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The Miracle Solution to Conflict Management? The Comprehensive Approach Frameworks of the EU, UN & NATO in Comparison

Bachelor Thesis

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Abstract

The concept of comprehensiveness has been suggested as a new miracle solution for conflict management in response to the complexity and ambiguity of contemporary conflicts. This thesis therefore seeks to gain a holistic understanding of the concept in order to say whether it is, in fact, a miracle solution. To arrive at the conclusion, it pursues a descriptive analysis of the EU's, UN's and NATO's respective Comprehensive Approach (CA) frameworks and an assessment of their functionality in practice in Afghanistan within a comparative research design. Based on a prior inquiry into the concept of comprehensive conflict management, theoretical propositions are leveraged to act as an analytical tool-kit. It is found that the CAs are framed and applied in a largely dissimilar way. The characteristics of comprehensiveness are fulfilled to different extents, mainly based on the specific organizational contexts the approaches stem from. Even though the EU's and UN's frameworks are most ambitious, in practice all three organization's CAs fail to materialize the promises from the policy level. That goes to show that comprehensiveness is by no means a miracle solution, as the organizations' deficiencies in conflict management cannot be automatically overcome. Nonetheless, comprehensiveness remains a promising concept that should be further pursued.

List of Abbreviations

CA	Comprehensive Approach
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CGEA	Commissioner's Group on External Action
CIMIC	Civil-military Cooperation (EU)
CMCO	Civilian-military Coordination (EU)
COREPER	Committee of Permanent Representatives
CSDP	Common Security and Defense Policy
Dir. ISP	Directorate Integrated Approach for Security and Peace
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DSRSG	Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General
EC	European Commission
EEAS	European External Action Service
EU	European Union
EUGS	European Union Global Strategy
EUMS	European Union Military Staff
EUPOL	European Union Police Mission
EUSR	European Union Special Representative
HIPPO	High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations
HR	High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
IA	Integrated Approach
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDICI	Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
NRF	NATO Response Force
PRISM	Prevention of Conflicts, Rule of Law, Integrated Approach, Stabilization and Mediation
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PSC	Political and Security Council
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

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1. Introduction

A look at the international security landscape shows a new complexity and ambiguity in conflict situations. Conflicts have now become multiscale challenges. For the past two decades, international organizations, such as the EU, UN, NATO have sought more frequent and effective contribution to managing these conflicts through civilian and military means (Juncos & Blockmans, 2018). However, empirical studies uncovered an increasing ineffectiveness of conflict responses (Pirozzi, 2013). Ever more evident becomes the need for more coherence in conflict management approaches. The need to coordinate the policies, tools and entities in the field of security and development has been acknowledged since the very beginning of the organizations' desire to play a role in global politics (Tardy, 2017). In fact, the existence of a causal relationship between internal coherence and external policy effectiveness has been shown in previous research (Marangoni & Raube, 2014; Thomas, 2012; da Conceição-Heldt & Meunier, 2014). All contributions find that the basic presumption is valid, in that overall, an internally coherent and cohesive conflict response is more effective in the international context.

Based on this idea, comprehensiveness has been proposed as the new miracle solution to provide more coherence and ultimately effectiveness to the approaches to conflict management. Comprehensiveness is generally thought of as "an understanding in the international community that responses to crises cannot be purely military and, therefore, should include all policies, instruments, players and methodologies that are relevant in violent/armed conflict and may contribute to its resolution, management, or prevention" (Faleg, 2018, p.12). The EU, the UN and NATO have all bought into the concept, having each adopted their own respective Comprehensive Approach (CA) to conflict management. Faleg points out that the institutional context is an important variable which impacts the framing and application of a CA (2018).

Under the umbrella of investigating how international organizations govern multiscale challenges, this thesis seeks to further examine the concept of comprehensive conflict management and assess whether it is, in fact, the miracle solution to conflict management. In a quest to gather a holistic understanding of comprehensiveness in conflict management, the CAs of the EU, UN and NATO, as the three most influential international institutions in the realm of conflict response, are compared, answering the following research question:

To what extent is the Comprehensive Approach to Conflict Management framed and applied in a similar way by the EU, the UN and NATO?

The general research question is then addressed in two steps. By means of a descriptive analysis, the frameworks are first examined at the policy level and it is assessed to what extent

they fulfill theoretical propositions of what a CA should entail. The second step of the analysis examines the three organizations' CA frameworks in practice, as a case study of the Afghanistan conflict provides empirical evidence about how the CA policy frameworks function in operation.

This allows threefold insights: Primarily it enables conclusions about the different interpretations of the CA in varying institutional contexts. At the same time, it can be assessed to what extent the frameworks actually adopt the expectations of comprehensiveness. Lastly, general conclusions can be made about the concept of comprehensive conflict management.

1.1 Scientific and Societal Relevance

This thesis makes important contributions to crisis management and international organizations scholarship. First, it provides theoretical propositions and an analytical toolkit to empirically analyze comprehensive conflict management, as it has been poorly studied due to the vagueness of the term. Second, the thesis tackles a new layer of comprehensiveness with its inclusion of horizontal coherence. So far, the focus of academic research has been on vertical coherence between the actors involved (c.f. da Conceição-Heldt & Meunier, 2014), not about horizontal coherence between the fields and instruments of conflict management. Also, within the conflict cycle of prevention, management, and resolution, the majority of research focused on the first and the latter phase (cf. Juncos & Blockmans, 2018), whereas this thesis stands out with its focus on the cycle's second phase. Lastly, the combination of a descriptive analysis of the policy frameworks and a practical assessment of said framework in operation provides a new holistic methodological approach of addressing a CA.

As the empirical question is situated in an applied context, the insights gained for the scientific community can also be of importance for policy makers. The thesis shows whether comprehensiveness is, in fact, a miracle solution and should be further pursued. By pointing out best practices and common pitfalls and challenges for the three approaches, the research contributes to the improvement of the current or development of new frameworks. Hence, the research ultimately enables the derivation of policy recommendations.

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

The first chapter introduced the topic, clarified the research question and argued for the scientific and societal relevance of this research, before explaining the research design and the methodology. Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical background of comprehensive conflict management, including its key concepts and theories in order to find out what

comprehensiveness entails, before developing an analytical tool-kit and theoretical expectations from it. In chapter 3 a descriptive analysis of the three policy frameworks is conducted, in which it is checked whether each framework fits the criteria determined in the previous chapter. The intention is not to describe the organizations' conflict management in and of itself, but the CA to it. Ultimately, the first sub-question is answered:

(1) To what extent is the Comprehensive Approach to Conflict Management framed in a similar way by the EU, the UN and NATO at the policy level?

After having analyzed the frameworks on a formal, conceptual level, Chapter 4 is dedicated to the assessment of the approaches on the operational level. Therefore, a case study of the Afghanistan conflict will be conducted. This conflict saw all three organizations being involved and took place in a time frame, in which each organization had adopted its respective CA. Scientifically, the Afghanistan case is a perfect example of a contemporary conflict (see chapter 2.1), making it a target area for the application of a CA. The point of the case study is not to develop a holistic picture of the Afghanistan conflict. Rather, it serves as an example of a geographical area of implementation for the CA, helping to assess how well the policy framework operates in a conflict scenario. The chapter ultimately addresses the second research question:

(2) To what extent is the Comprehensive Approach to Conflict Management applied in a similar way by the EU, the UN and NATO at the operational level?

Essentially now two levels of comparison can be distinguished: the first is showing the differences between the respective policy frameworks, while the second shows the difference between the theoretical assumptions of the frameworks and the practical functionality on the ground. Chapter 5 finally concludes on the findings and reflects about the general lessons to be drawn from the study.

1.3 Research Design and Methodology

This research deploys an empirical, qualitative approach. Generally, a comparative research design is pursued. The frameworks are addressed by means of a descriptive content analysis of relevant policy documents (listed in chapter 3). The analysis has a hermeneutic character, as the descriptive findings are interpreted to fit the theoretical propositions. The descriptive and comparative research is not of explanatory nature, as the factors leading to similarities and differences between the frameworks are not under investigation. The center of this analysis is rather the mere identification of similarities and differences.

