

# **The role of communication and information in civil-military cooperation in humanitarian operations**

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## **1. Introduction**

Ten years into the post Cold War era have shown many humanitarian disasters caused by war. In the wake of these disasters many relief organizations emerged to give humanitarian aid. Nowadays, there is a great variety of actors working in the field of humanitarian operations in order to cope with the demands made by the security environment of the 21st century.

The players in the humanitarian field have many origins: international military and civilian organizations, like the United Nations, whose members are nation states; non-governmental organizations (NGOs), like Memisa or Médecins sans Frontières (MSF); the International Committee for the Red Cross; transnational corporations; and the authorities of host nations. They are in fact any group that has the will and the potential to help in specific crises. All the organizations providing aid in crises have their specific working field, operating alongside each other and, where and if necessary, collaborating with each other. They are in some instances very different from each other and often they are not traditional collaboration partners at all.

Two reasons seem to account for the growth of organizations in this area and the resulting non-traditional coalitions that are necessary. Firstly, the transnational characteristics of the new security issues require another division of labour in which neither the military nor any other single organization or nation is able to solve the problems on its own and a multi-actor approach is called for. Consequently, a wide variety of civilian and military actors, who generally have not met before, find themselves working on a shared problem. Secondly, because of the uncertainty amongst the traditional players regarding the approach to the new security issues, new actors have stepped into the void.

In this article we will examine one field of such non-traditional multi-actor collaboration: the military's relationship with civil organizations and institutions in humanitarian operations. In the British Joint Warfare Publication - an important pillar on which the Dutch Army Doctrine on peace support operations is founded - humanitarian operations are defined in the following way:

Humanitarian operations are conducted to relieve human suffering. Military humanitarian activities may accompany or be in support of humanitarian operations, conducted by specialized civilian organizations (JWP 3-50).

It is in the interest of the military as well as the civilian organizations and institutions that good civil-military cooperation relationships are established in the operation for a number of reasons. Firstly, humanitarian emergency situations may be too dangerous for civilian organizations to handle on their own and they may require security. For instance, the military may provide for the safety of the environment in which medical treatment is given by MSF. Also, other specialized help from the military, such as the clearing of mines or logistical support may be required and complementary tasks of this nature imply good relationships. Secondly, humanitarian help and the resulting build up of a country often require a long-term response, whereas military assistance to humanitarian operations may only be needed on a temporary and complementary basis. This means that military humanitarian missions often have to be supportive of other organizations and short-term oriented. After a certain period of

time the international military community may leave the area of operations. Humanitarian organizations usually stay involved over a longer period. It is important for the military to timely transfer their responsibilities to civilian authorities and humanitarian organizations. Below we will present a number of measures that may help to improve the cooperation between the military and civilian organizations during humanitarian operations. Our arguments centre around the concepts of building confidence, trust, and control between the organizations and we will go into the roles of communication and information exchange within and between the organizations in this process. First we will outline the complexity of civil-military relationships during humanitarian operations, after which we will describe the concepts of confidence, trust, and control and analyze how these concepts contribute to the mutual cooperation between members of different organizations. In the final section of this article the importance of the role of interorganizational and interpersonal communication and information exchange in the process of creating partner confidence, trust, and control is discussed.

## **2. The complexity of civil-military relationships during humanitarian operations**

Although in recent years there have been examples of mutual benefits to be gained by civil-military cooperation in humanitarian operations (e.g., both the logistical support of the military during Operation Support Hope in Northern Iraq in 1991 and the logistical assistance provided by NATO in Albania and Macedonia in 1999 facilitated the work of humanitarian organizations), there are many instances to show that good working relationships in the field do not occur naturally. One of the circumstances preventing satisfactory civil-military cooperation may be differences of opinion among civilian relief organizations about the appropriateness of the involvement of military troops. To some humanitarian organizations, association with the military remains a sensitive matter to be limited as much as possible. For instance, in the case of the above-mentioned military support by NATO during the Kosovo refugee crisis, MSF have remarked: 'Although heavy logistical assistance has been useful, NATO is first and foremost a military organization which is currently involved in conflict and not a humanitarian actor.' The NGO believes the military is neither responsible for nor able to coordinate relief activities for the refugees (Press conference Skopje, April 9, 1999; in: Minear et al., 2000). During the same crisis the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), on the other hand, considered collaborating with the military to be necessary in order to support the refugees more adequately. As a result, the UN-organization was criticized widely by aid agencies for giving up too many of its humanitarian responsibilities to NATO (Minear et al., 2000).

