Soldiers and civil power: supporting or substituting civil authorities in peace operation during the 1990s

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THE TOOLS AT HAND

Civil-Military Cooperation in Kosovo

General Mike Jackson’s impressive military force, eventually numbering some 45,000 troops, was ill equipped and poorly prepared to deal with a power vacuum in a province inhabited by almost two million people. With tanks, artillery, and massive air support KFOR had “escalation dominance” if anyone chose to challenge it by military force. It was superior on the ground compared to most military expeditions of the 1990s. Battalion commanders such as David Hurley and Patrick Cammaert would have been jealous of the ratio of forces to the size of the sector at Anton van Loon’s disposal. What KFOR lacked more than numbers was light infantry and Military Police. However, it could be argued that what KFOR required most of all for a mission of military government-type proportions was a Civil Affairs organisation. For the unprecedented array of civilian responsibilities and coordination tasks NATO had to rely on the tools at hand, which was Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC). However, although in transformation from its old, primarily logistical Cold War support function since 1996, CIMIC as a concept as well as an operational capability was still in an early phase of development. Since IFOR and SFOR had restored confidence in peacekeeping from its all time low in 1995, Bosnia was perceived as the model of future peace operations. Just as the existing peacekeeping model hardly prepared the Alliance for Kosovo, the scope of the existing CIMIC concept appeared too narrow for the wide array of civil responsibilities that KFOR would have to assume and far too rigid for the situation in Kosovo. Since CIMIC avoided reference to the possibility of soldiers substituting for civilian actors such as police and administration, consciously omitting any reference to military government responsibilities or “vacuum filling”, the existing NATO doctrine and training was of limited use during the first six months in Kosovo. Yet, despite the vast gap between the CIMIC concept and the reality on the ground—and KFOR’s poor preparation within those vaguely defined parameters, civil-military cooperation was in many ways what saved the mission in Kosovo from impending failure.

Ad hoc Civil-Military Cooperation

In Bosnia NATO troops had operated under a narrowly defined military mandate that was interpreted tightly by the Force Commander. Nevertheless, IFOR had deployed with an almost 450-strong CIMIC Task Force to manage the civil-military interface. In the early months of 1999, as planning for KFOR within the headquarters of his Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) took shape, General Mike Jackson made a striking decision. As NATO started organising for the deployment of a groundforce, CIMIC planners at SHAPE esti-
mated that KFOR would require a CIMIC Task Force along the lines of that deployed in Bosnia in early 1996. A CIMIC assessment by SHAPE, was presented to Jackson, but the British Force Commander saw no need for attaching the approximately two hundred proposed civil-military specialists to his force at that point. Faced with the likelihood of massive civil challenges ahead of the military force, his refusal was daring, to say the least. The experience of IFOR and SFOR in Bosnia had been the cradle for NATO CIMIC and was generally expected to be copied in Kosovo.

Jackson’s motives for rejecting the idea of a separate CIMIC Task Force appear two-fold. His repudiation was a product of exactly this experience as the commander of one of three Multinational Divisions during the first six months of IFOR.¹ In Bosnia, as a result of unclear command-structures, elements of the American-dominated CIMIC Task Force had initially stumbled over each other in Sarajevo while military commanders in the field were hardly aware of their function or use. In Bosnia, the Americans had principally followed the segregated model for Civil Affairs, known as the “Mediterranean Model” in the Second World War, which gave the field commanders below the Supreme Commander hardly any control over CIMIC in their area of operations. As in Italy in 1943, this had made commanders in Bosnia some fifty years later leery of Civil Affairs and CIMIC. It also resulted in the CIMIC teams begging from the sideline for resources from regular forces. After recognising the problems in Bosnia, the American’s had learned and started to more closely integrate Civil Affairs assets into tactical units.

However, Bosnia left a lasting memory of the failure to combine military and civil efforts into the tactical chain of command. Although the IFOR CIMIC Taskforce was generated to smooth relations between the military force and its civil environment, every hint of support to Carl Bildt’s struggling UN Office of the High Representative, international governmental, non-governmental organisations and even the UN International Police Task Force had been treated with immense suspicion and spurned as “mission creep.” With a clear sense of understatement Jackson recalled:

There were times particularly in the beginning in Bosnia where the relationship between IFOR—the initial force that went in—and Carl Bildt’s civil administration was not terribly good. I was determined that this would not happen in Kosovo and that UNMIK would deserve from us just everything we could possibly do [...].²

Jackson dismissed the phrase “mission creep”, which he recalled being “bandied around in Bosnia” whenever the military mission touched upon the civilian sphere, thereby moving off track in the eyes if its American commanders. The term had also started to catch on in European military circles in the late 1990s.

More than just his Bosnia experience, Jackson’s dismissal of a specialised CIMIC Taskforce is likely to have been a product of his upbringing as a British officer. British and American attitudes toward civil-military interface in military operations had grown apart
since 1945. The American military had shown a tendency to treat Civil Affairs and CIMIC as a specialised function performed only by specialised Civil Affairs personnel, most of them reservists, in dedicated units and Task Forces. The primary intent of their deployment was clearing civilian obstacles for the military commander, who was expected to be fighting an all out conventional battle on the German plains.³ By maintaining a strict focus on the removal of civilian distractions, U.S. Army leaders made a deliberate attempt to keep the unwelcome peacekeeping operations of the 1990s as purely military as possible.⁴ The strict segregation of the military and the civilian spheres led U.S. military leaders and policymakers to strongly resist any military involvement in public security tasks, despite the repeated indications—most notably during peace operations in Somalia, Haiti and Bosnia—that the refusal to engage in some form of support to police, and at times even executive policing, proved unsustainable.

Other than most U.S. generals, Jackson was inclined to regard the civilian aspects as an integral part of the mission, whether dubbed Civil-Military Cooperation, Civil Affairs, Civil-Military Operations, civic action, liaison, or “support to the civil environment.” He was a product of a British military tradition rooted in a long history of colonial policing, counterinsurgency and the continued involvement of military forces in internal security operations in Northern-Ireland. Any level of success in these hybrid civil-military efforts had relied heavily on the triangular relationship between civil administration, civil police and the military. Given the British Army’s proficiency in robust but overall restrained military operations in low-intensity urban warfare in Northern-Ireland, it is not surprising that his attitude was very different from most of his American colleagues in both public security matters and support to the civil administration. Jackson would set the example for civil-military cooperation for his successors in KFOR, all of whom were European generals.⁵ In Kosovo, Jackson argued, his troops had to do “all sorts of things just to keep the show on the road.”⁶ He had been quick in assigning engineer support to the faltering electric power system and cooperated swiftly with UNMIK just after entry into Pristina to seize the archives containing the provinces telephone and electric bills. In a country with hundreds of thousands of dislocated people, this would prove crucial in the long run to settle the property claims that often underlay ethnic feuding. He would make such decisions swiftly without bothering about prior clearance with NATO or national headquarters.⁷

However, although Jackson’s inclinations may have made him the right commander for a mission that required much flexibility, the whole support effort to UNMIK would remain an ad hoc one. Plans for a CIMIC Task Force of up to four hundred CIMIC personnel were raised again in July, but stranded as a result of KFOR headquarters’ reluctance to create a separate CIMIC organisation and the reluctance and inability of the member states to provide the necessary staff. This left KFOR headquarters to tackle the coordination of the CIMIC-effort with 24 temporary staff augmentees in the G-5 staff section. Instead of an operationally driven effort to tackle the power vacuum that was now expected to stay for the foreseeable future, KFOR left most of the initiative at the tactical level by relying on the
CIMIC personnel that the different contributing nations provided to their own brigades and battalions.8

In mid-July, around the time when Jackson for the second time refused to build a separate CIMIC organisation, he nonetheless stepped up military support to UNMIK and tried to arrange its relationship through technical agreements and protocols with the UN mission. These would remain in draft for several weeks, partly because Viera Sergio De Mello told Jackson quite frankly that he was unable to commit his shadow of an organisation to any time-lines for the transfer of responsibility for these civilian tasks. Apart from arrangements between KFOR and UNMIK, a system of coordination and cooperation had to be set up to guarantee “unity of effort” between the civilian and the military components. As in Bosnia, but unlike in UN operations where a Special Representative and a Force Commander both reported to the Secretary General, there was no command structure linking military and civil components at the political-strategic level. The relationship between KFOR and UNMIK was therefore arranged through an elaborate, yet largely improvised system of liaison.

