



# Developing the Comprehensive Approach: Exploring the Lessons of History

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Efforts to develop and implement the comprehensive approach are ongoing. Indeed, research is being conducted on a number of key facets of the approach, including education and training, the building of interpersonal and inter-organizational trust, the development of organizational and procedural means to better facilitate and institutionalize its operation, and the development of measures of effectiveness. Thus far, however, little effort has involved the examination of past history to determine what insights, if any, this may hold for the development of the approach. This paper argues that detailed examination of the lessons that past history may hold for the development of the comprehensive approach is increasingly warranted. Indeed, such analysis can offer valuable clues into the general conditions and strategies under which a comprehensive approach may not only be applicable, but also successful. Historical analysis may also help identify cases where collaboration is possible, but will not contribute effectively to the mission.

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In today's security environment successful military operations are unlikely to be achieved through the use of military power alone. In a world where conflict often involves a myriad of ethnic, religious, ideological and material drivers, an ability to bring to bear all instruments of national and coalition power and influence (e.g., diplomatic, economic, military, informational) on a problem in a timely, coordinated fashion is increasingly essential to achieving effective results. So too is an ability to address and, if possible, constructively engage the views and reactions of the public, both domestic and international, as well as the media as operations unfold.

Acknowledgement of the need to practice a coordinated and holistic approach to operations is ever more evident – and pressing – within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In fact, Canada and a number of other states, including the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), and other NATO allies, are increasingly calling for the adoption of a "Comprehensive Approach" to operations. Such an approach would see diplomatic, defence, development and commercial resources, aligned with those of numerous other agencies, coordinated through an integrated campaign plan and applied in areas of operations as needed. As such, the approach would involve traditional and non-traditional military activities being carried out collaboratively within a broader context. The result, it has been argued, would be greater mission effectiveness (Leslie, Gizewski, Rostek, 2008, p. 11).

Efforts to develop and implement the comprehensive approach are ongoing. Thus far, however, little effort has been devoted to the examination of past history to determine what insights, if any, such an analysis may hold for development of the approach. Indeed, while a preliminary bibliographic survey examining works which discuss how elements of the comprehensive approach operated in past crises has been conducted (see Hrychuk & Gizewski, 2008), there exists no detailed analysis of the potential lessons that such incidents may hold for its development. Such neglect is unfortunate. Not only does examination of elements of the comprehensive approach reveal that such an approach has considerable historical lineage, but elements of the approach have been applied in a range of incidents throughout history. In fact, as this paper illustrates, careful examination of such incidents can offer a number of important lessons for the current development and future effectiveness of the comprehensive approach.

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#### 2.0 THE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH: KEY ELEMENTS

Definitions of the comprehensive approach vary. Yet most formulations have four basic tenants in common (see, e.g., British Defence Doctrine; Ministry of Defence, 2008, p. 1-8). The first is *proactive engagement* between actors, if possible ahead of a crisis. This enables coordinated approaches to complex situations and allows more nuanced responses. Significantly, this requires a shared approach to the collection and interpretation of crisis indicators and intelligence in order to inform planning and increase the time available for reaction.

Shared understanding between parties, whether they be military or civilian, is also crucial. This would help optimize the effectiveness of the partner's various capabilities, distinct professional, technical and cultural disciplines, as well as discrete values and perceptions. When combined, these variations offer additional perspective, depth and resilience. Where possible, this shared understanding should be engendered through cooperative working practices, liaison and education in between crises.

The third is *outcome-based thinking*, which entails participants involved in operations basing their thinking on outcomes and what is required to deliver the desired end state, when planning and conducting activities. Leadership, cohesion and coherence will be required to ensure that all actors work towards agreed objectives that are consistent with the various national strategic aims. Planning and activity should be focused on a single purpose and progress judged against mutually agreed measures of effectiveness.

Finally, practice of a comprehensive approach entails *collaborative working*, which builds institutional familiarity, generated through personal contact and human networking and mutual trust. Integrated information management, infrastructure and connectivity enable information sharing, confidence building and common working practices across communities of interest, including shared review and reporting. With all actions based upon agreed principles and collaborative processes, greater organizational efficiencies will be obtained, and traditional stovepipes will be overcome through enhanced synergies. The result, it is anticipated, will be greater mission effectiveness and strategic impact (Leslie, Gizewski, Rostek, 2008, p. 11).

