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CIMIC OUTLOOK (2035 AND BEYOND...)

ABSTRACT: Attempting to describe the future is always a risk stirring the pot. Having said that, when we have presented content from extensive and periodical foresight work done by NATO, supported by scholars, it offers an exceptional opportunity to take. This article is focusing only on the future of civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) as an institutionalised NATO capability. The short-term outlook is based on already evolving issues coming from practical experience. The ambitious long-term view is using the results of the above-mentioned NATO future project, resulting in effects of identified worldwide implications. As a conclusion, the author intends to detect the main patterns of future CIMIC, showing the possible way ahead in terms of capability development.

KEYWORDS: Civil-Military Cooperation, strategic foresight

“The future depends on what you do today.”

APPROPRIATE TIME FOR CONTEMPLATION

Dealing with the future is a tricky territory. You can be reckless about almost anything as in the imminent time there are no certainty, no facts. On the other hand, not paying attention to inevitable upcoming changes will put you in a wrong spot on the map of conceptual development as well as training and education eventually.

Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC)² is a very tiny and rather new capability within the military. That is being said, the time to look into CIMIC's prospects is more than adequate considering the stage of its evolution. Comparing it to the good old, traditional military capabilities CIMIC did not have the room for adjustment so far. Air defence, infantry, logistics, and others all have had the opportunity to prove themselves in different types of situations over decades. Based on that experience as well as taking into account future challenges they have been redesigned and fine-tuned many times. CIMIC though had only the chance to be born and gain some experience mainly in crisis response operations. The first adaptation of a capability, just like in case of CIMIC, obviously requires more futurology because the best practices cover only a short period of time regarding the scale of conceptual development. As time goes by, more lessons will be collected and learnt, which does not mean that outlooks for future would be less important, however, the room for vivid changes will be reasonably limited.

¹ Mohandas Karamchand 'Mahatma' Gandhi (1869–1948). <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/16418-the-future-depends-on-what-you-do-today>, Accessed on 31 January 2018.

² “The coordination and cooperation, in support of the mission, between the NATO Commander and civil actors, including national population and local authorities, as well as international, national and non-governmental organizations and agencies”. NATO NSA. “NATO Standard AJP-3.4.9: Allied Joint Doctrine for Civil-Military Cooperation”. Ed A Ver 1. 2013. 2-1.

Nowadays CIMIC with the new NATO policy and the nationally processed experience from the Balkan as well as Afghanistan reached a position which offers a window of opportunity to stop for a moment and envisage its future look. A CIMIC-specific forecast is understandably not the main focus of military researchers. This pie will be undisputedly too small for the big NATO table. Nevertheless, future studies are available and can help to provide basis and steer possible conceptual thinking in the field of CIMIC outlook. The most current one is a persistent foresight and future studies project of NATO Allied Command Transformation (ACT). The initial phase of this effort is called Strategic Foresight Analysis (SFA)³ and it is addressing opportunities and challenges of the future, from 2035 and beyond. The SFA report is based on national and international studies as well as comprehensive knowledge from practitioners and academic subject matter experts. SFA identifies trends within themes which will shape the future strategic context. The defence and security implications deriving from the above mentioned trends are providing the baseline for the next phase of Long-Term Military Transformation (LTMT), called Framework for Future Alliance Operations (FFAO). FFAO together with SFA intend to support the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP) in order to prepare for the required capability development of the Alliance.⁴

Utilizing the outcomes of ACT future project gives us possibility to increase interoperability among NATO nations and to avoid duplication of effort as a strong demonstration for Smart Defence⁵ and Connected Forces Initiative.⁶

CIMIC 'FUTUROLOGY'

Future is a broad abstraction which ranges from the next minute to abyss. As a matter of fact, futurology likes to partition the timeline smaller pieces for the sake of usability. In our case in connection with CIMIC the most plausible way is to investigate introducing two categories, like short- and long-term outlooks. This is a reasonable format because there is a forthcoming amendment from conceptual (policy, doctrine) side and the above mentioned SFA projecting at least 20 years in advance. These can be also interpreted as 'known knowns' (short-term) and 'known unknowns' (long-term).⁷ We can already tell what is going to happen with the CIMIC capability in the next, upcoming years, as theory usually follows practice, especially in the field of doctrine development. The collection of bad and best practices is considered as comprehended experience which will be transformed into doctrines and training

³ "Strategic Foresight Analysis: 2017 Report". NATO Headquarters Supreme Allied Commander Transformation. 2017. http://www.act.nato.int/images/stories/media/doclibrary/171004_sfa_2017_report_hr.pdf, Accessed on 31 January 2018.

