

# **Strange Bedfellows: NGOs and the Military in Humanitarian Crises<sup>1</sup>**

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## **1. Introduction<sup>2</sup>**

This article intends to examine some of the tensions that can arise between civilian relief workers and military personnel in peace operations.<sup>3</sup> The context is the qualitative change that has taken place in the post-Cold War period concerning the types of peace operations that military<sup>4</sup> personnel and humanitarian workers are asked to participate in. Militaries no longer just protect national sovereignty and that of allies. They intervene more and more in intrastate conflicts. Military mandates are wider and more ambiguous and the tasks more multi-dimensional and multi-functional. In addition, they are often tasked with facilitating humanitarian relief, social reconstruction and protecting civilians in areas where there is no peace. According to Williams, “the military have taken on new and significant political roles.” They are now asked to broker deals, shelter the displaced, protect human rights, supervise the return of refugees, organise and monitor elections, and support civilian reconstruction (Williams, 1989: 14). This takes them into the domain of civilian relief organisations.

There are also larger numbers of civilian relief workers in peace operations also performing a wide variety of tasks such as food delivery, monitoring elections and human rights, managing refugee camps, distributing medical supplies and services, etc. They can belong to any number of organizations with varying budgets, tasks, goals, competence, types of personnel, etc., which can make liaisons between them and the military at times difficult (Last, 1998: 162). In peace operations, one can now find the large International Organisations (IOs) such as UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund) in addition to the well-known international NGOs such as CARE, OXFAM, Médecins sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders) and the ICRC (International Committee for the Red Cross). There are also larger numbers of smaller NGOs in areas of conflict in the post-Cold War period. For example, in 1989, 48 international NGOs were registered with the United Nations. By 1998, there were 1,500 (Simmons, 1998: 75-76). These NGOs may be religious or secular, include personnel from one nation or several, be truly non-governmental or in fact receive large sums from government grants. Finally, a peace operation may also have small groups with a humanitarian interest running around, doing any variety of things from distributing old prescription glasses to trying to set up dental clinics. According to one Canadian sergeant:

A problem that confronts peacekeepers who must deal with NGOs is the wide range of competence they demonstrate. Fortunately, some are highly effective while others are simply useless. Many small agencies may be very well-connected to the local situation yet lack the administrative capacity to manage the money donated to them. Other groups simply lack the ability to coordinate their actions with outside organisations. The impressions formed by peacekeepers who have seen some of the less competent agencies, unfortunately, may colour their perception of the whole spectrum of humanitarian aid organisations (Pollick, 2000: 59).

Traditionally, interactions between the military and humanitarian workers were characterized by avoidance or antagonism. Each group held (and sometimes continues to hold) stereotypes

of the other. According to some US analysts, American military personnel are described by some NGOs as “boys with toys”, rigid, authoritarian, conservative, impatient, arrogant, homophobic, civilian phobic, excessively security-conscious, etc. (Bruno, 1999: 38; Dearfield, 1998: 4;). In contrast, one of the battalion commanders I interviewed referred to NGOs as “non-guided organisations” and other authors note the following comments: “Children of the ‘60s”, flaky do-gooders, permissive, unpunctual, obstructionist, anarchic, undisciplined, self-righteous, anti-military, etc. (Steihm, 1998: 20). According to Williams, humanitarian organisations form the nucleus of an international civil society whose ‘esprit de corps’ distrusts national military structures (Williams, 1998: 39).

Miller (1999: 181-192) tells us that the aid workers’ anti-military attitude stems from their organisations’ origins. Many were created to alleviate suffering caused by war (e.g. the ICRC) or to provide an alternative to military service (e.g. The American Friends Service Committee). In peace operations soldiers may find it morally acceptable to participate in humanitarian actions, however, it is highly unlikely that humanitarian workers would ever find it acceptable to take part in military actions. Pamela All has made the following comment on the NGO-military relationship:

Traditionally, NGOs and the military have perceived their roles to be distinctly different and separate. NGOs have felt uneasy with military forces, either from their own countries or from the country receiving assistance, particularly when the latter are employed in the service of dictators with unsavory human rights records. Military leaders, on the other hand, tend to regard NGOs as undisciplined and their operations as uncoordinated and disjointed (All, 1996: 440).

In the 1990s the nature of international conflict meant that relief workers increasingly found their lives and their work at risk. Relief workers in Rwanda and Chechnya were deliberately killed in 1997. In Burundi and the Sudan NGOs were expelled and workers killed because they were witness to local atrocities. In other countries workers have been victims of land mines, armed hijacking of vehicles, banditry, kidnapping, bombings, etc. A Canadian Defence Ministry official noted that some NGO workers had more battlefield experience than most Canadian Forces personnel (Williams, 1998: 41).

Because of these sad events and the deterioration of field situations, aid workers began to conclude that they needed weapons on their side in order to fulfil their mandates. For example, in Somalia the ICRC suspended its normally irrevocable principle of avoiding cooperation with military forces in its relief operation in order to protect its relief convoys. The chaos in Somalia became so bad and the negotiating position of humanitarian agencies so tenuous that military force became the only viable alternative (Natsios, 1997: 354).

But even security arrangements can prove to be a contentious issue. David Owen found the military in Bosnia “bitter in their denunciation of some of the NGOs who to them were a pestilential nuisance, resisting all attempts at coordination and then complaining that they were not properly protected” (Owen, 1995: 208). A Canadian officer I interviewed in Bosnia was equally cynical concerning NGOs, saying that the NGOs wanted nothing to do with the military until there was a perceived security threat, and then they started showing up to make sure that they could be evacuated or protected by the military. However, working with the military can be problematic for some NGOs. The Independent Commission on Kosovo has described the NGO dilemma in this way: “The central humanitarian mission of protecting civilian life and safety is precisely what is under siege in military engagement. How can humanitarian organisations develop closer and more continuous working relationships with military organisations without compromising their mission?” (International Commission on Kosovo, 2000: 208).

