*ATHA Thematic Brief Series: outlining basic tenets of humanitarian action*

HUMANITARIAN POLICY MAKING FOR CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION (CIMIC)
*Establishing a policy framework for working with armed forces*
*in complex political emergencies*
**October 2008**

**- Executive Summary -**

Interaction between civilian and military actors in complex political emergencies (CPE) continues to warrant close examination, as the scope and implications of these relationships are significantly impacting contemporary humanitarian operations. Acknowledging that such involvement between military and humanitarian bodies has been widely questioned and critiqued, this paper takes no position as to the ideal nature of the relationship; it adopts as its base for discussion situations in which the relationship is already in place. In recent years, humanitarian organizations have been criticized for the *ad hoc* style of interaction, as well as over the highly fragmented nature of this sector. There are many explanations for this lack of structure and coordination, a broad discussion of which is beyond the scope of this brief. However, this failure to collaborate in planning has implications for civil-military coordination (CIMIC). Policies, methods and tools to develop collaboration of an appropriate nature and character between humanitarian bodies dealing with military partnerships are vital for the success of any civil-military undertaking.

Fundamentally, *civil-military coordination* may be defined as "The essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies that is necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimize inconsistency, and when appropriate pursue common goals"[1] wherein *military actors* include "a wide spectrum of actors such as the local or national military, multi-national forces, UN peacekeeping troops, international military observers, foreign occupying forces, regional troops or other officially organized troops"[2] and *humanitarian actors* refer to "civilians, whether national or international, UN or non-UN, governmental or non-governmental, which have a commitment to humanitarian principles and are engaged in humanitarian activities."[3] It is important to note that in CPEs, more than one type of both military and humanitarian actors are likely to be present, and so coordination may entail establishing different protocols given the nature of each military actor with which humanitarian actors are involved.

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[1] IASC/OCHA. *Civil-Military Guidelines & Reference for Complex Emergencies.* (Geneva: United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2008), 8, http://ochaonline.un.org/OchaLinkClick.aspx?link=ocha&docId=1087369.

[2] IASC. *Civil-Military Relationship in Complex Emergencies – An IASC Reference Paper.* (Geneva: United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2004), 5-6, http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/PANA-7CTJ8U/$file/iasc_jun2004.pdf?openelement.

[3] Ibid.

In such circumstances, it is crucial to develop a coordinated approach amongst humanitarian agencies in the field, establishing regulatory principles or frameworks governing the relationship between these organizations and military units. This type of coordination is critical in order to: (a) maintain humanitarian neutrality; (b) clarify context-based responsibilities of these two sets of actors and ensure prioritization of urgent services; (c) ultimately facilitate transfer of responsibility away from the military, as such initiatives typically are shorter in scope and time frame than that of humanitarian operations; and (d) where possible, avoid increasing security presence in already militarized environments.

While challenges exist to such coordination, including the fragmented character of humanitarianism and the varying agency structures and mandates, some recommendations can be put forth to facilitate a procedural framework for engaging with military actors in the field. In such environments, it is critical to assert the leadership of humanitarian agencies, which are often best situated to provide a nuanced understanding of context. In addition, it is equally important to establish a humanitarian coordinating body which engages in the mapping of relevant actors and their responsibilities; establish a deliberative forum between humanitarian agencies aimed at fostering a policy framework; clearly delineate military and humanitarian action; formulate mechanisms which ensure policies are upheld, including monitoring events; appreciate the different roles of humanitarian versus military bodies, and share information where agreed upon; and recognize the nature and scope of services which can realistically be provided and as such, prioritized. It should be noted that, given the presence of multiple military actors, it may be necessary to cater protocols to each military body present, and that context should dictate how these recommendations are put in place.

**Introduction**

Humanitarian engagement has become a common feature in complex political emergency landscapes. At times, such humanitarian action involves actual cooperation with the military. The reasons for military intervention are multiple and varied, but in the instances discussed here, humanitarian agencies may rely on military actors in order to gain access and security necessary to provide relief. This paper approaches these issues and this relationship from the perspective of humanitarian actors, and issues and suggestions are made on this basis. There has been no small amount of discussion over the relative merits and drawbacks of such a relationship. Some critics contend that military involvement may create a dilemma by creating a militarized environment, and instituting the use of military tactics in humanitarian aid.[4] It is also argued that the merging of these two fields makes aid inherently political.[5] Further, arguments have been put forth that it may be inappropriate for humanitarians to engage where such forces are needed to ensure their access and safety. For instance, in civil wars, several scholars as well as policymakers and advocates have asserted that engaging the military to secure humanitarian aid is generally inappropriate and often has been seriously damaging in its toll on human life.[6] These arguments deserve time, consideration, and weight for any actor involved in CPEs. For the purposes of this paper, the contexts referred to are those in which a civil-military operation is already in place. It does not seek to flesh out the legitimacy of a coordinated relationship, though it puts forth the caveat that, under certain circumstances, the presence of a civil-military arrangement may be poorly placed. Given that CIMIC is a feature of many varied complex emergencies, there is need for coordination within this sphere. Humanitarian agencies have been largely criticized for their lack of coordination and collaboration amongst one another. This is an argument put forth not only when discussing military engagement, but also more generally. The *Advanced Training Program on Humanitarian Action* has published a separate policy brief detailing the general issues of humanitarian coordination and principles, reasons for improving coordination, and what obstacles may exist to this collaboration.[7]

The aim of this brief is to discuss inter-agency collaboration by humanitarian organizations, with the aim of encouraging policies and protocols specifically in regard to how these groups work with military actors in the field. The paper will proceed first with a review of some definitional points for clarification purposes. A discussion follows on why creating an inter-humanitarian agency policy framework for CIMIC is so important in complex political emergencies, followed by an examination of some challenges to this form of communication. Finally, some recommendations are put forth on establishing comprehensive policy decisions.