The descriptive analysis is followed up by a single-case study, in which the functionality of the frameworks is assessed. This study employs qualitative secondary data. The sources consist of policy documents published by the respective institutions and may come in form of joint agreements, declarations, action plans or implementation reports.

The documents were collected via desk research. This choice of data and data collection method is advantageous in terms of accessibility and resource considerations (Turner et al., 2011). However, a possible danger of this is heterogeneity in data availability because some organizations publish more detailed reports compared to others. Therefore, reports from neutral parties are also considered, to counter bias if the analysis and assessment is solely based on documents by the organization at hand.

2. Theoretical Background of Comprehensive Conflict Management

This chapter introduces the theoretical concepts relevant to this study. With the help of academic literature, international relations theories are leveraged in order to gain a holistic understanding of what constitutes Comprehensive Conflict Management (2.1). Chapter 2.2 summarizes the different theoretical expectations that can be derived from this body of literature and formulates them into a number of general propositions. The propositions enable a holistic and coherent assessment and comparison of the EU's, UN's and NATO's CA framework.

2.1 The Concept of Comprehensive Conflict Management

This section introduces and defines the individual elements inherent to such a complex concept. Section 2.1.1 analyzes characteristics of contemporary conflict situations, whereas section 2.1.2 looks into the response to said situations: Conflict Management. Lastly, section 2.1.3 presents Comprehensiveness as a solution to the problems of Conflict Management.

2.1.1 International Conflicts

The perception of threat, or actual occurrence of conflict, is necessary for the initiation of conflict management measures. Hence it is essential to address the concept of conflicts before exploring how to manage them. Historically, the term refers to conflicts taking place between two or more nation-states (Malek, 2013). However, the nature of conflicts has changed significantly (Bloomfield & Reilly, 1998). The majority of conflicts are now instigated and take place within states, rather than between. These so-called intra-state conflicts usually present themselves in the form of civil wars, armed insurrections, and other domestic warfare (Bloomfield & Reilly, 1998). Not only have the conflicting parties changed, but also the goals, financing, and methods of warfare. These conflicts, which literature coins "new wars" (Kaldor, 1999), are characterized by state failure, with movement of refugees, loss of the monopoly of legitimate use of force, rise of paramilitary groups, and human rights violations. Civilians are frequently targeted, causing a high number of casualties and displaced persons. Furthermore, the lines between public and private actors in the conflict are blurred (Kaldor, 1999). The multiscale conflicts involve different root causes and transcend the typical nexus between security and development (Debuysere & Blockmans, 2019).

It becomes evident that the new multifaceted and asymmetric nature of contemporary conflicts requires a changed response by the international actors. Conventional warfare can no longer solve international conflicts, hence the responses need to leverage a wider variety of instruments, both civil and military, and involve different actors working alongside each other.

2.1.2 Conflict Management

In international relations literature, conflict management is thought of as "the application of strategies designed to help an organization deal with a sudden and significant negative event" (Papanastasopoulos, 2018). Researchers often refer to crisis management as a cycle going through the three phases of prevention, management and resolution (which this thesis applies), while some scholars call for more nuanced conflict phases: prevention, crisis management, stabilization, reconstruction and state-building (Debuysere & Blockmans, 2019). One example is depicted in figure 2. It is important to mention that the conflict cycle is only an ideal model and does not necessarily accurately represent the empirical reality. Therefore, an analysis of one phase may also necessitate an incorporation of others due to blurry transitions and interrelations. According to Weissmann & Swanström (2005), Prevention is applied before the conflict becomes open and manifest. The Management phase and its respective measures set in when the conflict scenario is deemed likely or imminent and becomes armed (Major, 2012). The latter phase shall be at the center of this research.

Figure 1. Conflict Cycle. Source: Major, C. et al. 2012. Toolbox Crisis Management.

According to Major (2012), four key principles must be respected by the actors involved in conflict management:

"Do No Harm"	Negative side effects of international aid should be minimized
"Human Security"	Protection from physical force and from hardship and deprivation; focus of security political action should thereby be on the individual, not the state
"Local Ownership"	Gradual takeover of responsibility by local actors
"Protection of Civilians"	To be guaranteed in both civilian and military missions and to be supported by political measures

Table 1: Principles of Conflict Management. Source: Major, C. et al. 2012. Toolbox Crisis Management. SWP.

Conflict management action can cover a wide range of approaches, spanning from humanitarian aid to military missions. International relations theory offers, amongst others, two

interesting lenses which can help to understand the rationale of different approaches. The two dominant theories potentially offering the most insights in this specific case are Realism and (Liberal) Institutionalism.

Realism assumes that international politics are a struggle for power in which military security issues are the top priority and force is the most effective policy instrument. This would lead to assume that conflict management approaches would focus solely on military, instead of civilian means, and that international organizations as such would be rather ineffective in managing conflicts (Christine, 2018).

Institutionalism takes into account the role of international organizations and international regimes. It focuses on the development of norms and principles such as the Responsibility to Protect, humanitarian intervention and human rights. Emphasis is placed on the structure of the international society, in which international organizations are viewed as advocates of norms and values. The institutionalist logic would lead to believe that civilian and normative approaches to conflict management should be taken by the organizations (Devitt, 2011).

The role and identity of actors deploying said normative approaches is addressed through the notion of normative power, arguing that certain actors exert influence on others by changing the international community's idea of the norms and shaping the values and rules of behavior that govern the actions in the international arena (Savorskaya, 2015). Ian Manners sees the power of an international actor expressed in the ability to exercise normative justification. As a key characteristic he points out an actor's ability to formulate and apply normative principles in a normatively sustainable way (Manners, 2002).

Once again, conflict management is the mean to control a conflict and lead towards its resolution. Hence, the actors involved require effective conflict management approaches. The recent trends point to a CA as the best solution. What exactly that entails is addressed in the following section.

2.1.3 Comprehensiveness

Settling on a common definition of comprehensiveness has been a topic of policy and academic debate. Comprehensiveness is generally thought of as "an understanding in the international community that responses to crises cannot be purely military and, therefore, should include all policies, instruments, players and methodologies that are relevant in violent/armed conflict and may contribute to its resolution, management, or prevention" (Faleg, 2018, p.12). More broadly, Hodermarsky views comprehensiveness as "mobilizing the resources of an entire society"

(2015, p.12). These resources must be used in a coherent, cohesive and coordinated way. Enacting the concept at the policy level is called a Comprehensive Approach (CA).

The struggle for a common definition of the term is mirrored in the naming of the policy approach that follows the concept. The Whole-of-Government-Approach or the Integrated Approach are terms for similar approaches, all aimed at achieving the common goal of effectiveness and coherence in conflict management. For the sake of simplicity, the thesis groups all aforementioned terms under the name Comprehensive Approach. Kammel & Zyla (2018) define the CA as "the strategic objective of coordination and integration among different civilian and military actors involved in the conflict cycle, in order to enhance the effectiveness of tackling manifestations of instability and conflict".

Increasingly complex and non-linear conflicts have prompted military and civilian strategies, like development or diplomacy, to coexist simultaneously. Disputes now disrupt between those who believe the military should stick to preparing striking capabilities and those who believe the current conflicts necessitate broader forms of military engagement. However, the trend points to an amalgamation of military and civilian capabilities and strategies as an essential element of a CA (Rosén, 2010). In fact, according to the security-development nexus, or civilian-military nexus, respectively, security is a precondition for development and vice versa.

Having learned of the multifaceted character of contemporary conflicts and the potential for comprehensive conflict management to provide an effective response, it is essential to understand what exactly makes an approach comprehensive. Academic literature provides four layers of action which effectively substantiate comprehensiveness (da Conceição-Heldt & Meunier, 2014). In order for a policy approach to be truly comprehensive, these four layers must be fulfilled.

Table 2. Layers of Comprehensive Action.

