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# The Comprehensive Approach to EU Crisis Management: Contexts, Lessons Identified, and Policy Implications\*

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**Abstract:** Contemporary military operations take place in complex environments that are populated by multiple civilian and humanitarian actors facing an array of challenging issues that are not precisely ‘military’ in nature. This has increased the importance of addressing and managing the civil-military interface, particularly that between military and humanitarian organisations. In recognising that their relationship is not harmonious, organisations such as the EU have developed a so-called ‘Comprehensive Approach’ (CA) to better align the military and civilian responses to fragile states. Surprisingly, the EU’s CA has been understudied while its counterparts at NATO and the UN have received much of the attention. This article fills that gap, and shows that although the CA is clearly visible in official EU documents, the EU’s practical challenges with implementing and ‘living’ it remain immense.

**Keywords:** EU, comprehensive approach, crisis management, lessons identified, operational implication.

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

International crisis management operations frequently operate in low-intensity and counterinsurgency-type environments where insurgent forces often use asymmetric tactics against (Western) military forces.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, these operations are often long-drawn-out affairs lasting decades, with civilian and military actors fighting for the 'hearts and minds' of the local population such as in Afghanistan.<sup>3</sup> In such multifaceted peace operations, military mandates by definition are broader, more ambiguous, and include multidimensional tasks, including facilitating humanitarian relief, protecting the local population, or rebuilding the state and its institutions.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, there are a large number of civilian organisations who regularly interact with the military in providing fragile and conflict-affected societies with humanitarian services (e.g. delivering food, erecting housing, building refugee camps, supplying medical care etc.). Indeed, these civilian agencies often even operate under the protection of the military. While on the surface, this civilian-military relationship seems to be harmonious, it is not. To the contrary, it is often characterised as antagonistic, competitive and full of (mutual) mistrust and misunderstandings. Pamela Aall explains the differences between civilian and military operators by noting that

[t]raditionally, [civilians] and the military have perceived their roles to be distinctly different and separate. [Civilians] have felt uneasy with military forces, either from their own countries or from the country receiving assistance, particularly when the latter are employed in the service of dictators with unsavory human rights records. Military leaders, on the other hand, tend to regard [civilians] as undisciplined and their operations as uncoordinated and disjointed.<sup>5</sup>

While operational practice shows that militaries are clearly in charge of the civilian-military operational space, they regularly have no particular desire to acquire a role in providing humanitarian assistance in fragile and conflict-affected states. They make clear to their political masters that humanitarian assistance is not their primary responsibility but that of the humanitarian NGO community (e.g. Oxfam). Militaries, so goes their argument, are neither trained nor equipped to perform such tasks effectively. By contrast, humanitarian agencies, as Reuben Brigety reminds us,

[...] see themselves as dedicated to responding to humanitarian suffering for as long as such suffering exists, regardless of the affiliation of those in need, for as long as they have the capacity to respond, and as

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1 We would like to thank Katelyn Cassin and Sheena Chan for their research assistance.

2 Kaldor 1999; Smith 2005.

3 Johnson and Zellen 2014.

4 Egnell 2009.

5 Aall 1996, 440.

long as security conditions permit. All other political and strategic considerations are, generally speaking, irrelevant.<sup>6</sup>

While the antagonistic relationship between military and civilian actors in an operational space of crisis is well-known and established, the literature has long pointed to the need to better coordinate the military and civilian sides in post-conflict reconstruction operations where the responsibilities and actions of each overlap—that is, to increase the coordination among them and to sharpen mutual awareness for each other’s work.<sup>7</sup> Such a need emerged out of the post-Cold War intra-state conflicts in the early 1990s, many of which were of ethnic nature, especially in the Balkans where different ethnicities were fighting a civil war. One of the first lessons learnt from the Balkan experience is that these types of operations require a unified response on the part of both civilian and military actors.<sup>8</sup> In other words, the key to mission effectiveness and efficiency was coordination and coherence among the respective civilian and military actors. It required greater policy coherence and policy efficiency. Another lesson learnt was that both civilian and military operators openly clashed about tactics, strategy, and type of operations while being deployed into the field.<sup>9</sup> To put it simply, there were just too many actors and too many (policy) ideas as to what should be done in theatre.

Throughout the 1990s, and in dealing with and managing international crises like these, some states and international organisations (e.g. NATO, EU, UN) concluded that military organisations alone could not resolve modern conflicts. Especially with the Afghanistan missions after 9/11, a more concrete need emerged among international donors to harmonise the coordination of civilian *and* military actors’ operational behaviour.<sup>10</sup> The benchmark against which these discussions took place was, as mentioned, the need for greater policy coherence in a crowded international crisis management space. It was also fuelled by strong material factors. With the Cold War’s end, Western governments continuously cut the budgets of their foreign, development, and defence ministries, including their engagements abroad. Thus, a bundling of resources and even a joint approach, where military and civilian actors supported each other in the operational theatre, were considered potential solutions to the problem. These occasionally philosophical deliberations as to how to achieve this eventually led to the so-called ‘comprehensive approach’ (CA) to crisis management, which calls for a coordinated response combining the vast array of states’ toolkits to assist fragile and conflict-affected states or regions.

We can trace the earliest references to the CA back to 2001 when the UN Security Council noted that “[t]he quest for peace requires a comprehensive, concerted and determined approach that addresses the root causes of conflicts, including their economic and social

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6 Brigety 2004.

