STRATEGIC INSIGHTS

CIVILIANS AS A CREATIVE FORCE FOR DEFENSE

By Thomas Matyok, Srečko Zajc, Yvan Yenda Ilunga

ABSTRACT

This article argues that security and defense measures begin with individuals before expanding to encompass communities, nations, and regions. The sovereignty and agency of each individual are crucial, ensuring the right to self-defense, which extends to communities and states alike. In the current framework of civil-military integration, civil-military cooperation and civil affairs serve as essential tools for commanders to achieve military objectives. At the same time, civil society has a critical role in supporting military efforts. There is a pressing need for new tools, methods, or systems that extend beyond the military realm and are closely aligned with fundamental human rights. This article seeks to thoroughly examine the current framework and put forward approaches for establishing a theory-driven framework that is informed by all levels of analyses (international system, state, and local) and interactions in the international security and political domains.

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Ongoing global geopolitical challenges are redefining traditional defense strategies, underscoring the critical need for innovative solutions. Amid military confrontations and covert influences that fuel conflict and warfare, considering the impact on civilian populations is imperative.[1] Civil society is pivotal in establishing a robust infrastructure to counter hybrid threats and asymmetric warfare. Local responses driven by an active civil society are integral in building societal resilience and advancing security.[2]

This article argues that security and defense measures stem from individuals before expanding to encompass communities, nations, and regions. It positions security and defense within the individual level of analysis.[3] The sovereignty and agency of each individual is crucial, ensuring the right to self-defense, which extends to communities and states alike. Viewing the nature of current threats to peace, it is essential to adopt a new defense approach that focuses on citizens training and mobilizing for collective self-defense. Under this approach, civil-military integration/civil affairs experts should coordinate, train, and provide guidance to trainees and volunteers, with these trained civilians adapting such training to individual contexts. The current role of the local community in the security and defense framework is not clearly defined. This article aims to fill the gap and bring the proposed approach to the forefront of academic discussions and policy formulation.

The assumption that civil-military interaction (CMI) is inherently beneficial is prevalent. Civil affairs, civil-military cooperation, and civil-military coordination are practical examples of CMI. However, it is essential to critically evaluate the effectiveness of this interaction and its place in the global security architecture. Existing literature lacks a comprehensive discussion of the theoretical foundations of CMI on a broad scale. It mainly limits civil-military interaction to the institutional and organizational framework of defense institutions and relations, with almost no innovative ways of reading the existing and emerging dynamics in the field where nonstate actors have become prevalent. This paper will thoroughly examine existing CMI frameworks and propose actionable approaches for establishing a new CMI theory-driven framework informed by all levels of analysis (international system, state, local, and individual) and interactions in the international security and political domains.

Interoperability and integration are significant for civilian actors in CMI. But what exactly does the theory of CMI entail? What is the defining authority of the civil-military dynamic, and what is the overarching theory behind its current practice? Moreover, how can practitioners assess its effectiveness? These questions have guided this analysis of civil-military interaction.

The Ukraine Case Study, produced by the NATO Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) Center of Excellence, signifies a notable advancement in the discourse surrounding civil-military interaction, interoperability, and integration within combat scenarios.[4] This study aims to enrich the evolving narrative of civil-military interaction, emphasizing the pivotal role of civil society in these contexts. Through detailed analysis and documentation, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play between military entities and civilian sectors, ultimately enhancing collaborative efforts in conflict situations.

In the current framework of civil-military integration, civil-military cooperation and civil affairs serve as essential tools for commanders to achieve military objectives. At the same time, civil society has a critical role in supporting military efforts. Today, there is a pressing need for new tools, methods, and/or systems that extend beyond the military realm and are closely aligned with fundamental human rights. Such frameworks can empower self-administration and ensure defined safety and protection when necessary. In this context, security and defense are unequivocally viewed as universal rights, ensuring individual voices are heard when their lives are at serious risk.

As society contemplates contemporary defense challenges, an important question emerges: Who else ought to be included in the dialogue that frames responses to defense needs? Clearly, the role of civilians should be a consideration. Nevertheless, the current trend indicates a substantial segment of the population—

1   Thomas Matyók, Srečko Zajc, and Maj Fritz, "Individual Societal Resilience: A Precondition for Open Defense," Small Wars Journal, February 2, 2022, https://smallwarsjournal.com/.

2   Timothy Sisk, Statebuilding (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2013), 102–6.

3   Pinar Bilgin, "Individual and Societal Dimensions of Security," International Studies Review 5, no. 2 (2003): 203–22.

4   NATO Civil-Military Cooperation Center of Excellence (CIMIC-CoE), Case Study UKRAINE A Preliminary Analysis (The Hague: NATO, 2021), https://www.cimic-coe.org/.

potentially as much as 99 percent at the extreme—relies on others for their security and defense. Hence, the narrative and practice surrounding security and defense seem to be appropriated by an elite class in civilian and military spaces, leaving no room for civil societies to explore their agencies.[5]

> "Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home — so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the person, the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works."
>
> — Eleanor Roosevelt

ASSUMPTIONS

Strategies for security and defense developed at higher political levels and subsequently disseminated to communities and individuals may neglect the importance of sustainable local responses tailored to meet specific needs and enhance societal resilience. Considering security and defense mechanisms within the context of comprehensive military integration, this article defines societal resilience as the aggregation of local initiatives and defense as the totality of local actions aimed at ensuring survival and fostering growth.

