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14. ABSTRACT The security situation the US military faces in 2020 resembles the ones in 1806 and the 1980s when mission-type orders gained prominence. The US faces peer competition from China and Russia. Mission-type orders is a means to counter this. For the US military to fully utilize mission-type orders on future battlefields it must understand that mission-type orders are a mindset that requires a holistic approach to leadership, learn from historically successful applications of mission-type orders, and identify how to better adjust for mission-type orders in future conflicts. Germany in the inter-war era is an example of how such a mindset can be nurtured, Israel post WW II is another. Germany in both World Wars, the Soviet Union in 1943-44, and Israel post WW II all demonstrated the effect of successful application of mission-type orders. Modern definitions, bureaucracy, and risk aversion are obstacles for full utilization of mission-type orders in the United States military today.												
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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

TITLE:

**THE HISTORIC AND CURRENT RELEVANCE OF MISSION-TYPE ORDERS:
HOW TO BETTER ADAPT TO A MINDSET OF MISSION-TYPE ORDERS**

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Executive Summary

Title: The Historic and Current Relevance of Mission-type Orders: How a Mindset of Mission-type Orders Can Help the US Military in Future Conflicts.

Author: Major Brage Reinaas

Thesis: For the US military to fully utilize mission-type orders on future battlefields it must understand that mission-type orders are a mindset that requires a holistic approach to leadership, learn from historically successful applications of mission-type orders, and identify how to better adjust for mission-type orders in future conflicts.

Discussion: The security situation the US military faces in 2020 resembles the ones in 1806 and the 1980s when mission-type orders gained prominence. The US faces peer competition from China, and to a certain degree Russia, and has realized that it is not able to compete in production numbers and frequency.¹ Even more worrying is the technological advantages these two countries have gained over the last decade or so.² To remedy this situation the US must acknowledge the increased complexity, friction, and chaos that will characterize future conflicts. Mission-type orders are a key element to succeed under such circumstances. Despite the US military having doctrinally introduced mission-type orders in the 1980s, several experts have questioned to what degree this has been successful. The missing piece is a holistic approach to mission-type orders: a mindset. The mindset required to close the gap between mission-type orders doctrine and practice must be understood by the US military. Common education and theoretical foundation, exercises and training, and the everyday life of officers are the best area of activity to forge and mold such a mindset.

Armies that have succeeded in institutionalizing a mindset of mission type orders have demonstrated its advantages and potential on the battlefield on several occasions. The First World War is by most people viewed as a war fought in trenches with strict discipline, highly centralized decision making, and with no room for individual initiative and exploitation of windows of opportunity. However, there are several examples of mission-type orders and its tenets during the war. The Germans founded their approach to interwar rebuilding on their experiences of mission-type orders in the latter part of World War I. In the Second World War, the German attack on France in 1940 displayed a willingness to take risk that completely shocked the allies. At several levels of command, there were multiple examples of mission-type orders and the accompanying tenets being practiced with success. The same tenets were displayed by the Soviet Union's Red Army after the shift in initiative at the Eastern front in 1943. During the Cold War, both Israel and Russia succeeded with mission-type orders. Israel had success with mission-type orders in the 1950s and 60s, while the Soviets reinstitute their doctrinal approach of *Deep Battle* in the 1970s.

The analysis of the history of mission-type orders demonstrates that mission-type orders have contributed to success on the battlefield on numerous occasions since the emergence of mission-type orders following the battle at Jena in 1806. When practiced within a holistic mindset, mission-type orders have proved to be a military tool helping commanders and units prevail in challenging and problematic situations. Mission-type orders have survived modernization and technological developments, and while technology become old and outdated,

command philosophies like mission-type orders will remain vital. The US military can therefore exploit the lessons learned during the 200 years long practice of mission-type orders to ensure that it also prevails on the future battlefield, despite the rapid technological development affecting the military sphere. The 2018 National Defense Strategy assessed that the future battlefield will be more complex than ever before, characterized by great power competition, grey zone conflicts, and new domains such as cyberspace and space.³ To remedy this situation and to ensure that mission-type orders are a force multiplier also in future conflicts, the US military must nurture a more holistic and deliberate approach to mission-type orders. To achieve this, it must review its doctrinal foundation of mission-type orders to ensure it fosters the tenets required, reward and promote personnel displaying and living mission-type orders, and focus on risk willingness among its officer corps. If the US military is able to do this, they have a foundation for successful utilization of mission-type orders

Conclusion: For the US military to fully utilize mission-type orders, it must close the gap between theory and practice and institutionalize mission-type orders. A deliberate approach is required to succeed with this institutionalization. First, the US military must cultivate a mindset of mission-type orders encompassing both the work and life of especially the officers. Second, the US military must learn from successful application of mission-type orders. Third, the US military needs to identify how to better adjust for mission-type orders in future conflicts. One must address and change the obstacles and mechanisms identified as hindering mission-type orders, facilitating a military organization set up for successful utilization and exploitation of mission-type orders. Special emphasis should be put on nuances regarding subordinate initiative, how to reward and promote people practicing mission-type orders, and how to counter risk aversion. Succeeding with institutionalizing mission-type orders will give America a competitive advantage towards its peer competitors at the future battlefield.

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	5
Mission-type Orders are a Mindset Requiring a Holistic Approach to Leadership.....	7
The Kriegsakademi	8
German Doctrine and <i>Truppenführung</i>	11
Training and Exercises	14
Cultural and Societal Influence on Mindsets – Prussian Nobility	16
Cultural and Societal Influence on Mindsets – Israeli <i>Bitsuism</i>	19
Successful Application of Mission-type Orders	21
World War I	21
World War II	25
Post-World War II	30
How the US Can Better Adjust for Mission-type Orders	34
US Army and USMC: Defining Mission-type Orders	36
Civilian Influence and Promotions.....	38
Risk Aversion Obstructing Mission-type Orders	41
Conclusion	43
Bibliography	49

Introduction

After the catastrophic Prussian defeat at Jena in 1806, the Prussians realized they had to evolve and develop a Prussian way of war to compete with the Napoleonic armies of the time. Realizing that they were incapable of competing in size and numbers, the Prussians initiated several reforms addressing the quality of their army. Prussian leaders grappled with how to compete against a military genius when one of their own was not forthcoming. In their mind, especially the reformist Gerhard von Scharnhorst's, one could not leave the fate of an entire army or a nation on the shoulders of one man. Almost two centuries later, in the 1980s, the United States (US) found itself facing a superior enemy. After ending the Vietnam War, the United States realized it had lost a decade of development compared to the Soviet Union. Consequently, America again turned its focus towards the Soviet Union, which not only exceeded the US in numbers but also in doctrinal development. To compensate for this shortfall, the Americans opted to pursue a cognitive approach to compensate and, hopefully, overmatch the Soviet Union's numbers and doctrinal development. The answer both in 1806 and in the 1980s was mission-type orders.⁴ The overall definition of mission-type orders between the two was rather congruent. It encompassed a short and clear commander's intent, defined objectives, and decentralization of command and authority. From the subordinate it requires a genuine wish to accept responsibility, the ability to exercise initiative at all times, a certain degree of boldness, ability to thrive in situations characterized by friction and uncertainty, willingness to accept risk, and a genuine dedication to solve higher echelon's intent.⁵

Most Western armies today have adopted and implemented mission-type orders as their official form of command style. Additionally, varying modern doctrines all define mission-type orders in similar ways. Israeli researcher at the Bar Ilan University and author, Eitan Shamir, in

his book *Transforming Command* defines mission-type orders as “decentralized leadership; it is a philosophy that requires and facilitates initiative on all levels of command...on the battlefield. It encourages subordinates to exploit opportunities by empowering them to take the initiative and exercise judgment in pursuit of their mission; [and] alignment is maintained through adherence to the commander’s intent.”⁶ Shamir’s definition is based on an in-depth analysis of mission-type orders in Prussia/Germany, the US, Britain, and Israel. Therefore, it encompasses both the origin of mission-type orders and the most important modern conceptualizations of those who have implemented it. Hence, Shamir’s definition of mission-type orders is an excellent basis for analyzing historical and contemporary usages.