Until recently, when civilian relief workers and military personnel were both involved in ‘traditional’ peace operations, they performed their tasks separately. There was thus little functional need for cooperation between these groups. As the Canadian Chief of Defence Staff, General Maurice Baril has remarked: “Humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organisations seemed to be in every area of conflict but remained independent and reluctant to modify their approach and agree to coordinate their efforts with the military force” (Baril, 1997: 119). Moreover, some of the tasks assigned to the military (for example, delivering relief supplies) are no longer distinct from humanitarian work. Thus, the military are expected to work not only alongside, but also in cooperation with NGOs and other relief organisations. In these circumstances, an effective interface for civil-military cooperation becomes essential. In order to promote civil-military cooperation, it is important to understand some of the difficulties that can emerge in peace operations between the members of these communities. In this article, I will explore some of the tensions that can arise between the military and relief agencies. I have identified five possible points of tension to be found in peace operations, which I have been calling a ‘cultural interoperability model’.<sup>5</sup> These points of tension are related to organisational differences in terms of:

- a. organisational structure and culture,
- b. tasks and ways of accomplishing them,
- c. definitions of success and time frames,
- d. abilities to exert influence and control information,
- e. control of resources.

In addition to documentary sources, particularly the work of the American sociologists Laura Miller and Charles Moskos, research for this paper was carried out in the archives of the Canadian Department of National Defence Headquarters. During the crisis in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa, Canada attempted to lead the formation of a multinational coalition. The crisis resolved itself before the coalition could actually be deployed. However, there were a number of important lessons learned from this effort (Appathurai & Lysyshyn, 1997). Information also came from unstructured interviews and focus groups carried out with Canadian soldiers in Bosnia (October 1998) and in the Golan Heights (February 1999).<sup>6</sup> In addition to interviews with Canadian military personnel, I also conducted a few interviews at NATO headquarters and with European battalion commanders who have been deployed to the Former Yugoslavia. I have also consulted with members of large international relief agencies such as the UNHCR and the ICRC, but I have little interview data from the smaller NGOs who do not have contact with the military in an area of operations. This is an area for future research.

## **2. Organisational structure and culture**

In a speech on civil-military partnerships in humanitarian intervention given in Toronto, in the autumn of 1999, Lieutenant-Colonel D. D. McAlea described obstacles to fostering Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC):

Number one: NGOs just don’t trust the military; they’re suspicious of military.

Number two: they jealously guard their independence. NGOs have to be careful not to compromise their objectivity because they could lose their funding... There are suspicions on both sides because they have different cultures (Ross, 2000: 2).

In this paper, tension in organisational structure and culture refers to differences in organisational goals (including values and basic assumptions), organisational composition (gender,

age, and ethnicity), and actual organisational structure. Dandeker and Gow have said that, “culture comprises a set of ideas, beliefs and symbols that provide a definition of the world for a group or organisation and guides its action” (Dandeker & Gow, 2000: 59). NGOs and the military are often seen to be at odds with each other concerning the basic goals that guide their action (alleviate human suffering vs. preparation for war), approaches to violence (non-violence vs. controlled use of violence), their approach to nationalism (internationalist vs. strongly nationalistic) and decision making styles (decentralised vs. hierarchical).

The military’s primary mission is still fighting and winning wars and in a theatre of operations they continue to work on these skills. For example, when I was in Bosnia I was able to observe a Canadian live firing exercise. For some NGO members it is hard to work with the military because it is hard to forget their fundamental purpose. As one NGO member who had worked with the Canadian military on a peacekeeping training exercise remarked, “They seem like nice people, both the civilian and military people mixed, but I think of military people training in acts of war ...” (Miller, 1999: 191). Some military members feel that participating in peace operations dulls their warrior’s edge. These soldiers and officers do not believe in their role as ‘global street workers’. Peace operations are considered inappropriate for combat soldiers. As a Canadian soldier told me in Bosnia, “This is not what we trained for, which was green.” Similarly, Canadian politicians have been criticised for trying to make the military into NGOs in uniform. On the other hand, many soldiers and officers acknowledge that their presence in a peace operation makes a difference. As one NCO (Non-Commissioned Officer) in Bosnia remarked, “In UNPROFOR - they were shooting at us and children were throwing rocks at us. In IFOR - we were taking the guns away from the big guys. In SFOR – we see people coming back, children are waving at us.”

Miller’s work shows that in spite of the perceived benefits and a shift towards support of armed intervention in the regions where they work, relief workers remain essentially anti-military:

An anti-military and anti-weapons bias persists in relief organisations because militarization and violence are still the primary causes of much of the suffering that these agencies are attempting to relieve. The crises in Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia were all caused by clan or ethnic warfare. The human rights abuses in Haiti were the result of a military coup and a brutal dictatorship. NGOs accepted weapons as a necessary evil for reaching their goals when other methods no longer could provide a safe environment (Miller, 1999: 191).

Some differences between the two groups concern motivation. Soldiers and officers participate in a peace operation because it is their job. They stay for their tour of duty and do what they are ordered to. In one Canadian study on ethics, it is said that the extra money earned was also a strong motivation for participating in peace operations. “I have been on many tours, I do it for the money. I don’t believe in peace, in helping people who don’t want to help themselves” (National Defence Headquarters [NDHQ], 1999: 13). The Ethics Report goes on to say that: “The often articulated motivator of extra dollars as the prime consideration for volunteering complicates the decision making process in high intensity ethical situations. The comment dollars are the number one motivation, rather than duty, was not uncommon” (NDHQ, 1999: 13).

