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NATO – THE OBSTACLES TO “PROMOTING” A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

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Exercise Solo Flight

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**NATO – THE OBSTACLES TO “PROMOTING”
A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH**

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*The lessons learned from NATO operations, in particular in Afghanistan and the Western Balkans, make it clear that a comprehensive political, civilian and military approach is necessary for effective crisis management. The Alliance will engage actively with other international actors before, during and after crises to encourage collaborative analysis, planning and conduct of activities on the ground, in order to maximise coherence and effectiveness of the overall international effort.*¹

- 2010 NATO Strategic Concept

INTRODUCTION

During the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) 2006 Riga Summit, NATO declared that "the experience in Afghanistan and Kosovo demonstrates that today's challenges require a comprehensive approach by the international community involving a wide spectrum of civil and military instruments."² This is the first reference in NATO strategic policy to the concept of a Comprehensive Approach (CA) to operations. Defined in NATO capstone doctrine simply as "a means to ensure a coordinated and coherent response to crisis by all relevant actors,"³ a CA strategy is deemed by many members to be "a necessary response to practical coordination challenges and capability gaps that affect all of the Alliance's operations,"⁴ particularly its non-Article Five crisis management operations, which are becoming increasingly more complex and cannot be solved by military means alone.

¹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Strategic Concept: Active Engagement, Modern Defence* (Bruxelles: NATO, 2010), Paragraph 21.

² North Atlantic Treaty Organization. *Riga Summit Declaration*. (2006), Paragraph 10.

³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization. *Comprehensive Approach Planning Directive v1.0*. (Belgium: NATO Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, 2010), 2-12.

⁴ Phillip Rotmann, "Built on Shaky Ground: The Comprehensive Approach in Practice," *NATO Research Paper*, no. 63, (December 2010): 1.

NATO's CA philosophy to operations, be they humanitarian assistance, counter-insurgency, or full-spectrum conflict operations, has intuitive appeal both within and outside the Alliance, as demonstrated by the many countries and organizations that have come to independently embrace a CA in one form or another long before NATO's initiative took root. Notwithstanding its appeal, there remain several obstacles to the successful implementation of NATO's CA strategy. Some have argued that NATO should develop its own robust CA capability because the strategy is heavily reliant on others that lack either the willingness to cooperate or the capacity to deliver on their responsibilities in hostile threat environments. This paper, however, will demonstrate the error in this logic and instead argue that NATO should continue to take a minimalist approach in implementing its CA strategy and increase its engagement with its primary partners, namely the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU), in order to achieve future operational successes and maintain institutional credibility among its international partners.

In so doing, this essay will first examine the genesis of NATO's CA to examine how NATO's evolving mandate and lessons learned during post-Cold War operations led NATO to adopt its new strategic concept. Next the evolution of NATO's CA and how its philosophy to CA differs from those of its members and its international partners will be studied. The third part of this paper will identify the numerous obstacles facing NATO in its efforts to implement a CA strategy. The paper will then conclude with an argument as to why NATO should continue to "promote" a CA and suggest alternative courses of action to developing its own robust CA capabilities.

THE GENESIS OF NATO'S CA

NATO's Evolving Role as a Global Security Organization

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO re-invented itself by expanding its collective defence mandate to include collective security and international crisis management. These evolving core functions were seen in both post-Cold War summit declarations and through NATO's deployments expanding into non-traditional areas of operation. Even before its first major "crisis-response operation" in the Balkans, NATO was conducting missions around the globe. During the first Gulf War, for instance, following Iraq statements threatening Turkey, NATO deployed forces to Turkey in preparation to defend this NATO member if Iraq attempted to follow through on its posturing. In 1992, NATO also assisted international relief efforts into Russia and other Commonwealth of Independent States following the collapse of the Soviet Union and its centrally controlled economic system.⁵

Lessons Learned

It was not until NATO's involvement in the Western Balkans and Afghanistan, however, that NATO came to realise that "stabilization and contested state building required a carefully synchronized application of different forms of power from organized

⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "NATO Operations and Missions," last accessed 10 May 2014, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_52060.htm

violence, to effective governance, relief, and development assistance.”⁶ Having not yet adopted a CA, NATO approached both the Balkans and initial operations in Afghanistan in traditional military style, independently planning and conducting security operations.⁷ As a result, NATO “engaged belatedly with other actors through ad hoc, situational arrangements rather than as the result of prior planning.”⁸ Not understanding in advance which organizations (international, governmental, or other) or countries would play a part in these crises situations further exacerbated already difficult coordination and hindered effectiveness by wasting lives, time, and money.⁹

The Need for Something More

NATO’s CA strategy was therefore “born out of the short-lived and sometimes counterproductive effects of post-Cold War limited military interventions to ‘manage’ crises around the world.”¹⁰ In the Western Balkans, NATO was interacting with many more actors than ever before in its history, including diplomats, police, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), International Non-Government Organizations (INGOs), and International Organizations (IOs). In addition to its security missions around the globe, NATO was also conducting humanitarian aid and disaster relief in support of other organizations such as the UN and the African Union (AU). It was through these experiences that NATO came to promote the CA within the international community as

⁶ Phillip Rotmann, “Built on Shaky Ground...”, 2.