Just as Shamir’s definition represents a constant over time, in many ways, the security situation the US military faces in 2020 also resembles the ones in 1806 and the 1980s when mission-type orders gained prominence. The US faces peer competition from China, and to a certain degree Russia, and has realized that it is not able to compete in production numbers and frequency.⁷ Even more worrying is the technological advantages these two countries have gained over the last decade or so. The increased threats in the cyberspace and space domains reinforce the importance of these technological advantages.⁸ To remedy this situation the US must acknowledge the increased complexity, friction, and chaos that will characterize future conflicts. Mission-type orders are a key element to succeed under such circumstances. The relevance of mission-type orders on future battlefields is supported by maneuver warfare theorist William S. Lind. He argues that decentralization of command and authority enables an army to make decisions at a pace the enemy cannot keep up with, creating confusion and uncertainty within the enemy, leading to opportunities own forces can exploit at a rate the enemy is not able to keep up with.⁹ The Global War on Terror (GWOT) and an increase in managerial culture and risk

aversion have moved the US military away from mission-type orders, rendering mission-type orders as doctrinally manifested but not holistically exercised.¹⁰ For the US military to fully utilize mission-type orders on future battlefields it must understand that mission-type orders are a mindset that requires a holistic approach to leadership, learn from historically successful applications of mission-type orders, and identify how to better adjust for mission-type orders in future conflicts.

Mission-type Orders are a Mindset Requiring a Holistic Approach to Leadership

Despite the US military having doctrinally introduced mission-type orders in the 1980s, several experts have questioned to what degree this has been successful. Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), General Martin E. Dempsey, issued a white paper in April 2012 encouraging all the services to increase their effort to institutionalize and operationalize mission-type orders.¹¹ Dempsey's decision to publish this paper indicates that mission-type orders were not implemented and practiced in the US military. He points to a gap between doctrine and practice. This gap was the understanding of what mission-type orders were, and what was required for it to be implemented. The missing piece is a holistic approach to mission-type orders: a mindset. Former American officer and military historian, Dr. Daniel J. Hughes has claimed that mission-type orders in Prussia "was more than a system of command; it was part of a particular lifestyle typical of Prussian officers for more than a century."¹² Shamir also supports this view when he says that "[mission-type orders] was a product of specific Prussian and German historical circumstances and forces that produced a unique strategic mindset and military culture."¹³ They show that Germans practiced and exercised mission-type orders within a holistic approach, a mindset permeating all aspects of the officers' career and life. The views of Hughes and Shamir do not indicate that mission-type orders are something uniquely Prussian or

German. Consequently, the mindset required to close the gap between mission-type orders doctrine and practice must be understood by the US military. Common education and theoretical foundation, exercises and training, and the everyday life of officers were the best area of activity to forge and mold such a mindset. Professional military education (PME) has been an important institution for implementing mission-type orders in several countries, including Prussia, Germany, and Israel. In Prussia, institutionalizing and reforming PME started as early as in 1810.¹⁴

The Kriegsakademi

The Kriegsakademi was a vital institution for Prussia, and then Germany, to educate and instill mission-type orders into their officers, making mission-type orders a natural and ever-present part of their military life. Under the influence of reformists and great thinkers like former Chief of the Prussian General Staff Gerhard von Scharnhorst, his successor August von Gneisenau, and Carl von Clausewitz, the Prussian army sought to institutionalize military excellence.¹⁵ The remedy was education and organizational change. Well educated officers demanded and could handle increased authority and responsibility.¹⁶ The Prussian-German approach to higher military education was a vital part of institutionalizing mission-type orders in the German Army both in the 19th century and in the inter-war era, as well as an example of how to succeed with implementation for other countries.

Scharnhorst viewed the Kriegsakademi as the primary tool for institutionalizing military excellence. He personally directed the reconstruction of the Kriegsakademi. Its restructuring continued until the unification of Germany in the latter part of the 19th century.¹⁷ Germans reestablished the Kriegsakademi in 1933, after Nazi leadership ignored the Treaty of Versailles' banning of the institution. However, the institution had its greatest effect during Helmuth von Moltke's (the Elder) almost 30 years as the Chief of the Prussian General Staff. He used the

Kriegsakademi to infuse his ideas about mission-type orders into Prussian officers. Moltke observed a tendency of Austrian officers to halt and wait for new instructions when they faced uncertainty or conflicting orders after Prussia's Italian campaign in 1859.¹⁸ Based on these observations, Moltke was determined to avoid such a behavior from spreading within the Prussian officer corps. He was reaffirmed that "his view that commanders should be assigned general missions, related to fundamental, clearly understood objectives, and then instructed to accomplish those missions by carrying the fight aggressively to the enemy."¹⁹ Moltke focused on the Kriegsakademi's instructors to ensure his view of the prevailing tenets required for successful mission-type orders was institutionalized. To ensure that mission-type orders were emphasized and taught correctly, Moltke provided explicit instructions and guidance to instructors. To reinforce the message, he also regularly held his own lectures at the Kriegsakademi.²⁰ Colonel John G. Lorimer of the British Army highlighted the correlation between PME and practice in an article analyzing the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Lorimer stated that "Moltke gave his three army commanders an unprecedented degree of independence, whilst at the same time, monitoring their actions closely and constantly. The result greatly enhanced flexibility in command and control. He decentralised tactical command, and control of operations was intended to be a matter of day to day decision making within the context of an ongoing campaign."²¹ This displayed how Moltke, by many viewed as the father of mission-type orders, actively used the Kriegsakademi to permeate Prussian officers' minds with mission-type orders.²² The Kriegsakademi proved to have the same function also after being reestablished in the 1930s.

Rare insight into what was taught at the Kriegsakademi in the inter-war era was provided by American General Albert C. Wedemeyer, who attended the Kriegsakademi between 1936-38.

Wedemeyer's observations aligned well with what the school emphasized under Moltke's influence between 1857-1888. In his post-graduation report, he highlighted what tenets the Kriegsakademi viewed as important for an officer, something akin to a modern-day command philosophy at the Kriegsakademi. Wedemeyer described that according to the school, "two of the most important characteristics of a leader are initiative and willingness to accept responsibility...better a faulty plan or decision permeated with boldness, daring and decisiveness, than a perfect plan enmeshed in uncertainty. The leader must strive to maintain the initiative with respect to the enemy."²³ A list of important principles for a commander supported the Kriegsakademi's desired command profile. It told the students to "first weigh the chance of success. Then risk the chance for success," to "be quick to recognize favorable situations or turn of events and promptly utilize to your own advantage," and that "speed and surprise can make up for a considerable numerical inferiority."²⁴ The command philosophy encompasses these three principles and reinforces the impression that mission type-orders in theory were an important part of the officer education at the Kriegsakademi.

Most activities at the school were done under the influence of friction, and they learned that "when confronted by a vague situation and difficult circumstances, as is often the case in war: Be active. Seize and maintain the initiative. Do not expect or await hints or suggestions from the enemy, relative to your next move."²⁵ Wedemeyer pointed out these observations on several occasions in his report. Hence, the Kriegsakademi did not distinguish between peacetime and war, the philosophy and the desired tenets remained the same. Wedemeyer thoroughly described the different activities he participated in, such as lectures, map exercises, staff rides, and exercises. However, Wedemeyer's observation that they were all framed and emphasized by the command philosophy described earlier were more important than the activities themselves.

From 1936-38, the Kriegsakademi was an important institution for the German Army that instilled a mindset of mission-type orders into its officers.

Wedemeyer described an environment where students and instructors could speak freely and critically. It was non-attributional with a close relationship between the students and the instructors. Both these characteristics helped create an environment where discussions were not limited to the classroom, but also took place during hours after school.²⁶ According to Shamir, the curriculum, quality of the faculty, and discussions, all made the Kriegsakademi “an intellectual center...that would originate new ideas and spread them throughout the army.”²⁷ Having visited the German army, Wedemeyer had a similar observation, saying he had “been impressed with the thoroughness, with which the military force as a whole is being trained to seize and maintain the initiative. An aggressive spirit is being inculcated in the leaders of all grades.”²⁸ Therefore, the Kriegsakademi not only instilled a mindset of mission-type orders to its own students, but the institution helped foster it in the German Army as a whole. By doing so, the Kriegsakademi helped close the gap between doctrine and practice in the German army. However, a mindset based on mission-type orders was practiced by several institutions, not only in the realm of PME.

