
The Minimize-Maximize Continuum and the Civil Military Operations Mission

by Adam B. Siegel

In an operational environment, a military force's interactions with the civilian population vary according to the situation and the type of operation. The changing nature of a civil-military operation is a key factor in determining the role and the activities of the Civil Affairs elements that are

civil-military interactions.

This article will attempt to explain the dynamic nature of civil-military interactions and to plot them on a "minimize-maximize" continuum. The placement of interactions along the continuum will depend upon the type of operation and the circumstances of location and time.

To help readers understand the minimize-maximize concept, we will examine "pure" combat operations (in Clausewitzian terms) and, at the opposite end of the spectrum, we will examine humanitarian-assistance operations and disaster-relief operations. Next, we will turn to more complex situations that military forces might encounter during peace operations (such as Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti or Operation Joint Endeavor in Bosnia) or during complex humanitarian emergencies (such as Operation Restore Hope in Somalia or Operation Provide Comfort in Northern Iraq).

In examining various operations, we must ask two critical questions:

- How should a military force interact with the local civilian population?
- What interactions should a military force minimize and what kinds should it maximize?

In answering these two questions, we must consider four aspects of civil-military interactions:

- The civilian population's effect on the military operation.



Photo by Marjie Shaw

In humanitarian-assistance operations, such as Operation Provide Comfort, military operations are designed to have the maximum effect upon the civilian population.

involved. Therefore, in order for CA assets to operate effectively and to advise commanders across the spectrum of operations, they must understand the changing nature of

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- The military operation's effect on the civilian population.
- The military force's responsiveness to civilian requirements (medical, food, or otherwise).
- The military force's reliance upon host-nation support.

Combat operations

In a traditional combat operation, the military force interacts with civilians in a *minimize-minimize-minimize-maximize* fashion.

First, the military force seeks to *minimize the civilian population's effect on the military operation*. For example, the military force would attempt to minimize the interference caused by a group of refugees who are clogging the lines of communication that the military force requires in order to execute its mission.

Second, the military force seeks to *minimize the military operation's effect on the civilian population*. For example, the military force establishes rules of engagement that are designed to minimize collateral damage to nonmilitary, civilian targets (such as cultural and religious sites, or schools and hospitals).

Third, the military force seeks to *minimize its responsiveness to civilian requirements*. In almost no circumstances would a military force refuse to provide emergency medical care or food supplies to civilians in combat or post-combat environments. However, the force commander should avoid creating or encouraging a civilian reliance on the military force that could detract from the force's ability to execute a combat mission.

Finally, the military force seeks to *maximize its reliance upon host-nation support*. Host-nation support includes logistics support (such as equipment that can be used to off-load ships), communications support (access to phone lines) and people (such as linguists who are attached to the military force).

Humanitarian assistance

At the other end of the continuum, in a humanitarian-assistance operation following a major natural disaster, the military

force interacts with civilians in a *maximize-maximize-maximize-minimize* approach.

First, the military force seeks to *maximize the civilian population's effect on the military operation*. The military force may form partnerships with non-governmental organizations, or NGOs; international organizations, and governmental organizations that are also providing disaster assistance. These organizations may be able to provide a combination of direct and indirect assistance. For example, the organizations may arrange for local civilians to off-load international aid supplies from military vehicles. Or the organizations may sell civilian equipment to the mili-

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tary force. (Upon departure, the military force may decide to leave the equipment with the local civilians.) Maximizing the civilian-military interaction eases the transition from military control to civilian control. In other words, it is a means of achieving the desired end state of military withdrawal.

Second, the military force seeks to *maximize the military operation's effect on the civilian population*. In a purely humanitarian-assistance disaster-relief operation, the military force assists the civilian population in its recovery efforts.

Third, the military force seeks to *maximize its responsiveness to civilian requirements* as the operation transitions from the emergency-relief phase into the recovery phase.

Finally, the military force seeks to *minimize its reliance upon host-nation support*. When a host nation is already under stress

from a disaster, imposing additional support requirements only exacerbates the host nation's situation. Thus, to whatever extent possible, the military force should rely on its own logistics support.

Desert Storm

The concept of the minimize-maximize continuum may be easier to understand if we attempt to categorize some recent



Photo by Leslie D. Benito

Military units may want to maximize or minimize their support to mine-clearing operations, depending on whether the operations are military, emergency or humanitarian in nature.

military operations as combat operations or as humanitarian-assistance operations. While no real-world situation (not even World War II) fits the pure, Clausewitzian model of combat operations, Desert Storm seems to come close. During Desert Storm, minimizing the civilian impact on the battlefield was fairly simple to achieve in the desert. But in Kuwait City, the allied forces had to devote significant psychological-warfare resources to keep Kuwaiti citizens out of harm's way.

To minimize the military operation's effect on the civilian population, the allied forces constrained their bombing campaign in an effort to avoid damaging civilian sites.

For the most part, the military force avoided providing direct support to civilians until after the conflict was over. (The post-conflict situation in Kuwait City was

considered suitable for a humanitarian-assistance operation.)

The coalition forces maximized civilian support for the military operation by procuring various types of civilian resources, such as the hundreds of trucks they brought in to move supplies.

Sea Angel

Operation Sea Angel, the 1991 relief effort in Bangladesh following a massive cyclone, provides an example in which civil-military interactions are at nearly the other extreme on the minimize-maximize continuum.