Multi-dimensional	Use of all available policies + instruments
Multi-phased	Action at all stages of the conflict cycle
Multi-lateral	Engagement of all players present
Multi-level	Action at local, regional, national and global level

Multi-dimensionality refers to bringing together all tools at one's disposable – meaning those of civilian (political, diplomatic, humanitarian and development-related instruments) and those of military nature. An approach being multi-phased entails action on prevention, management and resolution, in order to holistically meet the urgency and the needs of each

phase of the crisis management. Multi-lateralism refers to cooperation with all actors relevant to a conflict and its management – both inside the organization, as well as outside with international partners. Lastly, an approach is multi-level if the conflict's complexity is addressed by taking action at all levels – from engaging with local forces to leveraging cooperation with global institutions.

Together, these four elements make up a Comprehensive Approach. They will serve as substantive criteria for the analyses of the respective frameworks and approaches by the EU, UN and NATO, meaning it will be assessed to what extent the criteria are fulfilled by each approach.

2.2 Theoretical Propositions

Theory proposes a range of different characteristics of comprehensive conflict management. Taking into account the insights acclaimed in the previous chapter, a number of expectations can be derived.

First, for the three frameworks under investigation to be truly comprehensive, they must fulfill or show essential characteristics (*proposition 1*). For one, they must be multi-dimensional, by making use of all instruments necessary (*proposition 1a*). Second, they must be multi-phased, by taking action in all three phases of crisis management (*proposition 1b*). Third, they must be multi-lateral, by involving all actors necessary within their organizations, as well as external partners (*proposition 1c*). Fourth, they must be multi-level, by approaching the local, regional, national as well as global level of managing the crisis (*proposition 1d*). Furthermore, a CA should ensure that conflict management features both civilian and military means in a balanced and integrated manner (*proposition 2).* Additionally, elements of normative power should be included in the CA *(proposition 3).* The extent to which these features are inherent to the organizations' CAs, i.e. how they are framed and applied, remains to be seen. Lastly, one can expect the character, i.e. the institutional context, of each organization to be an important determinant of the nature of its respective CA (*proposition 4).* One element of that context is the realist or institutionalist background (*proposition 4a).*

Overall, the theoretical propositions can serve as an analytical tool-kit to enable a holistic and coherent description, analysis, assessment and comparison of both the CA policy frameworks and the practical approaches on the ground.

In the ensuing chapter, each organization's CA is to be described in and of itself first, before analyzing to what extent it fulfills the theoretical expectations of what comprehensive conflict management should entail. The results of each organization will then be compared to

one another. Then, in chapter 4, a case study of Afghanistan investigates the management of the approaches in practice.

3. Comprehensive Conflict Management in Theory: Policy Frameworks

This chapter is dedicated to the descriptive analysis of the CA policy frameworks of the EU (3.1), UN (3.2) and NATO (3.3). After briefly introducing the organization's role in conflict management, each sub-chapter covers the framework's rationale, i.e. its background, goals and strategies, as well as the implementation of said goals and strategies with regard to structures, mechanisms, institutions and processes. The findings are contextualized with the help of the background determined in the previous chapter. Thereby, the question to what extent the CA is framed in a similar way by the EU, the UN and NATO at the policy level is answered.

The research is based on the relevant legal and policy documents of the EU, UN and NATO. Table 4 indicates which specific documents were consulted.

Table 3. Sources of the Comprehensive Approach.

	Policy Documents	**Implementation Plans / Reports**	**Legal Documents**
EU	EC & HR: The EU's comprehensive approach to external conflict and crises, 2013 HR & EEAS: Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, 2016 EC & HR: Taking forward the EU'S Comprehensive Approach to external conflicts and crises – Action Plan 2016-17 EEAS: Issues Paper suggesting parameters for a concept on Stabilisation as part of the EU Integrated Approach to external conflicts and crises, 2017	EC & HR: CA Action Plan, 2015 HR: Implementation Plan on Security and Defence, 2016 HR: Implementing the EUGS, 2017 HR: Implementing the EUGS, 2018 HR: The EUGS – Three years on, looking forward, 2019	The Treaty on European Union
UN	Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace, 2015 UNGA: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2015	Secretary General: Report on Implementation of the Recommendations of the HIPPO, 2015	UN Charter
NATO	Riga Summit Declaration, 2006 --- Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2010 Brussels Summit Declaration, 2018	NATO: Comprehensive Approach Action Plan, 2011	The North Atlantic Treaty

3.1 The EU's Comprehensive Approach Framework

The EU has been engaged in crisis management most notably since the late 1990s. For the longest time, the EU was primarily involved in civilian crisis management, for instance in Kosovo or Ukraine, with measures ranging from conflict settlement and reconciliation to democratization (Major et al., 2012). However, the creation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and especially the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)

provided the conflict management with military means. Under the umbrella of the CSDP the EU is furthermore able to provide legal and technical expertise. Altogether, it possesses a wide range of civilian (political, diplomatic, economic) and military (e.g. EU Battlegroups) instruments to deploy in a situation of external conflict (Major et al., 2012). The instruments are not under the supervision of one central authority, as the tasks are rather divided between institutions. The European External Action Service (EEAS) under the leadership of the High Representative (HR) is assigned most structures of the CSDP - both civilian (police, law, civilian administration) and military (Battlegroups). At the same time the European Commission (EC) directs other civilian instruments, for instance the neighborhood policy, humanitarian aid and development cooperation (Major et al., 2012).

3.1.1 Rationale

Since its creation, EU external action and specifically conflict management has involved a multitude of civilian and military actors, a group of member states with different preferences, capabilities and competing bureaucratic institutions at the supranational level. This results in a complex system of diverging strategic objectives and political priorities, and operational procedures and implementations. As a consequence, the need for coherence and coordination in EU conflict management has been established (Faleg, 2018).

From this background, the first efforts at creating a coordinated framework for interventions in crisis situations go back to the pre-Lisbon treaty era in the early 2000s. Two concepts were introduced and institutionalized. The civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) brought together the actors involved in policy making and action, while the civilian-military coordination (CMCO) brought together the instruments. Hence, the EU began to implement comprehensiveness in conflict management missions by employing concepts that were multi-lateral and multi-dimensional. The adoption of the Lisbon Treaty then brought about more coherence and coordination by creating the post of the HR and the EEAS. These two bodies are able to centralize authorities that were previously decentralized among several entities.

The post-Lisbon years were characterized by an expansion of crisis management tasks and a more ambitious integration of civilian and military components, both on the strategic as well as the operational level (Faleg, 2018). However, this phase also brought about a number of challenges, as Juncos (2010) identified: inadequate instruments, lacking capabilities, insufficient strategic guidance, remaining conflicts between institutions, and divergences between civilian and military agendas.

The previous experience was brought together in 2013 to formulate the *Joint Communication on the EU's Comprehensive Approach to External Conflicts and Crises*, which can be seen as the EU's first substantive policy framework on comprehensive conflict management. Here the HR and the EC formulate their commitment to make EU crisis management more consistent, thereby pursuing a goal set out in the Lisbon Treaty. The overarching goal of adopting a CA is a stronger, more coherent, more visible and more effective EU in its external relations. The Communication's introductory chapter states that post-Lisbon, the EU has "both the increased potential and the ambition – by drawing on the full range of its instruments and resources – to make it (…) more consistent, more effective and more strategic" (EC & HR, 2013, p.2).

The Joint Communication also makes clear that a CA shall satisfy multiple layers of comprehensiveness. It sets out that the CA shall be multi-dimensional (cf. proposition 1a), by combining the "wide array of policies, tools and instruments at its disposal" (EC & HR, 2013, p.3). The multi-lateral approach (cf. proposition 1b) can be found in the "shared responsibility of the EU-level actors and member states" (EC & HR, 2013, p.4). A goal of the CA is to make the actors work in a joined-up and strategic manner, which enables the EU to "better define and defend its fundamental interests and values, promote its key political interests" (EC & HR, 2013, p.3). Furthermore, a multi-phased approach is pursued by aiming to cover all stages of the conflict cycle (cf. proposition 1c). These measures shall on one side improve the lives of those threatened by conflicts, on the other side decrease negative effects of said external conflicts on the EU, its citizens, and its internal security. However, fostering human security is also set out as a goal (cf. Major on principles of conflict management).

