

Contemporary challenges in the civil-military relationship: Complementarity or incompatibility?

RAJ RANA*

“The violence directed against humanitarian aid workers has come in a context in which the US backed coalition has consistently sought to use humanitarian aid to build support for its military and political ambitions. MSF denounces the coalition’s attempts to co-opt humanitarian aid and use it to ‘win hearts and minds’. By doing so, providing aid is no longer seen as an impartial and neutral act, endangering the lives of humanitarian volunteers and jeopardizing the aid to people in need. Only recently, on May 12th 2004, MSF publicly condemned the distribution of leaflets by the coalition forces in southern Afghanistan in which the population was informed that providing information about the Taliban and al-Qaeda was necessary if they wanted the delivery of aid to continue.” (Statement by MSF, 28 July 2004)¹

“Advocacy for an independent and neutral humanitarian approach includes a claim for maintaining a clear distinction between humanitarian action on the one hand and political-military action on the other. Not because the ICRC shies away from the military: on the contrary, we want and often have an active dialogue with them. Nor because we claim that there are not circumstances when — other actors being incapable of fulfilling their missions — a military unit might be a last resort. But because we want to avoid the current blurring of lines produced by the

* The author works with the Unit for Relations with Armed and Security Forces at the International Committee of the Red Cross. The article reflects his views alone and not necessarily those of the ICRC.

characterization of military 'hearts and minds' campaigns or reconstruction efforts as humanitarian. The ICRC has in that regard a problem with the Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan. Not on account of the strictly speaking military or security objectives they have set for themselves. In keeping with our neutrality, that is not a dimension we wish to comment on. We are however concerned because they integrate humanitarian responses into an overall military and security concept, in which responding to the needs of parts of the population can be a constituent part of a strategy to defeat an opponent or enemy."

(Statement by the ICRC, 31 March 2004)²

The 1990s saw the beginnings of a tighter integration of political and military efforts in multinational efforts towards conflict management and resolution, and a new trend of multinational military forces being given humanitarian roles and mandates. In both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Somalia, there was a high risk that these trends would weaken the perception and reality of impartial, independent and neutral humanitarian action in the eyes of both the belligerents and beneficiaries. Humanitarian agencies were able to be neutral and independent only with difficulty when they used, for example, the logistical assets of peacekeeping forces which ultimately became belligerents in the conflicts they were meant to mitigate.

Armed forces were previously unwilling or unable to rise to the "humanitarian" challenge of the Balkans or Somalia with their existing doctrine and training. But by the time NATO took military action in Kosovo in 1999, the "humanitarian" practice of armed forces had adapted to the challenge. Under enormous pressure from their home governments to be seen as "doing good", NATO military forces were prompt to act in the face of a humanitarian crisis. They were as rapid as humanitarian agencies in the delivery of food to refugees in Albania, interposed themselves into the coordination of humanitarian aid and attempted to position their military operations

¹ "MSF pulls out of Afghanistan", Médecins Sans Frontières, 28 July 2004, available at: <<http://www.msf.org/countries/page.cfm?articleid=8851DF09-F62D-47D4-A8D3EB1E876A1E0D>> (last visited on 28 July 2004).

² Humanitarian security: "A matter of acceptance, perception, behaviour...", address given by the ICRC's Director of Operations to the High-level Humanitarian Forum, Palais des Nations, Geneva, 31 March 2004.

as being a “humanitarian intervention”. As humanitarian actors followed the NATO-led ground forces into Kosovo, the blurring of roles between humanitarian actors and the military had reached its high water mark.

In 2001, the ICRC adopted Guidelines for Civil-Military Relations (CMR), based on the experiences of the previous decade.³ While a relationship with armed forces is natural for an organization that works in contexts of armed conflict, there was a particular need to address both the complexity of multi-dimensional peacekeeping operations and the growing trend towards integrating the efforts of political, military and humanitarian actors. The ICRC’s Guidelines (see Annex) address the risks and threats posed by multinational military missions engaging in humanitarian activities or deployed under a humanitarian mandate, while potentially becoming an active participant in hostilities.

Contemporary contexts such as Afghanistan and Iraq confirm the validity and persistence of the earlier fundamental issues and concerns.⁴ Some indications of the more recent developments:

- Humanitarian operations have become a mainstream, non-combat function of armed forces, employed equally in combat, stabilization operations or as part of nation-building agendas. Providing assistance to the civilian population, or influencing the humanitarian and reconstruction efforts of others, is considered as a means of “force multiplication” or “force protection”.⁵ Political authorities expect their armed forces to have improved their civil-military capacities so as to meet their obligations under international humanitarian law, in addition to becoming part of the integral

³ Meinrad Studer, “The ICRC and civil-military relations in armed conflict”, *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 83, No. 842, 2001, pp. 367-392. The ICRC has adopted the term civil-military relations to describe the specific relationship between humanitarian actors and multinational military missions in time of armed conflict. This was a deliberate choice in order to differentiate between the ICRC’s term and the military terms of “civil-military coordination” (CIMIC-NATO) and “civil affairs” (CA - U.S. Armed Forces) which refer to military doctrine and practice.

⁴ The 1990s cemented the fundamental issues of cooperation between the ICRC and multinational military missions in situations of armed conflict. The core issues of this relationship include:

- access to victims;
- visits to those detained by multinational military forces;
- exchange of information (security, general situation);
- ICRC mandate to conduct training of armed forces and disseminate international humanitarian law; and
- ICRC support and assistance for treatment of the sick and wounded.

⁵ “Colin Powell’s call for non-governmental organizations to act as ‘a force multiplier for us (...) an important part of our combat team’ in Iraq shows the dangers.” Martin Woolcott, “Humanitarians must avoid becoming tools of power”, *The Guardian*, 2 April 2004.

post-conflict political and reconstruction efforts of local authorities, State civilian agencies, humanitarian organizations and others.

- The phenomenon of armed forces engaging in humanitarian action in the 1990s was a new and evolving concept without a road map, and there was room for humanitarian agencies to contest the perceived “militarization” of humanitarian assistance. Today, military and political actors are more certain of how they want to intervene, and consider every armed intervention as a fresh opportunity to test new integrated approaches to conflict management. Humanitarian organizations that fail to align themselves with these integrated approaches are perceived as being entrenched behind the inflexibility of their mandates, or simply out of step with the times.
- At both national and regional levels, there are active efforts to streamline and merge State and military capacities in carrying out future armed interventions. The concept of the latter is one in which the military is able to jump from waging war to peacekeeping to humanitarian assistance on the same day, at times within the same city. Civilian experts will be embedded into military structures to provide support for policing, civil administration and political reform, and to act as advisors to military forces and even as donors to humanitarian, reconstruction and private sector actors.

