

THE CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONSHIP: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE IN THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SOUTH SUDAN (UNMISS)

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Introduction

After nearly 20 years of civil war, in 2001, a peace agreement began to be negotiated between the central government of Sudan and the southern region. On January 9, 2005, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was ratified ending the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005) (Oliveira and Silva 2011) and stipulating a referendum to determine the status of the Southern Sudan region. According to the UN, 98.83% of South Sudanese voters were in favor of independence in January 2011 (Salman 2011; UNMISS 2022).

On July 8, 2011, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted the resolution 1996 (UNSC 2011), creating the UNMISS. The objective was to consolidate peace and security and help create the necessary conditions for the development of the Republic of South Sudan, a country that was born with the worst social indicators in the world (Oliveira and Silva 2011). The mission aimed to help South Sudan to develop and build its democratic institutions to support the political-administrative structure of a new country.

Although conceived under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which regulates the use of force at the international level to maintain or restore peace and the conditions for the adoption of armed actions to restore peace and international security (Melo 2010, 82; ONU 1945, 30), UNMISS was

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established with a focus on *peacebuilding*² (UNSC 2011). However, inserted in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment, it did not take long for its initial paradigm to be fragmented and its mandate changed to a *robust peacekeeping*³ bias (UNSC 2013), which demanded a profound change in the relationship structure of mission components.

Hilde F. Johnson, Special Representative of UN Secretary-General in South Sudan (SRSG), begins her story with a quote from President Salva Kiir Mayardit:

Our detractors already eliminated us even before our independence. They say we will descend into civil war as soon as our flag is raised. They justify this by saying that we are incapable of solving our problems through dialogue. They say we quickly resort to violence. They claim that our concept of democracy and freedom is flawed. It is incumbent on us to prove them wrong! (Johnson 2016, 21, our translation)⁴.

Detractors were right: less than three years after independence on July 9, 2011, South Sudan plunged into civil war on December 15, 2013. Since then, the country has seen clashes between its two main political and military forces: the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition (SPLA-IO) and also various groups that constitute local forces in the country.

Due to the level of violence against the civilian population, the Mission was forced to open the doors of its bases in *Tong Ping* and at the *UN House* (both located in Juba, the capital of South Sudan) to the thousands of people in need of shelter. Approximately 16,000 people sought shelter at the bases, mostly women with their babies, the elderly with their canes (...); children clinging to their parents, crying; teenagers with fear in their eyes (Johnson 2016, 188).

2 The term Peacebuilding is used by the UN in post-conflict situations when violent hostilities have ceased. It is a comprehensive strategy to prevent the recurrence of violence and establish peaceful relationships within and between different sectors of society at the local, national and regional levels (Mische and Harris 2008, 6).

3 Robust peacekeeping involves the use of force at the tactical level with the authorization of the UNSC and the consent of the host nation and/or the main parties to the conflict (UNDPKO 2008).

4 In the original: "Nossos detratores já nos eliminaram antes mesmo da nossa independência. Eles dizem que mergulharemos em uma guerra civil assim que nossa bandeira seja hasteada. Eles justificam isso dizendo que somos incapazes de resolver nossos problemas através do diálogo. Eles dizem que rapidamente recorreremos à violência. Eles alegam que nosso conceito de democracia e liberdade é defeituoso. É incumbente que nós provemos que eles estão errados!" (Johnson 2016, 21).

The calamitous situation forced UNMISS to perform the function normally carried out by humanitarians to meet the needs of the civilian population. UNMISS personnel undertook actions such as inspections to prevent the introduction of guns in protection of civilian sites (PoC Sites), organizing water and sanitation facilities and treating injured people and pregnant women. At that moment, when UN agencies and humanitarian NGOs were unable to articulate their actions, everything was done by the Mission. This is one of the factors that makes the study of the civil-military relations at UNMISS something peculiar and subject to study.

The events in Juba led to a domino effect across the rest of the country. “Bor, the capital of Jonglei, had already fallen to opposition forces on December 18; in Bentiu, capital of Macha’s home state of Unity, they took control on the 21st. The Government lost Malakal, capital of Upper Nile State, on the 24th, although fighting continued for days thereafter” (Johnson 2016, 199, our translation)⁵.

Two peace agreements were signed with the aim of resolving the ongoing conflict: the first in 2015 (Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan - ARCRSS) and the second in 2018 (Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan - R-ARCRSS). Under this last agreement, a Transitional Government of National Unity was to be installed and Riek Machar (the first deposed vice president) should be reappointed to the position of first vice president (IGAD 2018; Pettersson, Högladh and Öberg 2019) within eight months counting from the date of signature.

Despite the formation of a government of national unity in February 2020, with the return of Riek Machar, the country remains in crisis, with more than 1,000 people killed in violent conflicts between rival communities in the second half of 2020 alone. In 2001, there was an intensification of attacks against the civilian population by armed groups and militias organized and mobilized along ethnic lines, often with the support of the State and opposition armed forces (UNGA 2021).

5 In the original: “*Bor, a capital de Jonglei, caiu na mão da oposição em 18 de dezembro; Bentiu, capital do estado de Unity, teve seu controle tomado no dia 21. O governo perdeu o controle de Malakal, capital do Estado de Upper Nile, no dia 24, mas o conflito [ai] continuou por diversos dias*” (Johnson 2016, 199).