In an article on cooperation between the military and UNHCR Wolfson (1997) identifies yet other circumstances standing in the way of civilians and the military cooperating. According to this author, problems between civilians and the military may arise from differences in organizational behaviour in both types of organizations. Like most NGOs, UNHCR approaches its humanitarian tasks in a utilitarian way. By this Wolfson means that relief goods and funding will be deployed in such ways that as many refugees as possible will be able to benefit from the aid given. Because of the high degree of uncertainty concerning the amount and timing of humanitarian means and funding, UNHCR and NGO staff are expected to be flexible in the extreme. The operational conduct of the military, on the other hand, is based upon maximum preparation and planning. Means and funding are calculated beforehand and the designations are fixed. Military staff is expected to behave in accordance with their mission and within their given mandate, until officially revoked by their superiors. Other problems may arise as a result of diverging organizational cultures which manifest themselves, amongst others, in different views on leadership and decision making processes.

NGOs and UN-organizations, such as UNHCR and the World Food Program (WFP), rely heavily on decentralized field offices to coordinate the humanitarian tasks at hand. Field offices are staffed to a minimum and more often than not field workers are stretched beyond their limits in their efforts to solve the problems. Under these circumstances civilian staff has to operate highly autonomously. Therefore, the role of field-managers cannot be compared to the role and functioning of military commanders because the chains of command and the formalized decision making processes which the military are accustomed to are lacking.

Not only do the military and civilian institutions differ on these and other organizational root-aspects, at the same time both parties are attached to their own way of life. They often appear to be ignorant of the organizational patterns of behaviour of their counterparts or else regard them with disdain. Because of these differences civil-military cooperation in humanitarian operations usually does not occur naturally, and relationships prove to be far from simple.

Based on the above mentioned aspects, on literature on crisis management and civil-military cooperation (Seiple, 1996; Gordenker & Weiss, 1993; Frerks, 1998; Maynard, 1999), and on the influence of crisis-situations on the development of trust (Webb, 1996; Mishra, 1996; Creed & Miles, 1996), we propose the following set of characteristics to account for the complexity of civil-military cooperation in the field:

- *Context-related characteristics:* humanitarian operations are mostly characterized by the following stressors: human suffering, threat, time pressure and the lack of resources and supporting structures. Under these conditions the humanitarian support goes on around the clock. At some time both sets of actors are overcome with exhaustion, which provides fertile soil for mutual grievances and frustration to fester.
- *Organization characteristics:* Hierarchical relations between civilian and military organizations are non-existent. Therefore, interorganizational processes during operations cannot be coordinated by traditional mechanisms. Furthermore, representatives from both kinds of organizations have different working styles, originating from the hierarchical structures of their own organizations, e.g. a fully autonomously functioning person from an NGO may have to work together with a person from the military with far less autonomy to make decisions. Finally, civil-military cooperation involves temporary relationships, dissolving as soon as the operation ends for one of the parties. Chances of renewed cooperation between the same participants are slim. Up to the present moment interorganizational monitoring and evaluation of cooperation processes between the civil and military organizations has not been an issue of interest. As a result, (inter)organizational processes of learning and change have hardly had any impact amongst the actors in the humanitarian field (Minear, 1998).
- *Task-related characteristics:* the job that has to be done consists of unfamiliar tasks that are often difficult to understand. In the military, this may be so because of the fact, that there is relatively little experience in humanitarian operations, compared to civilian fieldworkers. Civilian institutions are not only aware of what should be done, but also how. For NGOs, however, the difficulty of the tasks may originate from their relative unfamiliarity with coordinating and managing the whole gamut of humanitarian activities and actors involved, whereas the military are used to organizing. Furthermore, the tasks to be performed are often interdependent, while time is short.
- *Actor-related characteristics:* civilian and military actors alike are attached to their own different identities. Their operational habits differ widely, they come from various fields of expertise and their motivation to take part in humanitarian operations varies. Often, the members of the NGOs are opposed to military forces from the outset.

Apart from the above-mentioned sets of characteristics, civil-military cooperation involves collaboration at different organizational levels, which adds to its complexity. All parties

involved have to cooperate at two different levels at least. People at the top of the organizations have to provide a policy for working together. Furthermore, they are the spokesmen for their organizations. However, the real work has to be done in the field. The civilian and military field workers have to meet during work and cooperate.

