

Dyndal, Gjert Lage and Cornelia Vikan (2014), "NATO's Comprehensive Approach: Still Something for the Future?", Paper presented at the *Norwegian Defence Command and Staff College (NDCSC) Doctrine Conference*, Oslo, 25–26 June 2014.

NATO's Comprehensive Approach: Still Something for the Future?

Abstract

For more than a decade, the ideal and thoughts of a more 'comprehensive approach' to handle complex conflicts and state-building has been the focus of both academic think-tanks, politicians, and civilian and military actors in the field. NATO has worked to conceptualize these ideas in a directive for Comprehensive Approach since 2010. This strong focus on 'comprehensive approach' is largely positive, and was asked for by politicians and think-tanks from the early 2000. However, we argue that NATO's conceptualization of the general thoughts to a NATO concept, or maybe doctrine have some unintended negative impacts on the broad consensus about 'comprehensiveness' which may rather hamper rather than strengthen civil-military cooperation, despite good intentions. We support the ideal of comprehensiveness, but find NATO's conceptualisation troublesome and worthy a discussion.

Introduction

Over the last few years, NATO operations and planning processes have come to be dominated by the 'comprehensive approach' mindset and framework. NATO's official doctrine for operational planning, the AJP-5 'Allied Joint Doctrine for Operational-Level Planning' has largely been viewed as outdated. It has not have any greater updates since the 1990s, and the parallel development of an unofficial operational planning 'handbook' called the '*Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive*' (COPD)¹ has effectively taken its place. The COPD is a product by the more political based Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), as opposite to the official doctrine processes and series developed by the NATO Standardisation Agency (NSA). Some will argue that 'comprehensive approach' is not a doctrine, as it is not developed by the NSA and is neither part of the official NATO doctrine hierarchy. But still, the strategic leadership state that is. For instance Jamie Shea, Director of Policy Planning in the Private Office of the NATO Secretary General: 'The "comprehensive approach" of major institutions and civilian and military players working closely together is now NATO's official doctrine for all non-Article 5 missions'. Also at the working level, 'comprehensive approach' has come to dominate NATO mindset and framework for operations, all from central documents, to practical plans and operations – and thus in an extend understanding of the word; has become doctrine. And again, it has de facto taken the place of the traditional AJP-5 'Operational Planning' doctrine. The 'comprehensive approach'

¹ NATO, *Allied Command Operations Comprehensive Operations Planning Process (COPD), Interim V 2.0* (Draft, 4 October, 2014). The development of this COPD has been in process since NATO decided to 'operationalize' the 2008 NATO meeting in Bucarest. The first complete version published was in December 2010 for intermediate use and testing. NATO, and other countries as for instance Sweden have since used it extensively. The COPD has by become accepted and authoritative for military planning processes since. Over the last year, 2013–14, NATO have taken a step back and are in process of aligning the COPD produces by SHAPE with the ordinary doctrine hierarchy, especially AJP-5, Joint Operational Planning.

and the NATO COPD explicitly, have further come to dominate also national doctrines in many of the NATO countries, eg. Norway. The same goes for the other Scandinavian countries, even Sweden.² The recently establishment of a Comprehensive Crises and Operations Management Centre (CCOMC) under the Supreme Allied Command Europe (SACEUR) further proves this great emphasis on ‘comprehensive approach’ in NATO over the last few years.³

NATO’s strong focus on comprehensiveness in operational planning of military operations is generally a positive development, in recognition that the military alone cannot solve the type of conflicts we have seen over the last decade.

However, as we cannot show too great of a success in many of the military involvements over the past decade – under the umbrella of a ‘comprehensive approach’ – it is now about time to re-examine the NATO Comprehensive Approach fundament and development, and the potential and challenges of such comprehensive civil-military ambitions. This as we end the great engagement in Afghanistan and look into a future which might prove different from the past conflicts of choice NATO has taken part in.

The *first challenge* we want to address is the fundament for the developed concept: As a brief history outlook; we see that there has been a gradual process of developing the basic ideas of comprehensiveness – the *thought* or *idea* – or maybe even an *ideal* – into a defined *concept* since early 2000. This transition prove to have some unintended negative effects, which NATO and military forces need to at least keep in mind in their aim for operationalizing the concept.

Second; we will discuss the classical challenge of civil-military relations, which clearly have been, and are likely to stay a challenge to NATO’s Comprehensive Approach. This will be answered by two underlying discussions: From a historical point of view, we raise a worry that NATO’s process of conceptualizing the idea to a concrete concept – maybe even doctrine – by itself drive some of the implied parties further away rather than make co-operation easier. Additionally we see that the concept stands on a shaky foundation, as it is based on selective use of history and cases. Thereafter we draw in the general civilian scepticism towards confusing civilian and military activity into the discussion for operationalizing the NATO concept of Comprehensive Approach. We argue that a ‘comprehensive approach’ is important to nurture first of all as a common ideal – not as a NATO defined concept. Additionally one could in line with Hew Strachan ask whether a thoroughly defined concept becomes a substitute for thought.⁴

Additionally; towards the end we raise question to whether NATO strong focus on ‘comprehensive approach’ as a general approach – doctrine – to military operational planning

² See for instance Karsten Friis and Sanaa Rehman (eds), *Nordic Approaches to Whole-of-Government – in Afghanistan and beyond*, NUPI Report, Security in Practice 6 (Oslo: NUPI, 2010), for discussions on a ‘Nordic model’. Later Sweden has developed its own planning processes handbooks based on the NATO COPD. In other European countries, eg France, the military has proved more reluctant to this development of ‘comprehensive approach’ doctrines. See Thierry Tardy, ‘The Reluctant Peacekeeper: France and the Use of Force in Peace Operations’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 37/5 (2014), 770–792.

