

# Civil Military Relation and Stabilization in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Pakistan

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## Abstract

The importance of civil military relations assumes seminal importance in ensuring the success of all phases of a counter insurgency campaign. In the true tradition of the Clausewitzian dictum that war is the continuation of policy and vice versa; Pakistan Army has been employed as a matter of policy in counter insurgency operations in the erstwhile tribal areas. They have also been used in the stabilization operations to bring about normality in the insurgency ridden areas. In fact the employment of Pakistan Army in the stabilization process defies any previous example in any other country. In all phases of the conflict cycle, the military has worked hand in glove with its civilian counterparts. The civil-military coordination (CIMIC) in the insurgency ridden areas has taken place within the framework of the established ground rules of an organized counter insurgency campaign. It would not be unfair to say that the return to normality in the erstwhile FATA has only been possible because of a well-knit CIMIC architecture. This paper briefly explicates the salient points of the CIMIC aspect of the counter and post-insurgency part of the operations in the conflict zones and highlights the importance of this aspect of dealing with insurgencies.

## Keywords

Civil Military Coordination (CIMIC), Counter Insurgency Operations (COIN), Internally Displaced People (IDP), Temporarily Displaced People (TDP), FATA, stabilization operations

## Introduction

Conflicts take place because of a variety of reasons. Usually it is a direct result of poor governance and misrule by those at the helm of affairs. The situation is aggravated, when external elements find the situation ripe and add to the factors which destabilize the state of peace. In case of Pakistan, the conflict that has raged in its tribal areas can be traced to the Afghan Jihad in the last century against the Soviet forces. The US found it an ideal opportunity to defeat its Cold War rival by sponsoring guerrilla war that pitched Afghan Mujahidin grounded in Islamic ideals against the 'godless' Soviet empire. The Afghan guerrillas were equipped with weapons purchased by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) with Saudi money to fight a long drawn war to weaken the overstretched Soviet 'Red' Army in the rugged and inhospitable land

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famously dubbed as the graveyard of empires (e.g. Bearden, 2001). After ten years of extremely expensive and futile campaigning, the Soviet Motor Rifle Divisions withdrew across the Amu River in 1989. The Soviet Union collapsed soon after. Today the Americans are confronted with almost a similar situation in Afghanistan, as they seek a 'face saving' exit out of the country. A clearly ascendant Taliban sniff victory after nearly eighteen years of a war that also engulfed the bordering tribal areas of Pakistan.

After the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan and left the warring Afghan warlords to their own devices in 1989, a new force in the shape of Taliban moved in to occupy the space created by the prevailing anarchy. The Taliban imposed a primitive roughshod order to establish order out of chaos. At first they took hold of the countryside and finally were able to capture Kabul in 1996. The Taliban, out of tribal traditions of hospitality, hosted the Al Qaeda (AQ)-an organization led by Arab ideologues like the Saudi Osama bin Laden (OBL) and the Egyptian Dr. Ayman Al Zawahiri- to fight American imperialism. The world history took a turn for the worse, when AQ cohorts were blamed for 9/11 attacks on the symbols of American power and prestige i.e., the Twin Towers (Manhattan, New York) and the military headquarter – the Pentagon in Washington DC (The 9/11 Commission Report, 2004). These attacks and what happened in their aftermath is now history but suffice is to say that it triggered a chain of events that brought about more death and destruction to this area than the 3000 that perished in the Twin Towers. Facts and figures also prove that the damage done in Afghanistan and Pakistan as a result of the American retaliation has been greater than that caused by the Soviet invasion and the civil war that followed it. In Pakistan alone, the death toll has been more than 70,000.

For Pakistan, there was no escaping the war in Afghanistan. Under intense pressure from Bush administration, Government of Pakistan under General Musharraf gave up on the Taliban and sided with the US government (Yamin, 2015). The price that it paid for this divergence was enormous, in terms of lives and revenues lost. The multinational 'holy' warriors, who were once lionized as heroes for fighting against the Soviets and were willingly allowed the use of Pakistani tribal areas as launch pads, were now sworn enemies. The snapping of this relationship was brutal and abrupt. As the conflict spread into settled areas like Swat, the government was forced to adopt a kinetic approach. For the first time in country's history, army was sent into the tribal areas to launch a series of military operations. Prior to army's intervention, law and order had been the preserve of the civil armed forces in the tribal areas. A series of military operations were launched to flush out and eliminate the militants. Since, these maneuvers were conducted on the country's own territory, both civilian and military agencies joined hands to first evacuate and subsequently rehabilitate those living in the tribal areas. This was no mean feat and is far from over.