⁴ "Strategic Foresight Analysis: 2013 Report". NATO Headquarters Supreme Allied Commander Transformation. 2013. 1. http://www.act.nato.int/images/stories/media/doclibrary/sfa_security_implications.pdf, Accessed on 31 Jan 2018.

⁵ "Smart Defence". NATO. 20 Feb 2017. https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/topics_84268.htm, Accessed on 31 January 2018.

⁶ "Connected Forces Initiative." NATO. 22 Jun 2016. https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/topics_98527.htm, Accessed on 31 January 2018.

⁷ "There are known knowns. These are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say, there are things that we know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we don't know we don't know." Donald Rumsfeld, 21st United States Secretary of Defense from a Press Conference at NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium, June 6, 2002. http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Donald_Rumsfeld, Accessed on 31 January 2018.

eventually ('known knowns'). Contrary to this, the long-term perspective requires assumptions to set up possible scenarios for 'unknowns' of which we are aware of ('known').

Short-term outlook (2018 and beyond)

In regard of CIMIC, the proximate future (aka 'known knowns') is going to be shaped by the implementation of the recently introduced official NATO process, called Civil-Military Interaction (CMI)⁸. This track is rather straightforward concerning prospects as the practical experience is given to some extent. That is being said the development will be definitely demanding along its predictability. Beside the definition there is not much that we can find on CMI so far. To comprehend its tentative effects on CIMIC it is sensible to describe this new phenomenon a little bit. The features collected below are not coming from NATO official source (as there is none). These are notions from the author who was part of the group launching CMI effort within NATO:

- The military is an equal player in the interaction (CMI), particularly dealing with security issues;
- The military aims to understand the civil environment and based on that build relations and engage with civilians;
- Everybody needs to consider CMI to a certain extent. All those who have relations with the civilian environment carry responsibility. CIMIC has a significant task within;
- CMI requires more effort from CIMIC in enabling, advising and coordination within the military. CIMIC needs to be more involved across all levels of command, now permanently, not limited to the operations area;
- Properly established and maintained relations between civilians and the military lead to better understanding as well as more effective and efficient actions;
- The current military setting is sufficient to support CMI. No additional resources are foreseen. However procedures and training (mind-set change) need to be amended to have better results;
- Civil-military interactions are naturally existing activities. In order to handle CMI professionally (not ad-hoc) military recognized the necessity to adapt and change. But both sides should work on it;
- Comprehensive Approach (CA) and CMI are closely linked. CA is a mind-set on "how" should civil and military have a better response to challenges nowadays. CMI are activities which have to be managed effectively by both sides to contribute to a CA;
- If the civil and military sides are able to better understand and improve their shared interactions, meaning CMI, they can avoid possible conflicts between them which supports a CA and leads to better responses;
- CMI is not limited in time or space at all. CMI is a permanent strand (before, during and after operation), it should happen inside and outside the area of operations;
- The biggest challenge is being mutually effective and efficient because CMI is a shared responsibility between the military and civilians.

⁸ "CMI is a group of activities, founded on communication, planning and coordination, that all NATO military bodies share and conduct with international and local non-military actors, both during NATO operations and in preparation for them, which mutually increases the effectiveness and efficiency of their respective actions in response to crises." "NATO Military Policy on Civil-Military Cooperation and Civil-Military Interaction: MC 0411/2". NATO Military Committee. 05 May 2014. 4.