Starting at the operational level, the key to the combined civil-military effort in Kosovo was the working relationship between the Special Representative of the Secretary General and the Commander of KFOR. Lessons from post-Dayton Bosnia had resulted in instructions under the Security Council Resolution for the UN special representative “to coordinate closely with the international security presence to ensure that both presences operate toward the same goals and in a mutually supportive manner.”9 Nevertheless, the success of the combined civil-military effort would largely depend on the personal relationship established between civil and military commanders in the field.

When Kouchner took over from De Mello in July, Jackson was reassured that the Frenchman grasped the limitations of UNMIK and that he was aware of his dependency on the military. From the early days of the operation, the Force Commander and Kouchner met on a daily basis at the “principles meeting” and soon exchanged senior liaison officers on higher levels. Jackson gave his German national deputy responsibility for humanitarian assistance, while his French deputy would take charge of support to civil administration and reconstruction. KFOR liaison officers were permanently stationed in the Office of the Special Representative and his four subsidiary organisations. Kouchner impressed the General as someone intent on rapid and pragmatic solutions. These solutions were desperately needed, for Jackson’s brigade commanders were becoming increasingly frustrated by the growing number of problems that required UNMIK input and resolution. All over Kosovo, as in Orahovac, the dilemma of either blocking or accommodating Thaci’s provisional government was pressing, but largely left to local commanders to figure out.

Reinhardt would also develop warm relations with Kouchner. On his first encounter with the Frenchman and his American deputy Jock Covey the General brought to mind his personal experiences. He had witnessed “terrible competition” between the military and civilian components in UN operations in Somalia, Croatia and during IFOR and SFOR in Bosnia, were he had commanded the German contingents. “In the interest of the Kosovar
people” he therefore informed Kouchner that, as a matter of principle, he and his military force would conform to “the will and ideas” of Kouchner, recognising the western standards of keeping the military subservient to civilian rule. The General may have slightly exaggerated his compliant role, but it was a powerful gesture. He took pride in the fact that he and his civilian counterpart were called “twin-brothers” for their ability to work together in such “close harmony.” Also with Kouchner’s deputy of civil administration, Tom Könings, the “chemistry was right” from the very first encounter.  

At brigade level, CIMIC Centres were installed to provide additional links to UNMIK, NGOs and the local population. Meanwhile UNMIK joined military meetings at KFOR headquarters and at brigade level. Its representatives were also invited to sit in on military meetings by the Joint Implementation Commission (JIC), created to co-ordinate compliance by the formerly warring parties with the MTA and The Undertaking. Other than in Bosnia, information was shared quite freely. However, there were more informal channels of civil-military cooperation. In the evenings, KFOR’s chief legal officers would not mind cementing civil-military relations by hopping over to UNMIK legal-staff for the occasional beer that was denied to them by strict military regulations on alcohol consumption.

Alexandros Yannis was probably correct in claiming that the problems with enforcing a clear chain of command were in fact bigger within KFOR, between the Force Com-
mander and the various national contingents, than between UNMIK and KFOR at the operational level. This became painfully clear when the crisis in Mitrovica exploded and Reinhardt could not dispatch the troops that were supposedly under his command. Interventions by national governments continued to hamper the ability of the force commander. However, the same was true for the UN administration and the unmanageable international organisations with whom it had subcontracted, the OSCE, EU and the UNHCR. While the two chiefs got along in an exemplary manner, their respective subordinates were difficult to command and did not automatically follow their example. They often had a harder time synchronising their efforts in the field, but only in December, after six months of joint civil-military operations, Reinhardt assembled all of his generals and Kouchner assembled his deputies for a conference on joint strategy. Overall, civil-military cooperation between KFOR and UN personnel at the operational level was regarded a success, but cooperation depended too much on the personalities involved rather than on planning and standard operating procedures.

Obviously, the dismissal of a Task Force that prepared for civil-military operations had its drawbacks. It is doubtful, however, whether it could have created a fundamentally different outcome. CIMIC planners at SHAPE argued in the fall of 1999 that the failure to deploy a CIMIC Task Force contributed to the subsequent difficulties for the belatedly deployed UN civilian administration component. They also partly blamed the mass exodus of Serb civil servants on this shortfall and the subsequent opportunity for the ČK to occupy the ground. A concentrated CIMIC effort vigorously directed from KFOR headquarters may indeed have been more successful in filling that vacuum pending the arrival of UNMIK. A Task Force with several months of preparation time for the mission would at least have been more successful at mustering part of the proposed CIMIC personnel and provide them with a CIMIC crash-course. Overall, members of the Alliance had come to appreciate the need for dedicated CIMIC staff, but they had failed to provide the necessary specialised units. It was long before any of the three large NATO CIMIC Groups that had been proposed in 1997 would become operational. CIMIC Group North, in which the Dutch and Germans took the lead, and CIMIC Group South under Italians chairmanship would only see the light of day in 2002. The British, instead of creating a multinational CIMIC Group within ARRC as initially planned, created a small national capability for what they called Civil Affairs. The third group within NATO would instead be provided by the Americans, who could simply use their existing Civil Affairs structures for this purpose. However, in 1999 the Americans would not contribute the numbers of Civil Affairs personnel it had deployed in Bosnia, since it had clearly opted to relegate overall responsibility for the ground operations in Kosovo to the European NATO partners.

The reiterated proposal in July 1999 could hardly have been successful in regaining the lost ground. It could only have accomplished something if NATO's political leaders would have agreed to their soldiers removing local mayors from town halls and CIMIC personnel filling their posts. This would have amounted to military government through direct
A British KFOR Puma helicopter delivers communications equipment to the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) building in the early days of the operation. KFOR was overall generous in its support to the UN interim government, and had to observe many of its function in the early months of the joint civil-military operation (Photo: ARRC).

rule at the most basic administrative level. There are no indications that either plan called for the required administrative “stopgap” at the municipal level. Yet, as UNMIK and KFOR temporally failed to gain control over Kosovo’s administration, and UÇK police were roaming the streets of Kosovo in the summer of 1999, there was overall agreement that the key to UÇK’s early successes in staging its “silent coup” was civil administrative control on exactly this level of local government. NATO member states clearly would not have allowed planning for the substitution of administrative functions, since anything resembling military government was ruled out. Soldiers were supposed to do soldierly tasks and—especially in the mind of Pentagon officials—stay as far away as possible from “nation building.”¹⁶

The CIMIC-concept that NATO had recently started to adapt could hardly have prepared its forces for Kosovo. Although the actual problem involved in civil-military cooperation was of course no novelty in peace operations, the conceptual approach towards CIMIC was relatively new. Upon entering Kosovo the over-arching aims of CIMIC was only vaguely defined in NATO doctrine that was still under draft. A NATO Parliamentary Assembly delegation visiting Kosovo in September 1999 cautiously concluded that while CIMIC was given trial runs in Bosnia and now in Kosovo, the input required was “somewhat
ill-defined." The general definition of CIMIC agreed upon at the time of the intervention in Kosovo was still “[t]he resources and arrangements which support the relationship between NATO commanders and the national authorities, civil and military, and civil populations in an area where NATO military forces are or plan to be employed.” Such arrangements were to include “cooperation with non-governmental or international agencies, organisations and authorities.” From late 2000 NATO defined CIMIC somewhat more properly as: “The coordination and cooperation, in support of the mission, between the NATO commander and civil populations and local authorities, as well as international, national and non-governmental organisations and agencies.”

At the time of the intervention in Kosovo the CIMIC-concept was often still directly associated with “mission creep” and therefore much emphasis was put on its role in support of the military objective. The overall perception of what the military mission or objective would be, was the pivotal problem in all thinking related to CIMIC prior to Kosovo. The military objective was never thought of as substituting for the civil power in law and order and other administrative tasks, and even support to civil authorities was hardly considered a key mission. The conceptual framework still hinged on its old Cold War status, while depending heavily on the input provided by the Americans who were often regarded as more proficient given their long tradition in Civil Affairs. As a result, CIMIC had been developed in isolation and considered a military function in the margin of military operations, rather than a function integrated into security operations.