⁷ Sten Rynning, “Of Sirens and Deceptive Virtue: A Critical Look at NATO’s Comprehensive Approach,” *Conference Paper Prepared for the EUSA Twelfth Biennial International Conference* (Boston: 3-5 March 2011): 8.

⁸ Friis Arne Petersen, Hans Binnendijk, Charles Barry, and Peter Lehamn Nielsen. “Implementing NATO’s Comprehensive Approach to Complex operations.” In *NATO In Search of a Vision*, (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2010), 77.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Phillip Rotmann, “Built on Shaky Ground...”, 2.

the best means by which to overcome the practical coordination challenges and capability shortfalls present in all of the Alliance's operations.

THE EVOLUTION OF NATO'S CA

In 2004, Denmark played a leading role in introducing the CA concept to NATO and in 2006, Denmark's initiative was supported by seven other NATO members, placing it on the Riga Summit Agenda and making mention of CA in the official summit declaration. In April 2008, on the occasion of their Bucharest Summit, the NATO Heads of State and Government affirmed their commitment to using a CA to address current and future security challenges by endorsing an action plan for the development and implementation of NATO's "contribution" to a CA. The 2010 *Lisbon Summit Declaration* and NATO's new *Strategic Concept* reaffirmed NATO's commitment to a CA and the concept was further developed and outlined in the NATO's *Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive (COPD)* and *Allied Joint Publication-01(D)*, both published that same year.

It should be noted that NATO's philosophy differs from many of its members' and partner organizations' such that the original intent for NATO in developing a CA strategy:

was neither to make NATO the centrepiece of cooperation nor a coordinator among international actors. Instead, the vision was to seek positive change in all organizational structures over time, beginning by making NATO a partner that is more ready to work with other organizations.¹¹

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 78.

Consequently, it was explicitly stated in the 2006 *Riga Summit Declaration* that NATO had “no requirement to develop capabilities strictly for civilian purposes”¹² and in both the 2008 and 2010 summit declarations NATO’s intent of promoting as opposed to leading a CA is made clear by referring to NATO’s “contribution” to a CA and to only “contribute, when required, to stabilisation and reconstruction.”¹³

The quick acceptance of the requirement to contribute to a CA within the Alliance, a multilateral organization based on consensus decision making, demonstrates the intuitive appeal such a strategy possessed throughout the Alliance’s membership.

OBSTACLES TO THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF NATO’S CA

Notwithstanding its quick acceptance, there exists a gap between the collective CA vision advocated in NATO’s strategic guidance and the practical realities in achieving its stated goal of “making NATO a partner that is more ready to work with other organizations.”¹⁴ This section of the paper will now examine some of the obstacles in implementing NATO’s intended CA strategy.

Lack of Genuine Consensus Concerning NATO’s Evolving Role

Firstly, despite the fact that NATO’s 2010 *Strategic Concept* accepted its new roles of crisis management and collective security, requiring the Alliance to conduct operations further afield, there was and remains much disagreement regarding NATO’s evolving core functions. Members such as Germany, France, Belgium, and Spain, for

¹² North Atlantic Treaty Organization. *Riga Summit*...Para 10.

¹³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization. *Lisbon Summit Declaration*. (2010), Paragraph 9.

¹⁴ Friis Arne Petersen, Hans Binnendijk, Charles Barry, and Peter Lehmann Nielsen. “Implementing NATO’s Comprehensive ...”, 78.

example, perceived the Alliance primarily as a military institution¹⁵ and were “uncomfortable with the military intrusion into the civilian domain they knew well.”¹⁶ Other members were concerned with the political implications for other IOs such as the AU or the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe, if NATO were to develop an autonomous civilian or political capacity. France, in particular, was concerned that in such as case, NATO would undermine or duplicate efforts of the EU, which had modest plans for the development of its own security capacity to augment its already strong political power.¹⁷ And yet others still, were concerned with the potential threat posed by Russia. Many of the undercurrents of disharmony present at the time NATO accepted the CA persist today, particularly the concerns with the potential threat posed by Russia, sentiments that have recently been exacerbated with the unfolding events in the Ukraine.¹⁸ This lack of commitment by some members has stalled meaningful progress of the CA strategy within NATO and for the most part, the implementation of NATO doctrine concerning CA has been slow causing some members to question whether the concept will stand the test of time.¹⁹

Weak Conceptualization

Secondly, it is not surprising that given the disagreements within the Alliance regarding NATO’s ever expanding global mandate – the impetus for NATO to develop a

¹⁵ Thierry Tardy. “NATO and the Comprehensive Approach: Weak Conceptualization, Political Divergences, and Implementation Challenges,” In *Understanding NATO in the 21st Century* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 107.

