

MISSION COMMAND PHILOSOPHY WITHIN THE BRITISH AND AMERICAN
ARMIES; DIFFERENCES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR INTEROPERABILITY.

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fulfillment of the requirements for the
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Art of War Scholars

by

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ABSTRACT

MISSION COMMAND PHILOSOPHY WITHIN THE BRITISH AND AMERICAN ARMIES: DIFFERENCES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR INTEROPERABILITY, by Major David T.M. Welford, 194 pages.

This thesis examines differences between the command philosophies of the British and American armies in the light of the Anglo-American interoperability agenda, identifying points of difference between the philosophies and implications for interoperability.

Both British and American armies adopted the German command philosophy of *Auftragstaktik* in establishing their own philosophies of mission command. Using the principles of *Auftragstaktik* as a lens, a doctrinal comparison of the two armies identifies several differences between the command philosophies, notably in their understanding of intent, approach to decision-making, and attitude to delegation. The result is that British subordinates have more freedom of action than their American counterparts.

Through an examination of the military culture of the British and American armies, it is determined that the difference in command philosophy was driven by cultural differences; each command philosophy is a reflection and representation of its army's national military culture, and it is not possible to simply change doctrine without an concomitant cultural change.

While it is possible to mitigate tensions in interoperability through an awareness of the other's differences, and by a degree of compromise, full interoperability could not be achieved without considerably greater alignment of both doctrine and culture.

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ACRONYMS

ACDS(DCD)	Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff (Development, Concepts and Doctrine)
ACSC	Advanced Command and Staff Course
ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
ADRP	Army Doctrine Reference Publication
CGSC	Command and General Staff College
CGSOC	Command and General Staff Officers' Course
CWC	Captains' Warfare Course
DCDC	Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre.
DLW	Directorate Land Warfare
HCSC	Higher Command and Staff Course
HQDA	Headquarters Department of the Army
ICSC(L)	Intermediate Command and Staff Course (Land)
JOTAC	Junior Officers' Tactical Awareness Course
SAMS	School of Advanced Military Studies

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Context

The special relationship, beloved of British Prime Ministers, possibly slightly less beloved of American Presidents, has at least found concrete expression in the actions of the two nations' militaries. Defense policy has been noted as one of the areas in which the idea of a special relationship is actually meaningful;¹ British and American forces have been deployed together in Afghanistan for over fifteen years, and can look back on a century where each nation's military has deployed independently of the other on only a handful of occasions.² The level of cooperation between the two militaries, of engagement between military leaderships,³ and the high profile billets filled by exchange officers in each country,⁴ are testament to the strength of a relationship built not just on the NATO alliance, but on deeper and older cultural bonds. Despite the undoubted

¹ Joseph Leggold. "British-American Relations after the Cold War: the end of the Special Relationship?" *Brassey's Defense Yearbook* (1996). The three elements Leggold notes as forming the special relationship are cooperation in the military / intelligence spheres; the idea of the UK as a diplomatic confidant / sounding board; and a shared outlook on several fundamental questions.

² The campaigns in Suez, Malaya, Oman, Northern Island, and the Falklands are the only British operations to have taken place without American involvement; it is noticeable, though perhaps coincidental, that most have a slightly imperial flavor.

³ The U.S. is the only nation with whom the senior leadership of the British Army hold bilateral annual meetings.

⁴ The Deputy Command of 3 (UK) Division is now established as a U.S. Brigadier-General. He is the only U.S. officer to have ever exercised OPCON over British troops.

strength of the relationship between the two militaries, and particularly the two armies, the intended direction of travel for military cooperation is still staggering in its ambition. The note on bilateral cooperation signed by the British Chief of the General Staff and the United States' Chief of Staff states:

Our priority... remains 'to enable a UK division to operate effectively within a U.S. corps and a UK brigade to operate effectively within a U.S. division, and to enable a U.S. brigade combat team to operate effectively within a UK division and a U.S. division to work effectively within the UK-framework NATO Allied Rapid Reaction Corps'; and additionally, to enable battalion battle groups to operate effectively within the brigades of the two Armies.⁵

The proposal, or if preferred the desired end-state of the two armies, is an almost seamless interoperability, such that a British unit is as effective a subordinate to a U.S. formation as its American counterpart.⁶ The most obvious challenges this presents are technical: how to ensure that British and American forces can communicate effectively, and share information digitally; and how to manage the expeditionary sustainment of a combined force. This is reflected in the learning demands of the U.S. Army's Warfighting Challenge #14, "Ensure Interoperability and Operate in a Joint, International

⁵ Gen Sir Nicholas Carter and Gen Mark A. Milley, "A Strategic Vision for Future Bilateral Cooperation between the Armies of the United States of America and the United Kingdom: Addendum," GS 02/01/03 (5 June 2016). For the sake of clarity, a battle group is a combined arms organization commanded by a Lt Col. It is typically based around an infantry or armored battalion, with the addition of sub-units from combat support arms: artillery, engineers, etc. Within the British army all battalions are task organized into battle groups when they deploy on operations.

⁶ It should be noted that the Strategic Vision gives equal weight to the inverse relationship, a U.S. unit acting as the subordinate of a UK formation; however, history and practicality would suggest that, at almost any echelon, the U.S. would likely be the senior partner.

and Multinational Environment.”⁷ Work within the British Army has taken a similar approach. Interoperability, which is defined by the British as “the ability for Allies to act together coherently, effectively and efficiently to achieve tactical, operational and strategic objectives,” has been broken down into three parts: human interoperability (the development of mutual trust and understanding); procedural interoperability (the alignment of policy, caveats and ROE); and technical interoperability (communications, data sharing and the development of a common operating picture).⁸ The vast weight of effort has been placed on the latter, with no detailed consideration of how to develop human interoperability beyond the established network of liaison and exchange positions.

This is not necessarily borne of neglect, but is perhaps based on a deep-seated belief in the fundamental compatibility and conceptual understanding between the two nations’ militaries. A shared language, including what appears to be a shared technical vocabulary,⁹ and a long history of cooperation may have blinded both armies to what may be key differences in understanding and approach. To challenge this, this thesis will consider a fundamental question: what differences are there in the command philosophies of both armies, and what are the implications of these differences for combined

⁷ “Army Warfighting Challenges,” Army Capabilities Integration Center, 2017, accessed 17 May 2017, <http://www.arcic.army.mil/Initiatives/ArmyWarfightingChallenges>. The specific learning demands stated are, “How to efficiently share information in a JIM environment?” and, “How to integrate sustainment operations in a JIM environment?”

⁸ Col Dickie Taylor (Assistant Head Interoperability), “US-UK Interoperability,” (Presentation, British Army Staff Conference, Washington, DC: 10 October 2016).

⁹ It will become apparent later in the thesis that the same terms, used in apparently the same ways, can convey subtly different meanings. Technical vocabulary is not shared to the extent that one may wish.

operations? Command philosophies are central to both the planning and execution of operations, and so will have a direct impact on the manner in which each nation would fight when deployed together. They are also based on a shared understanding, and a setting of expectation, between the superior and the subordinate in any command relationship. Given the intent that a British or American unit should be able to deploy within the formation of the other country, any fractures in the understanding between superior and subordinate have the potential to degrade interoperability.

Philosophies of Command

Both British and American armies espouse a command philosophy of mission command. The adoption of mission command by the British and American armies, and the doctrinal differences in their understanding of the concept will be discussed later in the thesis, but a brief discussion is required now in order to frame what is meant by mission command, and to explain why the adoption of the same command philosophy may have led to a divergence in practice.

In the 1980s both the British and American armies adopted a mission command philosophy.¹⁰ Inspired, consciously and admittedly, by the German command philosophy of *Auftragstaktik*, in the adoption of mission command both armies sought to gain a qualitative edge in the face of a perceived Soviet quantitative superiority in Europe, and to make practical the new operational concepts being formulated by both militaries.

¹⁰ Neither army used the term mission command at the time. “Mission command” was not adopted as a doctrinal term by the British until 1995, and by the Americans until 2003. However the style of command which was stressed within both British and American doctrinal publications in the 1980s contained recognizable elements of what would now be considered a mission command philosophy.

Defined in U.S. doctrine as “the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander’s intent,”¹¹ and within British doctrine as “a style of command that seeks to convey understanding to subordinates about intentions of the higher commander and their place within his plan, enabling them to carry out missions with maximum freedom of action and appropriate resources,”¹² it is immediately possible to identify common threads. A non-nation specific philosophy of mission command can be understood as one in which a commander establishes an intent as to what his subordinates must achieve, but then enables them freedom of action in the manner of their achieving it. As will be seen it is tied in to fundamental beliefs as to the difficulty of a commander exercising effective control over his subordinates, the importance of delegating authority in order to achieve timeliness in action and take advantage of opportunities, and creates a constant tension between the exercise of initiative on the part of the subordinate and the requirement to remain within the intent established by the commander. When “mission command” is used in this thesis without reference to a specific nation’s military, it should be understood in its generic definition: a system of delegated command, where freedom of action is bounded by an established intent.

¹¹ Headquarters Department of the Army (HQDA), Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-0, *Mission Command* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, March 2014), 1-1.

¹² Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff (Development, Concepts and Doctrine) (ACDS [DCD]), Joint Doctrine Publication (JDP) 0-01.1, *United Kingdom Supplement to the NATO Terminology Database* (Shrivenham, UK: Ministry of Defence, September 2011), M-3.

The fact that both armies adopted their philosophies of mission command from the same source, and appear to understand it in broadly similar ways, may seem to suggest that the differences in their command philosophies would be negligible, and therefore so would the implications for interoperability: the current focus on technical, rather than conceptual problems would be justified.

Potential for conceptual divergence

A key concept which will underpin this thesis is the potential for divergence in the adoption of mission command. In *Transforming Command: The Pursuit of Mission Command in the U.S., British and Israeli Armies*,¹³ a comprehensive account of the adoption of mission command philosophies across three armies, Eitan Shamir proposed a conceptual model for the adoption of a command philosophy. This model, shown in Figure 1, emphasizes the difficulty of adopting a foreign command philosophy, describing how that philosophy changes as part of the process of being adopted and then practiced.

¹³ Eitan Shamir, *Transforming Command: The Pursuit of Mission Command in the U.S., British and Israeli Armies* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011).

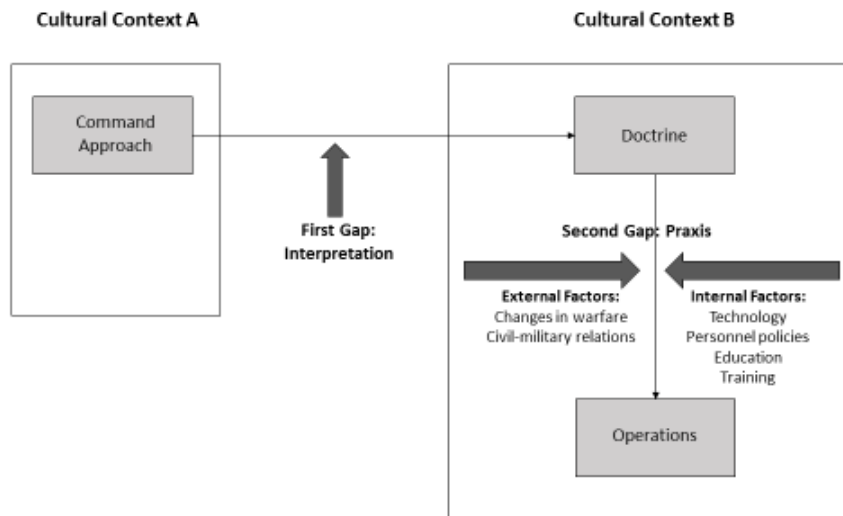


Figure 1. From Adoption to Adaptation and Praxis: The Increasing Gap

Source: Eitan Shamir, *Transforming Command: The Pursuit of Mission Command in the U.S, British and Israeli Armies* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 6.

Shamir proposes that from the adoption of a command philosophy to its execution in practice two different adaptations take place, the first leading to what he terms an interpretation gap, the second to what is termed a praxis gap. The command approach adopted, in this case mission command, is understood to be the product of particular cultural, strategic and organizational circumstances. In interpreting the command approach the adopting army either seek to change it to suit their own specific circumstances, or they do not change it and instead set the conditions for a misalignment between an espoused command model, and the one which is actually practicable. The second gap, the praxis gap, develops as a result of the adopted command philosophy interacting with the internal and external factors (i.e. the specific cultural and strategic

context) that the adopting army is subject to. This results in the execution of a distinct command philosophy on operations. In Shamir's interpretation it follows that the less a command philosophy is tailored to meet the peculiar strategic, cultural or organizational context of the adopting army in the first interpretive stage, the greater the potential praxis gap when the command philosophy is actually used. It also follows that if two separate armies adopt the same command philosophy that, their strategic, cultural and organizational contexts being different, they will eventually exercise two distinct variations of the original command philosophy, though depending on their similarity in circumstances, the distinctions may be subtle.

This thesis does not accept Shamir's model without reservation. One weakness in the model is that it does not take account of the extent to which the writing and practice of doctrine is a recursive process; so the latter, and the identification of a "praxis gap," informs new writing and new iterations of doctrine which will then begin to close the gap between doctrine and practice. Shamir's model is however useful for identifying the potential for conceptual divergence, and the potential for a dissonance between the theory and practice of a command philosophy

Limitations / Delimitations of the study

This thesis will only consider the execution of command within the British and American armies. It is acknowledged that there may be requirements for either the British or American armies to operate alongside one of the sister services of the other nations, but the implications of varying command philosophies across services will not be considered here. This is both in the interests of making the study manageable, and because the "interoperability agenda" is aimed squarely at inter-army cooperation.

Similarly, the impact that inter-agency partners or NGOs would have on the successful execution of mission command has not been considered.

While historical examples are used to demonstrate the development of the original philosophy of *Auftragstaktik*, no historical examples or case studies are used to demonstrate the manner in which mission command is exercised in either the British or American armies. The reasons for this are two-fold. Firstly, it is the intent of this thesis to determine the current understanding of mission command in the two armies; the state of the art, in its original sense. Given the unclassified nature of this thesis, the majority of the most recent examples of the exercise of mission command would not be able to be used.¹⁴ While a study could have been made from, for example, the 2003 invasion of Iraq,¹⁵ the lessons drawn from even a 14 year old study could have led to incorrect conclusions as to the exercise and implications of mission command today. Secondly, it would be difficult to determine from any case study—unless a particularly large number were studied—whether mission command as represented by that case study is in fact representative of mission command within the army as a whole. The British performance on Op Granby (the 1991 invasion of Iraq) is often cited as demonstrative of the British army's thorough embrace of mission command and the new operational doctrine that it supported. However the evidence for this is largely based on the performance and

¹⁴ Nathan K. Finney and Jonathan P. Klug, eds, *Mission Command in the 21st Century: Empowering to Win in a Complex World* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Army Press, 2016) contain a number of excellent (primarily American) case studies of mission command; however it is unclear how representative these are of the general exercise of mission command, as opposed to of the ideal.

¹⁵ Shamir, 145-147 uses the invasion of Iraq for one of his points of comparison between the American and British armies.

command style of Rupert Smith, the commander of the British armored division that deployed to Iraq. So, while he could be representative of an accepted and widely practiced command philosophy in the army, he could simply be an extraordinary outlier; extrapolating general lessons from individual examples is fraught with danger.

This thesis is concerned with the philosophy of mission command and so is not primarily concerned with mission command as a warfighting function: “the related tasks and systems that develop and integrate those activities enabling the commander to balance the art of command and the science of control in order to integrate the other warfighting functions.”¹⁶ Any consideration of the mission command war fighting function will be limited to those aspects which influence the exercise of a mission command philosophy.

While the existence of sub-cultures within both the British and American armies, and the potential for their interpreting mission command in different ways is acknowledged, these sub-cultures and the implications of their existence will not be studied in detail. When considering the extent to which British and American military culture supports or drives their philosophy of mission command, a single culture will be posited as representative of each army. This will itself be a type of sub-culture, as particular focus will be placed on the culture of commissioned officers.

This thesis will not seek to defend the utility of mission command for either current or future operations; the implications of the philosophy of command practiced by

¹⁶ HQDA, ADRP 6-0, 1-3.

the army, as it relates to performance in an operational environment, will occasionally be touched upon.

Thesis structure

In chapter 2 the development of *Auftragstaktik*, the German command philosophy that was then adopted by the British and American armies will be considered. This will achieve two things. First, it will enable an understanding of the principles and aspects of what was the paradigmatic philosophy of mission command; this will then provide a lens through which to examine British and American philosophes of mission command and identify differences between them. Second, it will enable some understanding of the cultural drivers and enablers of the paradigmatic philosophy. In chapter 3 the doctrine of mission command in each army will be examined in detail. Each doctrine will be compared to the paradigmatic doctrine identified in chapter 2, identifying the “interpretation gap” that exists in each army. This will help enable a comparison in chapter 3 between the British and American doctrines, identifying points of difference and possible sources of tension. In chapter 4 the impact of culture on mission command will be considered. Both British and American military cultures will be examined for the extent to which they support their national doctrine of mission command—enabling a consideration of whether a “praxis gap” is likely to exist—and also the extent to which they have driven their national philosophies of mission command. If successful interpretation is predicated upon bending a command philosophy to suit the particular cultural, organizational and strategic circumstances of an army, then it should lead to a national ethic of command; this will have its own implications on interoperability, dependent as it is on specific national characteristics. Chapter 5 will conclude by

summarizing the differences in command philosophies that have been identified, considering the implications these have for interoperability, and suggesting avenues of further study.

It is not the intent of this thesis to imply criticism of either army if it is established that their tendency towards mission command diverges from the original philosophy.

While clear about the advantages that *Auftragstaktik* offered the Prussian-German army during the period from the wars of unification up to World War II, this thesis is essentially agnostic about the benefits of mission command in the contemporary operating environment. Regardless of this agnosticism, the potential impact that divergent command philosophies may have on interoperability is evident; such divergence must be understood if it is not to negatively impact performance in combined operations.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AUFTRAGSTAKTIK

In this chapter the development of *Auftragstaktik* within the Prussian, later the German, army will be considered. Through charting this development some of the core principles of *Auftragstaktik* will become evident, as will some of the behaviors that supported them. *Auftragstaktik* in its fully evolved form will be considered the paradigm of mission command; its principles and requirements will be posited, and will be used as a point of comparison with the British and American philosophies of command in later chapters.

Napoleon and the Germs of *Auftragstaktik*

It is in one sense odd that *Auftragstaktik* should have developed in Prussia. What to some observers seemed the extreme delegation of authority and reliance on initiative inherent to the philosophy, seems at odds with the style of command embodied by Prussia's first great military hero, Frederick the Great.¹⁷ An army imbued with *Kadavergehorsam* (corpse-obedience), and controlled like so many puppets from a *Feldherrnhügel*, may have been the embodiment of an Enlightenment ideal,¹⁸ but stands in stark contrast to the type of delegated control and initiative practiced by later Prussian

¹⁷ J.F.C. Fuller, *A Military History of the Western World*, vol.3 (New York, NY: Frank and Wagnall, 1956), 134. Fuller considered Moltke the Elder to have “abdicated his command” during the Franco-Prussian war. “On 31 August and 1 September [1870] he never issued an order. . . He never foresaw the encirclement of the French which was due to their stupidity and the initiative of the Prussian army commanders. . . Moltke is not a general to copy but to study”.

¹⁸ Shamir, 29.

armies, and inherent to *Auftragstaktik*. It was the defeat of the Prussian Army, still according to the paradigm set by Frederick, by Napoleon at Jena-Auerstädt, that was the nursemaid of *Auftragstaktik*, and of the apparently unlikely transformation in Prussian command culture.

Paret argued that Napoleon's only innovations were the emphasis on armies living off the land as a means of sustainment, and the creation of the *corps d'armée*.¹⁹ But the latter innovation was of profound importance to the exercise of command within the French Army, and a direct contributor to the victory at Jena-Auerstädt. Napoleon appears to have realized that an army of the size the *levée en masse* was capable of producing could not be effectively controlled by one man. The creation of separate all-arms corps, capable of independent action, along with a willingness to cede tactical control of those corps to the commanders, was necessary for the revolutionary army to function effectively: the army was too big and too dispersed to be controlled by one man. This is not to suggest Napoleon was a mission-command general before the time—his idiosyncratic command style would defy emulation, and he was clearly willing to seek to control those forces in his immediate vicinity²⁰—but he appears to have realized that that necessarily meant not seeking to control those units that weren't, and designing them such that they could cope with this degree of independence. The most striking feature of Jena-Auerstädt was the lack of control that Napoleon sought to enforce on the majority of

¹⁹ Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 125.

²⁰ Martin Van Creveld, *Command in War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 95. Van Creveld describes Napoleon ordering about Regiments, while leaving some whole Corps completely ignored.

his troops, and the fact that he was entirely unaware of the main action of the day,

Davoût's victory at Auerstädt. In Van Creveld's laconic estimation:

Thus Napoleon at Jena had known nothing about the main action that took place on that day; had forgotten all about two of his corps; did not issue orders to a third, and possibly to a fourth; was taken by surprise by the actions of a fifth; and, to cap it all, had one of his principle subordinates display the kind of disobedience that would have brought a lesser mortal before a firing squad. Despite all these faults in command, Napoleon won what was probably the greatest single triumph in his career.²¹

The defeat at Jena-Auerstädt gave impetus to the nascent reformist tendency already present within the Prussian military and set the conditions for the significant structural and doctrinal changes that would take place in Prussia, eventually leading to the adoption of *Auftragstaktik*. Two strands of development are relevant.

Firstly, there was an almost immediate emphasis on the necessity for low level initiative, the 1812 Drill Regulations stating: "The soldier is in most cases on his own, no mechanistic formation guides his movement. An outstanding marksmanship, physical agility, judgement, ruse, boldness at the right place, and self-confidence have to be his qualities." The use of skirmishers had been a significant factor in the success of Napoleon's *Grande Armée*, the zeal of Napoleon's soldiery enabling a freedom of action denied to his opponents²²; within six years of Jena that lesson had been incorporated into the Prussian Army. Combined with the tendency to independent action (verging on insubordination) of the Junker aristocracy that would continue to make up a

²¹ Ibid., 96

²² Geoffrey Parker, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 197.

disproportionate number of the Prussian officer class,²³ this doctrinal emphasis on the importance of initiative contributed to an extreme tendency towards freedom of action within the Prussian Army.²⁴

Secondly, the creation of the General Staff provided both a corps d'elite within the Army, establishing a degree of understanding and trust between commanders and subordinates necessary for the execution of *Auftragstaktik*, and also magnified the influence of the *Kriegsakademie*. Officers taught by Scharnhorst and Gneissau moved to positions of prominence and influence within the Prussian Army and began to institutionalize a view of war that accepted the friction²⁵ and chance inherent within it, and pointed to its fundamental uncontrollability.

Moltke the Elder

The most influential figure in the development, certainly in the institutionalizing of *Auftragstaktik*, Moltke appears to have been convinced of the benefits of decentralized

²³ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 40. Aristocrats made up two thirds of the Prussian officer corps in 1860; this number declined steadily until they made up one third on the eve of the First World War.

²⁴ Robert Citino, *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2005), 306–12. Numerous examples of, frankly, disobedience can be observed in the account of Prussian and German operations. Citino argues that they are so numerous, that this disobedience much be considered an almost essential part of *Auftragstaktik*.

²⁵ This has been traditionally seen as the direct influence of Clausewitz. However the extent to which Clausewitz (as opposed to Scharnhorst and Gneissau) operated direct influence over the Prussian officer corps has been debated. It would be reasonable to consider Clausewitz's views as reflective of a wider view of war within the German officer corps (or at least within the teaching staff of the *Kriegsakademie*).

command and the exercise of initiative. An admirer of Clausewitz he espoused a view of war that was suspicious of the efficacy of centralized control,²⁶ and emphasized in his writings the importance of the exercise of initiative: “The advantage of the situation will never be fully utilized if subordinate commanders wait for orders.”²⁷ The instincts that he appeared to hold towards initiative and a decentralized command model were reinforced by four major developments of the mid-19th century: three technical (the railway, the telegraph, and the breech-loading rifle); and one structural (armies were getting exponentially larger). The size of the Prussian army and its deployment by railway ensured that too large an Army would be deployed over too great an area for detailed control by one man to be remotely possible; the breech-loading rifle meant that men had to fight in an increasingly scattered manner, sounding the final death toll for Frederician close order formations;²⁸ and the telegraph system was able to achieve relatively fast communication of short messages from a rear headquarters to the front, but was not extensive enough to enable units at the front to report regularly back to headquarters once they became mobile. Moltke’s system of short orders, specifying an intent, and

²⁶ Daniel J. Hughes, ed. and trans., *Moltke on the Art of War: Selected Writings* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1993), 92: “Victory or defeat in battle changes the situation to such a degree that no human acumen is able to see beyond the first battle. Therefore no plan of operation extends with any certainty beyond the first contact with the main hostile force.” The logical conclusion of this famous formulation (more commonly paraphrased as, “No plan survives contact with the enemy”) is to emphasize delegation of decision-making to subordinate commanders.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 131.

²⁸ Van Creveld, 107: “For the first time in history troops could no longer fight standing up, in full view of each other and of their own commanders. Entire armies turned into clouds of uncontrollable skirmishers, especially when on the attack.”

extraordinary tolerance of (sometimes reckless) initiative by subordinates, does seem an almost natural outcome of his own tendencies and a sensible appreciation of the advantages and limitations of technology.²⁹

In examining the Königgrätz campaign of 1866,³⁰ Van Creveld makes a number of observations pertinent to a consideration of the development of *Auftragstaktik*: three will be drawn out. The first is that the Prussians deployed when the intentions of the Austrians were still unknown; this was mitigated by deploying in a formation that allowed them sufficient flexibility to respond to various courses of action, and ensuring that each of the three army groups were sufficiently resourced to be able to fight independently as required. The second is that having planned the deployment of the forces in the most minute detail, the Army commanders were given (and felt) a remarkable degree of freedom in how they then acted. Within the first week of the campaign there were three independent moves by the armies: the first of which, by Blumenthal, Moltke had to agree with after the event; the second of which, by Frederick Charles, Moltke was forced to prevent as threatening to make the Prussian position untenable; and the third, again by Frederick Charles, in direct disregard of one of Moltke's directives. It is not that Moltke approved of these actions—in his post mortem of the campaign he stated that “our worst error consisted in the inability of senior

²⁹ Van Creveld, 131. Reports tended to take at least 24 hrs. to reach Berlin by telegraph. One urgent telegraph sent by Moltke to Frederick Charles, the 1st Army commander, took three days to reach him.

³⁰ The decisive battle of the Austro-Prussian war, fought on 3 July 1866, the Prussians won by managing to achieve a decisive concentration of force through the approach of forces on multiple axes.

headquarters to make its influence felt on its subordinates”³¹ —but that the Army commanders felt able to make them, and Moltke was content not to discipline them, but simply to correct them when necessary. The third is that the success of the campaign of the 2nd Army in Moravia—which involved a near unbroken string of victories—was due entirely to the activities of the individual corps, the Army Headquarters neither interfering nor directing operations: such were the state of Frederick Wilhelm’s communications with his subordinates that he seemed to have a very poor grasp of what was going on. “[He] took part, to the extent that he was informed at all, merely as a helpless spectator.”³²

What can be drawn from these three examples are: an institutional readiness to act on incomplete information; a recognition of the value of robust organizational structures in mitigating against uncertainty; a cultural willingness—probably class-based—to exercise extreme initiative; and the existence of successful examples of decentralized command. As the principles of *Auftragstaktik* began to be codified, they were at least able to benefit from fertile cultural soil, this cultural synergy lending towards their successful institutionalization. While Moltke with his emphasis on the intent, willingness to accept loss of control, and tolerance of extraordinary initiative³³, was to an extent making a

³¹ Van Creveld, 140.

³² Ibid., 142.

³³ Michael D. Krause and R. Cody Phillips, eds., *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art* (Washington DC: Centre for Military History United States Army, 2005), 141: Though while Moltke could be remarkably forgiving on occasion, in 1870 Steinmetz was dismissed for displaying exactly the same independence as that exhibited by Moltke’s Army Commanders in 1866.

virtue of a necessity—it was impossible to fight the wars he did, in the way he did, and possibly exercise detailed control—he at least had the imagination to see that that was the case.