### 3.0 HISTORICAL ROOTS

To be sure, the full development and implementation of such thinking would represent a fundamental change in the manner in which organizations view one another and how they interact to address problems and challenges. The ultimate result of a fully functional, fully developed comprehensive approach would be a level of organizational interaction and seamlessness not often seen, and most likely a new norm for the conduct of security operations.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The terminology of "outcome-based" is used (as opposed to "effects-based") as it is generally understood as neutral terminology, whereby effects-based operations (EBO) is regarded as part of a military-specific lexicon.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The change is clear when one compares how a comprehensive approach would differ from more traditional notions of civil-military cooperation (CIMIC). As one observer notes in the case of CIMIC, "(m)ilitary members are used to being "in the lead" and calling the shots - playing the military card whereby all activity is directed towards the military objective" (Dijk, 2010, p. 1). Under (the) old philosophy, when planned activities were executed, all means, military and civilian, were used to reach the militarily defined objective, as clearly defined in NATO's definition of CIMIC: "The co-ordination and co-operation, in support of the mission [emphasis added], between the NATO Commander and civil actors, including national population and local authorities, as well as international, national and non-governmental organizations and agencies" (Allied Joint Publication 9, 2003, p. 1-1, Art 102). With this definition, the commander's intent always prevailed in planning and executing the mission. The most significant change in adopting the comprehensive approach "is the understanding that the mission is not only a military objective but can be an objective used to integrate a broader approach, leading to an end state that is not simply military in character. By the incorporation of the comprehensive approach, the planning of operations would mean that we would not look to the use of civilian organizations as a means of supporting a military mission, but recognize that we have to share the planning table with other actors; actors who want to achieve their own objectives!" (Dijk, 2010, p. 1).



That said, both the comprehensive approach and the philosophy underpinning it are *not entirely* new. Hints of the latter are evident in a number of longstanding and key concepts of war and statecraft. For instance, ideas of "grand strategy," much like the comprehensive approach, call for a marshalling of a diverse range of resources to accomplish a specified end. As Colin Gray (2007, p. 283) notes, grand strategy involves the "purposeful employment of all instruments of power available to a security community." Counterinsurgency doctrine, with its strong emphasis on gaining victory by winning the allegiance of an indigenous population through political as well as military action, does much the same – a fact reflected in its characterization by some as "grand strategy in miniature" (Gray, 2008). Doctrines of civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) are equally notable – both acknowledging and explicitly endorsing the importance of military-civilian linkages (and civil-military cooperation and coordination) as an essential means of enhancing mission effectiveness.

Perhaps even more important is the fact that state efforts to apply elements of a more comprehensive-type approach to address domestic and international challenges have been evident throughout history – albeit to varying degrees and with varying levels of success. For instance, planning and implementation of the post-World War II reconstruction of Japan, and the development and implementation of the Marshall Plan in Europe, both involved considerable inter-organizational cooperation and coordination (including that of the military, the US State Department and the Department of Trade and Commerce and a variety of multinational actors). The British Coordination Committees campaign against Communist insurgents during the Malayan Emergency also exhibited elements of the approach. And so, too have various domestic operations such as the US Alaskan Earthquake Recovery effort, as well as Canada's response to the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ) Crisis and the Red River Flood.

Notably, the potentially rich empirical record which exists in regard to the comprehensive approach has not been matched by parallel efforts to investigate it systematically. While a number of studies do identify some of the cases in which efforts were made to achieve some degree of co-ordination, few explicitly consider what implications or lessons they hold for the comprehensive approach in general.<sup>3</sup> Nor has there been any comparative analysis of these cases to determine potential best practise or enduring principles.

#### 3.1 THE NEED FOR HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Given widespread and growing acknowledgement that a comprehensive approach is essential for meeting both contemporary and future security challenges, however, detailed examination of the lessons which past history may hold for its development is increasingly warranted. Concept development cannot occur in a historical vacuum, and to the extent that the history is neglected, key lessons from the past may well be overlooked.

While examination of past cases of comprehensive-type behavior is by no means the *sole* method by which to gain greater insight into the effective development and application of the approach, such study offers benefits. For instance, the availability of historical data for past events is generally far greater than that for events of the present. The capacity to draw upon particularly rich sources of information can increase the potential/prospect for the emergence of more satisfactory explanations of and insight on the phenomena under study. Use of such methods can also offer an important means of assessing and confirming results derived through the use of other methods, such as surveys and interviews, thus better ensuring that findings reported and conclusions drawn are valid.