¹⁶ Sten Rynning, “Of Sirens and Deceptive Virtue...”, 8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁹ Cécile Wendling, “The Comprehensive Approach to Civil-Military Crisis Management: A Critical Analysis and Perspective.” *Institut de Recherche Strategique de l'Ecole Militaire (IRSEM) Report* (2010), 46.

CA strategy in the first place – that there was (and continues to be) significant disagreement regarding the entire philosophy of a CA and what this strategy would truly demand of NATO. From its inception, the type of civilian-military interface NATO was promoting was unclear. Furthermore, it was feared by some that developing a CA capability would significantly increase the staff and financial burden on the Alliance which would detract from its well established military apparatus required to establish security.²⁰ This was particularly disconcerting to those countries already struggling with decreasing military budgets at home and relying on NATO for collective defence.²¹ Compounding the above disagreements concerning NATO's role is the fact that in the aftermath of the Cold War, many NATO members were heavily involved in operations through the 1990s and the early years of the Afghanistan campaign – and also the Iraq Campaign for a limited number of member states.²² These nations, with experience operating in the complex security environments, had already identified the need to develop their own national approaches to the concept of comprehensive operations, and were well on their way to doing so. Thus, “the CA means different things to different organizations and individual countries.”²³ Many NATO members such as the US, Canada, the UK, Norway and, of course, Denmark had already “endorsed the idea of comprehensiveness and tried to develop it on a national scale.”²⁴ Other members, such as Germany, France and most of the Southern and Eastern European members lacked either

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Mark Adomanis, NATO in the 21st Century: A More Cautious, Defensive, and Conservative Alliance.

²² Cécile Wendling, “The Comprehensive Approach to Civil-Military Crisis Management..., 45.

²³ Cedric de Coning and Karsten Friis, “Coherence and Coordination: The Limits of the Comprehensive Approach,” *Journal of International Peacekeeping* 15, (2011): 251.

²⁴ Thierry Tardy. “NATO and the Comprehensive Approach: Weak Conceptualization..., 108.

the political will or the resources, or in some cases both, to implement such a strategy.²⁵

In all scenarios, “the national conceptions [of CA] have prevailed over the theoretical NATO approach.”²⁶

Several international organizations were also making efforts to advance such a concept. The UN Security Council had identified the need for such a concept in 2001 stating that it reaffirmed “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.”²⁷ The UN concept has evolved into what is now known as the Integrated Approach and has been used extensively in UN missions in Africa.²⁸ The EU and the AU have also been making extensive use of “comprehensive approaches” since the early 2000s.²⁹

Thus, in comparison to the timelines of the development of CA as a philosophy on both a national and international scale, NATO was late in developing its own CA concept. As a result, the numerous approaches to CA that already existed within NATO’s member nations complicated NATO’s attempts to develop its own CA strategy because “collective work could not start from scratch and would have to find compromises between ‘best’ practices of disparate nature.”³⁰ Moreover, “there is no single, coherent, or commonly agreed CA model.”³¹ Consequently, notwithstanding the fact that “most actors

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ United Nations, “Security Council Press Release - Addresses Comprehensive Approach To Peace-Building,” United Nations Security Council, last modified 20 February 2001, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2001/sc7014.doc.htm>

²⁸ Cécile Wendling, “The Comprehensive Approach to Civil-Military Crisis Management...,” 49.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁰ Sten Rynning, “Of Sirens and Deceptive Virtue...,” 8.

³¹ Claudia Major & Christian Mölling, “More Than Wishful Thinking? The EU, UN, NATO and the Comprehensive Approach to Military Crisis Management,” *Studia Diplomatica* 62, no. 3 (2009): 22.

today acknowledge the necessity for better coordination and cooperation, their approaches diverge significantly regarding priorities, means and suggested end-states of crisis management.”³² Necessity for developing the CA has trumped the division concerning what CA entails, but the consensus is not genuine throughout and has resulted in a lack of coherence amongst members. This lack of coherence in defining and implementing NATO’s CA hinders commitment by member nations depending on their understanding or desires for NATO’s future. It could be argued that this lack of commitment at the strategic level manifests itself at the operational level through low troop contributions to operations, or troop contributions with restrictive caveats on force employment.