Codification in doctrine

In the years between the Franco-Prussian War and World War One, the principles of *Auftragstaktik* began to be codified in doctrine; this period also saw the first use of the term *Auftragstaktik*, initially as a term of abuse³⁴. Principles of delegated command and initiative, which had been applied at the operational level—and by default at the higher tactical level—were also now extended to the lower tactical level. The 1888 Drill

Regulations describe how:

[The battalion commander] executes the battle through missions he assigns to his companies. Only on the occasion of obvious misunderstandings or mistakes that could draw the battle in an unintended direction, the direct override in the platoons of single companies is due... His actions have to be aimed at retaining the common scheme of the companies. The companies for their part aim upon accomplishment of their missions also to the common scheme.³⁵

³⁴ Werner Widder, “Auftragstaktik and Innere Führung: Trademarks of German Leadership,” *Military Review* 82, no. 5 (September 2002), 5: The term was used by proponents of *Normaltaktik* (standardized tactics) who emphasized the importance of synchronization of movement and firepower at a low tactical level; proponents of *Auftragstaktik* were those who emphasized the need for dispersion and therefore independent action. That even Germany was subject to tactical debate as to the sense of decentralizing command at a low tactical level, may be suggestive of how difficult a concept loss of control can be in the military.

³⁵ Preußisches Kriegministerium, *Exerzir-Reglement für die Infanterie* (signed 1888) (Berlin, Germany: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1889), 129-130. The translation from the German in this example, and further examples of German doctrine in this chapter, accords with that within Martin Sonnenberger, *Initiative Within the Philosophy of “Auftragstaktik”: Determining Factors of the Understanding of Initiative in the German Army, 1806-1955* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2013).

Here then is a doctrinal assertion of delegated command within a common intent, with control only exerted *in extremis*. The 1906 regulations then extolled a Junker like independence of decision-making as the duty of every officer:

In cases in which the subordinate has to say to himself that the originator of an order lacks the ability properly to direct execution, or where the order has been rendered obsolete by events, it becomes an obligation of the subordinate not to obey or to alter the execution of orders received... All leaders have to constantly stay aware and inculcate in their subordinates the knowledge that **forbearance and dereliction weigh more heavily than mistakes in the selection of an action** [emphasis in the original].³⁶

While it was emphasized in the 1906 regulations that subordinates were still required to act within their commander's intent, and that they should inform the commander as to their decision to embark on an independent action, this is still remarkable: in 100 years the Prussian-German army had gone from corpse-obedience to the stated requirement for junior officers to assure themselves that the orders they received made sense, and to disobey them if they didn't. In terms of U.S. doctrine, purpose was clearly given primacy over task.

The World Wars

It would be overly reductive to judge performance of the German Army in the First and Second World Wars purely through the lens of *Auftragstaktik*. What can be stated is that while *Auftragstaktik* was not a panacea, and indeed may have contributed to

³⁶ Preußisches Kriegministerium, *D.V.E. Nr. 130 Exerzier-Reglement für die Infanterie*, including changes until August 1906 (Berlin, Germany: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1906), 90-91.

a comparative lack of interest in the strategic level of war,³⁷ it did open up tactical possibilities to the German Army that they were able to exploit.

In World War One, with both the techniques of the Elastic Defense and *Stoßtruppen* (Stormtrooper) tactics, the Germans built on a culture and commitment to *Auftragstaktik* to overcome—albeit briefly—the stalemate of the Western Front. The doctrine surrounding both concepts emphasized the reliance that was placed by them on the demonstration of initiative by low-level leaders, and the benefits that offered in the concomitant abilities to demonstrate flexibility and seize opportunities.³⁸ The decision by the German Army to seek to overcome tactical stalemate through doctrinal innovation, as opposed to the Allied Armies who generally sought to achieve an asymmetric advantage through technological innovation, was certainly driven to an extent by the Germans lack of a materiel advantage, but it was also able to build on the foundations of a cultural commitment to *Auftragstaktik*.

³⁷ Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett, *A War to Be Won: Fighting the Second World War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 19. Luddendorf's comment on the goal of his March 1918 offensive, "We will punch a hole in their lines and see what turns up", demonstrates the triumph of tactical considerations over any kind of strategic thought, but is also a kind of testament to a belief in the fundamental uncontrollability or unknowability of war that was reinforced by *Auftragstaktik*.

³⁸ Oberste Heeresleitung, "Die Abwehr im Stellungskriege," in *Urkunden der Obersten Heeresleitung über ihre Tätigkeit 1916/1918*, ed. Erich Luddendorf (Berlin: E.S. Mittler und Sohn, 1921), 607: "The defender is not bound to one place; instead he is justified to fight in a mobile manner in the battle zone, which means to attack or withdraw whatever is required. . . For tactical action best suiting the concept of battle a certain level of leeway has to remain with the leader—also the mid-level leader. . . The conduct of the battle according to this concept requires a great deal of initiative"; Ibid., 642: "Everything depends on the quick and independent actions of all involved."

The concept of *Auftragstaktik* did not develop to any great extent in the inter-war period. However *Truppenführeng*, the most significant German publication of the interwar years, while re-affirming the basic principles of *Auftragstaktik* in a manner that was recognizable from the 1906 Drill Regulations, did so in the most comprehensive way hitherto achieved. This was the paradigm of mission command in its most complete, and effectively final form:

The **mission** [emphasis in the original] designates the objective to achieve. The subordinate may not lose sight of it. A mission that contains multiple tasks easily distracts from the essential.

Uncertainty about the **situation** [emphasis in the original] is the general rule. Seldom can a detailed insight into the enemy disposition be won...

Based upon mission and situation the decision is developed...

In the vicissitudes of war inflexible adherence to a decision can be a mistake. It is the art of command to identify in time, when and under which circumstances a new decision is required.

The leader has to allow for freedom of action of his subordinates as long as this does not endanger his intent.”³⁹

Here one sees an emphasis on the mission, which must be short and nested within an understood intent; a belief in the uncertain nature of war, and requirement to act while uncertain; a requirement for freedom of action within a given intent; and the suggestion of circumstances whereupon acting against orders is required. While the German Army looked carefully at the reasons for their failure in World War One,⁴⁰ they clearly did not

³⁹ German Truppenamt, H. Dv. 300/1, *Truppenführeng* (Berlin, Germany: E.G. Mittler & Sohn, 1933), 10-11.

⁴⁰ James S. Corum, *The Roots of Blitzkrieg. Hans von Seeckt and German Military Reform* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 37. After being in post as chief of the *Truppenamt* for only one week, von Seeckt ordered a comprehensive study “to put the experience of the war in a broad light and collect this experience while

believe that *Auftragstaktik* required reform. Instead the German Army sought to utilize the principles of *Auftragstaktik* within their evolving concept of combined arms warfare, leveraging the advantages offered both by mechanization and enhanced communications to enable operational maneuver: *Auftragstaktik* provided a foundation stone for *Blitzkrieg* (Lightning War). It is possible to see the principles of *Auftragstaktik* emerging in the 19th century out of necessity: the growing scale of the battlefield rendering detailed control impossible. However, necessity had by the 1930s become understood as a virtue, and new communication technology,⁴¹ which could have been used to exert stricter control and subvert established command doctrine, was instead placed in the service of doctrine, enabling greater shared understanding and an increased tempo of operations. For this to be the case it was necessary for *Auftragstaktik*, and the benefits it realized, to have been completely ingrained culturally;⁴² when considering British and American philosophies of mission command later, the impact of an attitude to technology to the manner in which mission command is practiced will be examined further.

the impressions won on the battlefield are still fresh and the experienced officers are still in leading positions.” While elements of the German citizenry were content to comfort themselves with the “stab in the back” myth, what remained of the General Staff seemed determined not to fall into such easy traps.

⁴¹ Creveld, 191. By 1939 radio communication was possible between individual vehicles, meaning that formations were able to communicate effectively with tactical units.

⁴² As an exercise in counterfactual history, it is worth considering if the impact of radio communications on German doctrine would have been different when the *Auftragstaktik* vs *Normaltaktik* culture wars were still raging at the end of the c19th century.

As a particularly poignant example of the extent to which *Auftragstaktik* had entered the cultural make-up of the German Army one can consider the examples of disobedience on the Eastern Front. On 16 December 1941, his relationship with his generals having catastrophically broken down, Hitler issued a *Führerbefehl* (Führer's order) forbidding all retrograde movement, and threatening any disobedience with immediate court martial; this has tended to be seen as the death of *Auftragstaktik* above a tactical level within the Wehrmacht.⁴³ Sonnenberger details five occasions where generals still chose to exercise initiative and order withdrawals when necessary,⁴⁴ on each occasion knowing that they would pay for their decision either with their job or their life. It is one thing to disobey an order when one believe that a successful outcome will legitimize the decision,⁴⁵ it is quite another when one knows regardless of outcome one will be punished.

Conclusion

Auftragstaktik can be seen as a command philosophy which evolved gradually in response to particular historical and societal circumstances. That is not to suggest that

⁴³ Shamir, 51.

⁴⁴ Martin Sonnenberger, *Initiative within the Philosophy of "Auftragstaktik": Determining Factors of the Understanding of Initiative in the German Army, 1806-1955* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2013), 52-54. Clearly not all officers disobeyed the *Führerbefehl*, but the fact that a number did is still instructive of the inherent tendencies of the Wehrmacht officers.

⁴⁵ Sonnenberger, 51. Both Guderian and Rommel disobeyed direct orders to discontinue their advance during the German invasion of France; most egregiously Guderian even used a relay so as to prevent German signal intelligence from realizing that he has disobeyed an order.

there was a necessary determinism to its development. Other armies were faced with the same fundamental problem of how to fight mass armies, spread over large distances, with inadequate communications; only the Prussians chose to rely to the same extent on delegated authority. In doing so, Prussian and German commanders showed a willingness to cede control and encourage their subordinates' exercise of initiative. A number of principles, based on what has been seen of the evolution of *Auftragstaktik*, will be posited as representative of *Auftragstaktik*, and therefore paradigmatic of mission command.

1. War is chaotic and confusing; understanding of the battlefield is invariably incomplete.
2. Commanders are not able to exercise detailed control effectively; attempts to do so will fail.
3. Varying competence notwithstanding, the commander on the ground is the person best placed to judge the tactical situation, not his superior.
4. Subordinates should be given orders which are as short—containing as few tasks—as possible. These orders will contain an objective, which is framed in an overall intent.
5. Commanders must allow their subordinates freedom of action, providing they are acting within the commander's intent.
6. If the situation has changed such that an order no longer makes sense, or is inappropriate, then a subordinate should disobey that order; he should inform his superior that he has done so.

These principles will be used in chapter 3 as a lens through which to examine the British and American philosophies of mission command, and establish the extent of their divergence from the original paradigm.

Based on his examination of the development of mission command, specifically the Prusso-German experience, Eitan Shamir also developed a list of eight cultural requirements for mission command to be exercised effectively.

1. Understanding of and adherence to higher intent and the potential tension with the local mission.

2. Mutual trust based on professional competence (and not necessarily relationship or acquaintance).

3. Excellent communication based on shared understanding of doctrine.

4. High value on learning as expressed and emphasized in training and education.

5. Tolerance for well-intended mistakes.

6. Propensity for action and initiative.

7. Responsibility linked to authority.

8. Belief in the ability of individuals to make sound judgement calls.⁴⁶

Some of these principles will be used as a point of comparison in chapter 3—bearing as they do on doctrine as well as culture—but they will come to the fore more in chapter 4 when the cultural basis of mission command in the British and American armies is considered.

⁴⁶ Shamir, 26-27.

CHAPTER 3

MISSION COMMAND PHILOSOPHY WITHIN CURRENT DOCTRINE

Introduction

This chapter will describe the doctrine surrounding mission command philosophy in both the British and American armies; where aspects of the doctrinal framework in each command philosophy sits can be seen to bear on our understanding of the philosophy—for example in the British idea of the manoeuvrist approach⁴⁷—then those linkages will also be briefly explored. The British and American philosophies will be described in turn, and while analysis will take place throughout, and some of the more egregious similarities and dissimilarities of the philosophies will be identified, the detailed comparison of the philosophies will take place at the end of the chapter. This comparison will include a comparison of both to the paradigm of a mission command philosophy that was proposed at the end of chapter two. While broadly similar and containing many of the same features, it will be seen that both American and British armies have developed their own ethic of mission command; levels of emphasis given to similar concepts and features leading to dissimilar interpretations. The points of difference which are identified will form the basis for understanding to what extent cultural differences between the two armies have led to divergent philosophies, and also for considering the implications any divergence has for interoperability.

⁴⁷ When referring to the British doctrine of the manoeuvrist approach, the British rather than the American spelling—“manoeuvrist” rather than “maneuverist”—will be used.

The British Philosophy of Mission Command

While mission command was introduced into doctrine as an Army initiative, it has subsequently come to be of equal centrality to joint as well as Army doctrine; both joint and Army capstone publications contain detailed discussions of mission command,⁴⁸ and how the command philosophy fits into and informs a wider doctrinal framework. Within British doctrine, joint doctrine is generally given primacy over Army, the latter deriving its authority from the former;⁴⁹ in the case of mission command, the *Mission Command* doctrine note published in 2015 asserted the primacy of mission command doctrine as described in JDP 0-001 over the doctrine within ADP *Land Operations*,⁵⁰ and previous studies of mission command have therefore taken joint doctrine as definitive.⁵¹ However, subsequent to the doctrine note a new version of ADP *Land Operations* has been published,⁵² and has developed a new definition of mission command subtly different to JDP 0-001. For the purposes of this thesis this new Army definition will be considered to be definitive. Notwithstanding the normal priority of joint doctrine, the Army definition

⁴⁸ The concept of capstone doctrine publications, which sit at the top of a hierarchy and from which all subsequent doctrine flows, is introduced in the *Army Doctrine Primer*. Joint Defence Publication (JDP) 0-01 *British Defence Doctrine*, and Army Defence Publication (ADP) *Land Operations* are the capstone publications for joint and Army doctrine respectively. Developments, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC), ADP *Army Doctrine Primer* (Shrivenham, Wiltshire: DCDC, May 2011), 3-4.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 3-2.

⁵⁰ Directorate Land Warfare (DLW), Doctrine Note 15/04, *Mission Command*, 3.

⁵¹ Oliver Burwell, “Is the Culture of the British Army Conducive to the Successful Execution of Mission Command?” (Master’s Thesis, U.S. Command and General Staff College, 2016).

⁵² DCDC, ADP *Land Operations* (Shrivenham, Wiltshire: DCDC, October 2016).

is newer, was made cognizant of the direction of the doctrine note, and will likely be reflected in subsequent editions of JDP 0-01.⁵³ While the Army definition of mission command will be treated as definitive, the joint definition will also be discussed briefly; the utility of this is to identify recent changes in doctrine, and tendencies for change that may then develop further in the future.

Mission Command in Army Doctrine

Mission command forms part of the fundamental trinity that sits at the heart of Army doctrine.⁵⁴ Along with the manoeuvrist approach, the doctrine for how the Army fights at the tactical level, it supports the concept of integrated action, the Army's contribution to the joint fight (Figure 2).

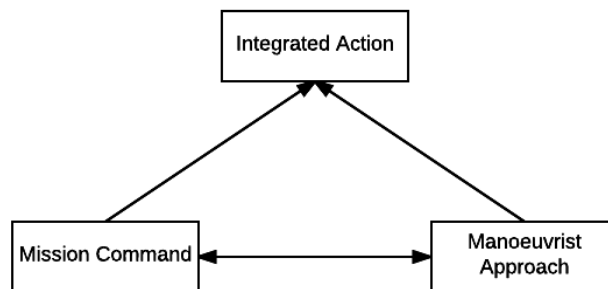


Figure 2. Mission Command within a Doctrinal Framework

Source: DCDC, *ADP Land Operations* (Shrivenham, Wiltshire: DCDC, October 2016), P2.

⁵³ The Army is the effective proponent for mission command doctrine. Given the desire shown by the Army in the *Mission Command* doctrine note to rationalize any differences between joint and Army doctrine, it would seem odd if they were to choose to insert new differences now.

⁵⁴ DCDC, *ADP Land Operations*.

The impact that the demands of integrated action and the manoeuvrist approach have on mission command will be explored later. First, the doctrine of mission command as described in *ADP Land Operations* will be examined in detail.

ADP Land Operations describes mission command very simply as “the British Army’s command philosophy.”⁵⁵ It goes on to say that “this is an approach which empowers subordinate commanders and promotes initiative as well as freedom and speed of action. Critically, it focuses on achievement of higher intent through mission-type orders; it empowers leaders at every level and is intended to generate agility and tempo.”⁵⁶ A guiding principle, five further principles, and five “practical, sequential actions” to enable mission command’s effective application are associated with it (Table 1).⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ibid., 6-4.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 6-5 – 6-7.

Table 1. An outline of the Army Doctrine of Mission Command

The Philosophy of Mission Command (<i>ADP Land Operations</i>)	
The Guiding Principle	The absolute responsibility to act to achieve the commander's intent
Further principles	Unity of effort
	Subordinates' freedom of action
	Trust
	Mutual understanding
	Timely and effective decision-making
Practical and sequential actions	Commanders ensure that their subordinates understand their intent, their own contributions and the context within which they are to act.
	Commanders exercise minimum control over their subordinates, consistent with the context and nature of the mission, and the subordinates' experience and ability, while retaining responsibility for their actions.
	Subordinates are told what outcome they are contributing to, the effect they are to realize and why [all own emphasis]
	Subordinates are allocated sufficient resources to carry out their missions.
	Subordinates decide for themselves how best to achieve their superior's intent.

Source: DCDC, *ADP Land Operations* (Shrivenham, Wiltshire: DCDC, October 2016), 6-5 – 6-7.

Some aspects of the principles which support mission command should be expanded upon.

Unity of effort.

Unity of effort stems from “the commander’s ability to formulate a clear intent and mission statements; the use of common doctrine and tactics; a common language of command; a high standard of collective training; and the designation of priorities or a

main effort.”⁵⁸ Two corollaries of the achievement of a unity of effort—achieved by the same means—are a framework of common understanding throughout the force, and the ability to respond quickly to a changing situation. So implicit in the requirement for unity of effort is the requirement to respond in a unified manner to a shifting effort.

Subordinates’ freedom of action.

Freedom of action is achieved through decentralized execution. The willingness of subordinates to exercise individual initiative—though it should be noted that ADP *Land Operations* now refers to this as “disciplined initiative”⁵⁹—within a model of decentralized execution is considered to be “the moral fabric of Mission Command.”⁶⁰ The commander’s intent bounds subordinates’ freedom of action, and so freedom of action is not absolute. It is however maximized by an assumption and a directive. The assumption is that the subordinate on the ground is usually best placed to respond to a changing situation:

Subordinates have the most up-to-date information about the situation in front of them and must make decisions and act quickly without waiting for further orders. When the situation changes subordinates must rapidly adapt their plans or what they are doing to achieve the intent, using their best judgement and without asking for permission.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Ibid., 6-5.

⁵⁹ Ibid. The reason for this change of language is not made clear; however, the echo of American doctrine is clear and presumably intentional.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 6-6.

⁶¹ Ibid., 6-5.

This establishes subordinates' freedom to make decisions in response to a changing situation, rather than waiting for permission or guidance from a higher commander. This expectation of the devolution of decision-making is then reinforced by the directive that "superior commanders should always support the subordinate's decision, only overruling it if it is unsuitable."⁶²

There is however a recognition that some subordinates, because of their abilities, will be able to cope with a greater degree of delegation, while others "will require more direction and control."⁶³ This reinforces the suggestion contained within the second practical action that mission command philosophy supports a spectrum of delegation, dependent both on the subordinate and the mission, rather than a fixed model which must be followed. It should be noted that this idea of a spectrum of command accords strongly with that offered in two joint publications, JDP 01: *UK Joint Operations Doctrine*⁶⁴ and

⁶² Ibid., 6-6.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ ACDS (DCD), JDP 01: *UK Joint Operations Doctrine* (Shrivenham: Ministry of Defence, November 2014), 104. "A commander should be pragmatic when applying mission command as not all subordinates are equally capable. A commander should be flexible in the extent to which they delegate their authority; this will depend upon the situation, the nature of their command, the degree of multinational and multi-agency interaction, and the predominant activities being undertaken. Delegation will also depend on commanders' and subordinates' abilities, training, personalities and experience."

JDP 3-00: *Campaign Execution*⁶⁵, where an approach of *befehlstaktik* is proposed as the occasionally necessary counterpart to the *auftragstaktik* of mission command.⁶⁶

Trust.

While trust is something which is considered to be earned, it is emphasized that the default position for commanders should be to trust their superiors and their subordinates. Shared experiences are seen as the crucial factor in building trust between superiors, subordinates and peers, but there is an ambiguity as to whether there are different classifications of trust that different categories of shared experiences can help build. Personal trust is identified as something which can only be built up over time as a result of direct shared experience with another person; i.e. one has experienced events at the same place and time as another person. However, this is insufficient for effective mission command, and so there seems to be the possibility of an organizational trust which can be developed through a shared experience of the same event, though at a separate time and place.⁶⁷ The commander's willingness to tolerate mistakes and treat

⁶⁵ ACDS (DCD), JDP 3-00 *Campaign Execution* (Shrivenham, UK: Ministry of Defence, October 2009), 4-3. "While mission command should be the norm, under exceptional circumstances, the JTFC may have to take charge of the tactical situation and issue direct orders with clear detail as to how they are carried out. This approach or *Befehlstaktik* should be used sparingly, and only where fleeting opportunities for decisive exploitation or risks of failure present themselves". It seems significant that a German term is used to describe the decision to not use mission command; something of a justification via an appeal to authority.

⁶⁶ The literal translation of *befehlstaktik* is "command tactics." "Detailed command" conveys its sense better.

⁶⁷ For example a qualification course which establishes common standards of expertise.

failure as an opportunity to learn is regarded as the crucial enabler of an atmosphere of trust. Without encouraging recklessness the subordinate should not be criticized for “errors in the pursuit of calculated risk-taking, boldness and initiative.”⁶⁸

Mutual understanding.

Mutual understanding between the commander and subordinate refers to understanding of each other, rather than the shared understanding of the operational environment. This mutual understanding is built on the development of personal relationships, but also upon experience, professional knowledge and study. A multi-national or inter-agency context is seen as harmful to mutual understanding, as it removes the shared experience and knowledge of doctrine upon which it is based.

Timely and effective decision-making.

There is an assumption that decisions will have to be made under time pressure and with imperfect knowledge: “Despite the increasing availability and speed of information, it remains essential for commanders to make decisions on the basis of incomplete and imperfect understanding.” If there is any doubt as to whether to act immediately or delay, the commander or subordinate should be biased in favor of action: “In general... it is often less risky to act quickly than it is to wait for more information and give adversaries more time.”

⁶⁸ DCDC, *ADP Land Operations*, 6-6.

Joint doctrine, and points of difference

JDP 0-001 defines mission command as “a style of command that seeks to convey understanding to subordinates about intentions of the higher commander and their place within his plan, enabling them to carry put their mission with maximum freedom of action and appropriate resources.” In contrast to the guiding principle, five further principles, and five “practical and sequential” actions specified within Army doctrine, JDP 0-001 gives a guiding principle, four tenets, and five essential elements (behaviors which embody and enable mission command).

Table 2. An outline of the Joint Doctrine of Mission Command

The Philosophy of Mission Command (JDP 0-001)	
Guiding Principle	The absolute responsibility to act, or to decide not to act, within the framework of a superior commander’s intent
Tenets	Timely decision-making
	Thorough understanding of a superior commander’s intent
	Clear responsibility on the part of subordinates to fulfil that intent
	A determination to take the plan through to a successful conclusion
Essential Elements	Commanders ensure that subordinates understand their intent, their own contribution and the context in which they are to act
	Commanders exercise a minimum of control over their subordinates, consistent with their experience and ability, while retaining responsibility for their actions.
	Subordinates are told what effect they are to achieve and why
	Subordinates are allocated sufficient resources to carry out their missions
	Subordinates decide for themselves how best to achieve their superior’s intent

Source: ACDS (DCD), JDP 0-01 *UK Defence Doctrine* (Shrivenham, UK: Ministry of Defence, November 2014), 28-29.

Several changes can be observed from the previous characteristics of mission command given in JDP 0-01, to the revised version of ADP *Land Operations*. Some of these are purely cosmetic, or act as a tidying up exercise; for example “mutual understanding” and “trust” were still considered important within JDP 0-001, their requirement was simply captured elsewhere rather than being made explicit. There are two changes which are of greater import.

The guiding principle

The guiding principle has been changed from “the absolute responsibility to act, or to decide not to act, within the framework of a superior commander’s intent” to “the absolute responsibility to act to achieve the commander’s intent.” The 2015 *Mission Command* doctrine note suggests that “Mission Command is sometimes misunderstood. Two common errors are an over-emphasis on freedom of action, and the fallacy that Mission Command is a substitute for good planning and allows commander to ‘make it up as they go along’.”⁶⁹ The change from joint to Army doctrine seems to be inspired by the same sentiment; the bounds of subordinate freedom of action tightened further. The previous definition’s admittance of inaction seemed to suggest that a subordinate could decide not to act in accord with his superior commander’s intent, albeit he would then bear the responsibility for the decision, and be required to justify it. In addition, the reference to “a superior commander’s intent” held open the possibility of a subordinate meeting a changing situation by acting in line with a 2-up or 3-up intent (i.e. a superior commander’s), but in a way that was not in accordance with his immediate commander’s

⁶⁹ DLW, *Mission Command*, 3.

intent. Regardless of whether this was intended by doctrine—the use of the indefinite rather than the definite article could be inadvertent—it was at least a possible interpretation. The new guiding principle within ADP Land Operations removes both possibilities; the subordinate has an absolute responsibility to act in line with his superior commander’s intent. If a situation changes such that he believes the intent is no longer valid or practical, then he must inform the commander before he acts contrary to his intent, assuming that informing the commander is practical.

Outcomes and effects

Rather than subordinates being told “what effect they are to achieve and why,” subordinates should now be told “what outcome they are contributing to, the effect they are to realize and why.” The specific meaning which is given to outcomes and effects within the British technical lexicon—this is described in some detail later in the chapter—means that this represents an expansion of the conceptual horizon that a subordinate is meant to bear in mind. This can be considered alongside the previous change to the guiding principle. While a subordinate has a renewed focus on the requirement to act within his commander’s intent, he is at the same time being armed with a greater awareness of the frame within which that intent sits; he is thus better able to apply meaning to it, and also better able to recognize when it ceases to have utility.

Framework and Lexicon

Having looked in detail at the definition of mission command within Army doctrine, and identified some of the key recent changes from the previous joint definition it is necessary to explore the framework within which mission command sits, and define

precisely the meaning of the key terms and phrases which bear on mission command. An understanding of both the framework and lexicon will then lead to a fuller understanding and appreciation of the doctrine.

The Framework of Mission Command

The doctrinal trinity of integrated action, the manoeuvrist approach and mission command, which is a fundamental part of Army doctrine, was shown earlier at Figure 2. The concepts of integrated action and the manoeuvrist approach, and how they bear on an understanding of mission command, will now be considered.

Integrated Action

The 2016 edition of *ADP Land Operations* introduced the concept of Integrated Action. Bringing Army doctrine in line with joint, integrated action is the Army contribution to joint action, and is the unifying doctrine of how the Army means to fight: “the application of the full range of lethal and non-lethal capabilities to change and maintain the understanding and behavior of audiences to achieve a successful outcome.”⁷⁰ A detailed explanation of the principles of integrated action is of limited relevance to this thesis; what is of relevance is the nomenclature that integrated action introduces, which has implications for our understanding of mission command, and especially the behavioral expectations it places on subordinates. “Integrated Action blends lethal and non-lethal **actions** to have **effects** on the understanding, physical capability, will and cohesion of the audience. Organized into attainable **objectives**, these

⁷⁰ DCDC, *ADP Land Operations*, P2.

effects are ultimately realized in people's minds, influencing their decision-making, to achieve the desired **outcomes**.”⁷¹ This hierarchy of actions through to outcomes, and exactly what is meant by each term, bears significantly on our understanding of mission command. The clearest explanation of each of these terms is given in *The Staff Officers' Handbook*:

1. The outcome “is a statement of success for the given operation. The End State of an operation is the overall desired outcome... The outcome can be most reliably achieved—and the effects orchestrated—by using objectives.”⁷²

2. Objectives “are goals which deliver the desired outcome. At the tactical level an objective is a tangible object... and the change required in the object. The change required is described as an, or a series of, effects.”⁷³

3. Effects “are the change brought about in a target by the consequences of action or activity. At the tactical level, an effect contributes to the achievement of an objective”⁷⁴.

4. Actions “are physical or observable activities to cause the desired effect.”⁷⁵

Mission command doctrine focuses significantly on the requirement to achieve effects, outcomes and, by implication, objectives, but says nothing directly about

⁷¹ Ibid., 4-4.

