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**Research Report**

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# Comprehensive Approaches to Crisis Management

## Complex Crises Require Effective Coordination and Political Leadership

*Claudia Major and Elisabeth Schöndorf*

Today's crises bring together social, economic and political security dimensions. Managing them requires the concerted use of diplomatic, military, civilian, humanitarian and development aid instruments. This is what makes crisis management complex. Those involved are becoming more numerous, duties and responsibilities are becoming more diverse and commitments more drawn-out. To achieve successful outcomes, governments and other actors involved need to coordinate their aims, activities and instruments at the earliest possible stage and ensure these are tailored to need. This is what comprehensive approaches are all about. New concepts and structures should be introduced to guarantee the coordination and cooperation of those involved at national and international levels. In practice, however, such efforts often come to grief in identifying the various different problems and approaches to resolving them, as well as in resistance to reform and inadequate funding.

The parameters of international crisis management have changed along three dimensions in recent decades:

**Broader range of tasks.** Traditional peacekeeping used to focus on containing violent conflict by military means with the help of UN blue helmets. Experience with weak or failed states such as Somalia, however, has brought home to the international community that no conflict can be resolved by military means alone. Success can only be achieved if the parties to the conflict are also involved in resolving it. Political, social and economic transformation is required to reach a comprehensive

and sustainable crisis management. Current operations have diverse objectives and missions. They need to create a safe environment and provide humanitarian aid, as well as establishing governance, political, economic and social structures and the rule of law.

**Longer timelines.** Long-term commitment throughout the entire conflict cycle is needed for sustainable conflict transformation. Activities span from the initial phase of conflict prevention, through actual crisis management, which includes humanitarian intervention, and up to post-conflict peacebuilding. Long-term structural

measures, such as reform of the security sector, follow short-term humanitarian measures. The timeframe for this is, on average, five to ten years. Usually, long-term development cooperation follows.

**More players.** The broader range of duties and responsibilities requires specific expertise and tools that no single actor alone can provide. International, regional and local organisations, including many governmental and non-governmental institutions, become involved. The burden will thus be shared and the legitimacy of an operation increased.

### **Comprehensive approaches for complex crisis management**

The interaction of these three developments has turned crisis management into a complex undertaking. Crisis management has, in fact, become primarily complexity management. The lesson from recent operational experiences, whether in Afghanistan or the Balkans, is: if one aspect of crisis management is neglected or measures are not inter-linked, there will be an impact on related efforts elsewhere. For a commitment to be successful in the long-term, this complexity must be dealt with through effective coordination.

It is this coordination that *comprehensive* or *integrated* approaches aim to achieve, based on concepts and coordination structures specifically created for this purpose. Their aim is to reinvigorate the way in which crisis response should be planned and carried out in order to enhance efficiency and legitimacy. This should be achieved by harmonising the interaction of tasks and actors involved.

On the basis of these comprehensive approaches, those involved in crisis management should set common goals at an early stage. Based on these common goals, decisions should be taken regarding the appropriate and prompt allocation of resources at the different stages of the conflict, with implementation coordinated by one or more actors. Cooperation between

civilian and military players must be coordinated in the same way as between different civilian actors (such as humanitarian aid and diplomacy) or military units (such as the armed forces of different countries).

A distinction is generally made between

- ▶ whole of government approaches assuring inter-ministerial coordination at national level and
- ▶ comprehensive approaches to coordination at international level.

Numerous governments and international organisations have embraced the notion of the comprehensive approach. Yet this broad banner conceals widely differing approaches, ideas and practices.

#### **National level: managing cross-departmental cooperation**

Germany, France and the United Kingdom are among Europe's most active players in crisis management. Their diverging concepts and structures illustrate the diversity of national cross-departmental approaches.

#### **United Kingdom: incentives through joint financial resources.**

In comparing European activity, the United Kingdom is the trailblazer in developing and implementing a whole of government approach. Admittedly, there is no explicit strategy, but the government has created financial and administrative structures that support inter-ministerial exchange and joint projects. Since 2001, there have been various funding pools for joint crisis management by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Overseas Development and Defence. These pools merged in 2009 into the "Conflict Pool", but, relative to other departmental resources, this still has only meagre funding. Nevertheless, the Conflict Pool offers incentives for cooperation, by providing rapid cash flow for integrated measures.