Given that humanitarian organizations are often present in situations where cooperation on some level with the military is necessary, it is important that agencies establish common cross-sectoral protocols relating to this interaction.[8]

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[4] Mark Duffield. "Complex Emergencies and the Crisis of Developmentalism." *IDS Bulletin* 24, no. 4 (1994), http://www.ids.ac.uk/UserFiles/File/publications/classics/duffield_25_4.pdf.

[5] Mark Duffield. "Governing the Borderlands: Decoding the Power of Aid." *Disasters* 25, no. 4 (2001): 308-320.

[6] See for example: Alex de Waal. *Famine Crimes: Politics & the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa.* (London: African Rights & the International African Institute, 1997).

[7] ATHA. "Humanitarian Coordination: An Overview." *ATHA Thematic Brief Series* (2008), http://www.atha.se/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageId=1633&parentID=541&nodeID=3.

[8] Additional guidelines and handbooks on humanitarian action and CIMIC available from UN-OCHA at:

**Definitions**

In order to establish coordinated guidelines, it is first necessary to frame the discussion by elaborating on the meaning of some key terms and actors, confusion about which contributes to some of the challenges of a lack of coordination. Firstly, CIMIC varies in how different actors conceive of this term, and in some cases has a particularly narrow focus. For instance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) uses this nomenclature to mean "co-ordination and co-operation, in support of the mission, between the NATO Commander and civil populations, including national and local authorities, as well as international, national and non-governmental organizations and agencies."[9] Meanwhile, the European Union (EU) adopts a similar definition, however it follows that the key relationship is "between military components of EU-led Crisis Management Operations and civil-role players (external to the EU)."[10] Finally, the United States military references civil military operations as "activities of a commander that establish, maintain, influence, or exploit relations between military forces, governmental and nongovernmental civilian organizations and authorities, and the civilian populace in a friendly, neutral, or hostile operational area in order to facilitate military operations, to consolidate and achieve operational US objectives."[11] What is interesting to observe in these definitions is that each is militarily oriented, and is also specifically referring to its respective body, be it NATO, the EU or the US military. That each organization has its own definition demonstrates the significant challenges in coordination between humanitarian agencies attempting to find collaborative protocols in dealing with military actors.

For the purposes of this paper, the broadest definition will be used to encompass the widest range of legitimate partners. This paper adopts the definition offered by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for Civil Military Coordination which is: "The essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies that is necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimize inconsistency, and when appropriate pursue common goals,"[12] wherein military actors include "a wide spectrum of actors such as the local or national military, multi-national forces, UN peacekeeping troops, international military observers, foreign occupying forces, regional troops or other officially organized troops,"[13] and humanitarian actors include "civilians, whether national or international, UN or non-UN, governmental or non-governmental, which have a commitment to humanitarian principles and are engaged in humanitarian activities."[14] Using these comprehensive terms and defining actors should facilitate a better understanding of which actors require coordination amongst one another.

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http://ochaonline.un.org/AboutOCHA/Organigramme/EmergencyServicesBranchESB/CivilMilitaryCoordinationSection/PolicyGuidanceandPublications/tabid/1403/Default.aspx.

[9] Michael Pugh. "The Challenge of Civil-military Relations in International Peace Operations." *Disasters* 25, no. 4 (2001), 345.

[10] Cedric de Coning. "Civil Military Coordination and UN Peacebuilding Operations." *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 5, no. 2 (2006), 98, http://jha.ac/2006/02/11/civil-military-coordination-and-un-peacebuilding-operations/.

[11] Ibid.

[12] IASC/OCHA. *Civil-Military Guidelines & Reference for Complex Emergencies.* . (Geneva: United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee/United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2008), 8, http://ochaonline.un.org/OchaLinkClick.aspx?link=ocha&docId=1087369.

[13] IASC. *Civil-Military Relationship in Complex Emergencies – An IASC Reference Paper*. (Geneva: Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2004), 5-6, http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/PANA-7CTJ8U/$file/iasc_jun2004.pdf?openelement.

[14] Ibid, 5.

> **Box 1: Overview of key definitions**
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> *Civil Military Coordination:* The essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies that is necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimize inconsistency, and when appropriate pursue common goals.[15]
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> *Military actors:* Military actors include wide spectrum of actors such as the local or national military, multi-national forces, UN peacekeeping troops, international military observers, foreign occupying forces, regional troops or other officially organized troops.[16]
>
> *Humanitarian actors:* Humanitarian actors include civilians, whether nation or international, UN or non-UN, governmental or non-governmental, which have a commitment to humanitarian principles and are engaged in humanitarian activities.[17]

It should be noted that in 2005, the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Principles stipulated that a cluster approach is to be used for humanitarians operating in emergencies. This approach designates a lead UN agency for nine areas of activity.[18] Within this approach, "The focal point for UN-CMCoord [United Nations – civil-military coordination] in the UN system is the Civil-Military Coordination Section (CMCS) of OCHA (Geneva)."[19] While this is an important recent evolution in coordination, the explicit CIMIC responsibility of OCHA mandates coordination on behalf of UN entities. This does not necessarily encompass the range of other humanitarian providers whose actions may not be within the scope of this lens, and may lead external organizations to take varying stances on CIMIC.

