



» XI Congresso Luso Afro Brasileiro de Ciências Sociais

Diversidades e (Des)igualdades

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COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH: VALIDADE, CONCEITO E DESAFIOS*

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Nos últimos anos, a chamada *Comprehensive Approach* (CA) ou “abordagem completa” emergiu no léxico da segurança internacional quer a propósito da gestão de crises e conflitos quer em todos os esforços e missões de promoção da paz e da segurança. A questão já não é tanto saber se as organizações internacionais e os Estados precisam de desenvolver a CA mas, sobretudo, definir o seu conteúdo e a forma de a operacionalizar. Esta tarefa não é, todavia, fácil em virtude da ambiguidade do conceito, da complexidade de situações em que a CA pode ser aplicada e da diversidade dos actores envolvidos. Este trabalho pretende contribuir para um melhor entendimento da validade da CA, justificando a sua necessidade, meditando sobre o seu significado, analisando de que forma certas organizações a vêm implementando e ponderando os respectivos desafios e dilemas.

Background – the need of the CA

The first previous point that I'd like to mention is the changing nature of international security. If we look back only 20 years ago, almost everything has changed in the international security field: we face now

- many different security challenges, such as terrorism, energy insecurity, paramilitary forces and Lords of war, proliferation of weapons and dangerous materials, cyber attacks, fragile states and post-conflict state-building, countering insurgency, sea piracy, displaced populations, organized crime, or trafficking in humans and drugs;

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- a lot more international actors are involved in peace and security efforts other than States or the UN, such as regional organizations (NATO, EU, OSCE or African Union), multinational coalitions, private military firms, financial institutions and donors or NGO's;
- And a new generation of “multi-dimensional” peace and security operations has emerged.

At the same time, the nature of warfare and of the armed conflict has also evolved dramatically. Fortunately, international wars are extremely rare today and are likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. However, the civil war story is quite different. Most of today's armed conflicts are so-called 'low-intensity' civil wars, almost all of which take place in the developing world. They tend to be 'asymmetric' conflicts in which strong and high-tech international forces fight poorly armed opponents that targeting civilian. Many of these conflicts take place in the world's poorest countries where state capacity may be weak, and where belligerents may be motivated by economic gain, as much as ideology or past grievances. Moreover, evidence has shown that a large proportion of all civil wars are due to a relapse of conflict, the risks of which are particularly high in the first five to 10 years following a conflict.

Accordingly, a new approach to promote peace and international security is needed because the conventional frameworks that have traditionally prescribed policies and strategies to prevent wars between states are largely irrelevant to violent conflicts within states. The latter now make up more than 95% of armed conflicts.

The international community's successes in reducing armed conflict worldwide in the post-Cold War era have been achieved despite inadequate resources, ad hoc planning, inappropriate mandates and lack of support from the countries most able to help. The risk of new wars breaking out—or old ones resuming—is very real in the absence of a sustained and strengthened commitment to conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding. The post-Cold War decline in conflict numbers was not inevitable—and it is certainly not irreversible. But while there is no room for complacency, nor is there any cause for pessimism. The evidence suggests the main driver of change has been the extraordinary upsurge of activism by the international community that has been directed



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toward conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding. With additional resources, more appropriate mandates, and a greater commitment to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, far more could be achieved. Effective policy doesn't just need extra resources and greater political commitment. It also requires a better understanding of global, regional and local security trends—and of why some conflict prevention and mitigation strategies succeed while others fail.

On the other hand, the evidence suggests that the risk of civil conflict is reduced by equitable economic growth, good governance and inclusive democracy. Development, in other words, appears to be a necessary condition for security, just as security is a necessary condition for development.

Foreign or international intervention - meaning the direct and coercive application of military force in internal conflicts to affect their course and outcome – has become a regular feature of international politics. But Peace enforcement and Peacekeeping are only two among a broad range of activities undertaken by international organizations and multinational coalitions to maintain international peace and security throughout the world. Although peacekeeping is the focus of many international security efforts, it is important to understand, first, how it relates to and differs from conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace enforcement and peacebuilding and, second, that the boundaries between conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and peace enforcement have become increasingly blurred. These activities rarely occur in a linear or sequential way. Peace and security operations are rarely limited to one type of activity and there are, in fact, a lot of grey areas.

This means that an effective coordination of all these activities is needed. However, the international community's ability to combine these activities effectively remains limited and this has, in some cases, resulted in critical gaps in the international response to crises that have threatened international peace and security.

