

# **Civil Military Cooperation**

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## **Disclaimer**

The opinions I am about to express are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of National Defence or the Canadian Forces.

## **Introduction**

It will come as no surprise to anyone here when I tell you that the last decade has seen groundbreaking changes in the quantity and nature of peacekeeping operations. From 1947 to 1989 there were fifteen Peacekeeping Missions that Canada was engaged in, 15 in 42 years. In the last 10 years, however, we have been involved in 22 missions. The tempo, as we are all aware of, has increased. The nature of the missions themselves has also changed. We are no longer in the Suez, or in Cyprus, with two uniformed armies facing each other over an agreed upon Demilitarised Zone, agreeing to disagree while Peacekeepers patrol the zone and diplomats attempt to solve the problem. Missions today, such as Bosnia and Rwanda, do not necessarily have uniformed soldiers or a clear chain of command. The population of these countries has become the main target of extermination campaigns that are not between countries but between factions within these countries.

Modern missions are more complicated for the peacekeeper due to the nature of the conflict itself but also due to the numerous UN agencies that are in the theatre of operations trying to conduct their mandated functions. On top of that are hundreds or thousands of freelance Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) who are also in theatre to pursue their own, largely altruistic mandates. The military, which has been accustomed to being in charge, is no longer in a position of command, nor for that matter is anyone else.

It is this complicated situation on the ground, with a military intervention force, indigenous forces, and numerous aid agencies all interacting without an apparent direction which has been described as like trying to herd cats. It has forced militaries around the world to re-examine what is necessary to conduct a successful peacekeeping operation. There have been a number of innovations that have come out of the last decade; one of them has been the concept of Civil-Military Co-operation. CIMIC is based on the idea that even if we in the military might not like to work with civilians, co-operation with them is one of the best ways to accelerate post-conflict reconstruction and thus get our troops home.

## **Definitions**

I have provided for you a slide with the Canadian CIMIC definition and have underlined for you what I see as some of the key parts of the Canadian concept of CIMIC. The idea that CIMIC is designed to support the relationship between our military and other actors in theatre, as well as including measures designed to include co-operation and co-ordination between our troops and others. These are important distinctions. The American definition of CIMIC states that it is "The

activities of a commander that establish, maintain, influence, or exploit relations between military forces and civil authorities...in order to facilitate military operations and consolidate operational objectives." Having spoken with a member of Medicines sans Frontiers, (MSF) one of the first problems he said he had with CIMIC was that it was designed to serve a military objective. One of the ideas that we in the military must accept is that in the interests of peace the military mission is the creation and maintenance of a stable peace, not a more narrow and short-sighted objective. To exploit relationships with NGOs in order to achieve short-term military goals is a sure way to guarantee that they do not co-operate, and that the mission will be a lengthy one.

I have also provided you with a graph detailing a conceptual model of an ideal post-conflict reconstruction. Conceptually the post-conflict reconstruction, into which a military mission is placed to provide security, will be divided into three phases. These phases are the Transformation Phase, the Stabilisation Phase, and the Normalisation Phase. Ideally, as the conflict nears normalisation the military force is incrementally decreased until it is no longer necessary. In the transformation phase the civilian organisations initially are unable to provide support due to an unsafe situation and the indigenous forces of 'good and light' are in such a state of disarray that they cannot be counted upon to provide much support at all to the operation. It is in this phase of disarray that the military is most useful and should provide its highest level of effort. As the reconstruction progresses however and the situation is stabilised Civilian agencies are most able to help due to an improved security situation and indigenous forces can start to ramp-up. If the situation is in fact stable it is at this point that military forces start to become redundant and should start to be withdrawn. As the situation returns to normalcy the indigenous forces can adopt a pre-eminent role while civilian agencies scale back and the military commitment is withdrawn.

This is, to be sure, an idealised model. But it is one that we, as peacekeepers should strive for. We, as peacekeepers, must accept that the purpose of a peacekeeping force is to provide a level of security to a given situation, and that the quickest way to achieve a stable peace is to allow civilian agencies to pursue their mandates. We in the military do not have the resources or the expertise to provide food and shelter to a population for any extended period of time. We cannot provide employment for refugees, we cannot provide people with individual protection and we do not have the expertise to nurture a stable government. The civilian agencies each according to their speciality do. So we come back to the analogy of herding cats. We realise that NGOs will run around, seemingly without direction and we who are charged with trying to provide security for them have to co-operate with them and coax them toward a common goal while realising that many of them cannot or will not associate with us. Moreover, we have to realise that we are dependent on the success of these NGOs in their humanitarian mission, so that we can end our commitment and go home. Just as the NGOs are dependant on us to provide at least a minimal level of security in a country so that they may start their mission.

The relationship between the military and the NGO community has very often been strained for a number of reasons. Some of them the fault of the military and some of it the fault of the NGOs. Much of it stems from a different organisational culture between the two groups. The military culture is vertical, with orders moving down a chain of command which must be obeyed. The NGO culture is more horizontal, with decisions taken in committee and wide latitude of action

allowed to its members. In the military a person may take years to command a platoon and more to command a company, with NGOs a few years in the organisation might make a person the head of that organisation's effort in that country. So if a 28 year-old person from an NGO comes up to you and states that he is the head of mission they might not be lying. They may in fact be our rough equivalent of a general and be responsible for the application of millions of dollars worth of aid money.