**Importance of establishing an inter-humanitarian agency policy framework for CIMIC**

The coordination and establishment of a set of principles for working with military actors that is utilized across humanitarian bodies in a given context is vital for a number of reasons. Where individual bodies use different standards from one another in dealing with the military, this may undermine the neutrality of the entire humanitarian operation. In addition, the military's involvement typically aims at comparatively short-term engagement, whereas humanitarians may be present for extended periods after the departure of forces. Thus, inter-agency policies ultimately will make the transition of responsibility from the military to other actors more smooth and efficient. In

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[15] IASC/OCHA. *Civil-Military Guidelines & Reference for Complex Emergencies.* (Geneva: United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee/United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2008), 8, http://ochaonline.un.org/OchaLinkClick.aspx?link=ocha&docId=1087369.

[16] IASC. *Civil-Military Relationship in Complex Emergencies – An IASC Reference Paper.* (Geneva: United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2004), 5-6, http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/PANA-7CTJ8U/$file/iasc_jun2004.pdf?openelement.

[17] Ibid, 5.

[18] IASC. *Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response.* (Geneva: United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2006), http://www.humanitarianreform.org/humanitarianreform/Portals/1/cluster%20approach%20page/Introduction/IASCGUIDANCENOTECLUSTERAPPROACH.pdf

[19] OCHA. "Coordination of Disaster Response Preparedness Activities." United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, http://ocha.unog.ch/drptoolkit/PCoordination.html

addition, as the responsibilities between these two sets of actors are often conflated, coordinated approaches will help to clarify the duties of both the military and humanitarians, and ensure better prioritization of urgent services. Further, there may a risk of overextending the expectations of different actors, both in terms of what is plausible and what is appropriate. Established protocols can encourage accountability and make clearer distinction around what the actors can and should provide. Finally, "use of military assets, armed escorts, joint humanitarian-military operations and any other actions involving visible interaction with the military must be the option of last resort. Such action may take place only where there is not comparable civilian alternative and only the use of military support can meet critical humanitarian need."[20] Thus, the option of last resort is an important principle of CIMIC. Such usage is discouraged in part due to its increasing the presence of security personnel in what is already a militarized environment. Ensuring comprehensive policies may prevent the use of forces where they are not absolutely needed.

*Issues of humanitarian impartiality and neutrality*

Humanitarian action is predicated upon the principles of neutrality and impartiality. There may be debate over the relative merits of these principles, but many organizations contend that in CPEs, being perceived as neutral and impartial is vital in terms of the security and access of the humanitarian community. Hence, undermining these principles when they are the premise for involvement presents a significant risk to personnel operating in these situations, as well as for local populations who will be jeopardized by the compromising of aid due to challenges to security and/or access. For instance in Afghanistan, by mid August "Nineteen aid workers had been killed so far this year – more than during the whole of 2007…."[21] In this context, humanitarians have been conflated with 'invaders'[22] (see box 4). In addition, this is often the case when military actors have explicitly political goals. This is more often clearly true with military participation in conflict (for instance, in Iraq and Afghanistan), and is more ambiguous in situations where peacekeepers are deployed (as in the DRC, East Timor, and Sudan to name some examples), or where the military is put in place to facilitate aid access (as was the case in Somalia, see box 2). Where actions are explicitly political, and the military is enmeshed in the conflict, it is all the more important to establish clear lines between actors. Though originally mandated with a neutral mission, the use of the military for security purposes in Somalia in 1993 became complicated when forces attempted to capture General Mohamed Farah Aidid, a clear political maneuver. Subsequently, humanitarians were attacked in Somalia, with some events even directly attributed to US military action (See Box 2). Further, differing policies of humanitarian agencies toward the use of military services may have implications for neutrality, which reverberate within the wider humanitarian community. Where some agencies are seen as too closely linked with the military, the entire legitimacy of a humanitarian operation may be undermined. This may be particularly troubling for civil components of UN missions, as the complex network of UN bodies makes differentiating UN peacekeepers from UN humanitarian personnel difficult.[23]

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[20]IASC. *Civil-Military Relationship in Complex Emergencies*. (Geneva: Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2004), http://ochaonline.un.org/OchaLinkClick.aspx?link=ocha&DocId=1001219

[21] BBC World News. "Aid women killed in Afghanistan." *BBC World News*, August 13, 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7558076.stm

[22] Ibid.

[23] Cedric de Coning. "Civil Military Coordination and UN Peacebuilding Operations." *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 5, no. 2 (2006), http://jha.ac/2006/02/11/civil-military-coordination-and-un-peacebuilding-operations/.

**Box 2: 'Securing Humanitarian Relief' in Somalia**

Civil war erupted in Somalia in 1991 between factional supporters for interim President Ali Mahdi Mohamed and those backing General Mohamed Farah Aidid.[24] Given massive displacement as a result, aid workers were deployed to facilitate relief to refugee populations. In addition, a United Nations Mission to Somalia (UNOSOM) was put into effect. However, the tenuous political environment presented a significant security risk to involved humanitarian agencies. As a result, in 1992, the United States military deployed to Somalia, with the objective mandate of using "'all necessary means to establish a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations in Somalia as soon as possible.'"[25] The tactics used by the military in this environment have been largely criticized, as civilian deaths occurred as a result of forces attempting to secure this aid. The forces involved in Somalia ultimately became entangled in political affairs, attempting to apprehend Aidid. Because the cause of their original mission was humanitarian, NGOs were targeted. For instance, "World Vision personnel were, in fact, attacked by militia forces expressing their displeasure with the United States-led enforcement."[26] Ironically, though the purpose of military intervention was originally for relief purposes, coordination between military and humanitarian actors in planning and throughout the mission was largely on an *ad hoc* basis. In Somalia, "The lack of military contact with NGOs in the planning phase led to initial confusion and then to continuing disagreement between the groups over what the military's priorities should be."[27] Ultimately disagreements between NGOs and military (and between humanitarian agencies) made appropriate planning nearly impossible. As such, a military approach, including attempts to disarm the population and engage in what were fundamentally political actions, was largely undertaken. Evidenced by attacks on World Vision, at least in part as a consequence of the militaries apprehension of Aidid, the perception of humanitarians as neutral bodies was lost, ultimately leading to a loss of civilian life.