Specific CIMIC training for officers had only just begun at the NATO School at Oberammergau. Lieutenant Colonel Ulrich Kilch, who was in charge of civil-military cooperation within the German brigade concluded that the CIMIC training he went through prior to his deployment, was of no use whatsoever while performing his job in Prizren. His nine staff members, comprised of Dutch, Austrian and eventually also Swiss officers, were equally ill-prepared for what they encountered in Kosovo. Flexibility and a capacity to quickly learn on the job would prove the most indispensable skills during his mission.

The lack of guidance and coordination from the operational level resulting from ill-defined doctrine and lack of planning and expertise was felt on the tactical level, within KFOR’s brigades and battalions. In defence of CIMIC staff officers at KFOR headquarters it has to be stressed that they were spread thin, only gradually reaching the level of twenty-five personnel, while many of the European officers in it had little specific training or experience. Moreover, during the refugee crises and the immediate aftermath of the military deployment in Kosovo, CIMIC staff at headquarters had been overwhelmed by the masses of displaced persons moving backward and forward across the province’s borders. This preoccupation with refugees left little time for post-conflict planning. According to Kilch, the only practical order brigade CIMIC staff initially followed from KFOR headquarters was the request for a daily report on civil-military activities, results and intentions. To that end the German brigade simply forwarded to KFOR headquarters the information they had already been sending the Ministry of Defence in Bonn. Coordination of the CIMIC effort in the ini-
tial months was limited to weekly meetings of CIMIC staff from all five brigades in which the officers gave a short briefing on their activities and intentions within their areas of responsibility. While ascribing generous support to the civilian component, the instructions provided down the chain of command in the force commanders “CIMIC intent” in July were not much more than a basic order of priority for the establishment of liaison and the likely recipients of support. The brigades were instructed to give priority to the four pillars of UNMIK, subsequently to the International Committee Red Cross (ICRC) and finally to the group of key governmental donors such as USAID, DFID, ECHO. Other than this order of priority and an emphasis on the winterization project the brigades received no orders on how to approach the power vacuum.22

A KFOR CIMIC handbook appeared in September, three months into the operation, as most of the coordinating structures and methods had already emerged in the field. The handbook intended to provide CIMIC staffs at brigade level with the overall goals of CIMIC liaison and operations and the structures intended to execute them. The military end-state was defined as the point when UNMIK was able to operate without KFOR support. It also outlined the main responsibilities and goals of UNMIK and provided CIMIC staff with instructions on how to perform the liaison function, on reporting CIMIC activities, and gave basic guidelines for setting up projects. Much emphasis was put on performing the liaison role, the pivotal CIMIC-function. Subsequently, some clarity was created by distinguishing between direct support “purely in support of the military mission” and indirect support “in support of and IO or NGO.”23 This established some clarity between civic action or CIMIC projects, specifically geared towards “winning hearts and minds” of the local population—without the pretence of providing structural solutions to problems of a post-war society—and support for civilian organisations in order to structurally rebuild the country and set the conditions for the development of a lasting settlement within Kosovo. NATO doctrine had thus far made the rather vague distinctions between “CIMIC activities”, and “CIMIC operations” which—although attempting to make a similar distinction—tended to puzzle rather than illumine views of the soldiers involved.24

Still, there was the usual omission in the definitions provided in the CIMIC Handbook: there was no mentioning of cooperation with UNMIK police or administration or other civilian organisations as an integral part of security operations. Moreover, the drafters of the handbook, who were apparently hoping these tasks would soon wither away with the emergence of more UNMIK staff, avoided the possibility of NATO military forces substituting for a civil authority. However, close scrutiny of a detailed matrix of possible civil-support tasks would have made CIMIC officers within the brigades aware that during the first months of operations in Kosovo NATO CIMIC had now come to include the provision of military forces “to preserve law and order”, “operate detention facilities to support law and order” and “conduct some Civil Administrative functions until UNMIK is fully staffed.”25

A “KFOR CIMIC Campaign Plan” covering the longer term was still under draft in September. When it finally appeared the plan seemed to have little impact. Many CIMIC of-
ficers were not even aware of its existence, which is also likely to have been the case with the CIMIC Handbook. Attempts by new KFOR rotations in 2000 to resurrect the overarching CIMIC Campaign plan failed as before because, an U.S. Civil Affairs officer concluded during 2000, “it did not receive the appropriate command emphasis, to the point where implementation at so late a phase became academic.”26 In Kosovo, CIMIC would remain primarily in the hands of the tactical commanders, who made up much of their policy as they went along.

The Complex Civil-Military Playing Field

During the British campaign in Malaya, arguably the most successful example of civil-military cooperation during counterinsurgency operations, civil-military cooperation had a relatively easy point of departure. The military forces in Malaya were all part of a British command structure and the colonial administration and police forces were all established and reporting to the same colonial administration. Moreover, at the height of the emergency General Gerald Templer was placed in overall command of both the military and civilian powers. During the early effort to establish international control over Kosovo, the civil-military arena was extremely murky. Not surprisingly, the number of national contingents in the coalition, the fact that KFOR headquarters was a coordinating rather than command headquarters, lack of planning, instructions and coordination within the loosely organised KFOR CIMIC structure, resulted in very different approaches taken by each of the five brigades. National contingents had differing numbers of CIMIC personnel, different levels of funds available, and had varying perceptions of, and attitudes towards CIMIC. Each brigade and battalion therefore reached different levels of coordination with the many civilian actors in their area. This resulted in varying degrees of combined UNMIK-KFOR administrative control over sectors and local populations and different levels of reconstruction.

By August, the German brigade had deployed an almost one hundred-strong CIMIC company in the field with abundant funds at their disposal. While the French had mustered some ninety-six personnel, they had little money to spend. This compared to some fifty-eight U.S. Civil Affairs troops, thirty-five Italians and a mere fourteen British CIMIC personnel.27 Numbers of dedicated staff alone were no reliable indicator of the degree of interaction and cooperation between the different brigades and their civil environment. British units, for instance, while low on CIMIC staff, were generally perceived by both local and international organisations as very supportive and communicative. Combined with the frequency of the coordinating meetings held by the different brigades in their CIMIC-centres a somewhat more reliable picture arises. The Germans, British and Americans all held meetings early in the morning on a daily basis. The Italians held them only twice weekly, while the French only held civil-military coordination meetings once a week.28

The effectiveness of different national CIMIC personnel was heavily influenced by their general posture in a civilian environment. The British were generally seen as integrating civil-military cooperation into operations. Their claim that “we are all civil affairs offi-
cers" was at times ridiculed by American officers who were hardly impressed with their meagre CIMIC organisation. It initially numbered just eight and was co-located with NGO's in Pristina's sports stadium where they had to borrow internet access from the one of the humanitarian organisations. They were, however, located in the city and operating side by side with the NGO community, which not all contingents did. An American Civil Affairs officer in Kosovo in early 2001 was surprised by their approach:

The concept is that CMO [civil-military operations] is integrated into operations (especially security operations) and that every soldier in a peace operations had a CMO mission. Hence the small number of dedicated CMO personnel at [Multinational Brigade Central]; a dozen or so CMO officers mainly at G3 (CMO) at Brigade and battalion HQ.

The force protection measures resulting from the U.S. military’s risk-averse mentality hampered the American Civil Affairs teams even more than regular combat troops in moving amongst the people. A Civil Affairs officer who planned on meeting a specific local Kosovar would have to leave early to reach his destination from the massive U.S. Army base Camp Bondsteel, which was situated nowhere near the majority of the population centres of eastern Kosovo. His appearance in town would have been quite intimidating for most Kosovars due to the force protection requirement for four-person Civil Affairs teams in at least two Humvees. The Civil Affairs officer engaging in a conversation with a local resident would always be wearing a helmet and body armour and would hardly be distinguishable from the combat troops who were likely to accompany them. His British, Dutch and other European colleagues, while exposed to exactly the same risk, were far more approachable, confident-looking and trusting towards the local population wearing their berets and merely a side-arm. One of the two Dutch CIMIC officers, Captain Wim Speth, walked about freely with his local translator and possibly with his driver who was also his guard. He would have his morning coffee in the local café and interact with the locals and figure out the general mood. For the battalion, almost all relevant information was garnered from personal contacts with locals and civilian organisations, and this information enabled the battalion to pre-empt crisis.