CMI does not intend to wipe out CIMIC from the NATO capability catalogue, on the contrary, it has been established in order to give more emphasis on the relationships between civil and military as well as to revisit the intended role of CIMIC. In the past CIMIC has been misused many times, which is probably a natural consequence if a young capability is going to be launched in the field. Not enough experience, limited national training, restricted lessons learned resulted in fog of war in terms of national application of NATO CIMIC in operational environment. The misinterpretation of CIMIC project work has altered the whole capability in a wrong direction. Both military and civil people gave so high importance to this auxiliary tool within the capability (see projects) that CIMIC has found itself on a forced track, struggling with its position and role. The introduction and use of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)⁹ in Afghanistan resulted also in confusion on this topic, mixing up development and quick impact projects.

The capability itself will not change with the operationalisation of CMI. This is an opportunity, especially for the CIMIC practitioners on the military side, to use the given power in order to regain trust while getting closer to a comprehensive approach. What has been provided is a foundation from conceptual perspective at the highest military level. CIMIC professionals have to translate it into doctrine and procedures at all levels in order to exploit this new phenomenon. The change will not be visible on the area of CIMIC assets. There is no need for more resources to this predicted transformation. The CIMIC mentality has to differ from the past significantly and as such the training and education has to be revised. This is not just education for CIMIC professionals, it goes also to the direction of military decision makers (see capability owners). As all the changes related to mind-set this will be also very slow and demanding process. It could also fail, which failure will not do any harm to the CIMIC, but it will be definitely a missed opportunity.

Having a capability which is used only in mission areas and not employing it on homeland during peacetime is rather a lavish thing to do nowadays. Understandably, all the trends in accordance with capability development or anything else indeed, are mainly characterised by cost-effectiveness. That is being said, those ones not having any particular visible role on home soil will always be targets for ignorance of politicians and subsequently budget cuts, demolishing eventually. This is not a unique thing for Hungary. In reality, economically more stable and stronger countries have already started this new way of thinking in connection with 'domestic CIMIC'. Undoubtedly more experience in the field of capitalism. Currently this subject is still taking its shape and has not been finalised at all. There is no agreed definition (see domestic CIMIC, in-land CIMIC, homeland CIMIC etc.) and the narrative varies also per nations to some extent. The common recognition of the interested countries is the noticeable and valuable skillset of CIMIC beyond doubt. This means basic competencies of CIMIC (negotiation; relationship building; mediation; cooperation, organisation etc.) can be used directly without further technical development or extra training. Regarding Hungary there have already been several cases (just like potable water distribution; illegal migration) when this homeland application was adequate and very beneficial not just for the military but the whole country.

One does not have to be a fortune teller to see this sort of changes. Resources are getting less and less meanwhile effectiveness will always be a driver. Using military capabilities

⁹ Maley, W. "Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan – how they arrived and where they are going". *NATO Review* 3. 2007. <https://www.nato.int/DOCU/review/2007/issue3/english/art2.html>, Accessed on 31 January 2018.

all the time in home country for whatever reasons is an imprudent thing to do. Not using available capabilities including competent personnel when it is needed is total waste and potential fraud. The biggest foreseeable change of CIMIC capability in this case is the conceptual background. A NATO doctrine does not recognise and elaborate domestic CIMIC as it is justifiably not the focus of the Alliance at all. This will not change in the future, either. However, national doctrines, manuals, procedures have to be revised and upgraded accordingly, as using CIMIC at home without any reflective itinerary can cause confusion as well as harm for the capability. This homeland CIMIC is a shining instance for 'known knows'. It has already been practiced recently and the only missing thing is the written authorisation by a national doctrine, which has to come in due time.

Another noticeable development in the area of CIMIC and on its halo is the willingness to open and collaborate with other disciplines. This will be really a paradigm change as capabilities are obviously reluctant to give up their identities. For this type of partnership a common denominator is needed utmost. In this particular case the key is the civil environment and the approach towards it. Based on hands-on experience from mission areas it is quite obvious that the civil environment is overwhelmed by military capabilities. Visiting civilians every other day and asking the same questions determined by different agendas does show dilettantism and amateur league. This unnecessary extra attention is resulting in confusion and annoyance on the civil side as well as duplication of effort on the military side. This leads to streamlining among military capabilities moreover combining resources. Nations (Denmark, Belgium, and the Netherlands) have already started to bring closer military capabilities just like CIMIC and psychological operations (PSYOPS)¹⁰ or intelligence as they had realised the significant overlaps and mutual ambitions. It is also quite obvious that these rather small countries do not have unlimited military resources and their rationale is always driven by strict fiscal requirements. Having said that, the cheap solution is not always the worst one. In this case the concept has also solid practical justification coming from recent lessons learned.