Inability to Coordinate Externally

Unlike other international institutions such as the EU or the AU, NATO does not possess its own organic civilian capabilities. If NATO is to employ a civilian capability, those capabilities must be force generated from its member states or through international or national organizations.³³ According to NATO’s 2010 Strategic Guidance, the Alliance remains committed to preventing crises, managing conflicts and stabilizing post-conflict environments particularly “by working more closely with our [NATO’s] international partners, most importantly the United Nations and the European Union.”³⁴

Notwithstanding this stated intent, NATO’s relationship with both organizations has been

³² Cécile Wendling, “The Comprehensive Approach to Civil-Military Crisis Management...”, 10.

³³ Peter Spilý, Pavel Nečas, and Miroslav Žák. “Comprehensive Approach: The Road for Complex Crisis Resolution.” *Revista Academiei Fortelor Terestre* 16, no. 1 (2011): 45.

³⁴ North Atlantic Treaty Organization. “Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation,” (2010), 1.

uneasy, despite the frequent requirement for all three organizations to work together in managing crises.

Turning first to the UN, NATO is and always has been committed to “the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.”³⁵ NATO understands that the UN is the principal actor in the international system within which it operates, a tenet that is captured in the North Atlantic Treaty.³⁶ It is for this reason that “UN Security Council Resolutions [UNSCRs] have provided the mandate for NATO’s operations in the Western Balkans and in Afghanistan, as well as the framework for NATO’s training mission in Iraq.”³⁷ More recently, NATO’s 2011 operation in Libya to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas under threat of attack was carried out in support of UNSCR 1973. In other areas:

NATO has also provided a great deal of support to UN-sponsored operations, including logistical assistance to the African Union’s UN-endorsed peacekeeping operations in Darfur, Sudan, and in Somalia; support for UN disaster-relief operations in Pakistan, following the massive earthquake in 2005; and escorting merchant ships carrying World Food Programme humanitarian supplies off the coast of Somalia.³⁸

NATO has therefore clearly identified that close cooperation with the UN and its agencies is an important element in the development of an international CA strategy to crisis management. Notwithstanding NATO’s stated desires to improve coordination with the UN, however, the two organizations have had a difficult past. The primary problem

³⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organization. *Chicago Summit Declaration*. (2012), Paragraph 2.

³⁶ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “NATO’s relations with the United Nations,” NATO, last modified 25 September 2012, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50321.htm

³⁷ Nigel Chamberlain, Chamberlain, Nigel. “NATO and the United Nations – Is the Balance About Right?” *NATO Watch*, last modified 27 September 2013 <http://www.natowatch.org/node/1205>

³⁸ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Five Years of Strengthened Cooperation Between NATO and the United Nations.” Last accessed 10 May 2014, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/five-years-of-strengthened-cooperation-between-nato-and-the-united-nations>

straining cooperation between these two organizations is the fact that some UN members “do not take kindly to the rapprochement between the UN and the Alliance which seems to serve American interests rather than their own.”³⁹ Russia and China in particular, both of whom have permanent seats within the UN Security Council, fall squarely within this camp. Russia, in particular, has demonstrated its frustration with the growing relationship between the two organizations, forcing the signing of the *Declaration on UN/NATO Secretariat Cooperation* in 2008 to be postponed several times and without media coverage because Russia deemed “the UN SG [Secretary General] had been acting beyond his powers”⁴⁰ by signing such a document.

The second issue is the concern that NATO is “seen as an actor potentially capable of crowding out the UN in crisis management, while imposing a US-centric view.”⁴¹ This mentality has its origins in the early interventions in Kosovo wherein NATO was required to become involved in non-military tasks such as “law and order, governance and humanitarian assistance.”⁴²

Lastly, there remain lingering tensions between NATO and the UN following its initial intervention in Kosovo which occurred without a UN mandate.⁴³ Similar tensions have surfaced following NATO’s involvement in Libya, for although NATO was

³⁹ Cécile Wendling, “The Comprehensive Approach to Civil-Military Crisis Management...”, 42.

⁴⁰ Peter Viggo Jakobsen, “Right Strategy, Wrong Place – Why NATO’s Comprehensive Approach Will Fail in Afghanistan.” *The Research Unit on International Security and Cooperation (UNISCI) Discussion Papers*, no. 22 (January 2010), 87.

⁴¹ Cécile Wendling, “The Comprehensive Approach to Civil-Military Crisis Management...”, 42.