From the beginning of the mission, the U.S. joint task force, or JTF, attempted to maximize the civilian population's effect upon the operation. For example, the JTF coordinated all its activities with the Bengali government and various nongovernmental organizations. In addition to accomplishing the JTF's political objective of reinforcing a new democracy, the coordination facilitated the military withdrawal as the situation transitioned from relief to rehabilitation.

The JTF also sought to maximize the impact of military activities on the devastated civilian population. Civilians were encouraged to trust the military force's ability to provide safe, reliable supplies (such as filtered water). Because of the massive devastation throughout Bangladesh, the JTF commander established a policy that no more than 500 military personnel would remain ashore each night. This policy minimized the military footprint and the burden placed on civil society by military demands. Thus, nearly all of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps personnel from Amphibious Group Three, or PHIBGRU THREE, and from the Fifth Marine Expeditionary Brigade, or Fifth MEB, returned to PHIBGRU Three ships for the night.

While Sea Angel came close to being the ideal model of humanitarian assistance for disaster relief, the operation also revealed some of the complexities inherent in the use of military forces for humanitarian assistance. PHIBGRU Three/Fifth MEB, which provided most of the JTF Sea Angel

assets, came to Bangladesh from the Persian Gulf region, where its forces had been part of Operations Desert Shield/Storm. Thus, those forces had to transition from nearly pure war-fighting to nearly pure humanitarian assistance. Clearly, the force went from one extreme on the minimize-maximize continuum to the other.

Joint Endeavor

A peace-support operation may not always fall clearly on either end of the minimize-maximize continuum. For example, the activities of Joint Endeavor's Peace Implementation Force, or IFOR, fell at various intervals on the minimize-maximize continuum and changed over time. During the first year of NATO operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, IFOR sought to:

- *Minimize the civilian population's effect on the military operation.* IFOR attempted to minimize civilian demonstrations and other situations that could have hampered its activities and freedom of movement.

- *Minimize the military operation's effect on the civilian population.* IFOR followed NATO's established rules of engagement to minimize the possibility that armed force, if required, would cause collateral damage to noncombatants or civilian property.

- *Minimize the military force's responsiveness to civilian requirements.* IFOR avoided engagement with local and international civilians and civilian organizations in a number of areas. For example, IFOR refused to engage in the enforcement of civilian laws and also refused to engage in humanitarian mine clearance. On the other hand, IFOR would not have been opposed to clearing mines for military purposes or assisting with the emergency demolition of a mine if a human life was threatened.

- *Maximize the military force's reliance upon host-nation support.* From the time of its entry into Bosnia, IFOR purchased supplies locally and relied on the local infrastructure for support whenever it was logical to do so. Taking full advantage of the various forms of host-nation support available, IFOR rented buildings in which to

house its forces and equipment, hired local labor, used local utilities (when they were operating), and purchased goods on the local economy. (Some of the measures were specifically designed to strengthen the host-nation's capability to support IFOR's future operations.)

- *Maximize the civilian population's effect on the military operation.* IFOR hired large numbers of civilians (including laundry workers, translators and headquarters-berthing managers); maintained regular contact with international and local civilian organizations; and coordinated activities (such as refugee movements and civic-assistance projects) with numerous civilian organizations, including the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

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- *Maximize the military operation's effect on the civilian population.* IFOR attempted to create general security by enforcing Annex 1 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace (essentially, security and cease-fire issues such as the cantonment of heavy weapons). International and indigenous civilian organizations were then able to work on other elements of the peace process. IFOR also attempted to create a secure environment so that the civilian populace could experience, to the maximum extent possible, the positive effects of peace. Some of IFOR's efforts, such as building bridges and repairing roads, also benefited IFOR.

- *Maximize the military force's responsiveness to civilian requirements.* On a num-

ber of occasions, IFOR responded to civilian requirements. For example, IFOR provided its own aircraft to transport civilian employees of international organizations. In one particular case, the movement of employees of the Office of the High Representative actually took priority over the movement of military personnel. IFOR provided significant support to the international organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In fact, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe could not have accomplished its tasks without IFOR's support.

- *Minimize the military force's reliance upon host-nation support.* After having endured years of warfare, the Bosnian infrastructure was either under stress or completely shattered, depending on the area. Although IFOR had attempted to maximize host-nation support, IFOR elements had brought with them much of their own logistics support (as any military force will do). Having its own support enabled IFOR to minimize its demands upon the local economy.

Conclusion

If operations were purely combat or purely disaster-relief, the desired civil-military interactions would be clear: In combat operations, the military force would seek to minimize-minimize-minimize-maximize; in disaster-relief operations, the military force would seek to maximize-maximize-maximize-minimize. But in real-world operations, such as those in northern Iraq, Haiti or Bosnia, civil-military interactions tend to be more complex and more fluid. The challenge for CA forces is to determine where on the minimize-maximize continuum an operation's civil-military interaction should fall. CA must conduct this mission analysis not only across the spectrum of operations, but also across time and space. The minimize-maximize analysis will enable the CA staff to advise the commander on the most effective procedures for dealing with the local populace. In turn, the commander will be better prepared to plan an essential fac-

tor in the achievement of the mission's objectives — the military force's interaction with the civilian populace. ✂

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