⁷² DLW, *The Staff Officers' Handbook* (Warminster, UK: DLW, September 2014), 3.6.4_3.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

achieving specific actions (beyond the requirement that actions should be in line with intent). The importance of this will become clear during the later discussion of intent, and the associated limits placed on freedom of action, but it appears consistent with the expectation placed on subordinate commanders within integrated action:

Actions taken by the land force are normally worded as tasks, which, together with their purpose, constitute subordinates' missions. . . A capacity to think laterally beyond these missions is, however, required; commanders must always consider the wider impact of their actions and how they might contribute to first and second order effects and outcomes.⁷⁶

The Manoeuvrist Approach

The manoeuvrist approach is not a recent innovation; a centerpiece of the original *Design for Military Operations: The British Military Doctrine*,⁷⁷ it has maintained a central role in defense and Army doctrine since. Its relationship with the philosophy of mission command is one of complete co-dependence: without a philosophy of mission command the manoeuvrist approach ceases to be possible; if a manoeuvrist approach ceases to be pursued then mission command is of lesser utility.

The manoeuvrist approach is defined as the Army's fighting doctrine for the tactical level, an indirect approach which seeks to defeat the enemy by shattering their will and cohesion, rather than through the imposition of significant attrition. The two specific requirements of the manoeuvrist approach are an attitude of mind, and an

⁷⁶ DCDC, *ADP Land Operations*, 4-5.

⁷⁷ *Design for Military Operations—The British Military Doctrine (Army Code 71451)*. Prepared under the direction of the Chief of the General Staff (London, UK: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1989).

understanding of the enemy's vulnerabilities;⁷⁸ in terms of activities it consists of seizing and holding the initiative, shaping the enemy's understanding, and then attacking the enemy's will and cohesion. Aspects of these requirements and activities can be seen to bear directly on the philosophy of mission command.

The attitude of mind demanded is one that is focused on identifying an "indirect approach [which] emphasizes the use of initiative to act in original ways unexpected by the enemy and a relentless determination to retain the initiative and exploit success... [and which depends on] agility, Mission Command and the willingness to accept risks."⁷⁹ The exercise of initiative, which is enabled by mission command, is thus necessitated by the demands of the manoeuvrist approach. Implicit within the understanding of the enemy's vulnerabilities is an acknowledgement that these vulnerabilities will "evolve during battle"⁸⁰; i.e. that the situation will change in contact and an adjustment decision will be required to adhere to the new reality. Given the emphasis placed on exercising initiative it seems that subordinates, and not just commanders, will be required to make these adjustments, and to do so cognizant of "wider contextual and operation factors... [such as the] second and third order effects of actions taken."⁸¹ This echoes and reinforces the requirement in mission command doctrine for subordinates to think not

⁷⁸ DCDC, ADP *Land Operations*, 5-1.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 5-2 – 5-6.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 5-1.

⁸¹ Ibid.

simply in terms of actions and effects, but to elevate their scope to include effects, objectives and outcomes.

The most significant activity, in terms of its relationship with mission command, is the seizing and holding of the initiative. While this is initiative in the sense of tactical initiative, “the ability to dictate the course of events, to decide and act before our opponents do and so gain advantage,”⁸² its achievement is associated with the exercise of individual initiative. Of the seven requirements for the initiative to be gained, regained or retained—tempo, surprise, pre-emption, momentum, simultaneity, exploitation and avoiding culmination⁸³—five are better enabled by the exercise of a subordinate’s individual initiative. The willingness of a subordinate to make a decision, rather than referring it to a superior commander, ought to lead to greater tempo and momentum; these in turn make surprise, pre-emption and exploitation easier to achieve. In the case of simultaneity and the avoidance of culmination, one can understand why the exercise of initiative on the part of subordinates might make a commander nervous—respectively their actions may unpick the synchronization of the force, or lead to them over-reaching themselves—however the capacity always exists for subordinates to err. While the exercise of initiative may seem to be of less direct benefit in these cases, the risk of it being a dis-benefit is mitigated both through the requirement for subordinates to remain

⁸² Ibid., 5-2.

⁸³ Ibid.

cognizant of those “wider contextual and operational factors”⁸⁴, and by the monitoring of actions by commanders and staff.

Consequences of the doctrinal framework

The two major consequences of the concepts of integrated action and the manoeuvrist approach are to establish an expectation of how subordinates should think, and create a context within which the exercise of initiative is seen as paramount. The requirement to think in terms of effects, objectives and outcomes reduces the focus placed on actions or tasks and, combined with the concept of intent which is discussed below, grants significant freedom of action to subordinates. This freedom of action, the exercise of initiative on the part of subordinates, is central to and reinforced by the manoeuvrist approach; the British Army’s fighting doctrine necessitates mission command by its particular emphasis upon the utility of subordinate initiative. An underlying attitude, which speaks to not just the manoeuvrist approach, but to a wider British approach to warfare, is that “a perfect plan made and executed too late will fail, whereas an imperfect one made before an enemy can act will succeed”⁸⁵. As it is assumed that the commander on the ground has the best appreciation and understanding of the situation,⁸⁶ it follows that when a situation changes he is the one best placed to make the effective, albeit imperfect plan. To refer the decision to a superior commander,

⁸⁴ Ibid., 5-1.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 5-3.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 6-5.

in the hope that he will make a better decision through a greater capacity to analyze or process information, is to risk failure through delay.

Terms and concepts within Mission Command

Two central concepts that must be defined, as they bear on mission command doctrine, and because their definition varies slightly from that within American doctrine, are intent—of which the centrality to mission command will have been noted—and the relationship of authority, responsibility, and accountability.

Intent

The commander's intent is defined as “at its simplest, a statement of the Effects that the commander wishes to achieve. . . . It represents what the commander wants to achieve and why.”⁸⁷ The suggested sequence for writing an intent is:

1. Describe the outcome; i.e. what you are trying to achieve.
2. Describe the objectives and effects that contribute to that outcome, using either time or space to what group them.
3. Describe what success looks like (i.e. an end state) and describe what will happen next.⁸⁸

It will be noted that while outcome, objectives and effects have been described within intent, actions have not. This is because it is specifically stated that “actions

⁸⁷ DLW, *The Staff Officers' Handbook*, 3.64_4.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

should never be described in the intent statement.”⁸⁹ Actions are still prescribed to subordinates within their mission statements, and will be included by the commander within his scheme of maneuver,⁹⁰ but they’re not being included within the commander’s intent has one clear implication. A subordinate can act in line with his commander’s intent without conducting any of the activities that the commander envisaged as necessary to achieve it. Thus if one considers the initiative that a subordinate is expected to show to be “disciplined” by the bounds of a commander’s intent, within British doctrine a subordinate has the freedom to not perform those tasks he has been ordered to do so, if he believes that the intent can be achieved more easily through different actions. As the relationship that actions have to effects is based on a particular understanding of a situation, this would seem to be related to a subordinate’s ability to make a decision when a situation changes: if the situation changes such that he believes the performance of certain actions will no longer lead to an effect, then he is free to act differently, at least until the commander decides otherwise. For while a subordinate is free to act within an intent, and thus is not required to wait from authority from a commander, the commander and his staff are still able to assert control of that subordinate, and constrain his freedom of action if they believe it to be necessary. In order to achieve this there is a subtlety to

⁸⁹ Ibid., 3.6.4_3.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 3.6.4_5. The definition of the Scheme of Maneuver given with the *Staff Officer’s Handbook* makes clear how it expands on the intent by getting into the detail of actions: “[The Scheme of Maneuver] expands the intent to describe how the commander sees his operation unfolding—the method to achieve the change identified in the Intent. It explains *where, when, how* and *with what*, in *relation to each other*, the force is to achieve its purpose, so that subordinates can understand their roles in the plan and the *effects* and *actions* that they and others are to realize.

the communication that must take place between the subordinate and the commander; while the subordinate is not required to seek permission before acting, he would seem obliged to inform the commander (or his staff) that he at least intends to act, or is in the process of doing so. The commander and staff therefore have the ability to intercede and prevent or amend the actions of the subordinate if required.

Authority, Responsibility, and Accountability

It is necessary to understand the British conceptions of authority, responsibility and accountability in order to understand the varying demands and expectations placed on commanders and their subordinate commanders within the doctrine of mission command. A succinct definition of the terms is given in ADP *Land Operations*: “Authority is the power and right to give orders and enforce obedience. Responsibility is the ability and obligation to act independently and make decisions. Accountability is the requirement and expectation to justify actions and decisions.”⁹¹ What must be understood is the extent to which authority, responsibility and accountability move from a commander to a subordinate when the commander gives the subordinate a mission: so what is the commander able to delegate, and what does that mean?

Doctrine is clear that authority and responsibility are delegated to subordinates as part of mission command:

Military operations in general and Mission Command in particular rely on subordinates receiving additional responsibility for missions and tasks so that they can achieve their commander’s intent. It is essential that the responsibility

⁹¹ DCDC, ADP *Land Operations*, 6-2.

assigned over the forces and resources matches the mission or tasks, and that the requisite authority accompanies it.⁹²

And where authority and responsibility go, accountability follows: “Whoever has authority and responsibility for anything will, if necessary, be required to justify their actions, and will be responsible in law for their decisions and actions.”⁹³

Commanders are unable to abdicate responsibility for their subordinates’ actions.⁹⁴ What they are able to do through delegation is *share* authority, responsibility and accountability with their subordinates.⁹⁵ That element of responsibility that a commander maintains for his subordinates therefore necessitates that he monitor their actions so as to intervene if required; it also places a requirement on the subordinate to respond promptly and obediently to the commander’s interventions.

Summary

From this consideration of the British philosophy of mission command a number of key points can be identified which should be borne in mind during the explication of the American philosophy, and which will help form the basis of the doctrinal comparison.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 6-7. “Commanders exercise minimum control over their subordinates, consistent with the context and nature of the mission, and the subordinates’ experience and ability, while retaining responsibility for their actions.”

⁹⁵ Ibid., 6-2. “Delegation does not detract from the authority of superior commanders (delegation can be rescinded), and since they are responsible for the decision to delegate and for the actions of subordinates, the superior commanders retain overall accountability. So, commanders and subordinates to whom they delegate share authority, responsibility and accountability for delegated missions and for the forces under their command.”

Intent

The commander's intent is the fulcrum around which mission command pivots; the primary responsibility of the commander is to effectively communicate his intent, and the primary responsibility of the subordinate is to follow it. Doctrinal changes between JDP 0-01 and ADP *Land Operations* have removed any ambiguity as whether the subordinate could disregard the commander's intent in pursuit of the fulfillment of a higher intent (e.g. disregard effects in pursuit of objectives or outcomes); he cannot. The requirement to fulfil the commander's intent is absolute, up to and until the point when the commander himself changes his intent. Crucially though the intent does not include tasks; therefore the subordinate can theoretically accord with his commander's intent without performing any of those actions which the commander had envisioned as required to achieve the intent.⁹⁶

Control

The commander should operate the minimum amount of control over his subordinates, consistent with achieving his intent. However, it is recognized that some subordinates will need more control than others, and the commander may need to move from a style of directive command to one of detailed command. Mission command is a

⁹⁶ The subordinate would still be disobeying the commander, as he would be failing to perform the task(s) he was charged with in his mission. The point is that the subordinate is able to disobey this order without recourse to the commander, if his decision to disobey is founded on a determination to achieve the original intent. Implicit within this acceptance of disobedience is the assumption that the subordinate must have a very good reason for his disobedience; a commander is likely to have very little tolerance for the subordinate who disobeys his orders in response to anything other than significant change to the situation.

spectrum and, as long as the dangers of doing so is recognized, there is doctrinal authority for the commander to move from a spirit of *auftragstaktik* to one of *befehlstaktik* if he believes it to be necessary.

Understanding and decision-making

A subordinate commander is likely to know his own situation and the opportunities and threats inherent to it better than a geographically separated commander and staff. A tendency to interfere in his actions, in order to seek to achieve a perfect response, is likely to lead to failure. Technology has and will not give commanders a perfect understanding of the situation; and commanders should therefore resist the tendency for technology to drive them to becoming engaged within the lower level fight. Linked to this is the conception of decision-making and timeliness. It seems assumed that most critical decisions will take place under a good deal of time pressure, and so the British tendency appears to lean towards an acceptable decision in time, rather than a better decision too late. This seems to drive more decision-making to take place at a lower level,⁹⁷ though doctrine would appear to have removed the ability of subordinates to make decisions outside of their commander's intent.

⁹⁷ And even when the decision itself is not made by the subordinate, it seems feasible that the subordinate's understanding of a situation and recommendation to a commander should then heavily influence the commander's decision.

Initiative

All soldiers, down to the lowest level,⁹⁸ must be willing to exercise initiative; in order for them to do so they must work in an atmosphere which is tolerant of this exercise, and within which mistakes are understood and accepted. It is recognized that the commander can imperil individual initiative by exercising too strict control, or by overturning his subordinates' decisions. However, the individual initiative of the soldier is not absolute; a subordinate's freedom of action remains bound by his commander's intent.

Authority, responsibility and accountability

When the commander delegates authority to his subordinates he also delegates a share of his responsibility and accountability; this does not however mean that he is able to abdicate responsibility and accountability for their actions, and he remains able to remove authority from them as required. The control he exerts on subordinates enables him to do this.

Conceptual horizon

Subordinates should think in terms of effects, objectives and outcomes.⁹⁹ Actions are important only in as much as they contribute to effects.

⁹⁸ DCDC, ADP *Land Operations*, 6-4, "[Mission command] depends on effective leadership at all levels of the force, with the most junior commanders and private soldiers confident and willing to use their initiative and tactical understanding."

⁹⁹ While not described as so, this likely accords to a 1-up, 2-up and 3-up intent.

Trust and understanding

Trust and understanding underpin the effective execution of mission command. Personal relationships and direct experience or knowledge of subordinates, commanders and peers contributes to trust and understanding, but cannot be its sole bedrock.

The American Philosophy of Mission Command

As the British philosophy of mission command sat within a doctrinal framework, so does the American. Figure 3 shows the framework proposed within ADRP 6-0 *Mission Command*. It is in order to accomplish Unified Land Operations, and to account for the complex and uncertain nature of war described as the “Nature of Operations”, that the Army utilizes a command philosophy of Mission Command. This philosophy is then enabled by the Mission Command Warfighting Function, the related tasks and systems that surround the exercise of command and control. The use of the term “mission command” to refer to both the philosophy and the warfighting function may seem, to a non-U.S. audience, unnecessarily confusing. Even within the U.S. doctrine community, this remains a matter of some debate.¹⁰⁰ If there is utility in the common usage, it may be to emphasize a link between the exercise of mission command as a philosophy and the means of exercising command, and particularly control, which are within the power of the commander. A tension is introduced, which will be explored later, whereby the greater the capacity that exists in the warfighting function, the greater the potential for the philosophy to be eroded.

¹⁰⁰ Charles R. Scrankel, “The Doctrine of Mission Command” (presentation, Art of War Scholars' seminar, Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 8 February 2017).

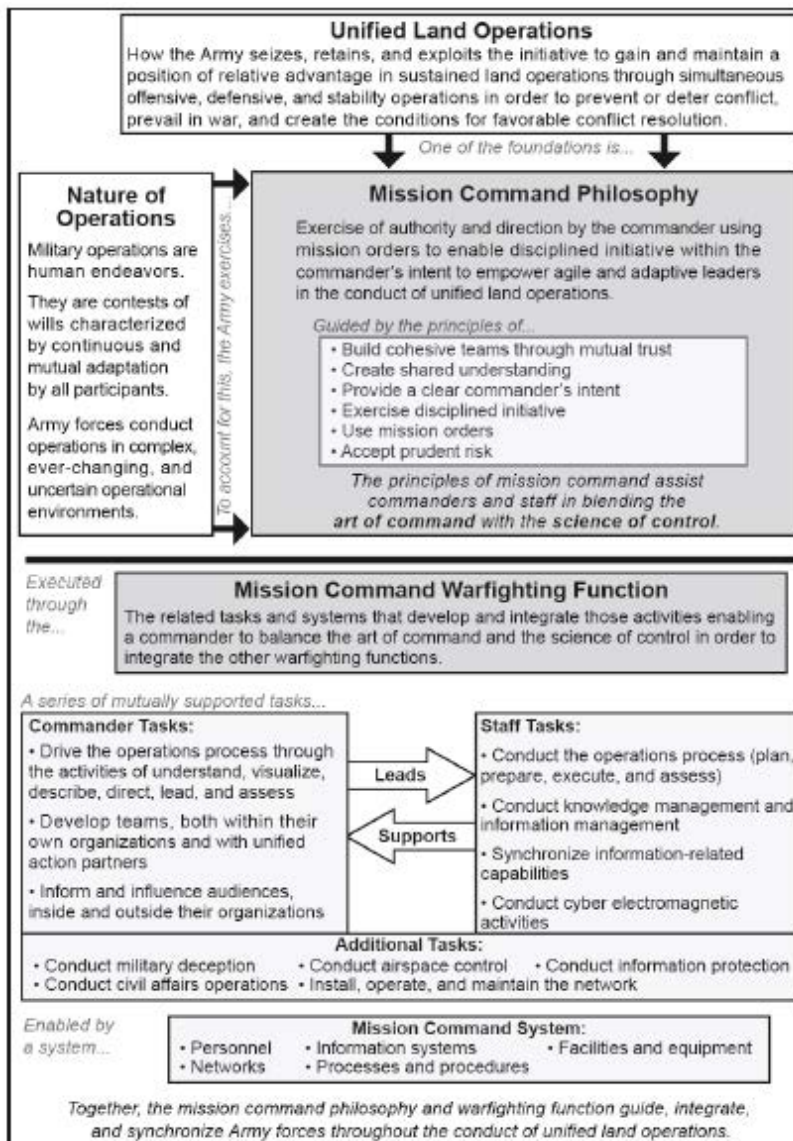


Figure 3. The American Mission Command Framework

Source: HQDA, ADRP 6-0 *Mission Command* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, March 2014), 1-3.

The definition of mission command given in ADRP 6-0 is “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”. With the focus on intent and initiative clear parallels

can be seen with the British doctrine, and the overarching idea, that of a centralized intent with a decentralized execution is the same.¹⁰¹ The six principles which guide the philosophy of mission command will each be discussed briefly in turn.

Principles of Mission Command

Build cohesive teams through mutual trust

The first point to note is that it is assumed that trust is a quality that needs to be built up, rather than one that is (or should be) inherently present because of a shared membership of a profession or organization: “There are few shortcuts to gaining the trust of others. Developing trust takes time, and it must be earned... Trust comes from successful shared experiences and training, usually gained incidental to operations but also deliberately developed by the commander.” The second is that the level of trust that exists between a commander and a subordinate is considered to impact directly on the efficacy or potential of mission command, a situation where less trust exists seemingly necessitating a detailed command approach:

Subordinates will be more willing to exercise initiative when they believe their commander trusts them. They will also be more willing to exercise initiative if they believe their higher commander will accept and support the outcome of their decisions. Likewise, commanders delegate greater authority to subordinates whose judgement they trust.¹⁰²

There are two implications of this principle. The first is that when a subordinate unit or formation is first attached to its superior formation, then there will be period when

¹⁰¹ HQDA, ADRP 6-0, 1-1: “Mission command emphasizes centralized intent and dispersed execution through disciplined initiative. This precept guides leaders towards mission accomplishment.”

¹⁰² Ibid., 2-2.

the level of trust that exists between the commanders of the two echelons is sub-optimal. This could of course be mitigated by previous knowledge, or shared experiences, or some other impetus which would increase the level of trust beyond which would otherwise be expected from a new relationship. The second implication is that a mission command philosophy may not work effectively initially.

Create shared understanding

The focus of the shared understanding is an understanding of the “operational environment, the operation’s purpose, problems, and approaches to solving them.”¹⁰³ It’s stated that this degree of understanding is achieved through a continuous collaboration throughout the operations process; the subordinate should therefore expect to be consulted and to have the opportunity to challenge the commander and his intent. The output of a shared understanding is a genuine unity of effort; subordinates should understand—and agree with—not only what the commander intends to achieve, but why he intends to achieve it, and how the actions he proposes will lead to that goal. This establishes the requirement for continuous and direct communication, which should by preference be face to face,¹⁰⁴ between the commander and the subordinate.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 2-12.

Provide a clear commander's intent

The commander's intent bounds the initiative of the subordinate; they have freedom of action within this intent, but no further.¹⁰⁵ It is specified that it should be clearly understood and easily remembered two levels down from the commander, and also that it should contain three specific elements: the expanded purpose of the operations; key tasks;¹⁰⁶ and the end state.¹⁰⁷ While the detailed comparison between British and American doctrine will take place later in the chapter, two points of difference seem to appear: American doctrine allows, indeed specifies the inclusion of tasks / actions with the intent; it is also much more specific with regard to the end-state, specifying conditions for friendly forces, enemy, terrain and civil considerations, as opposed to British doctrine's fairly ephemeral "what success looks like."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 2-4: "Commanders formulate and communicate their commander's intent to describe the boundaries within which subordinates may exercise disciplined initiative while maintaining unity of effort."

¹⁰⁶ HQDA, ARDP 5-0 *The Operations Process* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, May 2012), 2-19: "**Key tasks are those activities the force must perform as a whole to achieve the desired end state.** Key tasks are not specified tasks for any subordinate unit; however, they may be sources of implied tasks. Acceptable courses of action accomplish all key tasks."

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 2-19: "The end state is a set of desired future conditions the commander wants to exist when an operation is concluded. Commanders describe the operation's end state by stating the desired conditions of the force in relationship to desired conditions of the enemy, terrain, and civil considerations."

¹⁰⁸ DLW, *The Staff Officer's Handbook*, 3.64_4.

Exercise disciplined initiative

Disciplined initiative is defined as “action in the absence of orders, when existing orders no longer fit the situation, or when unforeseen opportunities or threats arise”. As was suggested earlier, the discipline within disciplined initiative is provided by the bounding effect of the commander’s intent.¹⁰⁹ There are two points to note from ADRP 6-0’s description of the principle. The first is that the link that was identified in British doctrine between individual and tactical initiative is here made explicit: “a subordinate’s disciplined initiative may be the starting point for seizing the tactical initiative. . . [and] helps develop and maintain operational initiative used by forces to set or dictate the terms of action throughout an operation.” The second is that there is a lack of clarity as to the limits of disobedience.

The stated position on disobedience of, or deviation from order is: “Commanders deviate from orders only when they are unlawful, risk the lives of Soldiers, or when orders no longer fit the situation. Subordinates inform their superiors as soon as possible when they have deviated from orders.”¹¹⁰ The first two instances of orders being unlawful, or risking the lives of soldiers will not be considered. In the case of unlawful orders the duty of disobedience is clear, and specified under the law of armed conflict. In the case of risk to life, the status of it as an exception seems entirely nonsensical—all military action necessarily risks the lives of soldiers—except in one instance, that of a

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 2-4: “The commander’s intent defines the limits within which subordinates may exercise initiative. It gives subordinates the confidence to apply their judgement in ambiguous situations because they know the mission’s purpose, key tasks and desired end-state.”

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 2-4.

changing situation bringing a new and unacceptable risk to life; it is therefore an example of “orders no longer fit[ting] a situation.” The tension and ambiguity within the discussion of deviation is whether this deviation takes place within an intent, or outside it. The language used “when orders no longer fit the situation” is an exact echo of the language used to justify disciplined initiative: “disciplined initiative is action... when existing orders no longer fit the situation”; however disciplined initiative is very clearly meant to be initiative shown within the bounds of an intent. The commander’s intent seems therefore broad enough to allow for that kind of change to a situation which would mean “existing orders no longer fit”, but which doesn’t invalidate the mission’s purpose, key tasks and end-state. The lack of clarity relates to how a subordinate is meant to act when the situation has changed such that the intent seems no longer practicable. The situation may seem to demand that he act immediately, and then inform the commander that he has deviated from orders (and from the commander’s intent); however doctrine would seem to demand that he first seek permission to act outside of the intent. The decision-making model which is discussed in ADRP 5-0, *The Operations Process*,¹¹¹ is instructive, and will be used later as a basis for discussing this decision-making process with its language of execution and adjustment decisions. A key point is that ADRP 6-0 seems to suggest that there are situations where the subordinate may believe that he has to act, but is at the same time restricted by doctrine from doing so; a conceptual “grey area” which confronts the subordinate with a decision dilemma.¹¹²

¹¹¹ HQDA, ARDP 5-0, 4-5.

¹¹² It is tempting to assume that if a situation changes sufficiently enough, and severely enough that a subordinate is required to act outside of the bounds of his commander’s intent, then of course he will do so. However, that is an assumption; and

Use Mission Orders

Mission orders are seen as a technique that has stood the test of time; the 1939 FM 100-5 is invoked as testament to their efficacy, and consistency within an American tradition. It is specified that mission orders should follow a five paragraph format,¹¹³ and be as brief and succinct as possible. Tasks are specified to contain the elements of “who, what, when, where, and why”,¹¹⁴ with the “why” emphasized as especially important. The requirement to resource subordinates properly for the missions which they are given—an enabling action within British doctrine—is included as an inherent part of this principle.

Accept prudent risk

Prudent risk is defined as “a deliberate exposure to potential injury or loss when the commander judges the outcome in terms of mission accomplishment as worth the cost.”¹¹⁵ It is recognized that the pursuit of any opportunity necessitates an exposure to risk, or, to use the technical language of risk-management, the pursuit of an opportunity-risk necessitates an exposure to a threat-risk. However the distinction between the

there are historical precedents for subordinates failing to show initiative in the gravest of situations—e.g. French forces in the Battle of France—because of a perceived requirement to receive their superior’s consent.

¹¹³ HQDA, ADRP 6-0, 2-5: That is, task organization, commander’s intent and concept of operations, mission, tasks to subordinate units, and minimum essential coordinating instructions.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 2-5.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

acceptance of risk, which is encouraged, and gambling,¹¹⁶ which is strongly discouraged, is emphasized: “Commanders avoid taking gambles. Commanders carefully determine risks, analyze and minimize as many hazards as possible, and then take prudent risks to exploit opportunities.”¹¹⁷

There seem to be two points worthy of note here. The first is the emphasis on the commander’s acceptance of risk; there is no consideration of a subordinate’s acceptance of risk in pursuit of an opportunity. The second is the description of the process under which a risk is taken: a careful determination, an analysis, an attempt to minimize hazards, and then the taking of a risk. While the idea of accepting risk to seize an opportunity seems to lean more to intuitive decision-making—if only because of the time pressure involved—the process described here seems markedly more analytic.¹¹⁸ This apparent preference for an analytic approach to risk-taking is of consequence when one considers who is then best placed to decide to take a risk.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 2-5: “Gambling, in contrast to prudent risk taking, is staking the success of an entire action on a single event without considering the hazard to the force should the event not unfold as envisioned.”

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ It could be the case that an intuitive decision-making process is seen as simply moving quicker, and sub-consciously, through the same steps as an analytic decision-making process. Doctrine does therefore not necessarily rule out an intuitive approach to taking risk, but it does seem to at least prefer an analytic one.

Command and Control

The value of the six principles of mission command is, as stated, to guide the exercise of mission command philosophy,¹¹⁹ but it is also to “assist commanders and staff in blending the **art of command** with the **science of control**.”¹²⁰ This juxtaposition of an art of command and a science of control is probably overstated; it will be argued that there are elements of art and science in each, and that the relationship of command and control is not one of opposition, but of a supported-supporting dynamic. The doctrinal understanding of command and control does still have implications though for the way in which a mission command philosophy is exercised.

The Art of Command

The art of command is “the creative and skillful exercise of authority through timely decision-making and leadership;”¹²¹ i.e. how a commander uses his judgement to guide and husband his forces in operations. The elements of authority and decision-making are of particular importance in understanding how this art reveals itself, and its impact on mission command.

Authority

As in British doctrine a consideration or explanation of authority is inseparable from one of responsibility or accountability. Authority is defined as “the delegated power

¹¹⁹ As distinct from the exercise of mission command, which is, within U.S. doctrine “an overarching idea that unifies the mission command philosophy of command and the mission command warfighting function” Ibid., 1-2.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 1-3.

¹²¹ HQDA, ADRP 6-0, 2-5.

to judge, act, or command,”¹²² and has a legal status;¹²³ responsibility as “the obligation to carry forward an assigned task to a successful conclusion”¹²⁴; and accountability as “the requirement for commanders to answer to their superiors (and finally the American people) for mission accomplishment.”¹²⁵ All are invested in the commander, however while the commander may delegate authority to his subordinates—indeed to achieve any extent of decentralized execution he has to—he is unable, in any meaningful sense, to delegate any responsibility or accountability. Subordinates may be responsible and accountable to the commander himself for what they do with delegated authority, but “commanders remain solely responsible and accountable for the actions of their subordinates.”¹²⁶ The statement that “commanders supervise just enough to assure subordinates’ success” has the implicit coda that if the subordinate fails then the commander will face the blame; this may have its own implication for how a loose a rein commanders are incentivized to give their subordinates. There is a clear distinction between American and British doctrine, the latter stating that responsibility and

¹²² Ibid., 2-6.