³ NATO, ‘New integrated NATO center supports the Alliance with improved approach to emerging security challenges and crisis’, <http://www.nato.int> (homepage), accessed 3 December, 2014.

⁴ Hew Strachan, ‘The Changing Character of War in a Multi-Polar World’, in Nina Græger and Tormod Heier (eds), *The Military Power Seminar 2009: Conference Proceedings* (Oslo: Norwegian Defence University College and Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2009), 33.

is the right way forward for NATO? This in lieu of the emerging new world order of multipolarity and with that a security situation which may require more classic hard-power mindset and preparations.

NATO's Comprehensive Approach

NATO has developed the idea of 'comprehensive approach' into a concept by describing its understanding of the term, the internal processes and NATO's interaction with the civilian actors in such scenarios. NATO's concept Comprehensive Approach builds on the idea of 'effects-based' planning, operations and assessments. This is central to NATO's COPD. This NATO planning directive has already become very central to military planners, and will probably influence military planning and operations for the coming years.

The entire idea of 'effect-based' operation planning has been criticized for years, and this debate is important in order to examine and understand some challenges of the Comprehensive Approach concept. This strong focus on 'effects' may be traced back to the American development of the concept Effects Based Operations (EBO) in the 1990s, and the NATO version of Effects Based Approach to Operations (EBAO) which was developed later.⁵

When focusing on 'effects' in planning and operations, be it in the shape of the American EBO, NATO's EBAO or the latest Comprehensive Approach concept, the planning may become too rigid. This is at least the critique and lessons the Americans have found through experience with EBO.⁶ Even though the Americans have rejected their early concept of EBO, NATO still seems determined to keep their focus on EBAO as an integrated part of Comprehensive Approach. NATO Comprehensive Approach is a statement that the effects of military operations need to be integrated with those of the civilian actors.

According to NATO's COPD, strategies should be supported by four different 'instruments of power': military, political, economic and social.⁷ The great and classic challenge for NATO is that it normally only is able to provide the first two of these instruments (military and partly political power), and rarely the last two (economic and other civil society instruments, particularly the latter).⁸ This in contrast to e.g. the UN, the EU or greater individual nations in their operations. This requires for NATO to coordinate its activities with other actors. Further, with the Comprehensive Approach concept, NATO has got an increased focus on what is labelled 'the extended operation environment' and the military abbreviation and jargon 'PMESII' (Political, Military, Economic, Social, Infrastructure and Information).⁹ Analyses of an actor to the conflict include assessments of the objectives, strengths, weaknesses and autonomy – in perspective these PMESII factors.

With NATO Comprehensive Approach the integration of military and civilian activity is intended to take place at all levels. The challenge is that it requires close cooperation with a great number of actors, where many are not directly responsible to any state or international parent organization (e.g. the UN and the EU). Experience has clearly shown that civil organizations, in particular non-governmental, are highly sceptical to coordinate its activity

⁵ Brooke Smith-Windsor, *Hasten slowly, NATO's Effects Based and Comprehensive Approach to Operations*, NDC Research Paper (Rome: NATO Defence College, July 2008).

⁶ James N. Mattis, 'Effects-based Operations', *Joint Force Quarterly*, 51 (October 2008).

⁷ NATO, *Comprehensive Operations Planning Process (COPD)*, Interim V 1.0, 17 (December 2010).

⁸ Cécile Wendling, *The comprehensive approach to civil-military crisis management. A critical analysis and perspective*, IRSEM Report, (Paris: IRSEM, 2010), 39.

⁹ NATO, *Comprehensive Operations Planning Process (COPD)*, Interim V 1.0.

with military forces. For examples from the Norwegian debate, see Holen, Diesen, Vastel, Mast and Nielsen, Stangeland, Fauske and Jæger.¹⁰ As the ISAF operation ended in 2014, the debate over this concept even increased. See for instance Martinussen et.al., Gravdal, Dyndal and Vikan.¹¹

COPD as a planning directive has become established in NATO, and has undoubtedly greatly influenced both NATO as an organization and the individual countries. The concept has been practiced since 2010, even though COPD has not yet been ratified and approved as an operational planning directive. However, civil-military cooperation has had a troublesome history, and it will not likely end with the new concept of Comprehensive Approach. Debate and research, and by that increased and broad knowledge about the concepts and its foundation is in any case a necessary process for moving forward.