### **Military as the First Responder**

The military in Pakistan is constitutionally duty bound to come to the aid of civil power, when asked to do so.<sup>2</sup> The employment of military in civilian affairs is always a political decision. Therefore, the time and duration of employment and its return to the barracks is the prerogative of the political leadership. Since army is configured to respond to emergencies, its services are requisitioned in all cases of natural and manmade disasters. The army is also called in for nation building tasks such as constructing

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<sup>2</sup> For details visit [www.pakistan.org/pakistan/constitution](http://www.pakistan.org/pakistan/constitution)

strategic highways such as the construction of the 1300 km long Karakoram Highway (KKH), over one of the most mountainous regions of the world.<sup>3</sup> In short, it is not unusual in Pakistan for soldiers to operate alongside civilian agencies over extended period of times. Therefore, they understand of the necessary nature of coordination with the civil government. As part of their annual training they learn such law enforcement duties as crowd control. Each field formation has standard contingencies for managing flood and earthquake relief. Regular liaison with civil agencies such as National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is carried out in peacetime for possible deployment on flood or other emergency duties.

Pakistan army was first employed in handling refugees at the time of the partition of India, which saw the largest exodus of mankind in contemporary history. However, the military operations in Swat and the erstwhile tribal areas have proved it to be a different kind of experience because it involved Internally Displaced People (IDPs). The Government of Pakistan refers to the people displaced due to internal conflict as Temporarily Displace People (TDPs). This is to show the state's resolve to resettle these uprooted people in their own homes as soon as possible.

The evacuation and subsequent rehabilitation of the IDPs/TDPs from the troubled areas of Swat district in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (KPK) province and the former tribal areas of North Waziristan and South Waziristan Agencies (NWA and SWA) was done in close collaboration with the civil administration. The relief and rehabilitation work also involved close cooperation with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). A number of national and international civil society organizations (CSOs) and almost 42 NGOs have been involved in the rehabilitation work in the tribal areas (e.g. Bajauri, 2016).

As a safety precaution, the areas, where the military operations were launched were first cleared of non-combatants before the army moved in. In case of Swat, which is a settled district of KPK a massive evacuation of civilian population was conducted and nearly 3 million people were moved from their towns and villages to camps located in the KPK. After Operation Rah-i-Rast had been successfully concluded, the IDPs were quickly moved back, so they could resume their daily lives (Torwali, 2012). The main reason for its success because all elements of CIMIC meshed well and operated like well-oiled machinery.

### **Civilian / Foreign Disaster Management Agencies**

A number of civilian agencies have the mandate to respond to disasters. In this regard the first and foremost agency in Pakistan is the NDMA and its provincial affiliates – the Provincial Disaster Management Agencies (PDMAs). The office of the Director General of the NDMA is located in the prime minister's secretariat to provide him easy access to the chief executive of the country. The warehouses of the NDMA are located all over the country with immediate disaster relief goods.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, issues related to refugees and displaced people are handled by the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions or SAFRON.<sup>5</sup> The office of the Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CAR) was created under the auspices of this Ministry. This was done to streamline the handling of Afghan refugees, who had started pouring across the international border in 1979 after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. A second and third wave of refugees came into Pakistan after the American invasion of

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<sup>3</sup> For details visit [www.beltroadinitiative.com/karakoram-highway/](http://www.beltroadinitiative.com/karakoram-highway/)

<sup>4</sup> Details about the mandate of the NDMA are available on their website <http://www.ndma.gov.pk/>

<sup>5</sup> For details, visit <http://www.safron.gov.pk/>

Afghanistan. Although a number of Afghan refugee camps have been disbanded. However 43 of these still exist. It is also important to note that a very large Afghan refugee population lives outside these camps.<sup>6</sup> The Ministry of Interior (MoI) monitors refugees and migrants that come into the country. The task of registering them is the responsibility of the National Database Registration Authority (NADRA).<sup>7</sup> This agency registers refugees and IDPs and issue them relevant identity documents. In addition, ATM cards are also issued to the IDPs to draw the compensation that the government offers to them to resume their livelihood. The MoI cedes control of the civil armed forces (CAF) and the police to the Army in times of an emergency. This is only a temporary measure and the paramilitaries and police revert to the control of the civilian provincial and federal authorities once the operational requirement is no longer there.

