Civil-military cooperation to address persistent issues of violent extremism, climate change and GBV[1]

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INTRODUCTION

Several solutions have been proposed in response to the multiple security challenges besetting the Sahel, but to some extent they have all shown their limitations. They have tended to focus on military solutions and deal with the symptoms of violence rather than the numerous endogenous, transnational, and exogenous causes that generate and feed it. It is therefore high time for a paradigm shift away from a 'purely Jacobin approach' to security towards an inclusive security that includes civil-military cooperation.

To meet that objective, this document will seek to clarify three fundamental questions: What is cooperation? Why cooperate? How can we cooperate?

However diverse security issues may be, the fundamental concern remains the same: to build a bridge and ensure a synergy of action between DSFs and civilians. Therein lies the value of this paper, which is aimed to encourage the protagonists in the virtuous triangle (government, security forces, and the people) to work together to achieve a security governance capable of countering violent extremism, climate change and gender-based violence.

While combining resources may appear at first glance to be a promising approach, in terms of the effectiveness and speed with which assistance can be delivered to the people, the idea of bringing together the actors in the above-mentioned virtuous triangle also poses several problems. However, this paper does not address the challenges of civil-military collaboration. Instead, it focuses on the following three points:

- The nature of civil-military cooperation
- Why we need civil-military cooperation
- How we can implement civil-military cooperation effectively

THE NATURE OF CIVIL-MILITARY COOPERATION

Cooperation is the process whereby different stakeholders work together to jointly manage security issues. In this specific case, cooperation takes the form of civil-military cooperation.

Civil-Military Cooperation

In view of our shared transnational challenges, who would venture to claim, in this day and age, that security issues are solely a military concern? A new mode of crisis management is gradually being introduced, in the form of Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC). In other words, peace is built on diplomatic, political, and military levels as well as on humanitarian, economic and industrial levels.

The Purpose of Civil-Military Cooperation

Civil-military cooperation mobilises public and private expertise to help resolve crises or conflicts. Ultimately, it allows the following objectives to be pursued:

- Preventing risks of security destabilisation through community involvement,
- Developing an attitude of listening and processing information to ensure better security management (uprisings, inter-community conflicts, etc.),
- Raising awareness and improving communication between security forces and the civilian population regarding their respective roles, rights and responsibilities,
- Protecting the public, particularly against climate change, violent extremism, and gender-based violence,
- Sharing information (reporting suspicious incidents, terrorist movements),
- Restoring a climate of trust, and
- Better combating terrorism and other forms of security threats.

WHY WE NEED CIVIL-MILITARY COOPERATION

The need for civil-military cooperation appears to be dictated by a combination of three factors:

A Necessity Dictated by the Challenges of the Hour

The need for civil-military cooperation to address extremism, climate change and gender-based violence has become abundantly clear. It is amply justified by the environment in West Africa and the Sahel. Indeed, these areas continue to be subject to a pattern of repeated conflict cycles:

- Terrorism is expanding in Burkina, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo etc., and increasingly towards the coasts,
- Governments lack the authority to exercise their sovereign functions and control their respective lands, seas, and airspaces,
- Ethnic and/or inter-community conflicts persist,
- As do poor governance and undemocratic power grabs.

In addition to these challenges, there exists another which appears to be one of the most significant causes of violence on the planet, and especially in Africa: climate change. Indeed, while climate change is not in itself a direct cause of conflict, it is increasingly clear that it needs to be addressed as a risk multiplier, and therefore as a peace and security issue.

Whether the issue is terrorism, violent extremism, gender-based violence or climate change, no single country or entity can overcome these pernicious phenomena that undermine development efforts. There is therefore a need for prevention and for civil-military collaboration.

A Necessity Dictated by the Multidimensional Nature of the Challenges

Beyond the failure of other methods so far adopted to address security challenges in West Africa, it should be noted that the multidimensional nature of the challenges is one of the essential elements underpinning the need for cooperation. Three security challenges in particular have drawn our attention:

Violent Extremism

In view of the failure of the security response in the Sahel zone and the fact that investments in the fight against violent extremism are heavily weighted towards security spending to the detriment of projects focusing on human security, the need to rethink the security response is becoming an urgent necessity and civil-military collaboration is a credible alternative. Such collaboration is all the more relevant as it has been proven today that civilians play a predominant role in the fight against this phenomenon but also in its amplification.

Climate Change

The degradation of the environment and natural resources is a factor that multiplies the risk of conflict. It undermines potential economic growth, social cohesion, and the security and stability of a region already beset by total insecurity. The decrease in arable land and natural resources, which has led to higher unemployment and poverty levels, has also generated inter-community conflicts, particularly in Mali and Nigeria. In a similar vein, climate change also promotes massive displacements, creating shanty towns around large cities and resulting in insecurity for women and children. Conflicts between herders and farmers are also intensifying in a context of climate change that jeopardises access to water.

GBV

Women's specific vulnerabilities leave them at higher risk for security threats and challenges and increase their fragility, hence the urgent need for civil-military collaboration to address these issues. Sexual violence and other forms of abuse against women in conflict and post-conflict situations is a widespread phenomenon in the ongoing conflicts (e.g., the modus operandi of Boko Haram).

The massive scale of security challenges, considering violent extremism, climate change and GBV, underscores the need for collaborative security governance.