¹²³ Ibid., 2-6: The legal authority to enforce orders under the Uniform Code of Military Justice is seen a key point of difference between military commanders and civilian leaders / managers; military commanders are of course similarly distinguished / separated within British society.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

accountability are shared between the commander and the subordinate to whom he had delegated authority.¹²⁷

Decision-making

Decision-making is probably the key function of the commander, certainly during execution; his decisions guide the actions of the force, and the quality or otherwise of his decisions are a significant determinant to the success of an operation. Within ADRP 6-0 the quality of decision-making hinges on an effective understanding of the operational environment,¹²⁸ and the process of attaining that understanding underpins the way in which decisions are made. The model within ADRP 6-0 is shown at figure 4:

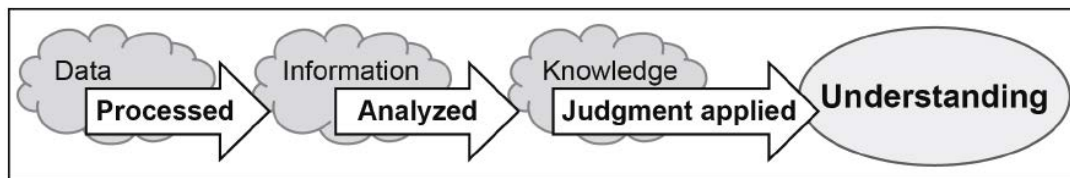


Figure 4. Achieving understanding

Source: HQDA, ADRP 6-0 *Mission Command* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, March 2014), 2-7.

¹²⁷ It is true that British doctrine is ambiguous about how much responsibility and accountability are shared, and in some parts talks of the ultimate responsibility and accountability of the commander. However, there is at least an ambiguity; American doctrine is utterly unambiguous that it is the commander who will be held to account.

¹²⁸ HQDA, ADRP 6-0, 2-7: “Decision-making requires knowing if, when, and what to decide and understanding the consequences of that decision. . . When making decisions, commanders strive to develop and maintain an understanding of the situation. With understanding, commanders can make effective decisions and regulate the actions of the force.”

The unprocessed signals represented by data are processed and assigned a meaning to become information; once analyzed this information is assigned a meaning and a value and has become knowledge; finally this knowledge is synthesized with disparate pieces of knowledge to produce an understanding of the situation which can then form the basis for a decision.¹²⁹ While in Figure 4 understanding is represented as the end-goal, the real end-goal is the commander's decision; an understanding of a situation achieving nothing in itself, but only useful in as much as it enables action. It is recognized that perfect understanding is impossible; optimal understanding, within the constraints imposed by an operation, is what the commander should aim for.¹³⁰

A distinction is drawn between the two methods of achieving understanding, and then making a decision: analytic decision-making and intuitive decision-making.¹³¹ Advantages and disadvantages of each are recognized: analytic decision-making will tend to produce a better solution, but takes longer; intuitive decision-making will produce a timely solution, but one that is subject to the bias of the commander, and more dependent

¹²⁹ Ibid.: This sentence is a paraphrase of the much fuller explanation given within ADRP 6-0.

¹³⁰ Ibid.: "True understanding should be the basis for decisions. However, commanders and staff realize that uncertainty and time preclude achieving perfect understanding before deciding and acting."

¹³¹ These accord to ideas of System 1 and System 2 thinking in the terms popularized by Daniel Kahneman, though originally proposed by Keith Stanovich and Richard West. Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow*, (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 20-21. "System 1 operates automatically and quickly, with little or no effort and no sense of voluntary control. System 2 allocates attention to the effortful mental activities that demand it, including complex calculations. The operations of System 2 are often associated with the subjective experience of agency, choice and concentration."

on his personal ability. The ideal suggested by ADRP 6-0 is a holistic approach wherein analytic and intuitive approaches are blended, leading to decisions which are “neither rushed nor overthought”. While the exact manner in which each decision is made and the relative levels of intuition and analysis that are applied to it will vary according to time pressure, apparent complexity, the personality of the commander etc., it is possible to draw a model of how decisions will tend to be made. The crucial point is that the commander is not alone in this process; while decision-making may be a function of command, with the requirement to achieve the optimal solution in the time available, the staff necessarily seem to have a role, and the commander’s subordinates will have varying levels of influence in the decision-making process. An ideal decision-making process is represented at figure 5.

Data is received from a subordinate and then processed by the commander’s staff into information; this information is then analyzed by the commander and staff in order to produce an item of knowledge. A subordinate is also able to input a piece of information or knowledge, but this will then be subject to verification either by the staff, or by the commander and staff together. While it is the commander’s responsibility to then apply judgement to the item of knowledge in order to develop an understanding of the situation—and here is the input of the intuitive, with the commander’s reliance on experience and use of heuristics¹³²—his staff can still inform this judgement, and the commander who trusts his staff is likely to seek their opinion. There are two reasonable

¹³² Ibid., 98. “[A] heuristic is a simple procedure that helps find adequate, though often imperfect, answers to difficult questions.” Kahneman discusses both the benefits and dangers of heuristics at length.

conclusions from this model. Firstly, the more pressed the commander is for time, the less a role his staff will play in analyzing information and informing his judgement, and the less inputs from a subordinate will be subject to verification by the staff. Secondly, the smaller the staff is the greater a role the commander will play throughout the process, and the more he will rely on the inputs from, and the analysis being conducted by, his subordinates.

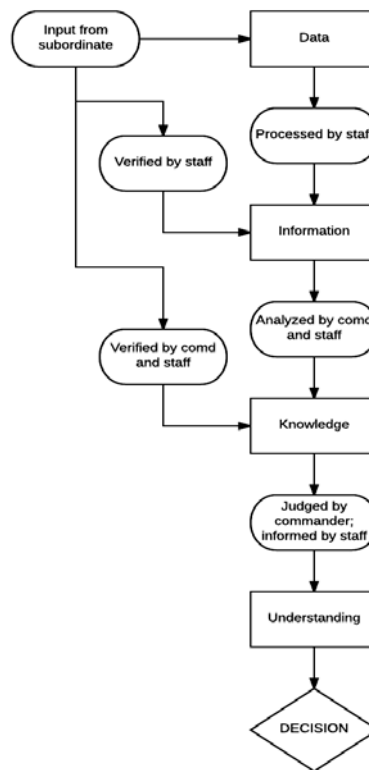


Figure 5. Preferred American decision-making model

Source: Created by author.

The Science of Control

While command is the “authority that a commander in the field lawfully exercises,”¹³³ control is “the regulation of forces and warfighting functions to accomplish the mission in accordance with the commander’s intent”. These definitions suggest a supported-supporting relationship between command and control, which is much more accurate than the juxtaposition, or relationship of tension, suggested by the allusion of “blending the art of command with the science of control”. The science of control does not exist in opposition to the art of command, it enables it; control “permits commanders to account for changing circumstances and direct the changes necessary to address the new situation”, i.e. enables them to transmit the authority which is at the center of command. The phrases “art of command” and “science of control” are themselves not entirely accurate. With the degree of analysis that is expected to take place within the decision-making process, there is clearly a scientific element to the art of command; and there is at least a degree of art in determining the degree of control that is suitable for a particular subordinate or operation. However while there is not so clear a tension between command and control per se, there is a tension between control and a concept of mission command.

There are two techniques or types of control: positive and procedural.¹³⁴ Positive control requires the active participation of the commander (or staff), while procedural control is achieved through the orders process, and the written and oral instructions

¹³³ HQDA, ADRP 6-0, 2-5.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 2-16.

received by the subordinates. Procedural control is an expression of the bounds of the commander's intent and restricts the subordinates' freedom of action through the constraints and restraints imposed through orders. Positive control is a means of reinforcing procedural control, of clarifying ambiguities or misunderstandings within orders, and of directing forces to meet a changing situation. The more control that is imposed on a subordinate the less freedom of action he has, or feels; more control would therefore seem to lead to the exercise of detailed command as opposed to mission command. The corrective is for the commander to ensure that he is at all times imposing the minimum amount of control upon a subordinate, consistent with the requirement for mission success.¹³⁵

The level of control imposed on a subordinate is therefore dependent on the decision and judgement of the commander: the element of art in the science of control. The remainder of the science of control consists of the systems and procedures through which the commander exerts control: the systems and procedures that are in place—which one could consider to be a large element of the mission command warfighting function—determine the bounds of that control which a commander can then choose to impose. The greater the capacity for information and communication that is held within a system, the greater the level of effective control that can be levied by the commander.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 2-15 – 2-16: There is a recognition within doctrine of the impact that control has on subordinates' freedom of action, and a concomitant emphasis on commanders seeking to exert a minimum of control, particularly procedural control: "They limit information in a base plan or order to the minimum needed to synchronize combat power at the decisive time and place and allow subordinates as much freedom of action as possible. . . Commanders use the minimum number of control measures necessary to control their forces."

Therefore the capacity to collect and process a large amount of information, and to communicate quickly and easily the knowledge and understanding which is produced from that information to subordinates, leads to the potential for ever greater control, and only the forbearance of the commander can prevent the maximum control possible being imposed. A tension does therefore exist between the philosophy of mission command and the warfighting function: while the warfighting function enables a mission command philosophy, the greater the capacity and scope of the warfighting function, the more a commander is able to move away from a philosophy of mission command without an apparent degradation in combat effectiveness. This tension was acknowledged in previous editions of FM 6-0,¹³⁶ but is not stated as a problem within ADRP-6-0.

Summary

From the American philosophy of mission command a number of major themes emerge; some of these stand in contrast to the British philosophy, but this comparison will be more clearly drawn out in the next section of the chapter.

Intent

The commander's intent is again the fulcrum around which the philosophy of mission command pivots. The commander is required to communicate his intent in very specific way, and is responsible for ensuring that his subordinate fully understand it. The

¹³⁶HQDA, Field Manual 6-0 *Mission Command: Command and Control of Armed Forces* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, August 2003), 1-19. "The digitized INFOSYS the Army is building actually facilitate and strengthen mission command, even though they can be used to impose detailed command. Their capabilities have the potential for creating conflict. A commander at almost any level can apparently reach down and control the actions of an individual soldier at any time."

subordinate is in turn obliged to follow the commander's intent; his freedom of action bound within it, and actions outside of that intent requiring the approval of the commander.

Decision-making

While the commander's intuition has a role in the decision-making process, a clear preference is demonstrated for analytical decision-making models. The same preference for analysis applies to the judgement of risk, whether opportunity-risk or threat-risk. It is recognized that pressures of time may drive the commander to a more intuitive model, but this appears to be treated as the exception, rather than the rule. While decisions are made by the commander, the commander's staff has a significant role to play in informing them; as time pressure increases the role played by the staff in the decision-making process grows less, and that played by subordinates may concomitantly increase.

Authority, responsibility and accountability

The commander delegates authority as part of mission command. He is unable to delegate responsibility and accountability, and remains wholly responsible and accountable for the actions of his subordinates.

Control and the Mission Command Warfighting Function

It is maintained that the commander should seek to exert the minimum amount of control over his subordinates consistent with the achievement of mission success. Control is however seen as the key enabler of command, allowing the effective communication of the commander's authority and intent, and it is additionally recognized that some

subordinates and situations will require a greater exercise of control, the commander moving from a style of mission command to one closer to detailed command. Related to this, a tension is created between the mission command warfighting function and the mission command philosophy. Although the warfighting function is designed to enable the philosophy, the more effective and sophisticated the war fighting function becomes, the greater the potential for the commander to effectively exert control in dynamic situations, reducing the freedom of action left to his subordinates; only the commander's active forbearance therefore prevents the warfighting function from denuding the command philosophy.

The British and American Philosophies: A Comparison

In considering how the British and American philosophies of mission command differ from one another, both will be considered against the paradigm of mission command proposed in Chapter 2. The extent of doctrinal divergence from the root philosophy of *auftragstaktik* should then become apparent. Other key difference which are not fully exposed through comparison to the paradigmatic model will then be explored.

Divergence from the Paradigm

British and American philosophies will be compared to the following paradigmatic tenets:

1. War is chaotic and confusing; understanding of the battlefield is invariably incomplete.

2. Commanders are not able to exercise detailed control effectively; attempts to do so will fail.

3. Varying competence notwithstanding, the commander on the ground is the person best placed to judge the tactical situation, not his superior.

4. Subordinates should be given orders which are as short—containing as few tasks—as possible. These orders will contain an objective, which is framed in an overall intent.

5. Commanders must allow their subordinates freedom of action, providing they are acting within the commander's intent.

6. If the situation has changed such that an order no longer makes sense, or is inappropriate, then a subordinate should disobey that order; he should inform his superior that he has done so.

In addition some of the cultural requirements identified by Shamir will also be considered, informed and illuminated as they are directly by doctrine:

1. Understanding of and adherence to higher intent and the potential tension with the local mission.

2. Mutual trust based on professional competence (and not necessarily relationship or acquaintance).

3. Tolerance for well-intended mistakes.

4. Propensity for action and initiative.

5. Responsibility linked to authority.

6. Belief in the ability of individuals to make sound judgement calls.

Tenet 1: War is chaotic and confusing;
understanding of the battlefield is invariably incomplete

Both British and American doctrine explicitly supports a view of war as chaotic and confusing. In both doctrines the understanding one is able to achieve of an operational environment is considered to be necessarily incomplete, though British doctrine places more emphasis on the requirement to make decisions on the basis of incomplete information.

Tenet 2: Commanders are not able to exercise detailed control effectively;
attempts to do so will fail

Both philosophies espouse the necessity of decentralized execution; to that extent they recognize that an attempt to exercise detailed control over the conduct of tactical actions is inefficient and mitigates against success. However both see the extent of control which should be exercised as a spectrum, with some subordinates and missions requiring that the commander exercise more detailed control: mission command giving way to detailed command.

Tenet 3: Varying competence notwithstanding, the commander on the ground is the person best placed to judge the tactical situation, not his superior

This is explicitly stated within British doctrine, however it does not appear to be the case in American doctrine. While the commander on the ground may believe he understands his local situation, true understanding¹³⁷ can only be provided as the result of an analytical / intuitive effort on the part of the commander and staff.

¹³⁷ At least as true as possible; the impossibility of perfect understanding has already been noted.

Tenet 4: Subordinates should be given orders which are as short—containing as few tasks—as possible. These orders will contain an objective, which is framed in an overall intent

While short orders may be a notion more honored in the breach than the observance, this is at least supported in doctrine. Both American and British doctrines have subordinates given task within the frame of an intent. American doctrine focuses more on the importance of clear and short mission orders, while British doctrine places a greater emphasis on an understanding of the wider conceptual framework.

Tenet 5: Commanders must allow their subordinates freedom of action, providing they are acting within the commander's intent

Both American and British philosophies grant subordinates freedom of action within an intent. However the American understanding of intent is narrower, which means that a British subordinate will tend to have more effective freedom of action if operating within his superior commander's intent than his American counterpart would.

Tenet 6: If the situation has changed such that an order no longer makes sense, or is inappropriate, then a subordinate should disobey that order; he should inform his superior that he has done so

In neither philosophy is the subordinate ordinarily free to act outside of his superior commander's intent in response to a changing situation; his commander must free him from the intent / develop a new intent before he can do so. In the event of it being impossible or impractical to communicate with his commander, then the subordinate could justify a decision to act outside of his commander's intent: to demonstrate, in other words, loyal disobedience. The tone of British doctrine seems more supportive of this, with the requirement for all soldiers down to the lowest private soldier to show initiative being stated, and the requirement for commanders to support the risk-

taking of their subordinates also being emphasized; in American doctrine risk taking seems something which is done by commanders rather than subordinates.

Requirement 1: Understanding of and adherence to higher intent and the potential tension with the local mission

Both doctrines support this requirement, ensuring that subordinates understand how the commander's intent is nested within a higher intent. British doctrine emphasizes more the requirement for subordinates to think in terms of effects, objectives and outcomes, so they may be better conceptually prepared to identify conflicts between local tactical action and the achievement of a higher intent.

Requirement 2: Mutual trust based on professional competence (and not necessarily relationship or acquaintance)

American doctrine views trust primarily as the product of direct experience of another person; so the product of relationship or acquaintance. While British doctrine recognizes the importance of personal relationships to the creation and maintenance of trust, there appears to be a stronger doctrinal recognition of an organizational or competence based trust, and the contribution that education and training has to this.

Requirement 3: Tolerance for well-intended mistakes

Both American and British doctrine insist on commanders tolerating mistakes in their subordinates; it seems true to say though that within their bounds of freedom of action, British subordinates will have the opportunity to make more. Of course, while this reflects the doctrinal requirement to tolerate mistakes, the cultural acceptance of that requirement may not be present.

Requirement 4: Propensity for action and initiative

Both doctrines emphasize the requirement for subordinates to act and show initiative. British doctrine is particularly explicit that if in any doubt as to whether to act immediately, or to wait for the situation and one's understanding to develop, the bias should be to act.

Requirement 5: Responsibility linked to authority

In British doctrine when a commander delegates authority he also delegates a share of the responsibility; he cannot abdicate responsibility, as the decision to delegate was, and the decision not to revoke authority from the subordinate is, his. When the American commander delegates authority he is unable to delegate any responsibility. Power without responsibility is the prerogative not just of the harlot,¹³⁸ but also of the American subordinate.

Requirement 6: Belief in the ability of individuals to make sound judgement calls

Both American and British subordinates are trusted and expected to exercise their judgement as to how best to achieve their missions. In response to a changing situation British subordinates may be required to exercise more judgement calls due to the understanding of the intent which bounds freedom of action, and an American preference for an analytical decision-making model which requires the interplay of a commander and staff.

¹³⁸ "Power without responsibility: the prerogative of the harlot throughout the ages." "Rudyard Kipling," *Oxford Essential Quotations*, ed. (Susan Ratcliffe: Oxford University Press), accessed 10 May 2017, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191826719.001.0001/q-oro-ed4-00006320>.

Summary

Both British and American philosophies broadly follow the paradigmatic model of mission command. However there appears to have been a greater doctrinal divergence in the American philosophy of command than in the British. This is particularly evident in the extent to which subordinates have freedom of action within an intent, and therefore the extent to which they are able to make decisions and take action in response to a changing situation. The comparative lack of freedom of American subordinates is exacerbated by two factors. First, the American commander's inability to delegate any responsibility must make him naturally more hesitant to delegate authority; when he does so he owns the entire risk for his subordinates' actions. Second, the assumption that superiority of understanding lies with the commander of the ground seems more strongly held within British doctrine than American. Combined with the clear preference for an analytic decision-making process, the commander, supported by staff, is considered to be in a better position to gain the level of understanding required to make an effective decision.

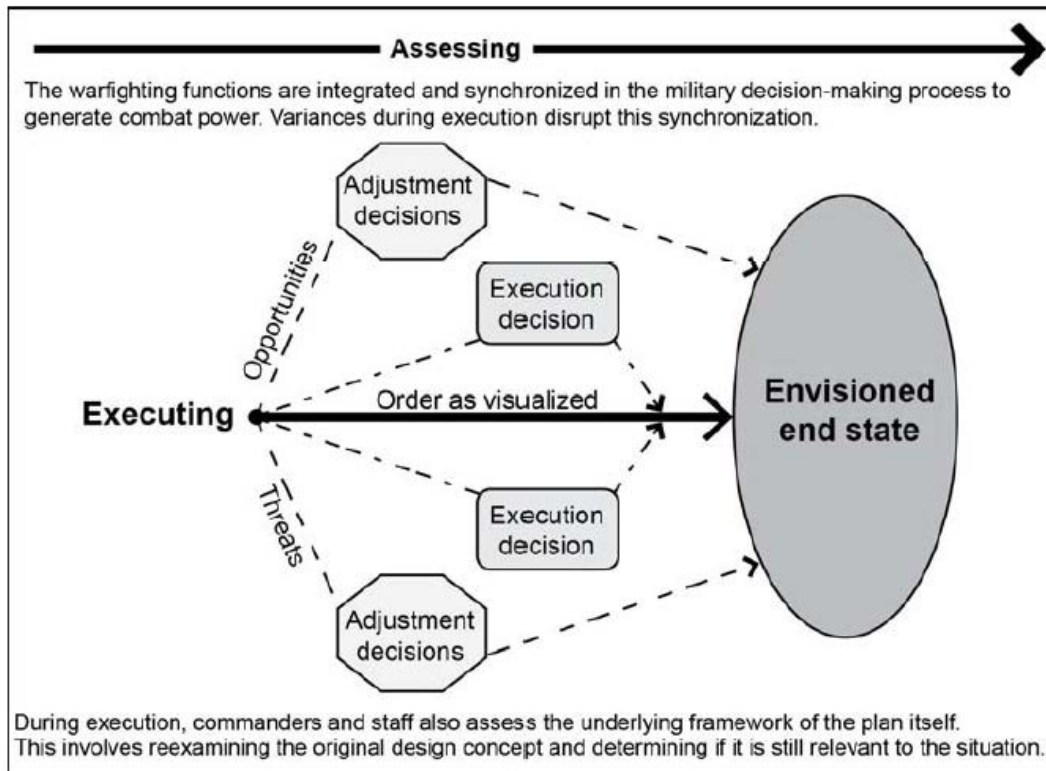


Figure 6. Decisions in Execution

Source: HQDA, ADRP 5-0 *The Operations Process* (Washington D.C: Government Printing Office, May 2012), 4-5.

The practical impact of this can be considered by using a modified version of the “Decisions in execution” model proposed in ADRP 5-0. As envisioned in the model in Figure B, the commander is required to make two types of decisions: execution and adjustment decisions. Execution decisions are those that he anticipated making within the plan, and are often associated with decision points; adjustment decisions represent modifications to the plan in response to unexpected opportunities and threats. The commander is held responsible for all decisions, however he may choose to delegate the implementation of some execution decisions to his staff. If we were to consider where

subordinates have freedom of action within the above model, it would be within area bounded by the execution decision. They have freedom of action in pursuit of those tasks which establish conditions for the commander's execution decisions. When the situation moves outside of the bounds of execution decisions subordinates cease to have freedom of action, and must wait for direction from the commander. The modified model at figure 7 will make this clearer.

Within the modified model the more holistic "effects, objectives and outcomes" have taken the place of the end-state, and there are two classes of adjustment decisions. The first seeks to achieve the same effects, objectives and outcomes through the execution of different actions, the second modifies the effects, objectives or outcomes being pursued.

Within British doctrine the subordinate would appear to have freedom of action within both the area of the execution decision and adjustment decision 1; in response to a changing situation he may effectively precipitate the adjustment through his actions. While he would be obliged to inform the commander of the action he is undertaking, while he would later be required to justify it, and while the commander may choose to overrule his action, freedom of action is at least initially his. Within American doctrine the subordinate has freedom of action within the area of the execution decision, but may not have freedom of action within the area of adjustment decision 1 if their actions were to mitigate against the achievement of the commander's specified key tasks. Both within adjustment area 1 and 2 the subordinate is required to seek permission for a proposed course of action.

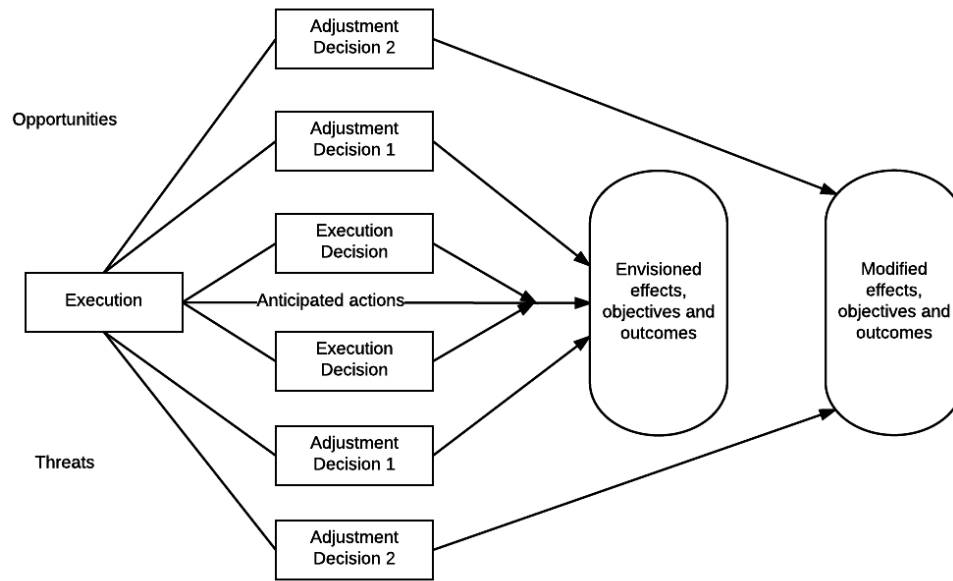


Figure 7. Modified Decisions in Execution

Source: Created by author.

However this presupposes the ability of the subordinate to seek permission from the commander. Either in the event of communications failure, or in the event of a situation changing very quickly and dramatically, the subordinate may be placed in the grey area of a decision dilemma. He may feel it to be necessary to be necessary to act immediately, while aware that his freedom of action would not ordinarily stretch that far. Both American and British doctrine would support the requirement of the subordinate to make a decision in these circumstances; however, with the focus on the assumed primacy of subordinate understanding, and stated importance of the commander supporting subordinate risk-taking, it seems that British doctrine is more supportive of subordinates in this grey area. This distinction, which is more a matter of emphasis and tone than anything else, may lead to subordinates who are quicker to act *in extremis*.

Conclusion

The American and British philosophies of mission command are broadly similar. A casual reading of the doctrine of one Army by a member of the other would probably not lead to the conclusion that there were any great philosophical barriers to interoperability. It is only when the philosophies are examined in more detail, and the implications of some of the technical language and points of emphasis that appear in the doctrine are considered, that areas of difference begin to emerge. The American mission command philosophy appears to have diverged more than the British from the paradigmatic model. While these points of difference can be seen in ideas of responsibility, understanding and decision-making, the significant output concerns the bounds of individual initiative: when a subordinate has freedom of action, and when he doesn't. This is linked to the greater conceptual horizon that a British subordinate seems obliged to focus on during the execution of operations. The expectation of behavior that this places on both commander and subordinate, and the confusion that can therefore result, seems to hold the greatest potential implications for interoperability.

Having considered differences in doctrine, and determined that there are two distinct—albeit broadly similar—interpretations of mission command, it is now necessary to consider the cultural bases of these. This will enable a determination of whether national philosophies of mission command are supported by culture—if they are not, then a “praxis gap” may arise—but also of whether they are driven by culture; i.e. whether characteristics of national military culture have actively driven the interpretation of mission command doctrine. This will be done in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

CULTURE AND MISSION COMMAND

Mission Command is not merely a technique or procedure for issuing orders, but a cultural phenomenon.

— Eitan Shamir, *Transforming Command*

Introduction

Chapter 2 demonstrated the extent to which *Auftragstaktik* was the product of the particular historical circumstances and social dynamics faced by Prussia in the 19th century. A product of necessity in as much as the technical limitations of communication technology demanded radically decentralized execution, it was enabled by the extent to which it was suited to and found acceptance within the Prussian, later German, military. One can argue over which came first, the *Auftragstaktik* chicken or the *Weltanschauung* egg,¹³⁹ but by the perceived high point of German tactical excellence the philosophy was thoroughly accepted by the German Army,¹⁴⁰ meeting their conceptions of war and the place of the soldier within it. The paradigmatic example of mission command therefore had a cultural basis, and considerations of how to adopt or enable mission command

¹³⁹ Williamson Murray and Mark Grimsley, *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States and War* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 13. Murray and Grimsley suggest *Weltanschauung* is best understood as the combination of religion, ideology and culture; it is therefore deeper than culture, and is really equivalent of an entire world-view.

¹⁴⁰ Broadly speaking the period of the Second World War between the Battle of France and Germany's culmination in Op Barbarossa. Tactical excellence is highlighted as even during this period, Germany's performance in both the operational and strategic levels was much more mixed.

since have tended to view it through a cultural lens. Besides Shamir's seminal work, *Transforming Command*, the number of monographs and theses written by serving Army officers dealing specifically with the cultural dimensions of Mission Command is striking.¹⁴¹

In this chapter both the extent to which the American and British philosophies of mission command, which were described in Chapter 3, are supported by their national military cultures, and the extent to which those cultures have driven national interpretations of mission command, will be considered. First, exactly what is meant by culture will be defined, and the models used by two pre-eminent theorists—Geert Hofstede and Edgar Schein—will be introduced. What culture is necessary to support mission command will be considered, and the problems that the British and American armies in particular—and potentially militaries in general—may have in utilizing a mission command philosophy will be described. Finally, key cultural characteristics of the British and American armies will be identified and, using an interplay of both Hofstede and Schein's model, the extent to which each national military culture may support the national ethic of mission command will be posited. This will lead to a judgement of to what extent the practice of mission command within a military is likely to match the doctrinal foundation; and will also identify the extent to which aspects of mission command doctrine are directly dependent of national-specific cultural

¹⁴¹ Examples include: Colonel Richard D. Heyward, "Embedding Mission Command in Army Culture" (Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, 2013); Burwell.

characteristics, and so may create interoperability challenges within a combined operation.

