

Jean-Luc Marret and Esther Brimmer

# **Concept Paper: Civil-Military Relations in Disaster Response**

**- Draft -**

May 2008

The following concept paper is a draft only, and is not to be quoted. Accordingly, we welcome feedback on this document as well as the project in its entirety. If you have any suggestions, please contact Jean-Luc Marret at [jmarret1@jhu.edu](mailto:jmarret1@jhu.edu).

## Introduction

Increasingly, military, humanitarian and other civilian actors find themselves working together to respond to disasters and complex emergencies. These situations pose challenges for all parties concerned. Traditional humanitarian actors are asked to work in physically challenging environments or areas plagued by violence. In these settings, the humanitarian relief workers may need the assistance of military actors for transportation or security. Yet for over a century, humanitarian actors have guarded their neutrality strongly eschewing government and military contacts that might infringe upon their special status. For example, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement proclaim its principles of “humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity, and universality.”<sup>1</sup>

Often local people accept humanitarian agencies because they are seen as providing impartial help to afflicted civilians. Yet, many humanitarians work to relieve suffering amid complex emergencies and unconventional crises in which they need support from the military to do their job. At what point in the spectrum of support does assistance become interference? Is transport into mountainous terrain acceptable? What about providing armed guards (“Armed humanitarianism”)? On that point, though there are limited examples of humanitarian actors using armed guards or private security companies for armed protection, Iraq has become a watershed moment for the humanitarian community.<sup>2</sup> Does having military security undermine the humanitarian mission? This problem may produce ambiguities. The UN Civil-military Coordination Officer Field Handbook prescribes, as general rule, that humanitarian convoys will not use armed or military escorts. But exceptions to the general rule can be considered, “as a last resort”, and only when requirements of sovereignty, need, safety and sustainability have been met.<sup>3</sup>

Disaster relief also poses challenges for militaries. For some military leaders providing relief is a distraction from their primary mission to defend their country. For other military leaders providing humanitarian support is an appropriate duty that advances overall policy goals. Increasingly many military personnel understand that they will be deployed in complex crises, in which minimizing humanitarian casualties is politically important. As General Sir Rupert Smith notes modern conflict is characterized as “war

---

<sup>1</sup> International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Fundamental Principles, Available at <http://www.redcross.int/en/default.asp>

<sup>2</sup> P. Cullen, «Armed humanitarianism », ISN Security Watch, March 5, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, *Civil-military Coordination Officer Field Handbook*, v. E 1.0, March 10, 2008.

amongst the people.”<sup>4</sup> Working with the local population becomes part of the military mission. In these complex conflicts, militaries have to interact with civilians and civilian agencies. Militaries may see humanitarian actors as sources of information or intelligence.

“Militaries” may be national forces or international ones such as UN mandated peacekeepers. Moreover, humanitarian agencies are not the only civilian organizations involved in disaster relief. In complex emergencies local officials,<sup>5</sup> diplomats, and representatives of international organizations may also be involved. Thus, an analysis of civil-military relations needs to include official civilians, non-governmental organizations and militaries.

## **Purpose and Focus of the Study Group**

The project focuses on the relations among international military, humanitarian and civilian actors in disaster response. The United States and the European Union are major donors providing disaster relief in many areas. Therefore, this study group aims to contribute to knowledge and policy analysis by comparing US and EU approaches to civil-military relations in a selection of cases at the strategic and operational levels. These assessments could contribute to an understanding of good practices for future force development and, maybe, enhanced cooperation between the EU and US or between military and civilian actors.

The civil-military case studies will be complemented by a comparative report that serves as a “chapeau piece” analyzing the overall approaches of the US and EU based on all four cases. The four studies provide perspectives that inform the chapeau piece. The “Raising the Bar” project will publish a research volume based on the case studies as well as policies papers and an Action Paper with recommendations from all four study groups.

## **Key Questions**

We will use a “collective study” design. Under this design, each case is reviewed in depth to draw analytical conclusions in response to the study questions. Depending on what is relevant for each case, the case study author will define which civilian and military actors will be considered. The study group leader will work with case study authors to identify which civilian and military actors are relevant to the study.

---

<sup>4</sup> Smith, Rupert. *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> See for instance: Earthquake Reconstruction & Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) in Pakistan.

In each case study, authors should address basic questions:

- What are the differences and similarities between the US and the EU in terms of their philosophies, policies, strategies and operational practices on civil-military cooperation?
- Where could EU-US cooperation or complementarities in this area be improved?
- Where could both countries learn from each other?

In addition to these three basic questions, authors should consider more specific points to deepen their analyses and to enable comparison across cases.