⁴² Peter Viggo Jakobsen. “NATO’s Comprehensive Approach after Lisbon: Principle Problem Acknowledged, Solution Elusive.” In *NATO’s New Strategic Concept. A Comprehensive Assessment*, (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), 2011), 85.

⁴³ Michael F. Harsch, “NATO and the UN: Partnership with Potential?” *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) Research Paper, German Institute for International and Security Affairs*, (January 2012): 7.

operating under UNSCR 1973, Russia, China, India, Brazil and South Africa have since accused NATO of exceeding their mandate.⁴⁴

Similar to the NATO-UN relationship, relations between NATO and the EU, an organization that shares 22 of NATO's 28 members, are much less cooperative than one would expect of two institutions independently seeking CA strategies. Despite the steps toward closer cooperation seen with the creation of the *Berlin Plus Agreement* in 2002,⁴⁵ little has been achieved since the acceptance of NATO's CA strategy in 2010. Once again, unrelated political disputes between members have hindered collaboration and cooperation between the two organizations. The primary issue is Turkey's dissatisfaction with the EU's acceptance of the Republic of Cyprus, which Turkey does not recognize, as a member in 2004. Since this event, Turkey has used its veto power to prevent the EU from attending NATO events, including the Chicago Summit of 2012.⁴⁶ Conversely, Cyprus has used its membership in the EU to veto Turkey's participation in the European Defence Agency.⁴⁷ Additionally, similar to the UN, there are EU members that are "skeptical of what they see as a US-dominated NATO."⁴⁸ France in particular is concerned that "the Anglo-American pressure for closer EU-NATO cooperation would increase American influence over the EU and prevent it from developing a capacity to

⁴⁴ While China and Russia did not veto the resolution calling on NATO to intervene in Libya, they, along with Germany, India and Brazil abstained from the vote. For more information on this subject see Michael F. Harsch, NATO and the UN..., 10.

⁴⁵ The *Berlin Plus Agreement* was implemented to improve the exchange of classified information between the two organizations and permitting the EU, under certain circumstances, access to NATO's planning and military capabilities in EU-led crisis management operations.

⁴⁶ EurActiv.com, "EU-Turkey tensions resurface over NATO Summit," last accessed 10 May 2014, <http://www.euractiv.com/enlargement/eu-turkey-tensions-resurface-nat-news-512464>

⁴⁷ Jakobsen, Right Strategy, Wrong Place 86.

⁴⁸ Karl-Heinz Kamp, NATO-EU Cooperation – Forget It, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=53458>

conduct autonomous military operations.”⁴⁹ Conversely, it could be argued that the EU’s emergence as an independent military actor is unnecessary and duplicative given the *Berlin Plus Agreement*, and more importantly, a threat to NATO’s legitimacy.

Lastly, the intent of NATO’s CA is to not only improve its relations with other international organizations such as the UN and the EU, but to improve cooperation at all levels with all actors, including NGOs.⁵⁰ The NATO-NGO relationship, however, suffers even greater difficulties than either the NATO-UN or the NATO-EU relationship.⁵¹ In operational environments where there are actors of many differing backgrounds (i.e. military, diplomatic, humanitarian, law enforcement...etc.), “the values, principles and mandates of some of the actors in a peacebuilding system are sometimes inherently incoherent.”⁵² This has led to strong reluctance on behalf of some NGOs to engage in cooperation in an effort to avoid legitimizing NATO’s increasing involvement in the delivery of humanitarian aid as witnessed in Kosovo and Afghanistan. This new role by NATO has in some cases resulted in “principled rifts”⁵³ between the Alliance and NGOs who view it as a threat to their neutrality, thereby increasing the threat to both NGOs and the people they serve.⁵⁴ Other NGOs view NATO’s well intended aim of linking development and reconstruction with military effects, as was the strategy for many Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan, as the first step in an ever-growing

⁴⁹ Peter Viggo Jakobsen, “Right Strategy, Wrong Place...”, 86.

⁵⁰ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *AJP-01(D) Allied Joint Doctrine*, (United Kingdom: NATO Standards Agency, 2010), 2-12.

⁵¹ Peter Viggo Jakobsen, “Right Strategy, Wrong Place...”, 87.

⁵² Cedric de Coning and Karsten Friis, “Coherence and Coordination...”, 263.

⁵³ Phillip Rotmann, “Built on Shaky Ground...”, 5.

⁵⁴ Peter Viggo Jakobsen, “Right Strategy, Wrong Place...”, 87.

militarization of development.⁵⁵ In Afghanistan, the fundamentally different approaches between multiple actors, combined with the NGO desire to distance themselves from NATO forces, resulted in a lack of understanding regarding each other's priorities⁵⁶ making efforts to collaborate and cooperate synchronized effects extremely difficult.

