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**An Experimental Investigation of Different Leadership and  
Facilitation Styles in Cross-Government Coalition Planning**

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# AN EXPERIMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF DIFFERENT LEADERSHIP AND FACILITATION STYLES IN CROSS-GOVERNMENT COALITION PLANNING

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## Abstract

This paper reports the experimental findings from a UK-led Limited Objective Experiment (LOE), one of the Multinational Experiment 5 (MNE5) series of experiments, in which the concept of Cooperative Implementation Planning (CIP) was examined. The CIP concept, as developed by the UK Ministry of Defence, proposes a *forum* in which key stakeholders can come together to engage in constructive dialogue leading to the development of a country-level framework plan. These stakeholders may include representatives from coalition government departments, international organisations (IOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), representatives of relevant regional organisations and representatives of the host nation. Forum members are supported by a small core staff including a forum head and a facilitation team. In the experiment, three different leadership and facilitation styles – development, diplomatic and military – were examined in terms of their impact on both forum outcome and group factors. We report the findings and recommendations for CIP arising from them.

## Introduction

Experience from multinational operations has demonstrated that co-ordination between a wide spectrum of actors from the international community, both military and civilian, is essential to achieving key objectives of lasting stability and security. For instance, humanitarian and development actors often possess a rich and insightful knowledge of the local society and culture which the security forces cannot afford to ignore. Allied nations are therefore seeking to adopt a *Comprehensive Approach* that would enable the collaborative engagement of all elements of national and international power – political, diplomatic, economic, financial, informational, social, and commercial, as well as military (see, for example, Joint Doctrine and Concepts Centre, 2006; Petersen & Binnendijk, 2007).

Applying a Comprehensive Approach to the planning and execution of crisis response and security operations means that a multinational force must be willing and able to co-operate with a range of civilian partners including, for example, the United Nations, the European Union, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local actors. Often, however, such organisations have professional attitudes and approaches that differ markedly from those of the military, and these differences are an ongoing cause for concern. In particular, the civilian

organisations often fear that, in seeking their co-operation, the military may be trying to claim a leadership role over them and their actions.

The UK's Development, Concept and Doctrine Centre (DCDC), part of the Ministry of Defence, has developed the concept of Cooperative Implementation Planning (CIP) as an application of the Comprehensive Approach to building an implementation plan. (A strategic plan defines a multinational inter-agency response to a crisis; an implementation plan describes how that response is to be implemented.) The CIP concept proposes a *forum* in which key stakeholders can come together to engage in constructive dialogue leading to the development of a country-level framework plan. These stakeholders may include representatives from the military coalition, other government departments, international organisations (IOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), representatives of relevant regional organisations and representatives of the host nation. Forum members are supported by a small core staff comprising a forum head, a facilitation team and support staff. This paper reports the findings of a UK-led Limited Objective Experiment (LOE) in which the CIP concept was examined with reference to the impact of different forum leadership and facilitation styles on both planning outcome and group factors.

## **MNE5 Limited Objective Experiment**

Since 2001, the US Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) has sponsored a series of multinational experiments to explore the uses of international power to influence the behaviour of adversaries and prevent or mitigate crises. Multinational Experiment 5 (MNE5), the fifth in the series (and still ongoing at the time of writing), has included the participation of Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden, UK, US and NATO's Allied Command Transformation. The aim of MNE5 is to explore the development of a Comprehensive Approach in crisis response planning. In this it has been guided by the following problem statement: "*Coalition partners require improved methods to conduct rapid interagency and multinational planning and coordination in order to create and carry out a unified comprehensive strategy.*"

MNE5 consists of three experimentation phases, the final one due to be completed in 2009. The first phase focused on Multinational Interagency Strategic Planning (MNISP) for a crisis set in 2010 sub-Saharan Africa. Subsequent phases focus on Cooperative Implementation Planning (CIP) and Cooperative Implementation Management and Evaluation (CIME) for the same crisis. In essence, the MNISP process defines the coalition's overall crisis response, the CIP process defines how to implement it on the ground and the CIME process defines how to assess it.

Within the second phase of MNE5, an experiment was conducted to explore the CIP stakeholder forum concept; specifically, forum factors that could affect implementation planning in a multinational and interagency context were investigated (Leggatt et al, 2007). This UK-led Cooperative Implementation Planning Limited Objective Experiment (CIP LOE) was hosted by the DCDC and conducted at the Defence Capability Centre (DCC) in Shrivenham, over the period 10-12 July 2007. The objectives of the CIP LOE were as follows:

1. To gain insights into the utility of the CIP forum as a mechanism for generating both effective dialogue and suitable planning output.
2. To identify the strengths and weaknesses of different styles of conducting dialogue.
3. To identify the strengths and weaknesses of different planning approaches and facilitation techniques.