The average American Civil Affairs officer, although still more professionally trained than most of his European colleagues and mostly with a relevant civilian background, was severely hampered in his work by the U.S. Army’s fixation on conventional warfare. A Dutch Major who spent six weeks in the general Civil Affairs training course at Fort Bragg, like his Canadian classmate, was surprised by the Americans’ lack of attention to peace operations in 1999. He was also taken aback by what he described in his daily report as the American military’s compulsion to “categorise and compartmentalise everything, framing it in a definition, doctrine or field manual.” He witnessed how his class had great difficulty handling the flexibility and creativity that he thought the subject required:

The lack of a clearly defined procedure, the exact layout and staffing of a Civil Military Operations Centre [CIMIC Centre], for which the changing circumstances in different opera-
tions result of many varieties, cause much confusion and many questions. [The Civil Affairs officers] need backup from a book! The CMOC is clearly seen as a military operation in which the primary concerns are force protection and the U.S. military’s leading role. [...] Today was another one of these days spent by the Americans struggling to squeeze all operations other than war into doctrine, definition or procedure. This proved hardly possible with all the exceptions to the rule. Operations such as peacekeeping and peace enforcement (our core-business) are dealt with in five minutes and are too murky and too dicey to be dealt with in-depth, despite the interventions of a Canadian officer and myself. They either do not understand our interventions or consciously ignore the matters we raise. The foundation of everything remains power (over-power?).

One American Civil Affairs officer would remark after his tour in Kosovo that because civil-military operations were “more an art than a science, it is something its practitioners simply either grasp, or fail to understand.”

Not all NATO soldiers manning the CIMIC Centres were equally communicative towards locals and their civilian counterparts in the humanitarian community. This was both the result of language barriers and the lingering cultural divide between soldiers and civilians. Cooperation also that depended on the different nation’s military and, last but not least, the individuals involved. One of the German CIMIC officers manning the CIMIC-centre was reported to refuse to speak anything other than German. The UNHCR in Djakovica had an even harder time dealing with the local KFOR officers, since hardly anyone of them spoke anything other than Italian. According to an aid worker from Novib, the Dutch branch of the NGO Oxfam, the weekly coordinating meetings held in the French CIMIC-Centre were initially no more than a French officer briefing those present on the general security situation and announcing what the French were going to do. He called their version of civil-military cooperation “one way communication.” His experience was that “KFOR follows orders and they give orders.” The French were also mocked for trying to “win the hearts and minds of the Kosovars” by giving priority to French language education over reconstruction of housing. Stories such as these would always be buzzing around the humanitarian community, but gave a distorted picture. Although the French were known in Kosovo for their “standoffish posture”, the independent researchers into NATO’s role in humanitarian operations concluded, “with the exception of one NGO, the humanitarian community expressed satisfaction with the support received from French KFOR”.

Differences in national approaches towards civil-military cooperation between national contingents were also influenced by their pursuit of their own national interest. Both civilian governmental and non-governmental organisations complained—and CIMIC officers in KFOR headquarters readily admitted—that much of the CIMIC effort, which should have been co-ordinated and equally distributed over Kosovo, was dominated by national contingents working towards their own benefit. Since this was mostly for the direct benefit of the Kosovar people in their area of responsibility, this tendency was not directly harmful, but the obvious result was an unequal distribution of resources. The Germans were the most
obvious example of a brigade following national over NATO priorities. According to Ulrich Kilch, his brigade commander Sauer and the Ministry of Defence in Bonn made no secret that they were “just following national interest” by providing an engineer battalion, a CIMIC company, an extra field kitchen and money for projects and eventually even wages of local civil servants. The unit had an estimated five million Deutchmarks at its disposal from government resources. More than other contingents the Germans tended to deploy their forces, especially their engineers, in civic action projects and the reconstruction of infrastructure. Moreover, the German government organisation for technical assistance, the THW, was only active in the South of Kosovo in direct or indirect support of forces under German commander, and therefore—to their great benefit—also in support of the Dutch. To policymakers and parliamentarians in Bonn “it seemed eminently reasonable that German government food aid allocated to the UN World Food Programme should be channelled to the Kosovo AOR under German command for use in bakeries operated by German troops to make bread for distribution to Kosovar civilians who would also be served by German NGOs.”

Clearly, the Schröder administration had much invested in a successful resolution of the Kosovo-crisis. It had been a staunch supporter of the war against Serbia in defiance of much internal opposition. The Germans were now making its biggest contribution ever to a peacekeeping operation by leading an 8,000-strong multi-national brigade and were soon to provide the second force commander. Further chaos in their sector of Kosovo would therefore have to be avoided at all costs. While there remained massive challenges in and around Prizren, Kilch argued that the CIMIC efforts by the Germans in the area caused envy amongst the Kosovars outside their area of responsibility. The scale of CIMIC activities in the area by the Germans was indeed unparalleled and an American observer called their accomplishments impressive: “the communications, transportation, and agricultural infrastructures in the Prizren region are among those in the best condition in Kosovo.” A KFOR officer from another contingent described German KFOR as “acting like a huge NGO doing projects. Although the Kosovar population was benefitting in this particularly region, there were many who wondered whether the resources were spent economically. The more crucial question of where the military’s priorities should lie was also being asked by the International Crisis Group in Kosovo:

KFOR has been extremely helpful in facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance; however, aid agency officials, from UNHCR to the private volunteer organisations, feel that KFOR would win more hearts and minds by providing the civilian protection that is within its mandate than by furnishing roof kits.

The author was quick to emphasise the “honourable exception” provided by units such as the British, whose frequent foot-patrols were reassuring to “almost all inhabitants of Kosovo’s capital.” There were more exceptions, including the Germans in 1999, but just as it was dif-
ficult to judge KFOR as a whole on its patrolling ethos and interpretation of the public security mandate, the sheer complexity of the civil-military playing field in Kosovo made it hard to generalise about the degree of coordination between civil and military and even more so about its success. By August 1999 Kosovo was host to some twenty different national peacekeeping contingents—that were inclined to follow national guidelines and priorities rather than those of the Force Commander—dozens of national and international governmental (IOs) and several hundreds of non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Overall, the Kosovar population—the intended beneficiary of civil-military cooperation—profited from a set of circumstances that made the intervention in Kosovo a more concerted effort than most previous combined military, humanitarian and reconstruction operations. Despite the usual bickering, the cooperation and coordination emerging in the field between the military, IGOs and NGOs capitalised on many years of experience in complex peacekeeping. During the 1990s civilian and military actors had grown accustomed to the need to synchronise their efforts to a certain extent. The relationship between the military and the humanitarian community has been described as a “marriage of reason” between what the American Chief of Staff General John M. Shalikashvili in 1995 had called “strange bedfellows” at a conference on military efforts in humanitarian crises. The main drive behind this process of rapprochement had been in the recognition of the mutual dependency in the achievement of common goals. This rapprochement was essentially demand-driven. Humanitarian organisations tended to welcome military assistance when its comparative advantages surfaced. These were the military’s ability to provide security, air-lifts and other logistic capacity, and the ability to get things done through clear leadership structures and discipline. This dependency, which had more then ever come to the forefront during the refugee crises between March and May, helped set the conditions for cooperation in Kosovo after June. When the hundreds of thousands of Kosovar Albanian refugees had spilled over the Albanian and Macedonian borders and overwhelmed the UNHCR and NGOs on the ground in previous months, the military came to the assistance of these organisations. In April NATO Secretary General Solana had approached UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata with an offer for military assistance to the humanitarian effort for which her organisation was clearly not prepared. NATO troops would be placed in support under civilian leadership in an unprecedented serving role. Despite some criticism from the humanitarian community, the military were generally praised for supporting the work of the humanitarian organisations in this phase.

In the course of the 1990s there had also been a growing recognition on the part of the military of the use of humanitarian and other international organisations in order to facilitate their work and most of all, their eventual withdrawal from a crisis area. In Kosovo, this was clearly echoed in the General Jackson’s overall CIMIC-intent that went far beyond directly “supporting the military mission.” Jackson and his successors put great emphasis on supporting UNMIK in the establishment of an interim administration and on maximising the IO and NGO capability “in order to set the conditions for the development of a lasting set-
tlement within the province thus allowing for the withdrawal of KFOR/NATO support.\(^{47}\)
Although in practise this segregation of intended beneficiaries of CIMIC support—the military commander or the civil environment—often proved futile in an operation with as broad and integrated mandate as that in Kosovo, the great emphasis put on the latter by helped to silence the “mission creepers” who saw anything outside direct support to the military operation as undesirable.