7 On the civil-military tensions see e.g. Gheciu 2012.

8 Bugajski 2000, 178–185; Wendling 2011, 19–20.

9 *Ibid.*

10 OECD DAC 2006.

dimensions [...] that must involve all the relevant actors in this field [...]”<sup>11</sup> From then on, effective international crisis management embraced a comprehensive approach involving political, civilian and military instruments. As a result of these developments, the CA’s visibility quickly spread beyond the UN; European Union member states and the EU itself also began to draft CA approaches for themselves. While much has been written about the CA on the NATO and UN side,<sup>12</sup> especially in light of the Afghanistan mission and the need to better coordinate civilian and military efforts there, the literature assessing the CA of the EU has been surprisingly thin and underdeveloped.<sup>13</sup> This is a gap that this article intends to fill. We argue that while the EU’s effort to implement the CA is clearly visible, the practical difficulties with implementing and ‘living’ it remain significant, particularly with regard to how the EU’s CA relates to the different CAs of its member states, and how to overcome the significant civilian/military divide that is deeply rooted in differing cultures, structures, and practices.

The article is structured as follows. We first examine how and why the CA emerged. Indeed, it emerged out of very specific historical and political contexts at the level of both (Western) states and international organisations that had become increasingly involved in international crisis management operations. That context first needs to be understood to better appreciate what the CA was designed for in a rather crowded space of international crisis management, and then, in a second step, to be able to assess how it has performed in the field. Taken together, this provides the context in which the CA is embedded. The second section analyses how the CA is ingrained within EU documents and practices. Here we trace the CA’s origins in EU treaties and documents. The last section analyses the EU’s application of the CA in the field since it was officially implemented, as well as the lessons learnt.

## **Situating the Comprehensive Approach in a Larger Context**

### *The Security-Development Nexus and Fragile States*

To start with, at its heart, the CA is about the operationalisation or the practical application of the so-called security-development nexus. The end of the Cold War brought about a significant change in our understanding of security, moving away from state-based concepts to focus instead on the human security.<sup>14</sup> Within parallel to this expansion at the Cold War’s end were changing contexts, with an estimated 25% of the global population

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11 UNSC 2001.

12 Greentree 2013, 338; Maass 2012; Petersen and Binnendijk 2007. Todd Greentree (2013, 38), among others, cites US General Petraeus: “You don’t kill or capture your way out of an industrial-strength insurgency, which is what faces Afghanistan [...]. It takes a comprehensive approach, and not just military but civil-military”.

13 Sweeney and Winn 2017; Hauck and Rocca 2014; Pirozzi 2013; Shalamanov 2011.

14 Kaldor 1999.

living in fragile states, and close to 90% of the civil wars from 2001-2011 taking place in countries that had already experienced an earlier civil war within the previous three decades.<sup>15</sup> In response to a rapidly growing demand for international peace operations in fragile states,<sup>16</sup> it was recognised that questions of development and security were inextricably linked<sup>17</sup> – that is, security came to be considered instrumental to development efforts being effective, and vice versa.<sup>18</sup> It is important to recognise this nexus here, as it allows us to better situate the EU's thinking on why combining civilian and military resources in crisis management operations became important.

Second, discussions about the CA usually take place in the context of those fragile states that have become major challenges to international security and development,<sup>19</sup> especially after the terrorist attacks on 9/11<sup>20</sup> and thus a 'natural' concern to the EU. Researchers became interested in trying to better understand what variables cause states to become fragile, for example whether states facing high levels of illicit drug trade, organised crime, terrorism, or infectious disease are more or less likely to become fragile.<sup>21</sup> While no conclusive answers have been found thus far, Nicolas Lemay-Hébert and Tobias Debiel *et al.* remind us that poor public services (e.g. security, welfare, clean water, energy, healthcare, education); a lack of formal infrastructure for economic activity and opportunity for the local population; a lack of stable/effective political and legal institutions and often in parallel a rise of vigilante justice, as well as an obvious restriction of political rights and freedoms causally affect fragile states.<sup>22</sup> These are important insights for the policy world as officials try to comprehend how best to stabilise fragile states and address the root causes of insecurity, underdevelopment and conflict more generally.<sup>23</sup> While on the one hand extreme poverty and diseases threaten the lives of people directly, on the other hand they also provide the conditions for larger threats (e.g. civil conflicts or terrorism).<sup>24</sup> For the EU

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15 Anderson and Olson 2003; von der Schulenburg 2014.

16 The rise in the number of UN peacekeeping operations is well established in the literature (see Diehl 2014).

17 UN 2004.

18 Stewart 2004, 278; ISN ETH Zurich 2012. However, analysts continue to argue about the direction of causality in that relationship. To complicate things even more, both the security and development paradigm overlap significantly in their interest in education, health care, violence, or national wealth (Stewart 2004, 278).

19 Nay 2013.

20 Chandler 2007.

21 Ghani and Lockhart 2008; Herbst 2004; von Einsiedel 2005.

22 Lemay-Hébert 2009; Debiel *et al.* 2005.

23 See Chandler 2007; Stern and Orjendal 2010; Stewart 2004. There is a significant debate in the literature on determining the exact characteristics of fragile and failed states. Here, it is sufficient to state that, generally speaking, these states experience the loss of monopoly of violence; an inability of the state to provide citizens with basic public goods (following a social contract view of the state); and a breakdown of economic institutions (and argument often used by economists).