### **3. Confidence, trust and control**

In an article about partner cooperation in alliances Das and Teng (1998) formulate a model from which several suggestions for better partner cooperation may be deduced. They describe partner cooperation as 'the willingness of a partner firm to pursue mutually compatible interests in the alliance rather than act opportunistically' (Das & Teng, 1998: 492). They see confidence in partner cooperation as central to successful cooperation. Confidence is defined as 'a firm's perceived certainty about satisfactory partner cooperation' (1998: 492). This means that confidence is inversely linked to perceived uncertainty about a partner's behaviour. The more an organization knows that the other organization performs in a reliable way, the less uncertainty there is and the better the alliance works.

Das and Teng introduce two mechanisms that play a part in building confidence in partner cooperation. The first mechanism is control: 'a regulatory process by which the elements of a system are made more predictable through the establishment of standards in the pursuit of some desired objective or state.' (1998: 493). Two measures that enable control are the defining of specific goals and objectives for the organizations or of specific rules and regulations for working together. The second mechanism mentioned by Das and Teng is trust, defined as 'positive expectations about another's motives with respect to oneself in situations entailing risk.' (1998: 494). So trust is about the goodwill of the other. It is especially valuable when organizations have to rely on their partners' performance and they themselves remain vulnerable to their partners' actions. For parties to trust one another they have to know that in the cooperation the other party will be reliable in the execution of its tasks, that it will not abuse information, that it will respect the interests of both parties, et cetera.

In the literature several kinds of trust have been described. Lewicki and Bunker (1996) distinguish three different kinds of trust.

*Calculus-based trust* is founded on rational choice of the parties, the fear of punishment for violating the trust and the rewards to be derived from preserving it. Knowing that cooperation is the best option will keep the parties working together. However, this form of trust is very fragile. A single violation is likely to terminate the exchanges between the parties.

*Knowledge-based trust* derives from repeated interactions over time between trustor and trustee. In this way reliability and dependability are formed in previous interactions, and the other's behaviour may be anticipated. This form of trust is based on repeated cycles of communication and information exchange. It develops over time. Dimensions of this kind of trust are: information about each other, predictability, and understanding that has been developed over repeated interactions. Exchanges based on this form of trust are more resilient when a violation of trust occurs.

*Identification-based trust* means that a party identifies with the other party's desires and intentions. Trust exists because the parties effectively understand and appreciate each other's wants. The other party can be confident that its interests will be fully protected and that no surveillance or monitoring of the other is necessary.

For the purpose of our analysis we would like to add two other kinds of trust that have been mentioned by McKnight, Cummings, and Chervany (1998): cognition-based and institution-based trust.



*Cognition-based trust* means that trust relies on rapid, cognitive cues or first impressions, as opposed to personal interactions. A person knows what to expect from another person on the basis of the reputation of the category to which the other person is perceived to belong.

*Institution-based trust* refers to knowing what one can expect from representatives of a certain organization. This kind of trust is based on two forms of beliefs: *structural assurances beliefs* imply that the necessary impersonal structures, such as regulations and guarantees about the behaviour of the other party, are in place to enable one to act in anticipation of a successful future endeavour. *Situational normality beliefs* imply that members of the organizations perceive the situation as normal, so that both their own roles and positions and those of the members of the other party are familiar. This leads to the expectation that cooperation will be successful.

To these categories of trust we would like to add yet another aspect which is often forgotten in the literature about trust. Lewicki, McAllister, and Bies (1998) distinguish between trust and distrust as two separate dimensions and not as two opposite ends of the same continuum. In their terms, trust is described as confident, positive expectations regarding another's conduct. Hope, faith, confidence, etcetera, in this conduct characterize high trust. Distrust, on the other hand, is characterized by confident, negative expectations regarding another's conduct. A distrusting person is sure that the other person will not behave as he would wish. It is possible to both trust and distrust a person with respect to different facets of interaction. In cooperation relationships there are often shared but also separate objectives. For instance, it is possible to trust a representative of a partner organization in professionally completing his task, and yet at the same time this person may be distrusted because he is working for an organization which is seen as a competitor. So, both trust and distrust may be necessary in this cooperation.

From the above categorization can be concluded that trust and control are not very well distinguished. Under the 'flag' of trust many elements of control have been included. The structural assurances beliefs are hardly more than control elements: the other organization can be trusted because of the many controls that exist between the two organizations. Also, calculus-based trust is hardly more than a control mechanism: people are pushed or pulled towards cooperation because of some extrinsic reinforcements. Furthermore, the distinction between trust and distrust points at the fact that members of the cooperation partner have to be checked or controlled for those aspects in which they are distrusted.