Analysing the evolving civil-military relationship during the 1990s, Charles Moskos observed an “embryonic convergence” between two parties that had resulted in “a ‘softening’ of the military, if you will, and a ‘hardening’ of the NGOs.”\(^{48}\) This process of mutual rapprochement undoubtedly improved civil-military cooperation in Kosovo at the end of the decade. Nevertheless, what could be called an unparalleled success in civil-military cooperation may not have appeared as such to a newcomer in the field of combined civil-military efforts in humanitarian disaster relief and reconstruction. Kosovo was the scene of the usual bickering and finger pointing between the military and civilian personnel. Compared to the improving relationship between the military and large international governmental organisations, the cultural divide between NGOs and military forces was still wide.\(^{49}\) One of the continuing sources of frustration on the military side was the lack of willingness on behalf of the NGOs to co-ordinate their efforts. Officially the UNHCR was responsible for the coordination of the humanitarian effort in Kosovo. However, as Wilbert van Howell, the Dutch acting representative of the UNHCR in Kosovo told Reinhardt during his introductory tour in October, it was easier to herd a bag of fleas.\(^{50}\) KFOR staff blamed the NGOs for sticking to the main-roads and cities, where the cameras and therefore donors would see them perform their job. There seemed to be much less attention to the more isolated villages, where the military ended up witnessing much hardship while performing some of their patrols. Although the peacekeepers considered this pursuit of publicity in order to please donators “distasteful”, many of the national military contingents in Bosnia and Kosovo were no strangers to high-profile, quick impact projects. Providing the ideal photo-opportunities, the reconstruction of schools and playgrounds were amongst the most sought-after CIMIC projects. And although “winning the hearts and minds” of the local population was as legitimate a goal as it had been in counterinsurgency and other military operations in the past, such as Cambodia, winning the hearts and minds of the tax payer back home was often still of equal importance to defence ministries and army leaders throughout Europe and North America.

It is not surprising therefore that some of the NGOs came to consider the military competitors in the search for donors and funds. The British governmental aid agency DFID provided British forces in the Balkans with grants for small projects, which would otherwise be channelled to international or local NGOs. Professional humanitarians tended to regard much of the national development funds spent through the military as costly and poorly directed. Despite the pride the Germans took in their initiative, the 8,000 hot meals per day provided by their troops to the population of Prizren became an often-cited example of money ill-spent. Not only were the program’s cost-effectiveness and effects questioned, the
meals were also discontinued before the winter for lack of funds. Numerous other incidents called into question the competence of the military to carry out humanitarian tasks. During the refugee crises in Macedonia and Albania, for instance, the positive effects of rapid camp construction by the military were at times undercut by their design and siting in cases where the soldiers failed to consult humanitarian professionals. Without consulting the UNHCR, U.S. troops constructed a massive refugee camp in a Macedonian valley, which flooded during the first rainstorm.

The relationship between KFOR and the international governmental organisations operating under the UNMIK-umbrella, the quintessential civil-military link for the establishment of international control over Kosovo, was generally better than that between the military and NGOs. There was no turf-battle raging over the administrative functions as there was in the purely humanitarian sphere. While direct military involvement in humanitarian aid and project was often controversial, temporary military input in the provisions of public services and rudimentary institution-building was generally welcomed. Obviously, there were many complaints from the military about the slow deployment of UNMIK officers in the field. The military often had little appreciation for the difficulty of starting a civilian mission from scratch. Kilch joked about their slow appearance in the field probably being the result of the crises taking place during summer, when most of them were on holiday. He probably forgot that they also had to leave their regular jobs behind. He also complained about some of the UNMIK employees being “young and inexperienced” and about the discontinuity of their presence resulting from UN contracts lasting from anything like three months to one or more years. While complaining about this lack of continuity, Kilch obviously forgot that from a civilian standpoint the very short four months tours performed by the German military were at least as disruptive while attempting to establish a solid civil-military relationship. Three months into the operation he himself had relieved his predecessor in Prizren. Moreover, the civilian organisations were mostly faced with military officers who had little or no experience outside the military sphere. Despite NATO’s efforts to create a dedicated CIMIC capacity since 1997, much of its CIMIC staff in 1999 was still untrained in the specific civil-military cooperation role and often “double hatted.” This meant that they could be taken away from their CIMIC tasks whenever other duties called.

The further down the line of command, the less guidelines KFOR and UNMIK received on how they were to coordinate their efforts and towards what political goal. While in Pristina cooperation between Kouchner and the Force Commanders may have been regarded as exemplary, in the regions and municipalities the lack of strategy on how to deal with local Albanian and Serb competitors in the administrative void made it hard for their civilian and military officers to create a viable mode of cooperation. By August the Germans in Prizren had established direct contacts with the UNHCR while most of the contacts with the NGOs were established in the CIMIC-Centre adjacent to the German military compound. However, the first German CIMIC officer had neglected to establish direct liaison with the regional UN Civil Administrator. When Kilch took over in October he performed this primary liaison
function himself. In this role the German CIMIC officer saw himself as “a kind of military advisor to the regional administrator.” After his arrival, weekly meetings commenced between the German brigade, UN Civil Administration, the OSCE and the UNHCR. They were soon known under the telling name “cabinet-meetings.” Here, Prizren’s most pressing problems were addressed and possible solutions and the distribution of labour between the organisations were discussed. After the initial problems Kilch called overall cooperation “quite good.”

The lack of coordination from the operational level at KFOR headquarters, planning and training for CIMIC tasks were also clearly felt one step further down the chain of command. The battalions were largely kept in the dark as to how they were to address the civilian challenges. Accept for the commander’s overall intent, little guidance ever reached the Dutch troops in Orahovac. The Germans had failed to inform the Dutch of their plans and intentions concerning CIMIC, as far as they themselves had any at that point. National guidance was lacking, since the Dutch government generally believed that by providing an reinforced engineer battalion, publicly called a “Engineer Aid Battalion”, it was doing enough in the field of CIMIC. No CIMIC-handbook or specified orders from KFOR or brigade headquarters reached the battalions operating in the municipalities in the first months of the operation. And while Kilch may have been complaining about the limited use of his CIMIC training in Germany, he had at least a point of reference as to what NATO was trying to accomplish by putting him into the field as a CIMIC officer. Major Arno Schouwenaars and Captain Wim Speth, the two dedicated CIMIC officers in Orahovac, had received no specific CIMIC training whatsoever. Both artillery officers were plucked away from other units in the rush leading up to KFOR’s entry into Kosovo.

The lack of guidance on the lower levels of operation did not necessarily mean that civil-military cooperation in the regions and municipalities of Kosovo was worse. But without it, it left the levels of success to chance and, again, depended on the personalities involved. In theatre, it simply demanded more creativity to establish a viable civil-military coordinating mechanism. The first challenge was to employ the soldiers within a unit to suit the largely unforeseen civilian dimension of the mission. Obviously, it took more than just the two CIMIC officers to manage the civil-military interface. Therefore the commander and much of his regular staff performed these aspects of the mission. Since the early days of the operation Captain Brouns, the intelligence officer (S-2) had been coordinating the police effort. Although the local UNMIK Police commander Albert League had officially assumed “police primacy” by November, the Dutch would remain heavily involved in policing duties and continue to cooperate closely with his police force. As the numbers of civilians in the field rose sharply in July many staff officers were given a secondary task performing a liaison role. The battalion’s operations officer (S-3), major Marcel van Weerd, as well as the logistics officer (S-4) and later chief of staff major Roy Abels, were spending much of their time performing these tasks which could be placed under the heading of CIMIC tasks. However, the soldiers were hardly bothered by the label put on the job they performed. The sig-
nals officer (S-6) was in charge of supporting, with logistical means and armed guards, the ICTY and the various forensic teams working to find and investigate the many mass graves and war crime sites around Orahovac.

