

Engaging Civil Centers of Gravity and Vulnerabilities

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IN THE NEXT 15 to 20 years, global political and military environments will require U.S. Army doctrine to recognize the existence of a civil center of gravity (COG) and related civil vulnerabilities throughout the spectrum of operations. The civil dimension is now a primary planning factor in stability operations and support operations as well as offensive and defensive operations. Integrating civil COGs and related vulnerabilities into operational planning focuses mission execution in appropriate terms and facilitates seamless transitions along the spectrum of conflict.

Integrating these concepts into doctrine will require a broader definition of the civil COG that is more suitable for emerging doctrine. Civil military operations (CMOs) or civil affairs activities (CAAs) are the primary ways to engage the civil COG or related vulnerabilities. In fact, the Army should probably incorporate CMO and CAA into its list of battlefield operating systems.

Joint Publication 1, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States*, defines COGs as “those characteristics, capabilities, or localities from which a military force derives its freedom of action, physical strength, or will to fight.”¹ Military planners target enemy COGs in combat and protect their own COGs from the enemy. COGs sometimes change during a campaign as a result of an opponent’s actions or reactions. Joint doctrine states that military planners might engage related key areas of vulnerability while conducting the campaign.²

Military planners determine the civil COG or related vulnerabilities after considering such factors as—

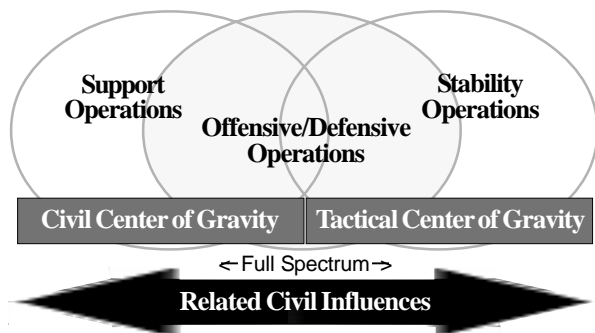
- Demographics.
- Economics.
- Social constructs.
- Political processes.
- Political leaders.
- Civil-military relationships.
- Infrastructure nodes.
- Nonstate actors in the area of operations (AO).
- Civil defense.
- Public safety and public health capabilities.
- The environment.

The military can engage all of these potential civil COGs, but according to the CIA in *Global Trends 2015: A Dialogue About the Future with Non-Government Experts*, the factors that will most likely shape world events are people (demographics); natural resources and the environment; and national and international governance.³ These elements will either enhance international cooperation or become sources of future conflict.

Commanders can engage a civil COG or vulnerability in a benign or destructive manner. For example, as part of the peacekeeping force in East Timor, the Portuguese military provided firefighting equipment to East Timor’s transitional government in an effort to improve its fire-response capability. The Portuguese military, in this example, is a peacekeeping force engaged in nationbuilding, and the civil dimension is its priority of effort. Enhancing emergency services to stabilize public safety is a benign engagement of the civil COG.

During the transition from Serb to Muslim control of the Sarajevo suburb Grbavica in 1996, Serb police deliberately set fires on the upper floors of apartment buildings beyond the reach of the Sarajevo Fire Department’s fire trucks. The Serbs destructively engaged a civil COG—the national will—to accomplish the objective of forcing civilians to leave Sarajevo. They were largely successful.

Failing to understand and appreciate an enemy’s civil COG during mission analysis can have deadly consequences. In Chechnya, the Russians underes-



The COG and related civil influences across the spectrum of operations.

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Refugees from Rwanda's bitter civil war between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes.

timated the will of Chechen guerrillas to fight at all costs to protect their homeland.⁴ This national will, rooted in ancient Chechen clan traditions, was a significant source of strength to the Chechens and was, therefore, a civil COG.

Doctrine for conventional military operations is often inappropriate for low-intensity conflicts, so it should be redefined. Military strategist Max Manwaring maintains that the military should redefine the components of conflict to reflect its changing nature. The enemy is “no longer simply a military formation but . . . violence and the causes of violence itself.”⁵ According to Manwaring, power has military, economic, psychological, moral, informational, and societal elements causing the center of gravity to now be more ambiguous.

