Report Working Group 2
Theories and Models for the Comprehensive Approach: A Multilevel Framework for Linking Theory and Application

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ABSTRACT

This summary of the discussions of Working Group 2 of NATO HFM Workshop 204 focused on the theories and models that might be applied to the Comprehensive Approach (CA) to Operations. Accordingly, this paper summarizes the theories and models in this regard. Equally importantly, the group recognized the various levels of analysis at play within the CA. To address this complexity, the group developed a multilevel framework to begin to organize and categorize the applicable theories and models in terms of addressing individual and single team issues (micro-level), coupled teams or multi-team systems issues (meso-level), and organizational issues (macro-level). This framework is intended to provide a useful lens for understanding how the large volumes of research on organizational dynamics, team effectiveness, and individual motivation and performance can inform theory and research concerning the CA.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the current global security environment, success in complex operations increasingly requires coherent and coordinated engagement across a wide range of national and international stakeholders, what is increasingly known as the Comprehensive Approach (CA) to Operations. The CA entails leveraging all instruments of national and international power to achieve unity of effect in contexts such as irregular warfare, counterinsurgency, and stability, transition and recovery efforts. For instance, in United States (US) Army doctrine FM 3-07, the CA is defined as "an approach that integrates the tools of statecraft with our military forces, international partners, humanitarian organizations, and the private sector to achieve unity of effort towards a shared goal."[1] Similar definitions focusing on the effective integration of all instruments of national power and influence have been adopted by many other nations, including Australia, Canada, Sweden, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, among others (Thompson & Gill, 2010). Although these national approaches share consistent themes, the CA by its nature will change over time reflecting the dynamic and challenging realities in which it was born. Nonetheless, theoretical models, empirical methods, and analytical tools can provide continuity in its development and implementation in the operational environment.

The task of Working Group 2 at the NATO HFM-204 Workshop on “Collaboration in a Comprehensive Approach to Operations” was to discuss the relevant theory and applied research responses necessary to support and enhance the analytics within the CA. Fortunately, the social, behavioral, and computational sciences offer numerous theories, methods and models that can be utilized and extended to improve

understanding of CA implementation challenges and to support effective responses to those challenges. A first step in utilizing theory for CA analytics is to understand the levels of analysis at which organizational dynamics play out (House, Rousseau, & Thomas-Hunt, 1995). A second step is to understand appropriate theoretical mechanisms with the capacity to explain these dynamics.

To achieve these objectives, we begin by presenting an organizing framework for grounding CA analytics in extant theory (Klein & Kozlowski, 2000; Mathieu & Chen, 2011). This framework first describes the general multilevel mechanisms and units of analysis within CA. Second, we present a summary of particular theories at these different levels of analysis, illustrating the utility of this framework for advancing knowledge and grounding applications in CA operations.

2.0 LEVELS OF ANALYSIS IN THE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

Figure 1 presents the organizing framework that the Working Group adopted for understanding the levels of analysis wherein important organizational dynamics are playing out to influence the effectiveness of operations within the CA. Based on multilevel organizational theory (Klein & Kozlowski, 2000) there are two essential types of multilevel dynamics at work. At the macro-level, constructs are largely structural and impersonal and include "organizational form, technology and at times environmental attributes" (House et al., 1995, p. 75).