Perhaps most important is that the use of historical inquiry offers a degree of realism and policy relevance in analysis not always attainable through the use of other methods (e.g., simulation, experimentation). More precisely, it offers the opportunity for examination and analysis based on actual and consequential

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> One important exception is the Project on National Security Reform, a nonpartisan organization working to modernize and improve the US' national security system to better protect the American people against 21st century dangers. One aspect of the Project has involved examination of a number of historical case studies to help determine the preconditions for organizational cooperation and coordination – although primarily as it relates to the US Government. See ongoing research available at http://www.pnsr.org.





incidents/events and the decision-making that accompanied them. To the extent that the cases examined are reflective of key issues and areas of long-standing political and strategic interest, insights derived from their investigation may be of particular value – as similar issues may well arise in future. Furthermore, historical analysis also allows for the examination of behaviour within a broad geo-political/geo-strategic context. Not only can this analysis facilitate investigation of the degree to which structural and environmental factors (variables) impact on the capacity to practice comprehensive-type approaches, historical analysis can also provide insight into the extent to which such factors can affect success. Beyond this, such analysis can provide greater insight into the degree to which certain personalities and relationships are important factors in facilitating the approach.

In short, historical examination may offer some valuable clues into the general conditions and strategies under which a comprehensive approach may be not only applicable, but also successful. And such an inquiry may also help identify cases where collaboration is possible, but will not contribute effectively to the mission. Where the analysis finds historical analogues to the comprehensive approach, these may provide guidance on specific methods that have proved effective in the past.

### 4.0 THE BOSNIAN CASE

A brief assessment of international engagement in the Bosnian case illustrates a number of the points detailed above. In fact, this analysis demonstrates not only the value of historical assessment but a number of key lessons to be considered in the development of a comprehensive approach.<sup>4</sup>

Civil-military cooperation in Bosnia was unique to a degree, insofar as members of the non-governmental and supra-governmental relief and development organizations were actively engaged when the military deployment commenced (Williams, 2005). However, during the initial stages of the United Nations (UN) mission, civil-military cooperation between the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR)<sup>5</sup> and civilian actors could be characterized as weak. According to the former head of UNPROFOR Civil Affairs, this could be blamed on a "two-way lack of familiarity for the attitudinal abyss which frequently separates aid workers from the military" (cited in Scheltinga, Rietjens, De Boer, & Wilderom, 2005, p. 55). Unfamiliarity encourages stereotyping, which, in the case of Bosnia, not only existed but led to intergroup tensions, misunderstanding and decreased cooperation. Relief workers tended to view military personnel as macho and machine-gun toting, inflexible, and culturally insensitive. As stated by the Commanding Officer of one UNPROFOR contingent, military personnel felt that members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) perceived peacekeepers to be "like fictional characters from MASH, with some senior military officers even being seen as incompetent idiots" (Beauregard, 1998, p. 1). The military, on the other hand, tended to view the humanitarian community as unorganized and undisciplined, often times finding it difficult to understand how women in their late 20s, wearing "Save the Whales" t-shirts, could be experts worthy of consultation (Scheltinga et al., 2005).

A lack of familiarity with organizational structures was also problematic. The field command and control structure of a UN peacekeeping force is vertical, with authority flowing from top to bottom, from the Force Commander to the commanding officers of national contingents, to platoon commanders, and then to the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The case is briefly outlined here for illustrative purposes. Naturally, a more rigorous analysis utilizing primary source material would be required to underpin concept development for the comprehensive approach.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> UNPROFOR was created by UN Security Council Resolution 743 on 21 February 1992. The initial mandate of the UNPROFOR was to ensure conditions for peace talks and security in three demilitarized "safe-haven" enclaves designated as United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs) located in the Republic of Croatia: Eastern Slavonia, Western Slavonia and Krajina. These were places with strong Serb populations that had organised into the self-styled Republic of Serbian Krajina, which had led to tensions and fighting. In 1992, the mandate was extended to so-called "Pink Zones" controlling access to the UNPAs, some border control and monitoring of civilian access to the Pink Zones, and control of the demilitarisation of the Prevlaka peninsula near Dubrovnik. Other extensions of the mandate included protection for Sarajevo airport from June 1992 in Resolution 758, and, from September 1992, protection for humanitarian aid in the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and protection of civilian refugees when required by the International Committee of the Red Cross in Resolution 770.