Concretely, organizations often institute different policies around what may tend to be seen as small decisions. However, the implications of these decisions may determine the perception of an organization, or humanitarian organizations more generally. As fragmented as the industry may be, humanitarians are often perceived locally as relationally the same. For instance, one policy decision often highlighted as contentious is the use of military or armed escorts for humanitarian convoys. Most humanitarian bodies would emphasize that such usage should only be employed as a last resort, and when an absolute necessity.[28] Inherently, determination of such circumstances requires some flexibility due to the fact that circumstances change, at times rapidly, in complex emergencies. However, establishing classifications beforehand across agencies around what constitutes an 'emergency' would ground a framework for such practices. It is important to recall that in sensitive environments, "the nature of the relation between one or a group of humanitarian organization(s) and

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[24] United Nations Operation in Somalia II. "Background: Summary." March 1993 - March 1995.

[25] John M. George. "The Politics of Peace: The Challenge of Civil-Military Cooperation in Somalia." *Public Administration and Management* 10, no. 2 (2005), 162, http://www.pamij.com/v10n2/pam10-2--george.pdf.

[26] Daniel Byman, Ian Lesser, Bruce Pirnie, Cheryl Benard, and Matthew Waxman. *Strengthening the Partnership: Improving Military Coordination with Relief Agencies and Allies in Humanitarian Operations.* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2000), 105, http://rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1185/.

[27] John M. George. "The Politics of Peace: The Challenge of Civil-Military Cooperation in Somalia." *Public Administration and Management* 10, no. 2 (2005), 171-172, http://www.pamij.com/v10n2/pam10-2--george.pdf.

[28] IASC/OCHA. *Civil-Military Guidelines & Reference for Complex Emergencies.* (Geneva: United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs , 2008), 16, http://ochaonline.un.org/OchaLinkClick.aspx?link=ocha&docId=1087369.

the military as well as the conduct of these actors in this relationship may also have an effect on other humanitarian agencies working in the same area and even beyond, possibly affecting the perception of humanitarian action in general."[29] Other important decisions that warrant policy cohesion include the levels of security used at humanitarian compounds (numbers and composition of guards, institution of recommended curfews, etc.), social integration with military personnel, and the wearing of military uniforms. These various facets impact public perception of humanitarians and as such further support the need for commonality between agencies in regards to such elements.

*Logistical challenges*

Lack of established policies and protocols for CIMIC may also lead to significant logistical challenges. Primarily, *ad hoc* attempts at joint missions and partnerships have largely conflated the roles and responsibilities of humanitarian and military actors.[30] This may extend the use of military beyond the scope of what is necessary and appropriate, and given the fundamentally more structured nature of the military, may encourage forces to take the lead where humanitarian organizations should be at the forefront of activity. Furthermore, and perhaps more concerning, is that such disjointed efforts often lead to poor prioritization regarding the delivery of resources.[31] This is particularly true where agencies are reliant on military services for transport facilities and logistics. When agencies are attempting to rapidly deploy resources, without consulting one another, it has been the case that non-essential supplies arrive on the scene prior to indispensable items. Having military manage airlifts may be useful, but humanitarian organizations may be better suited to structure priorities for the delivery of resources. This was specifically problematic in the post-genocide period in Rwanda (see Box 3).

In such a chaotic context, there may be significant implications for those dependent on arriving aid. To ensure that aid and funds are not wasted and that services are facilitated appropriately agencies must come together and determine priorities, as well as assess how to best cooperate and address pressing needs and gaps in services in the interim. This is, of course, a problem of humanitarian coordination more generally, however in CIMIC this is a particularly important point, as clarification around these priorities, roles, and responsibilities may impede the erosion of 'humanitarian space', which is one of the central concerns in situations where military and

> **Box 3: Airlifts in Rwanda**
> "After the genocide and refugee crisis in Rwanda, the initial days of the airlift were a debacle. Seventeen countries, 16 NGOs, and several UN agencies simply chartered their own planes and arrived at airfields in the region, assuming that there were personnel and facilities equipped to handle their cargo. Planes landed at airports with limited ramp space and insufficient fuel. Non-priority cargo often landed before essential items, such as water treatment equipment, because of poor planning."[32]

humanitarian actors partner (and at times, in the post 9/11 period, integrate missions).[33]

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[29] Ibid, 9.

[30] Michael Pugh. "The Challenge of Civil-military Relations in International Peace Operations." *Disasters* 25, no. 4 (2001), 346.

[31] Daniel Byman, Ian Lesser, Bruce Pirnie, Cheryl Benard, and Matthew Waxman. *Strengthening the Partnership: Improving Military Coordination with Relief Agencies and Allies in Humanitarian Operations.* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2000), 74, http://rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1185/.

[32] Cedric de Coning. "Civil Military Coordination and UN Peacebuilding Operations." *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 5, no. 2 (2006), http://jha.ac/2006/02/11/civil-military-coordination-and-un-peacebuilding-operations/.

