

## Partners Apart: Managing Civil-Military Co-operation in Humanitarian Interventions

Catriona GOURLAY

Military and humanitarian organizations share common roots in war. Indeed, modern humanitarianism was founded on the battlefield. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was established after the battle of Solferino in the nineteenth century while the First World War and the civil war and famine which followed it in Russia gave rise to the establishment of the Save the Children Fund and the American Relief Association. Similarly, the Second World War produced a number of humanitarian agencies including Oxfam and CARE. As Slim noted, “For the last 100 years, militarism and humanitarianism have represented two sides of the same coin — humankind’s inability to manage conflict peacefully”.<sup>1</sup> While the military waged war, the humanitarian organizations followed in their wake, mopping up as and when they could. Given their common presence on the battlefield, there has always been some contact between military forces and humanitarian organizations, but this was always clearly defined and limited by their distinct roles.

Since the end of the Cold War, the international military response to internal war and its attendant suffering has fundamentally changed from a war-fighting to a peace-making paradigm. International militaries, usually authorized by the UN Security Council, now seek to come *between* all sides in a civil war, by exercising their own brand of impartiality, in the name of peace and humanity. Consequently humanitarian interventions are now conducted by a wide array of international actors (UN agencies, NGOs, international humanitarian organizations, variants of UN forces and regional military alliances such as NATO) and the use of force is an option in, but not a determinant of, humanitarian intervention.<sup>2</sup>

As the political space for humanitarian intervention has increased, so too has the perceived need. There is every reason to expect that the twenty-first century will experience conflict as frequent and serious as the 1990s given the political difficulties in addressing their root causes (the growing wealth-poverty divide, environmental constraints, weapons proliferation). Humanitarian intervention will likely form an integral part of the Western strategy of ‘liddism’ — the attempt to keep the lid on emerging conflicts<sup>3</sup> — and military and civilian actors will, no doubt, routinely rush to meet the global humanitarian challenge.

Appreciating the dynamics of the civil-military relationship in this new context requires an understanding of the shared interests in co-operation as well as the inherent tensions which result from the different structures, cultures, competencies, methods and resources of the several parties concerned.

---

Catriona Gourlay is the Executive Director of the International Security Information Service, Europe ([www.fhit.org/isis](http://www.fhit.org/isis)). This Brussels-based NGO seeks to improve the quality of parliamentary scrutiny of security and defence policy through the provision of information and analysis on issues of international security and the organization of parliamentary working groups and larger conferences.

### *Introducing the actors and defining terms*

For purposes of brevity, this article divides humanitarian actors into two sectors — ‘the military’ and ‘civilian humanitarians’ — yet neither is monolithic and each represents a set of very diverse institutions. Military force may take different forms and vary in force size, structure, capability and posture. Some might include units of a largely civilian nature as well as contingents of an entirely military character. Military assets fall under UN, NATO or national commands, and national forces differ in competence and professionalism. This diversity has great implications for the division of roles and nature of co-operation, which will be explored below.

Civilian humanitarians are usually divided into three main groupings: UN agencies, the ICRC and the wider Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and international and national NGOs. The UN agencies and the ICRC are properly described as intergovernmental organizations since they are mandated by agreements drawn up between states. These international legal instruments give UN agencies and the ICRC specific mandates and operating procedures which help ensure that their operational relationships with the military are clear-cut, if not easy.

While the proliferation of international NGOs during the 1990s is well documented and literally hundreds have been employed in high profile emergencies such as Rwanda, Somalia and the Balkans, a relatively small number of large international relief NGOs collectively receive the majority of relief-assistance funding. National NGOs and international NGOs with other areas of expertise such as human rights monitoring or relationship-forging peacebuilding work are included in the far more numerous group of smaller NGOs. The role and size of the NGOs are thus important factors in determining the level of co-operation with the military.