A number of foreign agencies are also involved in disaster relief management, which includes the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).<sup>8</sup> The UNHCR not only provides relief and rehabilitation to the refugees but also helps in their repatriation to their home country, once the situation normalizes in the conflict zone. To begin with, the UNHCR identifies genuine refugees and provides them with identity documents. Government agencies then assign them to various refugee camps. Sometimes the stay of the refugees in host countries is prolonged. To make the best use of their time, the UNHCR opens schools and vocational training centers for the affected, as has been the case of the Afghan refugees. The International Committee of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent (ICRC) has among other things opened hospitals to provide services to the sick and the wounded.<sup>9</sup> The World Food Program (WFP) ferries in food items, when the world considers it necessary to send in food aid.<sup>10</sup> With regards, other UN agencies also chip in where necessary. Some international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) with credible credentials are also allowed to join in the relief effort. In case of the earthquake that took place in 2005, NATO forces along with men, materiel and helicopters also lent a hand in the relief operations. These forces became part of Operation Lifeline that was managed by the Pakistan Army (Pakistan: The complexities of delivering aid, 2006). All these operations become part of the overall CIMIC effort to alleviate misery and help those in need of dire help.

### **Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC)**

CIMIC procedures and architecture is flexible as it takes shape as per the developing situation. Usually, once the government calls in the army, it informs the civil agencies the number of soldiers that have been placed at their disposal. It can be anywhere from a platoon size force to a full-fledged brigade or even a division or more. One of the largest operation involving multinational and local agencies in relief and rehabilitation operations was in Pakistan's earthquake relief operations of October 2005. This also involved for the first time NATO aircraft, resources and troops (Khattak, personal interview, May 25, 2019). Traditionally, the military commander is supposed to link up with the civilian agencies in the theater of operation. The military force is equipped with fast means of transportation such as light aircraft and helicopters and all-purpose four wheels drive vehicles and the necessary communication equipment (long range wireless equipment) that communicate with their own elements already deployed in the area. Irrespective of who contacts whom, a CIMIC HQ quickly takes shape. It is the

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<sup>6</sup> For details visit <http://kpkcar.org>

<sup>7</sup> For details visit <https://www.nadra.gov.pk/>

<sup>8</sup> For details visit <https://www.unhcr.org/>

<sup>9</sup> For details visit [www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org)

<sup>10</sup> For details, visit [www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org)

government's decision to establish a chain of command. In case the military commander has the necessary means and authority, which is invariably the case, he is placed in command. But this is not the rule; a civilian with sufficient authority can be placed on top of the relief and rehabilitation effort. In any case the command shifts from the military to the civilian authorities when the situation is considered safe. NATO has a joint publication that lays out the rules for CIMIC titled 'AJP 9- NATO CIMIC Doctrine' (NATO, 2003).<sup>11</sup> The document clearly lays down the principles of CIMIC and provides an unambiguous framework for civilian and military forces working together in the affected area. The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO) has also produced a document giving the policy guidelines for CIMIC in a conflict zone.<sup>12</sup>

In Pakistan enough institutional experience exists to provide the army and the civil authorities, the plans and procedures of collaborating together in the best possible manner. The army in particular has contingency schemes down to the unit level to provide the basic information and guidelines of the likely situations to accept in the units/formation's Area of Responsibility (AOR) and how best to react to these. The experiences in Swat and the erstwhile tribal areas have further burnished the credentials of the military to work in tandem with civilian agencies in the conflict and post-conflict zones.

The recent events have shown that the army together with the civilians not only planned the evacuation of local populations to safe areas but also organized and managed camps for what are now referred to as Temporarily Displaced People (TDPs). These displaced people were also successfully relocated to their homes and hearths once the danger was over. In the post-conflict phase, the transition from military to civil administration has always been difficult because the putative civilian structures had broken down and in certain cases are still convalescing from the setbacks of a violent breakdown. In most cases the civilian administrators are not confident to take over, once the situation has returned to normal. This, nonetheless, has to be done. Police, prison and judicial system have to be revived. New human resources have to be engaged to take-over during the transitioning phase. Once the army leaves the police and other law enforcement agencies have to occupy the void quickly and efficiently so that there is not relapse to violence. The return to civilian control is important for the local masses to return the areas that they had left with confidence. For instance, in Swat, the army handed over the control to the civilian authorities in a ceremony held in Mingora on October 22, 2018 (Yusofzai, 2018). As per reports, the civilian authorities have so far been successful in reasserting control, though a large army presence still remains in the valley.

## **Rules of CIMIC**

Good inter-agency liaison can be the single most important feature in ensuring the success of an operation which involves civilian and military organizations. Based on common experiences, some cardinal rules need to be observed under all circumstances.