24 Collier and Hoeffler 2004.

it was important to understand this link at the policy level, and in designing the EU's CA. As a result, for example, security policies (including the EU's own security strategies) have come to include explicit references to development and poverty reduction in the global fight against terrorism.<sup>25</sup> It argues that joint civilian and military crisis management actors could promote cooperation, reduce risks of civil conflicts, and ensure the protection of local communities and foreign workers.<sup>26</sup>

### *International Organisations Responding*

A number of international organizations responded to these developments and became important actors in the security-development nexus themselves. In other words, the EU was not alone in developing a CA; it was just one of several international institutions that developed their own CA based on the security-development nexus. For example, by publishing its *Agenda for Peace* in 1992 and calling upon new tasks for modern peace-operators, such as providing humanitarian relief, building and protecting refugee camps, or monitoring elections<sup>27</sup>, the UN invited them to enter an already crowded space of international crisis management where a number of civilian crisis management organizations and NGO's work alongside the military. However, what was lacking from a strategic point of view were guidelines of how to better manage this civilian-military nexus and how to increase overall operational efficiency and effectiveness.<sup>28</sup>

Other international organisations slowly but surely followed suit. The World Bank, for example, devoted its entire annual report of 2011 to better understanding the circular relationship between security and development, and called upon the CA as a solution. This is highly unusual for an institution that up until that point was not a significant international security actor, and which normally concerns itself with reducing poverty and supporting the development of states. However, the Bank, as it is colloquially called, recognised that security had become the primary development challenge of our time, and that insecurity characterising weak states is repeated in a 'vicious cycle' that disrupts development. Specifically, the Bank charged that civil conflict, intra-state violence and political instability in states were among the main causes of significant drops in GDP. For example, civil conflict costs the average developing country roughly thirty years of GDP growth. However, the root causes of state fragility are the absence of capable, accountable, and legitimate institutions in fragile states that are able to provide public goods for their citizens.

As a result, and as a way of strengthening the resilience of fragile states against these types of shocks, the Bank recommends strengthening the legitimate institutions of fragile

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25 Hettne 2010, 31.

26 *Ibid.*, 34; ISN ETH Zurich 2012, 1.

27 Egnell 2009, Berdal and Ucko, 2015, UN 1998; 2000.

28 Piciotto 2004, Uvin 2002.

states, as well as a states' ability to govern—that is, to enhance their means of providing citizens with security, justice, and employment.<sup>29</sup>

Another important global actor operating with the security and development is the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The DAC was at the forefront calling for states and international organisations to adopt a comprehensive<sup>30</sup> or whole-of-government approach<sup>31</sup> to international crisis management, as well as to harmonize policies and practices of international donors jointly with non-governmental organisations.<sup>32</sup> While being much more concrete in policy terms and prescriptions, the comprehensive approach became the new 'doctrine' for international peacebuilders and crisis managers.<sup>33</sup>

### **The Comprehensive Approach in the EU**

While the EU did not come late to responding to and developing its own perspectives on the CA, it has had a hard time clearly expressing its views and formulating a clear policy or strategy for its CA, which is largely due to its complex institutional structure. To be sure, crisis management has always been at the core of the EU's Common Foreign, Security and Defence Policy; indeed, as outlined in Article 42 of the Treaty of the European Union, it was the rationale for the EU to become a dynamic actor in this field: 'The Union may use them [its civilian and military assets] on missions outside the Union for peace-keeping, conflict prevention and strengthening international security in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.' While the comprehensive approach is ingrained in nearly all EU policy documents, as we will discuss below, thus far the EU has not deployed any integrated civilian-military missions. Indeed, all deployments have been either purely military or civilian in nature, and in many cases they have occurred in the same areas of operation while retaining completely independent operational structures and mandates.<sup>34</sup>

In broad terms, the EU currently faces three challenges with implementing the CA.<sup>35</sup> Politically, it has struggled to arrive at consensus on a commonly acceptable model of comprehensive action between EU member states, with solutions falling short of original ambitions. Organisationally, the range of actors and instruments involved in comprehensive actions is broad and requires a high degree of institutional cooperation. Changes in working methods and institutional cultures are required for coherence among all actors. Contextually, the EU comprehensive approach needs to be flexible enough to be able to

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29 *Ibid.*

30 OECD DAC 2004.

31 OECD DAC 2007.

32 OECD DAC 2008; OECD DAC 2012; World Bank 2011; UNDP 2012.

33 Chandler 2007; Tschirgi 2002.

34 For example EU engagements in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mali and the Horn of Africa.

35 Faria 2014, 11.

respond to a broad range of crisis situations that differ from each other significantly. This requires a high degree of institutional adaptability and flexibility.

