

Harmony of Efforts:

A C2 concept for Complex Endeavours

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THE CONTEXT IN which military operations are undertaken is rapidly changing, from operations conducted by the military alone and for military purposes, to multi-organizational,² multifunctional endeavours, where the military is only one component. That component is still tasked with military operations, but these operations are part of an endeavour with wider scope than just a military one. Because they are so different from traditional forms of military activity, these operations require new concepts of command and control, C2, both for the endeavour as a whole and for C2 of the military component.

In this article I propose a new concept of C2 for multifunctional, multiorganizational endeavours, such as the operations following the current concept of a Comprehensive Approach or Effects-Based Approach to Operations (CA/EBAO) that is becoming the norm for Western militaries, including the Swedish Armed Forces. I have called this concept *Harmony of Efforts* and it is designed to provide an overall concept pertaining to what C2 should aim for in these complex operations. I also propose three supporting concepts that provide guidelines concerning how *Harmony of Efforts* is to be achieved: *Cooperation*, *Negotiation and Management of interfaces*. *Cooperation* refers to the spirit in which C2 is to be exercised in such operations, *Nego-*

tiation points to the method that is to be used, and *Management of interfaces* points to the substance of C2 in these operations, i.e., what C2 should be about.

The concepts proposed here have their roots in our work on C2 in UN Peace Support Operations (PSO) where we found that attempts at traditional forms of C2 caused many frictions,³ indicating a need for new ways of thinking about C2 for such operations. UN PSOs were, of course, early examples of the multifunctional, multiorganizational endeavours that are undertaken today. We then proposed that Cooperation be added to Command and Control to form a new approach to C2 in such operations. That idea is retained here, but it is now put into the context of the overall concept of *Harmony of Efforts*, and supplemented by more explicit ideas about what is required in addition to our early Command, Control and Cooperation concept.

Harmony of efforts⁴

The traditional ideal for military C2 of any military operation is *unity of command*. This ideal is a close relative to the conception that there is an ideal, or optimal, way of conducting a military operation, and that this requires that all resources be coordinated in one overall plan for the operation, under the direction of one commander. In short, military C2 is not just “muddling through”, to

use an apt phrase suggested by Lindblom⁵ in a different context but a question of finding the optimal way of doing things. This certainly characterizes thinking about the planning part of C2. When it comes to execution, however, “muddling through” seems to capture the thinking of at least some great military commanders better than the idea that there is an optimal way of doing things. Examples are the well-known quote from Napoleon: “One engages, and then one sees”, and Moltke’s equally well-known dictum: “No plan survives contact with the enemy”.

In multiorganizational, multifunctional operations, unity of command is not feasible, and perhaps not even necessary. To explain why this is the case, we need to understand how complex operations, such as operations according to the concept of Effects-Based Approach to Operations are different from traditional military operations. A simple answer is given by the very term EBAO, and the fact that the O stands for operations. Even though we may think of such an activity as one operation, the term Effects Based Approach to Operations reminds us – tongue in cheek – that the endeavour will, in fact, consist of *many operations at the same time*. Each of these operations is handled by a different organization, and that organization will be doing what it normally does, relying on its own expertise, methods, resources and planning routines to accomplish its normal tasks. Thus, a medical organization will provide medical care, a relief organization will provide relief in the form of food and shelter, and so on. A successful endeavour is one where each organization is able to accomplish its task, for there is nothing else that the organization can do. For the military component this task is generally to provide a safe and secure environment that makes it possible for the other or-

ganizations to accomplish their tasks.

A military mindset will, however, immediately lead to the assumption that this requires coordination of the activities,⁶ preferably by the military. This is not surprising, for that is, of course, what the military has been trained to do, and what it uses C2 for. However, before adopting this mindset, we should remind ourselves *why* the military have been trained to view C2 in this way. It is because of the nature of the task that faced a military commander in a second generation warfare military operation, viz., the need to concentrate sufficient mass or sufficient fire-power against the enemy’s centre of gravity to achieve (at least) local superiority and to avoid fratricide, something that still lingers in the training and education of officers. This is, of course, still a consideration when carrying out the military tasks required in CA/EBAO, but concentration of the kind required in a military operation is not what a complex endeavour is about. The concept “centre of gravity” has no real meaning in these operations,⁷ except, perhaps, in very watered down form. Certainly, this watered down concept does not imply a need for concentration of mass in the way the original Clausewitzian concept does. Moreover, it does not capture the real object of C2 in these operations, which is to find a way to enable the various organizations to do their respective jobs.

