

**HUMANITARIAN &
DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMME**

THE TEMPTATION FOR CIVIL-MILITARY COOPERATION

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HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS THINK TANK



OVERVIEW

Whilst the cause and effect relationship is yet to be defined, climate change appears to play a part in both the increase and worsening of natural disasters. Relief organisations must therefore respond to the greater need both in terms of assisting populations as well as intervening in progressively difficult operational areas, which requires an increasingly broad range of resources and skills. With this in mind, there are growing numbers of players in the humanitarian sector: non-governmental organisations, international organisations and those in public assistance.

However, civilian players are increasingly confronted with chaotic conditions that require considerable means of intervention. Countries are therefore often forced to call upon the operational capabilities of the armed forces to ensure there is rapid deployment of humanitarian aid, giving rise to Civil-Military Cooperation or CIMIC. Whilst at first glance these combined efforts seem promising, both in terms of the efficiency and speed at which assistance is provided to the population, a number of problems arise from bringing these two communities together.

EFFECTIVENESS OF HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTIONS

The humanitarian sector is populated by actors, specialized in assisting areas and populations in need. The size and diversity of this community has increased significantly in order to respond to the growing number of disasters seen today (Blecken and Hellingrath, 2008, Kovács and Spens, 2010). Hodges (2000) discusses the multi-organisational aspect of disaster response, and wider literature demonstrates the importance of collaboration and coordination amongst relief actors to ensure an effective overall response. Specifically, these relief actors can be divided into two broad categories: civilian actors and military actors.

Civilian Relief Actors

In response to a catastrophic event, three major groups of civilian actors will assemble (Pettit and Beresford 2005, Sheu 2010). The first group consists of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). These may be generalists (e.g. Oxfam or CARE) or actors that are specialised in fields such as medical assistance (e.g. Doctors Without Borders or Doctors of the World), the fight against hunger (e.g. Action Against Hunger) or technical support (e.g. Telecoms Without Borders). The second group consists of international organisations (IOs) such as the United Nations (UN) (e.g. UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the World Food Program (WFP), the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) or the World Health Organization (WHO)), the International Federation of Red Cross Societies (IFRC) and the World Bank. These players have significant financial, human and material resources in order to provide both general and specialised assistance in certain contexts. The third and final group consists of

public organisations such as civil defence organisations or embassies that put crisis management tools in place in order to assist victims.

Meanwhile, other actors who are not directly involved in the relief process also make up part of the civilian relief effort by offering certain humanitarian goods and services in the event of a disaster. There are those, for example, that provide transportation services such as the transport giant TNT - which has a partnership with the WFP - as well as and many other private companies that can provide different goods and emergency services. All of these civilian organisations cooperate with each other to deliver aid in a timely fashion and in high-risk environments.

Involving the Army and Civil-Military Cooperation

The response to catastrophic disasters not only involves provision of humanitarian aid but also carrying out so-called 'support' activities including transport, clearing roads for access or security management. These require capacities that civilian organisations cannot achieve on their own (e.g. NGOs are generally specialised in providing food aid or medical services), either because of insufficient resources or because these activities are beyond their area of expertise. To address the shortcomings of civilian organisations, military forces have expanded their scope of intervention to relief operations (Pettit and Beresford, 2005). The growing contribution of armies has given rise to this concept of civil-military cooperation (henceforth referred to as CIMIC) (Auerbach et al., 2010, Braem 2004, Braga 2010, Gourlay 2000). This rapprochement has become so important that CIMIC is now included in the objectives of the Ministry of the Armed Forces, the United Nations and NATO. From a military point of view, the Ministry of the Armed Forces defines CIMIC as the 'operational function intended to improve the integration of armed forces into the civilian environment of operational theatres. It facilitates the success of military missions, the reestablishment of a normal security and the takeover of the crisis by the civil authorities'. The main CIMIC objectives are therefore to provide support for the Force and the civilian and humanitarian environment. In its MC 411/1 policy, NATO defines CIMIC as the process of coordination and cooperation between NATO and civilian actors, including inhabitants, local authorities and international, national and non-governmental organisations. The United Nations also supports the humanitarian priority of CIMIC, referring to 'humanitarian civil-military coordination' as a framework defined as essential to facilitate dialogue and civil-military collaboration whilst also protecting the vital principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence of humanitarian action.

The idea of the rapprochement between civil actors (particularly NGOs) and the military forces can be seen by analysing major areas of influence specific to these two communities (Roux-Dufort, 2003). First, two main areas of complementarity justify the need for collaboration between these two groups of actors: logistics and security. Secondly, relief actors are known for their flexibility and information, which should facilitate exchange and mutual adaptive mechanisms.