In the *Naval War College Review* article “Complex Civil Military Operations, A U.S. Military-Centric Perspective,” John Gentry addresses the complex nature of CMOs and doctrine’s inability to integrate them into operational planning. “Planners,” he writes, “try to fit local and international actors into the categories of either friendly or enemy forces, which sometimes prevents aspects of the operation from being seen in the proper light. Planning fails if it does not address key issues or addresses them inappropriately.”⁶

People (Demographics)

Dislocated civilian (DC) operations occur in a variety of circumstances. During a major theater war (MTW), refugees, while not being a COG, are certainly a civil vulnerability. An opposing force can use refugees to disrupt operations by driving them into an avenue of approach or by infiltrating agents into the DC population to obtain intelligence information. Unless the planner considers this civil vulnerability during the planning process, he will find it difficult to react to and exploit DC movement in the AO.

On the other hand, DC operations might be the priority of effort, and the DC population might in fact be the civil COG, which was the case during Operation Pacific Haven from 1996 to 1997 that involved relocating Kurds from northern Iraq and Turkey to Guam, where U.S. Government agencies processed them for asylum before resettling them in the United States. Forces from all services within the U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) supported this effort. Army civil affairs personnel from both the Active and Reserve Components—

- Helped establish DC camps.
- Supported U.S. Government agencies in the asylum process.
- Developed cultural assimilation programs and programs to teach English as a second language.

□ Educated the joint task force commander about DC cultural, religious, and dietary needs.

The COG was clearly the evacuee population, but related civil vulnerabilities affected Operation Pacific Haven as well, including—

- Civilian government agencies.
- Guam's population.
- The media.
- Political sensitivities.
- Economic effects on the community.

The source of strength, or civil COG, for those responsible for the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 was the civilian population. Planners of the genocide recruited Hutu Burundi refugees and militias from the lower economic classes. A combination of anti-Tutsi propaganda and physical threats fueled their massive participation in the slaughter. According to interviews with survivors of the massacres, most of the 50,000 recruited killers were peasants just like their victims.⁷ Any organization tasked to stop the killing would have had to influence the civil COG—the peasant population.

Civil vulnerabilities are planning factors in urban operations, which have been increasingly a concern for U.S. forces in the last several years. Demographic studies indicate an overwhelming trend toward urbanization. The UN's Population Division forecasts that from 2000 to 2030, the world's population will increase by 2 billion persons. Virtually all of that increase will occur in urban areas, and the world will become 60 percent urban by 2030.⁸ This trend will create more competition for jobs, more stress on societal infrastructures, and greater strains on governments' abilities to provide basic city functions, which are often the preconditions for insurgency.

Future conflicts will likely be in urban environments, which reduce some of the U.S. military's tactical advantage. Military planners can regain some of that lost advantage by exploiting the civil dimension of the battlefield. In Somalia, civil affairs personnel developed a rapport with clan elders, district council chairpersons, and local police after repeated contact with them. The clans gradually developed trust in the civil affairs teams, enabling the teams to defuse potential problems such as sniper attacks, work force disputes, and populace control issues.⁹

Depending on the nature of the mission, U.S. forces might engage a related civil vulnerability or even a civil COG. When public safety issues are the source of conflict in an urban stability operation or support operation, a civil affairs public safety team of reservists with civilian law enforcement experi-

ence could be the military instrument of choice. Reservists with such experience are accustomed to conflict resolution and skilled in negotiation and observation and in applying graduated levels of response in threatening situations. In *Somalia Operations: Lessons Learned*, military analyst Kenneth Allard says that, in engaging an urban population, "the 'show the flag and kick ass' approach was not good enough. Instead, tact in applying ROE [rules of engagement] and weapons-confiscation policies was essential, as was the use of water bottles and smiles, as basic negotiating tools."¹⁰

Access to, and influence over, civilian populations is a source of strength for insurgent movements and arguably terrorist networks. Appropriate levels of engagement with civilian populations before, during, and after a conflict mitigate the effect of such threats. This is the case whether it is postwar Iraq and Afghanistan or hunting terrorists in Southeast Asia.

Take for example a region not at war but faced with low-level insurgency, piracy, and acts of terrorism. The combination of U.S. engagement and cooperation with the host nation's civilian law enforcement agencies and focused efforts to enhance its emergency response capabilities is a powerful tool with which to prevent insurgents and terrorists from disappearing into the populace. The host nation's public safety infrastructure might be a civil COG with the civilian population and socioeconomic conditions being related civil vulnerabilities. Planning and executing appropriate preconflict or preevent operations is critical to engaging these civil COGs.