*German Doctrine and *Truppenführung**

The Germans developed doctrine during the inter-war era that served as a common theoretical platform, and that outlined tenets and skills for how to fight on the battlefield. It was “designed to give them a set of intellectual tools to apply in complex and ever-unique warfighting situations.”²⁹ Two things strongly dictated the doctrinal development in Germany during the interwar era: the German experiences from World War I (WW I) and the restrictions put upon Germany through the Treaty of Versailles. The prevailing WW I experiences reflected in German doctrine of this era were the mobile warfare conducted in the theaters of Eastern

Europe and the success of stormtroop tactics experienced during the last years of the war. This will be analyzed in depth later on in this thesis. The consequences of the Treaty of Versailles limited Germany to a 100,000-man army, restricting the number of officers to 4,000. In addition, the treaty deprived Germany from having an air force, heavy artillery, and tanks.³⁰ Faced with these restrictions, the Chief of the German Army Command, General Hans von Seeckt, a WW I hero from the Eastern front himself, decided to invest in cognitive capita by educating his entire army as leaders.³¹

Seeckt envisioned a dual-purpose army. First, “it was to serve as a small, professional, high-quality army, an *Eliteheer*...[Secondly,] it...[would] serve as a cadre army, a force to provide the leadership corps of a greatly expanded army of the future.”³² This decision proved to have significant influence on the contents of the German doctrine of this era. The first doctrine published was *Führung und Gefecht in das verbundenen Waffen* (F.u.G.) between 1921-23. A doctrine that did not mention trench warfare once. Instead, it focused on maneuver warfare. The F.u.G describes mission-type orders and the tenets and conditions required to execute this type of command. More importantly, the F.u.G. was the predecessor to *Truppenführung*, published in 1933. According to Professor Williamson Murray, *Truppenführung* “remains the most influential doctrinal manual ever written.” And, “it also represents one of the most thoughtful examinations of the conduct of operations and leadership ever written.”³³ By analyzing *Truppenführung*, one can clearly see the emphasis put upon mission-type orders.

Truppenführung is divided into 1064 paragraphs, and several describe mission-type orders. Paragraph six states that “the command of an Army and its subordinate units requires leaders capable of judgement, with clear vision and foresight, and the ability to make independent and decisive decisions and carry them out unwaveringly and positively.”³⁴ A similar

message is conveyed in paragraph ten, describing that “the decisive factor...is the value of the individual soldier...The emptiness of the battlefield...requires soldiers who can think and act independently, who can make calculated, decisive, and daring use of every situation, and who understand that victory depends on each individual.”³⁵ The latter part of paragraph fifteen sums up the first fifteen paragraphs, referred to as fifteen highly philosophical paragraphs. To underline its importance, paragraph fifteen was emphasized in the original version. It says that “the first criterion in war remains decisive action. Everyone, from the highest commander down to the youngest soldier, must constantly be aware that inaction and neglect incriminate him more severely than any error.”³⁶ Similar content is found later in the book as well, paragraph 357 reminds subordinate commanders of their responsibility, saying “the independence of action of subordinate commanders and their close coordination will influence decisively the success.”³⁷ Paragraph 37 describes how to relate to missions, and ends by stating that “the commander must allow his subordinates freedom of action, so long as it does not adversely affect his overall intent.”³⁸

Truppenführung does not mention mission-type orders by name, but the theory of mission-type orders permeates the publication. Paragraphs 73-76 describe what orders should, and should not, contain. Paragraph 73 states that “an order should contain all that a subordinate needs to know to be able to execute his mission – and nothing more...The order must be short, clear, specific, and complete.”³⁹ Paragraph 75 emphasizes that “orders may only be valid as long they relate to the situation and condition.”⁴⁰ Several of the paragraphs talk about independent action, decisive action, and freedom of action. Within the context they were written, these paragraphs align well with how initiative was described in the definition, and the tenets the Kriegsakademi emphasized. The phrasing “soldier who can think and act independently,” a

wording close to the definition of initiative, further reinforced this comparison. Subordinate freedom of action can be directly translated into decentralized command, and overall intent is mentioned directly in paragraph 37. Therefore, the mindset and tenets of mission-type orders are present throughout *Truppenführung*, as part of all military activity practiced by the German army in the interwar era. As a result, *Truppenführung* is an important contributor that helped to instill a mindset of mission-type orders into the German army. The theoretical foundation from PME and doctrine created a starting point from which to begin practicing mission-type orders in the German army as a whole.

Training and Exercises

The German army used training and exercises to instill a mindset of mission-type orders into their personnel and units. The theoretical foundation provided through PME and doctrine was used as training objectives and as measurements of success. Chief of the German Army Command, General Hans von Seeckt, started arranging large maneuvers already in 1921 in order to train and evaluate the German army. In 1924, the theoretical influence on training started to show. During a regimental maneuver, small units maneuvered independently and adapted to ever changing situations. Historian Robert Citino remarked that “the duty of the officers was no longer simply to carry out incredibly detailed orders...Instead...he was to keep the mission foremost in his head. The method of achieving it was more or less up to him.”⁴¹ According to Citino the Germans characterized regimental maneuver as aggressive, risk-willing, bold, flexible, and within higher unit’s mission.⁴² These were the same characteristics that Seeckt envisioned for the German army. US military attaché to Germany in 1928, Colonel A.L. Conger, observed similar tenets and behavior.

Conger observed that training and exercises were designed and evaluated according to mission-type orders when he visited the 3d Infantry Division in vicinity of Berlin. During a

conversation, a German officer told Conger that the German approach differed from the French by “developing tactical proficiency in all officers and men, encouraging individual enterprise and initiative, and keeping orders from superiors to an absolute minimum. For success, the same officer said, we look...to the individual initiative and right action of subordinates at the front who take advantage of every local opportunity.”⁴³ That mission-type orders and the tenets enabling it were used deliberately to instill a mindset of mission-type orders to all levels of the German army were demonstrate by these two examples from the 1920s. Through such an approach, the German army effectively closed the gap between doctrine and practice. The same focus was utilized during wargames.

Wargames were a cost-effective way to practice tactics and leadership for the German army, an activity that allowed for numerous repetitions in the realm of decision-making and mission-type orders. The German army used wargames in most parts of its army: in PME, regular units, and during wartime. Citino describes the purpose of wargames under Seeckt as “to place officers and commanders in the midst of realistic wartime situations, force them to decide on the appropriate action.”⁴⁴ In 1921, Seeckt issued own regulations for umpires judging both field maneuvers and wargames. These guiding principles included the importance of individual action, initiative, aggressiveness, and short and concise orders.⁴⁵ All training was done with an overall focus of mission-type orders, ensured through Seeckt’s regulations. Col Conger stated after having visited a German unit, that Seeckt’s call for wargaming was having an effect, and that “wargames [was] played by the officers and non-commissioned officers, as well as by privates, on relief maps constructed on sand tables.”⁴⁶ The combination of Seeckt’s guidelines for umpires and the extensive use of wargames by the German army reinforced the practice of

mission-type orders and the manifestation of doctrine in the actions of the German army.

However, the use of wargames was nothing new in the German army.

The assault detachments (stormtroops) were created by Germany during WW I. They used wargames to teach their new techniques to other units and soldiers. The stormtroops differed from the regular German units of the time by fostering and encouraging decentralization, initiative by the individual soldier, risk acceptance, and aggressiveness.⁴⁷ However, they will be analyzed in detail later in this thesis. To instill these new tactics, the stormtroops introduced wargaming also at squad level. As historian Bruce I. Gudmundsson describes in his book *Stormtroop Tactics*, wargames “drove home the point that each individual squad was no longer an anonymous group of men being fed into a firing line formed for a purpose unknown to its members. Instead, the squad had become an irreplaceable element in a plan.”⁴⁸ The decision of the stormtroops to prioritize wargames during training in WW I was a good example of how important the German army thought this instrument was to instill tenets required for mission-type orders, such as initiative, aggressiveness, decentralization, and risk acceptance. Both Seeckt’s and the stormtroops’ emphasis on wargames demonstrates that together with PME, doctrinal foundation, and training and exercises, wargaming was an important ingredient to instill mission-type orders in the German army. However, the mindset must coincide and also encompass the part of an officer’s life taking place outside of work for mission-type orders to be institutionalized.

Cultural and Societal Influence on Mindsets – Prussian Nobility

Successful implementation of mission-type orders must take advantage of the existing culture, strengths, and trends already present in the respective society for the military to accept the mindset as their own. Successful utilization of society as a foundation for a command and

leadership mindset existed in Prussia in the 19th century. The officer culture in Prussia during the 19th century was an example of a military mindset exploiting the social structure of its society.