An innovative coordinating body is the inter-ministerial Stabilisation Unit (SU) set up in 2004. This Unit receives its instructions from a committee composed of Secretaries of State from the Ministries of For-

eign Affairs, Defence and Overseas Development and from the Cabinet Office. Its work focuses on recruiting, training and deploying civil experts. Since February 2010, the SU has managed a pool of over 1000 experts (Civilian Stabilisation Group). It is also successfully supporting the planning and implementation of stabilisation measures, particularly in Afghanistan, through civil-military training courses.

Beyond the SU and funding pools, however, the tools of the individual ministries are coordinated only to a limited extent. Concerned about a loss of independence, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Overseas Development are currently resisting a joint crisis management concept, which would deliver a cross-departmental early-warning system for crises and an inter-ministerial evaluation mechanism.

The cross-departmental National Security Council, set up in May 2010, should counter this resistance, continue cross-departmental cooperation and bring strategic alignment in terms of security policy. After a bumpy start, its effectiveness will mainly depend on how effectively the Chairman of the National Security Council and the Prime Minister cooperate.

**Germany: a plurality of concepts.** Germany has an abundance of policy framework papers, but no overall strategy. The Action Plan Civilian Crisis Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding (2004) and the White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr (2006) are at the heart of German thinking. These documents exist independently, however. The Action Plan focuses on civilian and preventive engagement, lists strategic priorities and measures and suggests improvements to cross-departmental coordination. The concept of “networked security” set out in the White Paper underlines the importance of a comprehensive approach and cooperation with international organisations.

The term by which Germany’s general crisis effort is to be known also remains

unclear: “networked security” appears to be taking root as a German term for cross-departmental approaches. The term has, however, been rejected particularly by representatives of civil society on the basis of its association with the armed forces. Instead, the term Civilian Crisis Prevention is frequently used in alluding to the Action Plan. Even this creates confusion, however, because Civilian Crisis Prevention is used ambiguously in the Action Plan as a synonym for the entire conflict cycle of prevention, crisis resolution and follow-up and, at the same time, excludes the military option.

The principle of departmental responsibility frequently proves to be a stumbling block to inter-ministerial action. In defiance of all the concepts on coordination or cooperation, departments often pursue their own goals. There is no joint situation analysis, nor development, implementation and evaluation of crisis management policies. The Civilian Crisis Prevention Inter-ministerial Steering Group, set up in 2004 to coordinate the various ministries involved in crisis management and chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has not been able to bring about any great change. It lacks authority and regulating capacity. Deliberations on joint funding pools and early-warning mechanisms have ended inconclusively.

Rather than an over-arching strategy, a plurality of concepts and ad-hoc cooperation are prevalent in Germany. Numerous bodies, gatherings and individual concepts, however, ensure that coordination relating to specific situations is successful. One example is coordination with regard to Afghanistan. In addition to regular meetings of the Departmental Heads, there is a coordinator in the form of the Federal Government’s representative, who is linked to the top-levels of political decision-making.

**France: from ad-hoc cooperation to permanent structures.** French crisis management for a long time took the form of ad-hoc cooperation under the leadership of

the President's office. There was no inter-ministerial strategy, no permanent coordination mechanism and no joint funding pool. Since 2009, however, the government has been setting up institutions, creating strategies for coordination and strengthening the neglected civil dimension.

The White Paper on Defence (2008) had already called for an inter-ministerial coordination structure to be created. The plan agreed under the French EU presidency in 2008 for strengthening EU crisis management capabilities stated that national strategies should be developed to improve the readiness of civilian capabilities. France fulfilled this requirement in 2009 with its national civil and civil-military crisis management strategy.

A two-tier inter-ministerial coordinating committee in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was then set up in the spring of 2010. Its purpose is to implement the political decisions for civilian and civil-military crisis management. The General Secretaries of the ministries involved (Interior, Defence, Health, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Trade and Industry) meet at management level in the Steering Committee under the direction of the Foreign Affairs Ministry to set strategies for countries, regions and subject areas. The development aid agency is called in from time to time. An inter-ministerial permanent taskforce implements these guidelines and coordinates civilian and civil-military activities in the field. The option of joint funding pools is still being considered.