The growing recognition within the international community of the linkages between peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding roles also brings the need to put working together relevant actors, including States, international or regional organizations, UN agencies, armed forces, police officers, intelligence services, international financial institutions and other donors, civil society organizations, NGO's and others.



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At the same time, the transformation of the international security environment has given rise to a new generation of “multi-dimensional” peace and security operations. These operations are typically deployed in the dangerous aftermath of a violent internal conflict and may employ a mix of military, police and civilian capabilities to support the implementation of a comprehensive peace.

Of course, every situation presents its own specific set of challenges. However, experience has shown that the achievement of a sustainable peace requires progress in at least four critical areas:

- a) Restoring the State’s ability to provide security and maintain public order;
- b) Strengthening the rule of law and respect for human rights;
- c) Supporting the emergence of legitimate political institutions and participatory processes;
- d) Promoting social and economic recovery and development, including the safe return or resettlement of internally displaced persons and refugees uprooted by conflict.

The international community are thus increasingly deployed into complex and volatile situations where the separation between the war fighting phase and the peace support phase is unclear. The requirement for post-conflict reconstruction and stabilisation has become central. This involves a significant overlap of work by several internal and international departments and agencies, which makes a well co-ordinated and joint approach essential. On the other hand, in recent years, most of the countries have only operated in coalition with allies and international organizations where a common understanding of methods and desired outcomes becomes yet more important.

The Comprehensive Approach is thus needed because the large number of different players and the complexity of the coordination of those players. This is very much so in Afghanistan. NATO assumed leadership of ISAF in August 2003. Since then, the operation has grown from 5000 to more than 100,000 troops, coming from forty-six countries, including NATO members and partners. As General McColl (Deputy Supreme Allied Command Europe) pointed out in June 2009



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«Each of them has three or more departments involved in this issue of the Comprehensive Approach. We then have at least ten others who are critical players in the country. We have international organisations—another 20—we then have NGOs, who run into their hundreds. Then on top of that, of course, we have the Afghan National Government. All of that needs corralling and the idea of having one single hand that is going to control all of that is clearly wishful thinking. Therefore, what we have to have is a concept which enables us to coordinate a reference in a coherent way, and the Comprehensive Approach, as we have heard, is the language of common currency in Afghanistan and in many of these theatres, because it is commonly understood that we need to work together. So I think from that perspective it is absolutely essential that we have a comprehensive approach and that we spell it out.»

In August 2009, General McChrystal (then Commander of NATO International Security Assistance Force [ISAF]) also reported that working in a coalition presented inherent difficulties:

«As formidable as the threat may be, we make the problem harder. ISAF is a conventional force that is poorly configured for counter-insurgency, inexperienced in local languages and culture, and struggling with challenges inherent to coalition warfare. These intrinsic disadvantages are exacerbated by our current operational culture and how we operate.

Preoccupied with the protection of our own forces, we have operated in a manner that distances us—physically and psychologically—from the people we seek to protect. In addition, we run the risk of strategic defeat by pursuing tactical wins that cause civilian casualties or unnecessary collateral damage. The insurgents cannot defeat us militarily but we can defeat ourselves.»

The complexity in contemporary and foresee future conflict areas highlights the need to develop coherence and coordination at different levels in parallel, within an international organization or government, between organizations and governments and between external and internal actors in crisis and conflict areas. There is broad consensus that inconsistent policies and fragmented programmes entail a higher risk of



duplication, inefficient spending, a lower quality of service, difficulty in meeting goals and, ultimately a reduced capacity for delivery.

Definitions and Development of the Comprehensive Approach

However, there is no one commonly agreed definition of what a Comprehensive Approach entails. Most of the definitions include the following elements:

- that the approach is horizontal, including both civilian and military parties and, where possible, allies and international organisations and local nationals;
- and vertical, taking account of the different stages in the situation from the initial war fighting phase to reconstruction.

Other definitions usually contain “engage, secure, hold and develop” elements. The CA can also be used in situations where there is no initial war fighting phase. In its simplest definition, the “comprehensive approach” means blending civilian and military tools and enforcing co-operation between international organizations and Government departments, not only for operations but more broadly to deal with many of the 21st century security challenges.

We could also define CA using the Multinational Experiment 5 (MNE) concept «as the wide scope of actions undertaken in a coordinated and collaborative manner by national and multinational civilian government agencies, military forces, international and intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to achieve greater harmonization in the planning, management, and evaluation of coalition interventions in complex contingencies and emergencies».