Mission-type orders in Prussia in the 19th century reflected the social structure of the time which emphasized the tenets required for mission-type orders and reflected the Prussian officers' way of life and professionalism. German military historian Franz Uhle-Wetter supports this view that the social and cultural context in which the Prussian officers grew up and lived in were key ingredient for mission-type orders. He observed that "at the root of the German victory is an unbelievable readiness to act independently, a readiness displayed at all levels down to the very lowest and displayed on the battlefield as well as in other matters."⁴⁹ Former American officer and military historian Daniel Hughes's research has concluded with a similar understanding, saying "*auftragstaktik* was more than a system of command; it was part of a particular life style typical of Prussian officers for more than a century."⁵⁰ Norwegian officer Ola Kjoerstad concluded his 2010 MPhil(R) thesis analyzing German officer education in the interwar years with saying that high standards and professionalism was present "not only in ordinary education and training, but professionalism in everything which interfered with the officers' lives and professions and which ultimately shaped the officers' personal qualities. It was in this environment and within this framework that every German officer was 'brought up'...to always take responsibility and to enjoy it."⁵¹ These scholars all show that mission-type orders were derived from tenets already present in the Prussian society, enabling the introduction of them into the army and a prerequisite for it to succeed. Robert M. Citino drew parallels between the personal life of a Prussian officer and how he performed during war.

Citino pointed to the relationship between the Prussian king and his Junker nobility when he explained the social contract that existed between them The contract made the Junkers declare

loyalty to the king in return for “near total dominance over the serfs, and later the peasants, on their domain.”⁵² The king’s interference in the matters of his subordinates, on the other hand, was viewed as a violation of the sovereignty of his subordinates.⁵³ As a result of this social contract between the king and his subordinates, the king believed “in giving these men general missions, but not in overseeing the details [while] officers of all ranks who showed initiative in combat might find a promotion waiting them at the end of the day.”⁵⁴ This goes to show that decentralized command, initiative, and general missions (intent) was present in the everyday life of Prussian officers.

Martin van Creveld, an Israeli military historian and theorist, described similar observations of Prussian officers’ life in his book *Fighting Power*, where he provides examples of Prussian regimental commanders who exercised complete control in their own area. One of these examples is a regimental commander who himself was responsible for recruitment and selection of officers and how to manage his regiment. At the same time, centralized governance was kept to an absolute minimum, exemplified by an annual inspection as the only interference by higher echelons.⁵⁵ According to Citino, quoting Prussian official history, the same characteristics were identified in the battle of Leuthen during the Seven Years War. The Prussians were characterized by the “independence of the Prussian commanders in battle. From the moment that their royal commander gave the command to attack, his generals acted with an understanding for his intentions, with a skill and an independent energy as in no other previous battle...Nowhere was there a mention of personal directives from the king.”⁵⁶ These tenets were demonstrated by both the infantry and cavalry exploiting windows of opportunity as they occurred, surprising the enemy through initiative, risk willingness, and aggressiveness.⁵⁷ The tenets demonstrated by the Prussian commanders during the battle of Leuthen must be assumed

to be closely connected with how the everyday organization in peacetime was conducted. Hence, what these Prussian commanders displayed at Leuthen was decentralized command, initiative, and general missions (intent), tenets required for mission-type orders. Most importantly in this context, however, the Prussian commanders only did what they practiced every day as a natural part of the Prussian social structure and the social contract between the king and his subordinates.

German journalist and military historian Walter Görlitz advocated that the close connection between everyday life and battle was natural for Prussian officers. Even though the Kriegsakademi was opened for all citizens in the early 19th century; by the mid to late 19th century the Prussian officer corps mostly consisted of nobility and aristocracy. With this in mind, it was therefore natural that such an officer corps embraced a culture rewarding initiative and individual action.⁵⁸ After all, Prussian nobility were the ones who benefitted from the social contract described by Citino. Mission-type orders in Prussia in the 19th century to a large extent exploited the tenets already present in Prussian officer culture, thereby utilizing the mindset already present. Through this approach, the Prussian army was able to institutionalize mission-type orders in a holistic manner. Similar exploitation of already existing mindsets took place in Israel in the 1940s and 50s.

Cultural and Societal Influence on Mindsets – Israeli *Bitsuism*

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in the decade or so after World War II (WW II) was characterized by what is known as *bitsuism*, which became the foundation for Israeli mission-type orders. *Bitsuism* were translated into someone who makes things happen. Tenets related to *bitsuism* are initiative, independence, and decentralized control.⁵⁹ The tenets characterizing *bitsuism* resemble the mission-type orders definition provided in the introduction who describes “a philosophy that requires and facilitates initiative on all levels of command...on the battlefield.

It encourages subordinates to exploit opportunities by empowering them to take the initiative and exercise judgment in pursuit of their mission; [and] alignment is maintained through adherence to the commander's intent."⁶⁰ The tenets derived from *bitsuism* were clearly recognizable in the IDF's command philosophy. During the War of Independence, *bitsuism* was exploited in mission-type orders in the IDF. The operation order issued by the division HQ for Operation Yoav against the Egyptian army were a good example of this.⁶¹ The method section of the of plan simply said "*beatzmechs* (at own discretion)."⁶² Through delegating the method of an operation entirely to the subordinates, the IDF, in this example a division, demonstrated decentralized command and a belief that the subordinates were able to display initiative, risk willingness, and an ability to seize opportunities, all tenets required for mission-type orders. According to Shamir, Moshe Dayan, the former military leader and Minister of Defense, personified *bitsuism* and mission-type orders through his belief in initiative, aggressiveness, and risk acceptance.⁶³

Dayan nurtured mission-type orders and its tenets among his subordinates and defended those who met his standards, even when things went wrong. Dayan defended former Israeli general and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon when an operation had gone wrong by stating that "I prefer excessive initiative and action, even if it involves some mistakes here and there, to the passivity of sit and do nothing and covering yourself with paper and seven authorizations for an operation before its execution."⁶⁴ The tenets and values emphasized by Dayan resonated well with both *bitsuism* and mission-type orders, demonstrating a clear connection between the two. In the 1940s and 50s, the IDF was still a young organization, and these tenets were therefore more likely to be part of the social structure and society in Israel at this point in time, rather than something being introduced through the military system. As a result, officers displaying tenets

required for mission-type orders at this point in Israeli history were doing so based on a mindset derived from *bitsuism*, which created a holistic approach to the command philosophy of mission-type orders that encompassed both the personal and professional life of Israeli officers of the time.

Exploiting strengths already present in a country's society and culture helps military organizations create a mindset that aligns personal and professional life of an officer. Both Prussia and Israel succeeded with this by exploiting Prussian nobility and Israeli *bitsuism*. By doing so, both countries and their armies created a holistic approach to mission-type orders, enabling it to encompass all aspects of their officers' lives. As a result, these countries effectively eradicated the gap between doctrine and practice, and between personal and professional life.

Successful Application of Mission-type Orders

Armies that have succeeded in institutionalizing a mindset of mission type orders have demonstrated its advantages and potential on the battlefield on several occasions. The First World War are by most people viewed as a war fought in trenches with strict discipline, highly centralized decision making, and with no room for individual initiative and exploitation of windows of opportunity. However, there are several examples of mission-type orders and its tenets during the war. The Germans founded their approach to interwar rebuilding on their experiences of mission-type orders in the latter part of WWI.

World War I

Though not the only military experimenting with units conducting more independent actions, the German army demonstrated mission-type orders in June 1915 during the battles of Argonne and High Vosges on the Western front. The German 124th Infantry Regiment demonstrated tactics and leadership during these battles similar to what later in the war would be

known as stormtroop tactics.⁶⁵ Several of the regiment's companies had introduced and encouraged independent action and initiative by small-units and individual soldiers. The companies were divided into small assault teams which were given individual missions, while the execution was left to the non-commissioned officer (NCO) leading the team.⁶⁶ The execution was based on preparatory fires. As soon as these lifted, and "before the smoke cleared, our three assault teams rose noiselessly from their trenches and dashed for their objectives."⁶⁷ This shows that on a company level, tenets like decentralized command, initiative, risk taking, and exploitation of occurring opportunities existed in the German army as early as 1915. According to one of the company commanders of 124th Infantry Regiment, WW II general Erwin Rommel, the use of these tactics and leadership was successful. Rommel described the battle in his book *Infantry Attacks*, where he said that after they entered the French trenches "part of the garrison ran down the trench, others fled across the open field, and the rest surrendered...the bulk of the assault force kept pressing south...and had the luck to surprise and capture a French battalion commander with his entire staff."⁶⁸ The successes that individual German units achieved in 1915 were developed further, and proved successful later in WW I, then in a more organized and holistic manner. However, it was on the Eastern front that the Germans succeeded the most with mission-type orders in the early stages of WW I.

At the battle of Lodz in the fall of 1914, the German Ninth Army under general Mackensen, exercised maneuver warfare and mission-type orders demonstrating William S. Lind's argument later in the 20th century that decentralization of command and authority enables an army to make decisions at a pace the enemy cannot keep up with, creating confusion and uncertainty within the enemy, leading to opportunities forces can exploit at a rate the enemy is not able to keep up with.⁶⁹ Mackensen's XXV corps, under the command of General Reinhard

von Scheffer-Boyadel, found themselves encircled by 200,000 Russian forces outside Lodz in 1914. Mackensen saw the Russian defenses as too strong, and informed Scheffer that he should make the best of the situation based on his own judgement, delegating the solution of the problem to his corps commander.⁷⁰ Scheffer assessed the situation and quickly decided to surprise the Russians with an attack to towards East.