This article proposes a nested model that avoids hierarchy and promotes integrated and flexible approaches to security and defense.
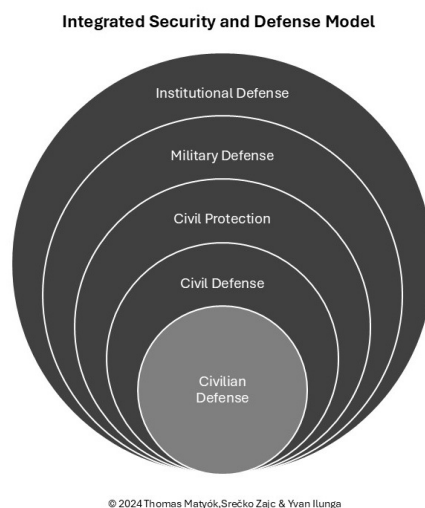
Integrated Security and Defense Model

Institutional Defense

Military Defense

Civil Protection

Civil Defense

Civilian Defense

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Figure 1. Integrated security and defense model

The following examination of civil-military integration will adhere to these provisional definitions.

A PROVISIONAL DEFINITION OF INSTITUTIONAL DEFENSE

In this article, institutional defense will refer to efforts to defend and support the survival of government institutions and their norms. Institutional defense is therefore normative and political at the same time. These efforts can inadvertently stifle the emergence of critical and innovative thought processes, as the prevailing thought style within an institution may limit the scope of inquiry to its established alternative norms and methodologies of defense.[6] Critique necessitates an external perspective, often originating beyond the confines of the institutions themselves.

The multifaceted nature of defense, encompassing civil, civilian, and military dimensions, is orchestrated and governed by various institutions at various levels, including state, local, and community tiers. Any vacuum created by the absence of institutional frameworks for security and defense at any or all of these three tiers will lead to the emergence of self-organized entities that often resemble gangs or mobs that usurp

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5   Ronald R. Krebs, "Narrative and the Making of US National Security," *Cambridge Studies of International Relations* 138 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015); and Mary Kaldor, "Global Civil Society: An Answer to War," in *The New Social Theory Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Steven Seidman and Jeffrey A. Alexander (London: Routledge, 2008).

6   Mary Douglas, *How Institutions Think* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 12–16.

the role of law enforcement. Herein lies the potential for a civil movement, bearing semblance to the Arab Spring in certain aspects, yet distinguished by the imperative for a well-defined and cohesive political agenda to steer the protests.

Mobilizing large assemblies and galvanizing them toward a cause appears relatively simple; however, formulating a palpable and efficacious political agenda demands substantial effort, with social media emerging as a pivotal tool in this endeavor.[7] While institutions can benefit from civilian mobilizations and participation, power in grassroots movements must be well managed to avoid intercommunity conflict.

Clearly, no panacea or singular blueprint for achieving the aspirations of institutional defense exists. The article proposes an innovative solution—a global 2nd Amendment of sorts—envisaging the empowerment of every citizen with the right to self-defense, transcending barriers of gender, nationality, religion, or any other discriminant, without relying on weaponry. This envisioned self-defense mechanism is anchored in the pillars of knowledge, training, community-based organizations, solidarity, and a collective onus for security and defense, necessitating acknowledgment and endorsement by the state apparatus. Such a convergence of institutional defense mechanisms and civil society's organized power could culminate in an impactful sociopolitical force. For instance, European civil society organizations have been instrumental in developing the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy.[8] Ukraine post-Maidan, Lebanon, and the last stage of ex-Yugoslavia also exemplify nations that, due to their states' weakened institutions, employ—without referring to it as such—a "2nd amendment" as described above. In contrast, entities such as the United States, China, the Russian Federation, NATO, and the European Union epitomize robust social bodies, less susceptible to international dislocation and external provocations.

However, with increasing ideological polarization and easy societal infiltration through social media and technologies, no society is immune from destabilization. This fact underscores the strategic imperative to bolster institutional defense by amalgamating civil capabilities encompassing the science, technology, academia, and media sectors. Such integration would significantly enhance institutional defense and societal resilience of states weakened by conflicts or at risk of societal collapse. States adopting this stratagem would be known as "smart states" that advance in their institutional defense strategies.[9] In order to be effective, coordination would need to be ensured between all sectors.

A PROVISIONAL DEFINITION OF MILITARY DEFENSE

In this article, military defense refers to strategic and operational planning, as well as tactical activities advanced by nation-states through military capabilities with the ultimate aim of guaranteeing states' survival and functions. The concept of military defense is rooted in a past when humanity shifted from nomadic lifestyles to settled communities. This shift brought about the emergence of roles such as guards, warriors, and soldiers. The modern military structure has evolved from ancient times, influenced by historical figures such as Napoleon and developed further by empires, colonial powers, and revolutionaries.[10]

Following the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall, many conscript armies shifted to professional forces, with auxiliary units including national guards, territorial defense forces, and gendarmerie complementing the professional armed forces. While industrial warfare has diminished, national armies still adhere to principles established during the Westphalian era and by Napoleon.[11] Recent conflicts in Ukraine involving battles across multiple domains highlight the need for collaboration between civil protection, civil defense, and military defense.

A PROVISIONAL DEFINITION OF CIVIL PROTECTION

Civil protection units are professionals or volunteers trained, organized, and equipped to respond to natural or human-made disasters. They typically operate under the authority of a nationally authorized

7   Funmilola Omotayo and Matthew B. Folorunso, "Use of Social Media for Political Participation by Youths," JeDEM-eJournal of eDemocracy and Open Government 12, no. 1 (2020).

