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## **Joint Civil-Military Interaction for an Innovative Euro-Atlantic Community – Thomas Matyók<sup>1</sup> and Srečko Zajc<sup>2</sup>**

***Abstract:** A fractious EU/NATO relationship challenges the ability of both to respond to growing hybrid security threats and asymmetric warfare. Joint Civil-Military Interaction is a mindset for building the Euro-Atlantic community's resiliency using a unity-of-aim approach if it is not too late.<sup>3</sup>*

***Key words:** international security, national security, defense, security integrations.*

The COVID-19 pandemic unambiguously communicates the need for the execution of a coherent EU/NATO crisis response strategy. Whole-of-Society (WoS) responses are required to meet hybrid security threats and increasing levels of asymmetric warfare. The absence of a coordinated EU/NATO crisis response strategy, incoherent national policies, and fragmented responses to crises allow a myriad of bad actors to exploit the Euro-Atlantic communities solidarity. UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, noted concern that COVID-19 pandemic presents “new opportunities” for Islamic State, al-Qaida, Neo-Nazis, and white supremacists to exploit governments’ inability to govern and respond to national and human security needs (1). Another important side-effect is the opportunity given to authoritarian politicians and governments to adopt unnecessary measures limiting human rights or even ignoring the duty to protect them. A direct effect is that people are not following protective measures because they do not trust their own governments. Trust is one of the most important elements and when missing overall policy can become invalid.

A coherent crisis response strategy will need to be held together by a common mindset. Joint Civil-Military Interaction (JCMI) is a mindset. JCMI brings civil society, governmental agencies, military practitioners, and scholars together to investigate issues impacting civil-

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military interaction in peacebuilding and humanitarian actions, and to provide professional and informed guidance to military, civil society, academia, and government regarding civil-military interaction before, during, and after kinetic, humanitarian assistance, and disaster response crises. Through ongoing dialogue JCMI stakeholders are able to develop context specific *collective intent* to guide *uncoordinated* actions. In this brief paper we discuss the need for developing JCMI as a complimentary framework for crisis response.

What is the call for an innovative Euro-Atlantic Community? Simply one that is prepared to develop and implement context specific responses to complex crises. Innovative approaches will ‘trust the pathology’ of a crisis and build a response plan specific to that crisis. Vertical bureaucratic structures will be broken down and replaced with horizontal collaborative ones. Creative thinking will augment critical thinking.

The European External Action Service (EEAS) is established to assist the EU in addressing its security needs. The EEAS Crisis Response System is the mechanism by which the EU responds to crises from beyond its borders (2). Unquestionably, crisis response and management is NATO’s core mission (3). There is no lack of organizations to address the security needs of the Euro-Atlantic community. Coordination mechanisms are in place. The question is how to handle *uncoordinated* action? Missing is a common mindset that will allow for collective, *uncoordinated* action in responding to fast moving crises. Pragmatic responses must replace bureaucratic ones. Pragmatism is the result of bottom-up local responses to crises, not top-down diktats such as NATO Civil Emergency Preparedness (4). The body specialized in NATO to develop better crisis response mechanism is Civil Emergency Planning Committee (CEPC), unfortunately more political than crisis response oriented and less operational. A serious structural fault is that most representatives to the committee are from ministries of defense and civil protection. What is needed are high-level representatives – civilian and military – that play a crucial collaboration role during complex emergencies. Reforms are necessary to make the CEPC as effective as it can be and to make it a substantive partner with EU and UN agencies.

To go forward we should go back. During the Cold-War many states conducted regular rehearsals and exercises to educate their populations on some basic protections in case of nuclear attack. The threat of nuclear attack was constant. This constant threat imposed responsibilities on governments to ensure the safety of their citizens. For some the exercises were nothing more than habit, for others a waste of time and resources, still some saw them as *meat-on-the-bone*. During many years Cuba prepared its population against hurricanes by detecting storms approaching the island using radar and other technologies, in close connection with US centers. Hurricanes scored less victims than many more developed neighbors. The jewel was hidden in systematic preparation conducted well in advance of the threat. Plans included assistance for the most vulnerable first – aged, ill, disabled – moving them to shelters early. Early warning systems and interactions with neighbors became key. An example we can find is in the Red Cross foundations: well-trained and organized volunteers as auxiliary to the government when there is a need.

Today, the current geostrategic picture looks more like a Jackson Pollock painting, a wild experiment, than a Rubens masterpiece. Abstract art communicates well the time within which we are living; a time where we cannot detect where we are and where we can hardly recognize any direction let alone have any clue about intention. What we can do is attempt to interpret as much of the present circumstances as we are able, unfortunately our interpretation remains individualistic. Unshared individual interpretations create a vacuous political narrative. There is no shared political discourse to guide joint responses to crises. Solidarity is a dream.

Billions of people are daily seeing too many pictures, receiving too many words (less intelligent sentences), as never before, none-of-which have any influence on their lives. Both governments and citizens remain lost during the Covid-19 pandemic. To many of the reactions provided people panicked or opposed collective responses without reason, sometimes because of mistrust of authoritarian government.

Institutions such as the EU and NATO were established after the World War II with a clear vision. Though the vision was clear it did not fully anticipate a changing world. More member states became nationalistic and selfish ignoring collective principles when it was in their particular interest. Governance structures became giant bureaucratic enterprises. Bureaucratic inertia ensures the continuation of institutions that have outlived their usefulness. The EU and NATO are not immune to the internal politics and policies of member states.

With the growth of authoritarian systems, we can see resistance to reforms that will lead to greater security and prosperity for everyone. From authoritarian regimes we cannot expect enlightened ideas and solutions to confront complex and wicked problems. It is necessary for liberal values to permeate governance systems and structures.