In 2016, the adoption of the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) brought about a further advancement of the CA. For the first time, the strategy paper explicitly refers to the four layers of comprehensiveness (multi-dimensional, multi-lateral, multi-phased, multi-level). Especially the notion of a (internally and externally) multi-lateral approach is highlighted, in engaging all players present in a conflict and seeking to partner systematically with regional and international organizations, as well as civil society. With regard to the security-development nexus, the central focus still remains on the dual nature of conflict management between security and development (cf. proposition 3). However, the EUGS puts more emphasis on systematically engaging in the security dimension of conflicts.

Overall, the EU's rationale behind their CA shows a gradual development towards a more holistic CA by continuously and ambitiously expanding the scope of its comprehensive conflict management approach. Theoretically, the policy framework covers all criteria of

comprehensiveness: it aims to address all dimensions of conflicts, during all phases, in cooperation with all relevant actors at all levels, while balancing civilian and military means and featuring normative power elements. Now it must be seen how the CA is institutionalized and implemented to achieve aforementioned goals.

3.1.2 Implementation

An underlying theme of a CA framework is the systematic formalization of guiding principles of such an approach. For the implementation to be successful and the CA to be effective, it needs a strong commitment from all participating entities, an all-around change in the organizational culture with regard to decision-making structures, the allocation of resources, transaction costs, and incentives to sustain an integrated bureaucratic machine (Debuysere & Blockmans, 2019). However, due to the EU's complex, sui generis institutional structure and processes, implementing the CA is, in fact, a challenging task.

In terms of conflict management specifically, the Joint Communication from 2013 set out actions to be undertaken in order to reach the goals: Develop a shared analysis; define a common strategic vision; mobilize the different strengths and capacities of the EU; commit to the long term; better use of EU delegations; partner with other international and regional actors. However, the key document constituting the CA is criticized for lacking systems, mechanisms and means to actually put the CA into practice (Debuysere & Blockmans, 2019). Indeed, the actors are not provided with any tangible, feasible structures and processes.

Faleg (2018) identifies the EU's initial modus operandi of implementing the CA as "learning by doing" (p.16). However, more mature efforts generally require two levels of institutional changes.

The first level of implementing the CA is creating a number of intra-service institutional changes. As indicated in the previous chapter, the reforms resulting from the Lisbon Treaty were monumental for the institutional setup of EU conflict management, with the creation of the CSDP and the creation of the HR and EEAS as the new coordinating and supervisory authority. One pillar of the EEAS structure is the Directorate Integrated Approach for Security and Peace (Dir. ISP), encompassing and succeeding the former PRISM unit. The Dir. ISP coordinates the EU's CA since 2019 and is split into a policy pillar (combining all policies relating to security and defense) and a conduct pillar (combines the operational headquarters of both civilian and military missions) (Debuysere & Blockmans, 2019). Within the Dir. ISP pillar for Policy/Conduct the Integrated Strategic Planning Unit is the most relevant to conflict management because it takes on the tasks of both CSDP and stabilization. A major benefit of

turning PRISM into a fully functional directorate within the EEAS is a clear and strong chain of command. Overall, this vastly improves and strengthens integration within the EEAS and facilitates the operational implementation of the CA.

The second level of implementing the CA is inter-service institutional changes. A first step in that direction is the HR simultaneously acting as Vice-President of the EC, leading to coherence and coordination between the EEAS and the EC. Another step of institutionalizing comprehensiveness is the activation of the Commissioner's Group on External Action, which brings all relevant commissioners to one table. Its goal is to harmonize diverging interests. The HR takes on a coordinating role, trying to mobilize instruments, funding and expertise managed by the Commission (Debuysere & Blockmans, 2019). It is argued that this increase in intra-Commission coherence can help increase the political will of the Council and the member states in conflict management, by seeing that the tools and instruments can be used effectively. This shows that the institutionalist character and intergovernmental structure of key policy fields is an influential determinant of how the EU implements its CA, which again makes apparent the influence of the institutional context on the framing and strategy of a CA (cf. proposition 4).

Acting from the same logic, there are two important bodies to help ensure coherence between the Council, the Commission and the EEAS. The Committee of Permanent Representatives deals with EU foreign policy in general (e.g. trade and development), while the Political and Security Council (PSC) specifically focuses on CFSP / CSDP policies. The latter brings together representatives from the member states, the Commission, the EU Military Committee and the Committee for Civilian Aspects for Crisis Management to de facto exercise political control and strategic direction of civilian and military CSDP operations. Below these two central bodies is a large network of working groups and units to further facilitate inter-institutional coordination. This institutional setup helps to facilitate the four layers of comprehensiveness, as having all stakeholder cooperate enables them to incorporate their instruments, resources, focus areas and action phases.

Regarding the integration of financial instruments and resources, the Commission has brought forward a proposal that would merge the instruments, which are separated under the current multiannual financial framework, into one financial instrument called the Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI). This joint instrument for pooled funding would greatly contribute to coherence and strategic direction, and hence facilitate the implementation of comprehensiveness. However, the NDICI's impact on facilitating multi-dimensionality is limited, as it does not cover all dimensions of conflict management spending. For instance, CSDP operations, military capacity-building and

humanitarian aid are outside the scope of the joint instrument. It is to the most extent multi-level, as it plans to transfer thematic actions into geographic programmes, thereby focusing more on engagement of regional and local actors. Multi-lateralism is pursued in NDICI by institutionalizing joint-programming with other donors and consultations with civil society and local authorities (EC, 2018).

All in all, in order to implement its ambitious goals on the CA, the EU has taken on quite substantial institutional changes. It has adopted intra-service restructurings, especially in the EEAS, and put new bodies into place, as well as merged old units, to facilitate inter-service cooperation. Nevertheless, gaps still remain between the political and operational levels of conflict response, as not all goals are followed up by direct implementing measures. What becomes apparent is the EU's historical-institutional context of intergovernmental decision-making and path dependency greatly impact the framing of the CA framework, but also burdens its implementation (cf. proposition 4).

3.2 The UN's Integrated Approach Framework

The UN is committed to preserve peace and security in the world. In the realm of conflict and crisis management it generally makes means available for international conflict resolution and contributes to the setting of norms (Major et al., 2012). The UN can impose sanctions which are binding under international law and can mandate military measures and the application of military force, in the form of peacekeeping operations (Major et al., 2012). What all this shows is that the UN's CA must be seen in the broader context of force regulation. The most important of its six principle organs is the Security Council (UNSC), which has the "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security", according to the UN Charta. Other actors in the realm of conflict management are the General Assembly (UNGA), particularly its Special Committee for Peacekeeping, the Secretary General and the Secretariat's planning and administrative offices for civilian or military missions, and the Commission for peace consolidation. The organization is financed through the assessed contributions of member states to the regular budget, to peace operations and international criminal courts, as well as through voluntary contributions. Decisions are made on the basis of consensus and compromise.

3.2.1 Rationale

The overall goal of UN conflict management is to prevent conflicts, help mediate peace processes, protect civilians and sustain fragile peace processes (UNGA, 2015). The

organization has for long been the leading organization in establishing and promoting integration and comprehensiveness in external policy overall and conflict management specifically.

Faleg (2018) identifies the 1990s as the early phase of integration of conflict management efforts, starting with a wave of structural – intra-Secretariat – integration and continuing with strategic – inter-agency – integration. This phase put the most emphasis on the approaches being multi-level and multi-dimensional, by promoting the idea that all UN entities shall work closer together to maximize the impact of their pooled resources (proposition 1a+b).

An important step was the concept of Integrated Missions as "a deliberate effort by all elements of the UN system to achieve a shared understanding of the mandates and functions of the various pillars of the UN presence at country level, and to use this understanding to maximize UN effectiveness, efficiency, and impact in all aspects of its work" (Weir, 2006, p.13). From 2008 onwards, the Integrated Missions were understood in a broader context as the concept shifted to an Integrated Approach. The Integrated Approach should ensure that all components, dimensions and agents cooperate and collaborate in a coherent manner (Faleg, 2018). The current version of the Integrated Approach is constituted primarily by the Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (HIPPO) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Nonetheless, the approach has its weaknesses. According to the HIPPO report, the resources are too scarce; the UN is often too slow to engage with emerging crises and deploy peacekeeping forces; mandates and missions are constructed on the basis of templates, rather than fit-for-purpose; the Secretariat departments and UN agencies, funds and programmes struggle to integrate their efforts; and the bureaucratic system limits the speed and mobility of responses in the field (UNGA, 2015).

