



The Evolution of Civil-military Cooperation

Concepts, Interoperability, Capabilities (CIC)
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INTRODUCTION

On February 22, 2022, Russia launched a large-scale offensive against Ukraine, severely impacting Europe's sense of security and damaging the rule-based political security system. The effects on civilians and their surroundings became increasingly evident as the conflict unfolded. Civilian involvement in warfare, including targeted attacks on vital infrastructure and medical facilities, has been significant. These developments have prompted NATO to shift its focus in Europe, transitioning from rapid reaction forces to ongoing defense planning along its eastern flank.

Drawing on the experiences of the Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF) in this war, resilience has taken on new importance for states, societies, and military organizations. The comprehensive thinking and action emphasis across all operational domains and effect dimensions shapes NATO's future development. Additionally, with increased interaction between military and non-military actors across different levels and timeframes, non-military considerations and whole-of-society/government approaches to security have become more crucial. As the conflict in Ukraine continues, NATO is assessing how to apply these "lessons from the field."

This paper explores synchronizing non-military and military activities to achieve effects across all domains. It examines how the military's interaction with non-military actors must adapt to new doctrine, training, technology, and mindset challenges. Furthermore, the paper is not limited to Civil-military Cooperation (CIMIC) within NATO but also aims to lay the groundwork for discussing national frameworks, such as Domestic Civil-military Cooperation and Civil Affairs.

CIMIC – an allied doctrinal point of view

NATO describes civil-military Cooperation (CIMIC) in various publications. The main document, MC 411/3, outlines NATO's Military Policy on CIMIC and Civil-Military Interaction.

According to MC 411/3, CIMIC is defined as "a military joint function that integrates the understanding of the civil factors of the operating environment, and that enables, facilitates, and conducts civil-military interaction to support the accomplishment of missions and military strategic objectives in peacetime, crisis, and conflict."¹ Additionally, the document describes Civil-Military Interaction (CMI) as "activities between NATO bodies and non-military actors to foster mutual understanding that enhance effectiveness and efficiency in crisis management and conflict prevention and resolution."² These two definitions form the basis for CIMIC in NATO, which consists of two core activities: Civil factor integration (CFI) and CMI.

1. MC 411/3 D6 p. 5
2. MC 411/3 D6 p. 5

MC 411/3 also provides fundamental definitions and descriptions. It considers all participants in the civilian environment as non-military actors without differentiating between the civilian population and humanitarian or international organizations. This underscores the significance of interactions irrespective of the specific actor.

In addition, the policy defines the role of CIMIC in building resilience, where resilience is seen as a critical element for deterrence and defense. Evaluating the resilience of both military and non-military entities offers valuable information for future planning, and CIMIC plays a crucial role in assessing the level of civil preparedness. This assessment focuses on the three core functions of civil preparedness³ and is primarily conducted through an extensive network of connections.

An introductory statement to understand CIMIC as a function is contained in the NATO doctrine AJP 01.

“The joint functions framework assists commanders to integrate political, military and civil actions through the operational domains.”⁴

The Joint Function framework helps commanders integrate political, military, and civil actions across operational domains. Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) is essential to this framework as it coordinates military and non-military activities. It also assists in determining the roles and influence of stakeholders in different domains and identifying which non-military actors need to be influenced and how. With NATO’s eight interconnected joint functions, commanders and their staff can efficiently streamline planning processes across all domains.