In practice, many issues are interdependent. Particularly important are, first, the conceptual differences of the meaning and purpose of comprehensiveness. As a result, the EU member states, the various institutions of the EU, and relevant civilian and military actors have interpreted comprehensiveness from their own perspective and adopted different definitions of the term.<sup>36</sup> Second, while political factions and agencies have differing opinions at the political level, civilian and military actors also differ in their perspective of how to operationalise the CA in the field. Moreover, differences in institutional and working cultures bring an added social aspect to the implementation of the CA that has to be considered when multiple institutions are cooperating in comprehensive crisis management operations.<sup>37</sup>

More significantly than intra-EU differences on the conceptual level of what comprehensiveness means are perhaps those differences that exist between member states and the EU institutions. While interest in comprehensive external action has grown at the EU level, many member states, in contrast, have themselves developed their own definitions of a CA and how to implement it within their own policies. This has led to a range of definitions that are broadly similar, but differ in emphasis depending on the priorities and interests of the member state.<sup>38</sup> The resulting complexity of the comprehensive approach is further exacerbated by institutional differences among the member states, as no standard model of organising national institutions tasked with crisis management has been put forward. Thus, analytically speaking, we can identify four different types of implementation models for the comprehensive approach.<sup>39</sup> First, there are national approaches that focus on developing coherence within national institutions on a broad range of actions, from development to security, also called the 'whole of government approach.' Second, we can identify intra-agency approaches that are concerned with bringing different agencies or units together to work on an issue in a holistic way, exemplified in the UN integrated mission approach. Third, there are inter-agency approaches that focus on a more ambitious type of cooperation among national as well as international actors. Only a few examples have been brought forth as of yet. And finally, there are international-local approaches that aim to foster host-donor relations and cooperation among national institutions and international partners, both organisations as well as states. This is a particular concern for development agencies running their various donor programs. The EU's comprehensive approach can be situated among these four types of CAs, and is well represented in its policy frameworks, which we discuss next.

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36 For example, while the UK has adopted the terminology of a comprehensive approach, Germany prefers using a networked approach (Borchert 2006).

37 Goetze 2014.

38 Hauck and Rocca 2014, 13–14.

39 See also OECD 2007.



## Sources of the Comprehensive Approach in EU Documents

Considering the timespan involved, and the range of policy tools, strategies and other documents defining the EU's CA, it is not surprising that its implementation has varied at times. To be sure, as Antonio Missiroli reminds us, the implementation of the CA is not an end-goal in itself; it is viewed as a process towards developing better crisis management capabilities.<sup>40</sup> While discussions on comprehensiveness have been stuck at the political level, its practical implementation and translation of policy into action have been criticised as largely incomplete.<sup>41</sup>

The European Security Strategy (ESS) of 2003 was the first reference framework to set out the concept of comprehensive action, and has been instrumental in exploring and establishing the ways in which a CA could be implemented practically among different security sectors. The implementation of the ESS was first reviewed in 2008,<sup>42</sup> at the end of Javier Solana's term as High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and before the Lisbon Treaty came into force, even though the broad outlines of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) were visible beforehand. The implementation plan, however, was not intended to provide a new strategic framework, as some member states favoured, but a new status quo report of the EU's external action. Although the report on the implementation called for a CA, its focus was sectoral, presenting the state of play and actions undertaken on each of the global challenges discussed in the original strategy. Above all, the report highlighted a lack of organisational capacity within EU institutions, and called for appropriate administrative structures, financial mechanisms and systems to support combining civilian and military expertise for mission planning. It also detailed capacity development requirements for civilian and military missions, as well as the need for interoperability within the two, without going so far as to call for joint missions. Overall, both the ESS and its review in 2008 are mute on the role of the military in the EU's external actions, focusing mainly on civilian capabilities and only mentioning military capabilities in a very few instances. This has been explained as wariness on the part of the member states to take strong action on common EU military capabilities and comprehensive integration due to both funding cuts<sup>43</sup> and overlaps between NATO and EU defence cooperation.<sup>44</sup> However, the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty brought a new institutional set-up for the EU's CFSP and CSDP by setting up the European External Action Service (EEAS), double-hatting the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and, in particular, further elaborating the rationale for the EU's CSDP in Article 42 of the Treaty on European Union.

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40 Missiroli 2016, 48.

41 *Ibid.*

42 Report on the implementation of the European Security Strategy, S407/08.

43 Telò 2013, 33.

44 Howorth 2013, 65, 72-76; see also Kammel and Zyla 2012.

### *Joint Communication on the Comprehensive Approach*

To frame the debate on comprehensiveness, the joint EEAS-Commission communication in 2013 set out eight measures on which the development of a CA should focus.<sup>45</sup> The range of measures articulated aimed to bridge the policy-practice divide, including elements relevant to the political decision-making related to CSDP capabilities and mission planning, and to improve the functioning of missions.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, it seems to have reinvigorated action on the CA. For example, the Political Framework for the Comprehensive Approach (PFCA) was created, the sharing of analysis through a common Early Warning System was advanced, coordination through a joint EU Crisis Platform was improved, the first joint geographic Operations Centre at the Horn of Africa was established, and shared secure communications were enhanced. Considering the range of advances, the implementation of comprehensive measures in the field has taken large steps forward. While these highlighted measures are by no means exhaustive, they should be viewed as providing a snapshot of the state of the implementation of the CA. It is thus clear that further work is required, particularly at the level of mission implementation.<sup>47</sup>

### *Comprehensive Approach Action Plan of 2015*

This is one of the more recent documents and has become the leading framework for the practical implementation of the CA. In order to address the perceived implementation gap between the political-strategic level and the field, the 2015 action plan included specific cases with proposed initiatives on eight key measures for four regions: The Sahel, Central America, Afghanistan and Somalia.<sup>48</sup> This can be seen as a way of fostering practical examples of comprehensive action in the field.