In contrast, relief workers volunteer for hardship, often making many personal sacrifices in order to pursue altruistic goals:

NGOs, who operate with much less individual security and often with fewer amenities than soldiers, are personally invested in the mission, and are committed for the long term to addressing whatever needs may arise. They are where they are by choice, and

are devoted to their vocation. Many of them find it difficult to believe that soldiers could truly be committed to the same goals as they are (Miller, 1999: 94).

In Miller's study, relief workers expressed the view that soldiers were there simply because they were ordered to be there. This in turn led some relief workers to feel morally superior to soldiers. "In a number of interviews, distrust of the military was translated into comments suggesting that the US military or individual soldiers help out only because they are ordered to do so or have self-interested reasons for doing so" (Miller, 1999: 192).

Differences in organisational structure can affect the way groups interact. What is the hierarchy in the organisation? How are decisions taken? Organisations such as NGOs tend to have a more flattened hierarchy with decentralized decision making. When one American colonel in Bosnia referred to NGOs as "one general and many privates" the response of an NGO executive was "How about one general and many colonels?" (Moskos, 2000: 33). According to Col. Bob Stewart, the commander of the first British deployment to Bosnia in 1992: "The military are hierarchical, authoritarian, centralized, large and robust, while UNHCR is flat, consensus-based with highly decentralized field offices" (Williams, 1998: 36). Thus UNHCR's perceived lack of structure and tendency to delegate decision making to people of a much younger age than the military can be a source of frustration (Williams, 1998: 37).

In addition, the gender and ethnic composition of the organisations in theatre may affect the way they interact with each other. Militaries in peace operations are predominantly male<sup>7</sup>, while relief workers are often female in their late twenties to early forties (Miller, 1999: 193). Similarly, UN field staff are predominantly female. UN agencies, such as UNHCR, recruit women on a positive-discrimination basis, which means that half of the staff of UN agencies and NGOs operating in Bosnia is female (Williams, 1998: 34). Young male soldiers between 19–22 years old may have difficulty dealing with relief workers who are female and considerably older. Finally, ethnic (including racial, cultural and religious) differences can have impact on the way organisations behave with each other and with the local population. Miller and Moskos showed that military units that were mixed race and mixed gender had more humanitarian attitudes to the local population than all-male uniraical units, which adopted a more aggressive stance towards locals (Miller & Moskos, 1995: 615-637).

### **3. Tasks and ways of accomplishing them**

It is my belief that the greatest contribution the military can make is to restore order and security so that humanitarian activities can then take place. However, more and more the military are being asked to undertake humanitarian and development activities. For example, in Kosovo the Canadian Battle Group's CIMIC cell actually maintained and ran several development projects - worth Canadian\$ 750,000 - on behalf of the Canadian International Development Agency. According to the military, this allowed the Battle Group to directly address the needs of the local population and helped them win local support for their presence (Delaney, 2001). This type of 'hearts and minds' campaign to win over the locals can also promote support for the operation back home. Almost any military article on CIMIC will have the inevitable photo of a soldier with children. This of course attracts more sympathy than coverage of any military action the soldiers might undertake.

But not everyone agrees that development activities should be within the scope of a Battle Group. As General Briquemont has commented, "The military cannot take the place of humanitarian organisations, which have their own objectives and methods and their own know-how; it is clearly useless to try to outdo the ICRC or the UNHCR" (ICRC/UNPOFOR, 1995).

An ICRC representative even goes so far as to criticise the concept of CIMIC itself:

A degree of caution should be exercised when referring to CIMIC. In whichever way the concept is interpreted it conveys first and foremost a military function. It is thus not an appropriate term for describing the ICRC's relations with the military, or for describing the function of a delegate whose essential role is liaising with the military. The inherent danger of CIMIC is that it could induce the military to go beyond their (military) mandate and focus more on humanitarian activities than on peace and security tasks (Studer, 2001: 7).

The other problem with mixing military and humanitarian actions is the possible confusion that can arise in the minds of the local population. Ogata tells us UNHCR's humanitarian activities have become closely entwined with the military, strengthening its humanitarian capacity but also complicating its efforts: "If UN peacekeeping forces were to engage in offensive action, it would no longer be possible to maintain the non-political and impartial base of UNHCR's humanitarian activities, however serious the needs of the victims might be" (Ogata, 1995: 119-127). The ICRC has exactly the same position. According to one ICRC official, when the dividing line between humanitarian and military action is blurred, "the very concept of humanitarian action, which is at the heart of the ICRC's mandate and activities, risks being undermined" (Studer, 2001: 1).

Ogata also expresses concern over the effect that military operations have on the neutral and impartial image of relief efforts. For example, while UNPROFOR convoy escorts provided protection and deterred attack, their presence in some cases heightened local hostility (Williams, 1998: 40). Again, the ICRC shares this view:

This is perhaps the ICRC's main concern, in particular the risk of weakening the concept of impartial humanitarian action in the eyes of the belligerents. This concern is due less to the limits of military involvement in humanitarian action per se than to the 'contagious' effect that it may have on civilian humanitarian activities, because any association with military missions – real or perceived – is likely to affect the way in which the population gauges the neutrality of the civilian humanitarian workers, insofar as they are – or are judged to be – no longer 'innocent bystanders' but rather potential parties to the conflict. Mixing mandates risks turning humanitarian workers into perceived enemy agents and thus jeopardizing their personal safety (Studer, 2001: 5).

