

Forging unity: Interagency collaboration in hybrid warfare

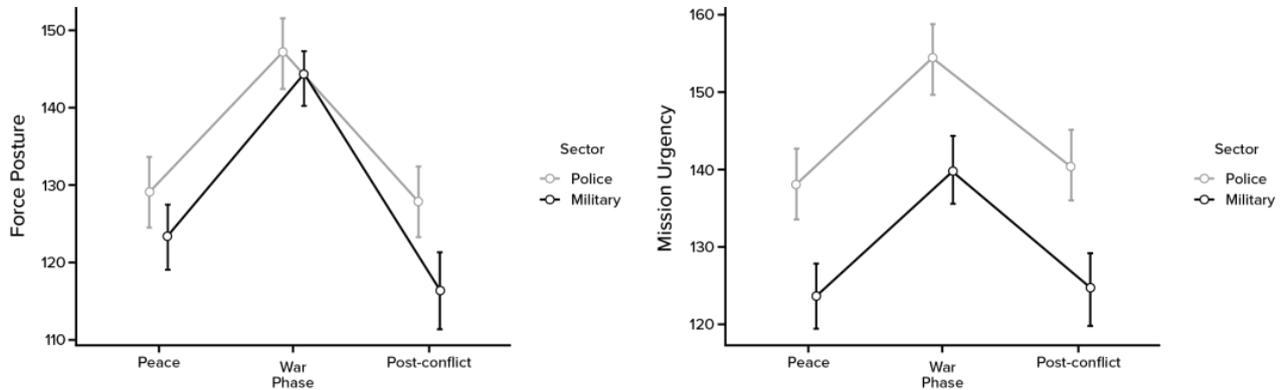


Figure 1: The leaders' Force Posture and Mission Urgency levels. Error bars indicate 0.95 Confidence intervals.

Jostein Mattingsdal explores leadership's critical role in maximizing interagency collaboration's effectiveness in hybrid warfare scenarios

Hybrid warfare challenges traditional security paradigms by blurring the distinctions between war and peace, combatants and non-combatants, and military and civilian domains. ⁽¹⁾ It can be conducted by both state and non-state actors to achieve strategic objectives and manifests in various forms. It can include disinformation campaigns designed to erode public trust, subversion tactics aimed at destabilizing nations, and overt combat actions disrupting national sovereignty. Addressing these threats requires a coordinated response that harnesses the operational capabilities of different agencies. ⁽²⁾ However, conventional mindsets among key leaders can hinder this essential collaboration, emphasizing the need for a shift toward embracing the cross-sectoral advantages of collaborative efforts.

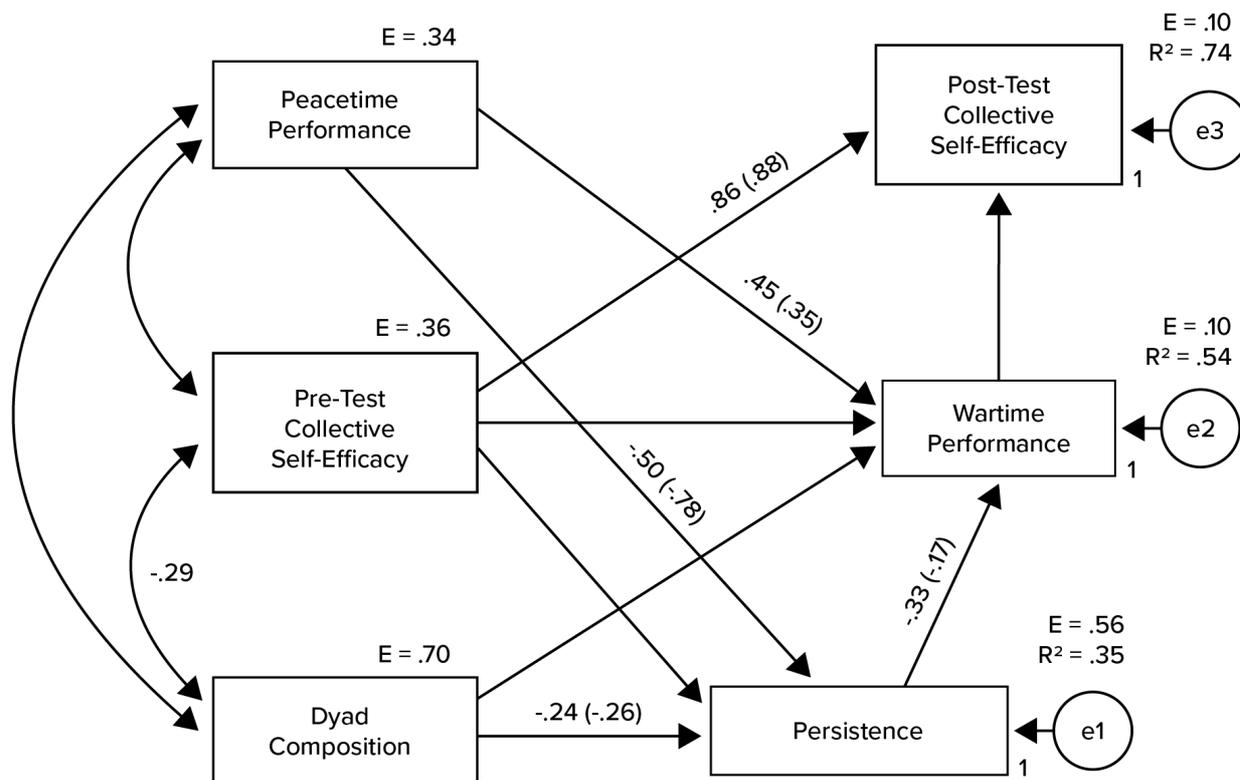


Figure 2: Path analysis output. Path coefficients in the form of standardized regression weights appear outside the parentheses. Only statistically significant correlations/ path coefficients are shown. Model fit summary: AGFI = .950, TLI = 1.045, NFI = .992