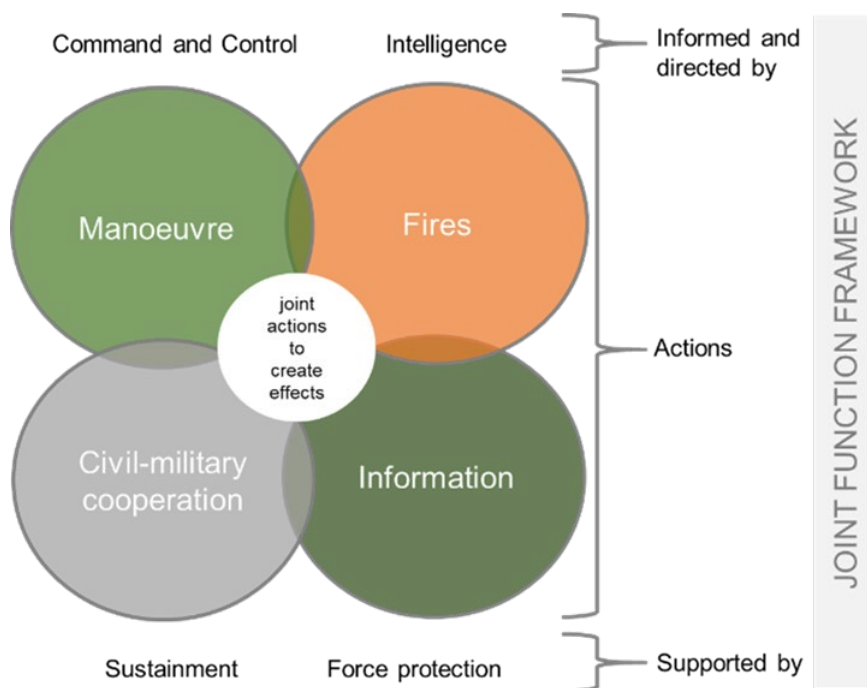


Figure 1: Joint function framework (AJP 01 p. 110)

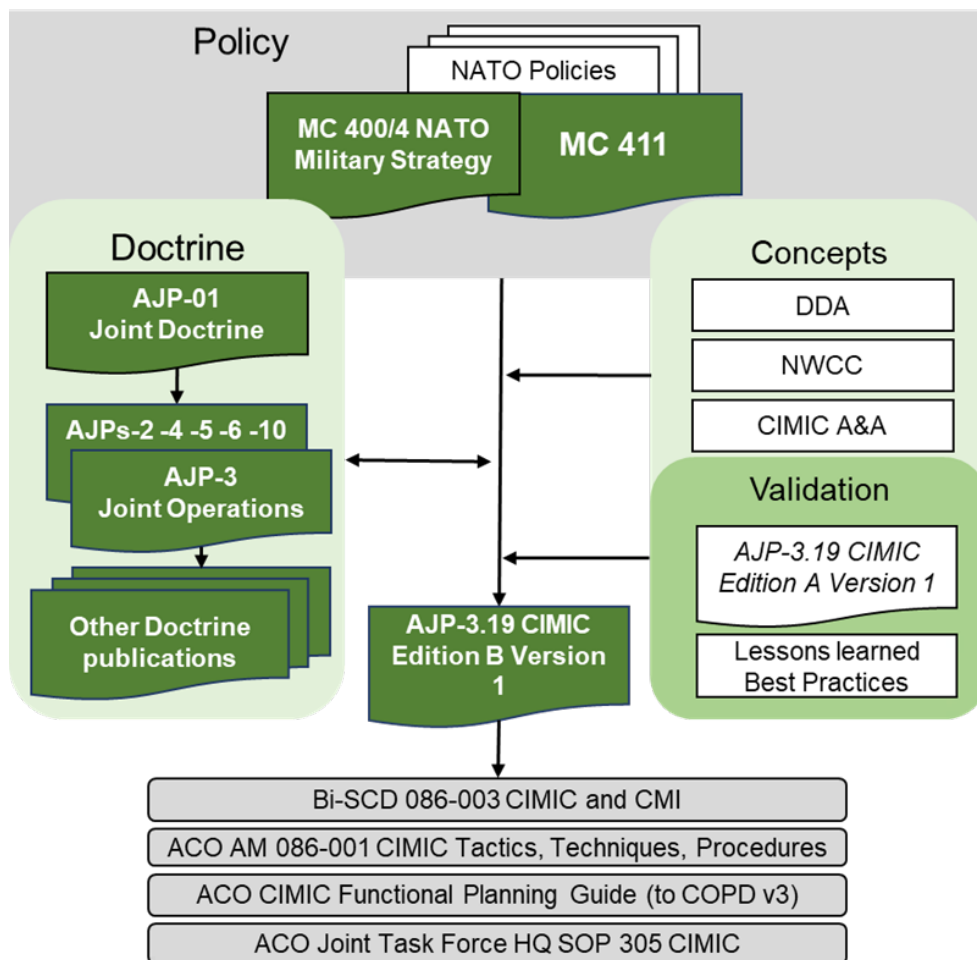
3. Continuity of government, Continuity of essential services to the population, Continuity of civil support to military operations.