### *Shared interests*

In so far as humanitarian intervention seeks to integrate traditional military capabilities into a response to human need, the military and civilian aspects of humanitarian intervention support a common long-term goal of promoting human security in societies marked by conflict. Often, military and civilian actors also share a common understanding of the limits of humanitarian action. Both

*Humanitarian assistance and military intervention do not provide a solution to political emergencies and war. Leaders of the military, UN agencies, the ICRC and NGOs agree that their interventions are no substitute for political settlements and long-term commitments to just development.*

emphasize that humanitarian assistance and military intervention do not provide a solution to political emergencies and war. Leaders of the military, UN agencies, the ICRC and NGOs agree that their interventions are no substitute for political settlements and long-term commitments to just development.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, they often feel that they are ‘set up’ as substitutes for tough political action and then scapegoated for failures often beyond their control.<sup>5</sup>

The principal factors driving civil-military co-operation do not stem from shared analysis or long-term goals. Rather, necessity has been the mother of co-operation and the most intense civil-military relationships have been formed at the field level, usually when the military has stepped in to fill gaps in civilian capabilities. Increased military involvement in humanitarian actions has not, however, always resulted in improved collaboration. To understand the potential and the limitations of the relationship it is first necessary to highlight the fundamental differences of the two sets of institutions.

## *Institutional diversity*

### POLITICIZATION

The military has traditionally been designed for war in pursuit of national or collective political interests. Forces are paid and trained to use regulated violence to accomplish objectives set by governments. Thus military action is always essentially political in nature, although mission statements may include reference to politically 'neutral' humanitarian goals.

In contrast, one of the principal purposes of civilian humanitarian organizations is to relieve suffering equally to all on the basis of need. This requires maximum access to all populations which, in turn, demands that the organizations are perceived as being neutral, with no political agenda.

This fundamental difference results in an inevitable tension between military and civilian humanitarian work where the implications for civil-military co-operation depend on the perceived politicization of the military mission and the level of consent it enjoys from the parties involved. When levels of consent among the local populations run low or the military is perceived as a party to a conflict, civil-military relationships become strained and civilian humanitarians distance themselves from the military.

The link between consent and the civil-military relationship is well documented. In 1995 Weiss ranked all recent humanitarian operations in order of consent level, identifying a spectrum of consent with Cambodia, Mozambique and El Salvador at the high end and Bosnia and Somalia at the low end. His findings confirmed that the more closely associated a civilian agency is with an unpopular international military force, the less room for manoeuvre the agency has and the more problematic the civil-military relations become.<sup>6</sup>

Kosovo offers a recent and extreme example of how politicization can infiltrate the neutrality of humanitarian activities in various ways. A comprehensive study of NATO and the humanitarian action in the Kosovo crisis<sup>7</sup> notes that NATO military action and military/paramilitary activities on the ground in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) meant that virtually the entire humanitarian community left the battlefield as the air campaign began, whereas "After the battle, reconstituting humanitarian operations became more subject to political considerations by host and donors alike." Moreover, "the efforts of some humanitarian agencies to distance themselves from the political context of NATO's involvement were largely unsuccessful".<sup>8</sup> For example, some agencies such as Médecins Sans Frontières chose not to accept funding from NATO states, while others tried to demonstrate that they worked with both sides of the conflict by establishing offices with region-wide responsibilities. Yet, despite their efforts, these agencies did not receive a greater welcome by the Serbian authorities whose attempts to frustrate humanitarian access were seen to be evidence of political backlash. The effects of the politicization of the Kosovo humanitarian intervention are still felt today with the result that the NGOs with the best access in Serbia are now Greek, Russian and Polish.

While the Kosovo example demonstrates the adverse effects of the loss of consent for the work of civilian humanitarian operations, these organizations differ in their approach to managing the problem. While some agencies are committed to limiting the political incursions on their humanitarian space, others view the politicization of humanitarianism as inevitable given the links between the political will needed to respond to such crises and the politicization that results from the excessive intrusion of political factors. Consequently, some actors argue that the humanitarian space will always be delimited by political factors and that, given this fact, they should simply seek to mount

programmes wherever possible. Moreover, given that civilian and military agencies have a common interest in maintaining the consent of the parties, some suggest that they may be able to co-operate to this end. Rather than being perceived solely as an area of tension in their relationship, both parties might usefully co-operate in the framing of joint policy aimed at maintaining and nurturing consent while preparing for different levels of operational association in response to changing levels of consent.