Scheffer knew that Mackensen's overall intent was to establish a defense line North of Lodz, hence, after he broke through the Russian encirclement in the East, he turned North.⁷¹ Scheffer took advantage of the opportunities that presented themselves during his attack, demonstrating initiative and risk willingness, and "after overrunning and destroying a Russian division in its way, Scheffer's corps turned west, rejoined the Ninth army, and...took its place in the German line north of Lodz."⁷² Based on his assessment of the situation, Mackensen decided to decentralize the authority, enabling Scheffer to make decisions based on his own assessment of the situation. Being given this authority, Scheffer demonstrated initiative, aggressiveness, and risk willingness to break out of the encirclement and join up with the rest of the German Ninth Army. Hence, the battle of Lodz demonstrated mission-type orders and the tenets required for it as early as in 1914. This suggests that Germans had an understanding of mission-type orders from even before the war. The German successes at Lodz and in the battles of Argonne and High Vosges created the foundation for the German stormtroops tactics practiced by Germany towards the latter part of WW I.

The German army organized special assault units called stormtroops, which were given specific training in decentralized operations relying on small-unit initiative, aggressiveness, and risk willingness. These stormtroops encapsulated mission-type orders and became the template when Germany reconstructed its army in the interwar era and for how they fought during WW II.

In the stormtroops, “lieutenants and NCOs became key decision makers upon whose shoulders rested complete responsibility or the outcome of the one of the thousands of little combats into which battle had disintegrated.”⁷³ Higher echelon commanders on the other hand, used to leading its troops from the front, became “miniature version of the operational art. He pushed resources toward the squad or platoon whose success would most contribute to the accomplishment of his mission.”⁷⁴ Through this organization, the German army decentralized decision making, relying on the initiative, aggressiveness, and subordinates’ ability to exploit windows of opportunities. The effectiveness of the stormtroops were demonstrated during the German Peace offensive against the British in March 1918.

The goal of the stormtroops was to penetrate 8,000 meters across no man’s land to the British field artillery within twelve hours.⁷⁵ The stormtroops’ technique was derived from the successful German attacks at Caporetto, where “the attack had broken up into a series of battalion- and company-seized engagements – seizing hilltops and racing through valleys.”⁷⁶ Based on these orders and experiences, the stormtroops started the attack on the British. During the first day of the battle, a third of the stormtroops reached their objective, and the Germans captured 13,300 prisoners and 88 artillery pieces.⁷⁷ The effect the German attack had on the British was significant, and created chaos and friction reinforcing the German progress. A British captain who observed the battle later said that “the day closed with Divisional HQ bowing under a welter of orders and counter orders from Corps, most of which took two hours to deliver and were too late for action when received.”⁷⁸ The performance of the stormtroops during the German Peace offensive against the British in March 1918 clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of mission-type orders in the latter part of WW I. The general missions and decentralized

command fused with the tenets required for mission-type orders instilled in the subordinates provided the Germans in 1918 with local success their opponents could not handle.

These three examples from WW I demonstrate that mission-type orders were a key ingredient in several of the successful battles fought during the war and shows that it worked as a force multiplier for those units who were able to utilize it. Furthermore, it shows how mission-type orders can be a tool to solve challenging or disadvantageous situations, hence, it is as relevant today as it was during WW I. The German experiences from the Great War were developed further during the interwar era, being displayed by both Germany and Russia during WW II.

World War II

The German attack on France in 1940 displayed a willingness to take risk that completely shocked the allies. Condell and Zabecki, the two translators of *Truppenführung*, state that “For years after the 1940 campaign the German victory was explained by Germany’s employment of masses of tanks, motorized forces and aircraft against an enemy bound to the Maginot Line and a defensive strategy. However, we now know that in terms of numbers of troops and weapons, the Wehrmacht in 1940 held few advantages. Indeed, it was often at a disadvantage against the Allied forces.”⁷⁹ What was it, then, that enabled the German army to defeat the French army, and push the British army over the English Channel within a matter of days? According to historian Karl-Heinz Frieser, the German plan for the attack was an example of how the tenets of mission-type orders played an important role in the German success.

At every level of command, there were multiple examples of mission-type orders and the accompanying tenets being practiced with great success. One example was the dilemma Guderian faced after he penetrated the French defenses and crossed the waterways in vicinity of Sedan. He was faced with either waiting and securing his flanks or exploiting the situation and

continuing the attack. Guderian's orders from Panzer Group Kleist said "success springs from speed. The important thing is to forget about your right and left flank and to push quickly into the enemy's depth and to take the defenders again and again by surprise."⁸⁰ This phrasing corresponded well with the original Sickle Cut plan which Guderian knew well, having been Erich von Manstein's panzer expert during its development.⁸¹ However, most of the German high-ranking generals had deemed such a move too risky, and therefore did not expect an operational-level effect from the breaching of the Meuse River.⁸² According to Frieser, Guderian faced two options after having crossed the river: should he wait until the infantry had secured the bridgehead and Guderian's flanks, or should he exploit the situation and adhere to the original Sickle Cut plan and continue westwards?⁸³ Guderian decided to attack, leaving his flanks and his bridgehead scarcely defended.⁸⁴ Guderian's decision was based on his perception of the situation as observed at the front, and by understanding the overall intent of the orders provided by higher echelon. According to mission-type orders, Guderian was the one with the best understanding of the situation. Guderian understood the overall mission of the German attack, and that the scope of it did not stop at Sedan. Furthermore, he understood that he was the only one able to utilize what he perceived as a window of opportunity. Based on these factors, Guderian's decision to attack demonstrated understanding for the overall intent of his superiors, initiative, responsibility, and risk willingness, all being done in a situation characterized by uncertainty and risk. The decision of Guderian to attack were therefore in accordance with mission-type orders both as defined then and now. However, Guderian was not the only one acting according to mission-type orders. Erwin Rommel was, as well.

During an attack in 1940, Rommel lost radio communications with his higher headquarters. Even before this occurred, Rommel had already exceeded the scope of the

operation. No one had foreseen that such progress was possible. Instead of waiting for orders, and with little or no understanding of the overall situation, Rommel decided to continue the attack under the cover of darkness. Attacking during nighttime in 1940 was no easy task, and the limited ability to observe meant it contained considerable risk. The result of the attack was spectacular. The following day when Rommel halted due to lack of ammunition, he had defeated a French corps and a French division, taking 10,000 prisoners while only taking 36 own casualties.⁸⁵ Rommel in his undertakings demonstrated the same will and spirit as Guderian. Rommel displayed an understanding for the overall intent of the campaign, initiative, responsibility, and risk willingness. These two generals are good examples of successful application of mission-type orders, and the monumental effect it can have on military operations when executed by officers who are educated, trained, and exposed to a mindset of mission-type orders. However, such undertakings took place at every level of the German army at the start of WW II.

During the crossing of the Meuse River, one of the first German companies across found itself completely isolated when arriving on the far-side of the river. Instead of waiting for reinforcements, the company commander remembered his orders, which told his battalion to cross the river and break through the Maginot Line. He, therefore, immediately launched an attack, knowing well that the company's flanks were exposed and that he had no communications means to higher echelon. He still took the initiative and proceeded to fulfill the intent of the orders he received prior to going into battle.⁸⁶ The same determination was displayed by Sergeant Rubarth during the crossing of the Meuse River. Rubarth also found himself isolated on the enemy side of the river. Without conferring with his superiors, Rubarth and his 11 soldiers seized a total of seven bunkers, and by doing so opened the breach for the

German 1st Panzer Division to continue the attack into France.⁸⁷ The company commander's and Rubarth's action demonstrated that mission-type orders was a mindset for not only high-ranking officers in the German army, but at all levels. Furthermore, it shows how small-unit initiative can prove vital to the outcome of a battle, reinforcing the conclusion after looking at the examples from WW I, that a mindset of mission-type orders can help units facing chaos and friction prevail. These lessons are as relevant today as during WW II. Though based on different circumstances and development, the Soviets also displayed mission-type orders during WW II.