Methodology

This work studies the dynamics expressed within the context of the construction of the perception of civilian and military components' relationships in UN peace missions in South Sudan, especially the empirical construction of actions that fundamentally demand the resolution of practical questions in a framework of humanitarian crisis and conflict, seeking to understand the degree of evolution of these interactions and, also, how the perception of each group was constructed. Methodologically, this research used a qualitative approach to build a holistic picture of the situation, deepening the investigation (Bui 2014, 15). The methods used were essential to understand how UN's theory and norms are perceived and applied in the peace mission in South Sudan. The qualitative method used was that of a case study, from the perspective of Yin (2018), through a unique-case analysis, due to the peculiarity of the humanitarian crisis faced and, also, the various reports critical of UNMISS' performance and effectiveness. Through inductive reasoning, patterns will be sought in order to build a conclusion.

Two data generation techniques were used: document research and structured participant observation. For the former, the primary sources used were UN documents such as manuals, protocols, memos, directives and reports, as well as UNMISS documents collected by the author. Secondary sources used were books and articles from academic journals focusing on literature that deals with the civil-military relationship, focusing on South Sudan whenever possible. Articles used were preferably recent, in English, Spanish and Portuguese, published from 2015 to the current days.

On the other hand, the case study was carried out with the help of unstructured and participatory observation by the author, which took place in 2015 and 2016, when he held the role of deputy head of operations at UNMISS, actively participating in the coordination of the military component in support of demands from the civilian component and other civilian organizations. In this sense, the author's professional status and position favored the collection of data and the understanding of the phenomenon, not only through his perception but also through interviews with other actors, contributing to the improvement of the interpretation of the results.

Thus, this article investigates the main obstacles to the interaction between civilians and military in South Sudan, trying to understand the internal and external causes for the low synergy between them. Thus, this

article's key question is: "what are the main problems in the synergy between civilians and military in South Sudan and what can be done to mitigate this situation?"

Finally, in addition to the introduction and these methodological considerations, this article is divided into four other sections. Below is a literature review focused on the main concepts linked to the theory of civil-military interactions in peace operations. In the fourth section, the functioning of the system under debate at UNMISS is addressed and, in the fifth section, the lessons learned are addressed, as a result of the central analysis proposed in the debate of this article. In the sixth section, some suggestions are presented to mitigate some of the mentioned effects and difficulties.

Civil-military relations – doctrine and theory

The doctrine on civil-military relations is relatively new, having emerged in the mid-1990s. Responses to disasters and armed conflicts have forced the various actors involved to work together. As such, civilian and military actors have worked side by side and the processes developed by them have become intertwined (Bollen and Rietjens 2008). However, these interactions are characterized by occurring in environments considered chaotic, unstable and conflictive, in contexts in which the lack of resources and infrastructure is the rule.

States and international organizations, adapting their doctrines of responses to humanitarian crises and to the need of interaction within multifunctional, joint, international and multilateral environments typical of peacekeeping operations (Boileau and Garon 2005; Franke 2006), have been adopting new strategies to improve the synergy and effectiveness of operations involving military and civilian components. However, the techniques, tactics and procedures of these interactions are still being studied and experimented, seeking validation through the analysis of lessons learned.

The complexity of the actors and the environment where this type of interaction takes place often brings uncertainties in terms of how to plan the actions of a contingent, along with the various civilian institutions present in a crisis (Da Cruz 2010). Peace missions are potential fields of study, but they are not the only humanitarian crises which can contribute to the validation of a theoretical body that helps in the efficiency of the response.

Due to the lack of structure and temporality, civil-military interactions have been criticized by both civilians and the military.

[...] formal mechanisms for coordination have been established at most levels between relevant [civilian and military] actors, but that outcomes in terms of tangible synergetic effects are often elusive. This is particularly true for civil-military interfaces, where an apparent 'difference in mindset' between military and civilian actors is still regularly perceived as obstructive to effective synergies (Zartsdahl and Doki 2018, 6, our translation)⁶.

The very term that defines the interactions between the components has already been the target of countless criticisms and multiple adaptations. Such differentiations often relate to semantic questions rather than reflect changes in the paradigms of fieldwork or of the relationship between the military and civilians. The choice of the term 'relations' for this section seeks to escape the dialectical discussion of terms currently in use, such as coordination, cooperation, coexistence, synergy, interaction, among others.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) conceptualized UN Civil Military interactions with the term UN-CMCoord and the following definition:

UN-CMCoord is the essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies that is necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimize inconsistency and, when appropriate, pursue common goals. Basic strategies range from **cooperation** to **co-existence**. Coordination is a shared responsibility facilitated by liaison and common training (UNOCHA 2018, 7, our translation)⁷.

It should be noted that what they present as coordination ranges from cooperation to coexistence, and that the UN-CMCoord is understood as a tool within the relationship between civilians and the military, being an instrument in the promotion of humanitarian principles and standards. The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPO, formerly DPKO) adopts,

6 In the original: "*Mecanismos formais de coordenação foram estabelecidos na maioria dos níveis de relações entre atores relevantes [civis e militares], mas os resultados em termos de efeitos sinérgicos tangíveis são frequentemente elusivos. Isso é especialmente relevante para interfaces civis-militares, em que uma aparente "diferença de mentalidade" entre atores militares e civis ainda é regularmente percebida como uma obstrução para sinergias eficazes*" (Zartsdahl e Doki 2018, 6).

