

Chapter 10

A Lessons Framework for Civil–Military–Police Conflict and Disaster Management: An Australian Perspective

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ABSTRACT

International conflict and disaster response operations incorporate a diverse, multi-layered series of activities and actors working in the same space, and in contested environments. Differences in organizational culture, language, processes, and behavior can either inhibit or enhance understanding and cooperation. This chapter looks at how the Australian Civil-Military Centre (ACMC) has developed, facilitated, and tested education and training programs, preparedness exercises, and targeted research to enhance understanding and cooperation. These activities provide the foundation for a holistic civil-military-police lessons framework that is being developed. They provide Australian government agencies, military, police, and the aid community with a guide to successfully maintain and contribute their technical expertise and perspectives to respond to conflict and disaster management. Through the continued refinement of training programs, preparedness exercises, and targeted research, this framework looks not only at lessons collection but also at implementation of these lessons in future practice.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, civil-military-police interventions in fragile or disrupted states have become common. The requirement to coordinate the efforts of actors from diverse backgrounds, with different mandates, operational cultures and values, represents a huge challenge to the successful conduct of an operation (Coning & Friis, 2011). However, organizational and cultural diversity can provide strength

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to international interventions by promoting the best use of each actor's and organizations' distinct set of professional, technical and cultural disciplines, values and perceptions. Together they provide breadth and resilience to assessment, planning and implementation. This diversity optimizes civil-military-police outcomes while retaining the individual cultural and professional diversity, agility and resilience necessary in complex circumstances.

Most countries—and the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization—contributing to recent operations have invested effort in developing a more cohesive and integrated multiagency approach (Coning & Friis, 2011; Haugevik, 2007). Australia is no exception and has progressively strengthened its multiagency approach and capability for conflict and disaster management overseas. Australia has a record of working with international partners to contribute to international conflict and disaster management. Recent operations in Timor Leste, the Solomon Islands and Afghanistan have seen a significant expansion in the number of Australian government agencies deploying overseas in support of international response and recovery activities. These deployments have greatly increased the need for effective civil-military-police collaboration at the decision-making, planning and implementation levels. Australia has recognized the need for building lessons from these operations, in particular in the field of civil-military-police collaboration partly because research shows that 25 to 50 per cent of peace processes may relapse within five years (Collier, Elliott, Hegre, Hoeffler, Reynal-Querol, & Sambanis, 2003; Suhrke & Samset, 2007) and also because the Australian government anticipates that lessons learned from its involvement in the Asia-Pacific region can be used in other contexts in which Australia might become involved in the future.

This chapter looks at how the Australian government, through the APMC, has developed, facilitated and tested education and training programs, preparedness exercises and targeted research to enhance understanding of civil-military-police cooperation during conflict and disaster response. These activities provide the foundation for a holistic civil-military-police lessons framework that is currently being developed. The framework as outlined in this chapter could assist other countries to develop their own lessons framework in the context of civil-military-police interaction.

THE REQUIREMENT FOR LESSONS LEARNED

'Lessons learned' refers to the act of learning from experience to improve performance and achieve success. Lessons cannot be learned successfully unless leadership is actively supportive and engaged in the process, stakeholders are involved in and have the opportunity to influence change, and all those involved are encouraged and willing to share information (North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO], 2011). In a multiagency setting, such as in Australia, Canada or the United States, successful learning requires leadership commitment, sound plans that set clear priorities, and measurable goals. While it is relatively easy to point to mistakes in the past, validating those mistakes and ensuring that they do not happen again requires leadership, particularly in the field of conflict and peacebuilding where long-term commitments and plans are needed (Cordesman, 2004). Most practitioners and researchers also agree that there needs to be a concerted effort to forge collaborative partnerships and seek coordinated solutions that leverage expertise and capabilities across communities (Coning & Friis, 2011; Reijnders, van Fenema, & Essens, 2013; US Government Accountability Office, 2010).

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