The CA is generally based on four guiding principles:

- *Proactive Engagement*, if possible ahead of a crisis, enables coordinated approaches to complex situations. This requires a shared approach to the collection and interpretation of crisis indicators and warnings in order to inform planning and increase the time available for reaction.
- *Shared Understanding* between parties is essential to optimize the effectiveness of their various capabilities. Where possible, shared understanding should be engendered through cooperative working practices, liaison and education in between crises.



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- *Outcome-Based Thinking*. All participants involved in crisis resolution need to base their thinking on outcomes and what is required to deliver a favourable situation, when planning and conducting activities. Planning and activity should be focused on a single purpose and progress judged against mutually agreed measures of effectiveness.
- *Collaborative Working*. Institutional familiarity, generated through personal contact and human networking, enhances collaborative working and mutual trust. Integrated information management, infrastructure and connectivity enable information sharing and common working practices.

The fact is whilst there is no commonly accepted definition for the CA, there is broad agreement that the CA requires a wide spectrum of civil and military instruments (integrating the political, security, development, rule of law, human rights and humanitarian dimensions) which calls for regular coordination, coherence, consultation and interaction among all actors involved - including governments, regional and international organizations, NGO's, civil society, the private sector and local authorities.

The Comprehensive Approach is a relatively new concept but the combination of civilian and military actors in a counter-insurgency operation is not new. Many strategists and observers refer back to strategies adopted in previous conflicts and in successful counter-insurgency campaigns in the past, for example, during the Portuguese colonial wars. However, the CA is more than the civil-military articulation, as the concept had developed mainly in the last decade from lessons learned in Bosnia, Kosovo and Sierra Leone, where development, humanitarian and political activities were integral to the desired end state, and, also in Iraq and Afghanistan, with the failure of post-conflict operations. In this sense, the Comprehensive Approach also developed out of the concept of effects-based operations.

Central to the concept of a Comprehensive Approach are stabilization operations. Stabilization operations combine military, political and development actions. Military intervention seeks to assist in the disarmament and demobilisation of armed opposition, to start the process of building effective security forces and to provide the security



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needed for the efforts of other actors. Political engagement seeks to ensure that there is a workable inclusive settlement that addresses the underlying causes of conflict and promotes reconciliation. Capacity building support seeks to enable the Government to extend its authority. This means laying the foundations of law and basic economic governance. It also means putting in place the building blocks for sustainable development through supporting basic infrastructure and service delivery, and a framework for the private sector. Underpinning all these must be effective strategic communication, both in the country concerned and at home, to avoid unrealistic expectations and sustain support.

The Comprehensive Approach is widely accepted as valid in most situations where military force is required and in other situations such as those requiring post-conflict reconstruction and stabilisation. It is crucial that, in all situations requiring the CA, certain elements should be agreed at the very earliest stage based on a thorough and all embracing assessment of the situation. These elements include leadership, objectives, a defined end state, strategy, tactics and the nature of personnel required. This assessment may need to be amended in response to changing threats and other circumstances but this should not prevent an early assessment taking place which reflects the needs and expectations of local nationals. Communication is a key component of any strategy and needs to include plans for conveying the strategic intent of the mission to local nationals and also to the international audiences in an informative but fair and balanced way.

This kind of evidence and recognition led to the development of the Comprehensive Approach and its adoption by Governments and by international organizations, seeking to make improvements in several key areas:

- planning and conduct of operations;
- lessons learned, training, education and exercises;
- wider participation and greater coordination between their own Departments and Agencies;
- enhancing cooperation with external partners;
- leadership arrangements;
- public messaging;



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- measurement of effectiveness;
- etc.

These efforts present an opportunity to ensure that the CA is embedded in future Governmental and international policies and that their structures, agencies, and personnel are designed, trained and equipped to perform their role in security and peace support operations. In fact, International organizations such as the UN, NATO, the EU and the OSCE are developing their concepts and structures for a more comprehensive approach to crisis management and security efforts.

The rationale behind the CA at the multilateral level is three-fold. The first motivation stems from recognition that the goals of military and civilian instruments are co-dependent: harmonizing these efforts requires compromises and developing understanding between military and non-military actors. The second motive is to avoid duplication of efforts, and the consequent waste of energy and resources. The third motivation for a CA at the multilateral level is to improve multinational capabilities to act in a constantly evolving and ambiguous security environment with increased unpredictability and asymmetry of threats and players; to develop multinational skills in areas such as institution building, development, governance, judiciary and police; and to strengthen the organization's ability to work with other partners and actors.