What we can see so far, is that the potential capabilities are not vanishing as individual disciplines. They are applied just as in the past, however, the manpower is used in a coordinated manner. Assets are restructured accordingly in order to save resource as well as to multiply effects in the field. The information flow is going to be also more flawless and manageable. Structural changes and cross-functional training are expected mainly with reference to CIMIC, PSYOPS, and Key Leader Engagement (KLE)¹¹.

Long-term outlook (2035 and beyond)

Going away from near tangible future and entering in the area of long-term outlook needs more grip to draw any sort of conclusions. In this area you do not have best practices or hands-on experience. Based on this, giving any kind of description of future CIMIC requires some details about the envisaged environment it is going to be operating. As it has been already mentioned the foundation of the long-term outlook is provided by SFA.

¹⁰ "Planned psychological activities using methods of communications and other means directed to approved audiences in order to influence perceptions, attitudes and behaviour, affecting the achievement of political and military objectives." NATO NSA. "NATO Standard AJP-3.10.1: Allied Joint Doctrine for Psychological Operations". Ed A. 2007. 1.

¹¹ NATO NSA. "NATO Standard AJP-3.10.: Allied Joint Doctrine for Information Operations". 2009. 1-10.

This study on future, dated 2017, introduces five themes: political; human; technology; economics/resources; and environment, is aimed to help to understand a whole picture as well as to describe future in a structured way. Themes are characterised by trends to give more flesh to the bones. The biggest help and most unambiguous part are certainly the implications paragraphs where we can find significant effects on the defence and security sector coming from one trend or mixture of tendencies.¹² As this article is focusing only on CIMIC outlook, the implications below are selected deliberately, taking into account their noticeable CIMIC relevance. The CIMIC related predictions, derived from implications, are articulated in a generic way to show more sorts of fashion and not the detailed portrait of CIMIC 2035. As the task is to describe ‘unknowns’ this seems also the right ambition level at this stage.

In the *political* arena global power shifts will continue to have significant effects on governmental and security landscapes.

Implications:¹³

- Answering to dynamic and complex threats demands extensive and close cooperation with others, comprehensive approach is more needed than ever;
- Long-lasting solution for crisis requires growing complexity which will bring wide-ranging number of non-state actors in the quotation;
- The role of Private Military and Security Companies (PMSC)¹⁴ will be increased significantly;
- Support to civil actors will become an overarching military task from one of the three CIMIC core functions;
- Protection of Civilian (PoC)¹⁵ as well as the different areas of Stabilisation and Reconstruction (S&R)¹⁶ will be integral parts of NATO missions.

Human theme: population growth, demographic shifts, inequality, migration and urbanisation combine to characterise the future.

Implications:¹⁷

- Due to increasing urbanisation military interventions are more likely to take place in urban areas, with massive amount of civil entities, powerless authorities as well as riotous population;
- Large-scale migration not just in conflict zones but also alongside of NATO’s borders;
- Human networks become enormous and they will change character easily and very quickly from hostile to supportive via neutral;
- The decreasing birth rates will lead to deterioration of working population causing a shrinking pool of available intellectual manpower (for military as well).

¹² “Strategic Foresight Analysis: 2017 Report”. 13.

¹³ “Strategic Foresight Analysis: 2017 Report”. 21–33.

¹⁴ “International humanitarian law and private military/security companies – FAQ”. ICRC. 10 Dec 2013. <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/ihl-and-private-military-security-companies-faq>, Accessed on 31 January 2018.

¹⁵ “UN Documents for Protection of Civilians”. Security Council Report. <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/protection-of-civilians/>, Accessed on 31 January 2018.

¹⁶ “Key NATO policy on stabilisation and reconstruction released to the public”. NATO. 23 Sep 2011. https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/news_78482.htm, Accessed on 31 January 2018.

¹⁷ “Strategic Foresight Analysis: 2017 Report”. 27–43.