4. Allied Joint Publication (AJP) 01 p. 105

The NATO CIMIC Doctrine AJP 3.19 establishes the connection between policy and CIMIC implementation. It places CIMIC within the operational context, outlines the levels of interaction with non-military actors, describes CIMIC as a joint function, defines its responsibility within the Joint Function Framework, and connects it to the resulting staff activities.

The CIMIC doctrine highlights two key tenets⁵ of doctrine as most relevant. While the behaviour-centric approach focuses on people’s attitudes and behaviours, the comprehensive approach seeks to combine all available military and civilian capabilities in a concerted effort to achieve a desired end state.

Other documents, such as the CIMIC Functional Planning Guide or the Bi-SC 086-003 CIMIC and CMI Directive, are fundamental but aimed at different levels.



DDA: Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area, NWCC: NATO Warfighting Capstone Concepts
COPD: Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive, CIMIC A&A: CIMIC Analysis and Assessment Concept

Figure 2: Linkages to other NATO CIMIC keystone publications (AJP 3.19 RD 2 p.xvi)



The CIMIC Handbook complements the doctrinal framework. The NATO-accredited CIMIC Centre of Excellence (CCOE) publishes it and is the operationalization of the doctrine at the operational and tactical levels, in contrast to the still essential AJP 3.19. Initially designed as a manual or checklist for soldiers on a mission, it has evolved over the years into a crucial document serving the CIMIC community and beyond. The handbook comprises seven chapters and several annexes, providing vital information on CIMIC in operations, relevant actors, the CIMIC contribution to the military planning process, and a description of cross-cutting topics and resilience.⁶

The NATO CIMIC Analysis and Assessment Concept (NCAAC) represents a significant advancement in the professionalization of CIMIC capabilities. Understanding the operating environment is dependent on understanding the civil environment, also referred to as the civil factors of the operating environment. Historically, integrating civil factors was often based and dependent on individual experiences and expertise, leading to varying methods, processes, and representations. This lack of standardization hindered recognition and made other staff functions and decision-makers appear immature. The NCAAC addresses these deficiencies by defining the analysis and assessment workflow, introducing structured analytic techniques, and establishing product guidelines.

Multi-Domain Operations (MDO)

In NATO, the new approach to warfare and operational planning recognizes the need for a broader definition of multi-domain operations (MDO) that includes a variety of operational domains beyond the traditional military services. The key difference between the MDO and the classical joint approaches lies in thinking and recognising the broader and more holistic approach across all domains. The term “joint” refers to “activities, operations, and organizations in which elements of at least two services participate.” In contrast, the MDO approach is effects-oriented and is defined as:

“The orchestration of military activities across all operational domains and environments, synchronised with non-military activities to enable the Alliance to create converging effects at the speed of relevance.”⁷