Thus, given the shared intuitive appeal of CA strategies it would be reasonable to assume that the desire to improve cooperation and collaboration between organizations would be relatively simple to achieve. It is clear, however, that this is not the case and that national interests play a fundamental role in shaping how IOs interact and in the case of NATO's attempts at implementing a CA strategy, have proven to be a significant obstacle to improving relations between the Alliance and the two organizations it deems most important at achieving success in future complex crisis management scenarios. Moreover, other actors such as NGOs signing up to an international initiative may not agree on how to achieve success, and will not answer to any sovereign and dominant national interest.⁵⁷

Inability to Communicate Effectively with All Actors

Compounding the Alliance's inability to collaborate externally is the fact that, in many cases, NATO lacks the culture and capacity to communicate effectively with all actors, particularly those outside of the Alliance. Due to the need for operational security and the potential to compromise sources of intelligence, military organizations are prone

⁵⁵ M.J. Williams, "Empire Light Revisited: NATO, the Comprehensive Approach and State-building in Afghanistan," *International Peacekeeping* 18, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 65.

⁵⁶ Cedric de Coning and Karsten Friis, "Coherence and Coordination...", 263.

⁵⁷ M.J. Williams, "Empire Light Revisited...", 67.

to “an institutional but understandable reluctance to share information.”⁵⁸ Such actions only strengthen the divide between NATO and other actors, particularly NGOs who perceive information sharing as a one way street. All this to say, the inability to communicate effectively between all actors, be it through policy or process, is a significant obstacle to implementing NATO’s CA strategy such that *AJP-01(D)* identifies the importance of information sharing in developing a common understanding.⁵⁹

High Threat Environments

It comes as no surprise that all of the above mentioned obstacles to implementing NATO’s CA are compounded significantly in high threat environments, the very types of deployments that NATO forces are best suited for (at least in independent operations). In these types of missions, which typically involve failing states or counter insurgency operations, it has been identified that “you cannot have security without development, and you cannot have development without security.”⁶⁰ However, until the security situation is rendered safe, development and diplomacy efforts are often delayed. At the outset of NATO’s Kosovo operations, for example, the Alliance was required to complete civilian tasks such as law and order, governance, and humanitarian assistance that were scaled back once the security situation improved, permitting the appropriate civilian

⁵⁸ Veronica Chinn, Lee T. Furches, and Barian A. Woodward. “Information - Sharing with the Private Sector.” *Joint Force Quarterly* 73. (2nd Quarter 2014): 34.

⁵⁹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *AJP-01(D) Allied Joint Doctrine...*, 2-12.

⁶⁰ Hedegaard, Niels Henrik. “NATO’s Institutional Environment: the New Strategic Concept Endorses the Comprehensive Approach.” In *NATO’s New Strategic Concept. A Comprehensive Assessment*, (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), 2011), 75.

organization to assume responsibility.⁶¹ In Afghanistan, however, the “Alliance’s inability to provide security pulled the rug out from under the Kosovo model.”⁶² The inability of the Alliance to provide a safe and secure working environment not only resulted in disengagement by civilian actors, it forced NATO once again to become increasingly involved in governance issues, humanitarian assistance, and reconstruction and development. The military domination of the CA in Afghanistan caused deep civilian resentment toward NATO and made it near impossible to establish the cooperative relationships with other actors in the region that are the foundation of NATO’s CA strategy.⁶³

SHOULD NATO DEVELOP ITS OWN CA CAPACITY?

It is clear that the obstacles to implementing NATO’s CA strategy are many and complex. It is for this reason that NATO has already taken steps to develop a civilian capacity in order to better interact with other external actors and to improve planning of crisis management responses within the Alliance. The steps most relevant to this discussion include improved liaison with the UN through the establishment of a UN Liaison Officer (LO) within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). NATO has begun to negotiate similar arrangements with other international organizations such as the AU. It has also increased senior NATO interaction with relevant NGOs and developed a database containing non-military expertise available to NATO through its

⁶¹ Peter Viggo Jakobsen., “NATO’s Comprehensive Approach after Lisbon: Principle Problem Acknowledged, Solution Elusive.” In *NATO’s New Strategic Concept. A Comprehensive Assessment*, (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), 2011), 85.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

member nations called COMPASS. To improve the planning and conduct of missions, two complementary civil crisis management capabilities have been created within NATO, the Comprehensive Crisis and Operations Management Centre at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), and the Civil-Military Planning Support Section within the International Staff of NATO headquarters.⁶⁴ These steps have been deemed necessary to the implementation of NATO's CA and for NATO to be prepared to fill gaps when they must to achieve mission success, particularly in high threat environments where, as previously discussed, coordination amongst all actors is most complicated. At the same time, undertakings have been constrained in an effort to stay within the spirit of the 2010 *Strategic Guidance* of promoting an international CA strategy, whilst maintaining a minimalist approach to leading any such effort, preferring instead to stay in the background and support others.