This means that C2 must have a different focus. That focus should be to find a way to achieve the overall goals of the operation by enabling the various organizations involved to accomplish their tasks with as few frictions as possible. This is not a matter of developing a plan that leads to an optimal response, for in these kinds of operations, we do not know what the optimal response is⁸ in the same way that we could, perhaps, do in a purely military operation where there

is only one goal to be achieved. The goal in multifunctional operations should instead, as already mentioned, be to insure the best possible conditions for each organization to do what it can do within its area of competence. It is thus a question of eliminating as many frictions as possible, and making certain that the activities of the various components do not conflict, in short, to achieve *Harmony of Efforts*. I use the plural to emphasize that there is a number of efforts going on, more or less in parallel, much like the voices in a polyphonic piece of music. Because of differences in organizational culture, any attempt to force all of the organizations taking part in the operation into the straitjacket of a traditional military plan is likely to create frictions, rather than to eliminate them. This is indeed what we found in our earlier work on UN peace support operations.⁹ Moreover, even if traditional military coordination were desirable, no one in a multiorganizational, multifunctional operation will have the authority to create and enforce the overall plan required to coordinate the activities of the military component and the civilian component, not to speak of the various NGOs. To stretch the musical metaphor a little further, the harmony that can be achieved is that of a group of jazz musicians in collective improvisation, rather than that in a string quartet, where the harmony was designed by the composer, for there is simply no composer with the authority to write out all the voices. In short, cooperation aiming at *Harmony of Efforts* is a more realistic goal than Unity of Command or Unity of Effort. Perhaps it is the only realistic goal in these operations.

The spirit: Cooperation

It is a fact that many of the organizations involved in a complex operation may not agree to being coordinated, especially not

by a military commander. Moreover, as noted above, there will simply not be a commander with the authority to coordinate them. This calls for a new approach to the problem of C2. What is required is cooperation, not coordination. This suggests that the spirit in which C2 is to be conducted should aim at fostering cooperation. That is, C2 should aim at reaching agreement about what should be done, rather than coercion by means of a plan. As a consequence, C2 arrangements must be such that they adhere to the conditions that are necessary for successful cooperation.

The method: Negotiation

When cooperation is the goal, the parties need to talk to each other, and there must be both give and take to make sure that the goals of each party are met to the extent that it is possible. The overall method should therefore be negotiation.

In these negotiations, it is important to remember that not everything is open to discussion. Each organization will have its own expertise and its own way of planning and executing its operations. The subject of negotiation should thus not focus primarily on *how* things are to be done, but *what* each organization needs to do to achieve *Harmony of Efforts*. In short, the negotiations should be part of the general sensemaking that precedes actual planning, rather than the planning itself. Making the negotiations part of the planning process is likely to create frictions because each organization has its own planning routines, its own terminology and its own implicit knowledge about how its tasks should be accomplished, things that will be less salient in a discussion of what needs to be done, provided that this discussion is kept concrete and free of jargon. Once there is agreement on what is to be done and by whom, it should be left to each

of the organizations to plan and carry out its response. Part of the “what” that is the result of the sensemaking must specify what each organization needs from every other organization to be able to carry out its task. This takes us to the final supporting concept that concerns the substance of the C2 process, what it should be about.

The substance: Management of interfaces

As noted above, each organization in a multiorganizational, multifunctional endeavour will have its own expertise, resources and planning routines to accomplish its core tasks. However, the situation in the mission area may make it impossible for the respective organization to function. The most obvious obstacle is the lack of a safe and secure environment, that which is to be provided by the military and the police. Neither health care nor relief can be delivered under fire from an enemy, and the local population may well be unwilling to accept what health care or relief agencies have to offer if they are punished for this by the guerrillas afterwards. A safe and secure environment is, of course, also needed for the local population to go about their normal business and to allow normal political processes to take place. A safe and secure environment is thus both a goal in itself (a main goal of the military and the police) and something that is required for the various civilian components and NGOs to achieve their tasks. Obviously, there is room for both positive and negative synergy for all parties here. This is where the need for cooperation comes in, and it should aim, not at creating an overall plan to govern the activity of all parties involved, but to make sure that the activity of, say, the military and the relief agencies do not interfere

with each other. For example, the military cannot conduct a large-scale high-intensity military operation at the same time as a relief agency conducts a major operation in the same area, and vice versa, but a relief agency must know what kind of support it can count on if there is violence from insurgents in the area where they operate, and so on. Moreover, there needs to be an exchange of information so that each organization has the information that is pertinent to what it tries to achieve.¹⁰

The substance of the negotiations should therefore be to work out agreements that handle the *interfaces between the various organizations* so that each organization can conduct its normal business with as few frictions as possible from other organizations in the operation, while collaborating and helping each other as required locally. This should, of course, not only be taken in the negative sense of minimizing interference. It may also be a case of support for example, a relief operation by lending military transport capabilities to the relief organizations. The main point, however, is that no overall common plan is necessary. What is necessary in the common sense-making stage is to reach an understanding of what each organization should do and the kind of interface management that is necessary, in the form of what each organization can do to support other organizations, as well as what they ought not to do to avoid hindering the other organizations from carrying out their tasks. After that, each organization is left to do its planning and to carry out its plan (which may include support and cooperation with other organizations).

