs for their work
    - Allows NGOs to break away from the restrictions placed on them by donors
    - But funding from governments will also come with strings attached
      - Some groups willing to accept those strings with government money
      - They recognize that the governments (especially the US government) is really trying for some of the same goals as the NGOs

QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION

This talk has been more focused on the historical relations of NGOs and the military
• The US military has been making counter-cultural changes lately
• It is possible to make behavioral changes without really changing underlying assumptions
• Currently many assumptions are being challenged
• A willingness to challenge assumptions and to change where necessary is good
  - There has been understandable resistance and caution related to these changes
  - History is still there behind the changes
• NGOs might object to being used to promote American power based on their underlying assumptions

There are wide variations in the degree to which individual NGOs are willing to work with the military or the government
Some are willing to work more closely with the military as military agendas are opening up
  - At the same time they also realize that they may be moving away from their core values and goals to do so
Some would not even consider working with the military or government
Various relationships need to be adjusted

There are no fundamental differences with NGOs working with the military versus their working with other elements of the government
- Given their interests in a focus on humanitarian causes, they won’t be interested in the military or government policies
- If the military/government agency is taking humanitarian actions that further US interests, then it is not really acting as a humanitarian
  - So all such actions are suspect even if they do help a local population
  - Some will reject immediately and some will look more closely

The recent FARC escape plan that used a phony Red Cross helicopter to remove hostages in Columbia is an example of why closer relationships with military or governments worry NGOs
- Such actions put NGO aid workers at risk of being mistrusted by one side or another in hostilities
- Adds suspicions so that some sides will be even less willing to work with those who have come to help them
- NGOs now say – This is why we don’t accept transportation offers – everything must always look “proper” to the outside world

No research was done on the gradation of NGO opinions about working more closely with the military/government
- Used “Top 40” US-based NGOs as study subjects
- NGOs are different than international organizations such as elements of the UN
  - But there are probably more similarities than differences
  - What changes are the levels of independence
  - International organizations are also restricted by their sources of funding

Civilian agencies could possibly perform bridging functions between the military and NGOs
- Some NGO/humanitarian workers would have a basic aversion to the military as a group that studies war and accepts violence as a way to handle problems
- While there may be little philosophical difference between the goals of the military and civilian entities, NGOs might have different reactions to relationship with each group
- Both sides need to work to bridge over these differences
- Underlying assumptions for each group might be a good place for more research
  - State Department and the military have been studied for their different ways of handling situations as they came together to write treaties
  - It would be possible to do ethnographic research on various agencies in the government and find differences in their cultures

NGOs are also very diverse as are different elements of the military
- Compare civil affairs and Special Forces: Same uniform but some basic differences about their underlying assumptions