8   Matthias Dembinski and Jutta Joachim, "Civil Society and the European Common Security and Defence Policy," *European Security* 23, no. 4 (2014).

9   Caroline Howard Grøn and Anders Wivel, "Maximizing Influence in the European Union after the Lisbon Treaty: From Small State Policy to Smart State Strategy," *Journal of European Integration* 33, no. 5 (2011).

10   Frederick W. Smith, "The Fighting Unit: An Essay in Structural Military History," *L'Antiquité Classique* 59 (1990); and Chester A. Crocker, "Military Dependence: The Colonial Legacy in Africa," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 12, no. 2 (1974).

11   Alex Vershinin, "The Return of Industrial Warfare," Commentary, RUSI, June 17, 2022, https://www.rusi.org/.

body or ministry, often a ministry of interior. While the structure of civil protection varies from state to state, its primary function is to assist citizens before, during, and after disasters.

In some regions, there is a strong tradition of voluntary organizations that play a vital role in civil protection. These organizations, which include firefighters, scouts, hunters, mountaineers, and others, work alongside professional institutions and receive state support to ensure their continued operation and the recruitment of new members.[12] This collaboration not only extends the pool of skilled individuals but also promotes gender equality and helps minimize logistical challenges, particularly in small towns where maintaining professional units can be costly. The dedication and expertise of trained, skilled, and organized volunteers are fundamental to the mission of civil protection, and it is an aspect that to the article will develop further.

A PROVISIONAL DEFINITION OF CIVIL DEFENSE

Civil defense involves leveraging civilian resources and infrastructure to defend against threats during a state of emergency, conflict, or wartime. It does not rely on traditional weapons but repurposes everyday items to impede military movements and monitor enemy activity. This approach entails unconventional defensive actions, such as using buses and heavy trucks to block roads, employing drones for surveillance, and disrupting military infrastructure such as electricity and water supply. For instance, civilians in Ukraine used large wooden logs to construct trenches, obstructing the advancement of Russian military vehicles.[13] Civil defense is distinct from civil protection, which focuses on managing fires and other emergencies, and from military defense, which encompasses kinetic operations against armed aggression with a variety of weapons.

THE MISSING ELEMENT—CIVILIANS

This study presents a novel dimension of defense by critically examining the existing narrative's shortcomings in its incorporation of civilian actors. These actors are often perceived as passive subjects rather than active participants in the provision and receipt of security and defense.[14] The article's proposed security and defense framework is fundamentally grounded in the active engagement of citizens. This paradigm emphasizes the critical role that public participation plays in fostering robust and effective approaches to security and defense policy. By integrating citizen involvement, the framework aims to enhance accountability, societal resilience, and democratic oversight within national security and defense strategies.

In order to enhance the current dialogue on security and defense, this article introduces the concept of civilian security and defense (CSD). Security and defense should not depend solely on the state or professional forces; rather, these functions should be rooted in the proactive involvement of local actors working together to strengthen the societal resilience and sustainability of their communities.

Civilians—as opposed to military members—constitute the majority of individuals in societies. Yet civilians often lack opportunities to organize and educate themselves on defense issues within their local communities. Defense and security practices are mainly seen as activities to be executed by the military, while civilians are considered the subjects of defense. In rare instances they are considered active contributors when they provide support to either active military operations or security and/or defense institutions.[15] This raises the question of whether civilians should be given the rights and legitimacy to organize into a civilian force that can operate in coordination with or entirely outside an organized military defense structure. Unlike military forces, civilian organized forces could take advantage of flexibility without the constraints of regulations and doctrines and thus potentially provide such forces with increasing improvisation, efficient

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12   Roscoe C. Scarborough, "Risk a Lot to Save a Lot: How Firefighters Decide Whose Life Matters," *Sociological Forum* 32, no. S1 (December 2017), https://www.jstor.org/; and Celina Del Felice and Andria Wisler, "The Unexplored Power and Potential of Youth as Peace-Builders," *Journal of Peace, Conflict & Development* 11 (November 2007), https://repository.ubn.ru.nl/.

13   Vitalii Hnidyi and Thomas Peter, "Ukraine Builds Barricades, Digs Trenches as Focus Shifts to Defence," Reuters, January 11, 2024, https://www.reuters.com/.

14   Yvan Yenda Ilunga and Thomas G. Matyók, "Peace Leadership, Security, and the Role of the Military in Ethnopolitical Conflict," in *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding and Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Jessica Senehi et al. (London: Taylor & Francis, 2024), 141–50.

15   J. Ricou Heaton, "Civilians at War: Reexaming the Status of Civilians Accompanying the Armed Forces," *Air Force Law Review* 57 (December 2005): 155.

utilization of minimal resources, rapid decision-making, and the ability to adapt to new realities.[16]

Adaptability is critical, especially in the face of hybrid threats in the current era of persistent conflict.[17] The military's rigid mindset, akin to a Rubik's cube with only one correct combination, is evident across all areas of engagement, including the NATO political-military alliance.[18] For instance, when reality demands more flexibility than the existing NATO membership baseline requirements provide, the incorporation of new requisites in the national defense strategy becomes necessary, as evidenced by Ukraine's inclusion of social societal resilience, information societal resilience, and financial and economic resilience.[19] Hence, the proposition involves integrating the concepts of civil protection, civil defense, and military defense to establish a robust foundation, with civilian defense taking precedence.

