

A Gap in Thought and Deed: Civil-Military Relations and Civil-Military Operations

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If CA Forces are to be what the CA White Paper says they should be, "...DoD's primary force specifically trained and educated to understand and shape the foreign political-military environments...", then the gap in our understanding and ability to assess civil-military relations must be closed. Consideration of the state of Civil-Military Relations (CMR), within a partner nation or an adversary, is not adequately addressed within Civil Affairs doctrine and activities. This gap limits the CA Force's ability to be an effective tool for influence at the strategic level when in competition against our near-peer rivals Russia and China. The few times CMR is mentioned in doctrine the context is detached from the civilian/academic study of Civil-Military Relations. The lack of Civil-Military Relations awareness in Civil-Military Operations (CMO) and Civil Affairs Operations (CAO) hinders the Force's ability to fulfil its critical role in influencing a partner or adversary military's indigenous populace and institutions (IPI) during the competition phase.

Civil-Military Relations studies is a social science that works at the intersection of political science, sociology and history to consider how the state and civil society support a nation's military as an institution. It considers key network nodes that are the foundation of a military establishment such as its political allegiance, legislative oversight, treaty obligations, foreign influence, recruitment, ethnic-religious divisions within the force, the military as social laboratory, media access, nongovernmental organizations, the military-industrial complex and the role of the military in civil society's ideological project. All of these are areas our near-peer competitors reflexively target through influence and information operations.

This critical information is not readily integrated into CAO, which remains over focused on military operations during armed conflict, to the degradation of our ability to compete for influence. Not all elements of the civil component (PMESII-ASCOPE) hold equal weight. Those impacting the military IPI should be prioritized by CA Forces in a time of competition. This paper sets out to articulate a CMR framework, within CA activities and analysis in order to focus the Force on a unique task no one else (outside of academia) is addressing and thereby of unique to our Unified Action Partners.

CMR should be thought of as a civil consideration that can be used to undermine or bolster a nation's willingness to fight. A CA force that understands CMR can turn its components into avenues of influence that become levers of action during competition.