#### DIFFERENCES IN STRUCTURE AND WORKING METHODS

Military institutions place a high value on command and control, top-down hierarchical organizational structures and clear lines of authority, discipline and accountability. They place great value on logistics, and substantial resources are dedicated to the acquisition of assets and training of personnel to ensure that they can function independently under the most adverse circumstances. The military's approach to problem solving is generally directive and coercive.

While these structures and approaches are fundamental and reflect the common war-fighting heritage of military forces, the experience of peacekeeping has led to certain modifications in approach and force structure. For example, forces such as the Canadians are known for their diplomatic and negotiation skills acquired during extensive training for peacekeeping and implemented according to carefully tailored Rules of Engagement. Similarly, the long history of British experience in low-intensity conflict situations has engendered a familiarity with civil-military interaction and negotiation. Moreover, the presence of units of civilians or reservists with civilian skills was said to help bridge the cultural gaps between military and civilian institutions and make collaboration easier in Kosovo.<sup>9</sup> Thus, training and force composition can make some militaries more conducive to civil-military collaboration than others.

Humanitarian organizations are less hierarchical and more participatory in their style of decision-making and operations than the military. They pay more attention to the process by which they accomplish operations, partly because they attach more importance to long-term impacts, but have fewer back-up resources and engage in less contingency planning to ensure that short-term objectives can be met quickly.

These structural differences are particularly evident in the distinct approaches of the military and civilian organizations to direct civilian assistance. The military's approach is informed by security rather than long-term development considerations. For instance, military infrastructure projects for

*The military's approach is informed by security rather than long-term development considerations.*

the local civilian populations rarely consider the long-term management implications of what they construct or repair. Rather, such 'civil affairs projects' (as they have been known in the United Kingdom and the United States) are essentially public relations exercises designed to reap hearts and minds returns to further a security objective. Thus the military's short-term, non-participatory approach is often a source of operational tension with the civilian agencies engaged in similar activities informed by considerations of development.

Just as some military structures are more conducive to civil-military collaboration than others, some civilian agencies have operational experience and practices which are more conducive to collaboration with the military than others. In the Kosovo case, UN agencies and NGOs that were operational partners of UN agencies were more comfortable with military culture than NGOs without such partnerships. Similarly, other NGOs with worldwide programmes and histories of UN collaboration interacted with more readiness than did smaller, crisis-specific groups. Thus, while

fundamental differences in structure and approach exist between military and civilian agencies, there is clear evidence that the modification of military practices for peace support missions and the institutional socialization gained through the shared experience of working together can help bridge the structural and cultural gaps and facilitate co-operation.

It also appears that both the military and civilian organizations recognize the value of increased institutional socialization and are working to improve their knowledge of each other in so far as this might assist collaboration. This has long been recognized within the UN context, but is relatively new within NATO structures. For example, military staff from NATO's Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) and representatives of large humanitarian organizations have recently agreed on extended visits to each others' headquarters to familiarize themselves with their counterparts' working methods. Similarly, NATO is in the process of revising its peacekeeping training programmes provided by the NATO school in Oberamgäu (for military and civilian participants) to improve civilian and military knowledge of each others' policies and practices. The Alliance has also recognized the utility of involving civilian actors in the planning process. Practical steps to achieve this are limited by military secrecy but include the involvement of civilian agencies in the conduct of military exercises such as NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic's exercise Open Road and in the planning of future exercises.

Such initiatives may improve the chances for collaboration but they cannot ultimately merge the differences between them. Indeed, the fundamental challenge to managing civilian and military collaboration concerns how best to preserve certain differences by agreeing a clear division of labour reflecting the comparative advantages of the two sets of institutions. This is the challenge taken up in the following section.