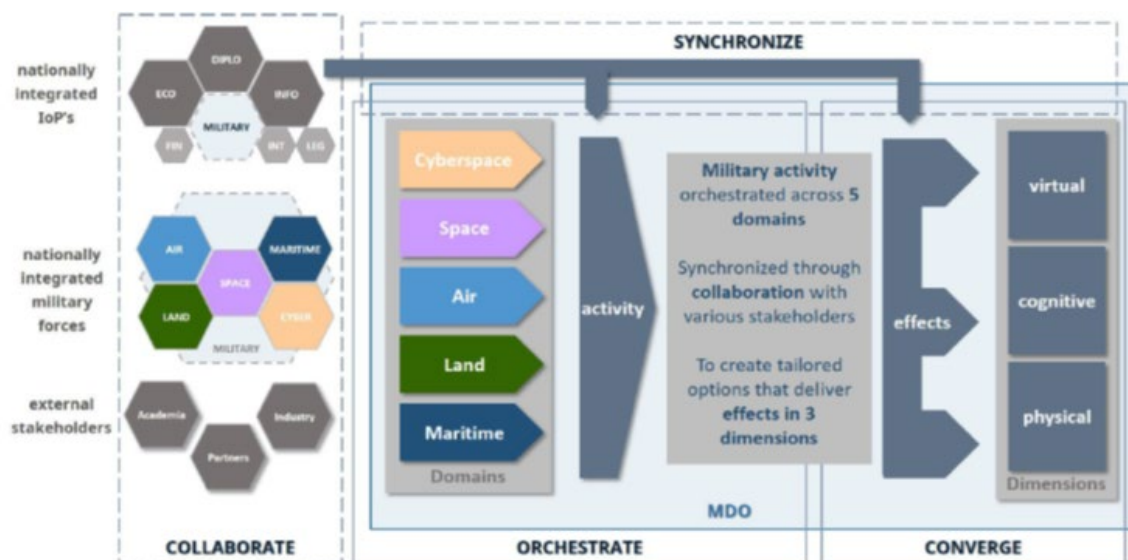


Figure 3: Orchestration and Synchronisation of Military Activities (Alliance Concept for MDO p.8)



Operational domains represent specific spheres of military activity within the engagement area and provide a framework for organising the military instrument of power. NATO recognizes five operational domains: Maritime, Land, Air, Space, and Cyberspace. The Space and Cyberspace domains are particularly noteworthy because, historically, joint military operations have rarely, if ever, been carried out exclusively within them. However, given today's adversaries' ability to influence these domains, the speed at which information spreads across all domains, and the global access to cyber capabilities, it has become essential to synchronize military activities across all domains.

As the Space and Cyberspace domains expand, the number of actors and stakeholders involved increases significantly. These stakeholders are not limited to the military but also include non-military international partners, private industry, research and academic institutions and others. These non-military actors can offer capabilities that NATO may not possess but require. Consequently, NATO may become dependent on these non-military actors. Therefore, assessing the potential risks of such dependencies is crucial, considering possible conflicting demands for these limited capabilities (from both military and civil sectors), and finding ways to mitigate any limitations that might affect military operations. But what is the role of CIMIC?

CIMIC plays a pivotal role in NATO's multi-domain operations, significantly as the number of non-military actors from the cyber and space domains increases. The value of CIMIC lies in its ability to bridge the military and civil sectors by facilitating two core activities: civil factor integration and civil-military interaction. These activities are essential for aligning military operations with the complexities of the expanded civil environment, particularly as cyberspace and space increasingly involve private industry, international partners, academic institutions, etc.

CIMIC's role in civil factor integration involves analysing and integrating civil factors of the operating environment into military planning and operations. This is especially important in the cyber and space domains, where civil actors control much of the infrastructure and expertise. Identifying limitations and gaps within the civil environment - such as restricted access to cyber capabilities or dependency on private space assets - is crucial to mitigate risks and avoid conflicts between military and civilian needs. For example, understanding how adversaries might target civilian cyber networks can help NATO better protect military operations and safeguard civil infrastructure.

Civil-military interaction focuses on facilitating collaboration between military forces and civilian stakeholders. In the context of cyber and space, this interaction is vital for ensuring access to civilian capabilities that NATO lacks but needs to operate effectively. By fostering cooperation, CIMIC can help minimize disruptions to the civil environment while optimizing the use of shared resources, ensuring the military's operational effectiveness without imposing unnecessary strain on civil actors and their environment.



NATO defines understanding as “the interpretation and comprehension of a particular situation in order to provide the context, insight, and foresight required for effective decision-making.” CIMIC contributes to this understanding by providing a comprehensive analysis of civil factors of the operating environment, not limited to but including the cyber and space domains. This understanding is crucial for ensuring that military planners know civilian assets, risks, and vulnerabilities in these domains, allowing for more informed decision-making and creating strategies that mitigate negative impacts on both the civil environment and military missions.

One of CIMIC’s primary tasks is to identify the limitations within the civil environment and assess how these may create shortfalls for military operations. For instance, dependence on private satellite communication networks could pose risks if those assets are compromised or unavailable during a crisis. Likewise, gaps in civilian cybersecurity infrastructure may create vulnerabilities that adversaries could exploit, negatively impacting both civil and military sectors.