An extensive progress report on the 2015 action plan and the 2013 joint communication was published in July 2016, covering ongoing activities of the different initiatives and measures.<sup>49</sup> As the primary documents included a broad range of suggestions, the report summarised the main activities without an in-depth analysis, and focused instead on regional cases and the second priority action of mobilising EU strengths. Notably, discussion was lacking on developing the CA as it involves civil-military cooperation while

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45 European Commission, “The EU’s comprehensive approach to external conflict and crises”: 1. Develop a shared analysis; 2. Define a common strategic vision; 3. Focus on prevention; 4. Mobilise the different strengths and capacities of the EU; 5. Commit to the long term; 6. Linking policies and internal and external action; 7. Make better use of EU Delegations; 8. Work in partnership.

46 Explained further in DL1.3, pages 70–77.

47 Conference report: EU programmes and actions in fragile and conflict states: next steps for the comprehensive approach. Wilton Park, 2014.

48 European Commission 2015.

49 European Commission 2015, *Progress Report on the implementation of the EU’s Comprehensive Approach to external conflicts and crises Action Plan*.

focusing on broader CFSP elements. Perhaps of most interest to field missions, the report discussed the establishment of a joint EU compound in Mogadishu ‘as a physical manifestation of the comprehensive approach,’ which would be a step forward after previous failed attempts. The report also included specific examples of rapid deployments and co-location of crisis management experts in EU delegations and EU Special Representative (EUSR) offices.<sup>50</sup> Developing a more mobile pool of expertise for external action could have a practical effect on the capabilities and effectiveness of field missions, as slow recruitment and gaps in staffing have been noted problems for civilian missions.

Looking ahead, the report outlined the next steps to be taken and suggested the drafting of a longer-interval two-year action plan on the implementation of the CA. This could significantly improve tracking the progress of implementation or, as the report notes, ‘[t]aking forward an action plan which focuses on a number of key issues will be instrumental to progressively generalise, through concrete examples, the Comprehensive Approach.’<sup>51</sup> This approach has gathered support after years or even decades of discussions on comprehensiveness with lacking or ambiguous implementation. There is thus a growing number of calls for short-term implementation through smaller-scale projects instead of developing large overarching frameworks.<sup>52</sup>

### *EU Global Strategy*

So far little can be said regarding the implementation of the new EU Global Strategy, published in June 2016, and currently the EU’s most recent policy framework. It also argues for a better implementation of the CA, which as Sweeney and Winn point out and as this article has shown, is not a new ambition.<sup>53</sup> However, its development and the way it will be implemented are relevant in the near future and worthy of review. The development of the EUGS has also demonstrated the challenges the EU and its member states were facing in agreeing on a new strategic framework that would fit the increasingly dynamic changes in the EU security environment. This was particularly apparent with regard to the conflicts in Syria and Ukraine.<sup>54</sup> The reason is not so much the emergence of these conflicts, but their nature. As a consequence of the migration and refugee crisis of 2015, it became obvious that the links between internal and external security needed to be strengthened, while the multidimensional or hybrid aspects of these crises required more coherent and coordinated responses. Additionally, during this time period, EU institutions went through significant changes in their organisation and roles. In turn, time was needed to institutionalise these roles and working methods, offering new possibilities for cooperation. The EU Global Strategy thus coined the term ‘integrated approach’ in order to foster

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50 European Commission 2015.

51 See 2016 progress report.

52 Anthony and Lundin 2015.

53 Sweeney and Winn 2017.

54 Zandee 2016.

human security,<sup>55</sup> and to respond properly to the different conflicts and crises in the EU's neighbourhood.

The EU Global Strategy was accompanied in November 2016 by an Implementation Plan on Security and Defence,<sup>56</sup> one of several such plans specifying initiatives to put the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) into practice in different policy fields. This new approach to implementation builds on previous experiences of gaps in translating policy into practice within CSDP, opting for more specific initiatives and shorter reporting cycles. More specifically, the recommendations of the implementation plan build on the earlier initiatives/measures put forward by the 2013 Joint Communication and the 2015 Action Plan. These are divided into the following tasks that are seen as mutually reinforcing: responding to external conflicts and crisis, building the capacities of partners, and protecting the Union and its citizens. Specific actions are proposed under all headings.

The implementation plan also discusses the future of EU field missions, calling for more credible, deployable, interoperable, sustainable and multifunctional missions. The range of mission types, including joint civil-military missions, presents a new level of ambition, and will require significant advances in the issues identified in the CA.<sup>57</sup>

While the first review of the ESS was undertaken after five years, the first reports on the implementation of the EUGS were published in mid-2017<sup>58</sup>. Those reports have acknowledged that the EU's external action is increasingly attentive to conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding, beyond mere crisis management. The reports name Syria, Colombia and Afghanistan as examples.<sup>59</sup> As a consequence of, and in comparison to the CA, the integrated approach is more strongly action-oriented. However, it requires a better-shared analysis and conflict sensitivity as well as a well-functioning early warning system that needs strong buy-in from member states. This means that more accurate

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55 EUGS 2016, 28.

56 EU Council 2016.

57 Possible future types of CSDP missions (non-exhaustive) are joint crisis management operations in situations of high security risk in the regions surrounding the EU (e.g. in the Eastern or Southern Neighborhood of the EU, specifically in Africa); joint stabilisation operations, including air and special operations; civilian and military rapid response missions, including military rapid response operations inter alia using the EU Battlegroups as a whole or within a mission-tailored Force package; substitution/executive civilian missions; air security operations, including close air support and air surveillance; maritime security or surveillance operations, including longer term in the vicinity of Europe; civilian capacity building and security sector reform missions (monitoring, mentoring and advising, training) inter alia on police, rule of law, border management, counter-terrorism, and resilience, response to hybrid threats, and civil administration as well as civilian monitoring missions; military capacity building through advisory, training, and mentoring missions, including robust force protection if necessary, as well as military monitoring/observation missions.