As the opening quotes from *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the ICRC’s Director of Operations make clear, the narrowing down of the humanitarian environment and the increasing security concerns for humanitarian workers must in part be attributed to the involvement of multinational military missions taking on roles that go beyond providing security or engaging in combat.

This article examines the ICRC’s view of the civil-military relationship in contemporary humanitarian environments and is based on recent reconsideration of the ICRC’s civil-military relations strategy.⁶ While the guidelines adopted in 2001⁷ remain unchanged, it is clearly necessary to reconsider the analytical framework within which they are relevant. From the tentative attempts of the 1990s to conduct humanitarian activities, armed forces have now moved on to consider such tasks as their mainstream responsibilities in all contexts.

⁶ The author, who assumes full responsibility for the content of this article, has taken certain liberties in considering the ICRC’s guidelines, previously limited to considerations of how the ICRC relates to multinational military missions in armed conflict, and projects these issues onto a broader horizon of interlinked issues and concerns for humanitarian action over the coming decade.

⁷ Studer, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp. 387-390.

There is a need for creative thought in considering the relationship between multinational military missions and humanitarian actors in time of armed conflict, the current trends and the potential consequences. It is no longer sufficient to limit the discussion to how humanitarian agencies and multinational military missions might cooperate or coordinate. Humanitarian actors are obliged to understand the evolving non-combat doctrine, operations and aims of the military forces with whom they are obliged to share their working environment. Most importantly, civil-military relations can no longer be considered as a subject in isolation. In order to understand the effects today — and more importantly, in the next five to ten years — the evolution of how armed forces see their capacity to take on civilian roles and tasks has to be understood within broader trends of nation-building and integrated approaches to conflict management.

The first section of this article examines how the military sees its role in taking on civilian (non-combat) tasks, and the doctrine that determines it. Concrete examples are given of such military non-combat operations that the ICRC encounters in the field. The second section situates these developments within broader trends of multinational armed interventions and the conduct of hostilities. The third section takes a critical look at how neutral, independent humanitarian action is being perceived by armed forces audiences, and outlines possible considerations of increasing importance for the ICRC in maintaining its relevance.

How does the military see its role?

There is a wealth of texts that describe the relationship between the military and humanitarian actors in time of armed conflict.⁸ The subjects covered include the humanitarian and political aspects of the relationship,

⁸ A cross-section of views on civil-military relations include the following: Sarah E. Archer, "Civilian and military cooperation in complex humanitarian operations", *Combined Arms Center Military Review*, March-April 2003, available online at: <http://www.leavenworth.army.mil/milrev/English/MarApro3/indxmao3.htm> (advocates improved synergy, cooperation and coordination between the military and humanitarian organizations in achieving common end states); "Armed forces as humanitarian aid workers? Scope and limits of co-operation between aid organizations and armed forces in humanitarian aid". *Verband Entwicklungspolitik Deutscher Nichtregierungs-Organisationen e. V.*, May 2003, available online at: <http://venro.org/publikationen/archiv/Position%20Paper%20Armed%20Forces%20and%20Humanitarian%20A.PDF> (last visited on 10 March 2004) (comprehensive overview of the civil-military relationship, focusing on the trend towards militarization of humanitarian assistance); Jane Barry and Anna Jefferys, "A bridge too far: Aid agencies and the military in humanitarian response", *Humanitarian Practice Network*, 6 May 2004, available online at: <http://www.odihpn.org/report.asp?ID=2398> (15 June 2004) (clarifies the key issues of debate, and

the cultural differences between the humanitarian and military worlds and some of the persistent issues that the two groups must resolve at the field level. The latter includes greater coordination to avoid duplication of efforts, the sensitivities of exchanging security information, or the basic “reach out” efforts to overcome the reticence of both actors that share the same working environment. Interestingly, there is relatively little written about how armed forces understand their role in assuming civilian tasks. However, without closer consideration of how the military understands its evolving role in humanitarian activities, humanitarian agencies are unclear about whom exactly they are dealing with. Furthermore, within the complex military world of hierarchy and acronyms it is prerequisite to understand how the military interface with humanitarian agencies fits into broader military operations. The following therefore is an examination of some definitions of the military practice of non-combat functions, including the provision of humanitarian assistance by armed forces, and attempts to understand their significance for the present debate.⁹

“Civil-military cooperation” (CIMIC) and “Civil affairs” (CA) are the names used by NATO and the United States Armed Forces (USAF), respectively, to describe those non-combat functions of their armed forces that deal with civilian functions, or involve armed forces taking on tasks typically performed by civilian authorities, NGOs or international humanitarian organizations. In order to avoid confusion with the military terms, the ICRC deliberately chose the term “civil-military relations” (CMR) to describe the relationship between humanitarian organizations and multinational military missions in situations associated with armed conflict.

proposes greater dialogue on policy and practice); Eric James, “Two steps back: Relearning the humanitarian-military lessons learned in Afghanistan and Iraq”, *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, October 2003, available online at: <<http://www.jha.ac/articles/a125.htm>> (raises doubts about the cohesiveness of the relationship between humanitarian and military actors, and suggests that growing discord can be seen as having set the relationship “two steps back”); Damian Lily, “The peacebuilding dimension of civil-military relations in complex emergencies: A briefing paper”, *International Alert*, August 2002, (advocacy for enhancing cooperation between military and humanitarian actors); Michael Pugh, “The challenge of civil-military relations in international peace operations”, *Disasters*, Vol. 25, No. 4, 2001, pp. 345-357 (highlights the integrative approach the military has adopted in attempts to institutionalize the civil-military relationship); Adam Siegel, “Civil-military marriage counseling: Can this union be saved?”, *Special Warfare*, December 2002, pp. 28–34, available online at: <<http://www.jha.ac/articles/a140.pdf>> (focuses on the military’s perception of its civilian counterparts).

⁹ NATO and United States Armed Forces doctrines are chosen as examples, given their availability in the public realm, their relevance to the key contexts of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the ICRC’s practical field experience with these armed forces in time of armed conflict.

It has to be imagined that armed forces have developed such doctrine with a view to improving their capacity to meet their obligations towards the civilian population as laid down by international humanitarian law. This law does not expressly address the issue of civil-military relations or the delivery of assistance by armed forces, nor does it preclude a party to a conflict or an occupying power from meeting the needs of the civilian population by means of its armed forces. Specifically, parties to a conflict and/or occupying powers have the obligation to ensure that the civilian population under their control is adequately provided with food, medical supplies, clothing, bedding, means of shelter and other items essential to its survival.¹⁰ The key issue under international humanitarian law in considering civil-military cooperation and civil affairs lies in assessing whether the civilian population is being provided with these basic supplies in an impartial manner, without any adverse distinction.¹¹

It must be emphasized that neither the concept of civil-military cooperation nor that of civil affairs is a new phenomenon. Both have been part of the major military operations of the twentieth century. For example, the Provincial Reconstruction Teams set up in Afghanistan in 2004 have their roots in the Strategic Hamlet Project implemented by the United States Armed Forces during the Vietnam War. In the latter example, Special Forces personnel were deployed alongside USAID¹² civilian representatives in a hearts and minds campaign to provide development assistance while waging a counter-insurgency campaign. The post-Cold War period has seen the importance of civil-military cooperation and civil affairs rise and become more of a mainstream capacity of armed forces.