However, through robust analysis, CIMIC can help identify opportunities to bridge these gaps. By leveraging knowledge from civil actors, such as cutting-edge technologies from the private sector or specialized research from academic institutions, NATO can address its military limitations. For instance, partnerships with civilian cybersecurity firms could enhance NATO’s resilience to cyberattacks, while collaboration with private space companies may provide access to vital satellite capabilities.

By carefully managing the civil-military relationship, CIMIC helps minimize negative effects on the civil environment and military operations. This is particularly important in domains like cyber and space, where the overlap between civil and military actors is pronounced. Through effective civil-military interaction and integration, CIMIC ensures that NATO operations do not unduly disrupt civilian life or infrastructure, thereby maintaining public support and minimizing collateral damage.

Moreover, CIMIC can positively affect the civil environment and mission success by fostering cooperation and understanding between military and civil actors. For example, joint efforts in securing critical infrastructure in cyberspace can enhance overall societal resilience, benefiting both civilian and military interests. Similarly, effective coordination with civilian space operators can ensure that essential communication and navigation systems remain functional during military operations, contributing to operational success.

In conclusion, CIMIC’s core activities of civil factor integration and civil-military interaction are vital in navigating the complexities of modern multi-domain operations, especially with the increasing involvement of non-military actors in the cyber and space domains. By providing understanding, identifying risks and opportunities, and fostering collaboration, CIMIC ensures that NATO can effectively bridge military limitations, mitigate negative impacts, and create mutually beneficial outcomes for both the civil environment and the success of military missions. This integration is essential to ensuring that NATO operations in the cyber and space domains are synchronized with civilian interests, ultimately enhancing the Alliance’s overall strategic effectiveness.

Resilience

Resilience is the ability of an entity to continue to perform specified functions during and after an attack or an incident.⁹ It involves the capacity to withstand shocks - such as physical, emotional, economic, or environmental stressors - while maintaining core functions and rapidly returning to a stable or improved state. Resilience emphasizes flexibility, adaptability, and the ability to learn from difficulties to strengthen future responses, which is, therefore, essential for credible deterrence and defence. Critical infrastructure plays a crucial role in enhancing social resilience in today's societies. Resilience encompasses civil and societal emergency preparedness as well as military capabilities. There are two conceptual layers of resilience. Military Resilience involves maintaining ready forces, capabilities, and redundancy needed to absorb shocks, provide early resistance, and continue to fight effectively. Civil resilience refers to the ability of civil society to deny competitors the ability to exploit vulnerabilities and overwhelm the military instrument of power. It also involves using forces and capabilities to support civil society in the event of natural or man-made disasters and protect society from the malicious activities of competitors.