Technology: the future will continue to be shaped by accelerating technological development.

Implications:¹⁸

- Increasing use of Internet, the growth of e-learning and virtual gaming creates enormous possibilities for the Alliance as well as other groups (including adversaries);
- Social media will become a parallel world including distinct society with different and sometimes unique individualities.

Economics/Resource: continuing globalisation will directly influence the world's society and economy.

Implications:¹⁹

- Declining defence expenditures results degradation of national capabilities which will reflect on Alliance's abilities.

Environmental changes have an impact across many global issues including economics, demographics, technology, resources and international relations.

Implications:²⁰

- Disaster relief (humanitarian actions) will be part of military portfolio more than ever, requiring comprehensiveness and interoperability;
- Natural disasters cannot be solved at national or regional level, alliances as NATO will be always requested to provide full spectrum of assistance.

The required increased cooperation with civil actors is already challenging enough for military, especially CIMIC. This is coming basically from the cultural, institutional differences between civil and military. Speeding up this interaction calls for dramatic change in military culture. Only procedures and infrastructures in place will not be sufficient anymore. It is not likely to change a complete military culture but a certain part of the army, such as CIMIC, can pick up this duty. It is difficult to say what will be the icebreaker on this but the more civil personality of CIMIC seems the only way. This can include civilian clothes, extensive training in civil schools as well as joint endeavours even before crisis.

CIMIC is going to face a more complex operational environment concerning military presence. Because of the competition (and confusion) in the security sector it will be difficult to promote own troops and provide indirect force protection. PMSCs might introduce their own CIMIC functions as well, making the civil-military relations (especially with the local population) even more clouded.

PMSCs have had a very bad reputation in the past.²¹ They are necessary and required although they can cause problems in terms of civil-military relations. The civil environment cannot always differentiate between uniforms or insignias. Actions with bad consequences done by PMSCs are going to hamper our CIMIC work. Working closer with these companies and raising their cultural awareness can ease a little bit of the pain, but it cannot reduce it to zero.

Supporting civil actors was only a CIMIC function so far. In this new setting when military is also responsible for stabilisation and reconstruction, and not just for providing

¹⁸ "Strategic Foresight Analysis: 2017 Report". 47–55.

¹⁹ "Strategic Foresight Analysis: 2017 Report". 59–65.

²⁰ "Strategic Foresight Analysis: 2017 Report". 69–72.

²¹ Gomez del Prado, J. L. "Impact on Human Rights of Private Military and Security Companies' Activities". Global Research. 09 Apr 2016. <https://www.globalresearch.ca/impact-on-human-rights-of-private-military-and-security-companies-activities/10523>, Accessed on 31 January 2018.

safe and secure environment but participating in good governance, rule of law, humanitarian assistance do oblige the whole military to have knowledge and skills dealing with civilians. CIMIC crew most probably will remain the focal point for such issues, however, there will be more and more 'shadow CIMICers' in the units.

Being responsible also for S&R demands intense cooperation with others way before a conflict or crisis starts. This can fulfil the desired goal of comprehensive approach being preventive and well-coordinated, maybe even integrated. Without enhanced CIMIC responsibilities and more authority this not likely to occur.

Overpopulated areas will challenge CIMIC massively. It is not just about the numbers but also the diversity of urban population. Most likely CIMIC has to rely on local insiders. KLE will merge into CIMIC, spending more time in isolation together with civil counterparts will be foreseeable. CIMIC will redesign its posture to operate successfully and safely in crowded megacities. The presumed high-toned space/force/time/information factors will require also changes in competencies.

It is fascinating to see that researchers and scientists predict migration for the future, though it is already happening around us. Obviously this fact will not undermine this study, on the contrary, it can help us to predict the possible response to this challenge. As it has already been stated 'domestic CIMIC' is beyond doubt a reasonable reaction for this. It will not solve the problem, but supports the way how to best handle huge political, economic, social problem with capabilities in stock. CIMIC is going to be deployed and used within NATO territory as well. In this case its role will change from force protection more towards effective and efficient facilitation/coordination with national authorities. Relationship building, established procedures with those will be required already in peacetime.