The principal task of the new structure is more effective provision and coordination of resources for civilian crisis management. A training system and pools of experts should be set up. In the light of the French approach, traditionally dominated by the military, the civilian components are noteworthy. It is difficult, however, for this new structure to become established vis-à-vis other departments.

### **Internationally: coordinating broader roles**

The EU, NATO and the UN are some of the most important international players in crisis management. They endeavour to achieve better internal coordination and more effective cooperation with external partners.

**EU: difficulties in coordinating between the EEAS and Commission.** The EU has a wide range of civilian and military instruments at its disposal. However, these are not organised in a single structure with decision-making powers, but are dispersed throughout the European External Action Service (EEAS) under the leadership of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and under the leadership of several Commissioners at the EU Commission. Military and civilian resources (police, judiciary, civil administration) of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) are attached to the EEAS. The Commission has civilian instruments, such as humanitarian aid, development cooperation and democratisation at its disposal. The EU must, therefore, coordinate both civilian and military as well as various civilian instruments within the EEAS, within the Commission and, furthermore, between both of them.

At a conceptual level, the European Security Strategy (2003) emphasises that the different military and civilian capabilities of the EU and its Member States need to be combined. The EU developed the concept of Civil-Military Co-ordination (CMCO) in 2003 in order to coordinate CSDP activities. The purpose of CMCO is to ensure a comprehensive approach at the political-strategic level from the planning phase up to the execution of an operation. CMCO is supplemented by the Crisis Management Procedures, which designate when, during the planning and decision-making stages, the civil and military dimensions will be taken into account.

The Council involves the Commission in these planning processes. Differences in

decision-making and financing, however, make it difficult to coordinate the instruments. The CSDP is organised inter-governmentally, strengthening the influence of the States. The latter, for example, decide on the deployment of military CSDP operations and also fund them. At the supranationally organised Commission, on the other hand, decisions, such as those regarding humanitarian aid, lie with the Commissioners. Funding is secured through the EU budget.

Member States are endeavouring to adapt EU structures to the challenges of comprehensive crisis management. The most recent measure (2009) has been the merger of two former Directorates-General of the Council Secretariat (Defence Issues and Civilian Crisis Management) into a single new structure, the Crisis Management and Planning Directorate. This should provide better coordination of civil and military planning, conduct and capability development. A further example is the EU's Special Representatives. They coordinate the various EU activities in crisis regions and connect Brussels to the field level. Special Representatives were appointed for Sudan, for instance.

The EEAS, which started its work in 2010, should improve consistency and efficiency in the EU's external relations. The relevant functions of the Council Secretariat (CFSP and CSDP) and of the Commission (External Relations) were merged under the leadership of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. However, since important sectors, such as development policy, remain with the Commission, coordination problems are also to be expected in future.

#### **NATO: on track towards civil capabilities?**

NATO declared the principle of a comprehensive approach a planning guideline at the Riga Summit in 2006. This meant initially extending the military planning process to encompass civil aspects and strengthening cooperation with external civil players. Experience in Afghanistan,

however, has shown that this remains a problem area. According to its new Strategic Concept (2010), NATO therefore seeks to form a modest civilian capability which might be used to plan, employ and coordinate civilian activities and to identify and train civilian specialists. The NATO Member States are being called upon to make civilian personnel available.

Independently of this, NATO has taken further measures to integrate the civilian dimension into its internal planning processes and to cooperate more effectively with external civilian players. A Civil-Military Interface Advisor has therefore been appointed at the NATO Headquarters. His job is to maintain contacts with civil actors and develop procedures for interaction. Development cooperation experts are working in the staff of the NATO Commander in Afghanistan. A Senior Civilian Representative has also been at his side since 2003. He manages NATO's relations with the Afghan government, representatives of civil society, the international community and neighbouring states.

In the field, NATO has taken its first partially successful steps by setting up Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan. These are designed to provide local security and to facilitate reconstruction measures. However, there are differences across the 20 or so PRTs with regard to composition, objectives and resources. This is due both to local conditions and decisions taken by lead nations. The interests of those involved at national and sectoral level thus have an impact on the implementation and effectiveness of NATO's comprehensive approach. In the case of Germany, these are the Foreign, Interior, Defence and Economic Cooperation and Development Ministries.