Insights from the Norwegian decision-making project

Recent research conducted in Norway provides valuable insights into the dynamics of interagency collaboration in hybrid warfare. ⁽³⁾ This research, funded by the Norwegian Defence University College, focused on examining decision-making processes within interagency teams comprised of police and military leaders. Through realistic simulations, the study explored how factors like occupational background and crisis phase transitions influence their decision preferences and overall performance.

Key findings from the research

1. Influence of occupational background:

Police and military leaders tend to have different decision preferences influenced by their training and experiences. Police leaders often prioritize maintaining public order and protecting civilians, whereas military leaders focus on neutralizing threats and achieving military objectives. These differences can complicate interagency coordination, highlighting the need for leaders to recognize and bridge these gaps to promote effective collaboration. Additionally, experienced leaders demonstrated a better understanding of the strengths and limitations of both police and military resources, allowing them to adapt their decision-making and effectively utilize interagency assets according to situational demands. ⁽⁴⁾

2. Impact of crisis phase transitions:

The transition from peacetime to war significantly changes the dynamics of decision-making, resulting in a more aggressive and urgent operational approach (see Figure 1). ⁽⁵⁾ As the stakes increase, leaders may be more inclined to utilize interagency forces to meet objectives. This change requires a thorough understanding of conflict escalation and its implications for crisis response in wartime. However, it also introduces considerable risks, such as the possibility of unintended consequences and further escalation.

Consequently, leaders must carefully evaluate their decisions to ensure alignment with overarching policy guidelines.

3. Predictors of decision-making performance: The research identified several factors that contribute to effective decision-making in hybrid warfare contexts (see Figure 2): ⁽⁶⁾

o Experience:

Leaders with extensive operational experience tend to navigate the complexities of hybrid warfare more adeptly. Their flexibility and adaptability are informed by a broader range of experiences and knowledge, enhancing their decision-making capabilities.

o Team composition:

Establishing common operational standards between agencies is crucial for composing cohesive and coordinated teams. Shared objectives, procedures, and risk assessments facilitate a unified approach to crisis response.

o Persistence:

While persistence is typically viewed as a positive trait, the research indicated that highly persistent teams might be prone to misjudgements in wartime due to overconfidence or a reluctance to deviate from established strategies. Conversely, lower levels of persistence, characterized by prudence and a willingness to explore alternatives, were associated with better performance in wartime.

Implications for stakeholders

The findings of this research carry significant implications for various stakeholders involved in security and crisis response:

1. European Commission:

The research highlights the importance of promoting interagency collaboration at the European level, including developing joint training programs, shared standards, and mechanisms for collective decision-making.

2. Government departments:

Departments responsible for crisis response can benefit from adopting a more integrated and collaborative approach. Recommendations include:

- Encouraging interagency teamwork to enhance interoperability and build trust among organizations.
- Establishing mutual leadership concepts for joint operations planning and clear directions during crises.
- Investing in research and development to improve understanding of hybrid warfare and develop effective countermeasures.

3. Academic community:

Further research should focus on:

- Exploring the impact of leadership and organizational differences on interagency cooperation.
- Developing best practices for managing transitions between peacetime and wartime operations in hybrid warfare contexts.
- Analysing the role of emerging technologies in enhancing teamwork and decision-making in ambiguous security environments.

Effectively countering hybrid warfare necessitates understanding its decision-making environment. This involves recognizing the increasingly blurred lines between police and military tactics and the various forms of shared tasks between the two entities, such as counterterrorism, intelligence collection, and emergency operations. It also requires insights into the backgrounds, capabilities, and professional standards of leaders and teams and their ability to adapt to change.

A collaborative approach, incorporating various security providers, including military and law enforcement agencies, is essential. A robust response also requires a profound understanding of the social, cognitive, and behavioural factors that influence the decision-making of leaders involved in countering hybrid warfare. This includes recognizing the psychological factors that drive human actions and the impact of established assumptions on individual and team decision-making.

Leaders must possess a high degree of operational experience, self-efficacy, and cognitive readiness. They must be able to navigate complex cooperative systems, foster cohesiveness among team members, and promote collaboration across various organizational levels. When faced with difficulties, leaders must be able to make swift and prudent decisions based on limited information, ensuring that every effort is focused on achieving the overarching objectives.

Teams must be able to work collaboratively across the functional boundaries of their respective agencies, sharing information and expertise to build a comprehensive understanding of threats and identify effective responses, including the incorporation of innovative courses of action. This requires a sustained investment in education, training, and research, with a focus on cultivating a culture of collaboration between governmental security providers.

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