### *Civil-military relationships: complementary or competitive?*

The distribution of tasks between military and civilian institutions has often proceeded according to the essentially *ad hoc* and fluid concept of 'gap filling' whereby the military takes on tasks for which civilian agencies have no competence or which they can not fulfil in the short-term. The military conduct of civilian tasks is therefore designed to be a stop-gap measure only and should be handed over to civilian agencies as soon as possible. Thus, while there is inevitably some degree of overlap in the tasks of the two sectors, the military is clearly meant to complement rather than compete with the work of its humanitarian counterparts. More specifically, military tasks in the humanitarian sphere can be divided into three groups,<sup>10</sup> each involving different degrees of overlap with civilian activities.

*The military conduct of civilian tasks is therefore designed to be a stop-gap measure only and should be handed over to civilian agencies as soon as possible.*

## FOSTERING A CLIMATE OF SECURITY FOR CIVILIAN POPULATIONS AND HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS

### *Controlling violence*

Military forces are clearly effective at guaranteeing security against military opposition and they are therefore well suited to bringing down the levels of violence between organized military formations and providing occasional back-up to policing tasks. They are not, however, generally suited to

controlling riots and civilian disturbances such as those witnessed recently in Mitrovica in Kosovo although the military does include special forces which can be usefully employed for these tasks. One of many such examples was the UN Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium's (UNTAES) employment of a Polish riot control company. In general, gendarmeries or international civilian missions may be more suited for dealing with large-scale civil disturbances or armed and organized criminal elements. By their nature, most international military interventions provide an incomplete solution to physical security shortfalls and problems generally result from capability gaps in the international provision of paramilitary and police elements rather than capability overlaps with civilian organizations.

### *Providing protection for the relief effort*

One key task of the military is to provide protection of populations or of relief agencies in a context of forceful containment and/or resolution of conflict as in Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo. Many view the provision of security, allowing relief agencies to conduct their work, as the principal role of the military in humanitarian interventions, and one in which there is no overlap between military and civilian competencies. Relief agencies rely on military assistance to avoid the severe problems of divergence of assistance and to avoid intimidation by parties to a conflict. Thus as long as these agencies continue to operate in mid-war, some form of accommodation with the military seems inevitable. Given the negative consequences of politicization to civilian humanitarian work, however, the nature and level of civil-military security relationships will vary. In general, the level of collaboration will be indirectly proportional to the politicization of the military actions.

### SUPPORTING THE WORK OF CIVILIAN HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES

This involves the provision of technical or logistical support such as transport and work on basic infrastructure (water, power and roads). The large scale of flight which sudden massive violence can set in motion (Iraq 1991, Rwanda 1994, Zaire 1996), the protraction of a vicious siege (Sarajevo) or the inaccessibility of militarized terrain (Somalia) has resulted in civilian organizations relying on military assistance in the transport of people and relief supplies. While some aid organizations have argued that they have a demonstrated edge in the movement of people, the scale of the demand for transport means that military conduct of this task will generally be welcomed by civilian institutions.

The military also conducts security-related support tasks such as demining and demobilization. While the level of collaboration of civil and military organization in the conduct of these tasks depends of the level of consent towards the military, the civilian organizations generally welcome this form of military support and do not contest military competence in this area, as the recent Kosovo case highlights. Early in the Kosovo crisis (April 1999) the Secretary General of NATO and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees agreed, after an exchange of letters, that NATO would provide support in the areas of logistics (airlift co-ordination support, port and airport off-loading, and warehousing), camp construction, transportation of refugees and relief supplies, and road repairs and maintenance.<sup>11</sup> According to the Minear, van Baarda and Sommers study, aid agencies were highly appreciative of the security protection and logistical support which NATO provided. Indeed, criticism of NATO's support focused on its Kosovo Force's (KFOR) reluctance to accept responsibility for *further* support tasks such as demining (it limited its mandate to military demining) and on the priorities which the military chose to allocate to various tasks. For example, many aid agencies in

Albania and Macedonia would have preferred that a higher priority be awarded to road repair and transit centre construction than to camp construction.