Similarly, when I was in the Canadian Area of Responsibility in Bosnia, some NGOs in the town of Drvar refused to have any more contact with the military because they had been targeted during riots. They felt that they had been singled out for violence because of their association with the military. Therefore, tensions can arise between humanitarian and military actors because of their respective mandates and modes of operation. Humanitarian organisations are concerned with protecting people and ensuring basic human rights and the security of the victims on all sides of a conflict, whereas the military use of force might be directed just against one party in a conflict.

Of course the military are also concerned with maintaining objectivity and this can lead to maintaining distance from the local population. Because of security issues, military personnel find themselves in armed camps, behind fortified walls and barbed wire. They remain separate from the local population with little opportunity for extended social contact. Keeping distance from the local population can be perceived as demonstrating a lack of trust in the host population. This is not to say that the military do not go into the community to help. In Bosnia, the Canadians rebuilt a hospital wing, set up a dental clinic, built a woodshed for a school, cut and delivered wood to the elderly, etc. However, the militaries like to do things for people rather than with them. In contrast, relief workers often place themselves in the midst of

the local population with few boundaries (be they physical or social) between.<sup>8</sup> Because of the closeness, relief organisations often incorporate local cultural modes in the way they accomplish their tasks. This is reflected in work habits:

The military's standards and preferred way of completing its tasks (the most rapid, most efficient, highest quality way) do not mesh with the NGO approach, which employs, teaches, and gives control to members of the community, incorporates local cultural modes, and uses locally accessible resources when possible. In Bosnia the USAID director at that time observed, "[The US military] had a tendency to want to take over, so we had to stop that, I have to teach the military each time not to run things" (Miller, 1999: 192).

The NGOs themselves can have mandates that differ from each other and this can lead to tensions with the military. The inability of NGOs to collaborate with each other was often cited as a problem during my trip to Bosnia in 1998. I was told, "NGOs are a business, each with their own agenda and sometimes their own agendas don't coincide with other NGO activities. Sometimes NGOs don't want to talk to each other." One problem the Canadians faced was that the UNHCR wanted to return refugees (Serbs), while another organisation wanted to get the (Croat) Council going. "So they have different mandates and get into conflict with each other. Sometimes the NGOs here seem to be working at cross-purposes to each other." Another interviewee, commenting on the SFOR mission, said NGOs were not well co-ordinated, which created "duplication of effort, missed information, poorly completed projects and villages with rebuilt homes but no electricity or water and a host of other problems."

Sometimes there is a gap between civil and military understandings of the strategic goals of a mission. For example, Garofano tells us that in Bosnia US military leaders did not believe that they had a mandate to do nation building - and may have wanted to avoid the burden of one (Garfano, 1999: 47). On the other hand, humanitarian workers express frustration with the military's inability to act in certain situations:

Our director witnessed a guy firing randomly in the air after leaving the scene of a crime. A UN peacekeeping truck was looking, trying not to get shot, but otherwise doing nothing. I'm sure they were careful because they didn't have a mandate to act. I imagine they were ordered not to do anything. That would be OK, but the military is here doing what? (Miller, 1999: 187).

Relief workers commonly call upon military forces to become more actively and deeply involved. In Bosnia a relief worker complained: "You cannot leave de-mining up to the [warring] parties. You have to take responsibility. You say not, you're not the police, fine; not de-mining, fine; not capturing war criminals, fine. What are you doing? You have to take responsibility for something" (Miller, 1999: 189). And in Haiti, relief workers pushed for more military commitment: "The UN [troops] should participate more in peacekeeping: patrols and police work. Foreign troops are not supposed to get involved in local actions, but people think they could have done more to disarm the local thugs" (Miller, 1999: 189).

On the other hand, many NGOs "seemed almost intentionally blind to the political and military implications of some of the suggestions and requests they made both privately and to the media" (Appathurai & Lysyshyn, 1997: 7). During the Great Lake crisis, this was reflected in different opinions as to what was an appropriate role for the military, i.e. some NGOs wanted the military to go into the refugee camps in Eastern Zaire and separate and/or disarm belligerents (Appathurai & Lysyshyn, 1997: 9). However, fulfilling the tasks the humanitarian agencies wanted would have involved serious risks and it would also have required important political decisions that many participating nations did not want to take.

#### 4. Definitions of success and time frames

According to Pope (1994), the long-term commitments of NGOs in a region may lead to substantial differences in how a mission accomplishment is defined. NGOs may not declare a mission a success until all human suffering has been alleviated in the area.<sup>9</sup> Public opinion and the media, on the other hand, may simply want to put an end to fighting (send in troops in order to prevent the escalation of the conflict). The national politicians<sup>10</sup> may have another definition of success (no casualties in the field, good publicity for their government, etc.).

The military's definition of success is determined by the mission that has to be accomplished. In addition, European military commanders have told me that a mission may be considered a success if their troops sustain no casualties and they are able to bring them all home safely – even if the actual mandate was not completely fulfilled. This can be interpreted by some as indifference to the local population or the humanitarian aspects of the mission. According to Miller, the US military share similar concerns about avoiding casualties among their own people and about 'mission creep', i.e. prolonging a mission because new objectives are constantly being set. "Many aid workers have detected these concerns, and look down on the military leaders as wanting to perform only the minimum required and then withdrawing as quickly as possible" (Miller, 1999: 191).

The brevity of military tours (usually six months) can also cause tension with NGOs who are often the first to enter and the last to leave a troubled area.