7 In the original: "*O UN-CMCoord é o diálogo e a interação essenciais entre atores civis e militares em emergências humanitárias, necessários para proteger e promover princípios humanitários, evitar a concorrência, minimizar a inconsistência e, quando apropriado, buscar objetivos comuns. As estratégias básicas variam da **cooperação** à **coexistência**. A coordenação é uma responsabilidade compartilhada facilitada pelo contato e treinamento comum*" (UNOCHA 2018, 7).

in most of its documents, including the Capstone Doctrine, the term CIMIC, which in the same document is referred to as *Civil Military Cooperation* at one point. and *Civil Military Coordination* in another. The term's most common definition, however, is the one used by the military and corroborated by several troop-contributing countries, as follows:

In a UN peacekeeping context, this coordination is called “UN-CIMIC”, which is a military staff function that contributes to facilitating the interface between the military and civilian components of an integrated mission, as well as with humanitarian and development actors in the mission area in order to support the UN mission objectives (UNDPKO 2010, 2, our translation)⁸.

In search for dialogue and interaction between civilian and military sectors, as it deems the dialogue necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition and pursue common goals (Da Cruz 2010), the DPO/UN also adopts the term – Civil-Military Coordination (CMCoord), and defines it as follows:

UN Civil-Military Coordination (UN-CMCoord) on the other hand refers to the humanitarian civil-military coordination function that provides the necessary interface between humanitarian and military actors to protect and promote the humanitarian principles and achieve the humanitarian objectives in complex emergencies and natural disaster situations (UNDPKO 2010, 2, our translation)⁹.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), in an expansion of the concept, presents the relations between civilians and military under the concept of CMI – Civil Military Interaction – in an attempt to encompass the various nuances and relationships that can be established according to the scenario. Such an approach gains projection by allowing military objectives to guide the level of interaction, responsibility and subordination, increasing

8 In the original: “em um contexto de manutenção da paz da ONU, esta coordenação é chamada de “UN-CIMIC”, que é uma função de estado-maior militar que contribui para facilitar a interface entre os componentes militares e civis de uma missão integrada, bem como com os atores humanitários e de desenvolvimento na missão área, a fim de apoiar os objetivos da missão da ONU” (UNDPKO 2010, 2).

9 In the original: “em um contexto de manutenção da paz da ONU, esta coordenação é chamada de “UN-CIMIC”, que é uma função de estado-maior militar que contribui para facilitar a interface entre os componentes militares e civis de uma missão integrada, bem como com os atores humanitários e de desenvolvimento na missão área, a fim de apoiar os objetivos da missão da ONU” (UNDPKO 2010, 2).

the efficiency and effectiveness of actions in crisis responses. Thus, NATO defines five levels of interaction, namely: cooperation, coordination, conflict, consultation and coexistence (NATO 2018b).

On this discussion of terminologies and perceptions, De Coning had already made an interesting and vital point to broaden understanding and reduce the conceptual confusion that befalls them, explaining in the following terms:

From a UN perspective, coordination refers to a spectrum of relations that range from coexistence to cooperation. This UN coordination concept has been developed in the context of humanitarian civil-military coordination, where coexistence refers to a situation where the minimum necessary information is being shared between the humanitarian community and a military combatant force. [...] Cooperation refers to a maximum state of civil-military coordination where there is a range of cooperative relations between the humanitarian community and a military force [...] The UN and NATO understanding of cooperation and coordination seem to be reversed, because in the NATO context, cooperation is understood to imply a less binding relationship than coordination, and NATO argues that the humanitarian community will be willing to cooperate, but not coordinate, and therefore they use cooperation (De Coning 2007, 7, our translation)¹⁰.

In addition, it is interesting to understand how the EU conceptualizes the CIMIC activity, so that it can be seen that, even though the concepts have similarities, the fact that they present points of divergence is not a mere coincidence, but fundamental points whose institutionality, the characteristic of its components and its objectives greatly influence its results.

10 In the original: “do ponto de vista da ONU, coordenação refere-se a um espectro de relações que vai da coexistência à cooperação. Foi desenvolvido no contexto da coordenação civil-militar humanitária, em que a coexistência se refere a uma situação em que a informação mínima necessária está sendo compartilhada entre a comunidade humanitária e uma força militar combatente. [...] Cooperação refere-se a um estado máximo de coordenação civil-militar onde existe uma gama de relações cooperativas entre a comunidade humanitária e uma força militar. [...] O entendimento da ONU e da OTAN de cooperação e coordenação parece estar invertido, porque, no contexto da OTAN, a cooperação é entendida como implicando uma relação menos vinculativa do que a coordenação, e a OTAN argumenta que a comunidade humanitária estará disposta a cooperar, mas não coordenar, e, portanto, eles usam cooperação” (De Coning 2007, 7).

Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) is coordination and cooperation at all levels between military components of EU-led military operations and civilian actors outside the EU, including local people and authorities, as well as international organizations, national and non-governmental agencies - in support of carrying out the military mission alongside all other military functions (CEU 2009, 8, our translation)¹¹.

The literature points out three fundamental problems to this debate and to the way in which the concepts of this relationship are constructed and used and, therefore, its effects in the practical field. The first one is linked to organizational cultures, as Aguilar points out:

Organizations, institutions and agencies have their own cultures, specific operating rules and procedures, and their own interests, and some are averse to coordinating with the operation's command. Strange as it may seem, the UN has difficulty coordinating peace operation activities with its own agencies, funds and programs (Aguilar 2016, 28, our translation)¹².

