

and exporter of conventional arms, outlays on the military are not as high (as a percentage of GNP or even of social expenses) as most other countries.

Certainly Brazil is not at war nor risking transborder war engagement for the foreseeable future (the most recent war its military waged was against its own people during a protracted 20-year authoritarian rule). If one could talk about unavoidable priorities in military spending, and if we consider domestic security as part of military spending, the focus in this case could be on modernization and "humanization" of local civilian and military police forces (plagued by extensive incompetence, brutality and corruption), with emphasis on intelligent crime prevention and not brutal and ineffective repression as it is today.

The essential issue to be considered, however, is not one of tit-for-tat in military spending versus development assistance-- it is of social and institutional agents involved in the development process. Recently, most multilateral organizations (from UN agencies to the World Bank) have been increasingly recognizing the importance of seeking alternatives to dealing only with national governments in supporting development programs. Considering civil societies' non-profit, engaged organizations (generally known as NGOs) as partners in aiming for effective change was anathema for most of these international bodies. But today NGOs are called to practically all summit events of the UN (starting with Eco '92 in Rio), and even the World Bank has created NGO liaison offices. NGOs are also invited to participate in the processes leading to UN events, and to help monitor their results-- an unthinkable opening to civil society less than a decade ago.

If a general recommendation could be humbly made, then, it is that, instead of seeking a generalized and simplistic form of pressure to influence reduction in military spending, and without abandoning extensive efforts to effectively reduce these (in particular by reducing arms exports), that donor countries seek to establish and reinforce new, legitimate partnerships away from central governments, and closer to local governments (municipalities) and civil society's organizations. These are much closer to the people in real need (the fundamental beneficiaries of human development) than national governments and the elites who control them.