Integrating these concepts would allow for better adaptiveness and innovation in communities' defense and security advancements, increasing the understanding of the interplay between civil and military aspects within "a world of enduring competition."[20]

IN SEARCH OF NEW LANGUAGE

Every profession cultivates its unique linguistic structure, even when utilizing an identical lexicon. Consider the term CIMIC. While its variations (NATO, US, Canada, UN) may convey a similar meaning, the nuances embedded within each interpretation are critical. These details, as pivotal as the overarching concept, underscore the importance of semantic sensitivity.

The existing narrative posits a bifurcation of language into civilian and military modalities, though it acknowledges the existence of a multitude of interpretations beyond this binary for theoretical exploration. The genesis of their divergence can be traced to the intrinsic structure of civilian planning and execution, followed by iterative adjustments. This horizontal principle fosters connections among system components, promoting flexibility and rapid adaptation to change, akin to the operational dynamics of corporations that often have contingency strategies. This civilian planning is mainly informed by detailed conflict assessment, civilian expertise in the context of their operations, and flexible and adaptable leadership.

Conversely, the military paradigm is meticulously structured, with planning informed by current intelligence and publicly available data. It is hierarchically organized, with each segment assigned specific roles and required to abide by specific regulations. This vertical model emphasizes subordination among branches and interoperability among domains. Collective action is predicated on assumptions and forecasts based on historical and contemporary data. However, the unpredictability of reality often challenges military plans, leading to engagements where victory can remain elusive. Indeed, the modern battlefield has transcended traditional confines, extending into digital and extraterrestrial domains and rendering conventional boundaries obsolete.

This evolution prompts a pivotal inquiry: despite the foundational structural differences, should a unified civil-military linguistic framework be developed, or should each domain endeavor to comprehend the vernacular of the other? Understanding the specific connotations of terms such as societal resilience across both spheres is imperative for fostering interoperability. To clarify this concept, the article draws a historical analogy from the disintegration of Yugoslavia—a federation marked by unresolved tensions that unraveled

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16   Claudiu Valer Nistorescu, "Adaptation of the Military Organisation—an Essential Condition for Obtaining Success on the Battlefield," *Romanian Military Thinking* 3 (2024); and David W. Barno and Nora Bensahel, *Adaptation under Fire: How Militaries Change in Wartime* (Oxford, UK; Oxford University Press, 2020).

17   Yvan Yenda Ilunga, "New Cloud in Global Security: When Peace Means Global Complex Operations," in *Routledge Companion to Peace and Conflict Studies*, 1st ed., ed. Sean Byrne et al. (London: Routledge, 2021), 481–90.

18   Burak Kadercan, "Strong Armies, Slow Adaptation: Civil-Military Relations and the Diffusion of Military Power," *International Security* 38, no. 3 (2013); and Alexander Moens and Alexandra Richards, "NATO: Current Challenges and Long-Term Adaptation," in *Routledge Handbook of Peace, Security and Development*, 1st ed., ed. Fen Osler Hampson, Alpaslan Özerdem, and Jonathan Kent (London: Routledge, 2020).

19   Yahya Alshamy et al., "Polycentric Defense, Ukraine Style: Explaining Ukrainian Resilience against Invasion," *Journal of Public Finance and Public Choice* 39, no. 1 (2024).

20   Cedric de Coning, "Adaptive Peacebuilding: Leveraging the Context-Specific and Participatory Dimensions of Self-sustainable Peace," in *Adaptive Peacebuilding: A New Approach to Sustaining Peace in the 21st Century*, ed. Cedric de Coning, Rui Saraiva, and Ako Muto (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International, 2023), 25–47; and *Competition Continuum*, Joint Doctrine Note 1-19 (Washington DC: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, June 3, 2019), https://irp.fas.org/.

following the death of its unifying leader.

SLOVENIA CASE STUDY

The former state of Yugoslavia found itself situated between two ideological blocs—Western and Eastern. In response to the escalating tensions of the Cold War and the growing need to navigate its binary choices, the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) emerged. Despite its multilateral approach and commitment to peaceful conflict resolution, the NAM's security and defense policies were grounded in pragmatism.[21]

Considering these factors, Yugoslav society undertook preparations for potential aggression from both the East and the West, placing particular emphasis on the threat of a nuclear attack. Legislation mandated that every newly constructed residence include a family shelter equipped with essential supplies such as water, food, batteries, sleeping arrangements, and basic medical essentials. In addition to these family shelters, public shelters and those associated with industrial facilities were also developed. Among the pivotal documents created during this time were the Crisis Plan and the Evacuation Plan. The government conducted comprehensive drills annually across various locations and assigned citizens specific roles based on the guiding principle of ensuring no one was left behind.[22] This philosophy was most thoroughly realized in the northern region of the former Yugoslavia, now known as the Republic of Slovenia. The comprehensive defense concept, often referred to as the total defense model or General People's Defence, comprises three main components, already discussed above: civil defense, civil protection, and military defense.[23]

Yugoslavian civil defense was grounded in crisis plans designed to respond to potential aggression from both the West and the East.[24] Preparations for martial law—encompassing the economy, logistics, and information aimed to transition society into a state of war, and the state conducted extensive training exercises to ensure readiness. Additionally, Yugoslavian society developed a robust civil protection effort, thanks to a longstanding tradition of volunteerism within local communities.[25] This effort involved various groups, such as firefighters, hunters, sports clubs, scouts, and numerous other civilian and nongovernmental organizations, all of which received training and were organized and recognized within their local contexts. The third element, military defense, was perceived by the public as a blend of police units and territorial defense forces, often informally referred to as a "republican army," despite not being officially labeled as such.[26]

During this period, the deep-seated divisions within the federal state were exacerbated by three rival nationalisms: Serbian, Croatian, and Albanian in Kosovo. In the broader context of European nationalism, conflicts often arise from a mix of contemporary grievances, historical tensions, and aspirations for future dominance by certain nations, frequently supported by powerful religious institutions. This situation becomes precarious when political leaders focus on the past, neglecting factual realities and misusing history to hinder societal progress instead of devising strategies for the future.