Meanwhile, Schouwenaars and Speth were performing the basic liaison task to the Serb and Albanian population. They and the other double hatted staff officers often joined UNMIK personnel to meet with the local population and its representatives in order to present a common front to the Kosovars who were becoming increasingly confused by the alphabet-soup of international agencies that had flooded into their war torn province. CIMIC tasks in Orahovac were not even the exclusive domain of the officer-corps. The extent to which CIMIC became integrated in the overall operation of the Dutch battalion made the employment of non-commissioned officers and men necessary. As previously described, the two most senior non-commissioned officers were taking testimonies of the local Albanian population in the makeshift police station. In some cases even regular soldiers were used to liaise with specific NGOs performing temporary humanitarian work in remote villages.

Despite the urgent need for more dedicated CIMIC staff, the Dutch Ministry of Defence and its “watch dog” in theatre, the national contingent commander, were not very supportive. Apart from the decision not to provide the battalion directly with funds to spend on projects, the Dutch Army’s Operational Staff made the more damaging decision to refuse to honour the repeated requests by the battalion for additional liaison officers and possible specialists to fill the niches in the operation when mere improvisation would not suffice. Two extra liaison officers and two specialists were on the battalion’s wish-list. The first specialist Van Loon asked for was a legal advisor to help him deal with complexities involved in matters such as arrests and detention. The second specialist the battalion could have used was a civil engineer capable of providing some quick technical advice on the water-supply problems in the early phase of the operation. The specialists were refused and the liaison problem was “a matter of handling the IOs/NGOs creatively”, the national contingent commander brigadier Bokhoven advised from distant Macedonia. Since Van Loon had a good understanding with his colleague Colonel Koen Gijsbers, who was in command of the Dutch engineer battalion, the latter lent him one captain in October to perform additional liaison tasks. He had twenty-five personnel on designated CIMIC-functions within his engineer battalions. The Dutch Army was making a vast contribution of over two thousand troops to the operation, but there was little appreciation for the complexities of a mission of the artillery battalion that—to a large extent—had become civil-military in nature.

The second challenge in establishing successful civil-military cooperation on the municipal level was the creation of a coordinating mechanism between KFOR and UNMIK. When the first UNMIK officer appeared in Orahovac in early August, there had been little evidence of such coordination. The local commander was hardly aware of UNMIK’s intentions, policy and plans, as far as there had been any. Meanwhile, the UN administrator had not been informed about the efforts made by Dutch KFOR to establish an interim council outside UÇK control, with the intention of furthering Serb-Albanian relations. This failure to
synchronise their posture and present a common front helped UÇK mayor Thaqi to manoeuvre through the cracks and proclaim himself mayor. Nevertheless, after the initial confusion and after the administrative lead was passed to UN Civil Administration the organisations involved in establishing a local trusteeship over Oraghovac successfully integrated most of their efforts. The Task Force successfully kept the UÇK military commander Tara in check and together they were able to limit the damage that Thaqi could do in his position as deputy mayor.

It would nevertheless take until late September before a formal coordination mechanism between KFOR and UNMIK was created in Oraghovac. It was neither KFOR nor Kane in his official role as “primus enter pares” within UNMIK who called for such a coordinating meeting. Kane’s leadership was not very strong and with the UN administration quite often changing its staff, UN Civil Administration was not very effective. The coordinating meeting was initiated instead by the OSCE field officer Walter Fleischer. These meetings would develop along similar lines as the “cabinet meetings” held in Prizren. As before, there had been no guidelines from the brigade on setting up or on how to conduct such meetings, but they gradually emerged in the field. At the first such coordination meeting held on 23 September, with Astrid van Genderen-Stort from UNHCR and Kane and Fleischer present, Van Loon was still the dominant figure, addressing many of the civilian issues and responsibilities he was eager to transfer or share. He was wondering who would manage the hospital once the Dutch doctors had left and was concerned about the management of the wine factory and the other larger enterprises, insisting there would have to be a control board and some sort of transparent record of where and to whom the future invested funds would be flowing. Since Van Loon was mostly too busy, his operations staff officer or CIMIC officers would represent him. When UN police commander Albert League arrived late October, someone apparently forgot to inform him about the weekly ritual, but in November he would join in. The issues addressed varied from the all-dominating blockades, the problems faced by the Serb and Roma minorities, Serbs convoys, schools and all other basic services. From the UNHCR’s perspective, these meeting were useful for information sharing and sometimes for a proper distribution of tasks, but the separate NGO coordinating meetings and bilateral meetings with KFOR were more useful and efficient.

Although virtually every element of civil-military cooperation in Oraghovac was improvised, solid relations developed with most of the international organisations during the initial effort to get essential services running again. With the local branches of the UNHCR and the German THW, cooperation was exceptionally good. In a letter addressed to Van Loon, the local UNHCR representative Astrid van Genderen lauded his troops for their “impartial, down to earth and efficient” way of substituting for United Nations personnel at a time when the main humanitarian organisations were not yet on the ground in Oraghovac. Having operated in this troubled area for several months, she was convinced that “no better foundation could have been laid for our humanitarian work in Oraghovac municipality than was done by your men.” Rejecting the assertion that national bias influenced her judgement
she described them as “straightforward, involved, human (well, most of them), showing a willingness to understand the local situation and culture and to recognise the differences between the two groups while trying to help both sides as much as possible in a constructive way.” They were “not afraid to take drastic measures when needed (arrests, trying to find kidnapped Serbs), they were pro-active, and went much further than just a peacekeeping role. Foot-patrols were no problem for them. The Dutch were everywhere in and around the Orahovac, including the Serb area, where the situation was very often insecure.”

Her boss, Louis Gentile, operating from Djakovica, even argued that they had “clearly received better training than most military personnel in theatre and have a clear idea of how to support humanitarian operations effectively. Your troops have been first class humanitarians as well as soldiers and that has made our work much easier.” Interestingly, hurling artillery shells at the enemy was what they were trained for.

**Unity of Effort**

Despite successes in civil-military cooperation at the time of Jackson’s departure from Kosovo in October, the general mood at the time was that its civil administrative control over Kosovo was lost to the UÇK. Revenge killings against Serb and other minorities were filling the headlines of the world’s media. With it, hopes for a multi-ethnic Kosovo had dwindled and the overall success of the joint civil-military trusteeship over Kosovo was hanging from a thin thread. The goal of building a new Kosovo in which all communities could coexist peacefully seemed “a battle against all odds.”

On top of that there was a tendency to regard the international intervention as a failure because of the lack of progress in the reconstruction of Kosovo. As winter started to set in, there was widespread fear within the international presence and amongst the Kosovars that the population was facing a humanitarian disaster. Although there had been marked progress in the reconstruction of housing—not in the least as a result of Kosovar resourcefulness and diaspora funds—Kosovo’s two main power plants were still operated by the British brigade. Its commander brigadier Peter Pearson was seriously worried about a complete collapse of the electrical systems as consumption was likely to soar during winter. Fear of massive outbreak of disease and even starvation was widespread and there was even talk of a possible rebellion in case the population would not hold out.

The fears of humanitarian disaster and wide scale uprisings in many ways resembled those of the Allies in late 1945, heading for what was then called “the battle for winter.” Combined with thousands of recently demobilized Kosovar Albanian fighters, the increasingly destabilising development of the parallel governments competing amongst each other as well as with the international administration, and last but not least, the international community’s failure to grant the Albanians in Kosovo the independence they craved for, it seemed at the time a recipe for disaster. Sergio Vieira de Mello who made an important comparison between the situation in Kosovo, where he had shortly run the civilian component, and the UN civil-military mission he headed in East-Timor:

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There is a general consensus among staff in both operations that those of us in East Timor have the easier task. In the midst of Pristina a UN staff member was shot dead for speaking Serbo-Croat, the language of the former rulers. On February 29, 2000 when Indonesian President Wahid addressed the people of Dili in the language of those who had illegally occupied East Timor for 24 years - an occupation that led to tens of thousands of dead and culminated in a grim orgy of destruction and murder - those who had recently been victims chanted, ‘Viva Indonesia’. In Kosovo the elderly relatives of Serbs who were responsible for some of the crimes committed against the Albanians are hunted down and killed. In East Timor, former militia members are for the most part welcomed back in to their communities. Another difference between Kosovo and East Timor is the attitude of local leaders towards the UN administration. In Kosovo, competing local administrative structures are in place. The Kosovars built up parallel structures as part of their resistance to Serb rule. These structures do everything from policing to registering of births. They can actively undermine the UN administration, which is seen by many as an impediment to self-rule. In East Timor by contrast, there is (still...) a general acceptance of the UN’s authority and a collaborative effort to develop a joint administrative system. Relative peace in East Timor and continued hatred and violence in Kosovo have reinforced prejudices among observers about the Balkan mentality and the supposed predilection of its peoples to ethnic intolerance, hatred and revenge. But the differences have less to do with mentality than with the clarity of Security Council mandates and with the issue of sovereignty.66

That same winter, however, there was an undercurrent of developments more favourable to UNMIK and KFOR. A Gallup Poll conducted amongst Kosovar Albanians confirmed that Thaci’s politics of obstruction had made his Provisional Government lose ground to the more moderate Rugova. His government had lost much of its appeal as it was lacking democratic legitimisation and as its administrators displayed little expertise and little results in solving Kosovo’s problems.67 Meanwhile, the UN administrators in the municipalities finally gained access to an operational budget in November. With civil-military cooperation working relatively well, with KFOR partially holding the line in its improvised manner, and with financial resources to win over the population, the power struggle between UNMIK and the local political forces seemed to tilt somewhat in favour of the international administration.