Beyond these objectives, the aim was to identify training requirements for key forum members, develop codes of best practice, and enable further refinement of the concept.

## Leadership and facilitation styles

It was hypothesised that *different approaches to leading the CIP forum will impact on both the type and effectiveness of dialogue and process output*. Effective forum dialogue was deemed more likely to result in a plan that was fit for purpose and had a strong level of buy-in from those who took part in the planning process. Hence, the experiment examined three separate CIP forums which involved different “flavours” of approach to dialogue leadership and facilitation, reflecting the stereotypical approaches that would be brought by different government departmental stakeholders:

- **Development style** – a group leadership and facilitation style typical of overseas development staff such as those working for the UK’s Department for International Development (DfID).
- **Diplomatic style** – a group leadership and facilitation style typical of diplomatic staff such as those working for the UK’s Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO).
- **Military style** – a group leadership and facilitation style typical of the Armed Forces.

## Experimental groups

The experiment used a “between participants” or “between groups” design, whereby three separate groups representing three different CIP forums (varying in terms of leadership and facilitation as defined above) were set the same task: to produce an implementation plan. The three groups were similar in composition and each had a *leader* who was assisted by a *facilitator* and a *scribe*.

- The *leader* was responsible for ensuring that the implementation plan was produced and that the strategic objectives were appropriately addressed.
- The *facilitator* was responsible for running the planning process on behalf of the leader, ensuring that the plan was both fit for purpose and that those taking part in the planning process had a strong sense of ownership of it.
- The *scribe* was responsible for supporting the facilitator by capturing the key elements of the discussion within the group, organising them using a mix of text, tables and schematics before “playing them back” to the planning team to stimulate further discussion and refinement.

However, the leader and facilitator were selected to ensure that each group reflected a different departmental flavour (military, diplomatic or development):

- **Group A** represented the “development style” with both the leader and facilitator coming from a development background (the facilitator was working for Post Conflict Reconstruction Unit (PCRU<sup>1</sup>) but came from the DfID background.
- **Group B** represented the “military style” with the leader being ex-military and the facilitator being a serving Army officer. As such the facilitator was experienced in military planning but was neither trained nor experienced in group dialogue facilitation.<sup>2</sup>
- **Group C** represented the “diplomatic style” with both the leader and facilitator being from the FCO.

The forum participants were predominantly operational personnel from a variety of government departments across a number of different countries. The participants were allocated to groups to give an even spread of expertise within the groups. The distribution of both military vs. non-military personnel and UK vs. non-UK nationals were balanced between groups (Table 1).

**Table 1 - Forum group membership**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Members' background</b>		<b>Members' nationality</b>	
		<i>Military</i>	<i>Civilian</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>Non-UK</i>
A – Development	13	5	8	4	9
B – Military	11	7	4	4	7
C – Diplomatic	13	5	8	5	8

## Forum tasking

The participants adopted the structure and philosophy outlined in the CIP concept and were tasked to go through a planning process leading to a common set of planning outputs. Based on the strategic response to the 2010 crisis as defined by the Multinational Interagency Strategic Planning process, each forum group was tasked to provide the following:

- a summary of the key issues arising from their the analysis of the situation;
- the conditions that would have to be achieved by any intervention to realise the desired end state (expressed in terms of decisive conditions and supporting effects), prioritised and sequenced with a critical path identified;
- a rationale or “theory of change” that explained the logic behind the plan;

<sup>1</sup> Since going to press the PCRU has been renamed the SU (Stabilisation Unit)

<sup>2</sup> The leader of Group B was unavailable for the first day of the planning process and consequently the facilitator had to perform both roles.

- the organisations that would be invited to take on the lead responsibility for delivering each supporting effect as the “supported” organisation and those organisations that would have a role to support them as the “supporting” organisation;
- the critical interdependencies between supporting effects and suggestions as to how these should be managed and by whom.

Groups A (development) and C (diplomatic) were free to select the manner in which they developed these outputs themselves; Group B (military), in contrast, was tasked to adopt the UK military Effects-Based Approach.

The event was held over three days. The morning of the first day involved briefings for the group participants with the afternoon used for planning within the groups. The second day involved planning within the groups for the whole day. The third day involved back briefs to the group and feedback sessions. In parallel with and complementing the main experiment, a workshop was also held in which the attributes and competencies required for leadership of a CIP forum were examined.