An illustrative example is the order given to the Yugoslav's People's Army to blockade the northern border of what was then the common state of Yugoslavia, which intensified tensions between Belgrade, the federal capital, and Ljubljana, the capital of the Republic of Slovenia. In this scenario, the well-organized Slovenian Territorial Defense Forces (TDF) and the diplomatic initiatives of Slovenian politicians played pivotal roles. The TDF's relocation of certain arms into Yugoslav People's Army barracks, as mandated by Belgrade just days prior, occurred despite an arms embargo affecting Slovenia; however, this did not prove to be a decisive factor.

The Slovenian army was equipped with ample weaponry, jets, and munitions, yet comprised mainly of young recruits just starting their conscript training. This situation was complemented by high morale and effective diplomacy, which arose from the collaboration of civil protection, civil defense, and military

21   Marco A. Vieira, "Understanding Resilience in International Relations: The Non-Aligned Movement and Ontological Security," *International Studies Review* 18, no. 2 (2016).

22   Yernar Akimbayev et al., "Operation Procedures of Civil Defence Authorities in Time of War," *Social & Legal Studies* 7, no. 1 (2024).

23   Tomislav Dulić and Roland Kostić, "Yugoslavs in Arms: Guerrilla Tradition, Total Defence and the Ethnic Security Dilemma," *Europe-Asia Studies* 62, no. 7 (2010).

24   Zdravko Buzadžić, "The Role of Civil Defense in the System of National Defense (in Yugoslavia in 1969)," *Yugoslav Survey. A Record of Facts and Information* 11, no. 1 (1970).

25   Ana Kladnik, "A Nation of Joiners: Volunteer Firefighters and Slovenian Nation- and State-Building from Below," *Comparative Southeast European Studies* 68, no. 2 (2020).

26   Robert W. Dean, "The Yugoslav Army," in *Communist Armies in Politics*, ed., Jonathan R. Edelman (London: Routledge, 1982).

defense (TDF and police) institutions. Consequently, the conflict in Slovenia lasted only ten days, after which the People's Army shifted its focus to the Western Balkans. Yugoslavia withdrew most of its weapons and personnel from Slovenia to reinforce the forces of Serbia-Montenegro under the command of Slobodan Milosevic and his associates.

In 2024, the Republic of Slovenia introduced a new national defense strategy that encompassed both civil and military defense.[27] However, the strategy appears to prioritize military aspects over the needs of its citizens, rendering it ill-suited to address the complexities of modern warfare in the twenty-first century.

CIMIC/CIVIL AFFAIRS DILEMMAS

THE NEED FOR SOCIETAL RESILIENCE

The role and purpose of the military and civilians in CIMIC and civil affairs are increasingly aligning with NATO's seven baseline requirements for national resilience, established at the 2016 Warsaw Summit: 1) "assured continuity of government and critical government services;" 2) "resilient energy supplies;" 3) "ability to deal effectively with uncontrolled movement of people;" 4) "resilient food and water resources;" 5) "ability to deal with mass casualties and disruptive health crises;" 6) "resilient civil communications systems;" and 7) "resilient transportation systems;" as well as the concept of societal resilience.[28] Understanding societal resilience is not just about bouncing back after a crisis. Societal resilience involves three main phases: 1) comprehensive research, preplanned actions, and exercises; 2) execution during a crisis; and 3) evaluation and adjustment of strategies and tactics.[29]

Societal resilience can be likened to a complex machine where the failure of one part—weak or strong—can halt the entire system. All parts of the system are interdependent, and the complex machine that is societal resilience relies on this interdependence. As such, the inability to improvise or find a substitute when one element of a defense system is stressed or broken can compromise that system. At a 2023 CIMIC conference in The Hague, a Ukrainian representative presented the concept of the defense triad, showcasing simultaneous defense and protection activities at the same time: 1) civil defense in which civilians built wooden barriers to thwart adversaries; 2) civil protection in which units combatted fires at electric power towers; and 3) military defense in which military units conducted kinetic operations. Achieving such a level of societal resilience requires careful consideration of education and training.

Another example is on the island of Madagascar. Father Pedro Opeka, the priest in question, was even nominated for a Nobel Prize multiple times.[30] His approach is an exemplary lesson that empowering individuals within a community makes the community more resilient. Once a critical mass of educated, skilled, and motivated citizens was achieved, the community became self-sustaining. This model perfectly demonstrates stability and reconstruction, founded on the principle and basic elements of community self-renewal.

Societal resilience, a contemporary concept acknowledged within NATO and beyond, can be defined as citizens serving as partners and active participants rather than merely passive recipients. This involves fostering trust between citizens and government, engaging citizens in support of national and collective security and defense, and emphasizing the importance of public information and education. Additionally, strategic communications within the NATO framework and sectoral guidance across the seven fundamental areas play vital roles in this effort.[31]

Concurrently, societal resilience exemplifies a multifaceted paradigm encompassing civil societal resilience, military societal resilience, and, by extension, through a synergistic framework. This paradigm operates on a bottom-up systemic approach wherein each component is self-coordinating. Furthermore, it

27   Vlada sprejela tri temeljne razvojno-usmerjevalne dokumente države na obrambnem področju | GOV.SI.

28   Jonny Hall and Hugh Sandeman, "NATO's Resilience: The First and Last Line of Defence," Strategic Update, The London School of Economics IDEAS, May 2022, https://www.lse.ac.uk/.