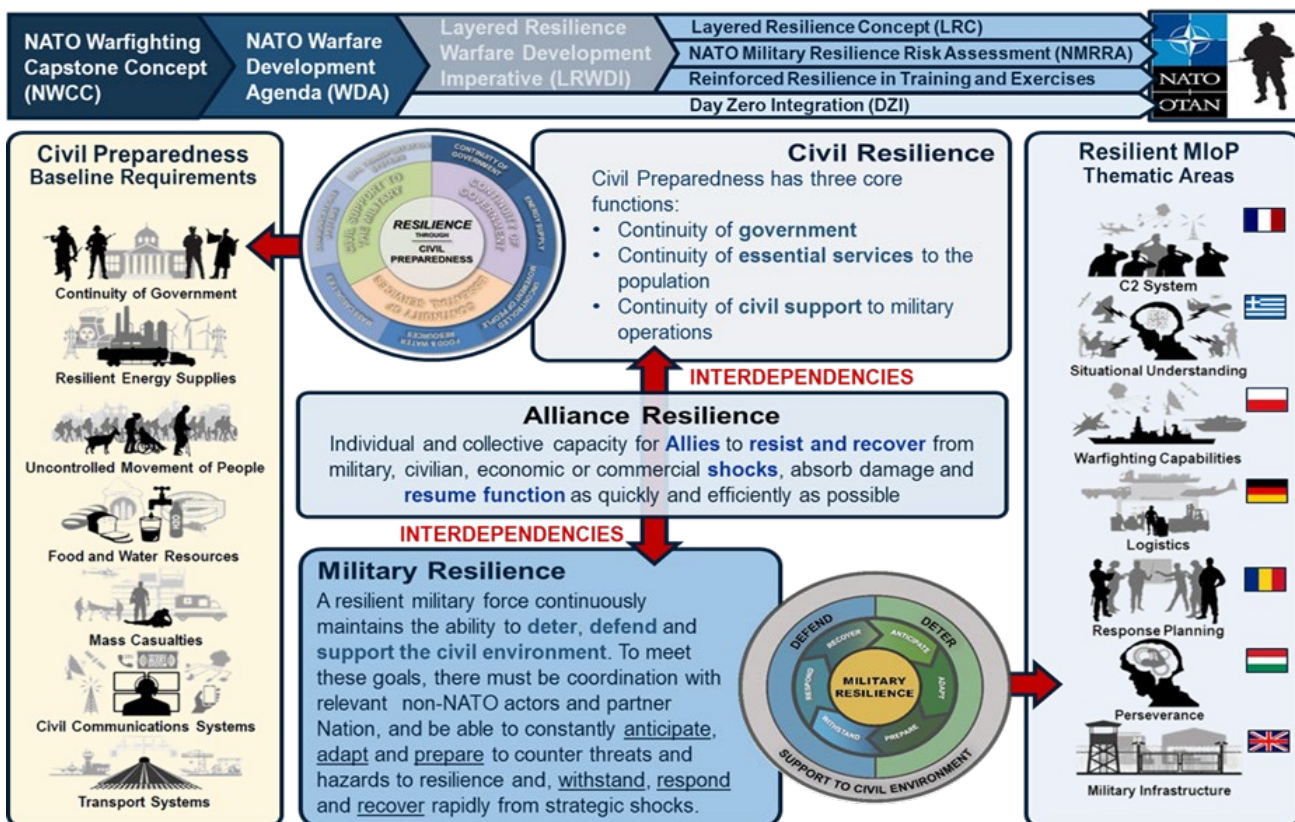


Figure 4: Resilience (NATO Joint Warfare Centre)



To assess the preparedness of NATO nations, the Alliance has established the seven baseline requirements¹⁰ that align with the three core functions of civil preparedness: continuity of government, essential services for the population, and civil support for the military. These core functions and the seven baseline requirements are interconnected. This means that a disruption in one area will potentially impact another. For example, managing mass movements of people, maintaining government continuity, and ensuring resilient food and water resources are interdependent, as disruptions in any one area can undermine stability and the provision of essential services. Large-scale displacement can strain resources and disrupt governance while maintaining government operations ensures coordination and access to critical services. Meanwhile, stable food and water supplies are essential for displaced populations and the smooth functioning of government and critical services. A breakdown in any one area can cascade, undermining the other two, making it crucial to address all three simultaneously for stability and resilience.

The role of CIMIC in promoting societal resilience is twofold. It ensures information about the Allies' resilience and provides advice on the impact on the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) area of responsibility. It also focuses on addressing limited impacts due to a shortfall in one or more baseline requirements. This highlights the significance of Civil factor integration and constitutes additional requirements for civil-military interaction.

Domestic CIMIC

NATO Nations have their own political and legislative characteristics, military, governmental, and administrative structures, and specific liaison arrangements and responsibilities. As a result, they will carry out CIMIC activities in line with national legislation and regulations. In essence, 32 nations, 32 approaches.

In reality, NATO CIMIC and domestic CIMIC responsibilities and activities will massively intersect within the NATO Command and Force Structure. The nation's expertise in national defence plans and national civil-military liaison structures is crucial in this context.

Aligning NATO CIMIC tactics, techniques, and procedures with those applicable to domestic CIMIC is essential to ensuring effective civil-military interaction through military-military liaison. This requires establishing a shared understanding of NATO CIMIC versus Domestic CIMIC.

Therefore, Domestic CIMIC can be seen as a nation's military function that conducts CFI and CMI to support the accomplishment and synchronization of national and NATO missions and military strategic objectives in peacetime, crisis, and conflict.