The first and the foremost rule of CIMIC is to identify one's adversary in quantitative terms. A successful CIMIC operation requires close cooperation and coordination among the military and civilian authorities at all levels. This begins at the

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<sup>11</sup> Document is available at (<https://www.nato.int/ims/docu/ajp-9.pdf>).

<sup>12</sup> The document is available at ([https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/DPKO%20UN-CIMIC%20\(2010\).pdf](https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/DPKO%20UN-CIMIC%20(2010).pdf)).

top most bureaucratic level and goes down to that of the foot soldier. The civilian and military partners should not only register and understand the rank structure of their respective service but they should also know them by name. A telephone directory of concerned personnel should be exchanged at appropriate levels. Each side should be well aware of how the other is equipped, geared and mandated to handle a crisis. Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) must be known and understood in adequate detail.

Second rule of CIMIC is to identifying and knowing one's area. Military units and commanders are rotated very often for operational reasons. Many times they are not familiar with their new AOR. Sometimes, they may be required to operate outside the area where they are stationed. Therefore, it is necessary that they not only intimately know their operational area but also the one, where they may be employed jointly with civilian agencies to handle an internal security threat.

Third rule of CIMIC is to have complete realization of one's job. In case of a military action, the commander and staff may understand when and how to call for an airstrike but they may not exactly know how to call and collaborate with the police or the civil administration. The division of labor must be understood. The mandate of the other party should not be under or over estimated. The magnitude of an internal disaster can vary and would require proportionate response for each situation. The military personnel knows that it must have a superiority of three to one to succeed in an attack but these manpower ratios may not match for internal security operations. Threat assessment and manpower requirements need to be calculated to the  $n^{\text{th}}$  degree. Plans to raise additional forces in times of emergency must be catered for.

Fourth rule of CIMIC is regard for language. For the military and civilian agencies to be on one page, they must know that a fair understanding of each other's way of speaking and method of communication is integral when working together. Ideally, the Army, police, sundry law enforcement agencies and district administration should have a common language. This is not impossible but for the time being a common jargon can be developed, so as to enhance the understandability of the meaning and import of each word used during operations.

Fifth rule is to believe in each other. This is perhaps the most important rule. Sometimes due to mutual suspicions and crosscutting interests, civil and military agencies tend to operate on different wavelengths and frequencies. In an environment of suspicion and trust deficit, important operational intelligence may be withheld in the 'service interest.' An important piece of information left unshared at the correct point of time can jeopardize the success of the operation. Similarly, a suspect released without informing counterparts in other services may also result in unwanted consequences. Such behavior can only be prevented by creating an environment of trust. The top officials must inspire confidence in each other and also instruct their subordinates to believe in each other and not keep the information of operational importance from each other. Needless to say, all members of the team must understand that their interests are common and transcend petty service rivalries. Under all circumstances, all information (important as well as trivial) must be shared in good faith.

### **A CIMIC Document**

To institutionalize CIMIC processes, lessons learnt during the operations are properly recorded and preserved. Archiving can be a long and tedious task but once the records are finalized, the Ministry of Defense (MoD), Ministry of Interior (MoI), Ministry of

SAFRON and the Planning Commission have joint ownership of this document. The findings can even be presented in the parliament and comments can be taken from the legislators to be included in the final paper. A doctrine on CIMIC can be developed as a part of the National Security Policy. The joint CIMIC document must be scrutinized and updated from time to time. For the time being, a CIMIC pamphlet should be released for future guidance. This should include the following points;

### ***Planning & Preparation***

Whereas, past meteorological records and future weather patterns can help predict natural disasters like floods and typhoons, it is very difficult to determine, where and how an insurgency is likely to break out. It is quite true many times the state of affairs are so obviously bad that a crisis is only begging to unfold. It is unfortunate, however, that the decision makers continue to ignore such a situation at their own and the nation's peril. Experiential evidence reveals us that when an undesirable situation is allowed to fester for long, it just explodes all of a sudden and by that time it is too late to control or contain it. It is time that dispassionate analysis is made of how and why things have gone wrong in the past and how this state of affairs can be avoided in future. Experts in the field of academia and from among the practitioners can be invited to formulate a policy on how to predict and prevent a manmade disaster. In this digital age, a software for predicting such events can be developed. Pentagon is known to use such a software (Shactman, 2011). The Group of Experts (GE) tasked with monitoring crises, should be provided support and inputs from relevant ministries and organizations. These experts should meet regularly to update their advice to the government regarding preparations for any unforeseen eventuality. This group should also identify critical infrastructure that must be protected at all costs to prevent a breakdown of essential command and control elements.