The historical premises

The difficult transition from a thought to a concrete NATO concept

A number of states and international organizations have in more than a decade focused on the need for a comprehensive and broad approach to solve conflicts and crises.

Especially Danish, but also other Scandinavian peace-research academics and politicians have been particularly active in these early debates. The debates often focused on a UN context in general, and often also centred around the challenges of the war in Afghanistan. Many of the conflicts have taken place in dysfunctional or failed states. These types of conflicts have been described as particularly complex and challenging. In the operational areas we have seen many actors working in parallel, all wanting to contribute to a positive development, but experienced that goals and intentions have not been well coordinated. The lack of coordinated actions, with a comprehensive perspective, has been seen as a great challenge and a probable reason for slow, if any, progress.

The labels ‘comprehensive approach’, ‘multidimensional approach’ and ‘integrated approach’ have been used by the major actors who have played key roles in these types of operations from the mid-1990s to the present day. The labels have come about as a result of concrete challenges in operations, across disciplinary and national communities. Many related and more specific concepts (on how one wished or planned to do this in practice) were developed in parallel: The Whole of Government Approach (WGA or WHOGA), the Interagency Approach, the Networked Security, the Multi Functional Approach and the 3D Concept

¹⁰ Øyunn Holen, ‘Livsviktig tydelighet’ [Essential clarity], *Dagbladet*, 11 September 2008; Sverre Diesen, ‘Det vil ta tid’ [It will take time], *Dagbladet*, 4 March 2008; Patrice Vastel, Johan Mast and Michael Nielsen, ‘Humanitær hjelp er ikke et våpen’ [Humanitarian aid is not a weapon], *Dagbladet*, 14 October 2010, Silje Stangeland, ‘Soldater er ikke bistandsarbeidere’ [Soldiers are not foreign aid workers], 26 December 2010, <http://www.forskning.no> (homepage), date accessed 3 December, 2014; Ole-Asbjørn Fauske, ‘Afghanistan 10 år etter – hva nå?’, in Gjert Lage Dyndal and Torbjørn Knutsen (eds), *Exit Afghanistan* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2012), 221–230; Tørris Jæger, ‘Current Challenges in Civil-Military Relations’, in Michael Williams and Kate Clouston (eds), *Comparative Perspectives on Civil-Military Relations in conflict Zones*, RUSI Occasional Paper (London: RUSI, 2008).

¹¹ Debates in the Norwegian newspapers *Klassekampen*, *Morgenbladet*, *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* in February 2014, sparked by a FFI report about the ‘Norwegian model’ in Faryab, Afghanistan: Svein E. Martinussen, Andreas Barstad and Jonas Myhre Christiansen, *Attainment of goals for the Norwegian led provincial reconstruction team in Faryab – an assessment*, FFI-rapport 2013/02793 (Kjeller: FFI, 2014). See also Gunhild Gjørsv, *Understanding Civil-Military Interaction, Lessons Learned from the Norwegian Model* (London: Ashgate, 2014).

(Diplomacy-Development-Defence) among some.¹² Also some focused military concepts or approaches to conflict resolution evolved: the DIME (Diplomatic, Informational, Military and Economic elements), the DIMEFIL (Diplomatic, Informational, Military, Economic, Financial, Intelligence and Law enforcement elements), and the MIDLIFE (Military, Intelligence, Diplomatic, Law enforcement, Information, Finance and Economic elements) concepts have all originated from the same set of thoughts.¹³

The basic idea that emerged was that there had been a need for better harmonization and coordination of international and local civilian and military efforts.

Comprehensive approach, and eventually the NATO concept with the same title is not something that suddenly came about. The mindset evolved gradually. We can trace the earliest direct references to ‘comprehensive approach’ associated with this topic back to 2001, by when the UN Security Council put forward that: ‘The quest for peace requires a comprehensive, concerted and determined approach that addresses the root causes of conflicts, including their economic and social dimensions ... [that] must involve all the relevant actors in this field ...’¹⁴

Many have used the wording ‘comprehensive approach’, but mostly as part of the general descriptions along with many other similar ideas and concepts. The UN has developed their concept of Integrated Mission or the Integrated Approach, which says something about how they want to develop and conduct operations with military and civilian actors interacting. Britain began to use the term ‘comprehensive approach’ actively in 2005.¹⁵

Denmark led a process to establish a ‘comprehensive approach mindset’ for the development of new doctrines in NATO in 2006. Denmark, Canada, Czech Republic, Hungary, Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia and the United States jointly promoted these ideas before the NATO Riga Summit in autumn 2006.¹⁶ Denmark seems to have had a leading role, which we also may trace back to Denmark’s earlier initiative for Concerted Planning and Action from 2004.¹⁷ During the Riga Summit NATO began to develop a conceptual framework to conflict resolution based on these ideas of a ‘comprehensive approach’. It evolved then – and this is important – from a loosely defined philosophical idea to a more defined label, and eventually a concept in NATO.

¹² Wendling, ‘The comprehensive approach to civil-military crisis management’.