Their respective military definitions are the following:

- “CIMIC (civil-military cooperation) is the co-ordination and co-operation, in support of the mission, between the NATO Commander and civil

¹⁰ Article 69.2 Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts of 8 June 1977 (“Additional Protocol I”).

¹¹ Article 69.1 Additional Protocol I.

¹² United States Agency for International Development, Disaster Assistance Response Teams:

“A DART is a rapid response management team composed of disaster relief specialists who conduct assessments, identify and prioritize needs, manage onsite relief activities, recommend response actions, and coordinate with affected country and other response organizations. The teams are typically deployed after devastating disasters of significant magnitude. DARTs have been deployed world-wide, including deployments to Iraq immediately following the aftermath of the recent conflict, to affected populations in Angola’s 27-year civil war, and to provide humanitarian relief to communities affected by the drought through out Ethiopia”. “USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) Deploys to Liberia”, 6 August 2003, <<http://www.usaid.gov/press/releases/2003/pro30806.html>>.

populations, including national and local authorities, as well as international, national and non-governmental organizations and agencies.”¹³

- “Civil Affairs (CA) are those interrelated military activities that embrace the relationship between military forces and civil authorities and populations. CA missions include civil-military operations and civil administration (...) CA encompasses the activities that military commanders take to establish and maintain relations between their forces and the civil authorities and general population, resources, and institutions in friendly, neutral, or hostile areas where their forces are employed. Commanders plan and conduct CA activities to facilitate military operations and help achieve politico-military objectives derived from US national security interests. Establishing and maintaining military-to-civil relations may entail interaction between US, multinational and indigenous security forces, and governmental and nongovernmental agencies as part of missions tasked to a JFC [Joint Forces Command]. These activities may occur before, during, subsequent to or in the absence of other military actions.”¹⁴

There are clearly differences in scope between civil-military cooperation and civil affairs doctrine. NATO foresaw civil-military cooperation as the interface intended first and foremost to improve coordination and reduce overlap with civilian organizations and authorities. There was no explicit call to “conduct” humanitarian projects within the doctrine; there was also no strict “exclusion” of such projects, provided that they supported the military mission.

The civil affairs approach of the United States Armed Forces described above is more difficult to categorize. It promotes an approach that seeks to influence the civilian environment in support of their armed forces. This can take the form of trying to win hearts and minds, or of applying tactics to break the morale of the enemy or reduce the support they receive from the civilian population. Civil affairs operations can consciously substitute for civilian authorities and organizations, if such practice supports the commander’s intent (and objectives) with regard to the civilian population. Civil affairs staff and operations bring skills and approaches that can be seen as oriented towards occupation, or for winning the civilian population’s hearts and minds in order to combat an insurgency.

¹³ “AJP-9: NATO Civil-Military Co-operation (CIMIC) Doctrine”, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), June 2003, <<http://www.nato.int/ims/docu/AJP-9.pdf>>, (last visited on 24 June 2004).

¹⁴ Joint Chiefs of Staff Library, 20 June 2004, <<http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/>> (last visited on 24 June 2004).

The two approaches are broadly moving towards convergence, or at least share sufficient common ground to be compatible. The “Cold Warrior” generation of NATO officers who defended the limited interface role of civil-military cooperation is being replaced by a generation of officers whose formative years have been spent operating within the complexities of the Balkans, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Afghanistan. The current generation of multinational military missions practising civil-military cooperation and civil affairs see no contradiction in a fighting force actively conducting humanitarian operations, or fulfilling this role in what they perceive as a “humanitarian vacuum” in contexts such as Iraq.

Civil-military cooperation and civil affairs should not be considered as a completely benign military function or one that can be considered in isolation from combat and intelligence gathering. With the restructuring of armed forces over the last decade, civil-military cooperation and civil affairs have been bundled together with the bulk of non-combat operations that are part of a commander’s range of tools for waging war — globally referred to as “information operations” (InfoOps). Civil-military cooperation and civil affairs are complementary to the other public function of “media operations” (MediaOps), while “psychological operations” (PsyOps) and “electronic warfare” are often undertaken in support of intelligence objectives. As such, there can be no complete separation between military humanitarian activities and intelligence gathering. This trend extends equally to armed forces involved in UN-mandated peace operations.¹⁵

The concepts of civil-military cooperation and civil affairs are starting to spread. Within western armed forces, they are no longer limited to a small cadre of specialists. Particularly with the United States Armed Forces, combat forces in general are becoming active in the provision of assistance. In Asia, some national armed forces are seeing civil-military cooperation or civil affairs as one of the three pillars of their doctrine, together with intelligence gathering and combat. In Africa, civil-military cooperation doctrine is developing along the lines of “traditional” 1990s peace operations, but will inevitably adopt “humanitarian” operations as a standard complement to the security and stability roles of armed forces.

¹⁵ Examples of this include the SFOR and ISAF military missions, which control newspapers, radio and television stations. From these platforms, they are able to control the flow of “good news” to the local population, and can attempt to influence public opinion and behaviour in their favour and towards broader political objectives.

To humanitarian actors, civil-military cooperation and civil affairs can be understood as follows:

- it is the interface to facilitate unity of effort between military forces and the relevant civilian entities, including local, national or regional authorities, non-governmental and international organizations;
- it serves as the focal point within the military for monitoring and influencing the general and humanitarian situation facing the civilian population;
- civil-military cooperation and civil affairs staff play the role of humanitarian diplomats and act as the conscience of their commander, though as a combat support function and not as operational decision makers;
- civil-military cooperation and civil affairs are part of a broader range of non-combat tools that a commander employs to dominate whatever landscape is being faced — the media (national/international), the civilian population (winning support for his forces/denying support to the enemy), intelligence, and in support of broader political objectives (nation-building, integrated approach, etc.);
- current civil-military cooperation and civil affairs humanitarian projects conducted by armed forces are almost identical in implementation to those of humanitarian organizations.¹⁶ The *modus operandi* of their teams includes needs assessments, definition of projects, securing of financing (military or national donors), finding implementing partners or contractors and evaluating the impact of their projects.

The following examples attempt to put a face to the civil-military cooperation and civil affairs operations that humanitarian actors have to contend with in contemporary contexts.