#### PROVIDING DIRECT ASSISTANCE TO THOSE IN NEED

The greatest competition over humanitarian turf is in the area of direct assistance to civilian populations. Military 'seepage' into the traditionally civilian humanitarian domain raises questions about the appropriate boundaries between military and civilian action. Aid agencies often perceive civic action by the military as evidence of the militarization of humanitarianism, claim that it is in direct competition with their work and are critical of its quality and cost-effectiveness. These charges will be dealt with in turn.

#### *The militarization of humanitarianism?*

From the perspective of the military, civic actions help improve the popularity of military engagement among local populations and thereby contribute positively to maintaining consent and obtaining peace support objectives. There is, however, considerable national variation in how much importance is accorded these tasks. In the German case, for example, historical caution to engage in security tasks abroad has recently given way to enthusiasm for domestically popular military civic action. The scale of the civic activities of the German brigade in Prizren, Kosovo demonstrates this. The unit had an estimated 5 million DM from government and private sources and was described by another KFOR officer as "acting like a huge NGO doing projects".<sup>12</sup> In contrast, other KFOR units usually had fewer resources and some chose to employ their troops by conducting projects that were not priorities for NGOs.

From the perspective of the donors, there is no evidence of a universal trend privileging military over civilian partners. In the majority of humanitarian interventions within the UN context, very little development aid has been channelled through military institutions to conduct direct assistance projects. There are notable exceptions however. During the emergency relief phase of the Kosovo crisis, for example, where the military presence massively outnumbered the civilian presence in the field, states expressed a clear preference for military and bilateral agencies over humanitarian and multilateral ones. British, Greek and German KFOR contingents received grants for projects from their respective bilateral aid ministries which would have normally gone to UN agencies or to NGOs.

#### *Military competence for direct assistance*

The competence of the military to carry out civilian direct-assistance tasks has often been called into question by civilian organizations. Recent examples from Kosovo include the German KFOR contingent's programme of providing 8,000 hot meals per day to Kosovar Albanians, which was criticized for its cost (in)effectiveness and for creating dependency. Other controversial projects included the construction of unsuitable refugee camps or of expensive 'state-of-the-art' houses, problematically located opposite UNHCR tent shelters. Similarly, a large polyclinic constructed by one national military contingent was criticized for functioning at cross-purposes with broader health efforts in the area. Taking stock in October 1999, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako

Ogata noted “instances in which assistance [that] was provided directly by the military sometimes to gain legitimacy and visibility had undermined co-ordination and deprived civilian humanitarian agencies of effectiveness and clout”. She concluded that “the military should support but not substitute for agencies with humanitarian mandates”.<sup>13</sup> The common conclusion in the Kosovo case is that improved co-ordination mechanisms and more disciplined attention to comparative advantage would have made for a more effective international response.

### *Cost-effectiveness*

Civilian organizations often argue that their own direct assistance operations offer better value for money than those of the military. This claim has been supported by some studies such as a UN evaluation of the Rwanda operation, but the lack of a detailed financial breakdown of military operations and the lack of an established methodology for determining what costs should be included in such calculations often make it difficult to reach conclusions on the issue.

### *The challenges of co-ordination and co-operation*

The fundamental differences in the values, structures, approaches and skill sets of civilian humanitarian and military institutions will make any organizational solution to civil-military co-operation difficult. So too will the intrinsic difficulty of operating in a mid-war or crisis situation where a multitude of practical, protection and political problems need to be addressed in a volatile environment. In preparing for and functioning in such environments, however, there are still choices to be made regarding how far, at what level, and by which mechanisms the civil-military relationship can and should be formally managed.