58 See One Year implementation of the EUGS, available at <https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/vision-action>.

59 *Ibid.*

identification of the risks and dynamics of violent conflicts is required in order to properly mitigate them. The development of the PRISM (Prevention of conflicts, Rule of law/SSR, Integrated approach, Stabilisation and Mediation) division within the EEAS structures is a clear recognition of the need to refine, streamline and coordinate the EU's crisis response mechanisms and instruments. It will almost certainly lead to a better focus on civil-military relations. This should manifest itself in all categories of PRISM, but particularly within the integrated approach section. Functioning as the secretariat of the Crisis Response Mechanism (CRM), PRISM is currently developing a conceptual framework to define a common EU approach to stabilisation.

When a crisis or conflict breaks out impacting 'the security of the Union,' the integrated approach calls for a politically and operationally coherent EU response based on a shared analysis. The response should be both inclusive, in the sense that it brings together and connects all EU levels (EEAS crisis management structures, civil and military CSDP and EU Delegations and Commission services, political, security, development and humanitarian aspects, etc.) and flexible, in the sense that it allows for a tailor-made rather than a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. EU conflict management bodies also need to reach out to non-EU actors' respective 'crisis management cells' (UN, NATO, OSCE, etc.) as well as to local actors as a matter of priority.

### **Lessons Identified and Policy Implications<sup>60</sup>**

Although intra-EU cooperation on crisis management has developed significantly since the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy became operational in 2003, the CA's implementation still faces many issues critical to its sustainability. As the EU has deployed 26 civilian and nine military missions since 2003,<sup>61</sup> a number of lessons can be drawn from the experience of the civil-military nexus in those missions. Indeed, as identified in the CSDP lessons-learned process,<sup>62</sup> many of the issues in the practical implementation of the CA in CSDP missions are related to the differences observed in the way CSDP actors are organised, financed and regulated. While civilian and military actors have, broadly speaking, similar capabilities, in many cases they lack corresponding structures and operational mechanisms to put these capabilities into action in a coherent way. Overall, this lack of symmetry has been a practical obstacle in the implementation of the CA, and resulted in diminished cooperation and coordination at both the policy and operational levels.<sup>63</sup> The following list of issues should be considered as recommendations for the improvement of the EU's CA:

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60 Our purpose here is *not* to present and discuss a full laundry list of the problems, issues, and lessons identified of the EU's CA. Rather, we want to highlight some of the most important problems, issues, and lessons identified.

61 See Military and civilian missions and operations, [https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/military-and-civilian-missions-and-operations/430/military-and-civilian-missions-and-operations\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/military-and-civilian-missions-and-operations/430/military-and-civilian-missions-and-operations_en).

62 See 2014 CSDP Lessons learned report.

63 Norvanto 2018.

### *Lesson 1: Overcoming the Separation of Civilian and Military Spheres*

The most obvious problem that the EU (as well as any other international crisis management actor) has to overcome is the rigid separation of civilian and military spaces, culture, and their respective protection that are grounded in diverging identities of the respective actors.<sup>64</sup> As a result, processes of traditional military command and control are deeply challenged by the necessity to cooperate with civilian actors, who organise themselves and perform in a different cultural context. This already starts at the planning process of crisis management operations where, in the context of the Afghan mission, stovepiping could be witnessed right from the start. It would undoubtedly continue in the case of a truly integrated civilian/military crisis management mission. Even though the integrated approach is designed to overcome this division, as discussed above, it is well known from the experience of recent peace operations (e.g. Afghanistan, Mali, etc.) that interactions between civilians and the military not only remain problematic, but are also often characterised by antagonism and even mistrust. Indeed, civil organisations, in particular non-governmental, are highly skeptical of coordinating their activities with the military.<sup>65</sup> Thus, the first lesson for the EU to learn is to overcome the divide between humanitarian and military spaces. One way to do so is through 'co-training' of civilian and military actors (Australia and Britain have done this), sending permanent liaison officers, or permanently seconding bureaucrats for the duration of the operation. This responds to the need to grow coordination organically, and through social networks and relationships. In that sense, the success of a comprehensive engagement in conflict-affected or fragile states hinges on having the right 'chemistry' among individuals involved with the CA to achieve the collectively-set goals.

### *Lesson 2: Enhancing Coordination Based on Political Will and Sufficient Resources*

The key to the success of better coordination of civilian and military actors and increased coherence in EU crisis management are strong political will and sufficient resources at the strategic level. Moreover, the coordination must span all EU levels and include all military and civilian actors. In turn, this requires clear common political objectives and goals that are adequately set, aligned and resourced. This also applies to opening up the command and control structures for civilians on the military side, and to accept military and strategic thinking on the civilian side.

### *Lesson 3: Communities of Practice*

Related to the second lesson, the CA is informed by a culture of cooperation, which by definition requires the interaction, collaboration, flexibility and creativity of civilian and

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64 Leggat 2011.