Culture

As with many abstract terms, culture is perhaps easier to understand than it is to define. The definitions provided by Schein and Hofstede respectively, as it is these theorists' models that will be considered in the chapter, are worth considering.

The culture of a group. . . [is]. . . a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.¹⁴²

And:

Culture is always a collective phenomenon, because it is at least partly shared with people who live or lived within the same social environment, which is where it was learned. Culture consists of the unwritten rules of the social game. It is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others. Culture is learned, not innate.¹⁴³

While the definitions are subtly different, with varying points of emphasis—for example Schein's focus on problem solving—there is a degree of commonality. Culture is a learned collection of assumptions, which come to govern behavior and thought. It distinguishes one group of people from another, such that it is sensible to talk of a cultural identity, but it perhaps it is best thought of as a mean or molar phenomenon

¹⁴² Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2010), 18.

¹⁴³ Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, and Michael Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (New York, NY: The McGraw-Hill Companies, 2010), 6.

rather than an absolute. While there will be some assumptions which are taboos,¹⁴⁴ and so more uniformly held, other assumptions will be heavily weighted points on a spectrum of opinion. There can therefore be outliers within a culture whose assumptions differ in some degree from those which are generally held. Crucially one may not even be aware of the impact that culture has on one's thought and behavior, learned as it is at a formative age, such that it becomes "the software of the mind" in Hofstede's phrase. So why does it matter? Because of the way in which it governs behavior and thought. Culture is derived from the Latin *culturare*, to till, farm, or cultivate, and this provides a useful analogy for its importance. Culture tills and cultivates the land on which thought and behavior grow; thoughts and behavior which are not supported by culture will, in the main, wither, while those which are supported by culture will thrive. The importance of a cultural basis for mission command is, in the technical language that we will encounter, that an espoused value cannot be genuinely held if it is not supported by one's basic assumptions; the espoused value will wither as it has been sown on barren and untended ground.

Levels of culture

An officer in the British Army is part of a military culture; he is also part of a national culture; he may also belong to a religious culture, a political culture and so on. A way of grouping the various cultural identities that Schein uses is as macro-cultures,

¹⁴⁴ That is to say that acting in a manner contrary to the assumption would be considered taboo.

organizational cultures, sub-cultures and micro-cultures.¹⁴⁵ There is a dependence between each of the categories; so it would be hard to sustain a military culture (an organizational culture) which was completely disjointed from a national culture (a macro-culture). However difference between the various cultures one belongs to will exist, and it may be that there are significant tensions between, for example, some of the values of an organizational culture, and those of the macro-culture it belongs to. There may be also be a difficulty when observing the behavior of an individual in determining exactly which cultural identity is acting as the driver for his behavior at any one time (or whether his behavior is an admixture of many of them).

¹⁴⁵ Schein, 2. Macro-cultures are “nations, ethnic and religious groups, occupations that exist globally”; organizational cultures are “private, public, nonprofit, governmental organizations”; sub-cultures are “occupational groups within organizations”; and micro-cultures are “microsystems within or outside organizations.”

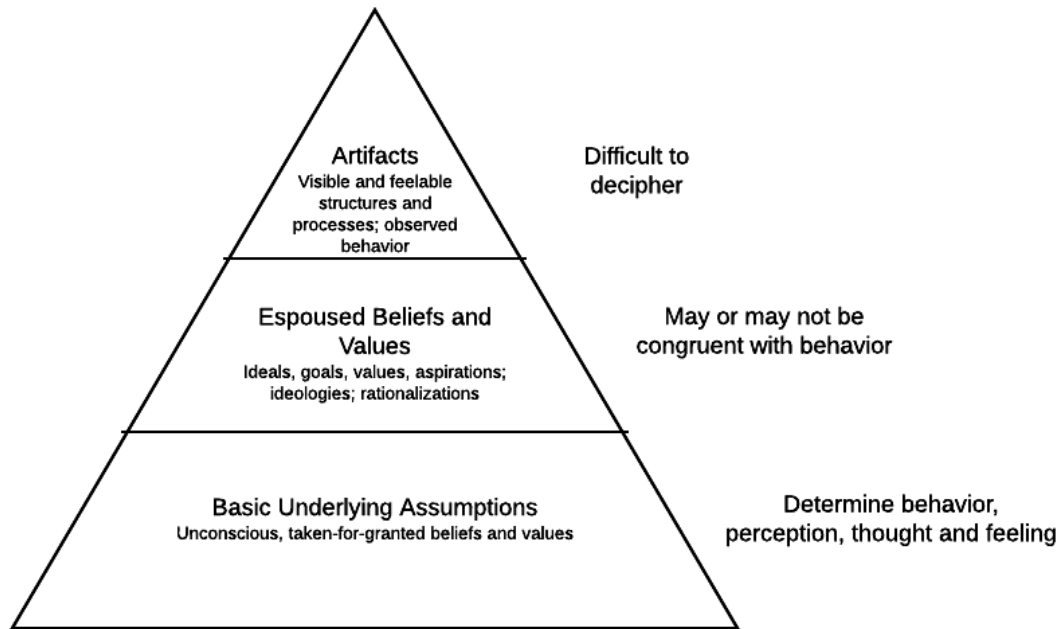


Figure 8. Schein's Three Levels of Culture

Source: Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2010), 24.

In considering how a culture manifests itself Schein's model of artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions will be used (Figure 8). Artifacts are everything that one can see hear and feel; so "the architecture of [a group's] physical environment; its language; its technology and products . . . its style, as embodied in clothing, manners of address, emotional displays, and myths and stories told about the organization; its published lists of values; its observable rituals and ceremonies."¹⁴⁶ Espoused values and beliefs are those things which the group profess to be true but which have not gone through the process of testing and validating which transforms an espoused

¹⁴⁶ Schein, 26.

belief into a shared belief and finally into an assumption.¹⁴⁷ Basic assumptions are those things which are so strongly believed that members of a group find any behavior based on other premises, or which is any way contrary to the basic assumption, to be inconceivable or incomprehensible.¹⁴⁸

When considering prevailing military culture within the British and American armies, this thesis will rely to a large extent on observable behaviors and structures. Schein identifies the danger in extrapolating the existence of underlying assumptions from the observation of artifacts, as “one’s interpretations will inevitably be a projection of one’s own feelings and reactions.”¹⁴⁹ There is a danger of personal bias in any kind of inductive reasoning—particularly for the author when considering the British army—however the use, whenever possible, of other cultural studies of the two armies should serve to verify any inferences that are made.

Hofstede and the Dimensions of National Culture

Hofstede’s work, while sharing elements of Schein’s idea of levels of culture, is focused very much on national culture, and how to understand the varying cultural alignments of nations. Hofstede proposes six dimensions, a dimension being “an aspect of culture which can be measured relative to other cultures”¹⁵⁰, each dimension acting as a lens through which to view the nation. The six dimensions are power-distance,

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 29.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 31.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 27.

¹⁵⁰ Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 31.

collectivism vs individualism, femininity vs masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long term vs short term orientation, and indulgence vs restraint. Hofstede posits that each dimension is associated with certain behaviors or tendencies, so by describing a national culture through these dimensions one is not only able to gain a deeper understanding of the particular national culture, one is also able to understand what organizational cultures, and what behaviors within them are tenable.

A summary of the various dimensions, the behaviors that the dimensions tend to support, and their possible links to the exercise of a mission command philosophy is given below.

Power-Distance

Power-distance is defined as “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.”¹⁵¹ In countries with a small power-distance index subordinates have limited dependences on superiors and expect to be consulted; emotional distance between subordinate and superior is small, and the subordinate feels able to approach and, if necessary, contradict the superior. In countries with a large power-distance index the opposite is the case. Subordinates have a large dependence on their superior, this dependence leading to either an autocratic or paternalistic style of leadership, or conversely a complete rejection of the superior by the subordinate takes place; emotional distance is large and the subordinate feels uncomfortable approaching and contradicting

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 61.

the superior. Some of the traits of small power-distance and large power-distance societies are summarized below:

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Source: Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, and Michael Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (New York, NY: The McGraw-Hill Companies, 2010), 76.

Of note, Hofstede states that a small power-distance index should help “tasks demanding subordinate initiative.”¹⁵² The implication for a key aspect of mission command is clear.

Collectivism versus Individualism

Hofstede states that collectivist societies place the interest of the group first, while individualist societies place the interest of the individual first:

Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Ibid., 75.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 92.

A summary of the traits that Hofstede believes represent this dimension is shown below.

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Source: Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, and Michael Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (New York, NY: The McGraw-Hill Companies, 2010), 113, 124, 130.

One instinctively imagines the military to be a more collectivist organization—or to attract people with collectivist tendencies—and indeed that is borne out by Joseph Soeters’ work investigating cultural tendencies within military academies (this work, and

its apparent implications for mission command, will be described later).¹⁵⁴ However, it will be noticed that a number of the traits associated with individualism seem to be supportive of mission command: the ability to speak one's mind; a preponderance of low context communication¹⁵⁵; and the importance of achieving a given task. However, some individualist tendencies can also be seen to be highly inimical to mission command (or indeed any form of military discipline): employees are "economic persons" who will pursue the employer's interest if it coincides with their self-interest; individual interests prevail over collective interests. A balanced culture, consisting of both individualist and collectivist traits, would seem the most suitable for the exercise of mission command. Individualist societies might require injects of collectivist behaviour, and vice versa.

Femininity versus Masculinity

Whether a society is determined to be feminine or masculine is based on their attitude to gender roles.

A society is called masculine when emotional gender roles are clearly distinct: men are supposed to be assertive, tough and focused on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life.

¹⁵⁴ Joseph L. Soeters, "Value Orientations in Military Academies: A Thirteen Country Study," *Armed Forces and Society* 24, no. 1 (Fall 1997), and Joseph Soeters and Ricardo Recht, "Culture and Discipline in Military Academies: An International Comparison," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 26, no. 2 (Winter 1998).

¹⁵⁵ Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 109. "A low-context communication is one in which the mass of communication is vested in the explicit code, which is typical for individualist cultures." This stands opposed to high-context communication in which "little has to be said or written because most of the information is in the physical environment or supposed to be known by the persons involved." It is posited in this thesis that low-context communication is preferable for mission command because of the greater clarity and assurance of clarity that results.

A society is called feminine when emotional gender roles overlap: both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life.¹⁵⁶

Some of the key traits of the masculinity versus femininity dimension are shown below.

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Source: Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, and Michael Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (New York, NY: The McGraw-Hill Companies, 2010), 159

With regard to the demands for mission command, a tension can be observed between the two dimensions. The focus on task achievement would suggest a masculine society would be more suited to the implementation of a mission command philosophy; however, attitudes towards women and homosexuals would mitigate against the creation of trust, and the efficient utilization of human resources, if a significant quantity of women and homosexuals were included within the practitioners of the philosophy.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 140.

Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance is defined as “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations”.¹⁵⁷ Cultures which have a low level of uncertainty avoidance will tend to be more comfortable with unfamiliar or chaotic situations, and require less need for structure. Some of Hofstede’s key traits are shown below.

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Source: Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, and Michael Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (New York, NY: The McGraw-Hill Companies, 2010), 203, 208, 217.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 191.

A culture with weak uncertainty avoidance would seem to be more suited to mission command; more comfortable with the level of uncertainty imposed by the delegation of decisions and execution; and more comfortable making those decisions in conditions of chaos and uncertainty. The importance that was placed in mission command doctrine on being required to make a decision on the basis of incomplete information seems to particularly resonate. The example that Hofstede gives as exemplary of a weak uncertainty avoidance culture (and the contrast that is made with another) is striking, and so will be quoted in full.

In the 1960s Arndt Sorge did his military service in the West German army. Near his hometown, where he spent his free weekends, there were barracks of the British “Army on the Rhine”. Sorge was keen on watching British motion pictures with the original sound track, which were shown in the British barracks, and he walked up to the sentry to ask whether he, as a German soldier, could attend. The sentry referred him to the sergeant of the guard, who called the second in command on the telephone and then tore a page out of a notebook, on which he wrote, “Mr Arndt Sorge has permission to attend film shows,” and signed it, adding that permission was granted by the second in command.

Sorge used his privilege not only on that occasion but several other times, and the notebook page (in conjunction with his German army identity card) always opened the gate for him. After he was demobilized Sorge asked the British sentry whether he, now as a civilian, could continue to attend. The sentry looked at the notebook page, said, “This is for you personally,” and let him in.

Arndt Sorge... remembers this experience as an example of how differently the British seemed to handle such an unplanned request from what he was accustomed to in the German army. The Germans would have taken more time and would have needed the permission of more authorities; they would have asked more information about the applicant and issued a more formal document. Finally, the document would have been issued to him as a member of the armed forces, and there would have been no question of his using it after his demobilization.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 187-188.

It is important not to extrapolate too much from one example, but there are two points of interest. The first is that the British Army is cited as an example of a weak uncertainty avoidance culture. This exchange took place after the end of National Service and the advent of a fully professional army, so this has cannot be explained by recourse to wider national dimensions of culture which do not hold true for members of the army.¹⁵⁹ Not only were the British soldiers comfortable dealing with an unfamiliar request, they were also comfortable making decisions based on their own initiative and judgment. Of note as well, this was the British Army of the Rhine: that part of the army that has been characterized as following a command philosophy of detailed control, and as being less willing and able to demonstrate initiative and flexibility.¹⁶⁰ The second point of interest is that the German Army is cited as an example of a strong uncertainty avoidance culture—and by a German soldier, who should be comparatively familiar with the organization. The Bundeswehr of the 1960s is not the Wehrmacht of 1941, but a degree of cultural continuity, particularly in attitudes to *auftragstaktik*, has been noted within the modern German army.¹⁶¹ So not only did the British army—which did not practice mission command—have a weak uncertainty avoidance culture; the German

¹⁵⁹ The dissonance between national attitudes and where nations sit on the spectrum of cultural dimensions, and the attitudes that appear to be prevalent in those nations' armies will be explored later in the chapter. Perhaps unsurprisingly it seems to be the case that those who are attracted to military service vary slightly from the prevailing national attitudes and display different preferences within Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

¹⁶⁰ Shamir, 80.

¹⁶¹ Jim Storr, "A Year Observing Command and Control," *British Army Review* 126 (Spring 2001).

army—which did practice mission command, and apparently effectively—seemed to have a strong uncertainty avoidance culture, which should have made their exercise of mission command less effective. A possible explanation is an ability on the part of the German army to moderate their degree of uncertainty avoidance dependent on the situation: so to tolerate ambiguity when required, but to use more formal and precise processes when possible. This would of course necessitate the recognition of which category a situation had fallen within, in order to carry out the correct response.

Long Term versus Short Term Orientation

Long term and short term orientation refers to whether one is more concerned with achievement in the far-future, or achievement in present or near-future; it also impacts the way in which one regards the past. Hofstede defines it as:

Long-term orientation (LTO) stands for the fostering of virtues oriented toward future rewards—in particular, perseverance and thrift. Its opposite pole, short-term orientation, stands for the fostering of virtues related to the past and present—in particular, respect for tradition, preservation of “face”, and fulfilling social obligations.¹⁶²

The traits associated with each orientation are shown below.

¹⁶² Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 239.

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Source: Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, and Michael Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (New York, NY: The McGraw-Hill Companies, 2010), 243.

The general norms of a long-term orientation, particularly the focus on adaptiveness and the willingness to subordinate oneself to a purpose, would seem to support mission command. However, the inclination towards a sustained effort yielding a slow result does not seem to fit with the necessity for relentless action and generation of tempo, which is implicit to mission command and the doctrines of maneuver that it supports.

Indulgence versus Restraint

Indulgence and restraint, a comparatively new dimension within academic literature, and included within Hofstede's dimensions only from 2010, relates to degrees of happiness, perception of life control, and beliefs as to importance of leisure.

Indulgence is defined as "a tendency to allow relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoyment and having fun."¹⁶³ Meanwhile restraint is the

¹⁶³ Ibid., 281.

“conviction that such gratification needs to be curbed and regulated by strict social norms.”¹⁶⁴ The traits associated with indulgence and restraint are shown below.

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Source: Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, and Michael Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (New York, NY: The McGraw-Hill Companies, 2010), 291.

Compared to the other dimensions, fewer traits surrounding indulgence and restraint seem to have implications for mission command; it is therefore unclear whether an indulgent or restrained attitude is more suited to its practice.

Summary

When considering Hofstede’s dimensions and their relevance for mission command, it would seem that a mission command philosophy would be more easily exercised by a society with low power-distance and weak uncertainty avoidance. A balanced position with regard to individualism-collectivism would be useful, an individualist task-focus and honesty of communication directed towards the achievement

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

of a group, rather than individual, interest. While a similarly balanced position with regard to feminine-masculine dimensions seems appropriate—the task focus of a masculine culture being allied to the maximum use of human resources and trust enabled by a feminine culture—their impact on mission command is not as profound. The other cultural dimensions discussed by Hofstede seem of less relevance to the exercise of a mission command philosophy, and will not be considered in later analysis.

Synthesis of Schein and Hofstede's Models

At this point an attempt will be made to link Hofstede's dimensions with the model of organizational culture proposed by Schein. This is shown at Figure 9.

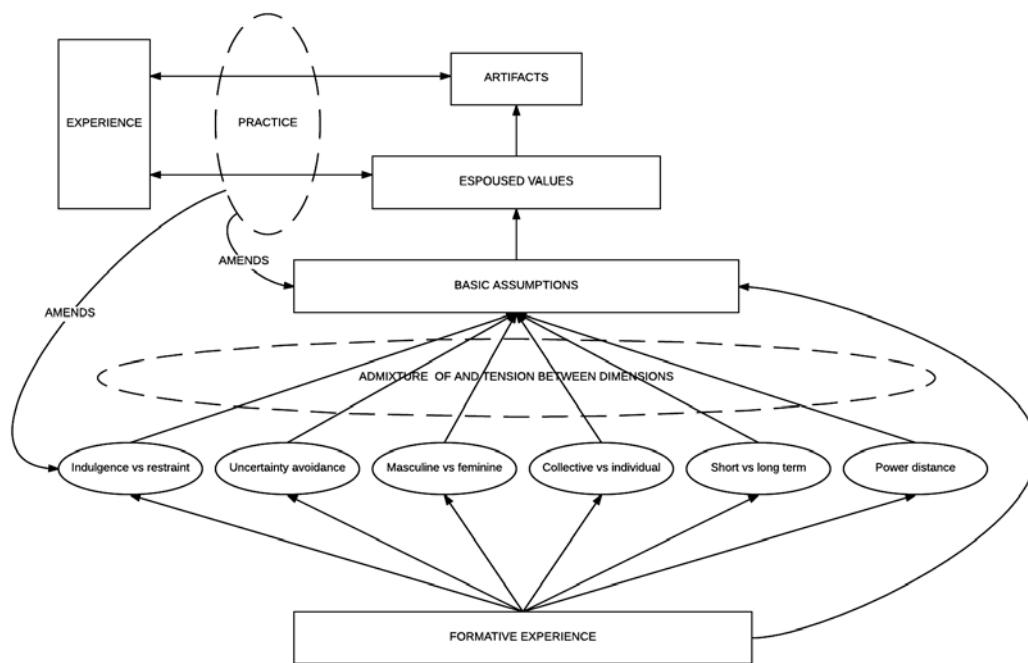


Figure 9. Unification of cultural dimensions and levels of culture

Source: Created by author.

Within the model proposed at Figure 9 formative experience leads to the cultural predilections expressed through Hofstede's various cultural dimensions. Through the admixture of, and the tension that exists between these dimensions, basic assumptions come to be formed. It is also possible, indeed more probable, that as well as creating predilections for certain dimensions, formative experience directly drives some assumptions. Upon these assumptions, as per Schein's model, espoused values and then artifacts sit.

It could be argued though, that these values and artifacts are constantly being tested. If culture is a construct designed to solve problems, the efficacy of values and artifacts in solving those problems must be considered by the actors involved (even if unconscious assumptions prevent an entirely impartial consideration of the values and artifacts' worth). The exercise of artifacts and values through testing and praxis enables two potential amendments. First, basic assumptions could be amended through the espoused values and artifacts which are built on them not wholly succeeding. Second, cultural dimensions should be able to be amended if, for example, a precept or an attitude on which they are based is shown or appears to be false. If formative experience is able to drive cultural dimensions, then it would seem logical that later experience could as well; though formative experience remains of course particularly influential. Artifacts and values are derived from basic assumptions, but the performance of artifacts and values may then amend basic assumptions or the dimensions that underpin them. This may be

seen as a logical extension of Schein's idea of artifacts as a secondary reinforcement mechanism.¹⁶⁵

The importance for mission command and the cultural acceptance of mission command, is that an opportunity may exist to change some of the dimensional attitudes which underpin basic assumptions, such that they are more receptive of, or accommodating to a philosophy of mission command. Much like the Aristotelian injunction to become good through doing good,¹⁶⁶ the commitment to espoused values and artifacts that reinforce one aspect of a dimension may succeed in changing a cultural proclivity towards that aspect. For example, the creation of artifacts and espoused values that reflect a feminine attitude may succeed through successful praxis in shifting the cultural dimension of masculine-oriented practitioners further to the feminine end. The weakness in this model is that the espousal of a feminine ethic or activity within an artifact might create an immediate cognitive dissonance within masculine oriented practitioners; there is therefore a danger of the value or artifact being rejected before successful praxis has been able to amend assumptions or underlying dimensions. Both British and American cultural artifacts or values will be examined for the extent to which they reinforce or subvert existing cultural dimensions, and the extent to which national military culture then supports each national ethic of mission command will be able to be identified.

¹⁶⁵ Schein, 250.

¹⁶⁶ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), 18-19. "The virtues we get by first exercising them, as happens in the case of the arts as well . . . by doing the acts that we do in our transactions with other men we become just or unjust."

Cultural problems for mission command

The idea of mission command, which has been explored previously, as a fundamental expression of German military culture, lies at the heart of the perceived cultural problems associated with it being practiced by non-German armies; i.e. in the case of this thesis the American and the British. To frame the problem as an overly simplistic syllogism: Mission Command is a German concept; British and American armies fight according to British and American concepts; therefore the British and American armies can't practice mission command. Or at least, they can't practice it without undergoing significant cultural change. Shamir attempted to demonstrate this using Schein's model of artifacts, values and assumptions, comparing the military culture of the British and American Armies to a "mission command culture" (which is synonymous with German military culture), and thereby identifying a perceived cultural chasm that would somehow have to be forded to enable successful praxis.

Table 9. Schein's Comparison of Military Cultures

Characteristics	British Army	American Army	Mission Command Culture
Basic Assumptions			
Attitude toward war	A sport or game for the aristocracy	Similar to business	A social phenomenon, clash of wills produces friction
Attitude toward the army	Limited basis, to secure and police the empire	Undesired, but if needed should be large and powerful	Central institution, "an army that has a state"
Attitude toward risk	Should be well calculated if taken	Should be avoided if possible	Necessary in all levels
Attitude toward the military profession	A lifestyle rather than a profession	Acceptable but not desirable	A distinct profession
Main inspiration for military education	Tradition and practical experience	Managerial knowledge	A balance of theory and practice
Espoused Values			
Social source of military elite	British serving aristocracy	West Point graduates	A blend of aristocracy and professional elite
Command doctrine	Umpiring	Managerial principles	Friction, chance and uncertainty
Uniquely emphasized principles of war	Maintenance of aim, moral, surprise, flexibility	Mass, simplicity, unity of command	Reciprocal and dialectic principles
Inspiring figures	Marlborough, Wellington, Slim, Montgomery	Grant, Lee, Sherman, Eisenhower, Patton	Frederick the Great, Moltke the Elder
Artifacts			
Higher military academies	Focus on staff administration	Focus on managerial aspects	Produces military professionals elite
General staff corps	Medium status and influence	Low status and influence	"Brain of an army," high influence
HQ's staff organization	Similar to German structure, operations are "first among equals"	French bureau system, operations equal to other bureaus	All staff functions revolve around operations
Technology	Conservative and suspicious	Heavy reliance on technology	A tool to serve doctrine
Human resources policies	The regimental system	Managerial efficiency	Maintenance of unit cohesion and tactical flexibility

Source: Eitan Shamir, *Transforming Command: The Pursuit of Mission Command in the U.S., British and Israeli Armies* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 96.

Shamir's analysis is thought provoking and certainly useful in identifying various cultural differences between the three armies in quite specific time periods¹⁶⁷; however there are two flaws with the analysis, or at least the way that it's presented.

By presenting German military culture as "Mission Command Culture" and associating specific assumptions, values and artifacts with it, Shamir suggests that all of these assumptions, values and artifacts are necessary for the successful cultural integration of mission command. While it is perfectly possible to argue—the argument was in fact alluded to in chapter 2—that the specific cultural mix created by a Junker aristocracy and a General Staff trained professional corps, was helpful to the acceptance and practice of *auftragstaktik* within the Prussian Army, it is quite another thing to suggest that a mixture of an aristocracy and a professional elite as a "social source of military elite" is therefore necessary for the successful practice of mission command. This is the logical conclusion—possibly inadvertent—of his choice and presentation of data.

The second objection is that elements of his cultural analysis of the British and American armies, if they ever applied to those armies, certainly did not apply at the point in time at which they were seeking to adopt mission command. Two examples will suffice to illustrate the point. Shamir's claim that a serving aristocracy within the British Army were the social source of a military elite would not have been true at any stage

¹⁶⁷ Shamir, 96. While Shamir suggests his analysis is meant to cover the full historical sweep of command practices described within his book, it seems better suited—in general terms—to describing American command philosophy in the period from the Second World War, and British command philosophy in the period up to the Second World War. There are however still flaws in his analysis.

since the 19th century. While aristocrats continued to serve in the military through the 20th century (and in vanishingly small numbers continue to serve in the 21st) they never did so in the numbers whereby they could form a West Point or German General Staff equivalent. If Shamir had referred instead to public school educated officers within socially prestigious regiments then his point would have greater validity,¹⁶⁸ but to claim every Eton educated Guardsman as an aristocrat seems to dramatically overstate the point. His characterization of American higher military academies as focused on the managerial aspects of war seems similarly anachronistic. This was certainly a criticism that was levelled at the Command and General Staff College (CGSC) before the Second World War¹⁶⁹, but in the period after the Second World War there seemed a much greater focus on at least attempting to produce a professional military elite (the quality that he attributes to the German model). The leading role that CGSC took in developing the doctrinal concepts around the Pentomic Division in the 1950s, are demonstrative of a

¹⁶⁸ A useful, albeit very partial, description of how officers from a comparatively educational background, belonging to a small number of well-regarded regiments have tended to wield disproportionate influence in the British army is provided in: Keith Macdonald, “Black mafia, loggies and going for the stars: the military elite revisited,” *Sociological Review* 52, no. 1 (February 2004), 106-135.

¹⁶⁹ Peter J. Schifferle, *America's School for War: Fort Leavenworth, Officer Education, and Victory in World War II* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2010). While Schifferle's over-riding thesis is the contribution that inter-war education at CGSC made to American success in World War II, he details much of the criticism levelled at the CGSC curriculum; particularly the prevalence of the “school solution” and the focus of technical, managerial problems (or at least technical, managerial methods of problem solving).

post-war role as a test bed for doctrine and a producer of the officers required to fight it.¹⁷⁰

These examples of apparent—possibly superficial—flaws in Shamir’s analysis do not invalidate his central thesis that there was a cultural difference between the German Army that developed mission command and the armies that sought to adopt it, nor that this difference would in turn either require a cultural change in the adopting armies or lead to a change in the adopted philosophy. However it does demonstrate that not every cultural divergence is necessarily significant for the efficacy of mission command, and that there is a requirement to ensure that those artifacts and values that one ascribes to an army are actually representative of it.

Hofstede’s Dimensions and Mission Command

In the description of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions and associated traits it was suggested that certain dimensions appeared to be aligned with the practice of a mission command philosophy: low power-distance; weak uncertainty avoidance; and a balanced position with regard to the collectivist-individualist dimension, traits of both collectivism and individualism clearly supportive of mission command.¹⁷¹ The masculine-feminine

¹⁷⁰ Brian McAllister Linn, *Elvis’s Army* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 91-93.