#### THE AD HOC APPROACH

In most humanitarian emergencies in the 1990s, the approach to civil-military co-ordination was essentially improvisational and pragmatic. As such it evolved over time in response to specific co-ordination or co-operation needs on the ground. There is certainly merit and appeal to this approach. Some argue that every crisis is occasion-specific and circumstance-specific and that its unique characteristics mean that strategies and structures for civil-military relations need to reflect the specific circumstances. In this approach, activities should be undertaken by military and/or military actors according to the peculiarities of the political and military situation in-theatre and the levels of resources available and committed from outside. Activities should be allocated according to simple, high-level consultation mechanisms as with the Solana-Ogata exchange of letters in the Kosovo crisis and refined over time through basic consultative mechanisms in the field such as those provided by NATO’s Civil-Military Co-operation (CIMIC) (described in a following section). Training would be crucial, since it would help prepare actors for their responsibilities, sensitize the military and humanitarian actors to each other and nurture the necessary skills to improvise appropriately and quickly. In this way ‘humanitarian space’ and ‘military space’ would be tailored to the specific circumstances and any problems associated with overlapping competencies or politicization would be accepted matter of factly as essentially unavoidable.



## STRUCTURING CIVIL-MILITARY HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES

By contrast, there are various proposals that seek to structure the military and civilian components of humanitarian interventions with the aim of improving short-term humanitarian effectiveness and/or its longer-term contribution to peacebuilding. In general, these approaches include suggestions for managing civil-military collaboration at the strategic or policy level and/or at the operational level. Each is taken in turn below.

*Managing co-operation at the strategic level*

One more strategic approach to humanitarian intervention would involve a division of labour carefully constructed in advance according to the comparative advantages of civilian and military institutions. For example, the primary task of the military would be the provision of security and support for the work of humanitarian organizations would play a secondary role. The provision of direct assistance to civilian populations would only be undertaken in rare cases.<sup>14</sup> Such a division of labour could be agreed in advance in bilateral and multinational Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and would ensure that civilian organizations knew the extent and limits of the support they could expect to receive from the military. However, without proposing a mechanism for tailoring these broad agreements to a specific context and ensuring that the operation has the appropriate resources to fit this pre-arranged mix, this proposal begs the question of how the military and humanitarian organizations might organize their division of labour in response to a specific crisis with limited resources.

*One more strategic approach to humanitarian intervention would involve a division of labour carefully constructed in advance according to the comparative advantages of civilian and military institutions.*

Another suggestion aimed at minimizing the politicization of humanitarian effort would be to insist on a national division between military providers of humanitarian assistance and those engaged in offensive military action, although this is unlikely to prove politically popular. Alternatively, the political aspect of military engagement could be reduced if the action was conducted by a standing special force that did not rely on crisis-specific troop contributions from states. Such a nascent force already exists in the form of the Multinational UN Stand-by Forces High-Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG) which can be employed in fifteen to thirty days for peacekeeping duties for up to six months. However, while such a force might help humanitarian agencies to operate in situations where there is insufficient political will to contribute national troops, it is unlikely that nations would choose to develop this model in place of multilateral peacekeeping operations.

Thomas Weiss, reviewing an extensive study of humanitarian interventions, argues that “Rather than extant feudal arrangements, a single body is necessary to set priorities, to raise and distribute resources, and to co-ordinate emergency inputs”.<sup>15</sup> But he goes on to explain how national calls for central co-ordination are disingenuous in light of their desire to wave national flags over assistance rendered. The same point is elegantly expressed by David Last, “Everyone wants co-ordination, but no one wants to be co-ordinated by others”.<sup>16</sup> Thus while some kind of unified solution is well-argued and logical, there are fundamental political obstacles in the way of its implementation.

Such political difficulties are amply demonstrated by the challenges to co-ordination within the military and humanitarian sectors. Significantly, one of the recommendations of the Minear, van Baarda and Sommers study on the Kosovo crisis was to strengthen co-ordination among military

actors and humanitarian actors, quite apart from the interaction of these two sets of institutions with each other. Reacting to the widespread impression that KFOR has little idea of what its national components are doing and to their widely divergent national approaches to CIMIC and humanitarian assistance, the study highlighted the need to improve military co-ordination and to address the unevenness and inconsistencies among national military contingents. Similarly, improved co-ordination among the relief agencies would help tackle issues of inconsistent programming and uneven professionalism in the humanitarian sector. They conclude that “a new seriousness about co-ordination by all parties is likely to be the test of whether a serviceable humanitarian architecture can be designed and implemented.”<sup>17</sup>

In the absence of an overarching structure providing co-ordination at higher levels, many agree that humanitarian operations can compensate, at least in part, by working from the bottom up to create appropriate structures at the operational level. Indeed this is where the most progress has been made so far.