Both trust and control contribute to a high level of confidence in partner cooperation. We think that a successful cooperation relationship has to start with the necessary control mechanisms in place. When this cooperation succeeds trust will develop. However, control mechanisms, such as rules and regulations, may prove their value in stable situations, but they may be inadequate when flexibility is required. So, when the cooperating organizations are very interdependent in very uncertain and changing situations, trust has to develop quickly because control mechanisms may be too inflexible and therefore insufficient for successful cooperation. Such situations require swift trust to develop. Meyerson, Weick and Kramer (1996) describe *swift trust* to be strongly action oriented. Instead of putting energy into the development of close interpersonal relations, the emphasis is on action, absorption in tasks and the avoidance of too much personal openness. Thus, swift trust can be considered to be a pragmatic strategy to cope with high levels of uncertainty. In such situations successful cooperation between two organizations requires a certain level of trust amongst the collaborators to be able to create the necessary flexibility.

#### 4. What are the requirements for confidence, trust, and control in civil-military cooperation?

In this section we analyze what qualities and quantities of confidence, trust, and control may be necessary for a successful partnership between the military and the civilian organizations during humanitarian crises. At first sight, it may seem ideal when two organizations adapt fully to each other. However, it is our opinion that the different organizations should adhere to their own ways of working, which are most adequate for dealing with the situations for which they have originally been designed. For instance, the military should be and remain able to cope adequately with dangerous situations, such as combat situations, and the NGOs should remain focused on their own tasks. In spite of this, however, ways should be found to create effective cooperation between the organizations based on confidence in partner cooperation and mutual trust.

According to Seiple (1996) relationships between the US military and NGOs in humanitarian interventions are governed by two principles. The first concerns the notion that apart from the goals both parties may share during the humanitarian operation, they will also adhere to their own specific interests and agendas at the same time. The shared goals are of a temporary nature, causing temporary civil-military alliances to evolve. With regard to the second principle ruling civil-military cooperation, Seiple introduces the concept of *altruistic self-interest*. By this the author means that civilians and the military will agree to cooperate when they are convinced that by supporting the other party they will also further their own interest. However, due to the simultaneous presence of conflicting interests and motives, chances are for the interorganizational cooperation to succumb to opportunistic behaviour. It is because of these dynamics, that civil-military relationships constitute the kind of alliances that are characterized by the emergence of both trust and distrust at the same time. An employee of one organization trusts employees from the other organization on certain aspects, but distrusts these same persons with respect to others. Thus, officers trust the medical professionalism of MSF employees, but they may distrust the way in which they regard security. Because of this distrust, the officers will emphasize certain control measures, aimed at maintaining security, and introduce measures to ensure that everybody lives up to them. These measures may generate some active or passive resistance from employees of the civilian organizations, which in turn may result in more controls, etcetera.

Working together in humanitarian crises may evoke rather high levels of uncertainty amongst the participants, which may interfere with cooperation on the tasks at hand. Therefore, measures should be taken to promote confidence in partner cooperation, thereby keeping the alliance from falling apart prematurely (e.g. before the shared problems are solved in a mutually satisfactory way). Because civil-military cooperation cannot be coordinated by traditional hierarchical mechanisms, the necessary safeguards to prevent these relationships from falling apart have to be based on other sources. We propose different forms of trust mentioned in the former section as main sources to instigate initial cooperation as well as for keeping interorganizational alliances together over some period of time.

Two kinds of trust may account for the emergence of initial interorganizational cooperation. The relation between *calculus-based trust* (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996) and the principle of altruistic self-interest seems to be immanent. Driven by rationality (for instance, because both the military and civilians cannot afford the costs of not collaborating and therefore not reaching their goals, collaboration may seem to be in their best interest) both partners may decide to cooperate. Since some degree of trust is a prerequisite for cooperation we assume that cooperation on the basis of altruistic self-interest involves at least some degree of calculus-based trust. Cooperation on the basis of calculus-based trust does not require a great deal of personal commitment or involvement with the organizational norms and values of the

partner. Both parties may either view civil-military cooperation to be the lesser of two evils or else a pragmatic strategy for achieving much coveted results. Therefore, relationships based on calculus-based trust will tend to be fragile and easily dissolved. Moreover, since this specific form of trust is to a large extent based on self-interest it may in fact promote opportunistic behaviour. Although collaboration may seem to be a rational decision regarding the need for complementary expertise and capabilities, at the same time it increases dependency on the partner's cooperative behaviour. High levels of dependency cause vulnerability and uncertainty, thereby creating the need for additional forms of trust.