Afghanistan: Provincial Reconstruction Teams

USAID describes Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) as: “Joint Civil Military units, which strengthen the reach of the central government through improved security and the facilitation of reconstruction and development efforts”.¹⁷

¹⁶ Afghanistan provides multiple examples: ISAF maintains 10 CIMIC teams, with a total budget of US\$1.2 million. Each CIMIC team has its own district of responsibility in Kabul province; each finds small-scale, short-term projects that it can finance — providing furniture to a school, rehabilitating a clinic, etc. The CIMIC approach as a whole attempts to coordinate the PRTs’ projects with the IGO/NGO community and the national and local authorities.

¹⁷ USAID PowerPoint Presentation given for ICRC Kabul, April 2004. The presentation goes on to describe the specific tasks of PRTs in detail: “Relationship building; Monitoring and reporting; Security support for

Provincial Reconstruction Teams can be seen as a sort of civilian-military annex to a military force, and are oriented towards a nation-building role as part of both military strategy and political aims. They are employed equally by NATO forces under the UN-mandated International Stability Force (ISAF) and by Coalition Forces involved in Operation Enduring Freedom. There are civilian State and donor representatives permanently based in the Provincial Reconstruction Teams, who maintain some authority over projects and approach.

With over US\$180 million available to finance 10 Provincial Reconstruction Teams in 2004, they have substantial influence and means. Functioning as a sort of security platform from which civilian representatives select projects, implementation is then undertaken by the International Organization for Migration (covering northern Afghanistan) and UNOPs (southern Afghanistan). Projects are largely infrastructure-oriented and include roads, offices and schools. Only a fraction of the financing is for direct provision of humanitarian assistance by combat troops.

UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL): Quick Impact Projects (QIP)

To cite the words of the Commander of the Pakistani UNMIL garrison in Voinjama, Liberia: "For the sake of humanity and as a goodwill gesture, we distributed some bags of rice and clothing to the local people we met here to ease their suffering."¹⁸

UNMIL's military contingents show that UN-mandated military missions are also providing humanitarian assistance as an integral task. A variety of Quick Impact Projects with small budgets are implemented by armed

Bonn processes; Security briefs/information sharing; Mediation; Prioritization of reconstruction and development efforts; Implementation of assistance projects; Approximately US\$125 million in 2004 project funding". In addition to State donor financing, US\$40 million is available to the military via Department of Defence programmes managed by USAF.

See also a further example from an article published during the 2004 NATO Summit in Istanbul: "The idea with Afghanistan is that you learn from experience, things that have worked, the PRTs, Provincial Reconstruction Teams, are liked by many people," said Mr Cagaptay. "They think it is a great idea. They think it is a successful marriage of civilian-military teams. It is also great for PR [public relations] because you can convince the people that you are working for them when you actually do projects on the ground and I think people would like to see this idea pursued further in Afghanistan and also elsewhere if NATO does get involved". Meredith Buel, "Europe NATO summit expected to focus on Iraq, Afghanistan", *Voice of America News*, 23 June 2004.

¹⁸ "Liberia: Key northern Liberian town faces relief crisis", *Integrated Regional Information Networks* (IRIN), 19 May 2003, available online at: < <http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/o/89a7aa1f5fc3d78085256e9900705551?OpenDocument>>.

forces as goodwill gestures and presumably integrated into the broader relief efforts of other humanitarian actors.¹⁹ Additionally, as active participants in the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration process, the various military contingents of UNMIL have been implementing a food/cash exchange-for-weapons programme, with mixed results (for example, riots by would-be demobilized soldiers and ensuing security concerns for the civilian population).

Some aspects of the relationship with humanitarian agencies mirror the issues of the 1990s, particularly the lack of coordination between military and humanitarian actors. In one example, an UNMIL battalion unilaterally decided to provide medical assistance to a hospital where the ICRC was already working. The ICRC ultimately chose to abandon its programme to avoid duplication of effort, and leave the support of the civilian hospital to UN troops.²⁰

Despite not having an explicit mandate from the United Nations to conduct humanitarian operations, there is apparently US\$1 million available at the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations for the various UN military contingents in Liberia to conduct local humanitarian projects.

Situating civil-military relations within broader trends

In the last decade, the relationship between humanitarian agencies and multinational military missions was one that could be understood with a fairly narrow examination of the differences and complementarities of the two groups at times performing similar roles. Today, a broader view must be taken to understand the complexity of the environment in which humanitarian actors work and the associated risks.

Civil-military cooperation and civil affairs, and military non-combat operations more generally, are only a subset of broader trends in the humanitarian environment within which the ICRC is concerned about the

¹⁹ The so-called Brahimi Report clearly advocates: "(...) flexibility for heads of United Nations peace operations to fund 'quick impact projects' that make a real difference in the lives of people in the mission area..." Lakhdar Brahimi, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, 21 August 2000, UN Doc.A/55/305 (2000).

²⁰ A similar scenario occurred in Kunduz, Afghanistan, where PRT forces belonging to the UN mandated International Stability Force again chose to support a hospital that had been part of the ICRC's ongoing medical programmes. Again, the ICRC chose to withdraw in order to avoid duplication of efforts and to reduce the risk of a humanitarian organization (the ICRC) being confused with military forces. The ICRC had to resume its support when the next rotation of ISAF forces decided that the programme no longer fitted in with its objectives or financing.

civil-military relationship. In the following projection of current trends an outline is given of future conflict environments that are likely to be characterized by a further blurring of functions, roles and mandates. It is this type of environment that humanitarian agencies will have to contend with in the future.

The growing sophistication of armed forces

“In one moment in time our service members will be feeding and clothing displaced refugees — providing humanitarian assistance. In the next moment, they will be holding two warring tribes apart — peacekeeping. Finally, they will be fighting a highly lethal mid-intensity battle. All in the same day, all within three city blocks.”²¹

Armed forces will train and fight in a way adapted to the complexity that General Krulak describes here. Even lower-level combat commanders will have to place growing emphasis on peacekeeping/stability operations and humanitarian assistance. Non-combat functions will be seen as core tasks in all contexts, including situations of armed conflict. Armed forces' media operations (information campaigns) will further dominate the public realm, obscuring the realities and human costs of war with sound bites about their humanitarian and reconstruction efforts. The military will continue to use the image and symbol of their assistance/reconstruction efforts as a way of winning support locally, regionally and, importantly, back home.

Despite its efforts to further professionalize armed forces to equal the challenge of multi-faceted operations, the military will still depend upon the integration of civilian functions and specialists into its military structures. Embedded civilians will take on further importance, with State civilian advisors for humanitarian, reconstruction or political matters, private contractors in traditional combat-support functions, and as in-house State donor representatives.

To keep pace with the evolving realities of conflict, the ICRC will have to draw the attention of a broader spectrum of actors to their obligations under humanitarian law in conflict. It will not be sufficient to address only States party to a conflict, greater investment will also be required in constructive dialogue with, for example, private military or security companies, private contractors, police forces, trainers and other relevant players.