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individual soldier (Beauregard, 1998, p. 1). By contrast, the operational structure of most professional NGOs is horizontal and fluid, with significant decision-making authority lodged at the site with the most information (which is usually in the field) and follows a consensus-based approach. Unfamiliarity with these varying structures can hamper cooperation and coordination between various national contingents and relief organizations, especially when coupled with a lack of pre-established communications links and procedures (Franke, 2006). This problem was prevalent during the early stages of UNPROFOR, when, according to Andrew Bair (1995), the failure of certain national contingents to communicate with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in their sectors resulted in both organizations experiencing a severe lack of engineering services and logistical support. This lack of communication limited the degree of cooperation and wasted time required for the provision of aid and assistance.

Similar problems were evident in the early days of the Implementation Force (IFOR),<sup>6</sup> where no common understanding of the capabilities, limitations, roles, and mission of CIMIC units and personnel existed prior to deployment. In the absence of NATO doctrine, IFOR commanders and staff incorporated civil-military tasks into their overall operations based upon personal knowledge, experience and national perspective, resulting in inconsistencies.<sup>7</sup> For example, the NATO approach tended toward observation, interposition and transition assistance while the UK was more active in assisting civil organizations with direct support. The US approach was centered on force protection and liaison with limited direct support (Celik, 2005).

Throughout the IFOR deployment, limited knowledge and experience with civil affairs activities was demonstrated in many areas, especially during the campaign planning stage. During the development of the Operational Plan, only one Civil Affairs officer was assigned to assist in planning for the IFOR deployment, signifying the limited importance placed on CIMIC (for a description of associated issues, see Hollen, Mundell, Nilson, & Sweeney, 2003). The campaign plan not only inadequately identified military tasks for CIMIC, but due to the lack of planning knowledge, negatively impacted CIMIC staffing, communications, and the development of information and logistics support requirements. This continued in theatre where many nations conducted individual stovepiped surveys and assessments of required tasks (Landon, 1998). No central planning or coordination of data collection existed, which resulted in operations and activities becoming stovepiped in national, functional staff or civilian agency channels. Cross-national coordination was not formalized, but rather, relied to a great extent on "swivel chair" interfaces.

Problems in the planning process were exacerbated by CIMIC assets being delayed in their deployment. As UNPROFOR forces withdrew or were transferred to IFOR, valuable CIMIC turnover opportunities were lost. No advanced information on how the CIMIC mission would be executed was provided to the NGOs, nor was information related to the type of support that IFOR would provide. In practice, the philosophy advanced by IFOR was quite different from UNPROFOR's, as it refused to provide what it thought the NGO community could provide for themselves. In fact, there was a fear that providing such support would create a long-term dependency on IFOR (i.e., "mission creep") (Williams, 2005, p. 84).

Over time, a Combined Joint Civil-Military Cooperation (CJCIMIC) staff element was established at IFOR headquarters to facilitate the coordination of CIMIC activities with NGOs and international organizations.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> IFOR was a NATO-led multinational force in Bosnia and Herzegovina operating under a 1-year mandate from 20 December 1995 to 20 December 1996 using the codename Operation Joint Endeavour. Its task was to implement the military Annexes of The General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP) in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It relieved the UN peacekeeping force UNPROFOR, which had originally arrived in 1992, and the transfer of authority was discussed in Security Council Resolution 1031. Almost 60,000 NATO troops in addition to forces from non-NATO nations were deployed to Bosnia. Operation Decisive Endeavor (SACEUR OPLAN 40105), beginning 6 December 1995, was a subcomponent of Joint Endeavor.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> NATO doctrine, *Allied Joint Publication 9 CIMIC* was only published in 2003.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> The Allied Command European Rapid Reaction Corps did send personnel in early to brief some NGOs on what to expect and to educate them on what IFOR troops would be doing and related plans. However, this briefing was only given in Sarajevo and not in the field where a majority of the NGOs were located.