### ***Rehearsals***

Traditionally, the military rehearses all operational contingencies during peacetime. This practice must be expanded to include civilian agencies for better preparedness to handle manmade disasters which have the potential to cause dislocation of citizens. Presently, the only rehearsals that soldiers are made to undergo concern riot control procedures and how to take over the situation from the civil authorities such as the district magistrate and the police. After having experienced refugee inflows and rehabilitation of IDPs in the past three to four decades, it is time that relief and rehabilitation of uprooted people due to conflict should also be practiced as part of the broader CIMIC apparatus.

### ***Reconnaissance***

Joint reconnaissance of restive areas should be carried out on a regular basis. While the question of who decides which areas to designate as restive and which areas to categorize as peaceful is debatable- It is only practical to suggest that the internal security matrix should be part of the National Internal Security Policy (NISP) which is prepared by the MoI (NACTA, 2018).<sup>13</sup> Additional briefings should be obtained from civil and military intelligence agencies before embarking on this venture. This exercise

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<sup>13</sup> The NISP II (2018-2023) is available at <http://moidemo.nadra.gov.pk/download/national-internal-security-policy-2018-2023/>.

shall be undertaken with the view to obtain the latest information on how things appear on ground. This way, it shall help the first responders both civilian and military to prepare suitable contingencies.

### ***Coordination***

Peacetime coordination with civil agencies including the district administration, police, relevant ministries, NGOs and INGOs can save a lot of botheration and waste of time. It would prove to be a good idea to frequently exchange mobile phone numbers, email and postal addresses to save time. An up to date directory can be useful to all concerned officials. In addition, establishing direct hotlines among the concerned agencies may also facilitate improved coordination, eventually leading to a better state of planning and activity in times of crises.

### **Conclusion**

CIMIC is an imperfect science. It can only be perfected through mutual interaction and practice. An internal security operation brings together different institutions of the state. Various agencies working together need to bond well. Their relationship should be free of fear and inhibition. Respecting each other's turf can increase respect. Sharing of experiences can be a good way of creating an association of trust. Holding on to precious information can have disastrous results. All those involved must understand that whatever, they are doing together is in the interest of the nation. All members of the CIMIC team must learn to operate together and their aim should be not personal glory or the aggrandizement of a particular service. It should be in the common interest of the nation and the state.

A good CIMIC model can be considered as a template to be taught in the military and civilian schools and staff colleges. The current counter insurgency and stabilization operations have thrown up a lot of examples that can be emulated. Important lessons learnt must become part of any and all future operations.

Similarly, it is important to teach Counter Insurgency Operations (COIN) and Winning the Hearts and Mind Strategy (WHAM) during active operations and stabilization phase from a common platform. Military, police and district management can develop a common pamphlet, where these operations can be conceptualized and practiced collectively.

An important phase of the stabilization operation is rehabilitation and mainstreaming of former militants. This has to be done through a formal process of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). The peacekeepers are familiar with this activity and understand the basics of it.<sup>14</sup>

Rehabilitating former combatants on one's own territory can be an emotional experience. These people have fought and killed a number of personnel belonging to the law enforcement agencies (Brigadier Commander Swat Operations, personal interview, August 05, 2015). It is difficult to forgive them. CIMIC operators must prepare a uniform code of ethics for these informal soldiers (some of whom will come under the category of child soldiers). Many of them have been seduced by religious ideologues to follow virulent ideologies, without understanding the import of their actions. It is important to handle them sensitively. All agencies involved should carefully screen and monitor them, to minimize the chances of their relapse into their

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<sup>14</sup> Detailed instructions are available on the UN website [http://www.unddr.org/what-is-ddr/introduction\\_1.aspx](http://www.unddr.org/what-is-ddr/introduction_1.aspx)

former ways. The real victory of a COIN operation is to actually accommodate the former combatants into the mainstream of the society. Considering the aforesaid as an ideal, all elements of the state must work towards similar end in order to ensure a lasting state of peace.

The title cover of Pakistan Army Green Book 2019 shows a Major General in combat fatigues handing over the 'command' of Swat to civilian administrators including a DIG of the police. This happy ending has only been possible because of a well-integrated CIMIC (Suddle, 2019). It can only be hoped that such meaningful investment in CIMIC can facilitate the process of peace restoration in the conflict-prone areas within the country.

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