The UN has taken steps to move towards a more comprehensive approach to peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Measures include joint assessments, joint programme frameworks, and the adoption of integrated UN Missions in a number of countries, such as Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste. There is also the new Peacebuilding Commission, which supports peace efforts in countries emerging from conflict. Its role includes bringing together all relevant actors, marshalling resources, and supporting the development of integrated peacebuilding strategies.

The United Nations issued Guidelines on Integrated Missions Planning Process in June 2006. This guidance provided for a comprehensive and inclusive UN system approach to planning of integrated missions, bringing together different UN departments and agencies and formed part of the broader UN peacebuilding strategy. In addition, the UN is working to improve joint working with other partners. For example, in 2008, it signed



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the UN-World Bank Partnership Framework for Crisis and Post-Crisis Situations and a Joint Declaration on Post-Crisis Assessments and Recovery Planning with the World Bank and the European Commission.

NATO adopted political guidance on the Comprehensive Approach in 2006. In April 2008, NATO agreed an Action Plan with pragmatic proposals to develop and implement its contribution to a comprehensive approach. The plan states that NATO—the Headquarters, the Command Structure and the nations—wants to bring together all the resources at its disposal—military and civilian—to deal with the problems that face it. It also focused on improving NATO’s co-operation with other actors, including other international organisations and NGOs. The Comprehensive Strategic Political Military Plan for Afghanistan, agreed at the same time, embodied this. In April 2009, NATO reaffirmed this approach at the Strasbourg-Kehl Summit, and its New Strategic Concept approved by the Heads of State and Government at the Lisbon Summit in November 2010 confirmed the priority afforded to the Comprehensive Approach. Meanwhile, NATO is developing pragmatic efforts which seek to make improvements in five key areas of work: Planning and conduct of operations; Lessons learned, training, education and exercises; Enhancing cooperation with external actors; Public messaging; Stabilization and reconstruction.

As well as being the biggest donor of development funding, the European Union (EU) has a powerful set of civilian and military resources which should enable it to apply a comprehensive approach to crisis management: civilian expertise, judges, police officers and customs officials; military force, economic might and the most extensive diplomatic network in the world. Since the launch of the first European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) mission in 2003, the EU has deployed civilian and military personnel in three continents. Of the 25 ESDP operations launched to date most have had a more civilian than military focus—helping to build the rule of law, support peace agreements or monitor borders. In the wider context of the EU’s ability to adopt a Comprehensive Approach, the existing pillar structures of the EU institutions have a fragmented approach to crisis management, post-conflict reconstruction and development. There is a gap in culture, working practice and political direction,



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between the Commission and the Council Secretariat, and within the Secretariat between the policy and operations arms.

There are standing arrangements agreed for consultation and co-operation between the EU and NATO. EU military operations thus fall into two categories: “Berlin Plus” operations using NATO command and control arrangements, like EUFOR ALTHEA in Bosnia; and “autonomous” operations using command and control provided by one or more Member States, like Operation ATALANTA in the Gulf of Aden.

The United States Joint Forces Command’s (USJFCOM) initiated a program of Multinational Experimentation to develop better ways to plan and conduct coalition operations. The campaign - called Multinational Experiment (MNE) - uses a building block approach of seminars and limited objective experiments that is distributed among multinational partners and conducted through a series of integrating events. This approach allows concepts and insights to emerge over the course of the experiment campaign.

Since the first experiment in 2001, the MNE community has developed structures, processes and tools designed to make future multinational engagements in crisis interventions more effective and efficient. Beginning in June 2005, the MNE community decided to integrate the results from previous experiments with lessons learned from practitioners in the field and examine their interrelationships within a coherent, comprehensive framework. Using sub-Saharan Africa scenario, Multinational Experiment 5 (MNE 5), from 2008 to 2010, was the most recent experiment in this series and included civilian and military representatives of a large group of nations and international organizations. It examined capabilities, both individually and collectively, that will enable coalition partners to be better prepared to respond to global drivers of instability using a “comprehensive approach.”