Logistical support and security at the heart of CIMIC

Gourlay (2000), Leaning, Briggs and Chen (1999) and Oloruntoba and Gray (2002a, 2002b) explain that CIMIC collaboration is justified due to the fact that NGOs, and more broadly civil relief actors, often have limited capabilities in two key areas: logistical and operational security. In contrast, military forces are recognised for their exceptional abilities in these two areas (Figure 2).

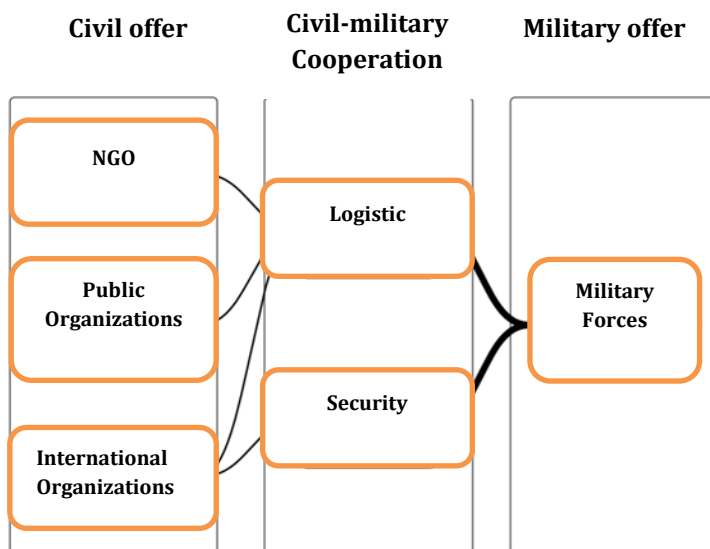


Figure 2. The main collaborative areas in CIMIC. Source: author

First, Pettit and Beresford (2005) explain that the more destructive a disaster is, and the more difficult to access affected populations, the greater the military involvement needed in order to provide logistical support to civilian organisations. For example, the military may have essential capacities to intervene in order to create an air bridge or clear roads for easy access. Secondly, military support may be essential to protect the activities of civilian relief organisations. Of course, the chaos caused by a disaster can increase insecurity, slowing the deployment of actors to the field. With this in mind, Byman et al. (2000) identify several activities that could be allocated to military forces such as refugee protection, restoring civil order or securing humanitarian aid flows. Furthermore, the intervention of civilian relief organisations in conflict zones can make them vulnerable to threats. They can end up in 'grey areas' (Harris and Dombrowski, 2002) that can expose them to increased risks such as death, injury or kidnapping. The support of the armed forces is therefore essential in order to ensure the protection of humanitarian organisations and to avoid any diversion of aid. In this respect, the UN has a peacekeeping mission called the 'Blue Helmets', which secure relief operations in case of

disasters in dangerous areas. In return, CIMIC collaboration can, in some settings, allow armies to improve their image amongst local populations and governments.

Common capabilities that facilitate exchange and cooperation

Civil organisations and armies have developed common capacities in two main areas: flexibility and information. Kumar (2001) notes that wars and disasters embody the two most extreme, dynamic and unpredictable operational environments. Civilian and military organisations strive to develop flexible arrangements in order to adapt to rapid changes in their environment. The languages used also share similarities with terms such as ‘operations’ being used in the humanitarian sector as well as in the military. For example, with respect to French military interventions abroad, it is a matter of external operations or ‘OPEX’. Additionally, civilian and military actors have developed strong information and communication skills to increase their visibility, reduce uncertainty of the environment and enhance the performance of their interventions.

THE HEART VS. REASON: CIMIC AS AN OBLIGATION

Inherent issues that limit the opportunities for CIMIC Cooperation

CIMIC cooperation has undeniable advantages on an operational level. However, military forces are a group of actors that are radically different at the heart of their work, culture and approaches. On the one hand, these are controlled by national (armies), intergovernmental (NATO) or international (UN Blue Helmets) powers. On the other, NGOs do their utmost not to be associated with this sphere of influence and to preserve their independence and impartiality on the ground. When deployed in areas ravaged by militarised conflict and then accept logistical or security support from the military, NGOs often fear that politicisation or bias may taint their actions. As a result they may be targeted by opposing forces as well as become rejected or misunderstood by local populations. For example, a report published in 1995 by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC, 1995) rejects resorting to the help from army for the security of humanitarian organisations (for example, military escort of convoys of humanitarian aid in dangerous areas). Weiss (1995) explains that the more the military involvement is involved in armed and unpopular conflicts at the local level, the less the NGOs will call on the army for support. Harris and Dombrowski (2002) and Gourlay (2000) observed that while collaboration does take place for the purposes of security, these partnerships are more of a