However, the report identifies four essential shifts that can be adopted by the means of a CA: (1) Political solutions shall guide the design and implementation of peace operations; (2) the full spectrum of peace operation responses shall be used more flexibly to respond to changing needs; (3) a stronger global-regional peace partnership is needed to respond to crises; and (4) the Secretariat must become more sensitive to the distinct and important needs of field missions (UNGA, 2015). From these priority areas one can derive that the UN is focusing the IA framework on making its conflict management approaches especially multi-dimensional (use of all policies and instruments) and multi-lateral (engagement of all players) (cf. propositions 1a+b). To a lesser extent one can view the framework as being multi-level (cf.

proposition 1c). While focusing extensively on prevention and reconstruction, the phase of conflict management receives the least attention.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reaffirms many of the goals set out in the HIPPO report. These include the universal respect for human rights. Also, the UN intends to universalize the normative values of democracy, rule of law and good governance, putting special emphasis on countries in situations of conflict (cf. proposition 3).

Overall, the UN's CA clearly stems from an institutionalist rationale (cf. proposition 4a), which results in its approach focusing on civilian and normative elements (cf. proposition 2+3), all framed towards force regulation. The criteria of comprehensiveness are pursued quite holistically (cf. proposition 1).

3.2.2 Implementation

The UN shows to be very ambitious in making changes to implement the CA. Over time, it has instilled several institutional reforms increasing unity and coherence across its conflict management pillars. It follows up on the goals set out with ambitious restructurings, integrative dynamics and innovations, as it looks to optimize the setup and processes.

One phase of the UN's implementation process is the creation of new bodies. A first step came with the creation of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), thereby providing political and executive direction to UN peacekeeping operations (Faleg, 2018). This institutional adaptation intended to boost inter-agency integration in order to manage multi-dimensional operations (cf. proposition 1a). Further inter-agency integration was implemented in the financial realm by pooling all conflict management instruments under the same budget. An Integrated Mission Task Force (IMTF) was formed at headquarter level to bring together the different actors and instruments involved in a mission, showing a clear emphasis on a multi-dimensional and multi-lateral approach (cf. proposition 1a+b). The task force is primarily involved in the planning process of conflict management actions and gives input to the DPKO. The creation of the post of Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General integrates the role of Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator. This allows for a better coordination among the development and humanitarian dimensions of conflict management.

As the second phase of its implementation process, the UN restructures existing bodies. Here intra-service changes are made, such as reconstituting the DPA as the Department for Peacebuilding and Political Affairs and the DPKO as the Department of Peace Operations. However, also in this phase new bodies are created, such as the Standing Principals Group,

tasked with improving coherence between the two aforementioned departments in pursuit of multilateralism (cf. proposition 1b). A multi-level layer is added by means of implementing the Integrated Strategic Framework (ISF), to guarantee a closer coordination between the UN peacekeeping operation and the UN country team, thereby bringing together the headquarter mission and the context-specific needs of the team on the ground (cf. proposition 1d).

The UN's ambitions to improve its comprehensive conflict management capacities is manifested in the follow-up report to the 2030 Agenda. Implementation measures to act upon the goals include (1) horizontal inter-agency cooperation by harmonizing, for instance, data and reporting systems, (2) strengthening vertical leadership and accountability lines by means of creating new coordinative authorities (such as the aforementioned DSRSG), (3) operationalizing both the humanitarian-development nexus and the security-development nexus by establishing a steering committee to streamline policies, foster synergies and guide collective action (cf. proposition 2b). Furthermore, to address not only policy coherence but also the coordinated use of resources, a Funding Compact is initiated, which can better address the systematic allocation of resources (UN, 2015).

Overall, the UN is very ambitious in following up on promises of what its CA should achieve. The organization sets a strong focus on renewing its internal structures by means of introducing new bodies, thereby creating coherence between dimensions, actors and levels of conflict management (cf. proposition 1a,b,d).

3.3 NATO's Comprehensive Approach Framework

Especially since the Balkan wars in the 1990s, NATO has continuously taken over crisis management and peacekeeping tasks. However, NATO completely relies on the military resources of its members states for these missions, as it does not possess capabilities of its own (Major et al., 2012). The North Atlantic Council and the Defense Planning Committee, under the chairmanship of the Secretary General, are the highest decision-making bodies, deciding upon starting or ending missions. All decisions made are based on the principle of consensus. In crisis management, NATO does not explicitly tie itself politically or legally to a UN mandate. The instruments deployed in conflict management are mainly of military nature, such as the NATO Response Force. Additionally, the organization is currently setting up small civilian planning and conduct capabilities and cooperates with both the EU and the UN.

3.3.1 Rationale

NATO has been involved in several international – especially armed - conflicts, such as Kosovo, which makes the organization a key player in conflict management. However, the organization's rationale and purpose of a pure military alliance (initial focus being collective defence and deterrence) is no longer fit to respond to contemporary conflicts in a sufficient way, as the changed nature of conflicts necessitates a more comprehensive response (cf. chapter 2.1). It has been realized that NATO needs to adapt its conflict management capacities and strategies.

The Riga Summit Declaration (2006) was the first document to explicitly refer to the CA. Learning from experience in Afghanistan (cf. chapter 4) and Kosovo, NATO diagnosed that the new type of conflict demands a CA making use of a wide spectrum of civil and military instruments (NATO, 2006). At the same time, it acknowledges that it currently lacks the capabilities to deploy strictly civilian means, hence making the enhancement of these capabilities a top priority.

Simultaneously, NATO sees an extension of multi-lateral cooperation mechanisms with other organizations as essential, in order to account for its capability deficiencies in the civilian, but also in the military realm (cf. proposition 1b). In addition to this multi-lateral layer, the CA incorporates a multi-phased approach, stating that military support efforts shall be brought in all crisis phases (cf. proposition 1c).

The 2010 Strategic Concept doubles down on NATO's ambitions to deploy a CA to conflict management. In fact, it covers all layers of comprehensiveness, though to different extents. It strives to make use of all available political and military instruments (cf. proposition 1a), while forming "appropriate but modest" civilian crisis management capability (NATO, 2010, p.21). Especially in this dimension, it intends to lean heavily on international cooperation, looking to plan, employ and coordinate civilian activities until conditions allow for the transfer of those responsibilities and tasks to other actors (cf. proposition 1b). NATO itself still plans to focus on its military conflict management capacities, especially its capability to deploy and sustain robust military forces in the field. It pledges to address the full spectrum of crises, even though the organization remains most focused on conflict management (cf. proposition 1c). Lastly, the Strategic Concept aims at the involvement of the local and regional level by developing and training local forces in crisis zones (NATO, 2010) (cf. proposition 1d).

Overall, NATO's CA aims to enhance integration of instruments, actors, conflict stages and levels (cf. proposition 1). Despite aiming for more civilian capabilities, the organization's realist background still heavily impacts the CA's framing (cf. proposition 4), resulting in a

predominance of military means (cf. proposition 2) and a lack of normative elements (cf. proposition 3).

3.3.2 Implementation

A Working Group, tasked with the implementation and operationalization of the CA, developed an action plan, which defined essential tasks and divided them into four pillars: (1) Planning and conduct of operations, (2) lessons learned, training, education and exercises, (3) cooperation with external actors, and (4) strategic communication (NATO, 2011). The implementation plan had a clear emphasis on division of labor between international diplomatic, security, humanitarian and development actors. Furthermore, a civilian-military task force was set up to coordinate the implementation of the CA in line with the action plan.

The task force brought together members from several units and offices, with the goal of achieving coordination, consultations and agreements on a comprehensive conflict management (cf. proposition 1a+b). The membership base included staff from NATO's main divisions in its Internal Staff, command structures, liaison offices, as well as frequent engagement with other international organizations and member states (Faleg, 2018).