29   Claudia van den Heuvel, Laurence Alison, and Nicola Power, "Coping with Uncertainty: Police Strategies for Resilient Decision-Making and Action Implementation," *Cognition, Technology & Work* 16 (2014).

30   Pedro C. M. Opeka, "The Little Girl in Rags and Pope John Paul: The Start of an Adventure on the 'Great Island'; the Poor Get Back on Their Feet," *Vincentiana* 48, no. 2 (2004).

31   "Resilience, Civil Preparedness, and Article 3," NATO Headquarters (website), November 13, 2024, https://www.nato.int/.

serves as a foundational platform for the evolution of a novel model of civil-military interaction.

COMPLEXITY OF LANGUAGES

CIMIC and civil affairs experts, whether military or civilian, possess a deep understanding of both military and civilian communication styles. They are adept at bridging the gap between these two worlds. Why is this important? Differences in language and operational protocols often lead to misunderstandings, especially in high-stakes situations such as crises, emergencies, or war, which can be extremely perilous. Recognizing and acknowledging the existence of diverse languages and cultures is essential for fostering cooperation and collaboration and achieving satisfactory interoperability.

Both military and civilian populations must understand each other's perspectives. This underscores the primary responsibility of CIMIC and civil affairs experts. Their secondary role involves actively participating in local and national planning processes to prepare, train, and organize citizens to defend their communities, whether armed or unarmed. The overarching goal here is to transcend the divide between those with and without weapons. While political approval is crucial, experts proficient in both military and civilian languages are best positioned to disseminate, educate, and guide others. Moreover, the potential of the numerous centers of excellence established over the past two decades remains underexplored. Proper evaluation of their theoretical and practical capabilities would likely yield surprising results.

Interoperability allows forces, units or systems to operate together.[32] Further, interoperability of military organizations is facilitated through joint planning (and) training exercises, something that is rarely possible when merging the civil and the military: one is horizontal and the other is vertical. The concepts of civil-military interaction and CIMIC are premised on the recognition of civil autonomy. However, both civil-military interaction and CIMIC frameworks have remained predominantly military-centric in practice. There is a concerning trend of the military exerting dominance and pushing out the civilian elements within the civil-military interaction framework. This issue warrants further exploration and analysis within the academic community. There is a need for a new role for the military in an emerging human security paradigm.[33]

When we consider today's security and defense challenges, it's important to ask: Who is being left out of the discussion? The answer is: the vast majority of the global population, about 99.5 percent. Even when excluding the elderly and children, adults compose approximately 60 percent of the population. According to the World Bank, the total number of armed forces personnel in the world in 2020 was 27,406,000 out of 7.8 billion people.[34] These numbers far surpass the military and the civilian armed forces (law enforcement and security personnel).

The question then arises: Are these individuals equipped, organized, prepared, and resilient enough to contribute to local community societal resilience? Unfortunately, the answer is no. During widespread global privatization, security and defense has become a commodity. This shift toward consumerism has had a profound impact on our global landscape. In this new consumerism approach to security and defense, if we consider the military the muscle of the architecture, then civilians could be likened to the brain. Investing solely in military strength is not a viable solution for addressing current challenges. Effective coordination between the military and civilians is the way forward. For instance, Rosa Brooks proposes that in a world viewed through the lens of conflict, where the military assumes multiple roles, every individual should be equipped for self-defense.[35] Each citizen ought to be knowledgeable about how, when, and with whom they can defend themselves. This idea parallels Henry Dunant's vision for the Red Cross, where trained and organized individuals receive official recognition from the government as primary

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32   NATO Backgrounder: Interoperability for Joint Operations (Brussels: NATO, July 2006), 1, https://www.nato.int/.

33   Thomas Matyók and Srečko Zajc, "A New Role for Joint Civil-Military Interaction," Small Wars Journal, April 8, 2020, https://smallwarsjournal.com/; and Matyók and Zajc, "Searching for a New Role for Military Forces Responding to Asymmetric Threat," *Sodobni vojaški izzivi / Contemporary Military Challenges* 22, no. 3 (2022), https://dk.mors.si/.

34   World Bank Group, "Armed Forces Personnel, Total, 1985-2020," World Bank Data (website), n. d., accessed May 2, 2025, https://data.worldbank.org/.

35   Rosa Brooks, *How Everything Became War and the Military Became Everything: Tales from the Pentagon* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016).

responders in humanitarian efforts.[36] In today's context, it's crucial for these qualified individuals also to be acknowledged by governments as first responders in matters of security and defense. This can be fostered with the assistance of civil-military experts who can act as educators and facilitators within this new framework.[37]

CIVILIAN PIONEERS IN COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

History also provides inspiring models that can guide the development of new systems to meet the needs of resilient individuals and society today. The field of healthcare provides a number of examples. Florence Nightingale, an exceptional nineteenth-century figure, pioneered methods and techniques to protect the wounded and other patients from harmful microbes.[38] Her openmindedness, expertise, and bravery allowed her to challenge the prevailing conventions of her time in the medical field. One founder of the American Red Cross, Henry Dunant, had a vision of establishing groups of organized volunteers trained in humanitarian work.[39] Louis Pasteur invented the first efficient method for preventing and saving countless lives, namely, pasteurization. And Alexander Fleming's discovery of penicillin ushered in a new era of life-saving antibiotics.[40] By strengthening individual societal resilience, these individuals and others like them also strengthened societal resilience: fewer ill people, means a more productive society, which leads to a better life for everyone.