¹³ Jack Kern, ‘Understanding the operational environment: the expansion of the Dime’, *University of Military Intelligence Free Library*, 2007, <http://www.thefreelibrary.com> (homepage), accessed 3 December, 2014; and Fitz-Gerald, Ann and Don Macnamara, ‘Comprehensive Security Requires Comprehensive Structures – How Comprehensive can We get?’, Strategic Studies Working Group Papers (Calgary and Ottawa: Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute, March 2012).

¹⁴ UNSC, ‘Security Council Addresses Comprehensive Approach to Peace-Building’, *UN Press Release SC/7014*, 2001, <http://www.un.org> (homepage), date accessed 3 December, 2014.

¹⁵ Alexander Alderson, ‘Comprehensive Approaches: Theories, Strategies, plans and practise’, in Christopher M. Schnaubelt (ed), *Operationalizing a comprehensive approach in semi-permissive Environments* (Rome: NATO Defence College, 2009).

¹⁶ Friis Arne Petersen, and Hans Binnendijk, ‘The Comprehensive Approach Initiative: Future Options for NATO’, *Defence Horizon*, 58 (September 2007).

¹⁷ Petersen, and Binnendijk, ‘The Comprehensive Approach Initiative: Future Options for NATO’; Peter Viggo Jakobsen, ‘NATO’s Comprehensive Approach to Crisis Response Operations’, *DIIS Report* 2008:15 (8 October 2008); and Bjørn Hansen, ‘Comprehensive Approach’ in Eldar Berli (ed), *Innblikk i Fellesoperasjoner*, [Insight in Joint Operations], Forsvarets stabsskole skriftserie 2/1 (Oslo: Forsvarets stabsskole, 2012).

The following year NATO regularly sought to describe and explain what they meant by the terminology and concept, and it was closely linked to the explanations of the challenges, the hope for solutions, and planned strategies for their efforts in Afghanistan. We explicitly see this with Jaap de Hoop Sheffer, former Secretary General of NATO, calling for more robust and expanded civilian efforts in Afghanistan in 2007: ‘... sustaining the progress in Afghanistan cannot be done by NATO Allies alone. A broader, concerted international effort by the whole of the international community is required. And this is what we, in NATO, mean when we talk about a comprehensive approach’.¹⁸

One year later, during the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008, the basis of the coming Comprehensive Approach concept was described as:

Experiences in Afghanistan and the Balkans demonstrate that the international community needs to work more closely together and take a comprehensive approach ... It is essential for all major international actors to act in a coordinated way, and to apply a wide spectrum of civil and military instruments in a concerted effort that takes into account their respective strengths and mandates.¹⁹

These citations show NATO's understanding of and thoughts of the terminology ‘comprehensive approach’. This understanding has since become the cornerstone of NATO's mindset and framework for planning and operations. Since 2010 NATO has used interim versions of the new planning directive, COPD.²⁰ The directive is not yet approved of, but a revised second interim version was published 04 October 2013. Working-versions of this V2.0 have also been in use at different places. NATO has still not established any approved definition of ‘comprehensive approach’. The first COPD suggested the following definition: ‘A means to ensure coordinated and coherent response to crisis by all relevant actors’.²¹

With this, NATO has both devolved the philosophical idea of a ‘comprehensive approach’ for it to become a defined term and a concrete concept named Comprehensive Approach. This, in itself largely should be a good development, as NATO has learned about the actors involved and has probably gotten a more realistic perspective on the complexity of these types of modern conflicts and the necessity of involving the greater society. However, the pit-fall and danger is that the previous philosophical idea of comprehensiveness, the original thought of the early 2000 which have had a wide international basing has become endangered. The challenge, or at least fear, is that the conceptual development by NATO actually repels rather than attracts the broad community of non-state actors, which it in fact is trying to work effectively with...

A sound concept on a shaky ground

As we have seen, the terminology ‘comprehensive approach’ mainly grew out of the experiences in Afghanistan, with some references back to the conflicts and wars at the Balkans. The military structures, thoughts and systems of the Cold War had been made for great military battles. The mindset and structures of these forces proved less suited for the

¹⁸ Jaap de Hoop Sheffer, ‘Speech by NATO Secretary General at the Microsoft-BBC-NATO – Defence Leaders forum Noordwijk aan zee 23 april 2007’, 23 April 2007, <http://www.nato.int> (homepage), date accessed, 3 December 2014.

¹⁹ NATO, ‘Bucharest Summit Declaration’, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008, <http://www.nato.int> (homepage), date accessed, 3 December 2014.

²⁰ NATO, *Comprehensive Operations Planning Process (COPD), Interim V 1.0* (Draft, 17 December 2010).

²¹ NATO, *Comprehensive Operations Planning Process (COPD), Interim V 1.0*.

modern complex conflicts of failed states and internal conflicts. The idea of a more ‘comprehensive approach’ to crisis management immediately gained support in civilian, military and political circles. The basic notion that ‘the military alone cannot resolve such conflict’ was (re-)learned and received widespread support. Both the Comprehensive Approach and the people-centric Counter-Insurgency (COIN) concepts and doctrines developed in parallel.²²

To meet the new challenges, the greater nations looked back to experiences from limited wars of the colonial era’, especially the French experiences and theories from Algeria, the American experiences from Vietnam and the challenges the British met as their empire was dissolving from 1950 to the 1970’s.²³ There were many similarities and the development appears immediately right. However, there are important differences with the historical cases as well.