The task force identified key challenges for the implementation of the CA. These were (1) internal cohesion, (2) convergence in member states' planning, and (3) a lack of budget allocated towards implementing the CA. The setup of multiple task forces and working groups indicates a move towards inter-service coordination of tasks between the actors involved. In 2017, NATO reviewed the tasks of its 2011 CA Action Plan and validated the importance of civil-military interaction (cf. proposition 2) and multilateral cooperation with other actors.

Another focus area for NATO in implementing a CA is increasing coordination and coherence at the planning stage. Now, the Council comes together to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the political, socio-economic and institutional situation and the physical infrastructure on the ground, to then construct an overall campaign plan that determines the approach, including the allocation of human and financial resources and the task-sharing with allied actors (NATO, 2011). The action plan then commits to a close cooperation with national authorities and intends to operationalize the capacity to adapt to any specific country situation. These measures can add the element of a multi-level approach (cf. proposition 1d).

Still, NATO's focus on multi-lateralism becomes evident in stressing that the implementation requires all actors to work together with a shared sense of responsibility and openness, taking into account each other's mandates, roles, and decision-making autonomy

(Courtney, 2018). This shows that NATO idealizes but also implements the CA not as hierarchical, but as a collaborative effort among equal partners – both internally (inter-service) between the different agencies, and externally (inter-organizational) between partnered international organizations.

Overall, NATO does not yet fully double down on its goals and promises of making its conflict management more comprehensive. Its CA sets a clear focus on effective multilateralism, in the sense of a close cooperation with other international actors. It does not, however, launch many significant reforms of its internal institutional structures, organizational culture or mechanisms, in order to increase its own capacities and effectiveness. It mostly relies on the institutional status quo to implement the CA. A key reason is being bound by its institutional context, which includes diverging member state interests (cf. proposition 4).

3.4 Comparison

Chapters 3.1-3.3 conducted a descriptive analysis of each organization's CA framework, thereby doubling down on the theoretical propositions established in chapter 2. The findings are summarized in table 5. These allow for a comparison of the extent to which each organization's framing of its CA differs on the policy level. The findings show that the EU, UN and NATO frame their CA frameworks dissimilarly.

The EU sets most ambitious goals, promising to fulfill all four layers of comprehensiveness (cf. proposition 1). Here its focus lies specifically on multi-lateralism and multi-dimensionality. The EU tries to balance civilian and military means, which is more feasible than in any other organization, though the civilian rationale still prevails (cf. proposition 2), in which normative elements play an important role (cf. proposition 3). For the EU it is clear that its institutional context plays key role in framing its CA (cf. proposition 4). However, despite efforts of inter and intra-service restructuring being visible and tangible, practical challenges of implementing and operationalizing the CA still remain.

The UN's CA framework is the most complex and sophisticated. The layers of comprehensiveness are pursued quite holistically (cf. proposition 1), with the exception of the multi-phase element. The UN's approach focuses quite extensively on civilian and normative means (cf. proposition 2+3). This framing is due to its institutional context of peace and force regulation in the logic of institutionalism (cf. proposition 4). In the implementation phase, the UN is quite ambitious in following up its promises by adopting internal restructurings to fit rationale of the CA. The UN appears to be best equipped to make its conflict management framework comprehensive in the long term.

NATO's CA framework is the least exhaustive and extensive, even though it recognizes all layers of comprehensiveness (cf. proposition 1). Despite aiming for more civilian capabilities, the organization's realist background still heavily impacts the CA's framing (cf. proposition 4), resulting in a predominance of military means (cf. proposition 2) and a lack of normative elements (cf. proposition 3). In the implementation phase, NATO lacks the significant restructurings that EU and UN showed. Overall, its framing of comprehensiveness is narrower than the other organizations'.

Overall, the comparison confirms the validity of the theoretical propositions. However, they all apply to a different extent to the three respective CAs, making evident the ambiguity of the concept of comprehensiveness when strategizing and implementing it. While the overall goal pursued by each CA is comparatively similar, the interpretation of comprehensiveness can differ quite significantly, as is shown by the different fulfillment of the theoretical criteria (cf. proposition 1). The key reason behind the differences in the framing of the CAs is the individual institutional context it is strategized and implemented in (cf. proposition 4).

Theoretical Proposition / International Organization	**EU CA**	**UN CA**	**NATO CA**
1a: Multi-dimensional	Yes: Dir. ISP	Yes: DPKO/DPA; DRSG	Yes: Civilian-military task force
1b: Multi-lateral	Yes: HR; CGEA; PSC	Yes: IMTF	Yes: especially inter-organizational
1c: Multi-phased	Goal set out, but not implemented	Management phase underrepresented	Not implemented
1d: Multi-level	Goal set out, but not implemented	Yes: ISF	Partly addressed via task force
2: Civil-military nexus	Civilian culture dominant, but military ambitions	Civilian culture dominant	Military culture dominant
3: Normative Power	Elements inherent to CA	Elements inherent to CA	Not part of rationale
4: Realism / Institutionalism	Institutionalist background	Institutionalist background	Realist background

Table 4: Comparison of the CA Policy Frameworks.

After this chapter concluded about the three organizations' frameworks and how they compare, the next chapter goes beyond the policy level and assesses how the CAs are actually "lived" in practice.

4. Comprehensive Conflict Management in Practice: Case Study Afghanistan

After having compared the three CA frameworks, this chapter seeks to answer the second sub-question regarding the extent to which the CAs of the EU, UN and NATO are applied in a similar way at the operational level. Each organization's handling of the CA in Afghanistan is analyzed, in order to assess how the previously discussed framework functions in practice, i.e. how goals and strategies are operationalized.

The case has been selected because Afghanistan serves as a prime example of the new type of conflict (see chapter 2.1), featuring terrorism, organized crime and large-scale migration. The war is held simultaneously in the security and the development domain, with the war on terror on the one hand, and state building on the other hand. Afghanistan has a long history of being plagued by local and international conflicts, one of the reasons being its geopolitical importance. In contemporary history there have been different phases of conflicts on Afghan grounds (Tripathi & Ferhatovic, 2017). Beginning in the mid-1990's, after the end of the Cold War and the subsequent Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Taliban took over large parts of the country. A brewing conflict with the United States escalated in 2001 with the attacks of September 11th. This incident brought the attention of the international community to Afghanistan as a sanctuary for global terrorism (Tripathi & Ferhatovic, 2017). The focus of the case study will be on the current conflict phase, starting in 2001, characterized by the disintegration of the Taliban and their allies, yet only a tenuous stability in the country, bringing upon the need for conflict management.

Figure 2. Map of Afghanistan's Geopolitical Location. Source: Ray. J.L. (2014). The US Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

4.1 The EU's Comprehensive Conflict Management in Practice

Afghanistan has been identified as a country case in which particular actions of the CA framework can be brought forward and are considered to bring added value to EU engagement. Two EU Action Plans (2015 and 2016/17) provide guidelines on the practical implementation and application of the CA.

The 2015 Action Plan operates a comprehensive progress report, which sets up precise deliverables to be monitored by a reference group. General prioritized actions in quest of comprehensiveness include: (1) development of guidelines for joint framework documents, strengthening joint analysis, (2) capacity building in support of security and development, (3) smoothing transitions to and from CSDP missions, (4) more collaborative transition strategies between the EC and the EEAS bodies, and (5) exploring new methods for rapid deployment of joint field missions.

In Afghanistan these broader goals of the CA are to be achieved by concrete initiatives: coherent (multi-dimensional) financial resource management through the Law and Order Trust Fund and the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (cf. proposition 1a); refreshed framework for mutual (multi-lateral) accountability (cf. proposition 1b); programmatic approach to capacity building for Afghan ministries and civilian policing (cf. proposition 1c); ensure EUPOL's transition to enhance police-justice linkages, also through reinforcement of the EU Special Representative's (EUSR) team to bring together the management levels (cf. proposition 1d); and humanitarian assistance for Afghans affected by conflict in pursuit of normative values (EC & HR, 2015; EC & HR, 2016).