The Soviet Union's Red Army had a difficult and challenging start to the war, mainly due to Stalin's purge in the late 1930s and his reluctance to realize the German threat. However, after having stopped the German advance and going on the offensive in 1943, the Red army displayed mission-type order tenets as laid out in their Deep Battle doctrine. Deep Battle described the organizational and tactical requirements in order to penetrate a strong defensive line, and how to exploit the following breakthrough in order to destroy the enemy in his deep rear. Deep Battle included encirclement of the enemy through several penetrations of the enemy defenses.⁸⁸ Former American officer and military historian, Jonathan House, describes how Soviet commanders moved rapidly to new objectives after succeeding with penetrations and encirclements in order to maintain tempo and momentum as described in the Deep Battle doctrine.⁸⁹ This was done in a decentralized manner due to the lack of communications. The Red army actively tried to create friction and uncertainty among the Germans, which they themselves could exploit. Small-unit initiative enabled the Soviets to seize targets of opportunity, targets often not identified during the Soviet planning processes.⁹⁰ The Red army faced challenges regarding communication and detailed planning due to the vast operation area and the progress they made.

Mission type orders allowed the Soviets to overcome these challenges. During the Soviet offensive against the German army group defending Poland in 1944, “the three Soviet tank armies had advanced up to 300 kilometers during only 15 days of continuous operations,” and “between 23 June and early August 1944, multiple Soviet mobile groups employed deep operational maneuvers across an 800 kilometer front to thrust deep into the German rear along numerous axes.”⁹¹ For commanders to exploit targets of opportunity under such circumstances required subordinate initiative, the ability to thrive when experiencing uncertainty, and a willingness to accept risk - all important tenets for mission-type orders. The effectiveness of the Soviet Deep Battle doctrine and the mission-type orders mindset accompanying it were clearly demonstrated during the Vistula-Oder operation in January 1945.

The Soviets attacked German army group A with four tank armies launched from numerous bridgeheads, and “swept through German defenses in a matter of hours and smashed the two reinforcing German Panzer divisions; within two days the 3d Guards and the 4th Tank Armies were streaming deep into the German’s operational rear... Within a week the four Soviet tank armies...virtually obliterating organized German defenses across a 250 kilometer front.”⁹² To achieve such an overwhelming victory, the subordinate commanders executing the numerous attacks demonstrated mission-type orders ability. As mentioned above, the size of the area of operations rendered it impossible for the Soviet army commanders to exercise command and control, hence, they had to rely on their subordinates to act according to the general mission, demonstrating initiative, aggressiveness, and ability to seize opportunities as they presented themselves. As a result, what the Soviet commanders demonstrated in 1944-45 certainly qualifies as mission-type orders. Furthermore, it shows that an army that was not well-educated and

trained to the level the German army was, also could achieve spectacular successes when exploiting mission-type orders in a holistic way.

Mission-type orders played a significant role in the outcome of several of the successful battles and campaigns undertaken by both the German and Soviet armies during WW II. Decentralized command and authority, intentions, initiative, risk, and accepting uncertainty and friction are key parts of the German and Russian success. In addition, the ownership and feeling of responsibility assumed by subordinates is worth noting. Even though the basis and reasons behind mission-type orders differed substantially between Germany and Russia, the tenets for successfully executing mission-type orders are the same and demonstrates how it can be utilized in complex and challenging situations also today. After the end of WW II, mission-type orders caught the interest of several scholars, mainly to explain the initial German success in WW II. The practitioners of mission-type orders during the Cold War, however, were far between. The introduction of nuclear weapons and the start of the Cold War overshadowed the relevance of mission-type orders. However, there are a few exceptions, mainly from Israel and Russia.

Post-World War II

Shamir described command in the Israeli army during the Suez Crisis in 1956 in terms resonating well with the definition of mission-type orders. Israeli historian Martin van Creveld supported this view of Israeli leadership, stating that the IDF was able to institutionalize a system resembling German *Auftragstaktik*.⁹³ The Israeli way of war, focusing on preemptive strikes and bringing the fight to enemy territory, required a certain set of skills among its commanders. These traits were decentralized command, a clear intent, willingness to take risks, boldness, aggressiveness, and creativity.⁹⁴ This description of Israeli command is closely linked with the definitions of mission-type orders. Therefore, it equates to Israeli mission-type orders in the

1950s. Israeli brigade commander colonel Uri Ben-Ari's undertakings in the war against Egypt in 1956 exemplified Israeli mission-type orders of the time:

Ben-Ari took a calculated risk and committed his...task forces on three different axes to fracture the Egyptian defense. Only the 7th Brigade's artillery battery gave Adan [battalion commander of one of the task forces] effective support. This small task force greatly discouraged and confused the Egyptian defenders in the area, who felt that their line of communications had been cut. The frontal infantry attacks were therefore able to overrun the Egyptians. The 7th Armored Brigade did not win the 1956 war by itself, yet its actions at Abu Agheila and elsewhere convinced Dayan that armored forces and decentralization of authority were superior instruments for future wars of maneuver.⁹⁵

Through his actions, Ben-Ari demonstrated understanding for the overall intent, moving the fight to other countries' territory. He also practiced decentralization of command and provided an intent before releasing his three task forces independently towards the Egyptian position. Ben-Ari's subordinates demonstrated ability to exercise initiative and understanding for the intent, all in a situation characterized by uncertainty. Overall, the Israelis showed boldness, aggressiveness and risk willingness by committing the whole force in an uncertain situation based on the on-scene assessment, and all levels of command took responsibility for their part of the mission through initiative and determination. The actions taken by the 7th Armored Brigade shows how the fusion between *bitsuism* and mission-type order came to show in the IDF, proving how important a mindset of mission-type orders is and how that helped the Israelis putting theory into practice also during wartime. A decade later, these experiences were further confirmed.

Israeli political scientist Ahron Bregman describes similar findings in his book *Israel's Wars; A History Since 1947*. He focuses on the Israeli commanders' ability to act based on

intentions while excelling in an environment characterized by uncertainty during the initial phase of the 1967 Six Day War, when “the three Israeli divisions thrust[ed] into the desert to engage the Egyptian forces.”⁹⁶ The Israeli divisions operated on a general mission to transfer the battle to enemy territory, and did not stop until they reached the Suez Canal having killed 2,000 Egyptians, while 10,000 were lost in action.⁹⁷ They were bold and willing to take risk, something made possible through mutual trust and a large degree of decentralized authority and command.⁹⁸

The existence of mission-type orders tenets in the IDF during the Six Day War were well documented by American author Steven Pressfield in his book *The Lion’s Gate*. Pressfield quotes a number of people who participated in the Six Day War. One of them is Yael Dayan, the daughter of Moshe Dayan, who quoted how Ariel Sharon, a former General in the IDF and Prime Minister of Israel, described Israeli leadership; “Of course the Israeli soldier will make up his own mind and do whatever he wants. This is as it should be. The reason we will trash the Egyptians is because they can’t do the same. They can’t improvise.”⁹⁹ Danny Matt, a former Israeli Major General serving under Sharon described how he was led by Sharon: “A commander under Arik Sharon is granted broad independence of action. Sharon tells you what to do but not how to do it...I know how Sharon thinks: If I don’t hear from Danny, that means everything is okay. If there is a problem, Danny will contact me.”¹⁰⁰ These firsthand observations and Bregman’s analysis of the IDF as bold, risk willing, and a practitioner of decentralized command demonstrate the existence of mission type in the IDF during the Six Day War. Sharon’s view of leadership encompasses giving an intent and decentralizing command, leaving it to his subordinates to determine how through initiative, mutual trust, risk willingness, and accepting responsibility for the outcome. The actions displayed by the Israelis during the Six Day War reinforces the impression that mission-type orders were a natural part of Israeli officers through

the mindset of *bitsuism*, and that mission-type orders helped turn a challenging situation into an advantage for the Israelis. As with the lessons drawn from WW I and WW II, these observations are as relevant today as in 1967, and demonstrated the effect of closing the gap between theory and practice. Similar approaches also took place in the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

According to American Colonel (ret.) and military historian Jonathan House, the Red Army broadened their scope of warfare in the mid-1970s by focusing on conventional warfare again after their overarching emphasis on nuclear war after WW II. The Soviets again returned to their doctrine of *Deep Battle*, modernized through the development of new armored combat vehicles and by re-implementing a combined arms approach, focusing on decentralized command, initiative and risk willingness among all leaders.¹⁰¹ The Soviets' focus on mission-type orders as a vital part of this modernization was evident when looking at *Field Manual (FM) 100-2-1 The Soviet Army*. It states that "Soviet doctrine emphasizes that under the fluid conditions of modern warfare, even in the course of carefully planned operations, the commander must accomplish assigned missions on his own initiative without constant guidance from above. To do this, the commander must be well informed about the general situation and the intentions of the senior commander."¹⁰² This description demonstrated that the tenets of mission-type orders were an important part of Soviet leadership philosophy in their approach to warfare in the 1970s and early 80s. The Soviets' revitalization of their *Deep Battle* doctrine also affected the US military. While the Soviet Union underwent this resurrection of conventional, mechanized, combined arms warfare, "the United States lost a decade of mechanized development because of its involvement in Vietnam."¹⁰³ Consequently, the US military's embrace of combined arms didn't happen before the 1980s.