Once familiarized with local conditions, [military] officers have little time left to establish solid working relationships with their civilian counterparts, or acclimatize themselves to local values, culture and politics... By contrast, it is unusual for civilians to serve for less than 12 months... It was not unusual for civilians with UNPROFOR to be in their post for three years (Williams, 1998: 36).

In addition, different military units may have different forms of rotation with some militaries rotating individuals while other rotate whole or parts of units at a single time. In addition, humanitarian agencies sometimes demonstrate a misunderstanding of the speed with which the military can deploy. In the Great Lakes crisis, "there was a clear expectation that armies would be fully deployed in theatre almost instantly after a political decision was taken. It was not well understood that this operation involved the movement of tons of machinery and hundreds of people to Africa, and their establishment on the ground, all of which takes time" (Appathurai & Lysyshyn, 1997: 12).

Last (1998: 166) discusses immediate (2-6 months), short-term (1-2 years), medium-term (5-10) years and long-term (10+ years) intervention in the Former Yugoslavia. In each of these time frames, the focus is different. So, for example, in the immediate and short-term military and civil security are the primary focus, while in medium- and long-term the emphasis is on economic reconstruction, education and development. Each of these forms of intervention requires different resources (military and security forces vs. social and economic development projects) and different social actors (military and police vs. relief and development agents). Thus, tension can occur when different social actors are operating with different time frames in mind in the same theatre of operations.

Tensions can also arise when no end state has been defined. As Dandekar and Gow (1997: 327-348) have pointed out, one of the serious points of tension in a strategic peace operation is that the belligerents are in control of the end state and it is only when they decide that the conflict has been satisfactorily resolved that the peace operation will end. Thus, the Former Yugoslavia could end up as a long Cyprus-type mission. In peace operations where the goal of the mission is defined as humanitarian, it becomes difficult to decide when the operation should come to an end. For example, in the case of Zaire, when the refugees were freed from

coercion and began to return to Rwanda, the international community then engaged in a debate over whether the military mission was still required. Those who defined the role of the military mission as 'humanitarian' noted that there were still people in need and supported the extension of the mission, however, as Appathurai and Lysyshyn point out "there will always be people in need in eastern Zaire ..." (Appathurai & Lysyshyn, 1997: 4).

## **5. Abilities to exert influence and control information**

Different groups are able to exert influence at a number of levels. In fact, the decision to undertake a peace operation may arise because of public pressure brought on by NGO and media reports. Public opinion can also play a critical role in the decision to send in or pull out troops. Organisations such as the NGOs and the media are able to exert influence not only at the national political level but also in the international arena. This can frustrate military commanders who are not able to influence political and public opinion in the same way. During the Great Lakes crisis, the NGOs had political interests not unlike governments. According to Appathurai and Lysyshyn, "These agencies have relationships with parties on the ground and with other national governments, and compete with each other for influence and financing. Some (not all) of these clearly tried to influence the Multinational Force during the crisis, providing suspiciously high numbers of refugees in need and using the media as a lever" (Appathurai & Lysyshyn, 1997: 6-7). According to Delaney, this was also the case in Kosovo, where local civil authorities and humanitarian organisations exaggerated the acuteness of problems and the means needed to address them in order to get more funds and resources (Delaney, 2001). The commander then finds her or himself trying to explain the disconnection between the information (s)he has about the local situation (numbers of refugees, etc.) and the portrait that is being painted back home or in the international press.

Tied to the ability to exert influence is also the ability to control information. A military commander finds her or himself at the interface of many relationships where different organisations want access to the information (s)he possesses. According to Miller, NGOs believe that the military can assist them in information gathering (Miller, 1997). In Bosnia the Canadian military shared information with the NGOs through the population surveys the CIMIC people carried out. Canadian military personnel also monitor returning refugees. In Kosovo, the Canadian CIMIC clerk established and maintained a database that kept track of population distribution, medical facilities, water supply, schools, civil authorities and shelter distribution (Delaney, 2001).

However, the intelligence community is a two-way street and NGOs must be willing to share information as well. Some organisations such as the ICRC are reluctant to share information because it might endanger some of their confidentiality agreements (Studer, 2001: 9). Nevertheless, because NGOs often have a longer experience with the local population, their insights can be of value to the military. The military however, have to be willing to accept information that is not packaged in the way they are used to seeing it. According to one relief worker in Bosnia:

There's no sense for the American military to reinvent the wheel: we had a lot of surveys and figures on refugees. The US military was starting to do it all over again. We saved them three to six months of work, and in return we have gotten a lot of support: they opened routes across the zone of separation, for example.

Both of us come from very strong cultures and both of us think we're right and know how to do things best. Who's going to take the first step? We've gone through a process. In the beginning, we were very reluctant, but we made the first step to help them learn how we think, how we work, to try to get them to understand the value of what we're doing. They started to realize how much we knew: that we had sensitivity to

what's going on in the country and that we could help them in situations in which they didn't know what to do (Miller, 1999: 192).