²¹ Charles C. Krulak (former Commander, United States Marine Corps), “Three block warfare: Fighting in urban areas”, Speech to the National Press Club, Washington, 10 October 1997.

There could be some positive aspects to civilian integration into armed forces. Civilians might promote greater cultural sensitivity of armed forces, lobby for greater awareness of the effects of conflict on civilian populations, provide both technical and political advice and ensure awareness of humanitarian needs and action in the waging of war. The inclusion of civilian and contracted experts and support resources in armed forces might enhance the fulfilment of international humanitarian law responsibilities by States, but the contrary could also be the case.

Instrumentalizing humanitarian and reconstruction assistance

When armed forces (and political decision makers) perceive that there is a “humanitarian vacuum”, they may try to fill it themselves or find short-term solutions that further their own military aims. This response will probably be based upon their experiences in contexts such as Afghanistan and Iraq, where humanitarian agencies are unable to function for lack of adequate security or in accordance with their *modus operandi*. The growing belief that humanitarian assistance is a tool that they can utilize may become a prevailing consideration on the part of armed forces.

While humanitarian agencies will largely continue to impartially provide needs-based assistance to those affected by conflict, armed forces will at times employ humanitarian assistance as a means to attain a strategic or tactical military goal. Armed forces might use tactics of bartering assistance to the civilian population in exchange for intelligence, to improve the protection of their own force, for the winning of hearts and minds, or as a means of coercing or rewarding cooperation. There is consequently a risk of cohabitation of incompatible approaches to humanitarian assistance in contexts of armed conflict. Humanitarian actors may be forced to revise their respective policies on assistance or to reconsider withdrawing from contexts that are too politically sensitive or too insecure for them to function effectively, thus leaving the task of humanitarian assistance to the military forces who are, in fact, partly or wholly responsible for the insecurity and the perceived partiality of those very agencies.

“Barno [United States Armed Forces Commander of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan] suggested that it was time for relief groups to accept that they could not be neutral after a stream of deliberate attacks on de-miners and well-diggers (...) ‘They probably have to, and they are, realizing that they are now operating in a different world,’ he said.”²²

22 “General plans changes in Afghan strategy”, *Associated Press*, 20 December 2003.

For conflicts in the media spotlight, parties to a conflict will use heavy leverage on the press, engaging in activities traditionally conducted by civilian agencies and each competing to market a “with us or against us” relationship with humanitarian actors.

Nation-building and integrated approaches to conflict management

The UK government has proposed “(...) the setting up of the Post Conflict Reconstruction Unit (PCRU) working closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence. The PCRU will include staff from DFID [Department for International Development], FCO [Foreign and Commonwealth Office] and MoD [Ministry of Defence]. It will plan and implement strategies, including civilian deployment, for post-conflict reconstruction and military-to-civilian transition, which will involve the recruitment, training, deployment and management of skilled civilian staff and appropriate resources. A Senior Officials’ Steering Group will provide strategic policy and operational direction.”²³

Multinational armed interventions and peace operations will steadily become a more sophisticated endeavour. As seen in Afghanistan, multinational military forces (both International Stability Force and Coalition

²³ “Director for UN, Conflict and Humanitarian Division”, *Homepage for DFID, the UK Department for International Development*. 6 July 2004, <www.dfid.gov.uk/Recruitment/files/jaextdirunchjobdescript.doc>. See also: United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, “Public Service Agreement 2005-06 to 2007-08”, July 2004, available online at: <http://www.mod.uk/linked_files/issues/finance/psatechnotes_2005-2008.pdf>: “Target 2.1 (...) the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Department for International Development (DFID), and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to work together (and if appropriate with other Government Departments) to improve the impact of Her Majesty’s Government’s (HMG) overall effort in areas suffering from violent conflict, or where there is tension which might lead to violent conflict. It also requires them as part of this work to seek improvements in the effectiveness of the efforts of the international community to prevent or end violent conflicts. This covers work in all the areas of activity to which HMG contributes at different parts of the conflict cycle. The Post Conflict Reconstruction Unit (PCRU), which will be set up in 2004 to co-ordinate FCO/DFID/MOD post-conflict work aims to ensure better planning, implementation and management of the UK’s contribution to post-conflict situations, primarily when UK forces are deployed. The PCRU will involve officials principally from the three departments, but will draw on other government departments as appropriate. It will gradually become operational and reach its full capacity in early 2006”. Similar suggestions can be found in the aforementioned Brahimi Report: “The Panel recommends that Integrated Mission Task Forces (IMTFs) be created, with staff from throughout the United Nations system seconded to them, to plan new missions and help them reach full deployment, significantly enhancing the support that Headquarters provides to the field. There is currently no integrated planning or support cell in the Secretariat that brings together those responsible for political analysis, military operations, civilian police, electoral assistance, human rights, development, humanitarian assistance, refugees and displaced persons, public information, logistics, finance and recruitment”. Brahimi, *op.cit.* (note 13), Executive summary.

Forces) will find broadening synergies with national authorities and UN political bodies. Cooperation may range from coordination of the information campaign to support of election processes and cementing the authority of a new government. While not a new phenomenon, the distinction between civilian agencies and military actors will increasingly cease to be relevant in the eyes of the population and authorities. Humanitarian organizations and personnel will simply be expected to integrate into the broader efforts made by the international community, regardless of the threats to neutrality or independence.

In the specific relationship between humanitarian actors and multinational military missions, there is a risk that the gap between policy and practice will grow. Some humanitarian actors will, with difficulty, resist political and financial pressures to integrate into broader efforts. Others will simply accept that they are not neutral or independent, and adapt their *modus operandi* to the realities of the situation. Collective and constructive dialogue on the civil-military relationship might become difficult for a community of humanitarian agencies with divergent mandates.

Outsourcing of tasks in armed conflict

"Two highly complex and vitally important post-conflict reconstruction projects — the Loya Jirga Elections and the National Currency Exchange Program — were planned and executed by the company [Global Risk Strategies — PSC] on behalf of the UN and the US and Afghan Governments. Controlling and utilizing a range of aircraft, vehicles, communications and logistics equipment, and liaising in over thirty locations across the country with all levels of national and local Government and military, company personnel ensured that these vital developments were a success."²⁴

Particularly in the case of Iraq, the absence of humanitarian workers because of security concerns is cementing the military perception that humanitarian organizations lack the will to face the dangers. Key States, armed forces and possibly humanitarian actors will push for even greater use of civilian contractors to carry out humanitarian and reconstruction activities, thus outsourcing risks, roles and responsibilities.