In our view *cognition-based trust* and parts of *institution-based trust* (McKnight, Cummings and Chervany, 1998) often have to accompany calculus-based trust in initial cooperation and trust formation. First impressions and second-hand information play an important role in reducing uncertainty about what behaviour to expect of the unfamiliar partner. For instance, based on their reputation, the military may foster positive expectations about the humanitarian expertise of NGOs. Based on hearsay about former military assistance, relief workers may look favourably upon any military offer regarding logistical support or security. Cognition based trust relies largely on this kind of tentative assumptions and indirect sources of information. However, by working together on a daily basis, direct information on the behaviour of the unfamiliar partner becomes readily available to all parties involved in collaboration. Perceived differences between direct and indirect sources of information will be interpreted in favour of the own direct experiences. Furthermore, *certain structural safeguards* have to be in place to regulate the cooperative behaviour of both parties, which reduces uncertainty about opportunistic behaviour. As a result, the partner's behaviour is becoming more predictable, which increases the perceived level of control over the relationship.

Because of the urgency in humanitarian operations to achieve the objectives, it is vital that the collaboration between civilian and military organizations starts quickly. Although they often do not know each other, representatives have to be able to work together at very short notice. Therefore, initial civil-military relationships require swift trust. In view of the above, we propose that calculus-based trust, cognition-based trust, and the structural assurances (*institution-based trust*) play an important role in initial trust formation between civilian and military partners unknown to each other. However, as more direct information becomes available or shared objectives are being partly achieved, another form of trust may develop between the partners providing additional support for more robust civil-military relationships. The tasks to be performed require informal interaction and exchange of information on a daily basis. In this way both parties are able to familiarize and mutual respect based on proven expertise may grow, leading to the development of yet another form of interorganizational trust: *situational normality* (institution-based trust). Situational normality makes both sets of participants not only feel comfortable with their own role and functioning in the alliance, but also at ease with the role and functioning of the partner in the alliance.

Both other forms of trust, viz. *identification-based trust* and *knowledge-based trust*, which we have introduced, have in common that they only grow and develop over time between individuals. They rely heavily on the building of close interpersonal relationships by which means the partner's behaviour in the alliance becomes fully predictable and understandable at all times. Because of the symbiotic nature of partnerships based on these forms of trust, the alliance has no need for control mechanisms such as monitoring or surveillance of the partners' actions. However, civil-military relationships during humanitarian operations are of a temporary nature. Collaboration takes place in a temporary system, the objective always being to get the job done. Although the military and civil organizations do indeed share some goals during humanitarian operations, at the end of the day they are highly separate organizations and likely to remain that way. Born out of totally diverging needs and motives,

besides having their own missions and goals towards society, both the military and humanitarian organizations naturally adhere to their own identities and look upon each other critically and with a sound distrust. Therefore, only knowledge-based trust may play some role between those few individuals of two cooperating organizations who have to deal closely with each other over an extended period of time. In our opinion, identification-based trust will hardly ever play any role of importance in civil-military relationships.

How much confidence in partner cooperation is required in civil-military cooperation? Regarding the necessary level, Das and Teng (1998) state that it is dependent on the type of alliance. The authors propose three different types of dependency that affect the necessary level of confidence in partner cooperation. The first regards the extent to which non-recoverable investments have been made into the alliance. The more alliance-specific investments there are, the more risk there is for partner firms, the more confidence in partner cooperation is necessary. The second aspect is the level of embeddedness and connectedness of both organizations. The more the organizations are embedded and connected, the more difficult it becomes for them to freely exit the relationship. Finally, there is the risk involved in opportunistic behaviour by one partner, abusing the resources of the other.

Since neither civil organizations nor the military will ever be closely connected in any strategic way, we presume the level of non-recoverable investments in the cooperation to be low at all times. However, because of external and political pressure the level of embeddedness and connectedness between both organizations is much higher. They are condemned to each other in concrete humanitarian aid situations and so they have to work together, whether they want to or not. They cannot openly state that they will not cooperate with the other party. Both parties also run some - but not high - risk that one party makes use of the resources of the other party. One of the risks that the organizations may see is that they may be each other's competitor in the acquisition of certain assignments. Another risk may be that an organization may perceive a loss of credibility by cooperating too closely with the other party. So, they have to be certain that they can retain their own identity in the cooperation.

This leads to the conclusion that civilian and military organizations have to have moderate - neither high nor low - confidence in the other organization. They have to form a moderate level of swift trust to be able to cooperate from the start. This level of trust requires a lot of communication and information exchange, both in the field during the operation and between headquarters before, during and after the operation. Communication and information exchange have to overcome the difficulties in cooperation which arise because of the above-mentioned characteristics, such as the stressful context in which the cooperation has to take place, the unfamiliar, fluctuating, and interdependent tasks that have to be performed, the great differences between the cooperating organizations and the actors within these organizations.