Despite these efforts, NATO remains a military alliance and retains its reputation as a military actor. Civilian players, especially NGOs, do not consider that NATO has a thorough awareness of the importance of the civilian dimension and they frequently eschew cooperation. The planned creation

of NATO's civilian structures thus has two dimensions: it is a sign that NATO recognises their importance, but also a confession that cooperation with external civilian players has not been particularly successful.

**UN: peacebuilding and integrated approaches.** The UN is at the forefront of the development of comprehensive approaches. Since the end of the 1980s, "multidimensional" missions, including political, administrative and social dimensions, have been operating alongside traditional peacekeeping activities. The central coordinating authority is the head of mission, who has senior authority as Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG). He or she coordinates the civil, police and military parts of the mission and manages contacts within the UN system and with non-UN players.

Once they had already been put to practice in the field, multidimensional missions were integrated as a concept into the Agenda for Peace (1992). The demand for a comprehensive understanding of security and the corresponding make-up of operations has since been developed further at strategic and operational levels (e.g. Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations, 2000). Since the 2000s, Integrated Mission Planning Processes (IMPP) and Integrated Missions (IM) have been intended to create greater consistency in planning and implementation. IMPP will involve UN political, humanitarian and development policy agencies and departments as well as other important players, such as neighbouring states, in planning at an early stage at UN headquarters. IM will consolidate the respective UN country team and the mission into a single organisational structure under the leadership of the SRSG. The implementation of the IM and IMPP, however, remains fragmented. Individual players, particularly from the humanitarian sector (the UN Development Programme, for instance) oppose it out of concern for their independence. Moreover, the complexities involved in coordi-

nation are often so great that the actual crisis work suffers.

A further development is the expansion of crisis management to the post-conflict phase. In 2005, the UN created new structures for promoting the consolidation of peace: the Peacebuilding Commission devises strategies and implementation schedules for states weakened by conflict, mobilises resources and coordinates the international commitment. The Commission is currently dealing with six target countries.

In the course of the current reform process at the Department for Peacekeeping Operations (cf. *A New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping*, 2009), the UN would also like to improve coordination with its Member States (particularly troop contributing and donor countries), regional organisations and host nations, using new concepts and structures. Member states are to be more closely involved in the planning process, and the UN would like to enter into further framework agreements with organisations such as the EU, NATO and the AU for mutual support, for instance, in respect of resources.

### **Deficits in approach, structure and political support ...**

Governments and organisations alike emphasise the need for a comprehensive approach. Implementation, however, is difficult to organise, and the results are equivocal. This is attributable to conceptual, structural and political deficits.

There is no common understanding in conceptual terms as to what a comprehensive approach involves. First, there is rarely a coherent framework that defines crisis management objectives, division of tasks and resources. Those involved, whether governments or organisations, are therefore reliant on an implicit consensus. This can only result in coordinated action, however, if implemented with strong, political authority. Second, the actors involved use different terms for a comprehensive ap-

proach, as shown by the German coexistence of “networked security” and civilian crisis prevention. This lack of clarity in terminology is confusing and makes communication and cooperation difficult. Third, many concepts, aside from NATO and the UN, have to date been predominantly targeted at internal coordination, that is, *within* the players’ own structures. Coordination with external players, whether with NGOs, governments or international organisations, is just as important, however, for effective crisis management.

In structural terms, coordination requires alignment in a wider context as well. This may mean to restrict competences and resources. National and international structures, however, are largely resistant to change. Protection of vested rights, minority interests and constitutionally protected regulations, such as the departmental principle, are dominant here. The new coordination structures, inter-ministerial coordinating offices or common funding pools, for instance, often have ambitious mandates. However, they also often lack authority, sufficient contact with political leadership and access to financial resources to fulfil their mandates effectively. The scope of action of the British Stabilisation Unit therefore depends on whether the inter-ministerial committee is able to agree on a common denominator. In international organisations, restructuring efforts often need to be supported by all members. The resulting delays or compromises usually affect the new structures in terms of restricted finance and staff. To assure comprehensive EU crisis management, it would be helpful to command short and long-term military and civilian instruments from one source and to combine all expertise under one roof. However, the Commission did not want to hand over such responsibilities (humanitarian aid, for instance) to the EEAS. The EU States for their part were not willing to surrender competences in security policy to the Commission. The Commission and EEAS will thus continue to act side by side: coordinated in the

best case scenario and, in the worst case scenario, in parallel.