The practitioners of mission-type orders during the Cold War were few, but both Israel and Russia succeeded during parts of the time period. Israel had success with mission-type orders in the 1950s and 60s, but over the next 30 years this approach lost its advocates and was replaced with technology and a more centralized command structure. The nuclear weapons race after WW II demanded the Soviet Union's full attention, losing their *Deep Battle* heritage of decentralization, initiative, and risk willingness on the way. However, the Red Army was able to reinstitute the doctrinal approach in the 1970s, indirectly accelerating the introduction of mission-type orders in the US military.

How the US Can Better Adjust for Mission-type Orders

The analysis of Prussian, German, Israeli, and Soviet history demonstrates that mission-type orders have contributed to success on the battlefield on numerous occasions since the emergence of mission-type orders following the battle at Jena in 1806. When practiced within a holistic mindset, mission-type orders have proved to be a military tool helping commanders and units prevail in challenging and problematic situations. Mission-type orders have survived modernization and technological developments, and while technology become old and outdated, command philosophies like mission-type orders will remain vital. The US military can therefore exploit the lessons learned during the 200 years long practice of mission-type orders to ensure that it also prevails on the future battlefield, despite the rapid technological development affecting the military sphere. Former CJCS, General Dempsey, expressed a similar view in 2012. Dempsey said he regarded mission-type orders as “critical to our future success in defending the nation in an increasingly complex and uncertain operating environment.”¹⁰⁴ Dempsey's view was also reflected in the 2018 National Defense Strategy, which assesses that the future battlefield

will be more complex than ever before, characterized by great power competition, grey zone conflicts, and new domains such as cyberspace and space.¹⁰⁵

Mission-type orders have been well documented for decades in several of the American services' doctrine; however, the question is to what extent it has been practiced. Retired US Army officer and author, Robert Leonhard, in his book *The Art of Maneuver*, looked at Operation Desert Storm and the Gulf War to evaluate the actual existence of mission-type orders within the US Army. Leonhard dismissed the presence of mission-type orders and went on to claim that "Operation Desert Storm was strictly controlled from the top down. There was no room for initiative, or even significant maneuver options, below the corps level. Commanders at all levels were instructed where and when to move and were not permitted to find their own way to their objective."¹⁰⁶ Counterinsurgency operations and the GWOT have raised similar concerns, that centralized command has been the preferred command philosophy.

American author Pete Nealen, a former Reconnaissance Marine and veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, argues in an article that "risk aversion has led to...micromanagement and the death of small-unit leader initiative."¹⁰⁷ Shamir shared this view, claiming that the US military as a whole has not been able to implement the command philosophy of mission-type orders.¹⁰⁸ Based on these scholars' view, it has struggled to turn its doctrinal foundation into practice, they have struggled to close the gap.

To remedy this situation and to ensure that mission-type orders are a force multiplier also in future conflicts, the US military must nurture a more holistic and deliberate approach to mission-type orders. To achieve this, it must review its doctrinal foundation of mission-type orders to ensure it fosters the tenets required, reward and promote personnel displaying and living mission-type orders, and focus on risk willingness among its officer corps. If the US

military is able to do this, they have a foundation for successful utilization of mission-type orders. Furthermore, they have reduced the gap between doctrine and practice. As an example, the German army in the 1930s implemented a mindset of mission-type orders through a holistic approach to PME, doctrine, and training. Doctrine is the foundation for both PME and training and should therefore be a focus of attention for the US military.

US Army and USMC: Defining Mission-type Orders

Both the US Army and the United States Marine Corps (USMC) have defined mission-type orders in their doctrine, but they both deviate from most other definitions with regards to the amount of initiative. US Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, Mission Command, defines mission-type orders as "the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander's intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of unified land operations...guided by the principles of building cohesive teams through mutual trust, create shared understanding, providing a clear commander's intent, exercise disciplined initiative, use mission orders, [and] accept prudent risk"¹⁰⁹ The United States Marine Corps defines mission-type orders as "the tactics of assigning a subordinate mission without specifying how the mission must be accomplished. We leave the manner of accomplishing the mission to the subordinate, thereby allowing the freedom—and establishing the duty—for the subordinate to take whatever steps deemed necessary based on the situation. Mission tactics relies on a subordinate's exercise of initiative framed by proper guidance and understanding."¹¹⁰ What these definitions have in common, is that they both limit the amount of initiative commanders accept from their subordinates.

The US Army definition mentions disciplined initiative, while the USMC definition calls for the subordinates to exercise initiative framed by proper guidance and understanding. By doing so, both definitions give the commander the right to intervene or direct his subordinates

after the mission and intent are provided. To do so is a commander's right, but compared to other definitions, the two American definitions reduce the amount of responsibility assumed by the subordinate. Compared with Citino's description of the Prussian social contract, where the king's interference in the matters of his subordinates was viewed as a violation of the sovereignty of his subordinates,¹¹¹ the two definitions from the US Army and the USMC appear to restrain subordinates instead of empowering them as intended.

The definition of mission-type orders provided in the beginning of this thesis, talks about encouraging "a philosophy that requires and facilitates initiative on all levels of command...[Who] encourages subordinates to exploit opportunities by empowering them to take the initiative and exercise judgment in pursuit of their mission; [and where] alignment is maintained through adherence to the commander's intent."¹¹² Shamir's definition empowers the subordinates as well, only limiting them through the commander's intent. What is clear from most of the historical examples from WW I and WW II, is the amount of ownership and responsibility the subordinates being led through mission-type orders assumed. The absence of this ownership among parts of the US officer corps became evident in an email exchange between Thomas Ricks and an anonymous US Army battalion commander in 2011. After a deployment to Afghanistan, the battalion commander stated that "for a number of my officers, success equaled nothing that made them stand out for a year. So the fewer times you left the FOB (forward operating base), the fewer times you interacted with the locals, the fewer time you did anything – that was a success."¹¹³ Such behavior does not resonate well with mission-type orders and initiative. Consequently, both the US Army and the USMC should review their definitions to clarify if what appears to be limitations compared to most other definitions with regards to initiative, and subsequent feeling of responsibility, should be changed. By doing so,

the subordinates are to a larger degree held responsible for practicing mission-type orders. This is a nuance critical for instituting mission-type orders as a mindset exercised in both PME and during training and exercises. Focusing on the mindset established through these two US doctrines will help mitigate the gap between doctrine and practice. Another aspect creating a gap between theory and practice is the organization of American politics and the military.

Civilian Influence and Promotions

The US military is under civilian control and it is therefore inevitable that they are exposed and directed through civilian forms of management. The difference between the Prussian king and his nobles and the American democracy is significant. As a result, the social contract and the accountability are quite different. In contrast to a king in the 19th century, a democracy answers to its people. Consequentially, the result of such a form of governance is that civilian bureaucracy begins to influence the military establishment. Promotions and appointment to key positions are indicators of which skills and qualities an organization rewards. American sociologist and author Morris Janowitz argues that the US military unavoidably will be influenced by the liberal American society.

One of the consequences of this is that the US military will adopt more of civilian society's bureaucracy, including measures of effectiveness. Such measurements focus on quantitative values that can be measured, such as money.¹¹⁴ These ways of measuring a military organization requires officers who can adjust to quantitative and hard numbers when it comes to military effectiveness. Examples of this are the current skill level of a military unit or its state of readiness, both difficult to measure accurately, but of crucial importance from a military point of view. From a bureaucratic stand, the emphasis is put on budgets, deadlines, and the number cost of training, numbers that can be measured. As a result, military organizations adopt rigid routines that make management of such organizations highly standardized.¹¹⁵ One example is

commanders of battalions or captains of Navy vessels, who “have no command authority over who serves [in your battalion or] on your ship.”¹¹⁶ Late Senator John McCain addressed a similar issue at a Senate hearing in 2015, saying that “we should ask whether we should give commanders greater discretion to build a staff...Commanders are likely better able to assess their needs than bureaucrats.”¹¹⁷ Senator McCain’s statement proves that the military establishment is partially led and driven by bureaucrats depriving military commanders of influence. To lead and run such an organization requires military leaders willing and able to thrive under such regulations.