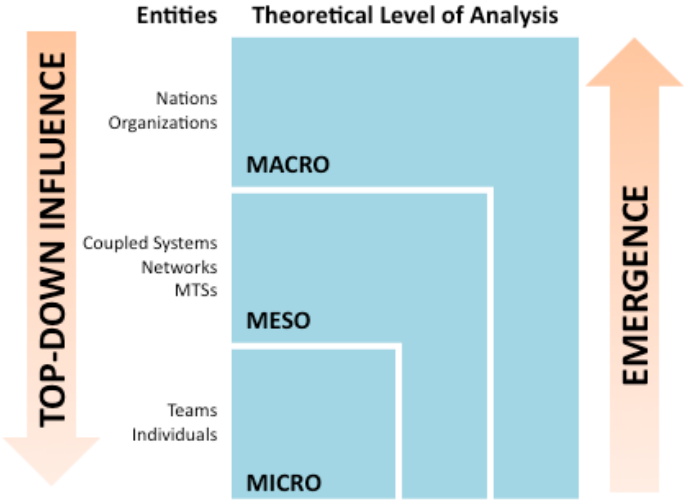

Figure 15 - 1 Levels of Analysis in the Comprehensive Approach

Within CA, macro-level issues would include top-down influence processes such as those stemming from national cultures, political systems, and embedding organizations. Importantly, these organizational macro-level variables shape and constrain the functioning of lower-level entities, including teams, multi-team systems (i.e., the meso-level in Figure 1), and individuals (i.e., the micro level of analysis). Indeed, organizational macro-theories contend that these structures are the "dominant causes of organizational actions and performance" (House et al., p. 75). However, other micro-level organizational theories focus on the emergent dynamics arising from the combination of lower-level entities (e.g., individuals) that form meaningful patterns of activity in teams and organizational subsystems and thus are also relevant to understanding behavior and performance in organizations. The micro-level includes many areas relevant to CA including individual differences and personnel selection, boundary spanners, organizational socialization, small team behavior and decision-making. Note however that adopting a macro- or micro-level approach leaves unanswered the question of how organizations and individuals or small groups influence each other. Meso-level organizational theory explicitly seeks to fill this knowledge gap by providing the vital bridging space that integrates both micro and macro levels of analysis. Thus, the meso level of analysis

offers the benefits of both the micro- and macro-levels with the additional advantage of providing an understanding of how the micro- and macro-levels influence each other. The result is a more complete specification and test of hypotheses, and ultimately a more complete understanding of the organizational phenomenon.

3.0 THEORETICAL DRIVERS

Having established this broad organizing framework, the next task undertaken by the Working Group 2 panel was to identify specific theories and models with the potential to inform and advance the understanding of the CA, and to classify them according to their position within the multilevel framework. Figures 2 and 3 present a classification of the theories identified as potentially valuable by the Working Group. As can be seen in Figures 2 and 3, numerous theories and areas of research offer promise as frameworks to understand the CA. In general, these areas include theories and models reflecting Social Psychology, Organizational Psychology, Motivation and Cognition, Team Dynamics, as well as Personality and Individual Differences. The more specific theoretical and conceptual categorizations within the micro-, meso-, or macro-level of the general framework, presented in Figures 2 and 3, are offered to assist researchers in refining their thinking about the models and areas of research of particular importance to their CA-relevant areas. However, perhaps the most useful aspect of the proposed overall framework is that it also identifies theoretical and conceptual consistencies that transcend at least two levels of analysis in the proposed organizing framework. Specifically, the entries in italic typeface in Figures 2 and 3 are those that have been applied primarily at either the micro or macro levels of analysis (and in a small number of cases both the micro and macro levels separately), but which the Working Group determined would be fruitful to apply to meso-level dynamics.

MICRO	MESO	MACRO
		International Norms theory
Social Influence Theory	*Social Influence Theory*	
	Intergroup Relations	
Game Theory	Game Theory	
Social Perception	*Social Perception*	
	Social Network Theory	Social Network Theory
	Complex Adaptive Systems	Complex Adaptive Systems
Collective Effort Models	*Collective Effort Models*	
Social Interdependence Theory	Social Interdependence Theory	
Team Effectiveness	*Team Effectiveness*	
	Multi-Team Systems	
Trust Theories	*Trust Theories*	Trust theories
		Organizational Theory
		Exploitation/Exploration
Task Theory	*Task Theory*	
	Structural Contingency	Structural Contingency

Figure 15 - 2. Theoretical Mechanisms for the Comprehensive Approach (Part I).

MICRO	MESO	MACRO
Leadership	*Leadership*	Leadership
Communication	Communication	Communication
Conflict Management	Conflict Management	
Multi-Party Negotiation	*Multi-Party Negotiation*	
Social Identity	Social Identity	
Social Role	Social Role	
Cultural Mosaic	Cultural Mosaic	Cultural Mosaic
Emotional Contagion	Emotional Contagion	
Group Affect	Group Affect	
Stress Theory		
Moral/Ethical Development Theories		
Motivation Theories	*Motivation Theories*	
Multi-Team Membership	*Multi-Team Membership*	
Command Team Effectiveness Framework	*Command Team Effectiveness Framework*	
Personality Theory	*Personality Theory*	
Cognitive Theory	*Cognitive Theory*	

Figure 15 - 3. Theoretical Mechanisms for the Comprehensive Approach (Part II)

4.0 CONCLUSION

The task of Working Group 2 was to address the theoretical and conceptual models that would be most useful to underpin and guide a future research program on the CA. We began by articulating a general framework that would provide a structure by which to identify and classify relevant theories. This exercise resulted in a multi-level framework, reflecting organizational- (i.e., the macro-level) and individual- level (i.e., the micro-level) organizational phenomenon. However, we also agreed that a more complete understanding would be provided in the acknowledgement of the meso-level, which explicitly seeks to integrate the macro- and micro-levels and to understand their reciprocal effects. We then populated this general framework, with relevant theories and areas within these levels that were assumed to have the greatest relevance for the study of CA. From this list we were able to identify those areas that should hold the most promise for CA research. This framework is offered as a point of departure, providing a valuable lens for understanding how the large volumes of research on organizational dynamics, team effectiveness, and individual motivation and performance can inform theory and research concerning the CA.

5.0 REFERENCES

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