Even though substantial progress has been made by these organizations, they also have a long way to go in developing internally coherent operational concepts. The UN, EU, NATO and OSCE suffer from internal, institutional and interagency rivalry, and all suffer from disagreement and fragmentation between member states. It is important to note that national governments represented in different international organizations play



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a vital role in bringing coherence to multilateral approaches: a vital question is then how multinational and national Comprehensive Approaches interact and what the relationship between them is. Furthermore, there is still an ideological gap between political/military actors on the one side and humanitarian actors on the other.

The Comprehensive Approach is difficult to implement because of the number of parties usually engaged in a conflict situation. In addition, interactions occur at many different levels between international allies and partners so increasing the complexity. This difficulty makes relationships, co-ordination and understanding between international organisations and allies all the more important. The Comprehensive Approach is often characterised by the large number of different players and the complexity of the coordination of those players.

There is evidence that the Comprehensive Approach is beginning to work in the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere but there is still much to develop especially in working multi-nationally with allies and international organisations. We have heard a lot said about the importance of the Approach but if it is to continue to work in Afghanistan and in future areas of conflict, then the policy must be given the leadership, political clout and resources it needs. Many of the ingredients for such a policy and doctrine already exist but are not brought together in one place.

Conclusions

The military instrument cannot operate in isolation and successful operations and enduring outcomes must involve a wide range of instruments (both military and civilian) and of contributors and influences. Comprehensive analysis, planning, execution and measurement of effectiveness should enable a more effective and efficient deployment of national and multinational capabilities, including heavily tasked military assets. The CA could be used to improve the coherence of responses to conflicts and crises, as well as to deal with asymmetric security challenges.

A Comprehensive Approach is beneficial on all levels: strategic, operational and tactical. Special attention should be paid to linking security and development together in



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fragile states and taking the local population and authorities increasingly into consideration in the field. Furthermore, the capabilities and expertise invested in various NGOs are assets which are currently underused.

It is evident that the need for a clear strategy and vision has been recognized for Iraq, Afghanistan and other areas of conflict. It is important that all parties share an understanding of the context and nature of the challenges faced. In present and future situations where the CA is adopted all relevant international organizations, government departments and the Armed Forces should agree a clear set of objectives with appropriate measures of achievement and with a clearly defined end state set in the context of the nature of the challenges faced. The need for post-conflict reconstruction and stabilization should be recognized and incorporated into the planning at the earliest stages. These objectives may need to adapt and evolve but it is essential that the agencies pursuing the CA have an agreed and feasible end state in mind at every appropriate juncture.

Joint training is an important element in the integration of civilian and military staff and in the successful use of the Comprehensive Approach. There should be a greater sharing of training and education, and at the minimum, civilians being posted to conflict areas should participate in pre-deployment training with the military about to be sent to such areas.

As the ability to communicate and share data is key to the further development of the CA, the international organizations and multinational coalitions should provide all partners with an action plan for how they intend to remedy the deficiencies in communication, information systems and data sharing between their Departments and forces in the field. The plan should include details of who will be responsible for delivering the plan and its constituent parts as well as the timetable for implementation.

NGOs are an important component in the use of the CA and have much to offer, not only in terms of humanitarian aid work but in their knowledge and understanding of the region and the needs of local people. The International organizations and national departments should expand their work with NGOs to identify better ways to draw on their expertise and to ensure that each side is aware of the other's activities without compromising the safety of aid workers on the ground.



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To make change happen on the ground, it is crucial to work with the local community and if possible to build on the structures and systems in place. This work needs to be conducted at three levels, local, regional and national. It is not straightforward to identify what local people want. There are many needs in countries such as Iraq, Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo and Afghanistan, with many competing factions and voices. The local population will have been significantly affected by the original conflict and the current security situation. It is important that the capability and confidence of local people is built up in all fields such as security, governance, law and order and development. The capacity to undertake reconstruction needs to be developed in local authorities.

On the other hand, an important component of working with local people is the ability to communicate directly with them in their own language. That's why Governments and international organizations should provide training and education on the culture, history and politics of areas where their staff will be deployed on the CA.

The development and implementation of a CA is a long-term effort, always being a work in progress. The cooperative development of a CA can and should be pursued at different levels in parallel: Culture and Values, Doctrine and Strategy, Leadership and Structures, and Management. The CA is all about developing mechanisms and cultures of understanding, sharing and collaboration, both vertically and horizontally between national departments, nations and international organizations and non-State actors.

The key point of the CA is not just to win a war but to make a better peace. That's why the CA is not an end in itself but a means to an end: to achieve better outcomes in a sustainable way.