¹⁷¹ Angela R. Febbraro, “Leadership and management teams in multinational military cooperation,” in *Military Cooperation in Multinational Peace Operations: Managing cultural diversity and crisis response*, ed. Joseph Soeters and Philip Manigart (Oxford, UK: Routledge, 2008), 49-69. In her discussion of cultural differences within multinational forces and their impact on operations, Angela Febbraro supports part of this analysis, identifying power-distance and uncertainty avoidance as the key cultural determinants of a mission command philosophy.

and long-term vs short-term dimensions were ambiguous, aspects of each supporting, but also working against the implementation of a mission command philosophy; however none of these traits had the same importance as those associated with the similarly ambiguous collectivist-individualist dimension.

Within Hofstede 74 countries are ranked against a particular index on each cultural dimension, and allotted both a score and a ranking. On each index a score of 105 tends to be the maximum that can be achieved, with a score around 50 is usually the tipping point from one side of a dimension to the other; for example a culture which scores less than 50 on the masculinity index is considered a feminine culture. Scores that the United Kingdom and United States of America were given by Hofstede, and their ranks within the 74 countries are shown below in Table 10.

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Source: Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, and Michael Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (New York, NY: The McGraw-Hill Companies, 2010), 58, 96, 142, 192, 240 and 282.

This seems a source of some optimism for British and American practitioners of mission command; both the USA and UK are low power-distance societies, with low

uncertainty avoidance; both are however quite masculine, and both are highly individualist, which might be conceived as causing problems. However, this assumes that militaries are representative of their societies.

In his article “Culture and Discipline in Military Academies: An International Comparison”, Joseph Soeters demonstrated the divergence between national cultural dimensions, and the tendencies of officer cadets.

Table 11. Divergence between national and military cultural dimensions

Index value	UK National	UK Military	USA National	USA Military
Power-distance	Low	High	Low	Low
Individualist / Collectivist	Individualist	Collectivist	Individualist	Individualist
Masculine / Feminine	Masculine	Masculine	Masculine	Masculine
Uncertainty avoidance	Low	Low	Low	High

Source: Joseph L. Soeters, “Value Orientations in Military Academies: A Thirteen Country Study,” *Armed Forces and Society* 24, no. 1 (Fall 1997): 181.

While there are only three category changes between national and observed military cultures,¹⁷² there are significant changes of scale within each dimension.

¹⁷² The British military’s change from low to high power-distance, and from individualist to collectivist; and the American military’s change from low to high uncertainty avoidance.

Table 12. Detailed divergence between national and military culture

Index value	UK Military (change in score)	U.S. Military (change in score)
Power-distance	+96	+44
Individualist / Collectivist	-45	-28
Masculine / Feminine	-63	-44
Uncertainty avoidance	+14	+26

Source: Joseph Soeters and Ricardo Recht, “Culture and Discipline in Military Academies: An International Comparison,” *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 26, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 15-18.

Within both British and American armies the officer-cadets surveyed¹⁷³ were higher on the power-distance dimension, less individualist, more avoidant of uncertainty, and less masculine. This pattern of change was expected by Soeters, and is reflected within the other eleven militaries that he surveyed. One change does appear to be disproportionate: the staggering increase in power-distance within the British army. As this may skew perceptions of British military culture, a potential reason for such a large increase amongst officer cadets, and a reason to believe that it may be unrepresentative of wider military culture will be briefly discussed.

Whereas questions to identify other dimensions were largely preferential, the questions to identify power-distance relationship were both preferential and experiential.¹⁷⁴ Here the comparative peculiarity of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) may have a bearing. Whereas most military academies are both

¹⁷³ All American officer cadets surveyed were from West Point; all British officer cadets surveyed were from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

¹⁷⁴ Soeters, 13.

academic and military institutions, Sandhurst is predominantly military¹⁷⁵, and as such cadets are subject to a more severe military discipline during what is the equivalent of 12 months of basic training than may be the case in other institutions. While this may not alter their preference for power-distance, it would certainly alter their experience. Of the three survey questions to determine power-distance, two are “Do you have an authoritarian / paternalistic superior?” and “How often are you willing to express disagreement with your superior?” To make the point somewhat tritely, most Foot Guards Colour Sergeants¹⁷⁶ are not known for their easy-going and permissive nature, and an officer cadet’s willingness to express disagreement is likely to be proportionate to their willingness to perform press ups. Of all the dimensions, because of the circumstances of surveying officer-cadets, power-distance is the one where the

¹⁷⁵ For the sake of clarity, there is some academic instruction at RMAS: cadets attend lessons in War Studies, Defense and International Affairs, and Communication and Applied Behavioral Science. However practical military instruction predominates by a distance. Recent accreditation has enabled officer cadets to use their time at RMAS to count towards either a bachelor’s degree in International Studies, or a master’s degree in Leadership and Conflict Studies, however there has been no increase in the time devoted to the academic component of the course, and the award of these degrees is contingent on the completion of significant amounts of work in the years following commissioning. “Academic Departments,” Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, accessed 29 April 2017, http://www.army.mod.uk/training_education/24488.aspx.

¹⁷⁶ The majority of practical instruction at Sandhurst is delivered by Platoon Colour Sergeants. Sandhurst is unusual, if not unique, amongst military academies in having officers instructed primarily by SNCOs. A disproportionate number of Colour Sergeants at Sandhurst, and an even more disproportionate number of Sergeant Majors, are provided by the five regiments of Foot Guards: Grenadier, Coldstream, Scots, Irish and Welsh.

response—certainly in the British Army—is likely to be the least typical of the experience of commissioned officers¹⁷⁷ in the field army.

This is not however to deny that there is likely to be a greater tendency to a higher power-distance dimension in the culture of British Army than there is in Britain as a whole. As mentioned, Soeters findings validated his pre-conception: that militaries had greater power-distance, were less individualist, more avoidant of uncertainty, and more feminine. The military seems somehow to attract the outliers, rather than truly representative examples of, the source society. The presumed reason for Soeters' preconception, beyond previous observations, is the well noted difference between the military and civilian mind and attitude. While the most famous explication of this was provided by Samuel Huntington in *The Soldier and the State*, a more directly relevant study for this thesis is Norman Dixon's *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence*. This is because it not only because some of his observations appear to link very neatly to the cultural dimensions used by Soeters, but because he seeks to establish a link between cultural tendencies and military effectiveness.

Dixon's central thesis is that incompetent generalship specifically (and incompetent leadership more generally) has as a root, or at least contributory cause, psychological flaws rooted in childhood trauma. The awful irony of military psychology that he contends is a pattern in British military history is that those psychological types who are least suited to military leadership in times of war, are the ones most attracted to the military as a career in times of peace. This is because there is, in his view, a

¹⁷⁷ This emphasis on commissioned officers is important, and will be referred to and explained later.

fundamental tension between the achievement of true military effectiveness and the traditional measures of military efficiency.

Since the Israeli Army puts a low premium on obsessive behavior, its administration tends to be disorderly: letters get lost, forms are wrongly filed, and Moshe gets the call-up papers meant for Josef. In other words, the flexibility and battle discipline of a near-perfect fighting machine are evidently bought at the price of minor breakdowns on the bureaucratic front.¹⁷⁸

While Dixon's characterization of the Israeli Defense Force borders on the hagiographic, the central paradox is clear: true military effectiveness necessitates the active rejection of at least part of a traditional military ethic.

Some of the characteristics of the psychological type that is most attracted by the traditional ethic can be seen to bear directly on mission command and the cultural dimensions that have been identified as supportive of it:

8. Passivity and indecisiveness in senior commanders.
9. A tendency to lay the blame on others...
11. A love of 'bull', smartness, precision and strict preservation of 'the military pecking order'.
12. A high regard for tradition and other aspects of conservatism.
13. A lack of creativity, improvisation, inventiveness and open-mindedness.
14. A tendency to eschew moderate risks for tasks that are so difficult that failure might seem excusable.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Norman Dixon, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence* (London, UK: Pimlico, 1994), 352.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

So Dixon's military mind has a high power-distance index, high uncertainty-avoidance, is risk averse, fails to make decisions, and destroys trust through transferring blame. Attracted by a traditional ethic of drill, discipline and the imposition of order, they are incapable of delegating authority, or acting with initiative when authority is delegated to them. The difficulty inherent in the traditional military type exercising mission command is obvious, and reflective of the phenomenon exposed by Soeters. A cohort who have higher power-distance, are more avoidant of uncertainty and are more collectivist than their wider national cultures, are required to exercise a command philosophy which is best suited to those who display at least some individualist tendencies,¹⁸⁰ with low power-distance and low uncertainty-avoidance dimensions.

In considering how suited British and American military culture is to mission command, one is therefore asking how effectively the respective organizational cultures reinforce low power-distance, weak uncertainty-avoidance, and more individualist cultural dimensions.¹⁸¹

Organizational Culture—Artifacts and their Importance

This section will examine how artifacts within the two military cultures either reinforce or hinder those cultural dimensions identified as supportive of mission command, and how they also reinforce or hinder other requirements for mission command established in Chapter 3. The focus throughout will be on commissioned

¹⁸⁰ Noting the contribution and requirement of collectivist traits as well.

¹⁸¹ Acknowledging that the goal is not to create to create an individualist culture, but one that contains some positive individualist traits.

officers as a sub-set of military culture. Mission command at everything above the lowest tactical level involves the delegation of command from and to commissioned officers, with the interplay (e.g. through the control function) of other commissioned officers. The attitudes held by NCOs and soldiers, and the relationship between them and officers is, strictly for the purposes of this thesis, unimportant. If the exercise of mission command at the lowest tactical level (i.e. within company group and below) was considered, then attitudes held by NCOs and soldiers would become increasingly important.

Size of Headquarters

At both the brigade and divisional levels American headquarters have larger staff than their British equivalent; in addition they seem to be rank heavier.

Table 13. Size and Structure of British and American Formation HQs

Echelon	Total Size ¹⁸²	Brigadiers	Colonels	Lieutenant Colonels	Majors	Captains
U.S. Division	537	2	2	31	65	53
UK Division	109	1	3	9	26	25
U.S. Brigade	136	-	1	1	11	22
UK Brigade	68	1	-	-	10	12

Source: “HQ, Armored Brigade Combat Team” and “HQ, Armored Division,” Force Management System, accessed 18 May 2017, <https://fmsweb.fms.army.mil/>; “Armoured Division HQ FESC” and “Armoured Infantry Division HQ FESC,” Army HQ, Andover UK (5 May 2017).

¹⁸² There must be a degree of caution in comparing liability figures as the two armies may not include the same elements as part of the headquarters’ establishment. However, while differences in attributing liability will account for some of the difference, it will not account for it all.

This phenomenon was identified by Rupert Smith, when he commanded 1 (UK) Armoured Division in the first Gulf War.

In the 1990-91 Gulf War, my armoured division headquarters was organized on the British model—and was noticeably smaller than the U.S. divisional HQ. This was a function of national philosophy and preference. It took us some time to learn that the many plans emanating from the superior U.S. corps HQ and flanking U.S. divisional HQ were but contingencies... I had one staff officer to deal with all this where an equivalent U.S. HQ had a branch of about five officers.¹⁸³

Smith associates the difference in size primarily with a difference in planning philosophy. The philosophy practiced by his headquarters—which he associates with a traditional British philosophy—was extremely commander centric; onus was placed on the commander to come to an early decision, on subordinate commanders to achieve the effects to support that decision, and the staff were freed from much of the business of working up options for the commander, or developing detailed plans for execution. The philosophy he associated with American headquarters—and also the NATO headquarters which he later commanded—saw the commander guided to his decision by staff, detailed options having been worked up for him to choose between. The latter philosophy necessitated a larger staff with more branches, as there was simply more work to be done. It should be noted that Smith does not take the ethnocentric view of “British is Best”, instead seeing advantages and disadvantages within both systems. He views the traditional British system as better at the tactical level: “it is smaller, more agile and produces rapid results, provided the commander is well forward and decisive.” The American system he sees as clearly superior at the operational level: “it is more thorough,

¹⁸³ Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force* (London, UK: Penguin, 2006), 94.

can handle a wide range of issues at the same time and, with a good Chief of Staff, can anticipate and plan ahead.”

It is important not to exaggerate differences between approaches to planning and execution in the two armies. The British Combat Estimate (which had not been introduced at the time of the first Gulf War) and the American Military Decision-Making Process are more similar than dissimilar. Both consist of commander led mission analysis leading to guidance from him to the staff; both see the staffs working up courses of action to present to the commander for approval; and both then see the commander required to make a decision between his various options, a decision which is tested through a process of war-gaming. However, it is probably true to say that within two ostensibly commander-centric approaches, the British approach is still slightly more commander-centric, the staff working to more directed guidance when they come to develop their courses of action, and working up those courses of action in less detail in order to enable a rapid decision. In terms of the American preference for an analytical decision-making process that was discussed in chapter 3, the British approach seems to allow greater influence for a commander’s intuition (and, also, biases), while the American planning process is more purely analytical.

The preference for a more analytical planning process necessarily drives a larger staff, but there are other contributory factors. The greater initiative that appears to be given doctrinally to British subordinates reduces the amount of control and direction that needs to be exerted by a superior formation during execution; the doctrinally greater delegation of decision-making also reduces the amount of analysis that needs to be conducted by the staff as part of the decision-making process during execution. By virtue

of the staff having to do less during execution, British formations can afford to be smaller.

A large headquarters staff would seem to reflect traits associated with a high power-distance dimension: a large number of supervisory staff, and the capacity (therefore the temptation) for centralization. In the greater degree of formalization and structure necessary in managing the activities of a large staff there may also be traits that come to reinforce a strong uncertainty avoidance. Neither of these reinforced dimensions seem to aid the practice of a mission command philosophy. One must also consider that while the size of a headquarters might be determined originally by the philosophical preference an army has for planning or its style of command and control during execution, its very size ends up creating its own momentum. Like a gas, the volume of work undertaken expands to fill the space and capacity available. A large headquarters instinctively delegates less, because it has to delegate less: it can conduct more functions for a longer period of time, so there is less of a forcing function to necessitate delegation. A larger, more capable headquarters would also seem to create a power-distance gap between itself and the subordinate commander; a distance based less on rank than on perceived expertise. This is reinforced by the power-distance gap which is created by the ranks at which command and control is exercised within a formation or echelon.

Seniority of subordinate commanders vs superior staff

It is generally true to say, at every echelon, that command in the British Army is exercised at a higher rank, while staff responsibilities within the HQ (and so a large degree of the control function) is exercised at a lower rank, than is the case in the American Army. The tables below summarize these relationships.

Table 14. Command and control relationships in the British Army

Echelon	Rank of Commander	Rank of Senior Staff Officer ¹⁸⁴	Subordinate Commander
Division	MG	Col	BG
Brigade	BG	Maj	Lt Col
Battalion	Lt Col	Maj / Capt ¹⁸⁵	Maj

Source: Created by Author.

Table 15. Command and control relationships in the U.S. Army

Echelon	Rank of Commander	Rank of Senior Staff Officer	Subordinate Commander
Division	MG	Col	Col
Brigade	Col	Lt Col	Lt Col
Battalion	Lt Col	Maj	Capt

Source: Created by Author.

A pattern is established within the British Army whereby a commander's subordinate commander is typically senior, or at least more experienced, than the staff officer advising him. There are three implications which have a bearing on mission command.

¹⁸⁴ Note "senior staff officer" not deputy commander. Deputy Commanders have been excluded from this comparison for two reasons: first, their utilization within the British Army is uneven, particularly at brigade level; second, they exercise a command as well as a control function, and so are perhaps not staff in the purest sense.

¹⁸⁵ Infantry battalions are established to have a Major acting as "Battle Group Warfare Officer" and leading the control of the battle; Royal Armoured Corps regiments tend to have a Captain fulfilling the same role. Both types of unit have a Major who is second-in-command, however as per the footnote above he is excluded from the comparison because of the command role that he exercises.

First, when considering the decision-making model posited at Figure 5, the comparative experience of the subordinate commander / staff may alter the value that is placed on the judgement of the subordinate commander with regard to his input, and similarly the judgement of the staff officer with regard to his verification during execution. All other things being equal—state of personal relationship with the commander, perceived competence etc.—the rank differential within the British system would tend to reduce the emphasis placed on a staff verification process, and increase the influence of the subordinate commander in helping formulate the superior commander's knowledge and understanding. So the respective rank differentials both encourage the American propensity for an analytical decision-making model, and leave the British commander more willing to short-cut the analytical process, or adopt a more intuitive model.

Second, the power-distance relationship between the staff officer exercising control, and the subordinate commander being controlled, is inherently different in the two systems. Within the American system the senior staff officer either outranks, or if he doesn't outrank he may well be more experienced than, the officer who is exercising control over him.¹⁸⁶ Within the British army the inversion of the power-distance relationship apparent within the American army may make the subordinate commander less willing to be controlled, and may similarly make the staff officer less willing to exercise control, at least in any ambiguous circumstances. When the control that is exercised is the reinforcement of that procedural control outlined as part of the orders

¹⁸⁶ This is clearly not the case when the commander himself exercises control over his subordinates!

process, then the power-distance relationship is comparatively irrelevant: the staff officer is required to exercise control and the subordinate commander is obliged to respond to it. However, when the control exerted is related to an apparent ambiguity in the orders, or is a response to a developing situation, then the power-distance relationship is of more relevance. In the former case the subordinate commander may feel that he has a better understanding—at least partly due to his greater experience—of the appropriate interpretation of an ambiguity; in the latter that he is best placed—again, due to greater experience—to formulate an appropriate response to a developing situation within the bounds of a new intent.

Third, the more experienced / senior a subordinate commander the more that may be left to his initiative. The example of the regimental / battalion echelon is particularly important, as this provides officers' formative experiences and understanding of the exercise of mission command. It therefore serves as a template which they will, to a greater or lesser extent, apply throughout their careers. British company commanders will, for the most part, be substantive Majors; they will have served for more than eleven years since commissioning; they will have attended Staff College, and so will be formally staff trained; they will have completed at least one staff job within a brigade or higher formation, or within the generating force; they will probably have been staff officers within a battalion or regimental HQ as a Captain. By contrast American company commanders are Captains; they will have served perhaps six to seven years; and for many their entire experience will have been at the company and battalion level. Everything else being equal it would be expected that the British company commander is trusted to use more initiative / is given a looser rein than the American. A pattern of comparatively

limited delegation (within the American system) vs comparatively liberal delegation (within the British system) is established which may then echo through other echelons. This would seem to reinforce the notion of subordinate freedom of action posited at Figure 7, wherein American subordinates had freedom of action within execution decisions, while the freedom of action of British subordinates was expanded to Adjustment Decision 1.

Systems of officer education and trust

It was noted in chapter 3 that British doctrine seems to view trust as something which is at least partly based on an inherent professional respect, while within American doctrine trust was more reliant on the development of personal relationships, and therefore had to be built up over time. British doctrine was therefore closer to the paradigmatic requirement of “Mutual trust based on professional competence (and not necessarily relationship or acquaintance)”. The homogenous British system of professional military education (PME), which stands in contrast to the more heterogeneous American model, may be seen to contribute to this.

British officers all attend a 12 month commissioning course at RMAS. While they then attend branch specific phase 2 courses, they all then attend the same Junior Officers’ Tactical Awareness Course (JOTAC) as a senior Lieutenant, and the Captain’s Warfare Course (CWC) as a Captain. Upon promotion to Major, all British Majors then attend the Intermediate Command and Staff College (Land) (ICSC(L)) at Shrivenham. On promotion to Lieutenant Colonel those who are of the requisite quality to compete for Battalion Command attend the Advanced Command and Staff Course (ACSC), again at Shrivenham, while those with the greatest potential are then selected to attend the Higher

Command and Staff Course (HCSC) while full Colonels. There are criticisms of this system, particularly the 100% attendance at ICSC(L), which is seen as necessarily reducing the rigor of the course and subverting the original point of staff college—the propagation of a staff trained elite—but there is a significant advantage. At every level there is a common understanding of the education and training an officer has received up to that point, and the standard that he will have to have achieved to clear the various educational hurdles. The standard of the worst company commander in the British Army is not necessarily very high, but any superior commander will at least know it was high enough to have passed RMAS, a phase 2 course, JOTAC, CWC, and ICSC(L). The superior commander will understand the standards of these courses, and will—revisions of officer PME notwithstanding—have attended, and possibly taught on them. The same is true at each successive echelon, and assists not just in the creation of trust through the achievement of a commonly recognized professional standard, but in the creation of a common language and understanding of doctrine.

By contrast the American officer will have commissioned from either West Point, an Reserve Officers' Training Corps program, or an Officer Candidate School. He will have attended a branch specific basic and advanced course, and then will, as either a promotable Captain or substantive Major, complete the Command and General Staff Officer's Course (CGSOC) at either Fort Leavenworth, a satellite campus, or via distance learning. If he is of the requisite quality he may attend the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) following completion of CGSOC, and later on in his career he will again—if of the requisite quality—attend one of the various Advanced War Colleges, or complete a fellowship program of comparative stature. There are significant advantages

to this system: it creates a breadth of experience within the officer corps; it leads to more cross pollination between the services, useful for creating the joint officer; it enables the injection of significant rigor at a comparatively junior level, through a course like SAMS; and it means that an officer is able—within reason—to tailor his PME to his interests and preferences. However it also means that two officers of comparatively senior rank may have completed none of the same PME courses, at least not delivered by the same institutions. They have no common point of reference provided by PME. The same is true for the superior commander and his subordinate; the requirement to establish trust through common experience and the personal relationship that then develops, is increased through the comparative lack of shared experience provided by a common system of PME.¹⁸⁷

So a heterogeneous system of PME may hinder the establishment of trust based on an assumed professional competence. The U.S. system seems to mitigate against this in two ways. The first has been alluded to. SAMS provides a significant injection of rigor into American PME; it also means that its graduates, when they move into key positions, are to an extent a known quantity. Because the reputation of the course is so high, for certain key positions there can be an immediate trust based on assumed professional competence. However, SAMS educates a very small percentage of officers, and so can have a minimal impact on its own. The influence that American formation commanders

¹⁸⁷ The perceived tendency of West Point graduates to show preference of favoritism to other West Pointers may be driven by this: either a conscious or unconscious drive to seek those with a shared experience enabling greater initial trust and understanding. The roots of this culture are discussed in Bruce Fleming, “The Service Academies: Eminent Victorians,” *Society* 49, no. 1 (January 2012): 3-12.

have over where incoming officers are placed in their formations, and related to this the system of “by name requests” is a much more widespread means of creating the basis for immediate trust. It enables commanders to leverage previous relationships within their current organizations, and gives them a means of personal assurance as to the quality of the officers moving in to certain key positions. A comparison with the British system of appointments is instructive. A British formation commander has no control or influence over which officers are appointed to his own or subordinate formations. He may have a limited influence over the roles that officers fulfil within his own formation, but even that is heavily constrained. To make the point most starkly a British brigade commander has no control or influence over who is appointed as his Chief of Staff (his senior staff officer): he does not interview for the position; he is not informed of the candidates; he is entirely reliant on the career management system on producing the right officer for the job.

Superficially it seems odd that within a much smaller army appointments are subject less to personal influence, and more to a bureaucracy, but considered against the framework of officer PME it is explicable. Homogenous PME provides a baseline of shared experience which enables trust, and enables a belief in an assumed competence (concomitant with rank) within the officer corps. The much more commander driven system of American career management is, at least in part, a mitigation measure for heterogeneous PME, and helps ensure that a level of trust exists between the commander and subordinate.

Impact of officer demographics

In addition to the impact of PME, the role that demographics has on the establishment of trust and mutual understanding within the officer corps might also be considered. The 2008 Center for Data Analysis study suggested¹⁸⁸ that American officers predominantly came from wealthier backgrounds. The findings of the study are summarized below.

Table 16. Household Incomes of the U.S. Officer Corps

Family Earnings Quintile	Percentage of ROTC Commissions	Percentage of West Point Graduates
Fifth (\$65,032-\$246,333)	40 percent	54.9 percent
Fourth (\$51,128-\$65,031)	22.4 percent	20.8 percent
Third (\$42,040-\$51,127)	17 percent	13.8 percent
Second (\$33,268-\$42,039)	12.8 percent	7.4 percent
First (\$0-\$33,267)	7.8 percent	3.1 percent

Source: Shanea J. Watkins and James Sherk, *Who Serves in the U.S. Military? Demographic Characteristics of Enlisted Troops and Officers* (Washington DC: Center for Data Analysis, Heritage Foundation, 2008), 9.

In addition to the over-representation of those from the fifth and fourth earning quintiles, there is a disproportionate geographical split, the South notably over-represented. An unrepresentative officer corps may be advantageous, a comparative

¹⁸⁸ Shanea J. Watkins and James Sherk, *Who Serves in the U.S. Military? Demographic Characteristics of Enlisted Troops and Officers* (Washington DC: Center for Data Analysis, Heritage Foundation, 2008), 2. “Suggested” rather than demonstrated as the Department of Defense does not maintain records on the household earnings of recruits (whether enlisted or officers). Therefore each officer was assigned the median household income of the census tract in which they lived. The methodology is robust however, and the results would only be distorted by the existence of a disproportionate number of outliers.

commonality of background creating a degree of cultural homogeneity and understanding.

The comparative homogeneity of background within the British Army is however even more marked; this is primarily due to education. The table below gives the percentage of senior members of various professions who were privately educated as children.

Table 17. Privately educated as a percentage of population by profession (UK)

Profession	Percentage
Law (judiciary)	74%
Law (barristers)	71%
Military	71%
Medicine	61%
Journalism	51%
Law (solicitors)	51%
Politics (Cabinet)	50%
Civil Service	48%

Source: Philip Kirby, *Leading People 2016: The Educational Backgrounds of the UK professional elite* (London, UK: The Sutton Trust, 2016).

While this was measure of the percentage of senior (which the report took to mean 2* and above) officers to have been privately educated, and while it measured senior officers from across all three services, the results are still striking. Given the historical social origins of officers in the British Army it seems unlikely that a disproportionate number of privately educated sailors and airmen have driven up the percentage. Amongst those who have recently commissioned from RMAS, 47% have

been privately educated; when compared to the 7% of children within the UK who are privately educated, this is a dramatic over-representation.

Data on family income of officer entrants does not exist, however given the expense of private education in the UK,¹⁸⁹ it is reasonable to assume that the 47% of RMAS cadets who were privately educated will overwhelmingly come from the top quintile of household incomes. The overrepresentation of upper income groups within the officer corps which is apparent in the U.S. Army seems likely to be even more apparent within the British Army. An even greater cultural homogeneity may be driven in by the shared educational background of many of these officers. While not all private schools are identical, there is a recognized public school¹⁹⁰ ethos which leads to a fairly homogenous emphasis and method of instruction across the schools¹⁹¹; the effect of boarding, comparatively widespread within the private sector, magnifies the shaping

¹⁸⁹ Cost will vary depending on the location and reputation of a school. However as a traditional public school, which offers both day and boarding, Marlborough College may be taken to be representative. For the financial year 2016/17 boarding fees were £35,280 per annum, while day fees were £29,985 per annum (day fees seem disproportionately high compared to other schools).

¹⁹⁰ Paradoxically, “public school” is a term used to refer to a type of traditional—often boarding—private school.

¹⁹¹ “Public School,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed 30 April 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/public-school>. “The impact of the public schools in Britain was historically immense. Perhaps in no other post-Renaissance country did an ethos directly and concentratedly inculcated in so few citizens exercise such influence nationally—and internationally, given the crucial role of the public school ethos in helping Britain build its empire. The ethos in question was less an academic one than a class-conscious code of behavior, speech, and appearance. It set the standard for conduct in the life of officialdom in Britain from the early 19th century to the mid-20th.” While public schools today have a much greater emphasis on academic achievement, the role they play in influencing and establishing particular codes of behavior, appearance, etc—whether that role is active or passive—is still observable.

effect that these schools may have.¹⁹² Anecdotally, and by observation, public schools are particularly overrepresented within the Infantry and RAC,¹⁹³ the most important cohort for this thesis with regard to the practice of mission command. A degree of understanding and trust because of a shared background may therefore be added to that trust generated by a shared system of PME. The extent of cultural homogeneity within the officer corps may help enable some of the observed behaviors (discussed later under “Formality”) which assist in reducing power-distance between superiors and subordinates, aiding the exercise of mission command through increasing the subordinate’s willingness to act with initiative. The danger of the degree of cultural homogeneity which seems apparent within the British officer corps is the tendency for group-think that it then presents. While this may be mitigated to an extent by the individualist grit provided by the regimental system (discussed in the next section), it is the major weakness of selecting officer candidates from a relatively narrow pool.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Dixon, 296. While boarding necessarily makes school experience more intense and all encompassing, Dixon specifically blames the cult of the boarding school as creating psychological shortcomings in officers; boarding leaving at least some pupils (at least some of whom then become officers) with lifelong separation anxiety.