In dealing with local aspirants to power, UNMIK relied heavily on the leverage that KFOR could provide to assert authority.68 Apart from keeping the show on the road, as Jackson had labelled the broad support provided by the military to UNMIK, the commander of the now 45,000 strong military force could wield his personal influence to persuade Kosovar Albanian leaders, particularly those with a military background in the UÇK, to move into line with UNMIK. Reinhardt backed up Kouchner at a crucial moment that may have made the difference between success an failure of the combined civil-military effort to establish international administrative control over Kosovo. For almost half a year, UNMIK had been improvising in its effort to consolidate a reasonable degree of UN control over the parallel administrative structures. Initial hopes had been vested in the Kosovar Transitional Structure
(KTC) established in July. The KTC provided a forum for reconciliation and the beginning of cooperation between the two main Kosovo Albanian leaders, Ibrahim Rugova and Hashim Thaci. Although the KTC may have contributed to preventing civil war between the two competing Kosovar Albanian parties, the council failed to achieve concrete results toward integrating the competing administrative structures under UNMIK leadership. Kouchner therefore started negotiations over a new Joint Interim Administrative Structure (JIAS) in October. On 8 December, for the first time since he initiated the plan, the Special Representative assembled the KTC. In the previous weeks the UÇK kept dragging its feet, hoping it could hold on to the powers it had illegally acquired. When Thaci arrived at the meeting he seemed willing to put an end to cooperation with the international administration. He burst into the conference room and—without removing his coat—started throwing around wild accusations at UNMIK and KFOR that they had failed to live up to their promises. Ranting and raving, he threatened to continue cooperation on the sole condition that UNMIK accept him as sole representative of the Kosovar Albanians. After claiming that further cooperation was only possible under his presidency, Thaci walked out of the meeting. Reinhardt, who was a witness to the scene made by the UÇK leader concluded he had turned into a “loose cannon.” He would have to wield his influence as the military commander to get him to stay in line.

Two days later, as Reinhardt ran into Thaci at an OSCE human rights conference in Pristina, he took him aside and lectured him, telling him that his behaviour was “unproductive and intolerable.” He impressed upon the UÇK leader that if he wanted to hold on to political influence he had better change his sulky posture. Reinhardt first tried to convince the Kosovar leader by drawing an analogy with the left-wing “generation of ‘68” in Germany explaining him that “you only reach your goals by joining the appropriate institutions and by submitting your ideas there.” Thaci was probably more impressed with the second example closer to home with which the General attempted to convince him. He could see for himself, Reinhardt argued, that the Kosovar Serb policy of abstention had brought them absolutely nothing: political developments passed them by after they had closed themselves off. In the General’s description of the encounter Thaci looked at the General pensively and asked what it was then, that he should do. Reinhardt strongly recommended that he alter his obstructionist posture toward Kouchner’s offer for cooperation in the Joint Interim Administrative Council. That evening Kouchner told the General that, to his surprise, Thaci had called upon him to announce his cooperation in the JIAS. After the agreement was reached Reinhardt had lunch with Hashim Thaci. After listening to some flattery about his trust in KFOR and the General personally, Reinhardt made it clear that his confidence in Thaci had been thoroughly breached and that—not out of consideration for his feelings but for the sake of Kosovo—the time had come to live up to his promises, to cooperate and “stop playing cat and mouse with UNMIK.”

After approval from the UN in New York the JIAS was thus finally established after weeks of negotiation on 15 December 1999. The outcome, primarily the result of Kouchner’s
strenuous effort, was nothing less than a political breakthrough. It was a compromise to share administrative and executive responsibility between UNMIK and the two main local parties, the PGOK headed by Thaci’s PPDK and Rugova’s LDK. Under the agreement, all parallel structures of an executive, legislative or judicial nature were required to be dissolved by 31 January 2000. By February 2000, JIAS had officially replaced all previous parallel security and administrative structures. The KFOR commander was included in its meetings as he had been in the KTC. UNMIK and KFOR established mechanisms to monitor and enforce compliance, primarily aimed at the former UÇK law enforcement structures. The integration of parallel administrative bodies into JIAS was relatively smooth.

In Orahovac, the international administrator Kharras Kane immediately felt the positive effects of the agreement, as there was a marked increase in the activities and policies of the UN Civil Administration. In consultations with the local political parties the new local structures such as the municipal council and an administrative board were formed on 25 February 2000. The PPDK and the LDK were each allocated half of the available seats. After the decision by the moderate Serb leader Bishop Artemije to participate and represent the Serbs in the JIAS, a local Serb representative joined the municipal administrative board as one of the three vice-presidents in Orahovac. In contrast to certain other municipalities in Kosovo, no acts of politically motivated intimidation were registered amongst the political parties.73

Once the UN established full authority over Kosovo through the gradual implementation of JIAS, the administrative problem reversed itself. As UNMIK established an ever-closer grip over the local institutions, the primary mission became handing over self-government to the Kosovars. De facto, all power in Kosovo was still under UNMIK control, while the rights of elected representatives on the municipal as well as on the central level administration remained rather symbolic.74 When Bernard Kouchner started a lecture at Harvard University in June 2001 claiming—in his Maurice Chevallier English—“I have been the dictator of Kosovo for one and a half years” he caused much hilarity amongst the assembled audience. However, if the first six month of his troubled reign were disregarded, he was hardly joking. The Special Representative of the Secretary General had full executive authority with no representative body to control him.75 In October 2000 democratic elections finally took place in all thirty municipalities. Somewhat unexpectedly and to the international community’s great relief, the elections were a massive victory for Ibrahim Rugova’s party and marked a further shift in power from the PDK (formally PPDK) representatives to the democratically elected LDK in most municipalities, including Orahovac. The next lucky break came as the historic political changes in Belgrade took place, toppling Milosevic’ regime that very same month.

In the winter of 1999 the problems ahead of UNMIK and KFOR were still enormous, but after the initial struggle, the joint effort of the civil and the military component had enabled them to establish effective control over most of Kosovo. While civil-military cooperation suffered from a lack doctrine, strategy and planning, and was severely understaffed and
often underqualified, Jackson’s emphasis on civil-military cooperation as a command and operational function rather than merely a support function seemed to trickle down to most of his force structure. Where it did, the integrated civil-military approach had immensely positive results when compared to previous combined civil-military peace operations and is likely to have saved both the civilian and military mission from faltering at an early stage. It also saved civil-military cooperation from being marginalised as a set of unwanted civilian or support-tasks to be left to specialists. The designated CIMIC assets were only part of the mission that had become civil-military in nature. Although there was continuous fear within KFOR headquarters of the dependency reflex of civilians, the example by headquarters when it came to short-term vacuum filling, was to gear military means at a unit’s disposal in the most creative way, whether it was Military Police, legal officers, engineers or regular staff officers or the soldiers on the ground. The fear of the dependency reflex seemed to be overshadowed by the awareness of Jackson, Reinhardt, but also commanders in the field such as Van Loon, of the paradoxical challenge while keeping the peace in Kosovo: to be able to extract itself from the performance of civilian tasks, the military had to become more involved.