#### *Managing co-operation at the operational level*

The UN has had extensive experience of working in the field with civilian actors and has used a variety of mechanisms in its efforts to resolve the difficulties of co-ordinating military, police and civil activities on the ground. Although each operation is different, lessons have been ‘formally’ learned through retrospective lessons-learned exercises, but all too often these are not implemented in the next crisis — which usually involves a new constellation of actors.

NATO has also learned a number of lessons through its experience in Bosnia and Kosovo. Unlike the UN, its military-civilian interface has a single name: Civil Military Co-operation (CIMIC). This is defined as “The resources and arrangements which support the relationship between NATO commanders and the national and/or regional/local authorities, civil and military, and civil populations in an area where NATO military forces are or plan to be employed. Such arrangements include co-operation and co-ordination with non-governmental or international agencies, organizations and authorities”.<sup>18</sup> Over the past ten years, NATO has reformed and adjusted the CIMIC concept to embrace all elements of the civil-military interface. It has specific CIMIC assets such as specialized CIMIC staff attached to every commander and CIMIC centres for co-ordinating civil-military co-operation in the field. While the development of CIMIC within NATO reflects a growing appreciation of the importance of civil-military co-operation, this is not often reflected in the wider military structures. CIMIC officers are often frustrated, for instance, by the fact that key staffing decisions still prioritize plans and logistics over the increasingly important functions performed by civil-military affairs structures.

The key role that CIMIC plays in structuring civil-military relations in NATO operations makes it worthy of more detailed attention. CIMIC tasks are divided into three operational stages: pre-operational, operational and transitional.

#### *Pre-operational tasks*

These include planning, advice to the chain of command and educating the force. There have been significant advances in the conduct of these tasks in response to the Bosnia experience. While NATO does not involve civilian agencies directly in the formulation of contingency plans, it has

developed mechanisms for consultation at this level. Indirectly, civilian organizations and NGOs participate in planning through their participation in military exercises. Similarly, NATO is updating its training programmes so as to familiarize civilian and military personnel with each other's institutional structures, resources and working methods.

Nevertheless the recent experience of the Kosovo crisis indicates that there is still room for improvement in advanced planning. Specifically, planning should enable civilian organizations to have input into decisions which relate to the priorities accorded to military humanitarian support tasks. When these decisions were being made in the early stages of the relief effort in Kosovo, civilian and military organizations found timely consultation difficult in the absence of functioning co-ordination structures.

### *Operational tasks*

The core operational tasks of CIMIC are communication, co-ordination, exchange of information, setting up of agreements, assessment and operations. In addition there are a host of 'specific responsibilities' supported by the involvement of functional specialists, which include gap-filling tasks normally carried out by civilian organizations. Once they were up and running, these co-ordination mechanisms and the military conduct of support tasks were considered successful by both humanitarian and military partners in the Kosovo case.

A final sub-group of operational tasks are the 'implied tasks' which "focus on empowering local and international civilian support agencies to assume full authority for civil implementation". Tellingly, there are no concrete tasks identified for this role in the CIMIC doctrine, which is perhaps part of the reason why NATO has and continues to experience such difficulty in implementing the final, 'transitional' stage of CIMIC operations.

### *Transitional tasks*

These tasks are supposed to smooth transition to civilian authorities or organizations and the termination of the military's involvement. The identified tasks, which include planning for transition to civilian authorities and closing CIMIC offices, require that such alternative structures have been put in place.