Our argument is that the historic foundation for the thoughts of Comprehensive Approach, as a strategy or concept, are not comparable to the challenges of the modern conflicts the West today are engaged in. First, about the historical cases which so often are used in debates about and argued as the foundation history of the concepts of the last decade: These cases had important different historical settings. Both the French colonial wars around 1900, making the basis for the thoughts of General Lyautey in particular, and the Anglo-American experience from 1950 to 1970’s, were largely *individual states* that made war and wanted to stabilize other nations or regions under its management. Second, there were few other actors than states operating in these uprisings and war zones. The Western nations then had unified interests and objectives in the areas they operated in, and all government ‘instruments of power’ could be used. The military tool was for these nations integrated with other instruments of the state.

Both these key differences between the historical cases, which the Comprehensive Approach (and for that case also the related modern people-centric Counter Insurgency (COIN) doctrines) are built on, hardly makes them comparable to the contemporary realities and challenges. Today we experience that there are mainly great alliances or coalitions that conduct operations to stabilize nations and regions, and often in parallel hundreds of non-state actors with a great span of interests and activities in the same areas.

Perceived NATO ownership creates distrust

However good the intentions, the general scepticism among civilian actors against civil-military interaction will likely affect the introduction of this NATO defined concept. A broad critical debate and historical cases give reason to raise this worry. For instance, Norway’s decision to send an Engineer unit to Iraq in 2003, and Engineer units and CIMIC contributions to Afghanistan in 2003-04 sparked strong criticism from civil non-governmental

²² See for instance discussion in: Citha Maass, ‘Peace-Building and COIN in Afghanistan: The View of NGOs – What Is Really Needed?’, in Hans-Georg Ehrhart, Sven Gareis and Charles Pentland (eds), *Afghanistan in the Balance. Counterinsurgency, Comprehensive Approach and Political Order* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2012). Further on the discussion on COIN, and the related ‘comprehensive’ aims of building the society in Kersti Larsdotter, ‘Regional Support for Afghan Insurgents: Challenges for Counterinsurgency Theory and Doctrine’, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 37/1 (2014), 135–162; as well as Todd Greentree, ‘Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: US Performance and the Institutional Dimension of Strategy in Afghanistan’, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 36/3 (2013), 338, where he among others site General Petraeus: ‘You don’t kill or capture your way out of an industrial-strength insurgency, which is what faces Afghanistan...It takes a comprehensive approach, and not just military but civil-military’.

²³ Wendling, ‘The comprehensive approach to civil-military crisis management’.

organizations and several politicians in Norway. It was argued that this was a mix of civilian and military efforts that would put aid workers and other civilians in dangerous situations.²⁴ This criticism has not been unique to Norway. Internationally there has been great resistance among civilian actors to mixing NATO and the military efforts with civilian (often referred to as) neutral peace efforts.²⁵ As Jakobsen has stated: 'Progress has been slow with respect to establishing effective CA cooperation with the EU, UN and NGOs since none of them have been eager to enter into closer relations with the Alliance'.²⁶

This shows a basic but crucial challenge: it is not so much about how NATO internally is able to adapt to and plan for conflict resolution based on its new concept of Comprehensive Approach; it is rather about whether the idea with its broad appeal will survive. Its survival depends on mutual understanding and trust and whether NATO can manage to keep the international support for the need of comprehensiveness as a basic thought.

...operationalising the concept in a distrustful civil-military relationship

With this, we have moved away from a situation where there was a broad agreement on the need for a 'comprehensive approach' to conflict resolution, to a situation where NATO has defined a concrete concept for such cooperation. At the same time NATO experience resistance among large international actors, in particular NGOs, to the idea of integrating military and civilian efforts. Cornish and Glad have been critical to what they call a 'politicization and militarization of aid'. They go on by stating: 'Development and humanitarian assistance is no longer based on criteria of need and aid effectiveness, but is used as a strategy to appease communities and win "hearts and minds"'.²⁷

Several studies and workshops, mainly initiated and directed by NATO, but also some by individual countries such as Denmark, France, England, Netherlands, USA, have discussed the challenges of implementing such a strategy or concept for cooperation.

Lindley-French, both alone and together with others, has published several articles on the 'operationalization' of the Comprehensive Approach.²⁸ Lindley-French is professor and member of NATO Atlantic Council Strategic Advisors Group. In an article with Cornish and Rathmell he goes far in claiming that an effective operationalization and implementation of the Comprehensive Approach is essential for the future of NATO. Several others, e.g. Petersen and Binnendijk already in 2008 argued that there was no longer any reason to doubt whether NATO needed this concept, and no reason for not defining the concept and its content.²⁹ This has since been the dominating view also among academics. NATO workgroups as well as national think-tanks has worked with content and plans, and discussed specific challenges with the implementation and operationalization.