The second one approaches the issue of identification between civilian and military personnel, marked by impressions and prejudices that make an adequate response difficult, and even on certain occasions impossible, as pointed out by Jackson and Haysom:

In recent years, civil-military coordination has faced a number of important and often interconnected challenges, including expanded international intervention in fragile and conflict-affected states, increasing frequency and scale of climate change-related natural disasters, and the rapid proliferation of humanitarian actors. Faced with these multiple challenges, it is essential to increase interaction and dialogue between military and humanitarian actors. However, the two sides have failed to reach a common understanding of the role each plays, the challenges they face and, critically, the priority needs of affected

11 In the original: “A Cooperação Civil-Militar (CIMIC) é a coordenação e cooperação a todos os níveis – entre componentes militares de operações militares lideradas pela UE e agentes civis externos à UE, incluindo a população local e as autoridades, bem como internacionais, organizações e agências nacionais e não governamentais –, em apoio à realização da missão militar juntamente com todas as outras funções militares” (CEU 2009, 8).

12 In the original: “as organizações, instituições e agências têm culturas próprias, normas e procedimentos operacionais específicos e interesses próprios e algumas são avessas a se coordenarem com o comando da operação. Por mais estranho que possa parecer, a ONU tem dificuldade de coordenar atividades das operações de paz com suas próprias agências, fundos e programas” (Aguilar 2016, 28).

populations and how these can or should be addressed (Jackson and Haysom 2013, 7, our translation)¹³.

The third one is about the constant inability to understand the operating environment and make principles or precepts more flexible in order to maximize results. Despite the constant debate on the insertion of collaborative approaches by various international institutions such as the UN, NATO and the EU and the adoption of terms such as the *Comprehensive Approach*¹⁴, there is still some resistance from both groups to adopt a more flexible position in relation to their norms and performance. Furthermore, the humanitarian response system lacks guidelines that can really support the different actors working with responses. These guidelines are often seen as being divorced from reality. “For example, there is no current policy to guide the interaction between humanitarians and the military in the migration crisis [in Europe], nor is there a framework to help them navigate the fluid space of conflict and post-conflict, proxy wars or extremist violence” (Colona 2018, 124, our translation)¹⁵.

The civil-military coordination system at UNMISS

According to UNMISS’ internal document on CIMIC, the essential objective of CIMIC is to link the civilian and military components of the Mission, and to connect the Mission with the humanitarian community and development actors.

¹³ In the original: “nos últimos anos, a coordenação civil-militar enfrentou vários desafios importantes e, muitas vezes, interconectados, incluindo a intervenção internacional expandida em Estados fragilizados e afetados por conflitos, o aumento da frequência e escala dos desastres naturais relacionados à mudança climática e a rápida proliferação de atores humanitários. Diante desses múltiplos desafios, é essencial incrementar a interação e o diálogo entre os atores militares e humanitários. Entretanto, os dois lados têm falhado em atingir um entendimento comum do papel que cada um desempenha, dos desafios que enfrentam e, criticamente, das necessidades prioritárias das populações afetadas e como estas podem ou devem ser abordadas” (Jackson e Haysom 2013, 7).

¹⁴ The doctrine of the *Comprehensive Approach* was defended by NATO, the EU and the UN to face the conflicts of the 21st century more effectively and with longer-term results, within the framework of the new international geopolitical scenario.

¹⁵ In the original: “Por exemplo, não há nenhuma política atual para guiar a interação entre humanitários e militares na crise de migração [na Europa], nem há estrutura para ajudá-los a navegar no espaço fluido dos conflitos e pós-conflitos, guerras de proxy ou cenários de violência extrema” (Colona 2018, 124).

CIMIC is an integral part of operations conducted across the full spectrum of military operations and in all environments. All activities conducted must support the objectives and mandate of UNMISS. The objective of UN-CIMIC activities conducted by the military component of the mission is to influence behavior and attitude in order to support the global process and not to win the hearts and minds of the population (UNMISS 2018b, 4, our translation)¹⁶.

The UNMISS CIMIC structure is made up of actors at different levels that articulate in their spheres of competence. Table 1 facilitates the understanding of this structure and the relationship it establishes with the military component, the civilian component, humanitarians and the South Sudanese population. The blue arrows signify the articulation movement carried out by CIMIC specialists.

Table 1: Relations between the actors and the CIMIC articulation in South Sudan

ARTICULATION	MILITARY COMPONENT	CIVILIAN COMPONENT	CIMIC SPECIALISTS		HUMANITARIAN	SOUTH SUDANESE
NATIONAL	U2 / U3 / U5 / U7	JOC / JMAC	↔	UNMISS CIMIC CELL – U9	↔	OCHA
	UNMISS DCMLLO	DAC / DPC / DDH / DRRCP UNPOL		↕		PROTECTION CLUSTER NGO FORUM
SECTOR	G2 / G3 / G5 / G7	SOC	↔	SECTOR CIMIC CELL – G9	↔	FIELD OCHA REPRESENTATIVE
	SMLO – G9	SAC / SPC / SDH / SRRCP UNPOL		↕		NGOS
STATE	S2 / S3 / S5 / S7	COP	↔	BATTALION CIMIC CELL – S9	↔	NGOS
	MLO – G9	SAC / SPC / SDH / SRRCP UNPOL		↕		LOCAL KEY LEADERSHIP
CONDADOS / PAYAMS				COY OR PLATOON COMMANDERS		POPULATION

Source: Created by the author based on UNMISS internal regulations.