9. AJP 3.19 RD 2 p. 5

10. <https://www.handbook.cimic-coe.org/7.Resilience/7.3Seven%20baseline%20requirements/>



Lessons from Ukraine

In Ukraine, CIMIC within the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) is primarily conducted by the ground forces, with minimal Navy and Air Force participation. However, CIMIC plays a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness and readiness of the armed forces by facilitating interaction between military and civil entities, which can be essential in deterring and withstanding aggression and ensuring seamless integration that contributes to the success of military operations and enhances societal resilience.

The Russian Federation's hybrid warfare strategy, which targets both the military and civilian population, has highlighted the need for a comprehensive approach to deter and withstand these challenges. In response, the Ukrainian General Staff integrated a J9 (CIMIC) Directorate in April 2020.¹¹ This directorate is responsible for establishing and coordinating civil-military relations and activities. At the strategic level, the J9 Directorate's main tasks include directing CIMIC activities, providing guidance for CIMIC doctrinal development, organizing measures to decrease civil casualties, coordinating humanitarian activities, planning the return of people to their homes, and conducting search and recovery operations for missing or deceased individuals.

At the operational level, CIMIC liaison officers are fully integrated into the administration of each oblast.¹² These officers have primarily two roles: horizontally, they communicate with other CIMIC operational levels and other administrations from which they receive tasks and requests for information; vertically, they are linked to the J9 Directorate in the General Staff of AFU, providing reports and assessments of the situation in their respective oblasts.

The CIMIC brigade elements at the tactical level are responsible for carrying out CIMIC tasks given by the strategic and operational headquarters. They play a vital role in the unit's decision-making and planning processes, providing the commander valuable insights into the civilian environment. The ultimate goal is to improve situational understanding within the brigade's territory, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of combat units. The Ukrainian CIMIC is actively planning, organizing, and coordinating CIMIC activities, particularly facilitating coordination between the AFU and local and regional administrations. They also focus on continuously assessing the civil environment, particularly safeguarding critical infrastructure to support government operations and people's daily lives.

The Ukrainian's comprehensive whole-of-government and society approach forms the basis for effectively responding to the Russian invasion. This approach entails active coordination and collaboration between military and civil entities at all levels, from strategic to tactical.

11. CCOE – Case Study Ukraine p.36

12. an administrative and territorial division in some republics of the Ukraine



There are two perspectives on the conflict in Ukraine. Most of the fighting occurs on land, which has implications for deploying CIMIC forces at the tactical level. However, a whole-of-government and society approach requires the inclusion of all other domains. This approach doesn't seem feasible without synchronising military and non-military actions described in the MDO concept. It's also evident that a common understanding of the civil environment, seamless across all levels and based on integrating the civil factors of the operating environment, is necessary.

The resilience of the Ukrainian military and society shows the close connection between non-military and military actions and the importance of cooperation and interaction. Combat operations on the soil of a sovereign state in Europe cannot be viewed purely in military terms and in isolation. The development of a resilient union of state and society visible in Ukraine since 2014 sets a benchmark for NATO in managing such conflicts.

CIMIC in Ukraine is a domestic matter and responsibility. The military is primarily responsible for interacting with non-military actors. Defence procedures are guided by state strategy.

Conclusion – or “so what” for CIMIC

Doctrine

It's essential to understand CIMIC as a joint function on all levels. The synchronization of military and non-military activities, as outlined in the MDO concept, has historical precedence within the Joint function framework. However, documents like the MDO concept lack a clear allocation of responsibility for this synchronization, which falls under the purview of the Joint Function CIMIC. Given the importance of CIMIC in enhancing resilience and in current conflicts such as the one in Ukraine, the question of its fundamental necessity no longer arises. With the necessary shift to deterrence and defence of the Euro-Atlantic area, NATO's capacity to connect with domestic CIMIC forces must doctrinally be further developed. It's crucial to have a standardized handover point from NATO CIMIC to domestic CIMIC, especially considering the diverse forces of different nationalities. The draft definition mentioned above lays the groundwork for this. Additionally, the fundamental principles of CFI and CMI should be incorporated into all NATO essential documents. In the end, the NATO CIMIC doctrine has to be improved from a Level 2 AJP to a Level 1 AJP to underline the position and appropriate level of CIMIC in the Joint Function Framework.