A Necessity Dictated by the Climate of Distrust between DSFs and Other Actors

Cooperation is important given the climate of mistrust that pervades relations between DSFs and civilians in West Africa and the Sahel. There are several reasons for this, including the following:

- Security communication strategies are poorly adapted to local realities,

- DSFs are not well trained to interact with civilians and lack awareness of concepts such as gender, trust, communication, etc.,
- Civilians are not adequately trained on the missions, concepts, and roles of the DSFs,
- Excessive media coverage of the phenomenon of insecurity creates mistrust and misunderstanding between civilians and DSFs,
- DSFs are understaffed and lack logistical resources, which prevents them from responding adequately to the expectations of the civilian population,
- Cultural barriers (abuses by the military, fear of the DSF uniform) and legal barriers (professional secrecy, duty of discretion),
- The time factor: DSF presence has gone on too long, particularly where peacekeeping operations are concerned,
- Inadequacy and ineffectiveness of peacekeeping operations,
- Perceptions of DSFs as predators and contributors to insecurity,
- DSFs are best by organisational shortcomings and operational inefficiencies, and
- Exactions are committed by DSFs against civilian populations (human rights violations and extra-judicial executions).

A climate of mistrust makes collaboration difficult and can create a rapprochement between the people and extremist groups; on the other hand, trust fosters the emergence of alternative forces.

HOW TO BEST IMPLEMENT COOPERATION

Discussion of how best engage in cooperation should begin with a review of the pillars of collaboration, followed by best practices in civil-military cooperation.

The pillars of cooperation

Civil-military cooperation is founded on three pillars: inclusion, complementarity, and trust.

Inclusion

Cooperation implies a holistic approach, involving all stakeholders, and is premised on the idea of building security together. Cooperative security is tailored to the local environment and local needs. It implies a more

appropriate consideration of citizens' concerns based on transparency, responsibility, efficiency, prevention, and anticipation.

Complementarity

The idea of cooperation excludes any form of replace-ment or overlapping of roles. It is fundamentally based on complementarity between DSFs and civilians in building security together. Cooperation consists of creating and developing complementarity and synergy between the civilian and military components of society, to ensure security in the human sense of the term.

Trust

Trust between the partners is the bedrock of cooperation. In order to reduce the divide between the various civilian and military stakeholders, it is necessary to overcome divisions and phobias on either side, and this can only be achieved through mutual trust between the said stakeholders.

BEST PRACTICES IN COOPERATION

The concept of community policing in Senegal, UN Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) in Baroua, Niger and Gao, Mali, and mechanisms for the monitoring of human rights violations by the Armed Forces of Côte d'Ivoire are all examples illustrating the importance of civil-military cooperation in responding to challenges. The following recommendations for the effective implementation of this cooperation can be made, based on communication, coaction, trust, and capacity building:

Communication

The first recommendation is to strengthen and broaden communication bridges between DSFs and civilians, thereby creating mutual understanding of their respec-tive roles. To this end, the following are required:

- efficient territorial coverage ensuring that DSFs have easy access to even the most remote communities,
- a permanent, proactive, and accessible communication strategy on the part of DSFs,
- effective feelings-based communication (understanding civilians' fears and their emotional and psychological situation),
- a peaceful communication strategy,

- outreach regarding the missions and roles of the DSFs (even in civilian matters) in simple terms that can be readily understood by the layperson, to facilitate ownership by the civilian population, and
- diversification of communication channels (traditional media, ICTs, traditional communication in the form of stories, myths, role playing, etc., innovative and interactive communication channels, etc.).

Coaction

The aim is to promote a synergy of action between DSFs and civilians, and to decompartmentalise the civilian and DSF spaces to promote the achievement of common objectives and complementarity. Such coaction should be implemented through:

- DSF involvement in social projects: it is important for DSFs to contribute to the implementation of projects that improve the lives of the population,
- The institutionalisation of civil-military cooperation, in particular through the creation of a department for 'civil-military affairs' which would also include civilian and military advisors. The department would interact with humanitarian partners at the community level and conduct peacetime and wartime missions in support of our communities,
- The promotion of civil-military cooperation in the areas of research, advocacy, and intelligence to address multifaceted challenges, including: GBV, climate change, violent extremism, post-conflict reconstruction, etc.
- The implementation of civil-military cooperation in the areas of beach and seabed clean-up, monitoring of marine pollution, as well as environmental restora-tion and regeneration, notably through reforestation, etc., and
- The organisation of joint aerial operations: seeding, locust control, and malaria control by air (planes, drones, etc.).

Capacity Building

Capacity building can be achieved through:

- Training of DSFs and civilians on civics and citizenship,
- Capacity building for DSFs in human rights and international humanitarian law,
- Capacity building for DSFs in human relations:

for example, at police and gendarmerie reception desks,

- Capacity building for civilians on security skills to detect suspicious behaviour and provide appropriate information to DSFs (intelligence, reports),
- DSF capacitation in terms of stress management and post-traumatic situations, and
- Significantly increasing the number of civilian personnel involved in peacekeeping operations.

Trust

A relationship of trust between DSFs and civilians can only be built through:

- Respect for local values and customs on the part of the DSFs,
- Observance of human rights, especially women's rights and international humanitarian law, by DSFs,
- Fighting impunity by involving the justice system, particularly in the search for and collection of evidence, and follow-up on complaints against the DSFs,
- Strategic monitoring of civil-military relations,

including by setting up investigations and surveys to be conducted by services specifically assigned to that task,

- Creation of Community Peace and Security Committees,
- Creation of Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue Spaces (Building lasting trust through the implementation of an inclusive security approach),
- Rapid responses by DSFs to alerts/information from the population,
- Regular presence of mixed DSF patrols,
- DSF ownership of the GBV victim management protocol,
- Stronger dialogue between security stakeholders, civilian authorities, and the people, through the organisation of conferences and seminars involving the DSFs, political and legal authorities and other experts, to jointly reflect on security challenges.
- Addressing the specific needs of the population, which must be the focus of all efforts (involving religious leaders to facilitate awareness-raising, detecting and reporting any messages or preaching that advocate radicalisation).

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1   Gender-based violence

About the author

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