Dr. Teodor Frunzeti, former Chief of the Romanian Land Forces and associate professor at the National Defence University in Bucharest argues that while NATO's CA capacity developments are modest; they are adequate for NATO's needs.⁶⁵ Others, such as John E. Herbst, former US Ambassador to the Ukraine, argue that promoting a CA strategy that relies so heavily on others has proven unsuccessful and NATO should develop its own robust civilian CA capabilities.⁶⁶ While it is true that actions to date have been insufficient to overcome the challenges for effective coordination and cooperation

⁶⁴ For more information concerning NATO's milestones in implementing the CA, see "Implementation of the Comprehensive Approach Action Plan and the Lisbon Summit Decisions on the Comprehensive Approach." *NATO*. 30 November 2011.

⁶⁵ Teodor Frunzeti, "Comprehensive Approach in Crisis Management," *Strategic Impact* 44, no. 3 (September 2012): 10.

⁶⁶ John E. Herbst, "Complex Operations and the Comprehensive Approach," In *Capability Development in Support of Comprehensive Approaches: Transforming International Civil Military Interactions*, (Washington: National Defence University, 2011), 32.

with NATO's primary partners in managing crises, namely the UN and the EU, NATO should not yet abandon its efforts. A shift in NATO strategy to develop its own robust capabilities to go it alone would be a mistake on three counts.

First, developing its own CA capabilities would further alienate the EU and the UN. While NATO could arguably manage without the EU, NATO has pinned the entire CA strategy in support of the UN and therefore could not do without it for the legitimacy of its international collective security or crisis response missions. Instead, NATO should place greater emphasis on improving its relationship with both the UN and the EU as permanent processes and structures required for effective coordination and cooperation with its primary partners for crisis management have been insufficient. Consequently, the inability to collaborate and cooperate effectively with one another at all levels - strategic, operational, and tactical - is perhaps the single greatest obstacle to the effective implementation of the CA. Accordingly, the intended outcome of permitting each actor to complement and mutually reinforce each other's efforts with the ultimate goal of achieving an overarching strategy agreed upon by both the international community and local actors as outlined in NATO's COPD⁶⁷ has yet to be realized. Rather than developing its own capabilities,

...additional steps should be taken to marshal external resources in support of the CA. NATO SG [Secretary General] should further both coordination and consultation with other organizations, beginning with the UN and the EU, for civil-military collaboration on crisis response and conflict resolution, with priority given to efforts in Afghanistan.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ North Atlantic Treaty Organization. *Comprehensive Approach Planning Directive v1.0*. (Belgium: NATO Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, 2010), 1-2.

⁶⁸ Friis Arne Petersen, Hans Binnendijk, Charles Barry, and Peter Lehamn Nielsen. "Implementing NATO's Comprehensive ...", 95.

This would include significantly improving relations with both the UN and the EU. At present, NATO has but one LO in the UN DPKO. To put this in perspective, “the EU is represented by delegations accredited to UN bodies in Geneva, Paris, Nairobi, New York, Rome, and Vienna.”⁶⁹ Moreover, “the EU works with all UN bodies, agencies and programmes across virtually the entire range of UN activities, from development policy and peacebuilding to humanitarian assistance, environment, human rights, and culture” and has “obtained a special ‘full participant’ status in a number of important UN conferences.”⁷⁰ While it could be argued that because NATO’s mandate differs from that of the EU, the same footprint is not required, it is clear that one LO is insufficient to achieve a truly CA to operations. Increasing the NATO presence in the UN from one LO to a delegation focussed on early mutual crisis assessment and operational planning would go a long way to building trust through transparency, allaying fears by apprehensive members (i.e. Russia and China), and avoiding misunderstandings such as the aforementioned concerns regarding NATO overstepping the UN mandate in Libya. Concerning the EU, NATO established a permanent liaison team at the EU military Staff, and the EU has reciprocated with a permanent planning cell at SHAPE. NATO should focus on improving upon and expanding on these initial steps at improved cooperation to include revisiting the *Berlin Plus Agreement* to examine the potential of expanding the agreement to permit NATO to call upon the use of the EU’s expansive civilian capabilities in a similar manner to the EU’s ability to call upon NATO for security forces. Perhaps, given the number of members belonging to each organization, an arrangement

⁶⁹ European Union Delegation to the United Nations, “About the EU at the UN – EU Delegations,” last accessed 10 May 2014, http://www.eu-un.europa.eu/articles/articleslist_s33_en.htm

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

could be made between all three organizations to work side by side in New York in joint assessments and crisis planning in an attempt to circumvent the Turkey/Cyprus divide.