Organisation and Personnel

The role of the CIMIC staff profession within NATO's Analysis and Assessment capability has become increasingly important. CIMIC staff elements are required to effectively integrate the civil factor as part of the comprehensive understanding of the operating environment in a manner that both the staff and the commander can utilize. Furthermore, this capability must span seamlessly from the strategic to the tactical level. The NATO MDO approach is primarily a concept, mindset, and attitude that must be implemented by developing plans at all levels.



To incorporate this mindset into the relevant plans, it is essential for headquarters at all levels, from strategic to tactical, to have CIMIC staff who are familiar with this mindset and can apply it throughout the planning phases and during the execution of operations. This impacts the timing of decisions, including non-military partners in processes and formulating conclusions for future operations. As non-military stakeholders can also be involved in the planning processes, CFI must commence as early as possible as a prerequisite for CMI—integrating a J9 directorate at the strategic level of the AFU underlines that.

Training and Personnel

The CIMIC staff addresses current challenges by considering multiple domains and military and non-military aspects. This approach necessitates a solid educational foundation, regular training, and proficiency in basic skills related to analysis, assessment, and civil-military interaction. It is widely recognized that the effectiveness of CIMIC advice is enhanced by persuasive content and presentation. While not a new concept, MDO can provide an opportunity to reemphasize the importance of these factors and CIMIC as a Joint Function. The fundamental structure of CIMIC basic training must be reconsidered to achieve this. Courses tailored to strategic, operational, and tactical levels should be available to CIMIC personnel, non-CIMIC personnel, and non-military actors. Interoperability between NATO as an alliance, the member states, and various NATO partners, as well as between military and non-military actors, must be trained for and regularly practiced, now more than ever. NATO's key training facilities for CIMIC, including the CCOE, the Multinational CIMIC Group, and the NATO School, play a crucial role in this.

Material and Facilities

Historically, CIMIC has not been associated with high material expenditure. However, it would be an oversimplification to conclude that further material development is unnecessary. CIMIC personnel need future-oriented and functional tools, especially the NATO CIMIC Analysis and Assessment Capability, to share results efficiently within headquarters and with other partners. Time is a crucial factor, particularly in cyberspace and space domains. Suitable technologies, including AI, should be introduced in Concept Development and Experimentation (CD&E) to test concepts with Allies and non-military actors. A seamless working environment between unclassified and classified areas must be established to ensure prompt and uninterrupted civil-military interaction for all CIMIC staff and training facilities.



Leadership

The shift from conducting stabilization operations outside the Alliance area to focusing on deterrence and defence in Europe represents a change in mindset and understanding of the new functions. The evolving role of CIMIC is evident not only in connection with MDO and the conflict in Ukraine but also in the recognition by political and military decision-makers of the importance of social and societal resilience as a more whole of government and society effort. Additionally, there is a growing acknowledgement of the reliance on non-military actors in the execution of military operations and relocations resulting in a combined effort of both worlds. While the need for Civil-Military Interaction is acknowledged, the integration of civilian factors by specialized CIMIC personnel within the headquarters is not always fully appreciated. It is essential to persuade both military and non-military decision-makers. Simply giving presentations, holding road shows, and conducting briefings is insufficient. CIMIC personnel must demonstrate their value through results in exercises and at headquarters. Furthermore, it is crucial to engage in the training of future decision-makers and leaders at an early stage.

Summary

CIMIC, as a joint function, is a crucial component of military operational planning and management. According to NATO's commitment to a comprehensive approach and the experiences from the war in Ukraine, there is a need to adapt to new challenges. For CIMIC and Civil Affairs, this means defining their roles in these scenarios and aligning training, education, and deployment accordingly. Both military and non-military communities need to recognize that CIMIC goes beyond just liaison. Without a solid integration of civil factors into the operational environment, efficient interaction and synchronization cannot take place in the headquarters. It is essential to consistently apply the methods of the NATO CIMIC Analysis and Assessment Workflow by specialized CIMIC personnel. The role of CIMIC expertise at the operational and strategic levels has significantly increased, which should be considered in training, exercises, and operations. At the tactical level, the ability to connect with domestic procedures and forces must be defined and trained. Joint exercises and training are key to success in this area.

CIMIC is a military joint function involving civil factor integration and civil-military interaction in peacetime, crisis, and conflict - in all NATO core tasks.



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