The U9 is the central cell of CIMIC within the military component at the national level. It is responsible for collecting, analyzing and reporting all activities and information generated by the CIMIC cells at the sectoral level

¹⁶ In the original: “CIMIC é uma parte integrante das operações conduzidas através do espectro integral das operações militares e em todos os ambientes. Todas as atividades conduzidas devem sustentar os objetivos e o mandato da UNMISS. O objetivo das atividades de UN-CIMIC conduzidas pelo componente militar da missão é influenciar o comportamento e a atitude, a fim de apoiar o processo global e, não, para conquistar os corações e mentes da população” (UNMISS 2018, 4).

(G9) and by the Military Liaison Officers (MLO-G9). The G9, located in the sectors, collect information to fulfill the mandate, supporting the analysis related to civil considerations, and carry out, within their area of coverage, the coordination and achievement of actions in support of humanitarians, without, however, allowing them to create false expectations in the civilian environment (UNMISS 2018b). Based on the information received, the Military Component maintains a dynamic national view of the needs of each state.

G9 CIMIC officials report on: gaps in civilian capabilities; social problems; interethnic violence; access to roads; key leadership information; sexual and gender violence; problems related to the protection of minors; trends in refugees and internally displaced persons; community support activities and projects; military actions in support of humanitarians; and they act as liaison officers of the military component with humanitarians, civil society and the civilian component of the mission (UNMISS 2018b).

The coordination with various stakeholders must be planned to ensure that there is regular, impartial and efficient liaison, enabling the coordination of UNMISS activities. The CIMIC officials, internally, must keep in touch with the civilian component and with the UN police (UNPOL). Besides, CIMIC officials must, along with the MLOs, contribute to the integration of the civilian component of the Mission and of humanitarians in the planning process (UNMISS 2018b).

The coordination of the *clusters*, in South Sudan, is UNOCHA's responsibility, in terms of compiling the demands of the humanitarians inserted in the activated *clusters*. It is responsible for presenting these demands to the CIMIC cell, and to say that it is the main partner of the CIMIC structure is not an overstatement. Although UNOCHA acts as a focal point for the military and as coordinator of humanitarian actions, the cluster system is not hierarchical. Thus, after coordination, it is up to each responsible cluster to operationalize the demand.

Main obstacles to civil-military coordination at UNMISS

Despite what was described in the previous section on the relationship of actors in the context of UNMISS, regulation is still far from practice. Civilian and military personnel must be aware of the practical complexity involved in cooperating with each other and the "obligation" to cooperate in order to improve conditions for the affected population. This joint work is called shared responsibility, which can range from mere coexistence to

effective cooperation (Gonzalo 2015). In many cases, CIMIC within UNMISS and with humanitarians is merely a coexistence strategy.

As is the case in various sectors of the UNMISS, cooperation is rarely effective, and the good functioning of CIMIC depends a lot on the agent who is invested with the CIMIC function and on the people who represent humanitarians and civilians within the Mission. Cooperation often does not occur due to the lack of knowledge of mission functions by humanitarians and the unpreparedness of the military to work with civilian actors.

Humanitarians work under the global guiding and normative principles and standards of their institutions. The military, on the other hand, are guided by the regulations of the DPO in their interaction with humanitarians. While most humanitarians have never heard of the IASC's or DPO's key reference documents for CIMIC, the military claim to be more familiar with the global guidance documents. However, both criticize the access and dissemination of these standards (CMAG 2012).

A survey conducted by the Civil Military Advisor Group¹⁷ (CMAG) showed that 60% of humanitarians felt that UNMISS military personnel had a low awareness of humanitarian principles and 46% found it difficult to find an appropriate interlocutor. Additionally, 75% of the military interviewed had the perception that humanitarians have a low awareness of how the military work, which part of them attributed to the "misalignment" of their respective mandates, and 25% reported finding it difficult to access an appropriate interlocutor among the military (UNMISS CMAG 2012). The interviews carried out in the context of this research reinforced that both humanitarians and military personnel are unaware of the work of their counterparts, which makes coordination and cooperation between them difficult.

Another problem pointed out is the turnover of personnel within the military component. Many of the countries that contribute with troops and officers to the mission do so for a limited time, in accordance with the Memoranda of Understanding agreed between the UN and the permanent missions of the signatory countries. U9 officers (the CIMIC cell) stay on the mission between six months and a year and are then replaced. This makes the U9/G9/S9 lack solid institutional knowledge, given the constant change of personnel.

¹⁷ CMAG is a component group of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs responsible for facilitating the adoption of measures to enhance dialogue between humanitarians and the military, in order to ensure a coherent response to emergencies.

The first test of the UNMISS military contingent's ability to fulfill its mandate to protect civilians in South Sudan took place between early 2011 and mid-2012, when allegations of serious human rights violations committed by the SPLA arose, particularly in areas of Murle ethnicity in Jonglei State. At that time, the close relationship between the UNMISS and the GRSS meant that the government's failures were also perceived as UNMISS' failures, tarnishing the mission's legitimacy and credibility, both in the eyes of South Sudanese and of other international organizations operating in the country (De Coning and Da Costa 2015). Within UNMISS, the failure was automatically attributed to the military contingent, since it has control of the force and, supposedly, would not have acted effectively to prevent the escalation of violence, compromising the internal relationship between civilians and the military.