The conceptual and structural deficits listed above lead to the identification of one overriding success factor for the comprehensive approach, namely political leadership. Leadership is critical for strategy development, deploying concrete support and implementing structural change.

### **... create problems in the field**

As a result of these deficits, conflicts of interest arise. They usually run along two interactive lines:

*Horizontal interaction* means that various actors cooperate at the same level of hierarchy, at the field level in the crisis region and at the strategic level within capital cities or within organisational headquarters. Differences in planning, recruitment and priorities inhibit cooperation for instance between civilian and military forces at the field level. It is, for example, difficult to reconcile short-term military measures with the long-term measures usually applied in development cooperation. Tensions also arise, however, within the allegedly homogeneous military and civilian sectors. The extent to which different national mandate specifications are able to affect multinational military operations can be observed in the PRTs in Afghanistan. Uncoordinated or rival activities in the civilian sector can thwart the objective at the time. During the UN operation in Croatia between 1996 and 1998, the objective of the mission was the stabilisation of the crisis region. This was, however, not in line with the objective of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, which was the repatriation of refugees. A rapid return would have had a politically destabilising effect.

*Vertical interaction* describes the interaction between the field and the strategic levels of a mission; that is, the interaction of different hierarchical levels. Problems are usually viewed differently, depending on whether they are seen from the perspective



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of the mission in the field or the headquarters in the capitals. Unrealistic instructions, delayed decisions or inadequate resource allocation can result. During the operation EUFOR RD Congo (2006), the headquarters in Europe did not take very seriously the fear at operational level that the conflict might escalate. As a consequence, the necessary resources were made ready at a very late stage.

Not only too little coordination, but also too much of it can have an adverse impact. If coordination becomes an end in itself, the success of the operation will be put at risk, as the UN's experiences in the Sudan shows. Many resources have been deployed simply to improve coordination mechanisms. As a result, the actual task, namely the implementation of the UN mandate, suffered.

## Prospects and recommendations

Excessive expectations and disappointing practical experience are increasingly calling into question the benefits of the comprehensive approach. The challenge remains the same, however. Complex crises need to be comprehensively dealt with. There is no alternative, particularly as uncoordinated action can have fatal financial, security and moral consequences, both for the "crisis managers" (the governments and organisations involved) and for the regions in crisis. Comprehensive approaches within foreign policy strategies and priorities therefore need to be developed further, rooted more firmly within institutions and appropriately funded.

► **Developing crisis-specific approaches.** Practice shows that an overarching concept that embraces all actors involved cannot realistically be implemented. Nor would it be sensible, because each crisis is different. Instead, different crisis-specific comprehensive approaches are needed. These would need to define the core processes for crisis management (security sector reform, for instance) as well as the duties and areas of

responsibility of individual players at each stage of a conflict.

► **Earliest possible cooperation.** Cooperation that begins only in the field has very little room for manoeuvre. All those involved need to arrive at a common understanding of the problem, already at the planning stage, in order to achieve strategic agreement on the division of labour and coordination. Departments and divisions should develop clear points of contact and establish binding exchange procedures with internal and external partners in their planning processes.

► **Harmonising organisational cultures.** Joint planning and action is only possible if partners understand one another. Thus, organisational cultures need to concur. Governmental departments and divisions of international organisations should set up inter-ministerial committees that meet on a regular basis, exchange staff with one another and provide joint training courses and instruction. This should ensure a constant flow of information and mutual understanding of working methods and decision-making processes, by creating tighter coordination and a greater willingness to cooperate.

► **Combining the resources.** Funding pools that provide resources for integrated projects can be the driving force behind a common understanding of the division of labour, coordination and therefore concerted action. They can be set up at national and international levels.

► **Recognising limits to the comprehensive approach.** Anyone wanting to operate strategy-compliant crisis management needs to recognise that there is a difference between close cooperation or even integration on the one hand and pure coordination or administration of a division of labour among those involved on the other hand. Comprehensive approaches are not a universal remedy in crisis management and should not be used for their own sake.