State civilian agencies (departments of foreign affairs, development, etc.) will also embrace the notion of outsourcing their programmes to the private sector. This approach will allow greater political control of imple-

²⁴ "Our experience", *Global Risk Strategies*, 30 June 2004, <<http://www.globalrsl.com/>>.

mentation and choice of projects and target populations, and will inductively limit responsibility and accountability. By extension, humanitarian organizations risk becoming implementing agencies to the private sector, particularly in large-scale structural development programmes and even in contexts that are still qualified as armed conflicts.

Old recipes for a new world?

“In these typically difficult times it is better for us to focus our humanitarian minds on engagement and not complaint. Instead of lamenting about the forces ranged against us, we should be planning and preparing, making relationships and building alliances, persuading or outwitting our opponents. We need to get tactical: to win where we can and to retreat where we cannot. Now is not the time, as some are advocating, to invest in yet more interminable debates that pander to a culture of complaint and seek to re-define humanitarian action from first principles once again. Nor is it the time to form a square and defend humanitarian values. They are simply not that threatened. Instead, it is the time to get decisive about where we can and cannot operate and to get innovative about how we do things. It is the time to be creative about humanitarian agency rather than to wallow in humanitarian agony.”²⁵

Hugo Slim has pinpointed the challenges facing humanitarian actors in the complexity of contexts such as Afghanistan and Iraq today, and prescribes a simple remedy of renewed engagement. The call to “win where we can and to retreat where we cannot” perhaps all too sadly describes the *modus operandi* imposed on such organizations in these two contexts.²⁶ While there is much credence given to the pragmatism of humanitarian organizations choosing contexts in which they work, or finding innovative solutions to old problems, there are also fixed limits to how far the ICRC or other organizations can “bend the rules” to face new challenges. For an organization like the ICRC — that is mandated to impartially protect and assist victims of conflict, without any distinction based on nationality, race, religion, politics or other criteria — the choice of where to work is dictated above all by where the victims are

²⁵ Hugo Slim, “A call to alms: Humanitarian action and the art of war”, *Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue*, February, 2004. <<http://www.hdcentre.org/index.php?aid=85>>. (last visited on 31 July 2004).

²⁶ In Afghanistan an ICRC delegate was killed in April, 2003, forcing the ICRC to drastically reduce its presence and activities in the south of the country. Likewise, after the car bomb attack in October 2003 on its delegation in Baghdad, the ICRC was obliged to reduce its visibility, staff and programmes in a context in which it was unable to conduct all of its protection and assistance activities safely.

found. Thus, the issue is perhaps not how humanitarian organizations might adapt to the realities, but whether they should in the first place.

This final section takes a look at how the ICRC and its particular brand of humanitarian action are being perceived by military audiences, in light of the evolutions in doctrine and the environment for humanitarian action. The ICRC and its strict adherence to neutrality and independence are something of an anachronism to armed forces audiences being trained to better understand and integrate all political, military and humanitarian action, whatever their assignment.

The following paraphrases the relationship of the ICRC with multinational military missions. For this relationship it advocates:

- maintaining its independence of decision making and action;
- keeping a clear distinction between humanitarian, political and military roles and actors in times of armed conflict; and
- maintaining a dialogue at all times, and at all levels, with multinational military missions, whatever their status in the conflict.

Not surprisingly, in light of the evolution of civil-military cooperation and civil affairs doctrine and operations and the broader trends in peace operations and conflict management, some States and other armed forces often perceive the ICRC as stubbornly resistant to change or simply outdated. Whatever their perception, the ICRC's position is limited by principles²⁷ that exclude closer cooperation, or subordination of the ICRC's brand of humanitarian action to broader political goals or new trends in warfare and multinational interventions. It does not, however, exclude dialogue and engagement.

The ICRC has a Unit for Relations with Armed and Security Forces, a group of military and police specialists who guide the organization through its liaising with armed, security and police forces throughout the world.²⁸

²⁷ "The ICRC's starting point in defining its relationship with the military are the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent as well as the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law. These provide the general framework for the nature and scope of this relationship". Studer, *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 386.

²⁸ Concerning the activities of the ICRC's Unit for Relations with Armed and Security Forces, see: "Integration of law of armed conflict", ICRC, Geneva, May 2003: "ICRC mandate: in 1977, the ICRC was mandated by the international community to support national programmes undertaken by States for the integration of international humanitarian law into the education, training, doctrine and operations of armed forces around the world.

Two-track approach: over time, the ICRC has developed two different, but complementary, approaches towards armed forces.

- *Dissemination* activities (PREDIS) aim at obtaining understanding by the parties for ICRC activities and guaranteeing access to the victims and security.

The Unit works steadily to make the specific role and identity of the ICRC known to armed forces worldwide,²⁹ particularly to those armed forces deploying on missions abroad, to senior levels of command and to people who are influential in policy and training at strategic levels.

To use western European contexts as a barometer of perception, the reaction to such ICRC dissemination efforts is increasingly animated. This is largely due to the fact that armed forces have a growing operational experience in contexts shared with humanitarian actors, and a wealth of personal experience — both positive and negative — of the possibilities for coordination and complementarity between military and humanitarian action. These are some examples of common reactions by armed forces to ICRC presentations:

- often there is some surprise when confronted with the ICRC's strict advocacy for neutrality and independence. There is scepticism amongst officers who are being asked by their political authorities to conduct "Three Block Warfare" (i.e. war fighting, peacekeeping and providing humanitarian assistance within three city blocks) — only to find that not all civilian organizations are comfortable moving into areas made "permissive" (in a security sense) by the military. Some of the more thoughtful audiences begin to question the very essence of humanitarian action, and respond that their military missions and role are also guided by principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality;

- *Integration* activities (PREIMP) aim at having armed forces adopt concrete mechanisms or measures to ensure respect for international humanitarian law principles, specially protected persons and objects as well as the necessary means to this end.

According to the prevailing security situation in the country and its operational needs, a delegation may give preference to one or the other or even to a combination thereof".

The ICRC employs 27 delegates worldwide, supporting the training efforts of over 100 armed and security forces.

²⁹ A typical presentation includes the following: (i) an introduction to the mandate of the ICRC to show its specific role linked to contexts of war and internal violence and based on the Geneva Conventions; (ii) a presentation of the structure of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to explain the different Red Cross/Red Crescent entities that might be present in a given context where a multinational military mission may be deployed; (iii) an explanation of the principles of neutrality and independence to lead into the presentation, and help explain to audiences the ICRC's advocacy for a distinction to be maintained between military, political and humanitarian action; (iv) an explanation of the *modus operandi* of the ICRC to stress that it is a predictable humanitarian organization that works in the same manner worldwide and a presentation of its core activities; (v) a closing explanation of the ICRC's position on civil-military relations and concerns with regard to the developments described in this article. A key message for armed forces is that for an organization such as the ICRC, which is active in zones of conflict worldwide, a relationship with armed forces is only natural.