²⁴ Stephen Cornish and Marit Glad, 'Civil-military relations: No Room for Humanitarianism in comprehensive approaches', Security Policy Library 5-2008 (Oslo: The Norwegian Atlantic Committee, 2008); and Lene Ekhaugen, 'Norsk alenegang i Afghanistan', *Dagbladet*, 4 May 2011..

²⁵ E.g. Cornish and Glad, 'Civil-military relations'; Howard Mollett, 'No Space for Humanitarianism? NGO perspectives on civil-military relations and the Comprehensive Approach', in Williams and Clouston (ed), *Comparative Perspectives on Civil-Military Relations in conflict Zones*.

²⁶ Jakobsen, 'NATO's Comprehensive Approach to Crisis Response Operations', p.4.

²⁷ Cornish and Glad, 'Civil-military relations'.

²⁸ Julian Lindley-French et al, 'Operationalizing the Comprehensive Approach', Programme Paper: ISP PP 2010/01 (London: Chatham House, 2010).

²⁹ Petersen and Binnendijk, 'Bucharest'.

Lindley-French further argued a number of measures for NATO to implement. He has argued that NATO as an organization need to focus on three key measures: (1) a separate Comprehensive Approach Command (although he elsewhere in the same articles criticizing NATO for being too bureaucratic and for having too many headquarters), (2) for an open (holistic) view of operations, and (3) for more flexible command structures.

As for creating effective relationships to non-military institutions, he has argued that NATO must build solid and systematic relationships and gain a broad understanding of civilian capacities. He believes that NATO must acquire civilian expertise at all higher levels, and be able to use these civilian capacities effectively in operations. Furthermore, he has argued that NATO must ensure continuity of civil personnel at the political-strategic level and create effective cooperation with civilian think-tanks. Others, such as Fitz-Gerald and MacNamara from Canada's Strategic Studies Working Group has rather argued the need of national inter-departmental cooperation and competence as essential to a successful implementation of the concepts, both in terms of challenges and possible solutions. This includes the reformation of structures, but equally important the development of expertise, professionalism and common culture.³⁰

Lieutenant General Shirreff, Commandant of NATO's Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC), who used Lindley-French, Cornish and several academics in his staff has made classic military assessments about the challenges and possible solutions. Shirreff has argued that a common proven multinational command and control structure is essential to the ability to coordinate military and civilian activity. His conclusion is that in order to 'operationalize' Comprehensive Approach the international community needs to create a common philosophy and structures for integrated planning and management of both military and civilian efforts.³¹ His arguments and views are important, both because NATO ARRC, with its competence, has been one of the main NATO institutions to develop the Comprehensive Approach concept, and because he fronts the basic (classic) military perspective of the debate – the need for common structures and processes. Shirreff promotes plausible arguments, based on experience.

Schadlow, also from the NATO Defence College in Rome, has conducted studies of several operations, and developed and tested models for effective efforts in complex operations. She has found that integrated institutions for military and civilian efforts would be the best solution. However, she realizes and explains that this will be very difficult to implement in practice due to the political challenges of organizing officers under civilian leaders, and vice versa. Her conclusion was that operations involving military and civilian efforts must be subject to strong political control.³²

Schnaubelt, a former U.S. Colonel with extensive experience from Iraq and Kosovo has directed some working-groups dealing with comprehensive approach at the NATO Defence College in Rome. He has argued (like most others participating in the debates) that NATO and individual countries have made poor progress as to civil-military relations earlier. NATO

³⁰ Fitz-Gerald and Macnamara, 'Comprehensive Security Requires Comprehensive Structures', 10.

³¹ Richard Shirreff, 'Unity of Purpose in Hybrid Conflict: Managing the Civilian/Military Disconnect and "Operationalizing" the Comprehensive Approach', 1 March 2010, <http://www.chathamhouse.org> (homepage), date accessed, 3 December 2014.

³² Nadia Schadlow, 'The Persistent Problem of Civil Military Integration in War', in Christopher M. Schnaubelt (ed), *Towards a Comprehensive Approach: Integrating Civilian and Military Concepts of Strategy*, NDC Forum Paper Series, 18 (Rome: NATO Defence College, 2011).

has not been able to put theory and thoughts into practice. He argued that the main reason for this has been lack of common concepts and approaches between military and civilian elements. We see that he supports Shirreffs arguments. However, at the same time Schnaubelt argued that those looking for a common ‘doctrine’ or way of working, a ‘Book of Common Prayer’ as he called it, are completely unrealistic.³³ As he argued, NATO as one organization has forever struggled to develop joint doctrines, how can we then believe that ad-hoc alliances, working with numerous governmental and non-governmental civil society actors, at all can be effective in creating joint strategies, plans and common efforts? Schnaubelt answer is that we must focus on developing good understanding of the involved organizations and their individual structures and approaches, and thereby become able to best possibly create positive overlaps and synergy. We must, in accordance to Schnaubelt, accept to be different and partly disagree.³⁴

Concluding thoughts on the future of NATO Comprehensive Approach

In this article we have discussed the development of the NATO concept of Comprehensive Approach, focusing on how it has evolved from being *a thought with a broad appeal* in the early and mid-2000, to how it became *a defined concept of NATO*. This transition, with the perception of and reaction to this development, is what we consider to be the most critical for civil-military relations in a ‘comprehensive approach’ to conflict resolution.