necessity for NGOs in order to be able to continue operating in complex areas. In these insecure contexts, NGOs, often preoccupied by their ideologies, refuse the assistance of the armed forces even though the situation on the ground poses a real risk for their workforce. After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the Foreign Armed Forces and MINUSTAH (United Nations Peacekeepers) were deployed to provide logistical support (clearing, airborne distribution of emergency assistance in areas in the most landlocked areas, airport recovery etc.) and to secure operations in certain tense areas (violence, riots, thefts, etc.). In particular, armed convoys have been set up for humanitarian workers to enable relief organisations to continue operating despite threats. Several NGOs have refused this support in order to maintain their independence, but this reduces their ability to intervene in areas of violence that also have the greatest humanitarian needs. Contrarily, others have ventured to intervene alone in these areas without any military support. This has manifested in reports from the press on the kidnapping of humanitarian staff of the NGO MSF. CIMIC collaboration is therefore a particularly complex issue that causes a division in opinions. Some organisations are open to temporarily collaborating with the military, whilst others are adamantly opposed to it, even if it may help them protect their staff and rescue people more quickly. On the other hand, military forces can also be sceptical about CIMIC, as it does not represent their core values. They are confronted with humanitarian actors who are unfamiliar to them and who, as previously mentioned, are often obstinate to their offer of support. Furthermore, the exchange of information between humanitarian and military personnel can present a major barrier with particularly negative consequences when assessing a crisis situation and or when organising operations. Specifically, the military has particularly advanced information-gathering capabilities that allow them to develop precise knowledge of security risks and threats. However, the armed forces are not used to freely sharing this type of information. Retention of information can put humanitarian workers in particularly dangerous situations. On the other hand, these same actors may be reluctant to exchange information with the armed forces for fear of direct or indirect repercussions on populations and the links they have with them. In this environment of constant rivalry and suspicion, the relationship between NGOs and military forces can become particularly tense, when individual difference become insurmountable at the expense of the victims' best interests.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Civilian organisations and military forces have everything to gain from working together. They each have their own competences and have many synergies that can significantly improve the disaster response. In addition, reducing disaster management solely to humanitarian actors does not allow for the involvement of armies that have a growing role to play in major disasters. However, civil-military collaboration is not something that happens automatically. It is still

poorly defined and is subjected to a lot of discrimination. Certain barriers such as its value, organisational model, or limits in operational capability limit opportunities for partnerships (Gourlay 2000, Harris and Dombrowski 2002). At the same time, this form of 'militarisation of the humanitarian relief' (Gourlay, 2000) can lead to circumstances where civil organisations have competing values in their core goal of helping people. It is therefore necessary to ensure effective coordination between these two communities of actors through a clear division of areas of expertise and areas of collaboration to avoid the risk of overlap. To this end, the UNHCR issued a report in 1995 outlining a set of principles and recommendations to assist in the development of effective civil-military cooperation (UNHCR, 1995). Moreover, it is imperative that the civil and military forces can meet and be formed before a crisis arises. For example, NATO established the Civil-Military Cooperation Center of Excellence (CCOE) in 2001, which offers a wide range of training and internships in the CIMIC field to civilian and military audiences. In this setting, different approaches to CIMIC are proposed to in order to allow actors concerned to meet and have dialogue - courses range from the tactical to strategic level, with specific programs for the actors in the field or for decision-makers and specialties like the CIMIC actors within the United Nations. In addition to this training opportunity, the CCOE organises the CIMIC & CMI Annual Discipline Conference every year, a seminar where participants from NATO discuss CIMIC news and training. The discussions are aimed in particular, at better adapting the training needs of the organisation in this area. Finally, the 'NATO School Oberammergau' offers several courses on CIMIC, some involving the ICRC and the United Nations (OCHA). For Gourlay (2000), efforts to bring together and train civil and military actors should allow these two communities to get better acquainted and to better define their own tasks in the event of a disaster in order to work together. The creation of formal CIMIC collaboration in humanitarian organisations is also essential to establish a central setting for dialogue with the armed forces, which can improve efficiency on the ground whilst also ensuring that International Humanitarian Law and its main ideologies are respected. All these initiatives help to refine the civil-military mechanism of action for each group of actors whilst creating the much-needed link for greater operational synergy in crisis situations. ■

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