Subsequently, in 2013, the (un)success of UNMISS was related to the protection of civilians from SPLA and SPLA-IO violence, particularly those who fled in large numbers to the Mission's compounds. While the loss of life avoided by these refugees was significant, the interpretation of the civilian protection mandate was reactive rather than proactive. Again, the military component was blamed for the inability to fulfill its mandate, since, despite protecting the population in the *PoC Sites*, it did not project power over other areas, allowing the increase of violence in the rest of the country (De Coning and Da Costa 2015).

One of the problems faced by the civilian component of UNMISS is the direct identification of UNMISS with its military component. The UNMISS Human Rights Division, part of the civilian component, is, among other things, responsible for monitoring and collecting data on violations in South Sudan. Often, its personnel cannot operate efficiently because humanitarians associate them with the military. One of the cases reported in the Protection Cluster was about how human rights officers had been prevented from entering a Doctors Without Borders hospital to collect data on rape cases, because the entry of UNMISS personnel would represent a breach of the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality.

This type of problem was found in several of the South Sudanese states. However, between 2015 and 2016, UNMISS had not thought of a strategy for interacting with humanitarians in terms of monitoring human rights violations. It should be noted here that the data collected by human rights officers can be used in an eventual trial (by an international court or by the hybrid court provided for in the Peace Agreement – ARCRSS) of those accused of war crimes. It is crucial that UNMISS and its Human Rights Division draw up action plans for interacting with humanitarians.

Moreover, the Civil Affairs Division finds it difficult to carry out its activities because they are directly associated with the military component. This is what happens, for example, during Integrated Patrols (patrols whose composition involves the three components of the Mission: military, police and civilian). Again, the responsibility for the use of force in this scenario becomes dichotomous, since, without the military component, there is no feasibility for patrolling, while the presence of the military inhibits the effectiveness of the results sought by the civilian component.

Another issue refers to the CIMIC cell, which should be seen as the main aggregator and arbitrator of humanitarian demands and military capabilities. However, due to the impasse of organizational cultures, the cell, on several occasions, is observed with some suspicion by military and civilians. Humanitarians perceive it as part of the military component, given its structure and the fact that it is composed only of military personnel; the military considers the CIMIC cells as uniformed spokespersons for the humanitarians.

Within this perspective, the mission of the CIMIC cell is covered by several complicating factors, coming to exist in a gray area between the humanitarian and the military. U9 often fails to satisfy the demands of either side. The imperative need versus capacity, which permeates the discourse of humanitarians and military personnel, seems to point to the CIMIC cells as those responsible for the non-solution of this problem when, in fact, there is a culture of non-understanding of the CIMIC work by the military and humanitarian.

The lack of a clear and unified humanitarian voice further undermines efforts for effective dialogue between humanitarians and UNMISS. Some of this, predictably, arises from competition for resources and competing agendas from the various mandates and objectives of the actors involved in aid (Jackson and Haysom 2013). An example is what has been happening with WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) work. As explained, after a crisis, like the one in South Sudan, the UN system is divided into *clusters*; one of these *clusters* is WASH. WASH services become not only a development issue, but also (and primarily) a humanitarian aid issue. In certain cases, the construction of water points and cisterns requires coordination with the UNMISS military component. Hence, in a volatile, complex and violent environment, there are three groups of actors that “dispute” the best way to help the local population.

The political instability of South Sudan and the general lack of security reduce international funding, leading to the compartmentalization of NGOs involved in the management of development programs and humanitar-

ian aid programmes. Development programs are long term and do not allow adaptations for quick responses. Humanitarian aid programs are short in nature, must respond to momentary demands, and have short-term funding. This situation generates competition for resources between NGOs, disputes for specialized support from the military component, ineffective actions in both fields, with direct impacts on the level of trust between UN agencies and NGOs. Many of the problems of humanitarian cooperation with UNMISS occur exactly in the execution phase. The military criticizes humanitarians for lack of coordination and non-compliance with what is agreed in planning meetings; criticism is even extended to UNOCHA for its inability to correct the actions of *clusters* when they negatively impact the progress of humanitarian operations.

The main activities coordinated by UNOCHA along with the military component of UNMISS are the use of military and civil defense assets (UNOCHA 2003) and escorts (IASC 2013) also detailed in the Guidelines for the coordination between Humanitarians and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS CMAG and UNMISS HCT 2013), widely known and disseminated regulations. Despite these, many of the coordination meetings between UNMISS and UNOCHA addressed problems such as the lack of correct identification of humanitarian vehicles to be escorted and the drivers of these vehicles, as well as cargo documentation. In the eyes of humanitarians, these demands were often perceived as mere formality. However, such “formalities” implied delays, detentions, escalation of crisis between the military component and the parties to the conflict and, at times, violence against humanitarian subcontractors. The refusal to start humanitarian convoys that did not comply with these rules created in the humanitarians an idea that the military had a lenient behavior when it came to providing humanitarian aid, while the military were deeply critical of the lack of attention of the humanitarians in taking the necessary measures for planning and preparation in view of safety constraints.