Reflecting on his experiences in Bosnia and Kosovo, Jackson’s analogy of the mission was like a piece of rope, made up of various strands. “[T]he rope’s strength comes from all the strands being woven together [...] If one strand breaks, the whole rope may break. This is as true of the military strand as it is true of the political strand.” Addressing an American audience he added: “You know, we’re all in this together, and in my view it is shortsighted for the military to say, we’ll do the bit with the armed forces but you worry about everything else. I don’t think it’s as simple as that.”


5 All first four KFOR commanders cooperated smoothly with Kouchner. Yannis, *Kosovo: An Unfinished Conflict*, 22


7 Interview with U.S. Army Col (retd.) William Phillips, 16 October 2003.

8 Lieutenant Colonel Mark Rollo-Walker, SHAPE, Chief CIMIC Section End of Tour Report (23 August 1999).

9 UNSCR 1244, par 6.


12 Interview Lieutenant Colonel Bart Haverman (KFOR legal officer 1999), Breda, 10 April 2003.


16 According to U.S. Defence Minister Cohen designated CIMIC forces could only occupy themselves with matters such as road construction, the humanitarian crisis, refugee resettlement.

17 Chauveau and Migone, “Cimic and Police: Forging the ‘missing links’ in crisis management.”

18 NATO Allied Joined Publication 9 (AJP-9). Officially de redefinition only occurred when NATO Military CIMIC Policy (MC 411) was approved by the North Atlantic Council in July 2001.

19 Lieutenant Colonel Ulrich Kilch (G-5, MNB South, July 1999-December 1999) MNB(S) KFOR CIMIC Lecture at Allied Forces Northern Europe (Powerpoint Presentation, on file with author).


21 Lieutenant Colonel Ulrich Kilch (G-5, MNB South, July 1999-December 1999) MNB(S) KFOR CIMIC Lecture at Allied Forces Northern Europe (Powerpoint Presentation, on file with author).

22 Kilch, MNB(S) CIMIC Lecture.

23 KFOR CIMIC Handbook, G-5 Branch EDN 2 (No date, probably released in September 1999).
The early draft of NATO AJP-09 made the following distinction. CIMIC activity: “A military activity intended to support the achievement of a military mission by pursuing an objective with the responsibility of a civilian authority, international or non-governmental organization, or civilian activity intended to support the achievement of a civil aim by assiting in the pursuit of a military objective.” CIMIC operation: “A military operation the primary intention and effect of which is to support a civilian authority, population, international or non-governmental organization, the effect of which is to assist in the pursuit of a military objective.” This doctrinal distinction was dropped in 2001.


Lieutenant Colonel Jesper Olsen, KFOR HQ CIMIC Lecture (Power Point Presentation, on file with author). The French held their CIMIC meetings in the afternoon at four, when most humanitarian workers were likely to be out in the field doing their job.

Conversation with a U.S. Civil Affairs officer and a U.S. NGO worker.


Ibid., 288.


Interviews with Novib employees Atuufa Tola and Rob van Bentum by S.M. Volters, “CIMIC: 1+1=3. Civiel Militaire Samenwerking in Crisisgebieden.” KIM Scriptie (Den Helder 2000); Correspondence between author and Astrid van Genderen-Stort (Letter received 3 August 2004)


Lieutenant Colonel Jesper Olsen, KFOR HQ CIMIC Lecture (Power Point Presentation, on file with author); Holshek, “The Operational Art of Civil-Military Operations”, 305.

Gilch, MNB(S) CIMIC Lecture.


Gilch, MNB(S) CIMIC Lecture.


Quoted in Larry Minear, Ted Baarda and Marc Sommers, NATO and Humanitarian Action in Kosovo (Thomas J. Watson Institute for International Studies and The Humanitarian Law Consultancy Occasional Paper no 38, 2000) 28; Three years after KFOR entered Orahovac, where the Germans took over from the Dutch in 2000, an OSCE employee argued that the German CIMIC was still doing more for the population that her own organisation. Conversation with British OSCE field officer Claire Valling in Orahovac (September 2002). In both Bosnia and Kosovo it has been said that the German CIMIC effort is primarily driven by the German government’s urge to return asylum seekers that had settled in Germany during the Bosnian and Kosovo wars. While there may
be some truth in such claims, they are likely to have been exaggerated. After all, from all over Kosovo could not be forces to return to the German sector.


46 NATO forces became known for deivering on their promise. “I have nothing but positive things to say about NATO,” observed one NGO country director about his experience in Macedonia. He said that after NATO built the camps overnight, NATO officials told NGO workers, in effect: “You’re in charge. We’re here to help you. Tell us what to do and we’ll do it.” Minear, Baarda and Sommers, NATO and Humanitarian Action in Kosovo, 22-23.

47 KFOR CIMIC Handbook 1-1-1.


49 Donna Winslow, “Strange Bedfellows”, 50

50 Klaus Reinhardt, KFOR—Streitkräfte für den Frieden: Tagebuckaufzeichnungen als Deutcher Kommandeur im Kosovo (Frankfurt am Main 2002) 52.

51 Minear, Baarda and Sommers, NATO and Humanitarian Action in Kosovo, 29.

52 Kilch, MNB(S) CIMIC presentation.


54 Kilch, MNB(S) CIMIC presentation. The German brigade and the Swedish regional administrator Terhy Makynen had been slow in establishing a viable working relationship. Von Korff’s fear of becoming entangled in the struggle for power between is likely to have contributed to his CIMIC officers initially avoiding being associated with Makynen.

55 Lieutenant Colonel Van Loon in lecture on his experiences in Kosovo during CIMIC course at the Royal Military Academy in Breda (November 2000).

56 CAD, 1 (NL) Conco KFOR I&II, Werkarchief, box 2, Maj Abels to G-3, G-1, G-4 OPS BLS (Urgent), Uitbreiding OTAS pers en mat; Ibid., box 7, C-Tasfkorce Orahovac to Kol van Dullemen, Otasverwijing 11(NL) Adfra; Ibid., box 4, Dir OPS BLS (Kol Van Dullemen wnd) aan C-1 (NL) Arty Bn RA, 29 juli. Betreft: Otasverwijing LSO-groepen.”


58 Correspondence between author and Astrid van Genderen Stort (Letter received 4 August 2004).

59 The European Union, which had committed itself to the economic reform of Kosovo was not represented in Orahovac and was the slowest of all UNMIK pillars to emerge all over Kosovo.

60 The UNHCR was most of all grateful to Dutch KFOR for their support. The battalion lauded the THW for their extremely professional and quick response to instantly erupting crises. They specialised in technical knowlege and provided the necessary materials. Van Loon later wondered why the Netherlands did not have “such a club.” He regarded this more usefull than creating elaborate CIMIC structures with civilian specialists in uniform or reservist.
Correspondence between author and Astrid van Genderen-Stort (6 June 2003).


Yannis, Kosovo: An Unfinished Conflict, 35.

Reinhardt, KFOR, 56.

Jennifer Leaning during lecture on Kosovo 1999 at Harvard University (June 2001; notes taken by author); Knut G. Kniste, Administrative Capacity Building in Kosovo, 10.


UNA-USA, Peacekeeping at the Brink: Recommendations for Urgent International Action on Kosovo (A report of the Project on Finding Solution for Peace in Kosovo, February 2000) 3.

Yannis, Kosovo: An Unfinished Conflict, 41.

Reinhardt, KFOR 244-249.

Ibid., 251.

Ibid., 263.

OSCE/UNMIK, Municipal Profile: Orahovac /Rahovec (1 April 2000).

“Ein Verfassungsrahmen fur das Kosovo”, Frankfurter Allgemeiner Zeitung (16 May 2001). While Daan Everts, the Dutch deputy SRSG in charge of the elections, told a local newspaper that “those elections should hand over 70% of self-government”, according to his counterpart at civil administration Tom Könings the November 2001 elections as “a step towards self-government.” Cited in: Knut G. Kniste, Administrative Capacity Building in Kosovo, 10.

Lecture by Bernard Kouchner about his time of UN Special Representative of the Secretary General in Kosovo (Harvard University, 16 May 2001; notes taken by author). For examples of Kouchner’s style of government, including his autonomous decision to introduce the Deutchmark, see: Michael Ignatieff, Empire Lite, 64.

Olsen, KFOR HQ CIMIC Lecture.