## Data collection

To evaluate any differences between the groups, a number of measures were taken by means of (a) observations by human factors analysts, (b) a post-task questionnaire completed by participants, and (c) a semi-structured feedback session, or *hotwash*, in which the participants were asked to identify which aspects of techniques, styles and approaches were more helpful and which were less helpful in achieving their goals through dialogue. The measures of interest were as follows:

- **The CIP forum construct:** The different aspects of the CIP forum construct were systematically addressed. A section of the questionnaire decomposed the CIP construct to obtain specific feedback. Due to the immaturity of the CIP concept it was also important to capture open-ended issues which may not have been identified before the event. A catch-all question was included to explore these issues.
- **The CIP forum process:** The CIP forum process was assessed by questionnaires, observations and open-ended interviews. The process measures were supported by an observation checklist designed to identify positive and potentially negative non-technical behaviours. The observations centred on the following categories of behaviour:
  - (1) Team working
  - (2) Task management
  - (3) Situation awareness
  - (4) Decision making
- **Comparison of forum outputs:** The CIP forums’ outputs were assessed by subjective assessment by members of the forum and an independently reviewed presentation from each group in open forum with all groups present.

- **Experimental validity check:** To understand whether the experimental treatments had the effect that was intended, it was also necessary to assess the presence of the treatment itself. This was assessed in three ways:
  1. Leader's style was assessed by both analysts and participants on scales which required them to rate the "feel of the meeting".
  2. Roaming analysts, who visited each of the groups, were asked to provide their judgements as whether they thought that the meeting was consistent with the leader's background.
  3. During the feedback session, the issue of whether the group was run in a manner consistent with the leader's background was investigated.

In addition:

- A number of elements of the questionnaire specifically addressed the suitability of the scenario to support the examination of the CIP construct, in order to ensure the scenario provided sufficient information and direction to the participants.
- A catch-all element of the questionnaire was included in order to assess whether any extraneous variables influenced the outcome of the event.

## Summary of findings

The findings are summarised according to the four measures of interest described above, i.e. the CIP forum concept, the forum process and forum outputs, but beginning with a check of experimental validity.

### *Validity check*

The questionnaire responses suggested that there were indeed significant differences between groups in terms of the "flavours" of leadership and facilitation represented.

- Participants in Group B (military) rated their forum as significantly more military in style than those in groups A (development) and C (diplomatic) ( $F_{2,30}=18.40$ ,  $p<.0000$ ).
- Participants in Group A (development) rated their forum as significantly more "development" in style than those in Group C (diplomatic) ( $F_{2,28}=5.39$ ,  $p<.0105$ ), though there was no significant difference with ratings given by Group B (military) for their forum.

The validity of the scenario was also assessed by questionnaire responses. Although there were some criticisms of the quality of the strategic guidance, 28 respondents rated the scenario as suitable and only 2 individuals rated it as unsuitable.

### ***The CIP forum concept***

The general view of participants involved in the CIP planning forums (both military and civilian) were as follows:

- The CIP concept offers strengths that no other planning process possesses (with only 2 out of the 33 respondents slightly disagreeing).
- The CIP concept has the potential to help their own organisation (28 out of 32 respondents).
- The costs of participating in a CIP forum are outweighed by the benefits (only 1 respondent out of 32 disagreed).

There were few significant differences in perceptions between military and civilian participants towards the CIP concept; those differences that did exist related to their leadership and training experience.

### ***The CIP forum process***

- **Facilitation.** Participants overwhelmingly judged that cooperative implementation planning required a suitable facilitation capability for it to succeed (31 of the 32 respondents). This was generally perceived as one of the key aspects of the forum and participants were keen to see it developed further.
- **Leader.** The notion of having both dedicated facilitation and lead roles was supported by CIP personnel (31 out of 34 respondents), suggesting that there is a need for both a leader and a facilitator and that these are two distinct roles.
- **Scribes.** Anecdotal evidence from the event suggests that the role of the scribe was highly valued. The scribe was able to capture the key elements of the discussion, allowing the dialogue to flow more freely, and to play back the discussion to the group, enabling them to review the logic and assumptions made. It was felt that this role was more accurately described as an assistant facilitator.
- **Representatives.** Participants noted that in order to be successful the concept required empowered representatives from their organisation (30 of 31 respondents).
- **Co-location.** Most participants judged that it was necessary for CIP forum personnel to be co-located (29 of 34 respondents). This significant assessment was probably based upon the need for complicated, subtle and often difficult issues to be discussed which can not be undertaken as effectively by distributed groups. However, a supplementary question which investigated whether the CIP forum members need *not* be co-located with their own organisation, or those that they are representing, received a mixed response. It would appear that many individuals would like to be co-located with both their own organisation and co-located with the CIP. This logical disconnect warrants further investigation.
- **Group Cohesion.** The data suggested that participants in one group were less inclined to work together in future. Observations, free response data and other questionnaire data suggest this may be due to some strong-willed individuals who took the group into areas of discussion that the remainder of the group thought were less relevant to the tasking. Tensions like these are entirely realistic. However, it is difficult to determine whether the slightly lower levels of cohesion of this group were due to the