36   E. N. da C. Andrade, "Henri Dunant, Founder of the Red Cross," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 100, no. 4875 (1952), https://www.jstor.org/.

37   Anit Mukherjee, "Educating the Professional Military: Civil–Military Relations and Professional Military Education in India," *Armed Forces & Society* 44, no. 3 (2018).

38   Bernard I. Cohen, "Florence Nightingale," *Scientific American* 250, no. 3 (1984).

39   Laetitia Tosi, Gilles Paché, and François Fulconis, "Towards a Strategic View of Humanitarian Action," 9th Armenian Economic Association Annual Conference, 2019.

40   Guy Bordenave, "Louis Pasteur (1822–1895)," *Microbes and Infection* 5, no. 6 (2003): 553–60; and Sulaiman Ali Alharbi et al., "What If Fleming Had Not Discovered Penicillin?," *Saudi Journal of Biological Sciences* 21, no. 4 (2014): 289–93, https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/.

Integrated Security and Defense Enterprise

Total Defense

Comprehensive/Collective Defense

Civil Defense/Protection of Civilians

Civilian Defense

Civilian Security

Local Communities are Foundation and Pathway of all Security and Defense Initiatives

Community-Centric, *Ad Hoc,* and Context Driven

Elements of State-Centric Defense

Human Security Failures move from Security to Defense:

Economic, Environmental, Food, Health, Political, Community, Personal (UN Trust Fund for Human Security)
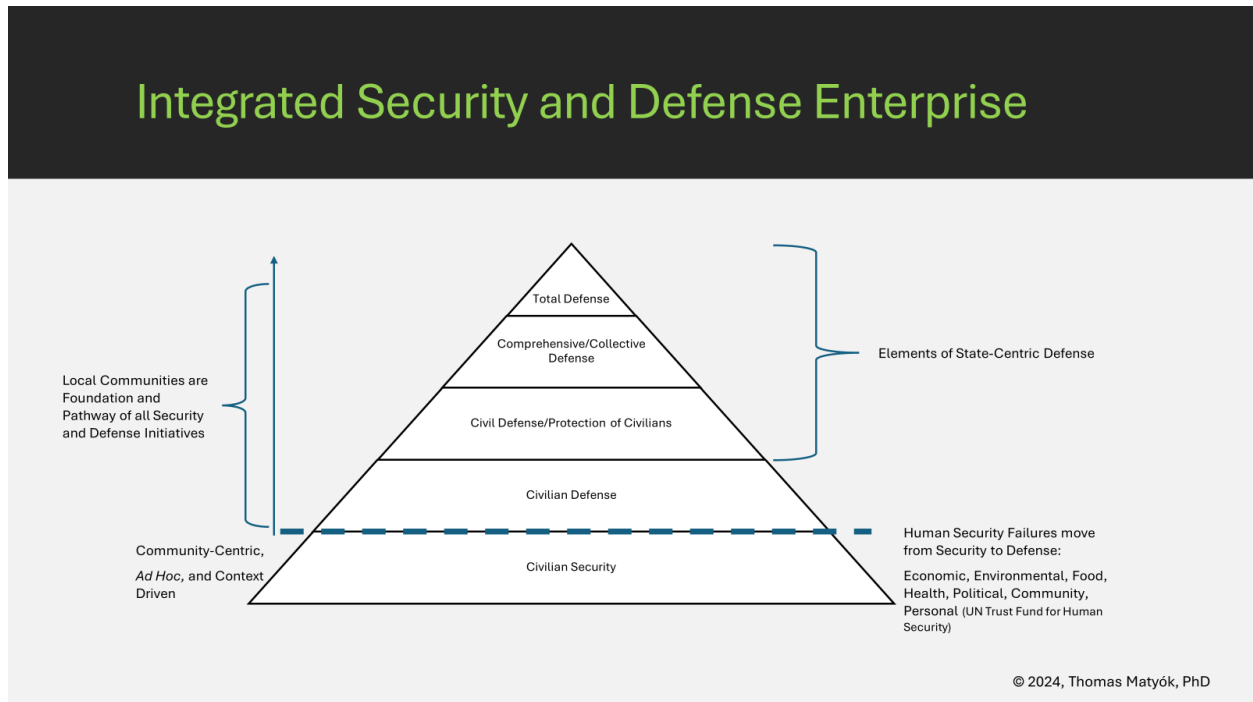
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Figure 2. Unified protection, enhanced defense: The Integrated Security and Defense Enterprise Model

Civilian security, as indicated by the presence of human security, forms the basis upon which all security and defense initiatives are built. An exploration into the aspirational framework of theory-informed civil-military-interactions practice underscores the importance of a harmonized approach among various societal sectors including government, military, civil society, and academia. The conceptual underpinnings of the joint civil-military interactions structure advocate for an integrated strategy that transcends traditional boundaries, fostering an environment where collaborative and interdisciplinary efforts are paramount. This article contributes to an emerging discourse to delineate the contours of such a theoretical framework, emphasizing the synergistic potential across all sectors of society.