As missions evolve, so do COGs. A stability operation or support operation could quickly transition to an MTW if the wrong conditions are in place, but even when the COG becomes more conventional, the commander must continue to integrate related civil vulnerabilities in mission planning. Assessing civil infrastructure and coordinating relationships with civil authorities and agencies in the battlespace will hasten the transition to recovery operations after an MTW. Postwar CMOs with the civil COG can help restore local government and simplify the exit strategy of U.S. forces.

Natural Resources and the Environment

Natural resources and the environment are transnational concerns. Competition for resources might be a future source of conflict in the Middle East and North Africa as it was in the events leading up to Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990 at least in part

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A Kurdish family receives immunization shots during a joint humanitarian operation that evacuated over 2,100 Kurds from Northern Iraq to Andersen Air Force Base, Guam in 1996. The Kurds were resettled in the United States.

in response to Kuwait's production and sale of oil at prices low enough to adversely affect Iraq's economy. Iraq exploited a resource-related civil vulnerability when it set fire to oil wells in Kuwait. The U.S. Agency for International Development notes that struggles over land use and resources contribute to global pollution, resource degradation, and the loss of biological diversity and can lead to conflicts that threaten U.S. trade interests and that might draw the United States into regional conflicts.¹¹

One volatile regional dispute involving resources is occurring in oil-producing areas around the Caspian Sea. A RAND study notes that Caspian oil production is significant because it could reduce U.S. reliance on oil from the Middle East, enable former Soviet states to become less dependent on Russia, and discourage Russian expansionism.¹² The Caspian states are struggling with unstable economies, income disparities, clan and tribal conflicts, political repression, and a dearth of government institutions. Events in the Caspian Sea region also affect Turkey, China, Russia, Iran, India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. The region is at risk for conflict, and the involvement of Turkish, Russian, or Chinese military intervention could draw the United States into a sta-

bility operation with the potential to escalate into a regional conflict. Although it is difficult to predict the level of NATO involvement, given concerns over the use of weapons of mass destruction and their proliferation in the Caucasus, the prospect for NATO and U.S. involvement is strong.¹³

According to RAND, the United States must engage the potential threat early by supporting UN and European Union initiatives to mitigate conflict in the Caspian Sea area.¹⁴ The United States should support programs that promote local economic institutions, human rights, and democracy and provide disaster preparedness, refugee control, and counternarcotics trafficking assistance. The U.S. military can support civilian agencies in any of these tasks. These missions are stability operations and support operations with the priority of effort being to engage the civil COG and related vulnerabilities.

A significant opportunity exists for peacetime engagement of the civil COG in the environmental field. Civil affairs units in USPACOM's area of operations currently conduct disaster preparedness mitigation assessments at the request of the Department of State (DOS) and country teams in select



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Oil well fires rage outside Kuwait City in the aftermath of Operation Desert Storm, March, 1991. Iraqi forces set the wells on fire before they were ousted from the region by coalition forces.

countries. Task-organized teams of military and civilian agencies deploy to these countries to assess their vulnerability to disasters and provide recommendations to remedy their deficiencies. This type of mission clearly engages the civil COG, usually a ministry or civil defense agency.

National and International Governance

Governance is not just a system of government; it also includes respect for human rights, civil-military relations, and tolerance of opposition movements or parties. Most issues related to governance are probably best handled through diplomatic and political channels, but in stability operations and support operations, the military must address them whether it wants to or not. Aside from postwar Iraq and Afghanistan, one of the clearest examples of direct military involvement in local political processes was U.S. military support to the UN International Police Task Force (IPTF) during the transitions of government in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia.

Bosnia. The IPTF had the critical task of ensuring a secure environment during the transitions from Serb to Muslim control of the local government and the creation of the Bosnian Federation Police (BFP). Under the Bosnian Government's transition plan, the ethnic composition of the police force would have been overwhelmingly Mus-

lim, a development that could have derailed the peace process. The U.S. military team assigned to support the IPTF recognized this and helped the IPTF restructure the BFP so its ethnic composition was more representative of the prewar state.¹⁵ In military terms, ensuring the police would not become a source of conflict later was the decisive point in securing Sarajevo's public safety. The source of strength, or civil COG, for the Bosnian Government was Muslim dominance of the Bosnian police force. The U.S. strategy was to engage that civil COG and its related vulnerabilities by developing strong working relationships with area UN elements, DOS representatives at IPTF, local government leaders, and the population.