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This structure aimed to provide an avenue for the numerous aid agencies to interface with the military on support arrangements related to their projects in theatre (see Bosnia-Herzegovina After Action Review Conference Report, 1996; Williams, 2005, p 104). CIMIC centres were also established at all levels for the IFOR command to provide a location for NGOs to meet and coordinate with the military. As might be expected, communication and co-operation did increase and improve as the Operation evolved and by May 1996 the High Representative was reporting that the "IFOR continues to provide…as much support to the civilian agencies as its principal tasks and available resources allow" (Hall & Vasselot, 2006, p. 165).

However, some problems were still apparent. In Sarajevo, both IFOR and Allied Command European Rapid Reaction Corps undertook CIMIC activities. This created confusion for the NGOs about whose projects should be coordinated with. In Multi-National Division (North) the CIMIC Center, which doctrinally was the central location for all NGOs to meet with the military, was located inside the gate at Tuzla (Landon, 1998). This was the case despite the fact that most of the NGOs were in downtown Tuzla and despite the fact that access to the base by non-IFOR personnel was strictly limited. Therefore the effectiveness of the CIMIC Center as a tool for coordinating NGO and military activities was greatly reduced.

Beyond this, force protection measures hampered relations among CIMIC personnel, civilians and NGOs. Convoys and the full battle gear that were required in order for personnel to leave the base did not contribute to creating an impression among the local population that the internal situation was improving. This also perpetuated the problem that the threat or use of force, whether appropriate or not, could singlehandedly terminate civil-military cooperation and coordination. One such example occurred when UNPROFOR and NATO threatened to use force to ensure the delivery of humanitarian supplies to besieged towns and cities in the former Yugoslavia (Beauregard, 1998, p. 1). While some NGOs would acquiesce that the use of force might be necessary in extreme circumstances, this should be avoided at all costs. The majority of relief workers favour negotiations with the protagonists rather than the use of force in such situations and object to the military engaging in such tasks (Gordon, 2006, p 39-52). As such, the threat was likely seen as heavy-handed.

#### 5.0 INSIGHTS FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

The discussion of the Bosnian case offered above is admittedly limited. Yet even a cursory examination of the operation suggests a number of important insights for development of the comprehensive approach. Indeed, examination of the case suggests that:

There is a need for the military to understand the organizational structures, processes, procedures and decision making styles of those non-military organizations that it will be working in conjunction with. Further, there is a need for the military to inform partners of its structures, processes and procedures.

- In a multinational, NATO or UN deployment it is essential to have common understanding of the capabilities, limitations, roles and missions of CIMIC units.
- CIMIC must be included in the early planning stages to determine appropriate and required tasks, as
  well as staffing and communications requirements. Consultations should occur with non-military
  organizations during this phase to avoid stovepiping and to ensure a common understanding and
  assessment of required tasks.
- Having multiple groups undertaking CIMIC operations in one area can create confusion amongst non-military actors.
- Locating CIMIC centres at great distances from NGOs, and inside bases, can limit their
  effectiveness as a tool for coordinating activities. Locations for liaison should be chosen with NGO
  range and accessability in mind.
- Force protection provisions may hinder others from engaging with military forces, or may contribute
  to feelings among civilians that the situation is not improving. Steps to mitigate this should be taken
  where possible.

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To be sure, the extent to which such observations apply elsewhere remains somewhat unclear. Yet such observations are nonetheless suggestive. In fact, a logical next step would involve investigation and analysis of additional cases. By examining a range of cases in a comparative manner, concept developers will be able to understand which lessons are context-specific and which hold wider applicability. For instance, Hrychuk and Gizewski (2008) identified common problems that have occurred in a range of comprehensive-like historical cases, such as inadequate coordination in planning, lack of understanding of diverse players, and the use of ad hoc measures. Future work should build upon such analyses.

#### 6.0 CONCLUSION

Efforts to develop and implement the comprehensive approach are ongoing. Indeed, research is being conducted on a number of the key facets of the approach (e.g., education and training, the building of interpersonal and inter-organizational trust, the development of organizational and procedural means to better facilitate its operation, the development of measures to assess the effectiveness of the approach, etc.).

Thus far, however, little effort has been devoted to the examination of past history to determine what insights – if any – this analysis may hold for development of the approach. Yet detailed examination of the lessons that past history may hold for the development of the comprehensive approach is increasingly warranted. The use of historical analysis offers benefits that other approaches lack. More importantly, the results of such analysis can yield valuable clues into the general conditions and strategies under which a comprehensive approach may not only be applicable but successful in meeting the security challenges the may arise in the years ahead.

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