*Varying approaches and timeframes*

In addition, military and humanitarian organizations have different scopes and spans working in CPEs. Military actors typically are only deployed once an emergency is underway. Relief providers may have had actors on the ground before the conflict necessitated military intervention. For instance, relief organizations may have had staff working in development capacities, they may have deployed staff at the onset of pre-conflict displacement, or the state may not yet have accepted outside military presence (as has been the case in Zimbabwe, and presented a long-standing obstacle in Darfur). In some instances, this early presence may provide humanitarian agencies with nuanced understanding of local needs as well as relevant cultural barriers.[34] As a result they may have a more intricate understanding of the challenges on the ground, as well as what types of interventions are likely to be the most sustainable. Information sharing in this regard can be quite useful for incoming military actors; however, again, this necessitates policies around such exchanges. Fundamentally, humanitarians walk a fine line in that by interacting with local populations, they are often privy to sensitive information that merits confidentiality. However, conversely, "to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to populations in need, information sharing with the military forces may at times become necessary. In particular, information that might affect the security of civilians and/or humanitarian workers should be shared with appropriate entities."[35] To ensure confidentiality, balancing against civilian protection, humanitarian organizations benefit from determining what types of information warrant sharing, and ways in which that knowledge can be passed and subsequently secured so as to not compromise populations or humanitarian workers.

Aside from being first on the ground, humanitarian agencies often have a broader, and different mandate spanning a longer time frame than military actors. Additionally due to a concomitant focus by the military on exit strategy, military forces may depart rapidly.[36] There are some key considerations in this regard. Firstly, relying on military only for pre-determined essential services will decrease the likelihood that these services will be hindered upon departure of military personnel. In addition, better coordination surrounding roles and capacities of various organizations may facilitate an easier handover of responsibilities from departing military actors to those humanitarians remaining. Thus, as military interventions may be short-lived, and functions ultimately handed over to humanitarian agencies engaged in the field, this transition is exceedingly difficult if a systemized set of protocols and procedures does not exist between military and humanitarians.

*Increasing the securitization of an already militarized environment*

Finally, it is necessary to address the ethical considerations of increasing a security presence where it may not be needed. Whenever operating in complex emergencies, humanitarian organizations must

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[33] Abby Stoddard and Adele Harmer. "Room to Maneuver: Challenges of Linking Humanitarian Action and Post-Conflict Recovery in the New Global Security Environment." New York: United Nations Development Programme , 2005), 12, http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2005/papers/hdr2005_stoddard_abby_and_adele_harmer_23.pdf.

[34] Ibid 76.

[35] IASC/OCHA. *Civil-Military Guidelines & Reference for Complex Emergencies.* (Geneva: United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2008), 14, http://ochaonline.un.org/OchaLinkClick.aspx?link=ocha&docId=1087369.

[36] Daniel Byman, Ian Lesser, Bruce Pirnie, Cheryl Benard, and Matthew Waxman. *Strengthening the Partnership: Improving Military Coordination with Relief Agencies and Allies in Humanitarian Operations.* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2000), 113, http://rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1185/.

seriously consider the implications of the presence of additional military actors in what may already be a highly militarized environment. As discussed, some feel that involving military actors, for a number of reasons, is not appropriate.[37] It is the responsibility of humanitarians ultimately concerned with protection activities, to ensure to the greatest extent possible that such activities do not harm beneficiary populations. It is imperative that aid agencies ensure they are living up to the principle of 'Do No Harm' (DNH), which emphasizes, "it is not necessary or justified to act as if aid has no responsibility for its negative—or positive—side effects on conflicts. While pursuing humanitarian and developmental imperatives, aid workers should also know and do more to ensure that their aid does no harm."[38] Where the military is present in response to humanitarian needs, humanitarians have a particular responsibility, and are encouraged to take the lead in prioritization of services and separation of duties.

However, it is important to note that in some situations where CIMIC is needed, it may be more challenging to set directives to military actors. There are different contexts in which military and humanitarians must coordinate. On the one hand, there are some situations where military actors are tasked specifically with supporting humanitarian operations (as was the case in Somalia). At times, humanitarians may use private security and military functions as well. For instance, even the ICRC in Somalia and the Northern Caucasus, and MSF in Somalia and Pakistan have used private armed escorts.[39] Though these are important occurrences, they come with a whole host of additional concerns, the extent of which cannot be encompassed in this brief. In such situations, humanitarian actors must work together to distinguish which activities may be tasked to the military.

On the other hand, the military is often engaged in a context with its own mission, distinct from humanitarian aims. In such scenarios, military actors are likely to perceive themselves as the lead actor. However, from a humanitarian perspective, any provision of aid to beneficiaries should be prioritized and serviced with aid agencies as the lead. This is a principle put forth by OCHA, which notes, "In any civil-military coordination humanitarian actors must retain the lead role in undertaking and directing humanitarian activities."[40] While this is likely to present some challenges, improved dialogue between agencies on what is appropriate to ask of military will help facilitate this process. Military actors are likely to have additional guidelines and varying perspective on these issues. While these can be useful to keep in mind, they are beyond the scope of this draft, which is targeted primarily at humanitarian providers.

On this basis, as well as premised on DNH responsibility, humanitarian organizations must ensure that the use of security to facilitate access or for staff safety does not exacerbate violent circumstances

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[37] See for example: Meinrad Studer. "The ICRC and civil-military relations in armed conflict." *International Review of the Red Cross* 83 no. 842 (June 2001): 367-391, http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/IMToolBox/10_Reference/Civil_Military_Relations/2001_ICRC_Military.pdf

[38] Mary B. Anderson. *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace—Or War*. (Boulder, Colo: Lynne Reinner Publishers), 38.