As the common idea of a ‘comprehensive approach’ has been developed into a concrete NATO concept, scepticism outside military circles has not decreased, but rather increased: There are still worries related to the risk of confusing civilian and military efforts, and there is resistance towards NATO’s concept derived from that. This can be explained by historical evidence as discussed in this article, and nevertheless constitutes a continuing challenge to future civil-military co-operation.

As argued, NATO’s Comprehensive Approach concept has grown out of the challenges in Afghanistan, and the ideas have been argued for by recalling historical lessons from French, British and American conflicts and limited wars. However, these cases largely included single states which were able to use all ‘instruments of power’, all the resources of the states. This is obviously not the situation today, as we have learned in Afghanistan. We will probably continue to see the involvement of many states and numerous non-state actors in such type of conflict in the future, and the thoughts and ideal of comprehensiveness is obviously sound for this.

We also started out with an open question asking whether the NATO Comprehensive Approach is the right way forward? We have not discussed this in detail, but by examining its foundation, its clear origin from the needs NATO and nations have experienced in its engagements since the Balkan conflicts in mid- and late 1990s, we should clearly acknowledge that this is a different setting that NATO was created for in the first place. And similar, lead us to ask whether our now strong conception of these kind of conflicts require the same mindset, processes and doctrines as for full scale warfighting between conventional potent forces, should that be needed. As concluded, we support the ideal of comprehensiveness for non-article 5 operations for NATO, but we also strongly question that NATO Comprehensive Approach should be much influential on the main war fighting doctrines of NATO for the future.

³³ Schnaubelt (ed), *Towards a Comprehensive Approach*, 6.

³⁴ Schnaubelt (ed), *Towards a Comprehensive Approach*, 7.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Lene Ekhaugen, Bjørn Trygve Hansen and Magnus Petersson for constructive and critical comments to the draft manuscript.

Bibliography

Alderson, Alexander, 'Comprehensive Approaches: Theories, Strategies, plans and practise', in Christopher M. Schnaubelt (ed), *Operationalizing a comprehensive approach in semi-permissive Environments* (Rome: NATO Defence College, 2009)

Cornish, Stephen and Marit Glad, 'Civil-military relations: No Room for Humanitarianism in comprehensive approaches', The Norwegian Atlantic Committee, *Security Policy Library*, 5-2008.

Diesen, Sverre, 'Det vil ta tid', *Dagbladet*, 4 March 2008.

Ekhaugen, Lene, 'Norsk alenegang i Afghanistan', *Dagbladet*, 4 May 2011.

Fauske, Ole-Asbjørn, 'Afghanistan 10 år etter – hva nå?', in Gjert Lage Dyndal and Torbjørn Knutsen (eds), *Exit Afghanistan* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2012).

Fitz-Gerald, Ann and Macnamara, Don, 'Comprehensive Security Requires Comprehensive Structures – How Comprehensive can We get?', Strategic Studies Working Group Papers (Calgary and Ottawa: Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute, March 2012).

Friis, Karsten and Rehman, Sanaa (eds), *Nordic Approaches to Whole-of-Government – in Afghanistan and beyond*, NUPI Report, Security in Practice 6 (Oslo: NUPI, 2010).

Gjørsv, Gunhild, *Understanding Civil-Military Interaction, Lessons Learned from the Norwegian Model* (London: Ashgate, 2014).

Greentree, Todd, 'Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: US Performance and the Institutional Dimension of Strategy in Afghanistan', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 36:3 (2013), 325–356.

Hansen, Bjørn, 'Comprehensive Approach' in Eldar Berli (ed), *Innblikk i Fellesoperasjoner*, Forsvarets stabsskole Skriftserie, 2/1 (Oslo: Forsvarets stabsskole, 2012).

Holen, Øyunn, 'Livsviktig tydelighet', *Dagbladet*, 11 September, 2008.

Jæger, Tørris, 'Current Challenges in Civil-Military Relations', in Michael Williams and Kate Clouston (eds), *Comparative Perspectives on Civil-Military Relations in conflict Zones*, RUSI Occasional Paper (London: RUSI, 2008).

Jakobsen, Peter Viggo, 'NATO's Comprehensive Approach to Crisis Response Operations', *DIIS Report*, 2008:15 (Copenhagen: DIIS, 2008).

Kern, Jack, 'Understanding the operational environment: the expansion of the Dime', *University of Military Intelligence Free Library*, 2007, <http://www.thefreelibrary.com> (homepage), accessed 3 December, 2014.

Larsdotter, Kersti, 'Regional Support for Afghan Insurgents: Challenges for Counterinsurgency Theory and Doctrine', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 37/1 (2014), 135–162,

Lindley-French, Julian et al, 'Operationalizing the Comprehensive Approach', Programme Paper: ISP PP 2010/01 (London: Chatham House, 2010).