## **5. Role of communication and information exchange in the promotion of trust, control, and confidence in civil-military cooperation during humanitarian operations**

In this section we will discuss the important role of communication and information exchange in promoting trust and confidence in civil-military relationships, thereby facilitating the ways in which the military and civilian organizations cooperate during humanitarian aid interventions. In our opinion a high level of communication and information exchange between the representatives of the cooperating organizations is a *sine qua non*. We will make a distinction between top levels of the organizations and the field workers and we will suggest six opportunities for increasing the flow of daily communication and information-exchange



between the military and civilian actors. We believe that by making use of these opportunities interorganizational trust and confidence will be promoted.

First, it has to be recognized that communication and information sharing between the military and civilian organizations are impeded in circumstances where civilian organizations feel the military are trying to take over responsibilities and tasks that belong to them. In their view the use of military assets to assist in the humanitarian sphere is designed to supplement, rather than to supplant the work of traditional humanitarian agencies. From a functional standpoint, military assets can make four major kinds of contributions:

- foster the development of a protective framework of overall stability within which civilian populations are protected and humanitarian activities are carried out;
- support humanitarian agencies and the host government with logistics, personnel, construction and security counsel;
- carry out relief activities on their own initiative;
- assist humanitarian agencies and the host government with regard to crisis management.

Assuming the host nation and other parties involved agree with the military presence, the former two military contributions evoke relatively little resistance on the part of humanitarian agencies. As to the latter two, however, things are much more sensitive. Traditional humanitarian actors share a common conviction as to the lack of humanitarian expertise of the military. Besides, as stated before, civilian agencies are divided amongst themselves about the appropriateness of military involvement with humanitarian affairs. Whereas some level of consensus might be reached concerning a purely supportive role, military involvement with regard to the planning, coordination, and management of humanitarian activities will soon meet with resistance. By the same token, civilian agencies generally object to the military undertaking relief activities on their own initiative. Contributions in these areas may be viewed as an attempt from the military to unrightfully take command, or else humanitarian agencies may suspect the military from trying to steal their turf. In other words, any amount of military initiative displayed in this field will be likely to evoke high levels of distrust, thereby severely impeding communication and information sharing. Under these circumstances civil-military cooperation is hardly likely to take place. At the same time the opposite is true. Because of the supportive behaviour of the Albania Force (AFOR) military and because of repeated assurances expressed by the commander of AFOR (COMAFOR) regarding the humanitarian mission of AFOR, the Albanian civil authorities, as well as international humanitarian agencies proved themselves willing to communicate with the military and - in many cases - were in favour of cooperating with them.

Secondly, military as well as civilian organizations do recognize the importance of communication and information exchange, as the emergence of conferences and meetings on civil-military cooperation in recent years has clearly shown. On these occasions high-level managers and high-ranking military commanders meet and familiarize. These gatherings are important for discussing and evaluating cooperation experiences. Furthermore, representatives may formulate policies there on working together in future operations, which they can then communicate to their organizations.

Although the conditions for trust may be provided from the top, real trust can only be developed amongst the field workers, which brings us to the third opportunity. We assume that continuous interaction - the extent to which both sets of partners communicate and take part in information exchange - has a positive effect on the level of confidence in partner cooperation and the emergence of trust. This recognition has led to an increase of *formal* structures in the field, such as military-led centres for Civil-Military Cooperation (Cimic) or their American pendant Civil-Military Operations Centers (CMOCs). Exchange of infor-

mation and communication with national and local authorities, NGOs and international organizations is a key element of the job of Cimic officers. From a military point of view Cimic is considered to be a valuable asset in areas where military forces are or plan to be employed (*MC 411 NATO CIMIC Policy/AJP 1 Definition*). On the civilian side there exist parallel structures, called On-Site Operations and Coordination Centers (OSOCCs) and Humanitarian Operations/Information Centres (HOCs/HICs). Needless to say, civilians are in charge of these information channels. On top of this, different departments of UN-organizations, preferably in collaboration with local authorities, disseminate information and organize meetings regarding their specific topics of interest, such as water and sanitation, food distribution, security, repatriation, et cetera.