In addition, different organisations are often not aware of what others are doing, so when NGOs criticise the military for 'not doing enough', it could be that they are simply not aware of what the military are actually doing. The Canadian military try to facilitate the sharing of information and promote coordination between NGOs. For example, in Kosovo the Canadian Battle Group's CIMIC cell acted as a go-between, finding an NGO to carry out well decontamination work and assisting them in finding adequate funding from available donors (Delaney, 2001). In Bosnia, the CIMIC liaison section's role is to assist the international organisations in their Area of Responsibility, particularly the ICRC, UNHCR, and their partners. CIMIC units also deal with the smaller NGOs in the Area of Responsibility. One of the problems these civilian organisations face is that they are small. They have to be small to keep their overhead down and be capable of direct action. However, because they are small they often lack access to current information and they cannot coordinate with other organisations. According to one OXFAM worker, the lack of coordination in Kosovo led to duplication of essential services and competition among NGOs to work in the same camps.<sup>11</sup>

Another gap in the information sharing relates to Islamic activities. The Canadians have little or no information of any development actions from Islamic groups that seem to be quite active in Bosnia. Not only the military are ignorant of Islamic group activities. Moskos reports that 7 of the 33 NGOs with official standing in the UN operation in Somalia were Islamic. Yet, Moskos' computer search of US press reports revealed that, "Not one story was ever written on any of the Muslim NGOs – not one" (Moskos, 2000: 46).

The military try to be sensitive to the NGOs. "We don't want to appear heavy-handed so we try to arrive at consensus." In this way, the military try to develop and co-ordinate NGO strategy. As one officer said, "It is important to show consistency of effort." In Kosovo, the Canadian military organised weekly coordination conferences between representatives of UNHCR, the NGOs, the UN Interim Mission in Kosovo, the OSCE, local civil authorities and military CIMIC representatives. In these meetings the military provided information on mine threats, safe routes, damage assessments, schools, medical coverage and population distribution (Delaney, 2001). This communication can be essential in areas where telephone communications and cellular coverage are practically non-existent. Similarly, the Canadian military in Bosnia organised regular meetings plus ad hoc information sharing between NGOs. One of the mechanisms for this was the called the Principals Group. When I was there, the Principals Group of NGOs met in the Canadian camp in Coralici. The military facilitated the meeting and produced the agenda. I was told, "We decide the focus and explain why so we can have a common effort." In addition, the head of the Canadian Medical Unit in Bosnia has a monthly meeting with the World Health Organisation in Bosnia, and (s)he also kept in contact with other medical staff in the area (for example, Médecins Sans Frontières) about the main medical problems in the region.

Finally, one cannot discuss control of information without discussing the media. Both the military and NGOs are concerned about their relations with the media. According to Moskos, "NGO funding often depends of favourable press coverage" (Moskos, 2000: 33). And as a leading figure in the International Rescue Committee remarked, "You go where governments or U.N. agencies want you to go to get your share of contracts that otherwise would go to other agencies. And one way to get such contracts is by getting the press to publicize your work" (Rieff, 1999: 27). This can lead to competition among NGOs for press coverage. Some members of the Canadian military find this 'distasteful'. As one peacekeeper put it:

The theatrical demeanour of these organisations, their tendency to go into dangerous situations, and their disregard for cooperation with other groups are particularly irritating to peacekeepers. This sort of competition is particularly galling when a group places its pursuit of publicity above the goals of the overall peacekeeping mission (Pollick, 2000: 60).

The military presence in theatre can also be a valuable resource for NGOs since it often draws political and media attention to an area. This can assist NGOs in publicizing their efforts and in raising funds. However, NGOs often have strained relations with the media, much the same way as the military do. As a senior officer in Sarajevo told Moskos, “The media understand NGOs even less than we do” (Moskos, 2000: 46). The military are often apprehensive about the media and particularly about negative coverage. Then again, so are the NGOs. For the military a bad news story may spell the end of an individual’s career; for an NGO it may mean the end of funding (Moskos, 2000: 50).

## **6. Control of resources**

In peace operations the different organisations often find themselves in competition for resources. The NGOs may be competing among themselves in order to secure funding and equipment and they may be competing over access to certain areas or regions that the military must safeguard. The military deploy with valuable resources – food and medical supplies, communication and construction equipment, transport and fuel, etc. Relief workers in Haiti described to Miller how early in the mission, in 1994, thousands of soldiers were deployed. At that time, they shared their resources:

After Cyclone Gordon... they volunteered. And they had an outpost next to our office. We knew each other, were friends, and they asked what support we needed. Engineers came out and set the course of the river back, which had just spread out all over. They made walls as barriers to prevent land degradation and protect the banks of the rivers. They also did an aerial survey with their helicopters for us. They worked well with the communities then (Miller, 1999: 188).

In Bosnia, the Canadians shared their personnel with the UN Mine Action Centre. While I was there, the military had someone in Bihac working as the Centre coordinator. He checked safety, techniques used to actually clear mines, and that the right people for the job were hired. Canadians also worked closely with the UNHCR to anticipate resource needs in Bosnia. However, I was told that the demands in 1998 were small compared to 1994-1995, when the UNHCR used Canadian military vehicles. During the Kosovo crisis, the numbers of refugees overwhelmed the NGOs on the ground. The UNHCR asked NATO to coordinate all transportation of food, relief supplies, and medical care. NATO troops also helped set up the camps for the hundreds of thousands of refugees (Moskos, 2000: 50).

However, some organisations are increasingly wary of using military assets in carrying out their own operations. This is because military assets can be used for peace keeping or even peace enforcement at the same time that they are being used for humanitarian assistance in the same geographical area. So even though organisations such as the ICRC understand only too well the value of armed protection of ICRC equipment and personnel, they have become cautious in using military assets for their operations. In Somalia, for example, it was not possible for the ICRC to use military aircraft which only the day before had been carrying military equipment for peace enforcement purposes (Studer, 2001: 10).

At other times, NGOs want the military to share their material resources. Different from the positive description above, of NGO-military cooperation in the beginning of the mission in

Haiti, by 1997 only a minimal US military force was present and it seemed to be conserving its resources. A relief worker expressed the following frustrations:

They have all that equipment here, money, people. Why not build roads, improve streets, build infrastructure? A lot of this is very capital-intensive and they have it. As it is, they're spending all this money to be locked up behind walls, and we don't know what they're doing (Miller, 1999: 188).