Since its inception, UNMISS’s lack of neutrality has been constantly raised as a problem by humanitarians, who see it as playing a partisan political role. The *Black UN* (reference to UN mission vehicles whose UN symbol is engraved in black, as in the case of UNMISS) threatens the perception of neutrality of *Blue UN* agencies (reference to humanitarian agency vehicles whose UN symbol is engraved in blue, such as WFP, IOM, UNICEF, etc.) with a humanitarian mandate or role (Jackson and Haysom 2013). This conflict extends beyond the humanitarians’ relationship with UNMISS; it becomes the perception of the general population. Several Military Liaison Officers report in their patrols an unwillingness of the population to receive

the UNMISS teams, which do not take anything material to the local population. Unlike humanitarian aid (*Blue UN*), which takes the form of food, water and shelter. The main function of UNMISS is to report and protect, which reflects in security, a concept that does not materialize for the local population.

Yet another point of friction between humanitarians and the military (UNMISS) is the issue of information. These agents must share relevant information with each other in a timely and efficient manner in order to coordinate their respective activities. There are situations, however, where both have confidential information that cannot be shared without compromising the identity of the source or exposing an individual (or a group of individuals) to potential risk. In such cases, it is understood that such information will not be shared between UNMISS and the humanitarian community (UNMISS CMAG and UNMISS HCT 2013). Humanitarian agencies and NGOs are believed to have similar policies. This principle is particularly important in protecting the impacts that sharing may have on the local population. However, it has been used to deny information between humanitarians and the Mission, mainly with regard to the military component; UN agencies, UNMISS and humanitarians have different ways and perceptions on how to manage the information collected.

At UNMISS, the Joint Mission Analysis Center (JMAC), composed of military and civilian personnel, is responsible for executing the information cycle contained in the DPO-DFS (Department of Peace Operations-Department of Field Service) Policy. This Center is responsible for producing balanced information, timely with the task, systematically treated according to criteria of data and source veracity and reliability and for the shared disclosure of information, according to each of the involved agent's need to support the ongoing operations and decision-making of the Mission's and other UN Agencies' senior management (Shetler-Jones 2008; UNDPKO 2006, 2017a, 2017b).

In other UN agencies, different structures for processing and sharing information can be observed; there is no linearity, since each agency is free to establish its operating structure. UNHCR, for example, has Information Management cells in its structure. These have trained personnel to work with the data received, not only in the context of the agency's mission, but mainly with regard to the issue of the information cycle (UNHCR 2019). However, this is not a reality for all agencies, nor for all agency units that

have Information Management Officer (IMO)¹⁸ positions in their structure. Often, due to the difficulty of hiring qualified personnel willing to work in conflict zones, these structures are not activated or do not even exist in the agency, making it extremely difficult to deal with information and, especially, the dissemination cycle.

Among the NGOs working in South Sudan, there was no unified regulation of information management. Thus, it is believed that each of them treats the sharing of information according to their perspective and within their capacity. Effectively, in many NGOs, information sharing is not the focus of actions, so that they see no reason to divert or employ people in this process. Thus, it is believed that the decision to share does not go through an analytical process, it just becomes the personal inference of whoever holds the data. The lack of data sharing prevents more accurate scenarios from being built, which directly implies the incorrect application of efforts, not only for humanitarian aid, but also for the protection of civilians.

In several situations where interaction between civilians and military is required, the use of different “languages” and terminologies, allied to different institutional cultures and the dispute for space, in a literal or metaphorical sense, lead to difficulties in understanding the common objectives between these actors (Balcik et al. 2010; Heaslip, Sharif and Althonayan 2012; Rietjens, Voordijk and De Boer 2007), which is another factor that hinders cooperation between UNMISS and humanitarians. However, it is questionable whether the various actors have common goals; perhaps it is more accurate to say that each organization has its own goals, but that everyone should work towards a common goal or vision.

According to Benett (2013), humanitarians should take a closer look at their real and perceived neutrality to explore opportunities to strengthen their operational independence. Coordination with other political and military entities (including UNMISS) should take place in line with agreed policies and principles. Humanitarian agencies must work to reduce their current over-reliance on UNMISS assets and must protect themselves more against the politicization or militarization of their work. Bennett’s perception, although theoretically aligned with global humanitarian principles, suggests a separation that often implies duplication of efforts on the ground and reinforces an alleged distance of objectives between humanitarians and the

18 Information Management Officers. For more information, the Terms of Reference for IMO positions can be consulted on the UNHCR website via the link <https://cms.emergency.unhcr.org/documents/11982/49515/Information+Management+Officer+Terms+of+Reference/19c63f5a-a229-42c4-8962-49135adb9eb8>.

Mission. In real terms, the approach of UNMISS with humanitarians becomes increasingly challenging and complex, since this type of approach does not institute the conditions for establishing the independence of humanitarians and does not observe the real dynamics of the actions of both humanitarians and military at the operational level, harming the chain as a whole, reducing effectiveness and reinforcing a condition of dispute and non-cooperation.

Another problem observed within UNMISS is the focus on the military component for the functioning of CIMIC. If civilians and military are to work together and military are to contribute to the work of civilians, it is crucial that civilian personnel also learn what CIMIC is all about. Training of civilians for mission deployment and understanding of UNMISS work (one week in Brindisi – *Civilian Pre-deployment Training* (UNGSC 2019); three days in Entebbe – Regional Services Center; and two days of training within UNMISS) does not include a module on CIMIC and the work of the military.