65 Fetherston and Nordstrom 1995.

military actors. This culture of cooperation also extends to monitoring and evaluating crisis management operations. The implication being that both civilian and military actors need to develop a *modus vivendi* for how to effectively and jointly monitor and evaluate their operations, including a detailed understanding and appreciation of the respective monitoring and evaluation tools currently in use, as well as a willingness to further and jointly develop them. The difficulty of creating such ‘communities of practice’, however, can be found in the proper addressing of fundamental questions, such as identity (and competencies associated with those identities), appropriate institutional roles and logics of action in the twenty-first century as Guercio reminds us.<sup>66</sup>

#### *Lesson 4: State-Building as an Essential Tool*

We know from recent peace operations in Afghanistan that state-building is essential for effective peacebuilding in fragile and conflict-affected states. States must be capable of managing the monopoly of power, legal order and service delivery. Afghanistan clearly is an example where the Afghan state was lacking these basic state functions. We also learned from the Afghanistan experience that effective state-building in fragile and conflict-affected states cannot occur without an all-inclusive process of nation-building that fosters the socio-political cohesion and the involvement of all political actors. In turn, state-building requires both the effectiveness and legitimacy of the state. While it is highly debated in the literature on whether a proper sequencing of peacebuilding can be developed,<sup>67</sup> we can say that three crucial state functions for peacebuilding are necessary: provision of security for the population, effective public financing, and effective administration of justice.

#### *Lesson 5: The Need for Societal Reforms*

Once more the Afghanistan experience shows that interveners must move beyond an exclusively liberal peacebuilding agenda characterised by democratic and market-oriented approaches to societal (neoliberal) reforms.<sup>68</sup> The liberal peacebuilding concept prioritises individuals and their capacity to seek representation through democratic participation, as well as their self-improvement and economic prosperity, all of which can lead to social change.<sup>69</sup> However, the concept thereby reveals its preference for short-term interventions by international donors primarily focusing on technical<sup>70</sup> and prescriptive

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66 Gheciu 2012.

67 Miller 2013.

68 See, for example, Chandler 2004; Fanthorpe 2005; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2007 .

69 Mac Ginty 2007, 459; Mac Ginty 2010, 393; Roberts 2011, 2538 .

70 See MacGinty 2017.

solutions as well as measurable results.<sup>71</sup> Yet, peacebuilding requires long-term commitments, as well as the institutional capacity of the host state to absorb this (technical) aid. Here, there are several policy implications for the EU to consider. First, the EU's efforts should focus on building and subsequently strengthening fragile states' legitimacy—that is, to help build states' capacity to respond to citizens' changing needs and provide public goods, as well as to provide a minimum of security and order.<sup>72</sup> When focusing on institution-building, it is imperative to ensure that the recipient state (not donors) gets credit for effective state actions.<sup>73</sup> In other words, circumventing states and thus causing 'phantom states' is not a viable policy option.<sup>74</sup>

However, more important in the long term are efforts to strengthen fragile and conflict-affected states *before* they fail, not after. In retrospect this is, of course, easily said. The point here is, however, more fundamental in the sense that true conflict management starts with conflict prevention. That includes building state capacities and resilience.<sup>75</sup> It also entails increasing the capacity of the state in the long term to predict future risks, and, from the international community's end, to assist those states before they lapse into fragility. This requires the political settlement of conflicts among powerful domestic political actors and a general need for political processes and mechanisms through which state-society relations are mediated (e.g. institutions, elections etc.). Consequently, for the EU, the focus should be on failing and not-yet-failed states, as these states pose much greater dangers and risks to the EU than failed states.<sup>76</sup>

### *Lesson 6: Uniqueness of Crisis*

The EU must recognise that each crisis management operation is unique and not transferrable. In other words, there is no CA policy design blueprint, and each CA intervention takes place in specific national and international contexts.<sup>77</sup> As a result, the EU must recognise that the role for the international community to contribute to security, stability, and reform in fragile and conflict-affected states is limited,<sup>78</sup> and that special emphasis should be given first to capacity-building elements at the local level. In this regard, the literature has called for so-called 'hybrid approaches' to crisis management, engaging simultaneously and coherently in bottom-up and top-down efforts to bring sustainable

71 See Acemoglu and Robinson 2012; Barnett 2006; Barnett, Fang and Zürcher 2014; Donais 2009; Held 2005; Held 2009; Paris 2004; Picciotto 2004; Richmond 2010.

72 Ghani and Lockhart 2008.

73 OECD 2006; OECD 2007.

74 Lemay-Hébert 2009.

75 von Einsiedel 2005.

76 Debiel *et al.* 2005.

77 Autesserre 2014a; Autesserre 2014b; Barnett 2006; Barnett, Fang and Zürcher 2014; Chanaa 2002; Donais 2009; Mac Ginty 2007.

78 *Ibid.*



resolution and security to conflict-affected societies.<sup>79</sup> The point here is that in implementing the CA to further improve civil-military coordination, the EU must maintain close coordination with the host country, its civil society, and powerful domestic actors. In consequence, when host-nation governance is weak, comprehensiveness is unlikely.

### *Lesson 7: Better Understanding of Comprehensiveness*

The CA assumes, at least indirectly, that cooperation among several departments and agencies is in their respective self-interest, and that, as a result, efficiency in terms of resources, policy and practice will result. However, once again, we know from the recent Afghanistan experience that this efficiency did not materialise, often because it was unclear from the beginning of the operation what the CA was about, and what comprehensiveness meant to both the EU and its member states. Related to this is the absence of a CA strategy, including an exit strategy that provides clear, concise and direct political guidance for each of the departments and agencies involved. Political masters failed to provide definitions of what comprehensiveness meant, short- and long-term goalposts for each department and agency, clear lines of accountability, point(s) of authority, and an explication of the processes on sharing information and knowledge among CA actors. Furthermore, CA actors must develop strategies at the political level for overcoming specific departmental and bureaucratic cultures and develop clear guidelines on paths of career progression—that is, not only answering the question of who gets promoted and why, but also whether one can be promoted outside of one's 'home' department.