Similarly, when the group I observed first arrived in Bosnia, the NGOs wanted the military to deliver goods and cattle for them. The military said no. Thus, there is also competition over soldiers as resources. That is, there are a large number of competing demands placed upon a soldier's time and upon military resources to accomplish both humanitarian and military aims. According to one Canadian officer in the Former Yugoslavia, they didn't have the resources to meet the demands of the military and humanitarian tasks: "We are pushing the envelope and doing our damn best to keep all the balls in the air."

Finally, there may be misunderstandings and disagreements as to the proper use of resources. Humanitarian agencies may want the military to go beyond their mandate in order to disarm the local population or catch thieves and criminals (Miller, 1997). One example of different views on using and withholding resources can be seen in the following situation in Bosnia:

A Canadian led team had arranged to halt SFOR-coordinated humanitarian aid to the town of Kotor Varos until the municipal leadership demonstrated a willingness to accept the return of displaced ethnic minorities. The team's efforts were undermined, several days later when an NGO announced a major donation to the town. The NGO thought it was more important for them to be seen providing aid to the town than for the humanitarian stakeholders to present a united front. With this NGO's money the mayor was able to ignore pressure to accept minority returns (Canadian Department of National Defence, 1999: 22).

## **7. Conclusions**

NGOs and the military may be strange bedfellows but they will have to stay in the sheets together because of overlapping tasks and scarce resources in mission areas. And there is a growing consensus that coordination is both necessary and useful. Just as in any couple relationship, they have to work continuously at improving communication, building bridges and developing mutual respect if they are to coexist and cooperate. Otherwise they will find themselves working at counter purposes to each other.

Although this article has stressed differences, it is also important to remember that NGOs and the military also share many things: a commitment to peace and stability, a hard working attitude, international experience, life with hardship and danger, personal risk of injury, illness and/or death, decision making under pressure, a 'can do' attitude or a 'make do with what you've got' attitude, an appreciation of competence, a willingness to work among the suffering, the dying and/or the dead, a frustration with conditions on the ground, a frustration with decisions they believe are political and make their work less effective, etc. (Steihm, 1998: 30). There is as much nobility in sacrificing your life for your country as in saving life in a country far from home.

Moskos has advanced the hypothesis that in peace operations we can observe an embryonic convergence between the two institutions: "a 'softening' of the military, if you will, and a 'hardening' of the NGOs" (Moskos, 2000: 33). Thus as the military and NGOs carry out overlapping missions in the same areas they develop common ground for improved relations. A recent survey by Nuciari (2001) of 260 officers from 9 countries<sup>12</sup> indicates that officers had fewer problems with NGOs than they had with the local population.

There certainly appears to be a growing recognition by military forces of the value of working with NGOs. For example, the US Joint Task Force Commander's Handbook has a whole chapter on civil-military relations, which includes a discussion of NGOs, UN agencies and other international relief agencies.<sup>13</sup> And the relief community is developing an appreciation of the military's assistance in realizing humanitarian objectives. Efforts are underway to work more closely together. Flora MacDonald, Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, went with NGOs to both Somalia and Rwanda. She said there were about 200 NGOs operating and "the confusion was total." However, MacDonald said Kosovo was different in that there was tremendous integration in the work being done by the Canadian military and the NGOs there – integration she had not seen elsewhere (Ross, 2000: 4).

Working together helps each community to view the other as equally professional and committed to common objectives. This is a very important point. In fact Miller's (1997) central argument is: organisations that share a common goal and depend on each other to reach that goal, can develop a cooperative relationship and yet retain distinct organisational memberships and cultures. In short, you don't have to be best friends in order to be able to work well together. Good working relations can be developed and I believe that these relationships should be encouraged outside of peace operations. For example, Canadian Forces in 1996 began an exchange with the NGO CARE in which an officer is attached to the organisation on a six-month basis. Some NGOs send personnel to the military for mine-awareness training. These types of exchanges promote mutual understanding.

In theatre, the CIMIC coordination centers permit detailed cooperation between the many NGOs and local authorities.<sup>14</sup> CIMIC operations need to be finely tuned and staffed with competent people. Often there are shortages which means that a battle group is forced to use untrained officers in a CIMIC role or keep them 'double-hatted'. This means that they can be taken away from their CIMIC tasks if their other duties call (Delaney, 2001; Pollick, 2000: 61). Of course, for a military professional, a career in civil – military relations may not mean professional advancement the way being involved in the core business of combat does. There is a need for clear tracks of professional advancement possible in order to encourage participation in these functions. Another military option is to use reservists who have a wide variety of non-traditional military skills. With this in mind, the Canadian Department of Defence intends to create units within the Reserves dedicated to CIMIC activities (Pollick, 2000: 62).

Another aid would be to co-locate headquarters in the same area. Of course being close to each other is not a guarantee of effective communication; nevertheless, it could facilitate it. Dialogue can also be improved through pre-mission meetings between the military and the NGOs, early agreement on responsibilities and objectives, central coordination, shared communications equipment, regular inter-agency meetings in-field, exchanged liaison officers, to name a few. It is also critical that relief agencies be included earlier in the strategic planning stages of an operation. A particular emphasis should be placed upon improving consultation at the policy level, information sharing and analysis. For the foreseeable future, at least, NGOs and the military have no choice but to remain in bed together if they are to ensure the coordination of humanitarian relief, reconstruction, peace building, and the political and security aspects of a mission.