The tenets required for bureaucratic leadership directly contradicts the tenets needed for mission-type orders, such as risk willingness, initiative, uncertainty acceptance, and decentralized command. According to Morris, it is likely that promotion and appointment to key positions are closely tied with loyalty to desired procedures and behavior.¹¹⁸ Tim Cane, author and a J.O. Conte Fellow at the Stanford University, describes these procedures as a “formalized process run through faceless bureaucracies ...If a person meets the minimum standards and has committed no crime, they will meet the lowest common denominator.”¹¹⁹ Rewarding tenets suited for management based on quantitative measurements directly contradicts skills required for mission-type orders. By doing so, the leaders responsible for turning mission-type orders theory into practice themselves lack the tenets required to utilize the command philosophy.

Rewarding procedural loyalty results in military establishments effectively promoting officers representing the opposite skills and tenets compared to what mission-type orders require. This is further reinforced by bureaucratic organizations. Bureaucracies measured by quantitative values tend to reward persons quietly accepting directions and regulations from higher echelons. Mission-type orders, on the other hand, encourage people actively discussing and debating

problems and solutions. Discussing the organization and its challenges is a requirement for creating the desired mindset. As a result, officers openly criticizing and advocating development within the organization will most likely neither thrive nor survive in such an environment, something reinforcing the impression that officers representing mission-type orders tenets are effectively not promoted in military organizations. To understand the consequences of such a way to reward officers, the US military's renewal of its officer corps before WW II illustrates the consequence of rewarding bureaucratic skills.

Before entering WW II, the American officer corps went through a major overhaul, replacing hundreds of officers. Despite having participated in the latter part of WW I, most of the officers in the US military during the interwar era were accustomed to peacetime routines and the bureaucracy involved in running a military establishment on a day-to-day basis. This resulted in officers caught in old patterns of how to do things, with reluctance and opposition towards change, development, and innovation.¹²⁰ A staggering five generals, forty colonels and lieutenant colonels, together with several regimental and battalion commanders were removed in the Pacific theater alone throughout 1942.¹²¹ General George C. Marshall, the architect behind the renewal of the US officer corps in this period, estimated that he had removed, either voluntarily or by force, as many as 600 officers by the time the US entered WW II.¹²² Marshall saw the need for officers with other qualities faced with a possible new world war. As a result, he created a list of seven qualities he looked for. These were: "good common sense, have studied your profession, physically strong, cheerful and optimistic, display marked energy, extreme loyalty, and determined."¹²³ Even though Marshall's list was not directly meant for selecting officers for mission-type orders, there are several resemblances.

Good common sense coincides well with making sensible decisions, a skill required of a subordinate making decisions at the scene according to an overall mission or intent. Having studied one's profession might be a basic requirement, but as shown earlier, PME is essential to instill knowledge and understanding for one's profession. In addition, Wedemeyer, the American student at the Kriegsakademi, became one of Marshall's subordinates after returning to America. It is possible that Wedemeyer's report to a certain degree influenced Marshall. To fulfill his mission according to a commander's intent required extreme loyalty, and determination is essential in order to handle chaos and friction, and while displaying risk willingness. The most important lesson to be learned from Marshall is that if the officer corps is not trained for the hardship of war, one will have to replace them at the start of the war. Therefore, if the future war requires officers educated and trained in mission-type orders, it needs to be done holistically through instilling a mindset during peacetime. Secondly, Marshall's list is comparable to the tenets required for mission-type orders, something demonstrated by general George S. Patton and several other American generals during WW II. In addition to bureaucracy and civilian management styles, the recent experiences in the Global War on Terror and the norms of the 21st century have affected the US forces ability to practice mission-type orders.

[Risk Aversion Obstructing Mission-type Orders](#)

Risk willingness is an essential tenet for successful mission-type orders, but America's Global War on Terror and society's norms have reduced the willingness to take risk on the battlefield. To exercise initiative and seize windows of opportunity to fulfill a commander's intent requires a willingness to accept risk and uncertainty. Most definitions of mission-type orders reflect the essential role of risk in mission-type orders, such as in the US Army's definition saying subordinates have to accept prudent risk.¹²⁴ Historical examples demonstrate the importance of accepting risk. General Scheffer's break-out from an encirclement and

following destruction of a Soviet division in 1914 exemplify risk. Sergeant Rubarth's crossing of the Meuse river and the subsequent seizure of seven bunkers at the start of WW II act as another example. Finally, the Red Army's deep penetration of German defenses in 1944 provides yet another demonstration of the effect of risk willing commanders. However, several sources indicate that the US military is struggling with its risk willingness.

Retired Colonel Kevin Benson, PhD, claims that the US Army's understanding of risk is incorrect, and that the type of commanders the US Army possesses today is not suitable for what risk will encompass in a near-peer or peer conflict. According to Benson, US Army officers are content to avoid risk. Such heritage from counterinsurgency will not survive the next war.¹²⁵ An example of this is how downsizing has affected the US military. Robert Kissel, a former student at the USMC War College, claims that the consequence of downsizing is that officers are afraid to make mistakes in their unit. Removing defects, mistakes, and flaws in the organization they command by centralizing decisions and reduce subordinate latitude is what characterize their actions. By doing so, they reduce the risk overall, and the risk willingness among their subordinates.¹²⁶ Lt. Col. Trent J. Lythgoe, US Army aviation officer and instructor at the US Army Command and General Staff College, supports Benson's findings and argues that "assuming high tactical risk is not a socially accepted norm because officers have grown up with risk aversion."¹²⁷ In addition, Lythgoe argues that there are "three main reasons Army commanders tend to avoid risk: loss aversion, institutional risk norms, and senior leaders' lack of comfort with risk."¹²⁸ The steady increase in personal protection gear and the amount of extra armor added to vehicles are examples of this. The commander of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command, General Stephen Townsend, observed officers in Afghanistan and Iraq and supports Lythgoe's point.¹²⁹ These officers "had to have permission from a brigadier general and

a stack of documents for routine missions.”¹³⁰ Another officer concerned with the US military’s risk willingness is US Army officer William Bell. Bell claims that zero defect mentality, career considerations, and avoiding command billets to reduce the chance of being held responsible if something happens, all contribute to an officer corps who actively avoids risk. These fears also jeopardize readiness, through commanders avoiding challenging exercises or training arenas such as nighttime operations or live fires. Such activities are either cancelled, or if carried through, they are severely regulated. Doing so reduces the output, leaving no room for subordinates to exercise command outside the script.¹³¹ These four high-ranking officers all paint a picture of a trend in the US military to avoid risk. They claim it is a natural development based on the conflicts today’s officers grew up with and the social norms of 21st century. However, the requirements for officers in combat demand officers to take risk at critical phases of a battle for them to succeed, especially under a leadership philosophy of mission command. To remedy this, the US military must instill a mindset of mission-type orders and the required tenets for it to succeed.

Conclusion

Over two centuries after the Prussian loss at Jena in 1806, mission-type orders have again emerged as a possible competitive advantage for the US military as an answer to the strategic competition with China and Russia. Mission-type orders is a phenomenon practiced among Western armies and to some extent by the Soviet Union. As Lieutenant General Lori E. Reynolds, Deputy Commandant for Information in the USMC, stated when visiting Marine Corps University in 2019, she doubted that the Chinese army was discussing mission-type orders on a late afternoon on an average weekday.¹³² For America to utilize this cognitive advantage, the US military must close the gap between theory and practice and institutionalize mission-type

orders. A deliberate approach is required to succeed with this institutionalization. First, the US military must cultivate a mindset of mission-type orders encompassing both the work and life of especially the officers. This should be done through a conscious development of everyday life of an officer, PME, and training and exercises. Together with doctrine, these areas will help establish a theoretical foundation for mission-type orders in the US military. Secondly, the US military must learn from successful application of mission-type orders. These examples demonstrate what tenets succeeding with mission-type orders requires and will help create common understanding for the desired end-state. Additionally, the historic examples demonstrate the advantage mission-type orders provide on the battlefield and how quickly it can turn difficult situations around. Thirdly, the US military needs to identify how to better adjust for mission-type orders in future conflicts. One must address and change the obstacles and mechanisms identified as hindering mission-type orders, facilitating a military organization set up for successful utilization and exploitation of mission-type orders. Special emphasis should be put on nuances regarding subordinate initiative in the US military's definitions of mission-type orders, how to reward and promote people practicing mission-type orders, and how to counter risk aversion. Succeeding with institutionalizing mission-type orders will give America a competitive advantage towards its peer competitors at the future battlefield, giving the US military a tool that has proven its utility and ability to help solve new problems for centuries.

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