- Which aspects of civilian-military cooperation could be most usefully improved, why, and in which circumstances? Why would the changes you recommend be most useful? For example, would these improvements bring the most benefit (and to whom)? Or are they the most likely to be enacted?
- What are the relationships among international and local civilian and military organizations? How do US and EU officials relate to local civilian and local military actors (including rebel groups or non-traditional “military” actors)?
- Are there significant differences between US and EU civil-military arrangements as the strategic and tactical levels?
- Natural disasters may occur in areas prone to internal conflict (for example, the Tsunami hit conflict-ridden Aceh, Indonesia). How might local civil-military tensions affect capacities for disaster response? What should donors such as the US and EU take into consideration when operating in such areas?
- The US and EU are usually supportive of civil society and a role for nongovernmental organizations. The US and EU member states are parties to international humanitarian law. Do the EU and the US need to be concerned about the possible impact of various civil-military relationships on the perceived neutrality of humanitarian actors?
- Are there any elements of civil-military relations that the US or EU should institutionalize, or institutionalize differently?
- In terms of planning, how should governmental actors address their obligation to protect the troops in the field while also considering how NGOs and other humanitarian actors should be involved and protected?

As far as states and their militaries are concerned, the challenges of intervening through a humanitarian operation may be different. Each operation poses a significant risk and

engages also immense costs that would need to be justified in the national environment. Understanding EU and US civil-military relationships within disaster response could enhance policymakers' analyses when deciding to undertake humanitarian action.

## Case Study Design and Selection

Two cases studies each (four in total) will be prepared on natural disasters and on complex emergency situations (post-conflict-related emergency or natural emergencies in a conflict situation). The US and EU face important civil-military issues when sending humanitarian assistance in both types of crises. At times the line between "natural" and "man-made" is unclear. For example, is the collapse of faulty levees after Hurricane Katrina the result of a "natural" hurricane or the "man-made" decisions about disaster preparedness before the storm?

Case studies focus on cooperation strategies provided by European Union and US agencies, as well as multilateral donors and agencies. Major international and/or local NGOs may be included if particularly relevant for aspects of EU/US civil-military relations.

*Nota Bene: The issue of training for preventing or managing disasters will be added, not as a specific case, but complementary to the four selected cases.*

Type of crisis	Case studies	Crisis context	Case study focus
Natural disaster	Katrina (a category 5 hurricane), August 2005	Flood Concerns a developed country, with powerful states and a federal structure Issue of civil-military cooperation for helping people	<p><b>General requirement:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Mix top-down and bottom-up approaches</li> <li>-Compare US and EU practices in civil-military relations (aid planning, assessment, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, ex post-training)</li> <li>-Analyze perception and feedback by "civil actors"</li> <li>-Lessons learned</li> </ul> <p><b>(with donor approach and training lessons)</b></p> <p>Civil-military relations and US federal-local problems?</p> <p>International aid challenges/Use by the US authorities?</p> <p>Chains of command problems?</p>

<p>Natural disaster</p>	<p>Tsunami – local/transnational disaster, massive casualties, massive human loss, 26-12-2004, epicentre off the West Coast of Sumatra, magnitude between 9.1 and 9.3</p>	<p>Crisis management, Awareness <u>Massive evacuation</u> International cooperation Damage assessments</p> <p>Many countries affected</p> <p>EU and US decision-making process for intervention</p> <p>Military logistics supports</p> <p>(Keep in mind/: Aceh conflict, GAM and cease-fire → consequences for civil actors protection)</p> <p>Man-made disaster</p>	<p>...</p> <p>Relationships/cooperation with other international donors, international and local NGOs?</p> <p>Civil-mil relations and field difficulties (epidemics public health risks, destroyed or damaged infrastructures/access to the victims → US/EU and transportation?</p>
<p>Complex crisis</p>	<p>The Balkans/Kosovo</p>	<p>US-EU-(NATO) involvement</p> <p>Armed humanitarian intervention</p> <p>Stabilization issue and correlated civil-military relations</p>	<p>→ Three ways to manage civil-military relations?</p> <p>US/EU civil-military relations and ethnicity issues in the field</p> <p>Prospective: What may happen if a natural disaster would occur there?</p>
<p>Complex crisis</p>	<p>DR Congo/Kivu - 2007</p>	<p>Crisis 2007</p> <p>Man-made catastrophe/Civil war/intrastate conflict/ - "Femicide"/local cultural practices</p> <p>EU and USAid locally involved, connections with local actors, civilian local actors</p> <p>civil-military relations and "armed humanitarianism", connection with local militia (Tutsi forces)</p>	<p>US/EU civil-military relations</p> <p>Selection of local humanitarian actors?</p> <p>EU/US civil servant protection/and local militia?</p> <p>Results assessment?</p>