¹⁹³ In one regiment 48 of the 50 officers commissioned over a ten year period were educated at public schools; the other two, while educated at state schools, completed undergraduate degrees at Oxford. This is not to suggest a conscious exclusion of officers because of background, however it is demonstrative of the profound cultural homogeneity that can arise within regiments.

¹⁹⁴ It should be emphasized that there is no evidence of conscious or official selection of officers based on social class or educational background. Officers are selected from a relatively narrow social background in as much as they are self-selected, i.e. they are the ones who put themselves forward as candidates for a commission.

Individualism and Collectivism

The utility of aspects of individualism for the practice of a mission command philosophy has been identified; so has the apparently more collective nature of British and American military cultures compared to their profoundly individualist national cultures. In the case of the British army this has given RMAS cadets a collectivist tendency, while in the American army West Point cadets are much less individualist than their civilian peers.

Superficially it seems odd that individualism is considered less pronounced in the British Army than in the American, as there appears to be a pronounced tolerance of eccentricity, or the promotion of individualism, amongst officers in the British Army which is not as strongly reflected in the American. Heroes within the British Army tend to be marked by their individualism¹⁹⁵: a sense of eccentricity or an attitude of straining against authority conforms to a definite type. Of these T.E. Lawrence is the most

¹⁹⁵ Here “heroes” is meant in the sense propounded by Hofstede: “persons, alive or dead, real or imaginary, who possess characteristics that are highly prized in a culture and thus serve as models for behavior.” Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 8.

prominent¹⁹⁶, Digby Tatham-Warter¹⁹⁷ and ‘Mad’ Jack Churchill¹⁹⁸ the most obviously eccentric, but even in Viscount Slim¹⁹⁹—Chief of the Imperial General Staff, hero of Burma, and commonly regarded as one of the few great British generals—there were traces of individualism in dress and bearing. They are exemplars of an idea of a British officer. While these may seem outlandish relics from the past, an even cursory observation of a group of British and American officers would reveal the much greater

¹⁹⁶ Lawrence James, “Lawrence, Thomas Edward [Lawrence of Arabia] (1888-1935), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed 30 April 2017, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34440>. James captures the controversy surrounding Lawrence’s reputation, but also that the image of him that has survived is that of the unconventional warrior, dismissive of authority, wearing Arab dress, and scornful of military etiquette.

¹⁹⁷ “Obituary: Digby Tatham-Warter,” *The Times*, 13 April 1993, 17. “Digby Tatham-Warter was famously depicted in *A Bridge Too Far*, Richard Attenborough’s 1977 film of the Allied defeat at Arnhem in 1944, as a crazed toff leading a bayonet charge sporting an old bowler hat and a tattered umbrella.” The bowler hat was an invention of the film, but Tatham-Warter did carry a rolled umbrella throughout Arnhem, using it to urge his men on. Reputedly he carried it in case he forgot a password (on the basis that only an Englishman would possibly carry an umbrella into battle).

¹⁹⁸ “Obituary: Lieutenant Colonel Jack Churchill,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 13 March 1996, accessed 25 April 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/7733516/Lieutenant-Colonel-Jack-Churchill.html>. “His exploits—charging up beaches dressed only in a kilt and brandishing a dirk, killing with a bow and arrow, playing the bagpipes at moments of extreme peril—and his legendary escapes won him the admiration and devotion of those under his command, who nicknamed him “Mad Jack”. . . He was awarded two DSOs and an MC, and mentioned in dispatches.”

¹⁹⁹ George MacDonald Fraser, *Quartered Safe Out Here* (London, UK: Harper, 2000), 52. “His appearance was plain enough: large, heavily built, grim-faced with that hard mouth and bulldog chin; the rakish Gurkha hat was at odds with the slung carbine and untidy trouser bottoms; he might have been a yard foreman who had become managing director, or a prosperous farmer who’d boxed in his youth.” MacDonald Fraser’s account of Slim—besides his physical appearance—is brilliant, and the most extraordinary testament to the affection that Slim inspired in the men of the 14th Army (later commissioned as an officer, MacDonald Fraser served in the 14th Army as a private and a lance corporal within 9th Battalion, The Border Regiment).

superficial uniformity of the latter: “high-and-tights” de rigueur, and—with the odd exception—all wearing the same uniform in the same manner. So why does a culture which fetishizes eccentricity, and which accepts non-military haircuts and variations of dress, have a more collectivist attitude?

Partly this reflects the focus of the questions which were used to identify individualism / collectivism:

The individualism index is based on responses to four questions that deal with physical working conditions, personal relations, sufficiency of leisure time, and quality of the living environment. If importance is attached to good physical working conditions and good personal relations, a collective orientation is indicated. If, on the other hand, relatively more importance is attached to leisure time and a pleasant living environment, this is taken to reflect an individual orientation.²⁰⁰

While a primacy may be put on good personal relations, a disinterest in both physical working conditions and a living environment would be in keeping with the somewhat Stoic disregard for discomfort which is in keeping with and attractive to the military ethic. A mildly collectivist orientation then appears to result. Consideration must also be given to the subjects of Soeters’ research: officer cadets. Those who are attracted to the army have joined an organization which—at least ostensibly—consists of people dressing the same, standing in neat lines, and marching in time. They have consciously joined what is an apparently collectivist organization. It is not therefore surprising that they have some collectivist preferences.

And as identified previously traces of the collectivist are not inimical to mission command. Some traits associated with the collectivist dimension are much more

²⁰⁰ Soeters, 18.

appropriate for the enactment of a mission command philosophy than their individualist contraries. “Employees are members of in-groups who will pursue the in-group’s interest” and “Collective interests prevail over individual interests” are far more in keeping with the subjugation of one’s own efforts to a higher intent than “Employees are ‘economic persons’ who will pursue the employer’s interest if it coincides with their self-interest” and “Individual interests prevail over collective interests.”²⁰¹ Mission command is suited best to a culture which contains aspects of both individualist and collectivist dimensions; which maintains the collectivist belief in selfless commitment,²⁰² while injecting it with the honesty, and task-focus of the individualist. In the source of much of the non-uniformity which was noted in the theoretical group of British officers, lies the answer as to how an individualist injection is achieved in the British army.

The Regimental System

Accepted implicitly by those who join and serve in the British Army, the regimental system can seem entirely opaque and arcane to outsiders. While it is the method of organization for the whole of the Army, its influence is greatest—certainly amongst officers—within the Infantry and RAC. As these corps provide almost the entirety of maneuver unit commanders, from Battle Group up to Division, they are of the most relevance when considering the impact of the regimental system on the culture of the British Army and on the practice of mission command.

²⁰¹ Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 124 and 130.

²⁰² Which, it should be noted, is one of the espoused values of the British Army.

While the vagaries of the regimental system are not important for this thesis, what is important to grasp is the manner in which regimental identity acts to both bind and separate one officer from another: it forms a visible and public bond between officers of the same regiment, while acting as a visible distinction between officers of different regiments. So just as it creates a sense of fellow feeling between one set of officers, it creates a sense of separateness between others. Through the creation of a competing identity and a competing loyalty, some of the traits of individualism which are useful to mission command may be enabled. An officer who dresses differently, and talks differently to another,²⁰³ may feel freer in expressing an opinion and in risking group harmony, for it is not the harmony of his real group—i.e., the regiment—that is risked.

The outward differences of dress spoke of inward differences of much greater importance. Regiments, I discovered, defined themselves above all by their individuality and it was their individuality which made them into the fighting organizations whose effectiveness in combat was proclaimed by the medals and crosses I saw all about me. My regimental friends. . . were brothers-in-arms; but they were brothers only up to a point. Regimental loyalty was the touchstone of their lives.²⁰⁴

At the same time, this is a quasi-individualism; because the sense of separateness is not created from an awareness of one's status as an individual *per se*, but from one's membership of a different group. This would seem to mitigate against the pursuit of an individual's narrow self-interest, ones interests being consumed within that of the

²⁰³ As an example: when an officer says "Sergeant Major" he could either mean "Regimental Sergeant Major", "Squadron Sergeant Major" or "Staff Sergeant" depending on his regimental affiliation. This has not even exposed the complexity of the Rifles spelling "Serjeant" with a "j", or the Household Cavalry not using the word Sergeant in any of their ranks (so the "Regimental Sergeant Major" is instead the "Regimental Corporal Major").

²⁰⁴ John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (London, UK: Hutchinson, 1997), xv.

regimental sub-culture. And that sub-culture creates ties of loyalty not just to those who currently serve but, in the words of Edmund Burke's social contract, "between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born."²⁰⁵ The regimental system is thus able to foster some of the sense of otherness, of distinctiveness, which leads to the traits of individualism, while creating a profound sense of belonging to a group identity which helps prevent the pursuit of self-interest, and prioritizes the reputation and standing of the group above all else.

At the same time the regimental system presents challenges. The notion that one's first loyalty is to the regiment and not to the Army has been referred to half-jokingly,²⁰⁶ but it has been an official concern for over half a century. The sentiment of a 1966 Army Board report— "The first loyalty is inevitably to the corps, regiment, or unit; but a loyalty to the Army as a whole is lacking"²⁰⁷ —finds its echo in the 2015 creation of a General Staff, a cohort within which all officers at the rank of Colonel and above are expected to subsume their previous regimental identities.

You will have read in the media . . . this idea of creating a modern general staff- . . . giving it a sense of being imbued by something that really matters for the ethos of the Army. It's the corollary of one of our great strengths, the so-called regimental system, which means so much at the unit level and below. One of the

²⁰⁵ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 96.

²⁰⁶ "I never went into the Army, I joined my great-grandfathers' regiment. There's no such thing as the British Army—there are only regiments. That's the great source of strength in the British endeavor: it's a family thing." John Hackett, quoted in "General Sir John Winthrop Hackett: Obituary," *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 September 1997.

²⁰⁷ David French, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army and the British People c.1870-2000* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005), 291.

great risks of the British Army is how that manifests itself beyond regimental duty.²⁰⁸

The difficulty that this poses for the exercise of mission command is how a Battle Group, which has a single infantry battalion or RAC regiment as its basis, then responds to the direction of the formation commander they are placed under, a commander who is unlikely to be from the same regiment²⁰⁹. One would hope and expect that professional officers respond to any direction from a superior commander entirely appropriately, in due deference to his lawful authority. However, the implicit danger that the contesting loyalty imposed by the regimental system imposes, could be seen to drive the British to a system which seeks to maximize initiative, and gives subordinates the most freedom in how they achieve a given effect. Taken to an extreme this leads to the abdication of responsibility that was umpiring,²¹⁰ which was a disaster; kept within bounds it drives a national ethic of mission command that is close to the original spirit of *auftragstaktik*.

²⁰⁸ Nicholas Carter, “The Future of the British Army: How the Army Must Change to Serve Britain in a Volatile World” (Speech, Chatham House, London, 17 February 2015), accessed 22 April 2017, https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_document/20150217QBritishArmy.pdf.

²⁰⁹ A near exception to this likelihood is 16 Air Assault Brigade, which has 2nd and 3rd Battalions, The Parachute Regiment, as its primary maneuver units. Of the past seven brigade commanders, three have been Parachute Regiment officers.

²¹⁰ Martin Samuels, *Command or Control? Command, Training and Tactics in the British and German Armies, 1888-1918* (London, UK: Unwin Hyman, 1987), 49. “Umpiring is a term coined to illustrate that practice in which an officer abdicates his command responsibilities. In both directive command and restrictive control, the commander imposes his will upon his subordinates through the assignment of clear objectives, which he then ensures that his subordinates work to achieve. The umpire, by contrast, having indicated a general mission withdraws rather than spurs on his subordinates. Whereas both directive command and restrictive control are ‘energy positive’. In that they force subordinates into action, umpiring is ‘energy neutral’.” Samuels contends that British commanders in the First World War tended to vacillate

Individualism within the American Army

The comparative greater uniformity of the U.S. Army has been noted, though this is not of course absolute. Distinct subcultures exist within the U.S. Army, the most obvious visual distinction of which is the wearing of unique headdress, a tradition maintained by some elements of the force. However, while officers will feel very strong attachments to their branch, they will move between regimental structures more often than is the case in the British Army²¹¹, and when they move will not be marked by membership of an originating regiment in the same way. To illustrate the point of difference between the two armies in another way: General Shinseki's decision to make all soldiers wear a black beret was, in the U.S. Army, controversial, and generated a large amount of criticism, particularly from the Ranger Regiment; within the British Army it is literally unthinkable that this kind of direction would ever be given. While subcultures in the U.S. Army exist, they seem not to exert as powerful an emotional pull on their members, nor do they operate in such a way that they may create conflict within a chain of command during the execution of operations.

This is not to suggest that Soeters' study is incorrect, and that officers in the U.S. Army should be considered to have a collectivist tendency. It simply demonstrates that

between the practice of umpiring and restrictive control, and that the former had as one of its root causes the parochialism that resulted from the British regimental system.

²¹¹ Only by exception will an officer who belongs to one regiment serve within a battalion of another. So if you commission into the Rifles, you will—competition for places allowing—serve within one of the battalions of that regiment as a platoon commander, a company 2IC, a junior staff officer, a company commander, possibly a battalion 2IC, and then finally possibly a commanding officer. It would be possible—though certainly unusual—for an officer to spend 15 of his first 20 years of service within the confines of a single regiment.

there is no organizational mechanism to drive them towards a greater individualism than that to which they already tend.

Formality

When discussing the difficulties inherent in multinational operations because of cultural conflict, Angela Febbraro used the example of an Anglo-Dutch mission, and the difficulty that the Dutch had with the apparent pattern of officer-soldier relationships within the British Army.

The Dutch soldiers in Cyprus criticized the rank-based separate mess halls and canteens and the prohibition against platoon commanders drinking a beer with the soldiers with whom they had worked all day. The authoritarian way in which orders were issued by the British Army leaders was also foreign to the Dutch, who were more accustomed to the jovial tone generally used by Dutch commanders when explaining plans and orders. The friction became so intense that the Dutch military staff in the Hague found it necessary to intervene.²¹²

This would seem to reflect the markedly high power-distance tendency identified by Soeters. However, it should be noted that Febbraro's comments are reflective of power-distance relationships between officers and soldiers, not between officers—i.e. the cohort that is of most relevance to this thesis.

²¹² Febbraro, 60. It should be noted in passing that—again because of the complexities of the regimental system—it is extraordinarily difficult to draw from the observation of one infantry battalion, a general rule of officer-soldier relations for the entire Army. It's noticeable that RAC regiments tend to have much more informal relationships between officers and soldiers than the majority of infantry regiments—a side-effect of spending days on end together in a small enclosed space. Even within infantry regiments differences in the formality of officer-soldier relationships vary markedly: in one battalion officers will be called "Boss" and soldiers referred to by nickname; in another it would utterly verboten for officers to be called anything other than "Sir" and for soldiers to called anything other than "Rank Surname".

A number of practices within the British Army serve to reduce the power-distance relationship that would otherwise exist between officers of different ranks within such a clearly defined hierarchical structure. Within a number of regiments—most notably within all RAC regiments, and a majority of infantry regiments²¹³—everyone below the rank of Lieutenant Colonel is referred to by their first name; differences of rank are therefore not reflected in the manner by which one officer addresses another, even if they are in the manner of what he then says. It is common for officers above the rank of Lieutenant Colonel to still be referred to by their first name, but with their rank inserted as an epithet. “Brigadier John” seems to convey less of a power-distance gap than a simple “Sir”. If nothing else it means there is a difference between the manner in which a soldier would address a senior officer, and the manner in which a junior officer would: this serves to create a sense of other-ness between soldiers and officers, just as it creates a sense of same-ness between officers of any rank. Saluting may seem less rigidly observed than might be expected, and other practices serve to de-emphasize power-distance even further. In some regiments, for example, rank is not worn on Mess Dress; thus the unimportance of rank, compared to the overwhelming importance of one’s belonging to a Regiment, is emphasized. The importance of reducing power-distance between officers is even affirmed in doctrine.

Nothing is more important than the relationship between the commander and his principal staff officers. . .

²¹³ Important because these are the primary sources of Battle Group, Brigade and Division commanders.

In age there is probably 12 years between the two. In that 12 years the commander will have acquired, by whatever devious means, higher rank and more experience than his staff. But otherwise there is no difference between the two. . .

There should be a free interplay of ideas between the two. This interplay can only take place in a relaxed and informal atmosphere. The knocking at doors, parade ground drill and the excessive use of the word ‘sir; all tend to interfere with the interaction of minds. It is of importance to note that others judge the competence and standing of the staff officer at least in part by the self-confident way in which he relates with his chief.²¹⁴

The interaction and consultation that Hofstede identified as a benefit of a low power-distance relationship are seen as beneficial to the military also, and the requirement to actively reduce any tendency for a power-distance gap to increase is identified.

The tendency for regimental custom to reduce power-distance relationships between officers pre-dates any notion of its utility to mission command or the effective functioning of staff, and is probably an echo of the tendency Huntington identified for militaries in the C18th and C19th to blur the niceties of military hierarchies in order to account for officers’ membership of competing social hierarchies.²¹⁵ While it may be an echo of a markedly un-egalitarian age, its impact is a paradoxically egalitarian one; distinctions of rank, beyond that required to enable the function of military authority are reduced, and the ability of officers to exchange ideas openly and freely is maximized.

Within the U.S. Army conventions of rank seem to be more rigidly observed. Use of first names between officers of different ranks seems not as widespread; junior officers salute more people more vigorously. The “parade ground drill” actively discouraged

²¹⁴ DLW, *The Staff Officers’ Handbook*, vii.

²¹⁵ Huntington, 22-27.

within British doctrine seems to have more of a role outside of the parade ground within American inter-officer relationships. However, two things should be borne in mind. First, Soeters' study suggested that American officer-cadets have a lower power-distance dimension than British; the required corrective effect levied by cultural artifacts may therefore not be so great. Second, a great emphasis is placed on the commander within U.S. doctrine to consult with his subordinates to understand what they're thinking, to explain his thoughts, to allow them to ask questions etc.²¹⁶ A commander who vigorously follows these injunctions should be able to mitigate any ill effects caused by the greater awareness / observance or differences in rank within professional interaction.

Attitude to technology

In Shamir's discussion of cultural differences between the American and British Armies, detailed in Table 9, the attitude to technology was identified as a prominent one. The British army were viewed as conservative and suspicious of technology, while the American Army were heavily reliant on it. While this was meant to be representative of military attitudes to technology at specific points in time, it accords with others' views of the more consistent attitudes to technology held within the two militaries. Technological dependence is one of the twelve characteristics that Colin Gray attributes to an "American Way of War":

America is the land of technological marvels and of extraordinary technology dependency. It was so from early in the nineteenth century, when a shortage of skilled craftsmen... obliged Americans to invent and use machines as substitutes for human skill and muscle. Necessity bred preference, and the choice of mechanical solutions assumed a cultural significance that has endured... The

²¹⁶ HQDA, ADRP 6-0, 2-12.

American way of war, past, present, and prospectively future, is quintessentially and uniquely technologically dependent.²¹⁷

In *Technology and the American Way of War* Thomas Mahnken echoes this sentiment, demonstrating not only the centrality of technology to the way in which the U.S. Army fights (certainly in the post WW2 era)²¹⁸, but also the fundamental optimism that American officers seemed to have in the potential of technology to have a transformative effect,²¹⁹ both in the character of war and the ease with which the United States would wage it.

To portray the British Army as, by contrast, technophobic, would be an overstatement. While Basil Liddell Hart may have detected technophobia within the inter-war cavalry²²⁰, and while the education of a social elite in Britain tended to be very

²¹⁷ Colin S. Gray, “The American Way of War” in *Rethinking the Principles of War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 29.

²¹⁸ Thomas G. Mahnken, *Technology and the American Way of War* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2008), 220. While acknowledging the divide between technology enthusiasts and skeptics within the U.S. military, and suggesting that the former have occasionally overstated the transformative potential of technology, Mahnken is clear as to the overall importance that technology has had within America’s wars: “Technology gave the United States an edge over the Soviet Union in the Cold War. Technology also increased the effectiveness of U.S. forces in Vietnam, though it could not salvage a failed strategy. And over the past fifteen years technology has helped create a series of lopsided battlefield outcomes between the United States and Iraq (twice), Serbia (twice), and Afghanistan.”

²¹⁹ Ibid., 226. In surveys conducted by Mahnken and James R. FitzSimonds: 85 percent of officers believed information age technology would give forces a substantial advantage; 75 percent felt the resulting new ways of war would lead to U.S. dominance over a full range of adversaries; and a majority believed that technology would lead to the easier use of force with fewer friendly casualties.

²²⁰ Basil Liddell Hart, *The Liddell Hart Memoirs, Volume I, 1898-1938* (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1965), 77. “Wellington’s reputed saying that the Battle

focused on the humanities,²²¹ with science and technology rather disparaged, techno-skepticism seems a fairer label to apply. Theo Farrell's study²²² on military transformation within the British army is instructive. Surveying students attending the Joint Services Command and Staff College, he found that while a vast majority expected the application of information technology to "profoundly change the conduct of military operations,"²²³ a majority did not believe that "information networks will be the most important asset to the source of military operations in 2020."²²⁴ He concluded that while not techno-phobic, there was a "skepticism inherent in the British military about what the technology can achieve", due to a "military culture [which places] more faith in the man than in the machine."²²⁵ Financial constraints, which drive armies to seek human-superiority rather than technological superiority, has an at least contributory effect on this

of Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton is merely a legend, but it is painfully true to say that the early battles of World War II were lost in the Cavalry Club".

²²¹ Lord Hailsham, *The Door Wherein I Went* (London, UK: Collins, 1975), 15-16. Lord Hailsham's description of his education is relevant in as much as it reflects that of a large proportion of generations of Army officers, though it clearly doesn't reflect current educational mores. "What I went through from the age of 8. . . until the age of 23 seems now so bizarre that it requires description. . . The Latin and Greek languages and culture formed the staple of my instruction, taking precedence of English, French, History, mathematics, science, and everything, perhaps, except the Scriptures."

²²² Theo Farrell, "The Dynamics of British Military Transformation," *International Affairs* 84, no. 4 (2008): 777-807.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 788.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 789.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

culture.²²⁶ The result is an evolutionary, rather than revolutionary approach to technology where “proven technologies are used to allow incremental change.”²²⁷

Another part of Farrell’s argument is intriguing: for as well as prevailing cultural attitudes regarding technology, he believes that the British commitment to a mission command philosophy itself drives a techno-skepticism.

There is a natural tension between networking of the force structure and the British philosophy of Mission Command... To be sure, information networks offer the possibility to strengthen lateral command practices. But the British military is also acutely aware that, by offering senior commanders a clearer picture of what is happening in the Joint Operations Area, networking may tempt them to take out the ‘long screwdriver’, and direct operations on the ground.²²⁸

This argument, mission command as a driver of techno-skepticism, is in itself not entirely convincing. If a mission command philosophy inherently led to techno-skeptic attitudes, then the same tendency should be noted within the American Army, rather than the technophile / techno-centric attitudes that have been identified. Also, apparently technophobe (more accurately techno-skeptic) attitudes were clearly a perceived feature of British army culture before the adoption of mission command.²²⁹ It seems reasonable to contend though that the British propensity towards techno-skepticism certainly

²²⁶ Ibid., 805. “Britain cannot hope to match, even in relative terms, the level of U.S. investment in military transformation. Thus, even if it wanted to, the British military could not aim for a US-style, wholly networked military force.”

²²⁷ David Potts and Jake Thackray, “No Revolutions Please, We’re British,” in *The Big Issue: Command and Combat in the Information Age*, ed. David Potts (Washington, DC: Command and Control Research Program, 2003), 29.

²²⁸ Farrell, 788.

²²⁹ This does leave open the possibility, not explored here, that previous command philosophies may have driven techno-skepticism; however, cause and effect is unlikely to be easily identifiable.

contributes to their attitude to mission command, and from this to extrapolate a relationship that may exist between an attitude to technology, and the likely practice of mission command. This relationship could inform an understanding of the American approach to mission command as much as the British.

Farrell identifies a relationship between information networks and the exercise of command; this relationship is characterized as one of tension, but also as one of enablement. There is an echo of the relationship that was seen to exist between the mission command war fighting function and the mission command philosophy within American doctrine. Figure 10, “The Mission Command paradox” seeks to describe the relationship between technology and a mission command philosophy, and captures both the sense of dependence and tension between the two.

Reflecting both the discussion of mission command’s historical development in Chapter 2, and the consideration of current doctrine in Chapter 3, in Figure 10 it is suggested that the exercise of a mission command philosophy, while a reaction to the limits of communication technology, nevertheless depends on the existence of the same technology to be practicable. So while the impossibility of exercising efficient detailed control over subordinates necessitates the decentralization of execution, that decentralization is itself made practical by the ability to communicate intent, and maintain a shared situational awareness.

As “mission command” technology improves then the extent to which a mission command philosophy can be practically executed increases.²³⁰ Commanders are able to communicate more easily with subordinates during execution in order to inform them of significant changes of intent, and they have the confidence that subordinates can seek a decision from them if required; the ability to communicate, and to maintain situational awareness of subordinate forces removes some of the risk involved in delegation. That is, until an inflexion point is reached.

The inflexion point exists when information technology allows the commander to “deep-dive” into his subordinates’ tactical actions, without seeming to lose a wider ability to command, and when the commander’s access to information systems seems to give him a better understanding of the ground situation and its implications than that enjoyed by his subordinates. At that point there appears to be a cost to the exercise of mission command— “worse” decisions are made by the subordinate than would be made by the commander, and so the extent to which authority is delegated to subordinates reduces as technology becomes more and more powerful. In order to preserve a mission command philosophy, the commander has to demonstrate forbearance: as technology increases and improves he has to make a conscious decision not to exploit that technology to its maximum, and instead to continue to follow a model of delegated authority and decentralized execution.

²³⁰ Van Creveld, 192-193. Van Creveld describes the critical contribution that radio technology—and intelligent use of it—had on the development and practice of *Blitzkrieg*.

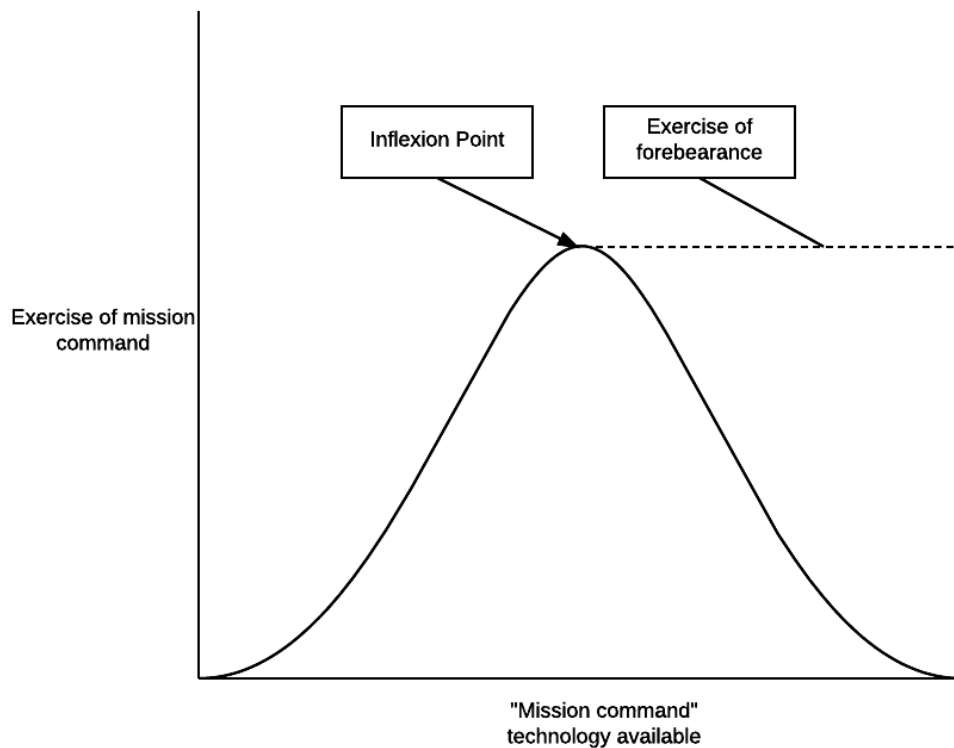


Figure 10. The Mission Command Paradox

Source: Created by Author.