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## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> This article is an enlarged and revised version of a piece that was published under a similar title in 2000 in *Transnational Associations/Associations Transnationales*, Vol. 5, pp. 222-232. The title was inspired by General Shalikashvili. In a 1995 conference on military efforts in humanitarian crises he referred to the military, humanitarian agencies and the media as "strange bed-fellows [that] can be a very good combination." (Cited in Charles Moskos (2000), *The Media and the Military in Peace and Humanitarian Operations*: 34, Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation, Chicago).
- <sup>2</sup> Funding for this research was received from the Defence and Civil Institute of Environmental Medicine [DCIEM], Canadian Department of Defence. I wish to thank particularly Ross Pigeau for his support of this project. Research funds were also received from the George C. Marshall Center in Germany. This research was also funded by US Army Research Institute, Contract No. DASW01-98-M-1868, *Army Culture*. Finally, I wish to thank my research assistants Jason Dunn and Glenn Gilmour for their good humor and hard work on this project.
- <sup>3</sup> I will use the term 'peace operations' partly to avoid getting involved in a controversy over labels and to have one term to describe the wide range of activities which are often called peacekeeping. In fact, peacekeeping is NOT a term found in the UN charter but it has come to refer to a wide variety of actions and interventions, which renders the peacekeeping role itself both ambiguous and open to variable definition (F. Pinch, (1994), *Lessons From Canadian Peacekeeping Experience: a Human Resources Perspective*: p. 17, FCP Human Resources Consulting, Ottawa, August 1994).
- In July 1992, an attempt was made by the UN Secretary General to identify various types of action in *An Agenda for Peace*. In Chapter II of this document, 'peace-making' and 'peace-keeping' are described. Peacemaking is the action to bring hostile parties to agreement while peacekeeping is the deployment of a UN presence in the field. Other concepts found in this chapter are 'preventive diplomacy' [action to prevent disputes from arising, to prevent existing disputes from escalating and to limit the spread of conflict]; 'post-conflict peace building' [action to identify and support structures which will strengthen and solidify peace]; and 'peace enforcement' [restoring and maintaining cease-fire by force] (Cited in: M. Bertrand, (1995), 'The Confusion Between Peacemaking and Peacekeeping', in: D. Warner (ed.), *New Dimensions of Peacekeeping*: pp. 163-164, Kluwer Academic, Deventer). Bertrand tells us that

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although these terms seem clear, in fact the distinction between the different forms of actions is blurred, and that there is confusion among them (Bertrand, 1995: p. 164).

4 Please note that my use of the word ‘military’ is very loose. Since the vast majority of my research experience is with the Army my knowledge of things ‘military’ mostly refers to Army knowledge and experiences in peace operations.

5 For an application of this model to UN and NATO operations in the Former Yugoslavia, see Donna Winslow and Peer Everts (2001), ‘It’s not a Question of Muscle: Cultural Interoperability for NATO’, in: G. Schmidt (ed.), *NATO - The First Fifty Year*: pp. 85-104 (Palgrave / MacMillan, Hampshire, UK).

6 I wish to thank the Canadian Department of National Defence and the soldiers and officers of the 3<sup>d</sup> Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment Battle Group deployed in Bosnia and the Canadian Logistics group stationed on the Golan Heights for taking care of me. I am well aware that such trips require time and energy to organise and I am extremely appreciative of the support and information given to me during these trips.

7 In traditional peacekeeping operations from 1957 to 1989 only 25 of the more than 26,000 troops were female. From 1989 to 1992 the number of females rose to 255 but that was still approximately 1 percent of the total military members in peace operations (J.C. Beilstein (1995) ‘The Role of Women in United States Peacekeeping’, in: *Women 2000*, Vol. 1: p.1)

8 Of course this is not always true. As one writer for the *Economist* cynically observed, “In troubled zones where foreign NGOs flourish, weekends bring a line of smart four-by-fours parked at the best beaches, restaurants or nightclubs. The local beggars do well, but discrepancies between expatriate staff and, say, impoverished local officials trying to do the same work can cause deep antipathy.” (Opinion section, ‘Sins of the secular missionaries’, in: *The Economist*, January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2000).

9 Sweatt describes how differences in conceptual end states negatively affects NGO and military relations. See S. Sweatt (1995), *The Challenges of Civil-Military Relations at the Trailing Edge of War*. Monograph of the Naval War College. Newport, RI.

10 National governments may also be responding to political imperatives – e.g. to stop the flow of refugees to national country. See M. V. Metselaar (1997), ‘Understanding Failures in Intelligence Estimates – UNPROFOR, the Dutch and the Bosnian-Serb Attack on Srebrenica’, in: J. Soeters and J. Rovers (eds.), *The Bosnian Experience*, *Netherlands Annual Review of Military Studies*, 1997: pp. 23-50, esp. p. 27.

11 Quoted in Opinion section, ‘Sins of the secular missionaries’, in: *The Economist*, January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2000

12 The countries were Bulgaria, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Sweden and the USA.

13 See US Joint Warfighting Center (1997), *Joint Task Force Commander’s Handbook for Peace Operations*, Joint Warfighting Center, Ft. Monroe, VA

14 The CIMIC liaison section in the Battle Group I visited consisted of 18 people and their role was to assist the international organizations in the AOR (the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the UNHCR, and their partners). The CIMIC liaison section also assists cooperation with the municipal and cantonment authorities in their efforts to successfully implement the civil aspects of the Dayton accords. For example, they co-ordinate with the UNHCR to help the returning displaced persons. CIMIC also has the task to conduct liaison efforts with international organizations such as the UNHCR and the IPTF (International Police Task Force), who are the Dayton Accord’s implementing partners.