[39] James Cockayne. *Commercial Security in Humanitarian and Post-Conflict Settings: An Exploratory Study*. (New York: International Peace Academy, 2006), 6, http://www.ipacademy.org/pdfs/COMMERCIAL_SECURITY_FINAL.pdf

[40] IASC/OCHA. *Civil-Military Guidelines & Reference for Complex Emergencies.*(Geneva: United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs , 2008), 11, http://ochaonline.un.org/OchaLinkClick.aspx?link=ocha&docId=1087369.

for local populations.[41] For instance, theft of military resources and weapons has occurred in many CPEs. Further, military personnel, including peacekeepers, have been implicated in exploiting local populations. For instance, allegations of sexual violence have been made against peacekeepers around the world, ranging from Nepal, to the DRC, Kosovo, Haiti and Timor Leste.[42] Given the far reaching implications of cooperation, it is imperative then that there is consensus within the humanitarian community around the type and extent of military activities deemed necessary, and that experiences working with military actors are shared across humanitarian agencies to support the determination of proper degrees of collaboration.

**Challenges to formulating overarching policy**

Improved policies and protocols around CIMIC, though important, also suffer from a number of stumbling blocks. Perhaps the most obvious and widely discussed challenge is the pervasive fragmentation of the humanitarian industry itself. For a number of reasons, humanitarian agencies are often reticent or unable to coordinate.[43] This may be due to the changing nature of contemporary conflicts, varying mandates and internal approaches, lack of funding for logistics, inter-agency competition for donor funds, and so forth.[44]

In addition, there are different organizational structures between humanitarian providers. Within the humanitarian realm, actors can typically be categorized as either UN agencies, the ICRC and the wider Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, or international and national NGOs.[45] Within these spheres, there are different types of protection activities, and varying approaches regarding critical issues such as interaction with the military, [46] as well as perspectives on the balance between neutrality and advocacy. For instance, while the ICRC is very strict in its neutral mandate,

> Médicins Sans Frontières (MSF) views acting as an agent of change as central to its work, including highlighting the responsibilities of the various actors involved. For MSF, neutrality means being non-partisan and not siding with any warring party. Other agencies go further, particularly those with mandates that extend beyond emergency action to include recovery and development. These agencies advocate a form of 'politicised' humanitarianism, where humanitarians seek to influence the political root causes of conflict and poverty.[47]

This difference has significant consequences for the capacity to coordinate. Some agencies may not be particularly concerned with neutrality if they are 'politicized.' On the opposite spectrum, other agencies, like the ICRC, might not be willing to work with military actors or may have very specific

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[41] UN-OCHA. *Civil-Military Guidelines & Reference for Complex Emergencies.* Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2008, 12, Ibid, 12.

[42] BBC News. "UN sexual allegations double." May 6, 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4521481.stm; BBC News. "Peacekeepers 'abusing children.'" May 27, 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/7420798.stm.

[43] Sue Graves, Victoria Wheeler and Ellen Martin. *Lost in translation: managing coordination and leadership reform in the humanitarian system.* (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2007), http://www.odi.org.uk/hpg/papers/hpgbrief27.pdf.

[44] Extensive elaboration on these difficulties is beyond the task set about in this brief. For a more comprehensive analysis on coordination issues, see: ATHA. "Humanitarian Coordination: An Overview." *ATHA Thematic Brief Series* (2008), http://www.atha.se/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageId=1633&parentID=541&nodeID=3.

[45] Catriona Gourlay. "Partners Apart: Managing Civil-Military Co-operation in Humanitarian Interventions." In *Peacekeeping: Evolution or Extinction?* Disarmament Forum no. 3 (2000), 34, http://www.unidir.ch/bdd/fiche-article.php?ref_article=131.

[46] Sorcha O'Callaghan and Sara Pantuliano. "Protective action: Incorporating civilian protection into humanitarian response." (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2007), 12, http://www.odi.org.uk/hpg/papers/hpgbrief29.pdf.

[47] ODI. "Humanitarian advocacy in Darfur: the challenge of neutrality." (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2007), 1, http://www.odi.org.uk/hpg/papers/hpgbrief28.pdf.

requirements if doing so.  These issues present impediments to establishing inter-agency policies. Furthermore, some structures have greater local flexibility than others, increasing the ability for local participation.  Meanwhile, directives for other organizations may be headquartered elsewhere, limiting the capacity for agencies to determine local policy decisions.[48] Finally, some humanitarian organizations lack an international operational structure which decides and implements policy regarding cooperation with military actors, and thus adopt an *ad hoc* approach to decision-making in urgent complex emergencies.  Consequently, creating a coherent set of policy objectives from humanitarians working with military forces in complex emergencies comes up against significant obstacles to implementation.

## **Current Challenges for Humanitarian Actors**

To the extent possible, a number of recommendations can be put forth which may facilitate improved policy-making by humanitarian organizations when dealing with military actors in complex emergency settings.  These are in addition to and distinct from the excellent resources provided by OCHA, which include general guidelines, handbooks on specific types of interactions, and guides for specific contexts.[49]

*Keep in mind that humanitarian actors should take the lead*

In any aid context, it is important to note that humanitarian actors are responsible for the prioritization of relief efforts, and that military is in place to play a supporting role.[50]  There may be a tendency, given the hierarchical and more structured nature of military actors, for these forces to take the lead.  Participating in any leadership bodies, and approving military techniques and strategies will help humanitarian agencies stay at the forefront of decision-making. The humanitarian community should play a central role in determining the parameters of engagement. This is not, of course, at the exclusion of the military.  However, humanitarian's position in this relationship is to determine the scope of action.  In practice, this will mean identifying points of agreement with the military, however it must be maintained that relief provision itself is a humanitarian role.

*Establish a coordinating body between actors*

A coordinating body should be established in order to facilitate communication between humanitarian actors and military actors. Military actors do have structures of this sort to facilitate coordination with humanitarians on their end.  For instance, the NGO-Military Working Group in Afghanistan, "is designed to help overcome difficulties and disagreements over issues such as NGO security and the appropriate targeting of military-led aid…."[51] In addition, general humanitarian coordinating bodies are in place.  Again, in Afghanistan, the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) [52] is meant to set up structures for humanitarian actors.  However, while the military

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[48] Daniel Byman, Ian Lesser, Bruce Pirnie, Cheryl Benard, and Matthew Waxman.  *Strengthening the Partnership: Improving Military Coordination with Relief Agencies and Allies in Humanitarian Operations.*  (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2000), 88, http://rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1185/.