Maass, Citha, 'Peace-Building and COIN in Afghanistan: The View of NGOs – What Is Really Needed?', in Hans-Georg Ehrhart, Sven Gareis and Charles Pentland (eds), *Afghanistan in the Balance. Counterinsurgency, Comprehensive Approach and Political Order* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012).

Martinussen, Svein E., Barstad, Andreas and Christiansen, Jonas Myhre, *Attainment of goals for the Norwegian led provincial reconstruction team in Faryab – an assessment*, FFI-rapport 2013/02793 (Kjeller: FFI, 2014).

Mattis, James N., 'Effects-based Operations', *Joint Force Quarterly*, 51 (Autumn 2008).

Mollett, Howard, 'No Space for Humanitarianism? NGO perspectives on civil-military relations and the Comprehensive Approach', in Michael Williams and Kate Clouston (eds), *Comparative Perspectives on Civil-Military Relations in conflict Zones*, RUSI Occasional Paper (London: RUSI, 2008).

NATO, 'New integrated NATO center supports the Alliance with improved approach to emerging security challenges and crisis', <http://www.nato.int> (homepage), accessed 3 December, 2014.

NATO, *Comprehensive Operations Planning Process (COPD), Interim V 1.0* (Draft, 17 December 2010).

NATO, *Allied Command Operations Comprehensive Operations Planning Process (COPD), Interim V 2.0* (Draft, 4 October, 2014).

NATO, 'Bucharest Summit Declaration', Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008, <http://www.nato.int> (homepage), date accessed, 3 December 2014.

Petersen, Friis Arne and Hans Binnendijk, 'The Comprehensive Approach Initiative: Future Options for NATO', *Defence Horizon*, 58 (September 2007).

Schadlow, Nadia, 'The Persistent Problem of Civil Military Integration in War', in Christopher M. Schnaubelt (ed), *Towards a Comprehensive Approach: Integrating Civilian and Military Concepts of Strategy*, NDC Forum Paper Series, 18 (Rome: NATO Defence College, 2011).

Schnaubelt, Christopher M., 'Integrating Civilian and Military Approaches to Strategy', in Christopher M. Schnaubelt (ed), *Towards a Comprehensive Approach: Integrating Civilian and Military Concepts of Strategy*, NDC Forum Paper Series, 18 (Rome: NATO Defence College, 2011).

Sheffer, Jaap de Hoop ‘Speech by NATO Secretary General at the Microsoft-BBC-NATO – Defence Leaders forum Noordwijk aan zee 23 april 2007’, 23 April 2007, <http://www.nato.int> (homepage), date accessed, 3 December 2014.

Shirreff, Richard, ‘Unity of Purpose in Hybrid Conflict: Managing the Civilian/Military Disconnect and “Operationalizing” the Comprehensive Approach’, 1 March 2010, <http://www.chathamhouse.org> (homepage), date accessed, 3 December 2014.

Smith-Windsor, Brooke, *Hasten slowly, NATO’s Effects Based and Comprehensive Approach to Operations*, NDC Research Paper (Rome: NATO Defence College, July 2008).

Stangeland, Silje, ‘Soldater er ikke bistandsarbeidere’ [Soldiers are not foreign aid workers], 26 December 2010, <http://forskning.no>, date accessed 3 December, 2014.

Strachan, Hew ‘The Changing Character of War in a Multi-Polar World’, in Nina Græger and Tormod Heier (eds), *The Military Power Seminar 2009: Conference Proceedings* (Oslo: Norwegian Defence University College and Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2009).

Tardy, Thierry, ‘The Reluctant Peacekeeper: France and the Use of Force in Peace Operations’, in *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 2014, 37:5, 770–792.

UNSC, ‘Security Council Addresses Comprehensive Approach to Peace-Building’, *UN Press Release SC/7014*, 2001, <http://www.un.org> (homepage), date accessed 3 December, 2014.

Vastel, Patrice, Mast, Johan and Nielsen, Michael, ‘Humanitær hjelp er ikke et våpen’, *Dagbladet*, 14 October 2010.

Cécile Wendling, *The comprehensive approach to civil-military crisis management. A critical analysis and perspective*, IRSEM Report, (Paris: IRSEM, 2010).

Authors:

Gjert Lage Dyndal is Colonel and Head of Department for Strategic Studies, Norwegian Defence Command and Staff College. He holds an M.Phil in War Studies and PhD in Modern History from the University of Glasgow. Research focus has been on military technology and doctrine development, and security policy and strategy. Dyndal has worked as an advisor in Afghanistan and co-edited the book ‘Exit Afghanistan’ in 2012.

Cornelia Vikan holds a MA degree in International Security, Intelligence and Ethics from the University of Tromsø (2009), and a Cand.Philol. (MA) degree in Russian from the University of Oslo (1999). She is currently pursuing her PhD in Philosophy at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), focusing on ethical issues in complex conflicts from a military perspective. She has served as an officer and military analyst in the Norwegian Army, and for several years also worked as an interpreter, specializing in military affairs.