- reluctance to accept that if “we” are all working towards the same goals, then why can’t “we” work together?³⁰ Armed forces often assume that there is a desired end state to the military mission with which they have been entrusted — stability, security, elections, etc. “Joint Integrated Approaches”, or the unity of effort of military, diplomatic and economic power, are ways in which armed forces understand their niche in the broader integrated approaches to nation-building. Interestingly, their approach is often to focus their strategic aim and end state on the same target population — victims of war. It is difficult to explain that the ICRC has the same unremitting interest in assisting the victims of conflict, though without the necessity to integrate into the political-military strategy and all the while conscious of the efforts of others.

The crux of the matter can be summarized thus: “You [ICRC] are afraid we [armed forces] will exploit you for intelligence purposes, you would prefer us to stay out of the humanitarian business, you want to work towards the same goal of helping the people, but not *with us* — what do you want us to do?”

Understandably, there is a certain frustration with an organization that can be perceived as asking for everything and its opposite. On the one hand, the ICRC expects a fixed relationship and a discussion on topics that are of concern to armed forces whatever their status in the conflict — ICRC access to victims, detention by armed forces, etc.³¹ The organization is equally concerned that the blurring of roles and actors will create the perception of having taken sides in the conflict and thus place it and its staff at risk. There is no one way to clarify how the ICRC and its position are perceived.³²

³⁰ As an example of such reactions: “The NGOs and international organizations and military, coalition, ISAF, seem to me all [to have] the same objective. Because we have the same objectives - whether we work together or not — we are going to be working for the same objective regardless of what coordination happens between those groups (...) No one here wants to work in an insecure environment. No one here wants to see the Afghan population with the kind of economy that it has now. Everyone wants to see an increase in stability, an increase in prosperity, and just because we have the same objectives, we are going to be seen as marching together regardless of what the NGOs or the military want or don’t want. Both parties are looking at doing the same thing for the same good reasons but they are not conflicting. They add to each other and they combine with each other, and that is good.” “Afghanistan: Interview with US-led coalition civil military coordination centre”, *IRIN News*, 9 April 2004, <<http://www.IRINNew.org>>.

³¹ See footnote 9 above.

³² As early as 2001 the issue of how the ICRC is perceived by others working in the same area in time of armed conflict was considered with regard to civil-military relations. The term “ecumenism” was used to describe the realities of the ICRC’s pragmatic positioning vis-à-vis an evolving civil-military relationship:

Key considerations for the way forward

The concepts of neutrality and independence are increasingly misunderstood and/or distorted to fit other agendas. The challenge for the future will be for the ICRC to find the means that distinguish it from all other actors. Some of the key considerations as to the relationship with multinational military missions — and indeed advocated by the ICRC beyond the scope of the civil-military relationship — include the following:

- In a world becoming ever more polarized, the need for neutral and independent humanitarian action as provided by the ICRC is essential in limiting the means employed in warfare and the human cost of war and armed violence.
- There remains a need for neutral and independent humanitarian actors in times of armed conflict; neutrality is a pivotal aspect of humanitarian action and is not a concept that can be abandoned and reinstated at will.
- It is critical to maintain a distinction between humanitarian activity and politically motivated aid.
- While there is room for divergent approaches to providing humanitarian and reconstruction assistance in time of armed conflict, all players must understand that their actions affect all those with whom they share the same geographic and humanitarian environment. Engagement and dialogue are the core remedy.
- It is essential to gain the acceptance and trust of all parties to a conflict regardless of their status within it, in order to have access to the people affected by the conflict and be able to provide them with protection and assistance. Whether the ICRC's brand of humanitarian action is accepted or not, the ICRC needs to maintain the perception of its neutrality and independence that enables it to protect and assist on all sides of the existing or potential front lines.

"Ecumenism — a policy we prefer — constitutes a sort of third way, frequently followed by the ICRC as a matter of course. It more clearly acknowledges the existence of a tendency towards closer cooperation between military and humanitarian action, in particular within the UN framework, which attempts to accommodate rather than thwart or ignore such cooperation and thus comes half way between 'damage control' and 'constructive engagement'. The ICRC should be tolerant of other approaches and resist the temptation to believe that its humanitarian policy alone is correct. The differences in perception pose a conceptual challenge to the ICRC, namely to determine what is the essence of humanitarian action and what is merely a pragmatic choice depending on the context." Studer, *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 386.

Concluding remarks

The conclusion to be drawn is in many ways epitomized by the ICRC Guidelines on civil-military relations (see Annex), which continue to govern the organization's relations with multinational military missions in time of armed conflict despite the continuing changes taking place in that environment. Some closing points however need to be added.

Today, the narrowing down of the humanitarian environment felt by the ICRC in both Afghanistan and Iraq can in part be attributed to the involvement of multinational armed forces assuming roles that go beyond providing security or engaging in combat. In both contexts, armed forces are increasingly active in roles typically filled by civilians. The distinction between humanitarian, political and military action becomes blurred when armed forces are perceived as being humanitarian actors, when civilians are embedded into military structures, and when the impression is created that humanitarian organizations and their personnel are merely tools within integrated approaches to conflict management.

If Afghanistan and Iraq are a new benchmark for the civil-military relations challenges facing the ICRC, there should be concern that the issues facing humanitarian agencies in such situations, if not the situations themselves, will only increase in the years to come. Political and military decision makers are consolidating the lessons they have learned and proposing even more extensive synergies of political, humanitarian and military action.

Civil-military cooperation and civil affairs, and the greater issue of improving synergy between military and civilian efforts in multinational interventions, will be a key priority for both States and armed forces. Concepts of future operations will have military forces working closely with their national civilian counterparts towards a form of "integrated approach" at the national, regional and inter-governmental levels.

The challenges of the civil-military relationship today cannot be resolved by consultation solely between humanitarian and military actors; a more comprehensive approach to an influential and diverse range of political leaders and opinion makers is necessary if the ICRC is to maintain its position as a major humanitarian actor, with a mandate to work in situations of armed conflict and violence.

The ICRC is committed to focusing its engagement with political circles and armed forces on a "back-to-basics" approach clearly explaining the role and identity of the organization. While perhaps neither side will allow itself to be persuaded to adopt the principles of the "adversary", each must understand and respect the notions of complementarity and distinction.

Résumé

Les défis contemporains dans la relation entre civils et militaires : complémentarité ou incompatibilité?

Raj Rana

Durant les années 1990, les organisations humanitaires ont vu croître le nombre des acteurs dans les situations de conflit où elles menaient leur action. La guerre froide ayant pris fin, les forces armées ont été déployées dans le cadre de missions de maintien de la paix, dans lesquelles elles ont souvent assumé, outre leur fonction traditionnelle – garantir la sécurité –, un rôle et un mandat humanitaires. Le risque que ces forces militaires multinationales, en plus de fournir une assistance humanitaire, deviennent des belligérants, portait atteinte à l'image de neutralité et d'indépendance de l'action humanitaire. Les humanitaires se sont défendus avec vigueur et à juste titre de toute «militarisation» de l'action humanitaire.