However, not all initiatives actually materialize. Overall, a basic assumption of the CA is that cooperation among departments and agencies is in their respective interest and will ultimately result in increased efficiency. Yet, conflict management in Afghanistan shows that this assumption does not necessarily materialize. An overarching problem in that regard appears to be a lack of clarity among the actors in terms of what the CA is about and what comprehensiveness means. Furthermore, the absence of a real CA strategy is cited, meaning that even if the idea and goals were clear, there is no concise and direct political guidance on how to operationalize them. It would have needed short- and long-term goals for each department or agency, clear lines of accountability, points of authority, and further guidance on, for instance, processes of information-sharing (Kammel & Zyla, 2018).

In interviews conducted by Faleg (2018) EU officials specifically highlighted problems with putting the CA framework into action, citing that the approaches on the ground were bound by bureaucracy and a complex variety of disconnected procedures and organizational cultures. Internal (multi-dimensional) coordination of policy tools and funding instruments has been difficult between the EU Special Representative, the delegation of the Commission, EUPOL and bilateral missions by member states. The latter fear that joining EUPOL would marginalize their national influence on the ground (cf. proposition 1a), highlighting a reoccurring issue of the EU's institutional context. Despite referring to positive developments especially in internal

(multi-lateral) information-sharing (cf. proposition 1b), challenges remain. External (multi-lateral) cooperation suffered from a lack of coherence among the key international actors. For instance, EUPOL was denied access to NATO intelligence, despite the Berlin Plus Agreement allowing the EU just that for its CSDP missions (cf. proposition 1b). Vertical coordination from the headquarter level to the delegation (cf. proposition 1d) is insufficient, as the EU's CA suffers from too little recognition of and sensitivity towards the local context on the ground (Debuysere & Blockmans, 2018). Lastly, the provision of quick analyses for critical decision-making and a vision for long-term risks in light of short-term (politically visible) crises are named as the most imminent issues (Faleg, 2018).

The shortcomings of the comprehensive conflict management in Afghanistan allow for operational implications to be derived. Generally, operational factors turn out to be an essential – yet vastly underestimated – factor in successfully deploying a CA. The EU must recognize that issues such as civil and military logistics, operational costs and resource constraints can be an impactful determinant of the CA's success (Kammel & Zyla, 2018).

As a solution, Kammel & Zyla propose a further operationalization of the civil-military nexus (cf. proposition 2). For instance, one should explore the idea of deploying small military contingents within civilian missions in insecure areas, while simultaneously embedding civilian experts in military missions. In the bigger picture, civil-military relations must be considered within the EU's institutional context, that is, the EEAS, the Commission, the Council, and to a lesser extent the Parliament (cf. proposition 4). For the civil-military relationship to truly function in practice, as a key part of the CA, it must be reflected in the structures determining the direction of the EU's conflict management. For instance, there is no military staff or component represented in the Commission, and the only military component present in the EEAS is the European Union Military Staff.

Overall, the Afghanistan conflict uncovers that the EU struggles to effectively translate the CA framework into action. Despite aiming to make the four layers of comprehensiveness feasible (cf. proposition 1) operational challenges of organizational and coordinative nature limit the progress in practically deploying the CA.

4.2 The UN's Comprehensive Conflict Management in Practice

First and foremost, the UN plays a central role in the international community's collective approach to conflict management, as the UNSC must legitimize international involvement through its resolutions. This is highly relevant for the context of the UN's conflict management

actions. The fact that EU and NATO members also act through the UN discloses the inevitable interrelation of the organizations, as well as the unique position of the UN.

As an element of its quest for comprehensiveness, the UN has created several bodies contributing to the implementation of the CA framework in practice. The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) serves the purpose of primarily multi-lateral and multi-dimensional coordination on the ground (cf. proposition 1a+b). It mobilizes resources from the different UN actors and has multiple field offices (Stavridis, 2011), which can be leveraged for multi-level coordination (cf. proposition 1d). The UN Development Programme contributes to comprehensiveness by assisting in the creation of so-called district development plans, which serves as a valuable asset to further the integration at the strategic planning stage. Moreover, the Integrated Missions were leveraged in Afghanistan to achieve the policy-level goal of acting upon a multi-level approach. This way, a shared understanding could be gathered of all elements and functions of the UN's work at country level (cf. proposition 1d).

However, the UN's CA also shows, similar to the EU, that it is difficult to mobilize, organize and coordinate the activities of all actors. In his analysis of the UN's CA in Afghanistan, de Coning (2008) identified various technical, administrative, organizational and budgetary challenges that still exist in integrating dimensions, actors, phases and levels of conflict. Furthermore, it becomes evident is that the UN's lack of mentioning a multi-phased CA in its policy papers also is reflects in practice. While the organization is very active in prevention and especially reconstruction efforts, taking the leadership role in civilian reconstruction in Afghanistan, it falls short in the phase of conflict management (cf. proposition 1c).

One key element of the CA is to always take into account the local or regional context of the conflict situation and recognize the specific realities and needs on the ground. An issue that is diagnosed for all three organizations, yet especially highlighted in the context of the EU's and UN's conflict management, is the conflict sensitivity, along with which comes the principle of 'do no harm' (cf. chapter 2). Some have argued that the UN's awareness of how interventions affect the situation on the ground and the ability to minimize negative effects needs to be strengthened (Debuysere & Blockmans, 2018).

Overall, the UN cannot quite follow up its ambitious CA framework with an effective application on the operational level. While to a large extent deploying mechanisms and structures to leverage the layers of comprehensiveness (cf. proposition 1), operational issues arise when pursuing integration, especially of the civilian and military realm (cf. proposition 2).

4.3 NATO's Comprehensive Conflict Management in Practice

The most substantial initiative in Afghanistan is the UN-mandated and NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). As part of the CA framework, NATO intends to redirect the mission towards becoming more flexible and guaranteeing the sufficient resource supply.

NATO works with creation of new bodies to actively implement its CA. Most notably, it established so-called Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT). These are units that include military, civilian and diplomatic components, with the intention to feasibly establish a multi-dimensional approach (cf. proposition 1a), as well as briding the gap between the headquarter level and the local level (cf. proposition 1d). However, the PRTs have been criticized for having too vague missions, vague roles and insufficient resources (Steinsson, 2015).

Despite viewing the further promotion of the civilian-military nexus as a powerful tool to manage the conflict in Afghanistan, the coordination between the civilian and military components proved to be the most challenging task. In fact, the cultural divide between civilian and military actors has not yet been fully bridged (cf. proposition 2). NATO's military rationale remains predominant. In Afghanistan – seeing conflict management as a collective effort of the international community, built on multi-lateral (external) cooperation (cf. proposition 1b) – it occupies the role of military protector for the other actors. It intends to provide a basic level of security, for instance with its Defence against Terrorism initiatives, in order to create a secure area in which the other actors can contribute their respective conflict management measures. While voicing full support of and commitment to civilian, development and diplomatic efforts, NATO's CA in Afghanistan falls short on actually delivering civilian capabilities (cf. proposition 2) or integrating normative elements (cf. proposition 3).

Considering its extensive focus on multilateral cooperation with other international actors, that cooperation is not very holistic and effective in practice, as different issues arise (cf. proposition 1b). The cooperation between the EU and NATO has been highlighted as being especially insufficient. As touched upon in the previous chapter, both organizations failed to coordinate their respective police programs and integrate their intelligence or security means and failed to come up with joint solutions. Cooperation with the UN has also encountered difficulties. Steinsson (2015) holds that this partnership is especially crucial, as the two organizations are perceived as respective leaders of the military (NATO) and civilian (UN) efforts in Afghanistan. Steinsson reasons that the UN has been ambivalent about working closely with a military alliance like NATO due to differences in their constituting sets of norms, which shows that the respective institutional contexts can impact the application of the CA (cf. proposition 4).

Overall, NATO's application of the CA in practice cannot deliver upon the policy level promises. The layers of comprehensiveness that were especially highlighted in the framework are not effectively leveraged due to operational limitations (cf. proposition 1). Meanwhile, the gap between the civilian and military cultures cannot be overcome, as NATO's application of the CA focuses entirely on the latter (cf. proposition 2).

4.4 Comparison

After an assessment of each organization's handling of its CA in practice, the findings are compared in order to show the extent to which the EU, UN and NATO apply their CA in a similar fashion, while also learning about a possible gap between the policy level and the operational level of a CA. For the sake of clarity table 6 summarizes the findings.