## **Operational Implications**

Against this backdrop, there are several implications for EU crisis management operations.<sup>80</sup> To start with, for a mission to be successful the EU must recognise that civil and military logistics must be coordinated across contributing agencies and organisations, as logistics are the 'lynchpin to coordinating an effective response.' Related to this point is the recognition that peace engagement has high operational costs and poses significant resource constraints—both require sustainable approaches and strategies as well as political will as stated in lesson 2.

Second, the EU needs to explore the idea of deploying relatively small military contingents within EU civilian missions and thereby creating communities of practice as indicated in lesson 3. This could be relevant to a civilian mission operating in an insecure area

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79 Boege *et al.* 2009; Donais 2009; Fetherston and Nordstrom 1995; Mac Ginty 2010; Mac Ginty and Sanghera 2012; Peterson 2012; Richmond 2009; Richmond 2010, 26; Roberts 2011; Schwartz 2005; Talentino 2007.

80 See the Deliverable 6.2. „Identification of the Overlap“, IECEU-Project, Horizon 2020 Grant Agreement no. 653371. Once again, our aim here is *not* to provide a full and comprehensive list of all possible implications but rather to highlight some that we think are important.

of operation without a protection force to provide a secure base or locality from which to operate. The EUPOL Afghanistan relationship within ISAF, for example, illustrates how the EU could provide some military or military-type protection element where no such supportive force exists. Undoubtedly, there would be many issues to be surmounted such as command and control, legality and financing. However, it could provide a practical enabler to the civilian mission while at the same time contributing to an evolving working relationship.

Similarly, third, there is space to embed civilian experts and even components in military missions and operations. There are already civilian political advisors in military missions. It is not a great leap to expand this to experts or even capabilities in civilian disciplines across the range of competencies/instruments of the EU. Again, there may be many obstacles to be overcome but the potential benefits would make an investigation worthwhile.

Fourth, there is already a small number of EU delegations that have a military adviser. It may be a good time to expand this initiative. It is another good opportunity to develop mutual understandings among civilian and military actors and thus contributing to a more common approach towards comprehensiveness as asked for in lesson 7.

Fifth, civil-military relations must be considered within the context and mechanisms of the main structures of the EU, that is, the Council, the EEAS, the Commission and the Parliament. The position of the military instrument within these structures is vital to understanding the benefits and the limitations of civil-military relations. For example, there is no military staff or component represented in the EU Commission. In Brussels, the military delegations to the EU are part of the member states PermReps and the Political Security (PSC) delegation. This has a limiting effect on developing and advancing the military view. In the EEAS, the only military component is the European Union Military Staff (EUMS), numbering roughly two hundred personnel. The Chairman of the European Union Military Committee (CEUMC) and the Director General of the EUMS (DGEUMS) have designated advisory roles vis-à-vis military advice to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The point is that if civil-military relations are an important component of the CA and have a significant impact on the capability of the EU in crisis management intervention, this is not reflected in the structures determining the direction and development of CSDP. The creation of the post of a deputy High Representative dealing only with military and defense issues could help in partially overcoming this problem. Consequently, it becomes important that working relationships, mutual understandings, a sense of partnership, parity of esteem and recognition of relative competencies are developed and fostered. These are important matters and they are necessary to engender trust and to create a situation where realistic civil-military development can take place. The creation of institutions, bodies and discussion forums alone will not build that trust. As indicated in the lessons identified section, this requires a better understanding of what comprehensiveness really is about and also the necessary political will and resources to properly implement a comprehensive approach on the ground.

## Conclusion

The CSDP has made the EU a unique strategic actor due to its ability to mix civilian *and* military crisis management instruments as part of a Comprehensive Approach to assist conflict-affected states. While the CA has been at the heart of the EU's external crisis management since the publication of its first Security Strategy in 2003, very little research has been done on tracing the sources and the lessons learned thus far with respect to practising the CA. This is the gap that this article intended to fill. We argued that while the EU's effort to implement the CA is clearly visible, the practical challenges with implementing and 'living' the CA remain immense, particularly with regard to how the EU's CA relates to those of its member states, and how to overcome the huge civilian/military divide in terms of differing cultures, structures, and practices. We started off our analysis by discussing the conceptual background of the CA in terms of the security-development nexus debate that commenced at the Cold War's end. We then provided an overview of the sources of the EU's CA in official EU documents, as well as the reasons the concept has become a 'hallmark' of the EU's civilian and military missions. While claiming no comprehensiveness, we outlined some of the main lessons learned of the EU moving forward, as well as specific policy implications for civilian and military EU actors in the field.

In practical terms, and moving forward with regard to improving the practice of the CA, the EU and its institutions should recognise the need for flexibility and adaptability in terms of planning and monitoring their (civilian and military) operations, especially with regard to becoming better at risk-sharing, management, and sharing among civilian and military actors. To fully employ a CA for international crisis management, the EU must also think about a 'culture of learning'—that is, an externalised process whereby outside experts continuously evaluate the actions and practices of CA actors with the intention of learning from past practice. This would also increase the institutional memory of the EU's CA.

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