leadership and facilitation styles adopted, to the nature of the participants or indeed to a range of other factors.

- **Approach.** The majority of participants favoured approaches which were consultative, with a suitable facilitation capability and a separate leader. They also valued the opportunity to solve problems using more than one approach. “Hotwash” feedback suggested that a planning approach which is outcome-based and seen as adaptable to the user’s particular needs will assist in obtaining participant “buy-in”.

Comparison between the different flavoured CIP forums with respect to dialogue and communication revealed a number of differences.

- When asked to rate to what extent all participating organisations had contributed to the dialogue in their forum, participants in Group A (development style) gave a significantly lower rating than did participants in Group B (military style) ( $F_{2,31}=4.11$ ,  $p<.0260$ ). Free response data suggested this may be attributed to their being more language barriers in Group A than in the others. It was observed that these non-native English speakers became more engaged in dialogue when the participants broke into smaller groups.
- When asked to rate the extent to which the dialogue in their forum was relevant to the task, participants in the more diplomatic style forum (Group C) gave lower ratings than did members of the other groups (at the lower significance rating of 8% alpha:  $F_{2,31}=2.73$ ,  $p<.080$ ). Observations and free response data suggest that a small number of individuals in this group were thought to concentrate too much on their particular area of interest and this was reported by the other participants as being not strictly relevant to the task at hand. This could be attributed to the particularly open and inclusive leadership style adopted in this group, or it might simply be attributed to the particular individuals in that group who presented more opportunities for conflict and made resolution a more challenging task.
- While all groups gave positive ratings of their facilitators, the military style forum participants (Group B) gave a significantly lower rating of their forum’s facilitation ( $F_{2,31}=4.06$ ,  $p<.0271$ ). The participants in this group also felt that there was significantly less consultation in their forum than did participants in the other forums ( $F_{2,31}=7.61$ ,  $p<.0020$ ). Although the military facilitator in Group B used inclusive and consultative language, observers noted that these verbal cues were often outweighed by the non-verbal sense of urgency and desire to “press on” that was displayed by this facilitator. It appears that the non-verbal cues used by facilitators are as important as their verbal communications.
- When the participants were asked to what extent more than one planning approach was considered in their CIP forum, the responses by Group B (military) were low, while those by the other groups were significantly higher ( $F_{2,30}=5.84$ ,  $p<.0072$ ). This may explain why, when asked to judge whether their forum process was suited to the tasking, Group B participants (military style) gave only neutral ratings while Groups A and C gave significantly more positive ratings ( $F_{2,29}=5.06$ ,  $p<.0130$ ).

### ***Comparison of forum outputs***

- Following a review by an independent assessor it was determined that all groups produced an adequate plan within the time constraints. However, the development

style group (Group A) were judged to have produced the most complete plan; the diplomatic style group (Group C) were judged to have produced the least complete.

- The approaches adopted by the development and diplomatic groups (A and C) produced a richer analysis of the situation than the military group's approach (B).
- Both the more military style forum (Group B) and development style forum (Group A) revised the end-state provided within the strategic guidance to reflect an interim state that they felt was more achievable; the more diplomatic style forum (Group C) retained the original end-state.
- Few supporting effects were clearly articulated as output statements across all groups, with the majority being written as activities. However, the development style and military style forums (Groups A and B) produced a more detailed extrapolation of the decisive conditions into supporting effects than the more diplomatic style forum (Group C).
- All the groups collated their decisive conditions within certain themes; each group, however, adopted a different set of themes.
- The more development style forum (Group A) was the only one to produce a theory of change.
- All groups made an attempt at prioritisation and sequencing within their plans.
- No groups identified responsibilities of lead organisations.