One of the main ‘documents’ agreed upon between World War II allies was the Yalta Agreement that determined what the world would look like after the war ended. Space was created for the authoritarian Soviet regime while space for the West’s free markets was enlarged. Great Power Competition began. The West and the Soviet Union anchored the two poles of the conflict continuum. The nuclear and space races defined the competition. Today Yalta is something studied in history classes – a thing of the past with little relevance today – and nobody really cares about nuclear weapons and space is becoming the domain of private-public projects and new power states such as China and India.

Is history a bad teacher or are we simply poor pupils? Doctrines do not prevent, nor do they resolve, crises. People acting together through a common mindset do. Existing doctrines and crisis response systems employed across the Euro-Atlantic must be adjusted to meet the demands of a new world. A world that shifts seamlessly from competition to confrontation to conflict and back again. This world demands an active civilian presence. Civilians act as stakeholders equivalent to government and military. Why the presence of civil society among military and governmental actors? Simply, they are the experts of daily life. They are present at the grassroots. They have insight into what local responses are needed and will work. Often governmental and military actors work to teach people how to fish, they also need to be taught how to fish in their own ponds. The way forward in responding to crises is through interaction – local stakeholders, governance structures, and the military.

In psychology the guidance is that listening is more important than talking. Governments should heed this advice. Governments should listen to experts and society should listen to government. Unfortunately, when trust is absent no one listens.

Today, the world of information is a competition between real and unreal. Real and unreal news travel in nanoseconds and can unite or divide the world in a matter of minutes. Real and unreal have merged. The Internet and social networks are the new Sword of Damocles. This new sword hangs over all our heads and threatens everyone. Greater human security is dependent upon open, democratic systems. Democracies alone are able to address the competition between real and unreal. A free and open public commons is the only way to ensure truth survives. Everyone

has a role in responding to crises. JCMI offers the framework by which seemingly disparate actors can move toward shared objectives through development of a common mindset.

Joint Civil-Military Interaction is the nucleus for a new Civil Defense complementing civilian and military experts, taking the best from everyone, building on experience and failures, and using lessons learned to build context-driven responses to crises. COVID-19 communicates the need for solidarity and societal responses to crises and trust. Fragmented, nationalistic responses are not good enough. The EU and NATO must restructure by adapting and adjusting to a new state of solidarity driven by cooperation and collaboration where answers to crises, scientific and otherwise, cross borders unrestricted. The right people and institutions are linked across time and space. Governments are trusted.

The controlling policy challenge is that we apply a visible strategy to an invisible enemy. Top driven responses to crises that are not context specific are akin to having a solution and then going out and looking for a problem to solve with it. The problem *must* guide the solution. What we have now is the McDonaldization of crisis response. A response driven by the principles of McDonaldization: efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control (5). Subject matter experts are asked to provide answers to crises so complex new ways forward are required. Logical, linear, bureaucratic responses anchored to Industrial Age thinking are no longer useful, and we must become comfortable operating in chaotic spaces that do not lend themselves to control.

When people fear the present and the future they return to the past. People desire certainty. How will we respond if there will be no vaccine? How will we function in the new *abnormal*? Our capacity to manage crises will depend on our ability to embrace chaos and become comfortable operating in unstructured environments that actively push back against control.

Why interaction and not cooperation? Cooperation assumes a stable plan. Individuals and resources are allocated, and lines of communication are established. Stakeholders move in a coordinated linear fashion from point A to B. Though stakeholder flexibility is encouraged, it is flexibility in executing the plan; not necessarily changing it. Interaction is a way of thinking and if we would like to use a metaphor it is more like an algorithm, quickly adapting to the changes -- faster than paradigms, doctrines or even laws.

A proposed solution is to augment top-driven crisis management with bottom-up organic management of crises. The goal here is to trust the *wisdom-of-the-group*. To better facilitate crisis management, it is essential to recognize two key elements or organically driven responses:

1. management of crises is context driven,
2. crisis management is fluid and response processes and mechanisms co-develop with crises.

Fred Koehler speaks of *Flipping the Elephant*, moving from discussion as a competitive activity where the goal is to win an argument to dialogue where individuals seek to develop a better understanding of their own thinking. He introduces discussion as an expedition with a defined objective and dialogue as an exploration for discovery. A flipping-the-elephant approach is needed in developing innovative approaches to complex problems such as pandemics.

Recognizing slow, top-driven, bureaucratic responses cannot keep pace with rapidly shifting circumstances on the ground there is need for creative *uncoordinated* actions. A Joint Civil-Military Interaction mindset allows for a *collective consciousness* to develop. All stakeholders

in the operational environment become part of a living, complex adaptive system guided by mindset, not control. The JCMI mindset adheres to three principles:

1. stakeholders develop collective-intent specific to a crisis,
2. engaging and aligning resources replaces directed distribution,
3. answers grow organically out of problems.

The butterfly is flapping its wings and our world will be changed in ways we cannot predict. Needed is a return-to-the-future where US Euro-Atlantic leadership was present. US leadership and joint strengthening of the alliance prevented partner nations from sinking into destructive conflicts. Peace, prosperity, human and civil rights flowed from multi-lateral agreements negotiated by, and flowing from, the UN, NATO, and later the EU.

For some the most important strategic question we face is when a COVID-19 vaccine will be available. Allow us to suggest the most important strategic question is: who will lead the US and how can that leadership contribute to the development of a common Joint Civil-Military Interaction mindset to collectively respond to crises as a unified Euro-Atlantic community?

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