The military often complains about the way that NGOs behave in theatre and a lack of co-operation on their part with the military mission. Many NGOs will not co-operate with the military for a very straightforward and simple reason; they fear for their own safety if they were viewed to take sides. If an NGO was seen to be co-operating with the military and the military was viewed as sympathising with one or another of the factions, the civilian aid workers could become the victims of reprisals on the part of the slighted faction. This danger exists even when the military perceives things as going well. One example of this is the MSF in Kosovo. For a period of time things seemed to be going well in that province but even then the organisation refused to be associated with the military. While this may seem perplexing to the military one of the members of MSF explained to me that they are in the situation for the long haul. Now that Milosovic is no longer in power in Serbia, for example, the west may decide to pull out. Without the protection of western troops, had MSF accepted their support, they could conceivably become the victims of reprisals by one side or another. Because they maintained their neutrality, however, they need not fear that they will become victims.

NGOs may also dislike the military for other reasons born of past experience. Whether that experience is of soldiers from other, less liberalised countries, who either repress the population or who indulge in the atrocities a peacekeeping mission is aimed at stopping, or the experience of working with soldiers from western countries who 'exploit the relationship to advance the military mission'. As a result of these negative encounters there are a fair number of idealistic and altruistic persons who are members of these civilian agencies who are also very jaded towards their relationship with the military.

For the military, problems with NGOs abound as well. The sheer number of NGOs is staggering in and of itself. In Kigali, after the Rwandan Genocide there were 109 NGOs operating out of the city, while in Bosnia a 1996 estimate placed the number of NGOs at 1700. The sheer number of these organisations is in and of itself a complicating factor for our peacekeepers, as is the uneven quality of the NGOs that are encountered in the field.

There are a number of aid agencies such as MSF and ICRC who are of high quality and who are highly effective. There are however a large number of smaller NGOs who may be very well connected to the local situation but who lack the administrative ability to manage the money they are given or who lack the ability to co-ordinate their activities with other organisations. One example of this was an offer made to a certain NGO during Op Assistance, the aid to the refugees of the Rwandan Genocide. The military made an offer to transport their supplies, free of charge, by military airlift. The sole stipulation was that their cargo be at a certain spot at a certain time. The NGO was unable to organise itself to get its supplies to the airfield and thus lost its airlift.

Moreover, another problem that the military have with civilian aid agencies is their tendency to compete for funding in a theatrical manner or to undertake actions that can at times run counter to the greater good of the mission. One example of this is the town of Kotor Varos in Bosnia, where the military and the local NGOs agreed to withhold aid to the town to pressure the mayor to allow the return of ethnic minorities. One NGO who felt it was more important to be seen to be doing something, as opposed to actually doing something, made a substantial monetary grant to the town which allowed the mayor to resist the pressure to allow the minorities to return. It is acts like these, and others, where NGOs undertake actions that the military perceives as too risky in an effort to compete for future funding which colours the perceptions of members of the military and leads to an unfortunate tendency among peacekeepers to colour all NGOs with the same brush.

So, how does one solve this impasse? How do we encourage co-operation between the military and the civilian aspects of a peacekeeping mission? I would propose that there are several ways that a better co-operation could be achieved. The first is to encourage NGO participation at events like these. If the two groups could mix in an academic setting and present papers and opinions in a non-conflict situation it would likely result in the two groups if not coming to like each other, then at least acquiring an appreciation of the motivations of the other so that co-operation is made more easy. It is my experience that this does not often happen. These types of colloquiums are usually attended by one group or the other, with little mixing.

I would also suggest that some degree of training be conducted in a joint fashion between these two groups. This type of training would be of the classroom variety but if it were possible to send the two groups to attend certain courses such as the CIMIC course offered at the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre progress could be made towards mutual understanding and co-operation.

Finally, CIMIC is not a skill that is practised at only the highest levels of command. It is a skill that is used by most people every day. As one operative once told me, 'We've all done CIMIC, we just didn't know it'. It is my opinion that if more people were aware, at all levels of the military, of the benefits and pitfalls of dealing with the different actors in a peacekeeping operation we could, as one cat in the herd, direct ourselves in a more constructive fashion and complete the mission more effectively and in less time.

I would like to conclude with an argument that is near and dear to my heart. The Department of National Defence has announced that it would like for reservists to become a large part of the CIMIC resources of the country. I think that this is a wonderful idea. A reservist has traditionally been the type of person that straddles the divide between civilian and military. As such the possibility of utilising reservists to aid peacekeeping missions by using their civilian expertise is super. The Americans for example have 210 regular soldiers who do CIMIC tasks and 5000 reservists. One example of the utility of this arrangement is when the US wanted to reconstruct a public transportation system in, I believe it was a South American country. To do this they took a reservist to do the job. The reservist was a public transportation executive for a major American city. Needless to say the project went well. I think that Canada can do similar work with reservists, although probably on a smaller scale. One can easily appreciate the idea that improving sewage disposal or water treatment in an overseas area is probably better suited to someone with experience in that area as opposed to an infanteer or a gunner.

And here is the rub, the type of person who is ideally suited to do a CIMIC job, has a specialised and marketable skill set. The Americans, with many more personnel and resources often come up against the problem that many of their reservists are reluctant to leave their jobs to go to a foreign country for a six month, or more, tour. Canada will without a doubt have this same problem with one very significant difference. In the United States a reservist has job protection. If he or she goes overseas their job is guaranteed when they return. In Canada this is not the case. If a Canadian reservist goes overseas there will be no job waiting for them when they return. It is my considered opinion that in spite of the wonderful initiative to use reservists in CIMIC roles that without legislation protecting the jobs of these soldiers we will never be able to effectively deploy them into an operational environment. No reservist will sacrifice their civilian life for a six-month tour in peacekeeping mission.