Conclusions

This article represents a first attempt at developing a concept of C2 that is more suit-

able to the modern multiorganizational, multifunctional endeavours than the traditional military concept of C2 of Unity of Command, or even *Unity of Effort*. The new term, *Harmony of Efforts*, is chosen to indicate that C2 in such endeavours must have a different focus. The traditional approach of Unity of Command does not apply because of the multiorganizational character of these operations and because no person has the authority to enforce unity of command. The somewhat less ambitious concept of unity of effort does not apply either, because the unity hinted at by this concept is at such a high level of abstraction that it offers very little guidance. *Harmony of Efforts* provides a concept at a more realistic level, describing something that is possible to achieve. The supporting concepts then show how harmony can be achieved.

The concept may be seen as somewhat defeatist in that it suggests that the grander goals set for some CA/EBAO operations cannot be achieved. This is indeed one of the points of departure for the present suggestions. It accepts that we simply lack the understanding of social systems required to build nations by means of CA/EBAO, or any other method. This is, as is noted above, projects aiming at large-scale social engineering. Little has changed in this respect since Popper (1954) criticized such projects as epistemologically unsound, however. This does not mean that multifunctional projects should not be capable of having many good effects, and that they

should not be undertaken at all. What can be achieved may well be worth the effort, and the likelihood that this is achieved increases with an adequate C2 concept.

Being a first attempt, the concepts proposed are at a fairly general and abstract level. The next step should be to work out procedures (SOPs) that embody the concepts and to try them out.

Summary

This paper proposes a new concept of Command and Control for multiorganizational, multifunctional endeavours, such as the operations conducted under the heading of Comprehensive Approach, or Effects-Based Approach to Operations. It is called *Harmony of Efforts* and suggests that in such endeavours, C2 should aim at creating an environment where each organization involved can do what is within its competence without being forced into the straitjacket of an ordinary military plan, which is something that the organizations will not accept anyway. To achieve *Harmony of Efforts*, the spirit in which C2 is conducted should be cooperation, the method should be negotiation, and the substance should be management of interfaces between organizations so that they are able to support one another as required locally and avoid causing frictions for each other.

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Notes

1. I want to thank Erik Bjurström, Håkan Forsmark, Anders Josefsson, Peter Thunholm och Christofer Waldenström for their comments on an earlier version of this article, comments that have made it a better product.
2. I will use the term “multiorganizational”, rather than multinational throughout the article. It includes the multinational aspect, but emphasizes that the problem is not always that the components come from different countries but that they belong to different organizations with different organizational cultures, and this may create frictions also when the organizations come from the same country.
3. Ahlqvist, Leif; Brehmer, Berndt och Buxrud, Petra: “‘Frictions’ in the command and control of UN peace support operations”, in Essens, Peter; Vogelaar, Ad; Tanercan, Erhan and Winslow, Donna (eds.): *The human in command: Peace support operations*, Mets & Schilt, Amsterdam 2001.
4. Although this article focuses on international endeavours of the EBAO type, the line of reasoning here should also apply to multiorganizational operations within a country, as, for example, operations launched in response to large-scale natural disasters, large fires, large industrial accidents, and so forth. It is less suited to handling problems among components of the same type, i.e., frictions caused by differences in command culture, and the like. This requires a different approach, aimed at resolving the differences in culture directly. In a given component, e.g., the military, the concept of unity of command still applies, of course, and steps must be taken to achieve that. But this is a subject for another article.
5. Lindblom, Charles E.: “The science of muddling through”, *Public Administration Review*, 1959, Vol. 19, pp. 79-88.
6. Op. cit. note 3.
7. In multifunctional operations, there is never one centre of gravity but many things that should be achieved. A consequence of this is that even when a military centre of gravity is detected, it should not always be pursued with the brutality and ruthlessness that Clausewitzian thinking may suggest.
8. The goal of an EBAO is often described as “nation building” or something of that kind. We would do well to remember that stable nations as we know them are the result of hundreds of years of development. Not one of them was created by intervention by an outside force, so we should not pretend to know how to do nation building. What is known is how the various organizations involved have to go about their business to achieve their limited goals. CA/EBAO with aiming at nation building and similar grandiose goals is simple an example of the kind of social engineering that Popper criticized so eloquently, e.g., Popper, Karl R.: *The open society and its enemies*, Vols I and II, Routledge, London, see also General Mattis thoughts on the problem, Mattis, James N.: “Commander’s guidance for Effects-Based Operations”, *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 2008, Issue 51, pp. 105-108. as well as Challans, Tim: “Tipping sacred cows. Moral potential through operational art”, *Military Review*, September-October 2009, pp. 19-28, from a somewhat different perspective. “Muddling through” in Lindblom’s, op.cit. note 5, sense may indeed be the only feasible approach here. But this requires a different mindset than that which currently characterizes planning for EBAO and the like.
9. Op. cit. note 3.
10. This is not as simple as it sounds, for many NGOs find it difficult to supply information to the military for fear of being associated with a perhaps unpopular foreign force.