East Timor. U.S. military operations in East Timor also engaged a civil COG. The UN administered East Timor under the auspices of the UN Transitional Authority-East Timor (UNTAET) until the emerging state held elections and became capable of self-administration. U.S. military support was limited to relief and recovery operations, but the United States engaged the civil COG, in this case the UNTAET, and for force protection and practical reasons, coordinated relief efforts with UN Peacekeeping Forces (PKF) to ensure its military components were aware of U.S. intentions in the area. The U.S. Support Group-East Timor estab-

lished an ongoing relationship with the PKF civil-military affairs office and UNTAET infrastructure directorates—the civil COG.

African states. The African Crisis Response Initiative is a training assistance program the United States conducts to help African states become more self-sufficient in regional crises and during peacekeeping operations. Army Special Operations Forces have taken the lead for the U.S. military contribution to the instruction package for peacekeeping and humanitarian-relief missions. Other agencies involved include the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee for the Red Cross, the U.S. Agency for International Development, World Vision, and many humanitarian agencies.¹⁶ The COG might differ depending on the instructions. Some instruction is for military units, such as Special Forces training in Mali and Senegal. Certain aspects of the instruction, however, are intended for civilian and military leaders, as for example, when civil affairs personnel conducted classes on the military's role in a democracy for Uganda's Ministry of Defense.¹⁷

Redefining the Civil Dimension

The current operational environment requires a better definition of the civil COG and its related vulnerabilities. The civil COG is that broad set of non-military components in the AO that is the priority of effort for the mission and has a direct effect on mission success. The nature of the operation defines the COG, whether the COG is an organization or agency, a group of individuals, an institution, or an infrastructure function. To give the operational planner great flexibility in defining his mission, objectives,

appropriate courses of action, and parameters of success, the COG is deliberately defined as a broad set of components.

Related civil vulnerabilities are civil influencers; that is, peripheral nonmilitary components of the AO that indirectly affect mission success. Civil influencers are integral to the mission, and the military planner must incorporate them into the plan early. The influencers might first be peripheral to the mission and then become the COG as the mission evolves. For example, the United States might invade country X, where the COG is a paramilitary organization. Country X's police, a related civil influencer, are still in the AO, and do not present a threat, but they are ineffective against the paramilitary organization. While attacking the paramilitary organization, the United States should also engage the police to develop a working relationship as early as possible. Once hostilities cease, the U.S. objective might be to restore law and order to prevent looting. The COG then becomes the police force.

The United States must remain prepared to conduct operations throughout the spectrum of conflict. Traditional doctrine appropriate for conventional operations must evolve to reflect the new environment of conflict. Low-intensity conflicts, now stability operations and support operations, have characterized conflicts in the last decade, reflecting the uncertainty and unpredictability of the geopolitical environment. An increasingly large number of nonmilitary components of the battlefield exist in conventional operations as well. Integrating the civil COG and related civil vulnerabilities or influencers into doctrine will enhance the Army's ability to plan both conventional and unconventional operations. **MR**

NOTES

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6. John A. Gentry, "Complex Civil-Military Operations: A U.S. Military-Centric Perspective," *Naval War College Review* (Autumn 2000).

7. Gerard Punier, *The Rwanda Crisis* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1995), 247.

8. The UN Population Division Report, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 1999 Revision*, on-line at <www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wup1999/wup99.htm>, accessed 29 June 2004.

9. CPT Phillip R. Parker, U.S. Army, *Counterintelligence and Civil Affairs in Somalia and PSYOP and CA Contributions in Somalia* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Center for Army Lessons Learned), available to Department of Defense (DOD) personnel on-line at <<http://call.army.mil>>.

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11. U.S. Agency for International Development, *USAID and the Environment*, on-line at <www.usaid.gov/our_work/environment/>, accessed 16 June 2004.

12. Richard Sokolsky and Tanya Charlick-Pulley, *NATO and Caspian Security: A Mission Too Far?* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1999).

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*

15. For more detailed information on this mission, see MAJ Richard K. Sele, "Civil Military Operations in the Post War Sarajevo Region," *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement* (Spring 1999).

16. U.S. Department of State Fact Sheet, *African Crisis Response Initiative* (May 2000), on-line at <www.usinfo.state.gov/regional/af/acri/fact0500.htm>, accessed 16 June 2004.

17. News Briefing, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), DOD Briefing on African Crisis Response Initiative, 29 July 1997, transcript on-line at <www.defenseink.mil/news/Jul1997/07311997_tacri.html>, accessed 16 June 2004.

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