[49] Additional guidelines and handbooks on humanitarian action and CIMIC available from UN-OCHA at: http://ochaonline.un.org/AboutOCHA/Organigramme/EmergencyServicesBranchESB/CivilMilitaryCoordinationSection/PolicyGuidanceandPublications/tabid/1403/Default.aspx.

[50] Ibid, 167.

[51] Victoria Wheeler and Adele Harmer (eds.).  *Resetting the rules of engagement: Trends and issues in military-humanitarian relations*.  London: Overseas Development Institute, 2006), 16, http://www.odi.org.uk/HPG/papers/hpgreport21.pdf.

[52] Agency Coordinating Body For Afghan Relief (ACBAR), http://www.acbar.org/index.php.

led NGO-Military working group specifically seeks to address CIMIC, ACBAR encompasses the overarching issues of coordination, and not specifically dealings with the military. Furthermore, OCHA has a Civil Military Coordination Section housed in Geneva to facilitate dialogue internationally.[53] Locally, often coordination is accomplished through the use of a liaison arrangement. This relationship should be established in order "to guarantee the timely and regular exchange of certain information, before and during military operations."[54] For a better understanding of the logistics of a liaison structure, training and workshops can be provided by the UN Civil-Military Coordination Section (CMSC). However, there is a proliferation of liaisons, given the fragmentation of humanitarianism—for instance some UN agencies use Military Liaison Officers, while the DPKO also utilizes Civil-Military Liaison Officers.[55] If liaison arrangements are to be divided as such, coordination must be arranged between these various functions so that, to the greatest extent possible, policy is uniform across humanitarian bodies. The establishment of a coordinating body, which would typically fall under the responsibility of OCHA, would be vital to discussions with the military.

*Map the actors to the given context*

One fairly straightforward and concrete preliminary task in any humanitarian context is for a coordinating body to map actors involved, along with locations and principle activities. OCHA has a mandate to fulfill such tasks more generally in the coordination of humanitarian organizations and has in some arenas been successful in compiling data and making this information public. For instance, OCHA has put together a comprehensive catalogue of all NGO and international organization staff in Sudan, available online.[56] OCHA has also developed the "Who does What Where Database and Contact Management Directory."[57] Building on this, mapping both humanitarian and military actors by a humanitarian body may prove useful, as well as providing overviews on each body's policies, responsibilities, and initiatives, and policies used by humanitarian agencies toward the military. As a first step, this will help to establish greater clarity around roles, as well as make public what types of relationships currently exist between military and humanitarian actors. This makes activities transparent, and may encourage greater policy coherence around the use of the military.

*Clear delimitation on roles of humanitarians versus military*

A critical lesson demonstrated in the case of using Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan is the danger of blurring the distinction and initiatives of military and humanitarian actors (see Box 4). In this instance, "A clear distinction between civilian and military roles is vital for the preservation of humanitarian space. In a conflict or other nonpermissive environment, if the local population is unable to differentiate between foreign civilian and military actors, all international entities may be

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[53] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Civil Military Coordination Section, http://ochaonline.un.org/?TabId=1274.

[54] IASC/OCHA. *Civil-Military Guidelines & Reference for Complex Emergencies.* (Geneva: United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs , 2008), 13, http://ochaonline.un.org/OchaLinkClick.aspx?link=ocha&docId=1087369.

[55] Ibid.

[56] OCHA. Contact List of UN Agencies, NGOs & Key Government Authorities Involved in the Humanitarian Response, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2008, http://www.unsudanig.org/contacts/.

[57] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Who does What Where Database and Contact Management Directory – 3W Version 2.20, http://3w.unocha.org/WhoWhatWhere/.

perceived as belligerents."[58] It is largely detrimental to the security of aid workers, as well as to any relationship of trust between local communities and humanitarians, to allow the development of a perception on the part of the local population, (as well as the governing authorities) which conflates humanitarian actors with the military. One agency's decision to participate in joint projects with the military may undermine both the perception as well as the capacity of other organizations working in the field. It is challenging to have some humanitarian actors committed to a political cause, while others attempt to retain neutrality. Coordination and discussion of these implications may encourage agencies to modify their behavior when it presents a security risk to other organizations.

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**Box 4: Provisional Reconstruction Teams and the Erosion of 'Humanitarian Space'**

Coordinating in Afghanistan, given the complexity and array of actors involved, has been a particularly daunting challenge. Not only is this context marked by a plethora of organizations, working on relief on a range of sub-topics, in a highly insecure environment, but it also requires relief work to be done at a highly decentralized level due to the erosion of other institutions.[59]

Clearly, the situation in Afghanistan is complicated by the extraordinary involvement of the international coalition forces. This pervasive level of international engagement makes differentiation of actors inherently more challenging. These roles have only been conflated further with the use of Provincial Reconstruction Teams, which "combine military personnel and civilian staff from the diplomatic corps and development agencies," with the aims to "extend the authority of the Afghan central government, promote and enhance security, and facilitate humanitarian relief and reconstruction operations."[60]

International organizations have been divided regarding these teams. Those tied to notions of neutrality see this action as fundamentally eroding the space between military and relief efforts, thus breaking down trust by civilians. In addition, this endangers the security of all humanitarian staff, as it is difficult to identify political-military actors from relief workers.[61] Indeed, Afghanistan has become one of the most insecure environments in which humanitarian activities take place. The loss of this 'humanitarian space' has had largely stifling impacts on the capacity to distribute aid, and attacks on humanitarian aid workers are pronounced in this context.[62]

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*Create a forum for dialogue and establish a clear baseline set of protocols*
The humanitarian coordinating body may provide a deliberative forum in which to engage discussion and debate around issues of military coordination. There are several obstacles to this coordination,

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[58] Michael J. Dziedzic and Colonel Michael K. Seidl. *Provincial Reconstruction Teams: Military Relations with International and Nongovernmental Organizations in Afghanistan*. (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2005), 6, http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr147.html.