The Afghanistan conflict uncovers that the EU struggles to effectively translate the CA framework into action. Despite ambitiously aiming to make the four layers of comprehensiveness feasible (cf. proposition 1) and deploying a set of actions, operational challenges of organizational and coordinative nature limit the progress in practically deploying the CA. The mere complexity of the EU's institutional setup appears to be an issue for the deployment of a feasible and effective CA that is hard to overcome.

The UN cannot quite follow up its ambitious CA framework with an effective application on the operational level. While to a large extent deploying mechanisms and structures to leverage the layers of comprehensiveness (cf. proposition 1), not all of them manifest. Furthermore, a unique set of operational issues arises when pursuing integration, especially of the civilian and military realm (cf. proposition 2).

NATO is comparatively active in conflict management in Afghanistan. However, the application of the CA in practice cannot deliver upon the policy level promises. The layers of comprehensiveness that were especially highlighted in the framework are not effectively leveraged due to operational limitations (cf. proposition 1). Meanwhile, the gap between the civilian and military cultures cannot be overcome, as NATO's application of the CA focuses entirely on the latter (cf. proposition 2).

Overall, the three organizations applied their CAs in a largely dissimilar way. They focused to different extents on the application of the four layers of comprehensiveness (cf. proposition 1), diverged greatly in their interpretation of the civil-military nexus (cf. proposition 2) and showed contrasting inclusions of normative elements (cf. proposition 3). Again, this can be drawn back to their respective institutional context (cf. proposition 4). A commonality of the three CAs is the significant gap between the policy level and the operational level, in that no

organization could effectively materialize its goals and strategies from the policy level. In practice, they each faced operational burdens of mobilizing, organizing and coordinating dimensions, actors, phases and levels of conflict. Despite their organizational differences, a set of problems is consistent with all three organizations.

In the big picture of comprehensive conflict management, it becomes evident that progress must start at the strategic level; a CA cannot function on the ground without proper coordination and planning of policies and resources at the top. A CA must offer the necessary coordination capacity by leveraging a conceptual and organizational basis for cooperation, promoting the establishment of new structures and regulating the distribution of resources. Even if a common strategic objective is in place, that does not automatically translate into a comprehensive operational approach. The organizations need to open up the command and control structures for civilians on the military side, and military aids on the civilian side, in order to overcome the divide between the two cultures. Furthermore, it becomes evident that for all three organizations their intergovernmental context limits the operability of the CA.

In fact, the insights from the on-the-ground comparison to a certain extent challenge the policy-level assumption that there is always a high enough level of common values, goals, objectives, as well as synergetic strategies, processes and mechanisms among the relevant dimensions, actors, phases and levels to facilitate system-wide coherence. Just as theory proposes, a key characteristic of international organizations is the intergovernmental decision-making structure and ensuing power struggle. The member states are ultimately the key players in determining the policies and approaches, which means that finding common ground can fail due to diverging interests both within and between the organizations. However, a number of countries are members to all three organizations, meaning that the actors within the organizations are ultimately the same. This coexistence can be curse and blessing at the same time. Ideally, this could be an opportunity for the international community to leverage their powers to pursue a more integrated multilateral approach, despite this quest being challenging. By no means does this imply that it is impossible to achieve coherence and coordination across actors, instruments, stages and levels of conflict under a comprehensive approach umbrella. Rather, it suggests that, at least currently, there may be times and situations in which it is very difficult to achieve a common comprehensive approach.

Theoretical Proposition / International Organization	**EU CA**	**UN CA**	**NATO CA**
1a: Multi-dimensional	Pursued, but operational constraints	Pursued, but operational constraints	Pursued, but strategies too vague
1b: Multi-lateral	Pursued, but lack of coherence	Pursued, but mobilization difficult	Internat.cooperation pursued, but insufficient execution
1c: Multi-phased	Yes, but limited ability	Management phase insufficient	Focus on management phase
1d: Multi-level	Yes, but insufficient coordination	Pursued, but limited conflict sensitivity	Effectively pursued
2: Civil-military nexus	Applied, but difficult to coordinate	Coordination pursued, but administrative obstacles	Imbalance between civil and military means
3: Normative Power	Only partially leveraged	Leveraged within internat. community	Not pursued
4: Realism / Institutionalism	Institutionalist background as operational obstacle	Institutionalist background as operational obstacle	Realist background in the way of true comprehensiveness

Table 5: Comparison of the CA in Practice.

5. Conclusion

This thesis aimed to deepen the understanding of the concept of comprehensive conflict management. It therefore conducted a descriptive analysis and comparison of the CA policy framework of the EU, the UN and NATO, followed up by an assessment of the CAs in practice by means of a case study of the Afghanistan conflict. Overall, the research sought to answer the question to what extent the CA to conflict management was framed and applied similarly by the EU, the UN and NATO. The analyses were supported by a prior theoretical inquiry into the concept of comprehensive conflict management, which resulted in theoretical propositions of what a CA should entail.

It was found that, overall, the CA is framed and applied in a largely dissimilar way. The frameworks' rationale, institutional implementation and practical application differ based on the extent to which the four layers of comprehensiveness (multi-dimensional, multi-lateral, multi-phased, multi-level) are inherent to the approach (cf. proposition 1), how a balanced civil-military nexus is leveraged (cf. proposition 2) and whether normative elements are included (cf. proposition 3). They key reason for the differences in the framing and application of a CA is the respective institutional context of each organization (cf. proposition 4). While the EU's, UN's and NATO's efforts to strategize and implement a CA - in a way that fits their individual context - is clearly visible, the practical challenges of implementing and applying the CA remain.

The EU sets the most ambitious goals at the policy level by fulfilling all criteria of what a CA should entail, integrating civilian and military means and including normative elements. The holistic idea of a CA is implemented by means of extensive inter and intra-institutional changes, despite difficulties occurring due to the complex institutional structure. The UN's CA framework is the most well-established and sophisticated. Despite not satisfying all theoretical layers of a comprehensive framework, it continuously revamped its internal structures and mechanisms in pursuit of a broad notion of systemic comprehensiveness. NATO's framework is the least exhaustive and established, as it portrays a narrower framing of comprehensiveness. The CA aims to overcome the military culture and build up civilian capacities, yet fails to provide palpable solutions to reform its structures and mechanisms.

In practice, all three frameworks failed to fully deliver upon their promises from the policy level. In materializing its framework, each organization faced its own unique organizational, operational and coordinative issues. The EU appeared to be limited by organizational constraints, starting at the strategic level, making both horizontal and vertical coordination ineffective. For the UN, especially the mobilization and coordination of the actors

was a difficult task, while NATO cannot overcome its military culture. Also, the pursued multilateral cooperation was mostly ineffective.

Overall, the study shows that comprehensiveness is by no means a miracle solution for conflict management. Preexisting deficiencies of international organizations' conflict management, such as operational limitations and organizational constraints, cannot automatically be overcome. Nonetheless, comprehensiveness remains a concept that shall be further pursued. The study showed that a CA can be framed, strategized and applied differently, with a varying fulfillment of theoretical ideals of comprehensiveness, and still be a promising tool to achieve coherence and effectiveness in conflict management. A CA strengthens an organization's stance as a global player, by building up capacities, establishing coherence and developing the flexibility and multi-layered nature required to adequately respond to today's crises. Ultimately, comprehensiveness should not be viewed as an end goal in and of itself but rather as a process towards becoming an efficient conflict manager.

By demonstrating different ways of framing and applying a CA, determining strengths and weaknesses of each approach, both at the policy level as well as in practice, and pointing towards potential changes to be made, the thesis confirmed the concept's scientific and societal raison d'être and significance. In the future, the scientific debate on comprehensiveness can be further enhanced by developing a different set of characteristics to use as a tool-kit to analyze a CA. Furthermore, comparative analyses could focus more on an explanatory feature, investigating why rather than how CAs are framed and applied differently. Also, different conflict scenarios can be assessed to investigate whether they show different outcomes than the Afghanistan case. In a more applied sense, scientists as well as policy makers can derive specific policy recommendations to further optimize the CAs.

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