In view of the above, it is our opinion that difficulties in civil-military cooperation do not stem from a lack of formal structures for communication and information exchange. Instead, we propose that an overabundance of these formal structures, each led by either military or civilian actors, creates confusion and uncertainty as opposed to transparency and a certain degree of trust. For the formal structures to fulfil the need for communication and information sharing, they have to be *freely admissible* to all collaborating partners. This means, they have to operate on a local level to be of any use in case of an appeal for help. Instead of isolating themselves from the civilian actors by being based at military headquarters, centres for Cimic or CMOC should be based 'outside the wire' (Devendorf, 1996). In their evaluation of the humanitarian operations that took place in Albania, Macedonia and in Kosovo in 1999 (Minear et al., 2000) compare the functioning of Cimic structures there. In Macedonia Cimic was based at the Headquarters of Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps (ARCC) and KFOR in Kumanovo. In Kosovo, too, Cimic was based inside the wire at KFOR Headquarters. In Albania, however, COMAFOR decided that, rather than establish a separate Cimic centre, Cimic officers should participate in already existing structures. As a consequence, Cimic officers were assigned to the Emergency Management Group (EMG), set up by the Albanian government to coordinate the crisis management, and to the Humanitarian Information Centre, an NGO-initiative. Situated in the centre of Tirana, the HIC-offices are freely accessible to the military, humanitarian organizations and local authorities.

For each of the above-mentioned settings relationships with civilian authorities differed. In Macedonia the authorities were viewed as resisting cooperation on humanitarian issues, in Kosovo the authorities were non-existent. In Albania, on the other hand, they proved to be eminently cooperative. In July 1999 the first author of this article conducted interviews with Canadian, British, German, American and Dutch Cimic officers in Albania. In these interviews all officers expressed their satisfaction about the smooth collaboration with civil agents and organizations. They also showed themselves appreciative of AFOR's involvement in the EMG and HIC. A British Cimic officer, appointed to the EMG, compared the advantages of being assigned to the civilian-led structures to working at a military led Cimic-center. According to him, 'Cimic could have played that role (in information-exchange), but the HIC-chairman represents all those NGOs in person. They are 100% behind her, whereas they would never have been behind a military-led Cimic.'

Fourthly, we suggest improvement of civil-military relationships in the field may be found in the increase of communication, information exchange and personal contacts in more informal settings, in which the parties involved interact on a daily basis. Michael Toole, an American MD, who has cooperated with the military throughout the world stresses the importance of informal personal communication and information exchange between the military and civilian actors. Describing his experiences with the US military in Goma (1994), he comments,

Many attempts to have NGOs and the military become more familiar with each other have been made [...], but those meetings and exercises mainly involve the higher level managers and the upper ranks of the military. The real familiarization has to be made among field people. [...] In Goma there was almost no social mixing of the two groups. Without these personal relationships organizational relationships will never work. In a field of human endeavour so stressful and emotional, the personal linkages are even more important (Seiple, 1996: 165-166).

By actually working shoulder to shoulder, daily civil-military interaction becomes a natural phenomenon. This means that *situational normality* may set in. Under such circumstances the participants in the alliance will consider cooperation as a matter of course. For instance, both the Cimic-officers and the civilians appointed to the HIC in Albania worked together in extracting, gathering and distributing information. After a while, because of positive results, they voiced their respect for the degree of professionalism shown by their counterparts. Although both parties did not take part in generalizing their mutual experiences to comprise the entirety of each other's organizations, at the work floor a good deal of fraternization took place and it continued after the work for the day had been finished. Mijs observes some form of confrontation is to be expected between cooperating mutually divergent parties (Lammers, Mijs, van Noort, 1997). Therefore, the author suggests interorganizational relations should allow for differences of opinion and conflicts of interest. Informal settings are needed to enable partners to feel at ease with one another. Thus, informal settings may facilitate the processes of coping with the confrontations Mijs regards as unavoidable. Moreover, informal settings may promote feelings of *situational normality*, which in its turn affects the development of confidence in partner cooperation. However, it is our opinion that *situational normality*, one of the characteristics of institution-based trust, cannot be taken for granted in the early stages of civil-military cooperation. We suggest both calculus-based trust and cognition-based trust are needed for initial trust formation in civil-military relationships. Only by working together on a daily basis and each party contributing the required expertise, an insight is gained into actual behaviour and organizational safeguards. Information of this nature reduces uncertainty about the partner's cooperative behaviour and minimizes the risks of opportunistic behaviour. Eventually, due to continuous interaction situational normality may come about. Apart from feeling comfortable with the partners' behaviour, situational normality also results in parties assuming that structural assurances, necessary for risk-taking, will be met under such circumstances.