Understanding human networks is paramount for CIMIC. The chaos and flexibility of future human networks which has been projected as an implication is one of the biggest challenges for the military in terms of planning and subsequent interaction with them. The high numbers of variables will bring information technology in the picture for sure. Without assistance of expert systems likely powered by artificial intelligence cannot be possible to manage the figures. A new sub-capability will evolve within CIMIC regarding structured interactions with advanced information technologies. The brand new component calls for tailored conceptual, educational and physical improvements. The knowledge reach back function will be assigned with new motive.

The human resource market will affect military massively. The limited but more importantly inappropriate CIMIC personnel will produce 'counter-CIMIC' (negative effects). Competition for the quality can motivate civil business interest and more civilian involvement as the required skills and competencies for CIMIC are convertible. It is difficult to find this kind of quality (CIMIC competencies) in the technology world as a replacement. The capability does need the human feature, so the information technology or robotics cannot be a stable solution for this issue.

As CIMIC still needs time to take steady roots compared with traditional military capabilities it will stand a chance of being set aside under defence reduction. The non-measurable, in many cases invisible aspects of CIMIC are also seconding this situation. In order to avoid this scenario CIMIC has to be transformed into basic military skills as the competence will be still needed in future operations.

Working together with other actors and being outside of the comfort zone in terms of specialisation is not new for CIMIC at all. In this new and more demanding setting CIMIC will rely on even more special expertise to provide an interface for coordination regarding

humanitarian crises including disasters. Functional Specialist (FS)²² system has to be transformed and amended accordingly to support the required international response.

SUMMARY

As it can be seen in the previous chapter, the chosen implications can delineate some future scenarios for CIMIC but they are not necessarily providing particular features of it. Without those characteristics the listed scenarios stay vague and ambiguous. In order to portray future CIMIC the referred findings have to be viewed in a holistic way whilst taking notice of already existing tried and tested CIMIC experience. Application of the ‘thinking out of the box’ principle is a must!

The foresight work is a little bit like being in a fashion show, or car show/exhibition, where new models, prototypes are introduced for the audience. One can hardly see complete solutions and final products on the stage. But the tendencies, small features, innovative interpretations will show the direction while triggering further intellectual work. After reading through the CIMIC futurology section of this article we will have the same confusion just like during the previously mentioned social events when we are going there for ultimate solution. The future workshop is not equivalent to a car dealer or a fashion boutique. That is being said it is also impossible to find a place where we can see or buy future CIMIC capability as such. What we can always do however is thinking. Taking into considerations the implications and concluded effects coming from scientific studies, just like SFA, CIMIC patterns can be identified in the following manner:

External patterns of future CIMIC:

- Minimalized military posture;
- Non-military, unobtrusive equipment;
- More civilian personnel than military;
- Civilian attire;
- Civil type of deployments (earlier and longer presence / permanency);
- Working and living quarter among civilians (subsequently outside of military compound).

Internal patterns of future CIMIC:

- Interaction with civilians as a basic educational/training subject for all military (like shooting or first aid etc.);
- Aptitude test is paramount (high standard entry requirements and selection criteria);
- More civil expertise and wide-ranging knowledge (experts hub);
- Customised skills (IT, urban, human network etc.) instead of ‘all-in-one’ package (segmentation).

The above listed predicted characteristics obviously do not give the spitting image of CIMIC in 2035 and beyond. Having said that, they can offer possible research topics in order to further specify them and validate their relevance or non-relevance. If we would like to be ready and prepare for the future of CIMIC, better to start exploring it in the present!

²² “FS are deployed because a specific requirement for their expertise has been identified. They may come from a wide range of sources and are not necessarily military personnel. They may be required to assist in the planning process or to conduct CIMIC projects”, NATO NSA. “NATO Standard AJP-3.4.9: Allied Joint Doctrine for Civil-Military Cooperation.” Ed A Ver 1. 2013. 2-6.

As future work goes, SFA/FFAO is an iterative process which will be updated on a regular base. For that very reason, this CIMIC forecast should be also a living project recognizing changes from holistic studies describing generic trends and military implications as well as adjusting assumptions based on possible scenarios.

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