While the level of consultation within the military style forum (Group B) was judged by participants to be relatively low, it is perhaps unsurprising that this more directive approach was able to deliver a reasonably complete plan. Of more interest is the fact that the more consultative approach adopted within the development style forum (Group A) was also able to deliver a relatively complete plan. It is not possible to judge which plan was of a higher quality although it might be surmised that the richer analysis undertaken by the development style forum may have led to a more insightful collection of decisive conditions and supporting effects. Unsurprisingly, participants were almost unanimous in their judgement that for the CIP forums to succeed analysis needs to be based upon an understanding of the area of interest developed over a period of time.

## Conclusions

1. An objective of this experiment was to gain insights into the utility of the CIP forum as a mechanism for generating both effective dialogue and suitable output. *The LOE suggested that the CIP forum offers strengths over other planning processes*<sup>3</sup>.
2. The forum aspect most affecting the utility of the CIP concept was the requirement for suitable facilitation. Overall, the results indicate that CIP forums need to have a trained facilitator to be effective and that this should be a separate role from that of the leader. Differences in facilitation style have been highlighted, but further studies would be needed to provide insight into how the type of facilitation modifies group

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<sup>3</sup> This conclusion is based on a large number of respondent's comments.

behaviour. It is concluded that *effective facilitation to support CIP is essential*, and recommendations for this are made below.

3. Strong evidence was found to support the need for a separate leader or chairman within forums, and anecdotal reports suggested the role of scribe and an additional analyst role could be further explored. It is therefore concluded that *the roles of the whole facilitation team need to be defined*.
4. It is concluded that *an open, consultative style encourages forum members to voice their opinions freely, but this open discussion needs to be facilitated to ensure that it remains on track without losing the cohesion of the forum*. CIP forums with unresolved conflict through a combination of strong willed individuals and less direct leadership are more likely to produce a less complete plan.
5. Defining the *output* required from planning processes appears to be more effective in maintaining group cohesion and buy-in than mandating or imposing a single *process*, although both approaches can lead to satisfactory plans. It would appear that participants are uncomfortable with an imposed process, even though this may lead to a satisfactory output, and they feel more comfortable if they have had an opportunity to influence the process. This supports the assertion within the CIP concept that, within a multinational and interagency context, a single planning approach should not be applied prescriptively but that the approach adopted should be developed to suit the situation and the members of the planning group. In addition it suggests that perception is important and that there is a need for facilitators to ensure participants feel that they have had a genuine opportunity to influence the approach and the outputs. The planning process used should be adapted from existing processes to suit the situation and the planning team participants and should avoid the use of specialist language; straightforward ‘plain English’ being better than terminology peculiar to one section within the planning team. It is important that participants *feel* consulted and included, not just in the content of the plan, but also in the decision of which process to use.
6. Language difficulties can hamper inclusive dialogue. The *use of smaller groups* may therefore be an effective means of incorporating those who are less comfortable with the language that the dialogue is being conducted in. Care must be taken however that this does not lead to a loss in the overall awareness within the forum.

## Recommendations

Recommendations that apply to the development and application of the CIP concept and its further exploration through experimentation are summarised below.

- With regard to the **CIP forum concept**:
  1. A CIP-type forum should be used when appropriate as it provides a capability not currently provided by existing planning approaches.
  2. The CIP forum concept should be externally reviewed by non-military personnel to identify aspects which are judged to be overly militaristic.
- With regard to the **CIP forum process**:

3. An effective facilitation capability is needed for CIP forums to be successful.
  4. Facilitation techniques and approaches need to be adopted which ensure that members are, and are made to feel, consulted in the forums.
  5. CIP forums need separate leaders and facilitators.
  6. A flexible planning approach needs to be adopted in CIP forums which is not considered by participants to be overly prescriptive.
- With regard to **future CIP forum experiments**:
    7. There is a need to simulate some form of external-to-forum dialogue (e.g. LOCON and HICON).
    8. The CIP tasking should assign roles and responsibilities which enable participants to represent suitable organisations.
    9. The training for CIP participants could be improved by potentially applying some form of “front loading” to the joining details.
    10. The strategic guidance provided to participants needs to be sufficiently detailed to engender constructive dialogue.
  - Finally, **further investigation** is needed in the following areas and issues:
    11. The detailed requirements, role and competencies for CIP forum leaders.
    12. The role of the scribe/assistant facilitator.
    13. The type of analytical support required to support CIP forums.
    14. The conflicting requirements of co-location with the CIP forums and with participants’ own organisations.
    15. The approaches to facilitation which are most effective for CIP forums.

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