The greatest acknowledged difficulty of CIMIC operations relates to the implementation of these exit strategies in the absence of the construction of alternative civilian structures. Last attributes this difficulty in handing back responsibilities to a capability gap in peacebuilding — "a gap in our ability to rebuild the trust that permits co-operation between the parties".<sup>19</sup> He argues for a unified solution at the local level within a manageable area. Within such communities a third party would have the capacity for controlling the full spectrum of violence and building relationships in the areas of security provision, development, governance and reconciliation. By arguing for a confluence of civil and military operational boundaries and for increased participation of local actors and peacebuilding facilitators in such community-based structures, this proposal seeks to maximize the potential for innovative civil-military co-operation at the local level and intertwine it with initiatives to build local governance, security and reconciliation capacities.

## Conclusion

The dynamics of the civilian-military relationship reflect a host of factors including the structure, culture and skill sets of the actors involved as well as the specific humanitarian needs and the political context of the operation. Faced with fundamental structural differences and interests as well as widespread reluctance to cede any element of project or operational control, it is tempting to conclude that the only way to manage these relationships is to try to maximize consultation and co-operation throughout an operation, at every level in an *ad hoc* way.

Nevertheless the logic of structured co-ordination is compelling and should lead to efficiency gains and greater respect for the comparative advantages of civilian and military actors. Given the

*The most promising way forward is to experiment with improved models for co-ordination at the operational level where the need is often most obvious.*

formidable political and structural constraints on achieving these levels of synergy and co-ordination at a strategic level, the most promising way forward is to experiment with improved models for co-ordination at the operational level where the need is often most obvious.

There is no single solution to managing civil-military relations at this level either, yet if humanitarian operations are to improve, we need to structure and learn from each operational experiment more systematically. It is only in this way that operations will be able to build on past experiences and lessons learned by different actors.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> H. Slim, *The Stretcher and the Drum: Civil-Military Relations in Peace Support Operations*, *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1996, p. 124.
- <sup>2</sup> O. Ramsbotham and T. Woodhouse, *Humanitarian Intervention in Contemporary Armed Conflict*, London, Polity, 1995.
- <sup>3</sup> P. Rogers, *International Security in the Early Twenty-First Century*, ISIS Europe Briefing Paper No. 22, February 2000 ([www.fhit.org/isis](http://www.fhit.org/isis)).
- <sup>4</sup> H. Slim, *op. cit.*
- <sup>5</sup> L. Minear, T. van Baarda and M. Sommers, *NATO and Humanitarian Action in the Kosovo Crisis*, Occasional Paper #36, Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute of International Studies, Brown University, 2000.
- <sup>6</sup> T. Weiss, *Military Civilian Humanitarianism: The Age of Innocence is Over*, *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1995.
- <sup>7</sup> Minear, van Baarda and Sommers, *op. cit.*
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>10</sup> This typology is taken from an Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) study (L. Minear and P. Guillot, *Soldiers to the Rescue: Humanitarian Lessons from Rwanda*, Development Centre of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, 1996).
- <sup>11</sup> These tasks were identified in correspondence between NATO Secretary General Javier Solana and UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata on 21 April 1999.
- <sup>12</sup> Reported in Minear, van Baarda and Sommers, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
- <sup>13</sup> Opening statement of the High Commissioner at the Fiftieth Session of the Executive Committee, 4 October 1999.
- <sup>14</sup> Minear, van Baarda and Sommers, *op. cit.*
- <sup>15</sup> T. Weiss, *Military-Civilian Interactions: Intervening in Humanitarian Crises*, Lanham, Rowmand and Littlefield, 1999, p. 201.
- <sup>16</sup> D. Last, *Organizing for Effective Peacebuilding*, *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 7, no. 1, Spring 2000 (forthcoming), p. 13–25.
- <sup>17</sup> Minear, van Baarda and Sommers, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
- <sup>18</sup> NATO Civil-Military Co-operation (CIMIC) Doctrine, AJP-09, 2000 (forthcoming).
- <sup>19</sup> Last, *op. cit.*, p. 5–25.