Conclusion

Although there are several norms and guidelines on CIMIC, it seems that in South Sudan their implementation is not effective. However, looking at the literature on CIMIC, this does not seem to be a problem for UNMISS alone. A better work by CIMIC would require, among other measures, an improvement in the procedures of the *clusters*. Even though we can already see an improvement in the coordination of humanitarian work since the adoption of the cluster system in 2005, this coordination can be made more effective by designing a better accountability system for the agencies and institutions responsible for each cluster. A system that demanded coordinated actions from clusters could result in more effective and less problematic responses for affected populations.

One of the principles of coexistence is the separation between the military (included in the UNMISS military component) and humanitarians. In order for the differences between the humanitarian community and UNMISS (with its military component) to be clear, both must ensure that their activities are distinguished at all levels. It is important, for example, that humanitarian and military personnel are properly identified, in order to distinguish personnel and material structure; all public statements must make clear the strategies and mandates of each actor with a focus on reinforcing the distinction between them (Gonzalo 2015).

The use of armed escort or military resources (vessels, aircraft and vehicles) for humanitarian operations should only be used as a last resort. In the specific case of armed escort, UNMISS, in response to requests from humanitarians, studies case by case, always keeping in mind available means, priorities, costs and capabilities. All requests for the use of UNMISS resources or armed escorts must be channeled through UNOCHA and the Joint Operations Center (JOC) (Gonzalo 2015). The JOC is an information center staffed by civilian and military personnel to ensure mission-wide situational awareness of ongoing operations and daily reports on the state of the country (UNDPKO 2014, 2016). Humanitarians should attend UNOCHA meetings to determine whether requests are of last resort (Gonzalo 2015).

The most important aspect of CIMIC in the context of South Sudan and UNMISS is the protection of the civilian population. Coordination linked to the protection of civilians should include regular consultations on UNMISS and humanitarian action strategies. UNMISS should participate in the Protection Cluster and work to ensure that the priorities of protecting civilians are included in the priorities of the Mission (UNMISS CMAG; UNMISS HCT 2013). On a theoretical level, it is observed that NGOs feel uncomfortable with their relationship with the military. However, in the field, effective cooperation is not uncommon (Heaslip and Barber 2014; Rutner, Aviles and Cox 2012; Listou 2011), because in South Sudan, without UNMISS assistance, the required assistance would often not reach the affected population. The logistical transport of supplies across the Nile River to the cities of Leer, Malakal and Melut (in Unity and Upper Nile states) – facilitated by the UNMISS military and the installation of a temporary military base, following the attack on the Doctors Without borders in Leer (which enabled this NGO to function effectively) are examples of successful civil-military cooperation and collaboration. In the case of Doctors Without Borders, despite the principles of neutrality and impartiality, there was a time when violence directed at the NGO demanded a practical approach between it and the UNMISS.

Another initiative that could help the work of coordination between civilians and the military is joint training. Initially, for the improvement of work and cooperation between civilians and military, it would be necessary for the training to also include aspects of CIMIC and institutional knowledge of the existing actors in the operation. In a second phase, simulated cooperation exercises in training for civilians and military personnel could present the most common problems encountered in CIMIC to both groups of actors. Training of this type could also help to create bonds between individuals from different groups; personal contacts can help improve responses and share information.

For the military, it is essential to familiarize them with the global humanitarian principles and procedures of the main agencies and actors in CIMIC; the mere insertion of these in training before the deployment of troops has proved to be insufficient. UNOCHA documents, for example, could be worked with all military personnel (not just those of CIMIC) before they were sent to a UN peacekeeping mission.

Despite DPO documents and Humanitarian Principles being different, it is necessary to work to find points of synergy between these norms and regulations. Military and humanitarians need to work within their own norms, but at the same time looking for ways to collaborate and cooperate with each other, so that aid reaches affected populations and so that work is not duplicated.

Another way to work towards improving coordination is to start it in the planning phase. An effective approach between humanitarians and the military when planning responses can avoid many problems at the time of implementation. It is necessary to think of strategies to increase the trust of humanitarians in UNMISS (and in the military in general) so that the effective protection of civilians and humanitarian response can happen efficiently.

As has become clear, the two sides (military and civilian) have failed to reach a common understanding of each other's role, the challenges they face and, critically, the needs of the affected populations (who suffer from problems of violence and lack of basic resources such as water, sanitation, shelter and food). It is important that the differences between the ways in which civil and military actors work are not an obstacle to the protection of the affected populations, but that both humanitarian and military actors find points of convergence in their work.

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ABSTRACT

International theories that address civil-military relations have increasingly been the subject of new approaches. The scenario where these are developed gains specific nuances and priority in the discussion about the effectiveness of joint work and the limits of each of these groups. This article discusses how the civil-military relation has been built in the UNMISS context. Based on the theoretical construction of civil-military relations, more specifically, those applied to the context of peace operations and their practice, the effectiveness of the relationship between the military components and the civilian components in all their multiplicity is discussed. We challenge the efficiency of the integrated response that is sought through the deepening of civil-military relations. The central question addressed, specifically, seeks to understand the main problems in the synergy between civilians and military in South Sudan and what can be done to mitigate this situation. As a result, we've mapped the main problems presented by both components and later confronted them through interviews with military and civilians in leadership positions, the theoretical confrontation with the with the main concepts of the **CIMIC doctrine** and discussed the process, projecting in this work some perspectives that can help to mitigate the problems found.

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South Sudan. UN. CIMIC UN-Coord. CMI

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