[59] Naomi Weinberger. "Civil-Military Coordination in Peacebuilding: The Challenge in Afghanistan. *Journal of International Affairs* 55, no. 2 (2002), 264-266, http://www.naomiweinberger.com/peacebuilding.pdf.

[60] Michael J. Dziedzic and Colonel Michael K. Seidl. *Provincial Reconstruction Teams: Military Relations with International and Nongovernmental Organizations in Afghanistan.* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2005), 1-2, http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr147.html.

[61] Ibid, 4-5.

[62] UN News Centre. "Ongoing insecurity hampering humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan – UN." *UN News Centre,* December 17, 2007, http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=25084&Cr=afghan&Cr1=.

noted above, and organizations may have different reasons for the varying employment of military services. Establishing a mechanism for dialogue may help flesh out some of these issues, and may allow a coordinating body to, at a minimum, establish a framework for various tiers of military engagement. On this basis, the coordinating body can produce a baseline set of protocols. While a number of independent agencies have set up codes of conduct in dealing with military,[63] this forum could enable the establishment of an inter-agency policy framework.

*Ensure mechanisms to uphold policies*
Accountability is one of the biggest challenges and critiques of humanitarian action.[64] This is true both in terms of personnel committing crimes, which are often equated to the issues presented by private military actors, and in terms of following where there are often weak links of managerial supervision. While there are extensive debates and discussion around this issue, in so far as the scope of this writing is concerned, the lack of accountability may contribute to leniency around established standards. Within specific humanitarian organizations, policies not only should exist stipulating regulations, but mechanisms should be put in place for enforcement. Agencies committed to productive engagement with military actors in CPEs should create internal accountability measures to prevent staff from taking these policies casually, and sanction those staff members that do disregard policies. In addition, it would be useful for the coordinating body to establish monitoring mechanisms to ensure adherence across programs and areas.

*Coordinate information sharing*
As discussed, humanitarian and military actors are fundamentally different in their structure, scope, goals, tactics, and strategy. Thus, they are well placed to take on different though complementary duties. Appreciating these differences, the military may be better tasked to undertake appropriate actions. Wherever possible, military should not directly provide humanitarian relief. While military may be able to navigate an insecure environment, they are geared more toward assessing risk and threat than to empowering populations.[65] On this basis, humanitarian actors should keep in mind the differences in the humanitarian versus military approach. Also, given that humanitarians are to take the lead, and have a longer standing presence in context, they should be prepared to put forth a clear and concise package of information for incoming military services, outlining a framework for responsibilities to demarcate boundaries on humanitarian and military roles, which would at minimum provide a more clear starting point for discussion and operations.

*Be realistic and prioritize*
Starting with a clear picture of what is possible may help to prevent some of the pitfalls of *ad hoc* coordination between military and humanitarian groups. Garnering an understanding of the nature and scope of services which the military can realistically achieve is a good point of departure for coordination. On this basis, coordinated humanitarian efforts can prioritize what services must be delivered before others. It is useful if agencies set overarching goals for relief efforts, a common

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[63] Victoria Wheeler and Adele Harmer (eds.). *Resetting the rules of engagement: Trends and issues in military-humanitarian relations.* (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2006) , 14, http://www.odi.org.uk/HPG/papers/hpgreport21.pdf.

[64] See for example: Humanitarian Accountability Partnership, http://www.hapinternational.org/; and Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action, http://www.alnap.org/.

[65] Michael Pugh. "The Challenge of Civil-military Relations in International Peace Operations." *Disasters* 25, no. 4 (2001), 350.

schedule at the earliest possible juncture (without being overly predictive), and a determination of what precisely they need from the military so that these actors can plan accordingly.[66]

## Conclusion

From a humanitarian perspective, identifying baseline inter-agency principles in dealing with military actors in complex political emergencies may help to avoid some of the hazards of civil-military coordination. Given environments where, due to a lack of security and access, humanitarians may be reliant on a cooperative engagement with military, many themes that parallel the overall discussion on humanitarian coordination emerge. Different approaches, structures, and institutional policies within and across organizations present impediments to policy coherence. The implications of such occurrences are damaging for the security of humanitarians, the preservation of 'humanitarian space', and perception of relief-based organization by local actors. This final point is perhaps most vital to keep in mind. Agencies ultimately are involved in contexts to facilitate the needs of local populations. Where the relationship between such groups and the international community is damaged, it seems therefore imperative to find an alternate approach—to question methodology—and arrive at a framework that is better suited to the demands of a local environment. The ability to provide those services that, premised on assessments of local situations, are deemed most vital necessitates an overarching prioritization of work. Coordinated inter-agency protocols on working with military may help facilitate improved responses to context-based requirements, on the same principle that coordination in general makes prioritization and provision of essential goods based on the needs of local populations a more attainable reality.

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[66] Daniel Byman, Ian Lesser, Bruce Pirnie, Cheryl Benard, and Matthew Waxman. *Strengthening the Partnership: Improving Military Coordination with Relief Agencies and Allies in Humanitarian Operations.* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2000), 170, http://rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1185/.

**Resources**

Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action.
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