1. Theoretical foundations: At its core, joint civil-military interaction is predicated on the idea that more cohesive and effective outcomes in conflict resolution, humanitarian assistance, and overall societal resilience can be achieved through the strategic alignment of efforts across the government, military, and civilian sectors—including engagement with academic institutions. Drawing upon principles from conflict resolution theory, public policy analysis, and strategic management, this framework posits that a multistakeholder approach is essential for addressing the complexities inherent in modern civil-military interactions.

2. Government's role: Government agencies play a pivotal role in setting policy agendas and providing regulatory and legal frameworks necessary for effective civil-military cooperation. By fostering policies that encourage collaboration and providing adequate resources for joint initiatives, governments can significantly enhance the operational efficiency and impact of civil-military interaction efforts.

3. Military engagement with civil society and academia: From a military perspective, engaging with civil society and academic institutions can offer critical insights into the sociocultural dynamics of the areas in which they operate. Such engagement can also facilitate the development of more nuanced strategies informed by broader ranges of perspectives and expertise. This includes incorporating conflict sensitivity and cultural competency into military training and operations, informed by academic research and civil society insights.

4. Academic contributions: Academia plays a crucial role in generating the research and theory that underpin effective civil-military-interaction practice. Through rigorous analysis and critique, academic institutions can provide the critical evidence base needed to inform policy and practice,

offering innovative solutions and frameworks that are grounded in empirical evidence. Additionally, academia can serve as a neutral ground for dialogue among military, government, and civil-society actors, fostering mutual understanding and collaboration.

5. A framework for collaboration: the joint civil-military interaction aspirational model calls for a structured yet flexible framework for collaboration, where open communication, mutual respect, and shared goals are paramount. This involves creating mechanisms for regular dialogue, joint training exercises, and collaborative research projects that involve stakeholders from the government, military, civil society, and academia.

Indeed, advancing toward a theory-informed civil-military interaction practice requires a commitment to cross-sector collaboration and an openness to integrating diverse perspectives and expertise. By embracing this model, stakeholders across the government, military, civil society, and academia can contribute to a more effective, responsive, and resilient framework for civil-military interactions, ultimately enhancing peace and security in complex environments.

A FURTHER NOTE ON ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTIONS TO CIVIL–MILITARY INTERACTION

In contemporary discourse surrounding the integration of academic knowledge with practical application, a central thesis is the necessity of synergetic engagement between academics and practitioners. This thesis posits that following a collaborative learning model, the melding of scholarship and practice enhances the efficacy of theoretical frameworks and enriches practical approaches within various fields. This partnership extends beyond the traditional realm of joint training sessions to a more profound coalescence aimed at amplifying factual knowledge while minimizing unfounded assumptions.

An example of this proposed integration is the structure of stand-alone civilian courses that reflect the academic rigor and practical relevance of the Bundeswehr's civil-military master's degree program. This model exemplifies how educational frameworks can mirror real-world applications and vice versa, thereby fostering a richer learning and operational environment.

Moreover, the joint civil-military interaction structure, embodying a collaborative platform spanning government, military, civil society, and academia, serves as a quintessential manifestation of this theory-to-practice, practice-to-theory paradigm. Such structures facilitate the dynamic interchange between theoretical insights and practical experience, underscoring the vital need for academics and practitioners to engage collaboratively in the pursuit of merging scholarship with practice.

This cooperative engagement not only bridges the gap between theoretical constructs and practical application but also contributes significantly to advancing knowledge and refining methodologies across various disciplines. Consequently, fostering an environment where theoretical acumen and practical wisdom coalesce will yield substantial dividends in both academic and practical realms.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this article emphasizes the untapped potential of civilians, not merely as bystanders in global defense mechanisms but as pivotal creative forces. Through a thorough examination of civil-military interaction, it becomes evident that a reimagined and theoretical approach to such interaction can enhance interoperability and integration, ultimately contributing to more resilient and adaptive defense strategies. By drawing on examples such as proactive civil-military involvement in Ukraine and analyzing the roles of civil protection and civil defense, this article underlines the importance of civilian participation in defense beyond conventional paradigms. This involves a profound shift from viewing civilians as mere recipients of protection to recognizing them as indispensable contributors to the collective defense infrastructure.

The significant role of civil protection units and the innovative strategies of civil defense exemplify how civilian resources and ingenuity can be mobilized to safeguard communities and contribute to broader security objectives. Moving forward, it is crucial to foster a collaborative environment where the diverse capabilities of civilians are acknowledged, nurtured, and integrated into the fabric of national and

international defense strategies. By doing so, we can forge a path toward a more inclusive, dynamic, and robust defense posture that not only addresses the challenges of today but is also better prepared for the uncertainties of tomorrow.

Researching the relationship between security and defense can be challenging. In the past, security was associated with civilian institutions such as the police, gendarmerie, and law enforcement, while defense was primarily a military affair. Can we now clearly and definitively distinguish between the two? It is likely to become even more complex and ambiguous in the future, as the world increasingly encounters a mix of dual-use systems or objects driven by artificial intelligence. Will it be feasible to separate civilians from the military according to International Humanitarian Law, or will the UN's protection of universal human rights become a new cornerstone for adjusting the legal framework to a new reality? Suppose a civilian cyber expert were to launch an attack on an adversary's brigade command post from a civilian building. What would be their status and level of protection under international humanitarian law? Are we once again facing a dilemma: hybrid or legitimate military target? Civil defense is largely under a vaguely defined status in times of war or crisis. It is essential to shine a bright light into this fog, particularly when many things appear self-evident, when they are not. It is time for research and action.