En 2004, les dimensions des relations entre civils et militaires ont considérablement changé. Les acteurs politiques et militaires ont pris de vitesse les humanitaires, et la participation active des forces armées à l'assistance humanitaire est devenue une réalité. La distinction entre l'action militaire, l'action politique et l'action humanitaire s'estompe progressivement quand les forces armées sont considérées comme des humanitaires, quand les civils sont incorporés dans les structures militaires et quand il semble que les acteurs humanitaires ne sont que de simples outils dans les stratégies intégrées de gestion des conflits ou la création d'une nation. La distinction est plus floue encore lorsque les forces armées font de leurs efforts d'assistance humanitaire et de reconstruction les piliers de leurs objectifs militaires et de leurs campagnes de communication, sur les plans local et international. Ces aspects posent d'immenses défis à l'action et aux acteurs humanitaires aujourd'hui, et en poseront sans doute de plus grands dans l'avenir.

Cet article se penche sur la vision que le CICR a de la relation entre civils et militaires dans les environnements humanitaires contemporains, et se fonde sur un examen récent de la stratégie de l'institution à l'égard de cette relation. La deuxième partie de l'article présente, pour référence, les lignes directrices du CICR sur les relations entre civils et militaires.

Annex: ICRC Guidelines on Civil-Military Relations

The general framework

The ICRC's starting point in defining its relationship with the military are the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent as well as the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law. These provide the general framework for the nature and scope of this relationship.

The ICRC works independently of any objective of a political or military nature. Its activities include not only assistance to the victims of armed conflict and internal violence but also — fundamentally — their protection, on the basis of both humanitarian law and principles.

The following three points are important for the ICRC. They concern the respective nature of military intervention and ICRC humanitarian action as well as the relationship between the two and possibilities for cooperation:

- The objective of the ICRC's humanitarian action is not to settle conflicts but to protect human dignity and save lives. ICRC humanitarian activities cannot in any way be subordinated to political and/or military objectives and considerations.
- The primary objective of multinational military missions should, in the ICRC's view, be to establish and maintain order and security and to facilitate a comprehensive settlement of conflict.
- The ICRC must maintain its independence of decision-making and action, while consulting closely with international military missions which are deployed in the same theatre of operations. There should be consultation at every stage, at both strategic and operational levels.

Within the International Red Cross and the Red Crescent Movement, the ICRC seeks to exercise leadership regarding the policy and operational aspects of civil-military relations in armed conflict. In particular, it provides clear directives for the relationship between National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies working as "Participating National Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies" (i.e. contributing to a Red Cross / Red Crescent operation on foreign soil) and the military contingents of their respective countries. Should such a relationship be problematic in terms of respect for the Movement's Fundamental Principles, appropriate action will be taken by the ICRC, in accordance with the Movement's Statutes³³ and the Seville Agreement.³⁴

³³ Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, 1986.

³⁴ Agreement on the Organization of the International Activities of the Components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, 26 November 1997, published in IRRC, No. 322, March 1998, p. 159.

Cooperation in practice

Dialogue with political and military policy-makers and decision-makers

The ICRC seeks to establish and/or maintain a dialogue with the political and military circles that formulate the policy for military intervention in emergencies arising from armed conflict. Particular attention is paid to developing dialogue between the relevant agencies and bodies of the United Nations, NATO and the European Union. The primary aim of such a dialogue is to promote the ICRC's view of humanitarian action and, where necessary, to foster and maintain contacts useful for operational cooperation and for enhancing respect for international humanitarian law.

Moreover, the ICRC seeks such dialogue outside the Western world as well, especially in regions where there is a marked desire to "regionalize" peacekeeping.

Operational cooperation with peacekeeping forces

When possible, the ICRC fosters contact with a view to exchanging relevant information, especially in situations where it is operating in the same theatre as military forces. Where necessary, the ICRC assigns one or more persons to be in charge of liaison with the military command in the field and others, at headquarters, with the supreme military command concerned.

The ICRC also maintains contacts with the relevant political and military authorities, urging them to define the mandate of peacekeeping forces clearly in terms of its humanitarian implications so as to avoid any ambiguity with its own mandate and role. It tries to ensure in particular that military action does not impinge on the impartiality, neutrality and independence of its work. It endeavours, too, to make sure that international humanitarian law is respected by international military missions.

Without resorting as a rule (which may be waived in exceptional circumstances) to armed protection for its own operations, including relief convoys, it welcomes any efforts by international military missions to create a safe environment for humanitarian activities.

Protection of ICRC equipment and facilities by armed guards

The ICRC does not rule out the protection of its equipment and facilities by armed guards in situations where such protection is considered indispensable (for example, because crime is rife). However, the impact of such arrangements on the perception of the ICRC's neutrality and impartiality is regularly assessed.

Use by the ICRC of military or civil defence resources

In general, the ICRC is wary about using military or civil defence resources, considering that such use should be impelled by needs rather than prompted by availability. The ICRC does not object to their use by other humanitarian organizations, provided that its own activities are not impeded thereby.

In cases where the ICRC does use such resources (because they are offered on conditions that provide a clear advantage or because comparable civilian assets are not available), it makes sure that their use poses no threat to it being perceived as neutral and impartial and is in keeping with its operational strategy and principles.

The ICRC's contribution to training

By means of courses on international humanitarian law and the basic principles governing humanitarian action, the ICRC seeks to influence or be directly involved in the training of military personnel participating in military missions abroad. To this end it establishes and maintains organization-to-organization relations with military academies and other facilities that train military and civilian personnel for such missions. It provides the measure of cooperation which it finds appropriate, ranging from ad hoc contributions to formal and long-term cooperation (such as that in the programme launched with SHAPE).

The ICRC also endeavours through its training programmes to familiarize its staff with international military missions and the various concepts of civil-military cooperation applied in the field.

ICRC participation in conferences on the relationship between military and humanitarian action

By taking an active part in multilateral and other conferences dealing with the relationship between military and humanitarian action, the ICRC aims to promote its view of crisis management and to share its operational experience. It also seeks to develop and maintain a network of contacts among those who deal with issues of international security.

The participation of the ICRC in such events is determined by the possibilities it is given to contribute to the debate and/or the relevance for it of the subject matter to be discussed.

ICRC participation in military training exercises

The ICRC takes part — selectively — in military training exercises when invited to do so and when such exercises are intended as a vehicle for training in the military management of crises that includes the humanitarian/military relationship. Its aim on such occasions is to make its mandate and activities better known and to spread knowledge of international humanitarian law; its contribution should begin at the planning stage. Priority is given to international exercises.