Secondly, to take on its own CA capabilities would undermine the CA concept entirely. While there are numerous interpretations as to what CA entails, the vast majority understand the philosophy to be an effort that is first and foremost civilian-led across the entire spectrum of conflict and disaster relief missions.⁷¹ Although NATO is still early in defining its own capability through doctrine and planning processes, it understands that CA is as much about coordinating civil-civil as it is civil-military collaboration.⁷² Moreover, for any CA strategy to be effective there must be an ambition toward avoiding friction with internal and external actors, for without the cooperation of all involved, improving efficiencies is unlikely.⁷³ NATO is therefore correct in adopting a minimalist approach to the CA, remaining in the background for the time being, for it should not be NATO's responsibility to "engender a culture of coordination among the plethora of civil actors engaged in crisis management with varied mandates and strengths [which] is as significant an imperative and challenge as improving civil-military interface."⁷⁴

Finally, even in the event that NATO could develop its own CA capacities in order to operate independently, it would by no means remove the requirement to coordinate and collaborate with other actors in the theatre of operations. The intent of any CA is to encourage the collaboration and coordination of all actors operating in one

⁷¹ Chris G. Neely, "Operationalizing the Comprehensive Approach," *Wilton Park Conference Report (WP1092)* (16-18 April 2012): 3.

⁷² Ferenc Molnar, Brooke Smith-Windsor, and Eugenio Menqarini, "10 Things You Should Know About a Comprehensive Approach," *Report of the NATO Defence College 17th Partnership for Peace International Research Seminar*, (8-10 October 2008): 2.

⁷³ Cécile Wendling, "The Comprehensive Approach to Civil-Military Crisis Management...", 49.

⁷⁴ Ferenc Molnar, Brooke Smith-Windsor, and Eugenio Menqarini, "10 Things You Should Know...", 2.

theatre so as to maximize efficiency by minimizing the duplication of effort, thereby saving time, money, and in some cases, lives. By developing and employing its own capabilities, NATO would not remove other actors from pursuing their own initiatives (many of which are tied to ideology and not national interest). It would, however, increase the financial burden on the Alliance and add additional participants to the multitude of uncoordinated actors likely to be operating in any given theatre.

CONCLUSION

This paper began with an examination of the origin of NATO's CA, demonstrating how it was manifested out of the requirement for NATO military forces to increasingly operate alongside many other actors, both military and civilian. It was through the lessons learned during these post-Cold War missions that NATO came to promote the CA as a means to leverage the capabilities of others in achieving mission success. Next, the evolution of NATO's CA was discussed, highlighting that NATO's CA strategy differs from those of its member nations or other international organizations such that NATO is not attempting to assume a leadership role, but to promote and encourage collaboration amongst all actors. It was perhaps because of this minimalist approach and the concept of burden sharing, thereby increasing efficiencies, that a consensus in adopting this new approach to operations was swift. The third section of this paper outlined that while NATO has achieved consensus, there remain several obstacles to the implementation of NATO's CA strategy stemming from an undercurrent of disharmony within the Alliance concerning the evolution of NATO's core functions and

the lack of a common understanding as to what form the CA should take. These issues are compounded by political tensions among individual actors (nations, IOs and NGOs) hindering the development of strong collaborative relationships at all levels of operations. These political tensions, in some cases, are fuelled by the inability of NATO to effectively communicate with all actors for a number of reasons, operational security being the reason most often cited. The paper then concluded with an argument as to why NATO should continue to “promote” a CA and suggested alternative courses of action to developing its own robust CA capabilities.

It has been demonstrated that such an effort would not only contradict the original intent of the 2010 *Strategic Guidance*, it would likely further alienate the EU and the UN, require NATO to become increasingly involved in coordinating civil-civil affairs, and lastly, would not alleviate the requirement to collaborate and cooperate with other actors. NATO should therefore continue its minimalist approach to CA, promoting the philosophy in an effort to encourage better coordination between partner organizations, particularly with the UN and the EU, while continuing to rely on these partners for development and diplomacy. The recommendations presented in this paper are by no means a panacea for overcoming the many obstacles to the implementation of NATO’s CA, but are a step in the right direction toward NATO continuing to evolve as an entity ready to work with other organizations while at the same time ensuring that NATO becomes neither the centrepiece of cooperation nor the coordinator among international actors – two roles it is not, nor should it be, designed to complete.

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