Fifthly, therefore, for any structure to fulfil the need for communication and information sharing there has to be *open personal contact* between all parties involved. Openness increases the transparency of civil-military relationships, allowing mutual understanding to grow. By means of open communication direct feedback is facilitated, which allows a different course of action when needed. During former humanitarian operations open personal contacts have already proven their value. For instance, the high degree of openness in the relationship between the Dutch military and Memisa in camp Mugunga (1994) led to the formation of interorganizational trust of a rather resilient nature. After the Dutch military had supported Memisa in constructing a field-hospital and supplying medical equipment, the idea was to have Dutch orderlies assist the NGO in its medical work. In this capacity the untrained orderlies could benefit from the medical expertise of the relief-workers. However, after a short period of time Memisa made it clear they preferred para-medically trained refugees to support them instead. Although faced with a serious management problem, the commanding officers trusted Memisa up to the point of understanding its underlying motives and, without relationships deteriorating, untrained military personnel were withdrawn from the field-

hospital. In an interview conducted four years after the event, the senior medical officer of the Dutch contingent motivated his decision:

*We took too many inexperienced orderlies along, relatively speaking. The NGOs use local people on those jobs. We should have brought more highly specialized medical staff. For me this was an important lesson (personal communication with the authors).*

When asked, the former logistical officer of Memisa also remembered this particular incident. Due to the actions of the commanding officers and the support received, he declared to be highly in favour of cooperating with the military during humanitarian operations.

Finally, in order to create an open communication and information exchange there has to be common acceptance of the use and objectives of the information gathering. The military consider NGOs to be rich sources of information, needed, amongst others, for force protection. NGOs, on the other hand, feel reluctant to share information if they suspect it will be used for military intelligence, as this could endanger their much-coveted neutrality in the area. By the same token, NGOs often refrain from informing the military about planned activities out of fear that this might attract undue attention from indigenous groups.

## **6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, communication and information exchange between civilian and military organizations are important in order to be able to formulate the necessary control mechanisms, and to build the required trust and confidence between both organizations. Without the required levels of confidence, trust, and control cooperation will not be successful. Furthermore, since the parties involved have little or no previous experience in working together, we propose that, at least at the onset of the cooperation process, a certain level of control is as important as a certain level of trust to reduce uncertainty. However, it has to be taken into account that, up to a certain extent, both the military and civilian institutions will have to adhere to their own interests to be able to also fulfil the goals they do not share. As mentioned before, both sets of partners come from highly disparate organizations. They have their own missions and goals towards society and no amount of communication and information sharing may ever be able to fully reduce uncertainty between civilian actors and the military.

The phases of the humanitarian operation itself may also add to the uncertainty about the cooperative behaviour amongst civilian and military partners. In our view the initial emergency-phases dictate the need for cooperation, since they exceed the capacities of any single organization to cope with the problems at hand. As a consequence, traditional relief agencies and civil authorities in host nations may appeal to the military for support. Usually, reception and accommodation of refugees will be the main goals during the first phases of a humanitarian operation. Under these circumstances of acute emergency civilian organizations and the authorities in host-nations may feel highly dependent on military assistance to reach their humanitarian goals. Compared with many civilians, the military lack humanitarian expertise. Therefore, they may be dependent on civilian organizations for the way in which their support should best be given. Interdependency for reaching shared goals is a characteristic of interorganizational cooperation. Moreover, during this highly ambiguous novel situation, both the military and civilian actors will require daily interaction and information-sharing to be able to perform their interdependent tasks. However, at some point the acute emergency is over. Refugees have been provided with shelter, their basic needs are seen to and some degree of stabilization may set in. The demands for support are changing from massive relief into specific specialist needs. Besides, as the operation proceeds over time



the number of civilian aid-agencies increases. The same applies to the financial funding supplied by donor-organizations. As a consequence, civilian institutions may feel better prepared to cope with the situational demands. Their dependency on cooperating with the military may be reduced, which in turn may affect their need for daily interaction, communication and information sharing with these partners. All of a sudden, the military may find themselves in a situation in which the tables have been turned overnight. Their ongoing support of humanitarian tasks may now even be considered as competition or as undue interference with the rightful domain of humanitarian agencies. Under these circumstances it can only be expected that the military will experience a certain degree of uncertainty as to the behaviour that is expected from them.

Humanitarian operations take place in a fluid context, causing different demands and needs for civil-military cooperation. In our view, civil-military cooperation may always be limited to certain areas under specific circumstances. The same can be expected with regard to the established levels of trust and confidence in these temporary alliances. Communication and information sharing between the parties involved before, during and after the operation may increase the awareness of these dynamics, enabling both civilians and the military to cope with the consequences of the temporary nature of their relationships.

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