The attitude to technology held by an army would seem to impact the likelihood of that forbearance being shown, or at least determine the point on or after the inflexion point at which it kicks in. A techno-skeptic army, like the British, is more likely to believe that the apparent ability given to the commander to interfere in tactical actions without losing capacity elsewhere, or the apparent superiority of understanding given to him through a multiplicity of sensors are both chimerical. Technology may seem to reduce the requirement to exercise a mission command philosophy, but technology fails, it promises more than it can deliver, and so the philosophy must endure. A technophile or

techno-centric army, like the American, is more likely to embrace the opportunity offered by technology and so may delegate less authority and seek to control more, because to not do so would be to reject the manifest advantage that technology offers.

Two of the tenets of mission command identified in Chapter 2 were, “Commanders are not able to exercise detailed control effectively; attempts to do so will fail,” and, “Varying competence notwithstanding, the commander on the ground is the person best placed to judge the tactical situation, not his superior.” Both of these tenets are more easily maintained within a techno-skeptic army.

Cultural Artifacts; a Summary

Lengthy though it was, the discussion of cultural artifacts within the British and American armies was not exhaustive. However, it is at least possible to understand how these artifacts reinforce or shape cultural dimensions within the two armies, and to begin to consider the impact this has on the exercise of mission command.

Table 18. Impact of artifacts: American army

Artefact	Impact on cultural dimensions	Other impact pertaining to mission command
Larger headquarters	Reinforces high power-distance Reinforces strong uncertainty avoidance	Reflects and reinforces preference for analytic decision-making Tends to reduce delegation through headquarters' capacity
Staff relationship with subordinate commanders	Power-distance gap created	Increases value placed on staff's opinions Staff more willing to exert control / subordinates more willing to accept it
PME	—	Trust based on direct shared experience, rather than assumed professional competence
Demographics	Reduces power-distance May increase collectivism	Increases trust and understanding through degree of socio-economic / cultural homogeneity
Uniformity	Increases collectivism	—
Formality	Reinforces power-distance gap	May make frank communication more difficult
Technophile / techno-centric attitude	—	Increase control to maximise use of technology Belief that better understanding lies with superior headquarters

Source: Created by Author

Table 19. Impact of artifacts: British army

	Impact on cultural dimensions	Other impact pertaining to mission command
Smaller headquarters	Comparatively lower power-distance and weaker uncertainty avoidance	Possibly more commander-centric decisions, so a greater role for intuitive decision-making Greater delegation of decision-making because of comparative lack of capacity
Staff relationship with subordinate commanders	Inverts power-distance relationship between the superior headquarters' staff and the subordinate commander	Superior headquarters more reluctant to impose control Subordinate commander more willing to use initiative / less willing to be controlled by staff Views of subordinate commanders given greater weight
PME	—	Degree of trust can be based on an assumed professional competence Mutual understanding increased through shared experiences
Demographics	Reduces power-distance Increase to collectivist through the existence of another shared group identity	Significant cultural homogeneity of officer corps leads to high degree of understanding, and feeling of fellowship Danger of groupthink, given homogeneity and comparative lack of capacity for deep analysis
Regimental system	Increase of individualist traits through creation of sense of otherness	Creation of deep understanding within regimental sub-culture Strength of loyalty to regiment (vice to wider Army) increases feeling of independence and willingness to show initiative
Informality	Lowers power-distance	Enables open and honest communication
Techno-scepticism	—	More able to demonstrate forbearance in utilising information systems Subordinate commander assumed to have superior understanding

Source: Created by Author

One can see that the artifacts that have been examined seem to act as a necessary corrective to those cultural dimensions inimical to mission command that pertained in each army. Soeters' work, summarized at Table 10 suggested significant cultural difficulty to adopting a mission command philosophy; the most egregious problems can be seen to be rectified by prevailing cultural artifacts. In the British army, which appeared to have an extremely high power-distance index, numerous artifacts work to reduce the power-distance gaps between officers; the regimental system meanwhile injects some individualist traits into a collectivist tendency, but crucially without creating a sense of self interest (as opposed to sub-group interest). The American army appeared to have a very individualist mentality—albeit not as individualist as the wider national culture. Through a comparatively culturally homogenous officer corps, and the stricter uniformity which officers are expected to demonstrate, a more collectivist mindset is generated; the balance between individualism and collectivism which is required for mission command is therefore more likely to be achieved. One dimension that was not subject to the same correction within the American army was uncertainty avoidance, the uncertainty avoidance prevalent within the officer corps reflected rather than corrected by the tendency to larger headquarters.

Having examined cultural artifacts, and considered their impact on cultural dimensions, it is now possible to determine to what extent national military culture supports and drives national philosophies of mission command.

British Culture and Mission Command

In chapter 3, various key aspects of the British philosophy of mission command were identified:

1. An intent focused on effects, objectives and outcomes rather than actions.
2. A requirement for the commander to exert a minimum of control.
3. An emphasis on rapid decision-making, because “a perfect plan made and executed too late will fail, whereas an imperfect one made before an enemy can act will succeed.”²³¹ Linked to this was the belief in the “man on the ground’s” priority of understanding.
4. The requirement for subordinates to be willing to exercise initiative; linked to this was the requirement for superiors to tolerate (well-intentioned) mistakes.
5. A concept of authority and responsibility wherein at least a share of responsibility is delegated along with authority.
6. A requirement for organizational trust, to then act as the building block for the type of personal trust borne of shared experiences.
7. A requirement for mutual understanding to exist between superiors and subordinates; that is, an understanding of each other, of motivations, and of meanings. Not simply an understanding of the situation.

In relating cultural artifacts to these aspects, both the extent to which mission command is supported by culture, and the extent to which national culture has driven a particular interpretation of mission command, can both be identified..

Aspect 1: Effect focused intent

The extent to which British officers are observably more focused on the effects they are trying to achieve was demonstrated in chapter 3, so an intent which is less

²³¹ DCDC, ADP *Land Operations*, 5-3.

focused on actions and more on effects, objectives and outcomes is clearly practicable. The sense of independence which is driven in by the regimental system—which like the Junker variety, may have the potential to reach extremes—may create a certain independence of thinking which would then favor the independent determining of the relationship of actions to effects, rather than accepting the analysis of a commander or superior staff, but this seems tenuous. While this aspect is supported by culture, it is not determined by culture as such.

Aspect 2: The commander exerts a minimum of control

The extent of control the commander exerts will be driven by his own forbearance. Techno-poor as the British army might comparatively seem, they have reached the inflexion point described in figure 9 as surely as the American army, and so most commanders in most circumstances are able to exercise a degree of control inimical to mission command. While a smaller headquarters necessarily reduces the maximum amount of control that can be effectively exerted over a subordinate, minimum control is supported by the power-distance inversion between subordinate commander and superior staff. A comparatively low level of uncertainty avoidance reinforces this, while the level of trust engendered by a uniform system of PME may encourages commanders to allow their subordinates “a loose rein”.

Aspect 3: Emphasis on rapid decision-making

The smaller headquarters, with its aforementioned lack of capacity, necessarily reduces the appropriateness of a staff-driven analytical decision-making model during execution. The extent to which decision-making is delegated to the subordinate

commander, both to increase tempo and because of his presumed priority of understanding, is supported by both British techno-skepticism, and the seniority of subordinates compared to staff.

Aspect 4: Subordinate initiative

Initiative consists both of the willingness to grant it, and the willingness to use it. The sense of independence fostered by both the regimental system, and the tolerance for comparative individuality, enables the latter; this is reinforced by the comparative informality of the British army, and the reduced power-distance index that causes.. The former relies on the creation of trust. The tolerance of mistakes is something that bears on the practical exercise of initiative, but which has not really been addressed so far by this cultural study. While nothing actively undermines a tolerance for mistakes, it is unclear to what extent it is actively supported by culture.

Aspect 5: Authority and responsibility

This does not have direct cultural support; nor does it face opposition.

Aspect 6: Organizational trust

This is fostered by the uniform system of PME and, at a more junior level, by the regimental system. The comparative cultural; homogeneity of the officer corps might also be seen enable this.

Aspect 7: Mutual understanding

As per organizational trust, uniform PME, cultural homogeneity, and (at a lower level) the regimental system all support this.

Summary

It is not possible, from the cultural artifacts discussed in this thesis, to determine the acceptance of risk, or the extent to which mistakes are tolerated within the British army.²³² The fact that responsibility is shared between the commander and subordinate, suggests that there should be a greater propensity to tolerate mistakes, simply because the superior commander will not be held entirely accountable for them. However, it cannot be stated for certain that the culture of the British army supports this aspect of mission command.

With the exception of that one aspect, the culture of the British army seems broadly supportive of the requirements of the British mission command philosophy. Much still depends on the personality of the individual commander, but various cultural aspects seem to coalesce to help him avoid the mission command paradox, and maintain a philosophy of mission command in the teeth of the greater potential to exercise detailed control.

While the regimental system is the most unique cultural artifact within the British army, it does not drive an exclusively national ethic of mission command—i.e. one that other armies would have difficulty adapting to. Its main contribution, besides the extent to which it aids trust and understanding at a lower level, is in the extent to which it assists

²³² Burwell, 115. Burwell's view is that the British army is risk averse, and that this risk aversion does affect mission command. This thesis does not reject Burwell's argument, but instead remains agnostic. Much of the evidence for the army's risk aversion was predicated on increased litigation in civil society (taken as indicative of attitudes that would also be present in the military), and the extent to which constraints were placed on military action by civil authorities. There does not seem to be much evidence to either prove or disprove the army's attitude to risk within an operational environment, when not acting the imposed constraints of a civil authority.

a certain independence of spirit, necessary for the propagation of individual initiative. Within the cultural context of the British army the regimental system is vital for this, acting as a corrective to a very collectivist tendency by the injection of its quasi-individualist traits. However another army, without a regimental system but possessive of the traits that it supports, would still be able to show the same aptitude for initiative: it is not a peculiarly national conception of initiative that is displayed within the British philosophy of mission command, it is just achieved in a peculiarly national way.

The hardest divide to cross, and the closest that the mission command philosophy comes to being an exclusively national ethic, is the organizational trust that is created by exclusively British artifacts, e.g. the uniform system of PME. An external organization attached to a British unit, whether in a subordinate or superior role, would find it hard to achieve the same degree of implicit trust, simply because it is predicated on nation-specific cultural artifacts. This is reflected in British doctrine, with its observation that within multi-national operations trust and mutual understanding are both necessarily eroded.

American Culture and Mission Command

The aspects of the American philosophy of mission command identified in chapter 3 were as follows.

1. An intent which maintained some focus on actions.
2. A preference for an analytical decision-making model, reducing the number of decisions delegated to subordinates.
3. The commander's maintenance of responsibility even when he delegates authority.

4. The requirement to exert the minimum amount of control over subordinates.
5. Demonstration of subordinate initiative, associated with tolerance of mistakes.
6. Trust which was based on shared experience, and established over time.
7. Mutual understanding between superior and subordinate of an operational environment.

Again these will be related to cultural artifacts to determine the extent to which they are supported by and reflect national military culture.

Aspect 1: Intent and Aspect 2: Decision-making process

It was shown in chapter 3 that Americans officers placed particular importance on those tasks they had been given, while British officers placed greater emphasis on the effects those tasks were meant to achieve; this reflected the difference in intent between the two armies, the American intent including key tasks, the British intent specifically excluding any actions. The American attitude to intent is being considered alongside their preference for an analytical decision-making model, because the two are heavily linked. The American conception of an intent is itself reflective of their cultural preference for analytical planning and decision-making processes. The determination of key tasks within an intent demonstrates a perceived causal link between the achievement of those tasks and the achievement of a particular effect or effects. The type of analytical decision-making process which leads to the identification of this link necessarily has a degree of rigor behind it which cannot be replicated by either the intuitive or less analytical decision-making process subsequently followed by a subordinate commander. The larger headquarters, staff-subordinate relationship, and technophilia of the American army all support the preference for an analytical decision-making process, increasing the

quality of a decision which can seemingly made by a superior formation. The British determination to not include actions within an intent is predicated on the belief that the commander on the ground is best placed to determine what actions will lead to the desired effects. The American certainty that an analytical staff-dominated process leads to the best decisions drives in turn the inclusion of key tasks within an intent; the commander on the ground without the priority of understanding to determine his own causal links between action and effect.

Aspect 3: Authority and responsibility

There does not seem to be a cultural driver for the American doctrine of delegating authority without delegating responsibility. The comparatively junior rank (at some echelons) at which Americans command could be used to explain less delegation, but not a different quality of delegation. However in the extent to which this predisposes American commanders to keep a tighter rein on subordinates—where that is possible—then it can be seen to reinforce other cultural drivers.

Aspect 4: Minimum control

Culturally the American military seems more predisposed to exert control over subordinates than the British, making the exertion of a minimum amount of control quite a difficult thing to achieve. Technophilia creates more confidence in those information systems and communication technologies that seek to increase a commander's situational awareness and understanding, and extends the bounds within which the commander feels that he can exert more effective control. It is not surprising that the example van Creveld used to demonstrate the potential for technology to allow commanders to interfere at the

lower tactical level when they should leave it to their subordinates' initiative, was an American one: commanders helicopters stacked one on top of the other, observing and seeking to direct the company fight on the ground below.²³³ A larger headquarters offers more capacity for the control function to be exerted, while the power-distance relationship between the staff and the subordinate commander lends itself to the staff both being more willing to exert control, and the commander being more willing to be controlled.

Aspect 5: Initiative

Within accepted bounds it would be dangerous to conclude that American subordinates were culturally unable to show initiative, or less likely to show initiative than their British counterparts. While the informality and cultivation of individualism which occurs in the British army and is used to foster a spirit of independence, is absent from the American, one must place against this the greater inherent individualism and lower power-distance of those officers entering the American. Cultural artifacts within the British army were seen as correcting cultural dimensions; the American dimensions of individualism and power-distance do not need to be corrected. Within bounds therefore it would seem fair to say that the demonstration of initiative by American subordinates is culturally supported—if only by inherent cultural dimensions—but of

²³³ Van Creveld, 255: "A hapless company commander engaged in a firefight on the ground was subjected to direct observation by the battalion commander circling above, who was in turn supervised by the brigade commander circling a thousand or so feet higher up, who in his turn was monitored by the division commander in the next highest chopper. . ." While Van Creveld attributes this phenomenon to commanders' thirst for information, and unwillingness to show forbearance in the use of "directed telescopes," a different explanation is offered by John Keegan.

course the bounds within which they are expected to show initiative may be smaller than the British.²³⁴

Aspect 6: Trust

The focus on personal trust, built on shared experience and developed over time, is to an extent made necessary by the difficulty of fostering organizational trust. While uniformity of dress and bearing helps to create a sense of organizational one-ness, a heterogeneous system of PME prevents an implicit understanding of and trust in the capabilities of an unknown officer. The requirement nevertheless to create at least some sense of immediate trust within a unit or formation is supported by other cultural artifacts. Particular schools like SAMS create a “known quantity” of officer and of quality who can command the implicit trust of the commander; the system of “by name request” appointments allow the commander to have chosen men in key positions; and finally the power of appointment given to commanders within their formations allow a degree of assurance as to who is doing what—and so the person in a key job is someone that one trusts.

Aspect 7: Understanding

While the American faith in technology supports the belief that it is possible for a superior and subordinate to achieve a shared understanding of an operational environment, this is not otherwise driven by culture. However, there are no cultural aspects that would appear to oppose it.

²³⁴ The aforementioned distinction between execution decisions and adjustment decisions.

Summary

Much like the British philosophy of mission command, it is difficult to determine the extent to which the requirement to tolerate subordinate's mistakes is supported. While one might believe that because the commander is unable to delegate responsibility he would be less tolerant of mistakes—after all, the commander is the one who will bear the consequences of them—one could as easily say that, because American subordinates have less decisions delegated to them, their mistakes should be of less importance and therefore more easily tolerated.

An aspect of the American mission command philosophy that seems less supported by culture is the requirement to exert a minimum amount of control over subordinates. Within a techno-centric army the mission command paradox is less easily avoided. While it clearly depends on the individual commander, one might expect American commanders to typically show less forbearance, and for the amount of activity left to individual initiative to be steadily eroded by the increased capacity of communication and information systems. This propensity to exert control is exacerbated both by the size of the headquarters and by the power-distance relationship between subordinate commanders and staff.

With the exception of a toleration of mistakes—about which judgement remains agnostic—and the exertion of a minimum amount of control, the American philosophy of mission command is otherwise supported by culture. Where it differs from the British philosophy, that difference again has a cultural basis.

Conclusion

In chapter 3 several differences between the British and American philosophies of mission command were identified. What chapter 4 sought to determine was the extent to which the two subtly different philosophies of mission command were supported by their respective national military cultures. Broadly they are. Soeters' application of Hofstede's cultural dimensions to the military suggested a difficulty for mission command, revealing as they did a military mind—at least in the British army—which, in the manner of Dixon, seemed not to possess the kind of qualities demanded by a mission command philosophy. However with the interplay of cultural artifacts—an organizational culture acting on the cultural predispositions of those entering the military—the most egregious of the dimensions were subject to a form of cultural correction. The officer able to thrive within the organizational culture would have the qualities and tendencies required to operate within a mission command philosophy.

What is more interesting is the extent to which cultural differences do not simply support mission command doctrine, but can be seen to have actively driven distinct national interpretations of the philosophy. When one considers the fundamental difference between the two command philosophies—the greater delegation of decision-making within the British model—the impact of the organizational structure of the two armies, their attitude to technology, and the increased homogeneity of background and PME within the British army, have all been profound. Just the fact of a British sub-unit being commanded by a Major might have extraordinary influence, the greater degree of delegation made practical at that most formative level setting an example which then cascades through the echelons. The fact that the command philosophies are not merely

supported by culture, but that differences between them are cultural in basis, has significant implications for the limits of interoperability. This, along with the other major findings from the thesis, will be discussed in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This thesis seems, noting the reservations expressed in chapter 1,²³⁵ to support Shamir's contention of the potential divergence in mission command philosophy when adopted by foreign (i.e., non-German) armies. Differences in doctrine were identified; at least some of these differences can be reasonably attributed to the specific cultural contexts of the adopting armies; the result is two distinct national philosophies of mission command that present challenges for the interoperability which the British and American armies aspire to. In this conclusion the major findings of the thesis will be described; the potential implications for interoperability will be emphasized; and avenues for further study will be considered.

Major Findings

Differences in Doctrine

The British and American philosophies of mission command are far more similar than dissimilar. Both seek to achieve decentralized execution through the effective delegation of authority, and there is a striking overlap between the principles of mission command in both armies. It is only following a quite detailed examination of the doctrine that differences—some of them significant—begin to become apparent.

²³⁵ i.e., That any process of interpretation and praxis is necessarily recursive rather than linear; any praxis gap that exists, with its concomitant misalignment of doctrine and praxis, may then drive a re-interpretation of doctrine, closing the gap.

While both doctrines pivot on an understanding and adherence to the commander's intent, their precise definitions of "intent" are different. Within American doctrine intent must include those key tasks which have been established by the commander, while British doctrine specifically prohibits the commander from including any actions (tasks within American nomenclature) within his intent. This reinforces an apparent encouragement in British doctrine for subordinates to think in an expanded conceptual horizon, and remain cognizant of the potentially shifting links between actions, effects, objectives and outcomes.

While both doctrines involve the delegation of authority, there is a fundamental disagreement as to the commander's ability to delegate responsibility. American doctrine is clear that commanders retain full responsibility for their subordinates actions at all time. While commanders always retain some responsibility within British doctrine, they share responsibility with the subordinates to whom they delegate authority. It was posited in the thesis that a commander would be more willing to delegate authority when he was able to at least delegate a share of the responsibility along with it; the commander retaining full responsibility encourages him to maintain a tight rein on his subordinates.

British doctrine explicitly asserted the priority of understanding of the commander on the ground; this priority of understanding was not assumed within American doctrine. This is seemingly related to a difference of opinion as the value—or rather the practicality—of an analytical decision-making process. American doctrine betrayed a definite preference for a staff informed analytical process to achieve an understanding of a situation, albeit the decision-making would then take place with the admixture of the—at least partly intuitive—commander's judgement. While not dismissive of the value of

an analytical process, British doctrine seemed skeptical as to the practicality of a rigorously analytical decision-making process in the majority of situations. An assumption was apparent that the majority of decision-making would take place under time pressure and on the basis of inadequate information: the commander should seek the good decision in time, resisting the temptation of the perfect decision too late.

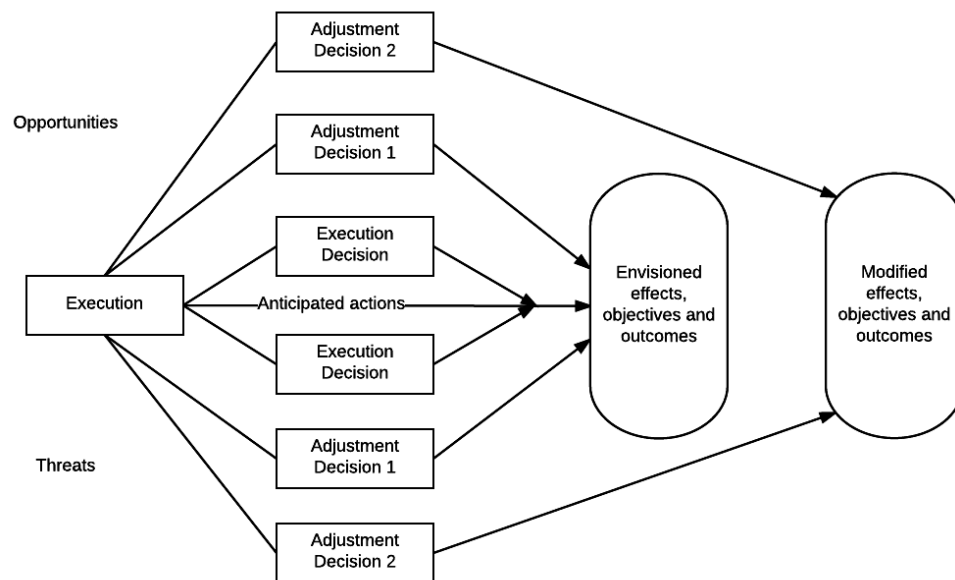


Figure 11. Modified Decisions in Execution

Source: Created by author.

The cumulative effect of these various differences in doctrine leads to a divergence in the freedom of action enjoyed by subordinates; the bounds of their initiative. In the terms of Figure 11 American subordinates are expected to display initiative within execution decisions; outside of these bounds they are—in most circumstances—required to seek permission to act, or to await direction. British

subordinates have freedom of action within the area bounded by adjustment decision 1, and are only required to seek permission to act, or to await direction—again, in most circumstances—within adjustment decision 2. The existence of the “in most circumstances” recognizes the existence of a grey area, in which a subordinate believes that an action is immediately necessary, while also being aware that he does not have the authority to conduct it. While both British and American doctrine would seem to support the subordinate in exercising initiative within this grey area, it is suggested by this thesis that British doctrine is more encouraging of this exercise, leaving the subordinate more likely to display initiative *in extremis*.

The fundamental difference in the British and American doctrine of mission command therefore lies in the extent of delegation. British subordinates have more decisions delegated to them, allowing them greater freedom of action, and necessitating less control to be exercised by a superior headquarters.

Impact of Culture

The importance of culture, and the extent to which it supports a command philosophy, is apparent from Shamir’s model; a misalignment between culture and doctrine would lead to a praxis gap and a command philosophy that differs in execution from that prescribed by doctrine. In considering the differences between command philosophies and their implications for interoperability, it would therefore be necessary—if there was a misalignment—to first of all come to a judgement as to what each command philosophy would actually be like in execution, and only then determine what the differences between each projected command philosophy were, along with the related implications. Fortunately, each command philosophy seemed broadly supported by the

respective national military culture, although there was one tension, and some areas where it was not possible to make a judgement.

In seeking to determine the culture of each army, and its compatibility with the espoused command philosophy, both Hofstede's and Schein's models of culture were used. In considering Hofstede's model a tension was identified between the suitability of wider national culture to a mission command philosophy—which seemed strong—and the suitability of national military culture. It seemed evident from Soeters' research that militaries were more avoidant of uncertainty, more collectivist, and had higher conceptions of power-distance than their wider national cultures; this seemed to pose significant problems for the British army, which varied particularly significantly from national norms. However it was posited that the organizational culture of the army—described through Schein's model, with particular recourse to artifacts—successfully mitigated this apparent misalignment between culture and mission command philosophy, reducing power-distance, and serving to inject some useful individualist traits.

The major doctrinal difference between the British and American philosophies of mission command—the greater delegation of decision-making apparent in the British—was seen to be supported by, and reflective of, particular cultural differences between the two armies. The comparative seniority of British commanders at each echelon encouraged more authority to be delegated to them, while the fact that they tended in particular to be senior to the principal staff officer in their superior headquarters served to reduce the level of control that the superior headquarters was likely to exert, and that the subordinate commander was likely to accept. Smaller headquarters within the British army reduced the capacity of the headquarters to conduct analytical decision-making,

particularly during execution, thus increasing the burden placed on the subordinate commander. The regimental system and a tolerance for individualism encouraged a certain independence of spirit, useful for the greater initiative required in the British system. Finally, the uniform system of PME and significant cultural homogeneity within the British officer corps enabled the organizational trust necessary for the greater degree of delegation. The extent to which differences in doctrine are reflective of differences in culture serves to reinforce the idea of culture as something that does not just support doctrine, but actively drives it. In the same way that *auftragstaktik* was seen as a reflection of a particular Prussian cultural and strategic framework, so should the British and American command philosophies—if they are to be successful—stand as coherent expressions of their national military cultures.

It was mentioned that there appeared one point of tension between doctrine and culture, and some areas of uncertainty. The tension lay in the American doctrinal requirement to exert minimum control, with a cultural context that seemed to encourage or emphasize control. The power-distance gap between staff and subordinate commanders, the American predilection for an analytical decision-making process, the much greater American capacity within headquarters, combined with the apparent American technophilia create a context in which Americans seem more likely to exert control in more circumstances than their British counterparts. To the extent that this might alter the manner in which mission command was exercised, it would simply be to exacerbate the extant difference between the British and American models, further reducing the bounds within which American subordinates have freedom of action. The uncertainty, which applied to both the American and British philosophies of mission

command, lay in the extent to which culture supported the requirement for commanders to be tolerant of mistakes. There was no basis of evidence—e.g. a weight of observed behavior—upon which to judge whether this aspect was or was not supported by culture.

Implications

It is possible to conclude that the American philosophy of mission command had diverged further from the initial paradigm of *auftragstaktik* than the British philosophy. This does, incidentally, accord with one of Shamir's conclusions.²³⁶ However, for the purposes of this thesis the divergence in and of itself is not important. A conscious limitation of this thesis was that the suitability of a mission command philosophy to the contemporary operating environment would not be considered, and that the thesis would therefore be agnostic as to the benefits or dis-benefits of a mission command philosophy. *Auftragstaktik* is not a Platonic ideal of command—at least there is no assumption in this thesis that it is—and so it does not follow that the British philosophy of command is superior to or more effective than the American philosophy. It may well be more effective for the British army, but that is because it suits—because it has been driven by—the British army's particular cultural context. The divergence between the philosophies is only important in as much as it has implications for the interoperability of the combined force.

²³⁶ Shamir, 197. "The British Army has probably been the most successful in implementing mission command. A small professional force charged with a wide range of missions, it enjoys the advantage of agility and a tradition of professionalism. In addition, its policy regarding military action in the empire had granted subordinates considerable independence and freedom to act."

The most obvious implication is the potential misunderstanding that would exist as to the limits of freedom of action. A subordinate British formation might believe it has greater freedom of action than a superior American formation is actually willing to tolerate; the contrary is also true, a subordinate American formation believing its freedom of action to be more limited than the superior British formation intends. One thing a command philosophy does is to establish an expectation between the leader and the led. Uncorrected, the divergence in philosophy would lead to a general dissatisfaction between echelons. The American superior might feel its British subordinate rash or insubordinate, while the British subordinate might feel micro-managed and over-controlled. In the contrary example the British superior might consider its American subordinate lacking in initiative, while the American subordinate might feel the British superior to be shirking its responsibilities, offering inadequate control or direction. This can be mitigated in the first instance through simply being aware of the differences between the philosophies. While to know all may not be to forgive all, the associated awareness of the potential problems may at least reduce their impact on cohesion, and also drive both British and American echelons towards achieving a clarity of understanding: what are the expectations of the superior, and what are those of the subordinate. Associated with this is the achievement of clarity as to the precise meaning of technical language: one army must make sure that their understanding of “intent” and other key concepts is known to the other.

The second implication is the potential requirement for one army to adapt its command philosophy to one that more closely approximates the other’s. In the majority of instances, one would expect the subordinate formation or unit to adapt itself to the

requirements of the superior. If that is the case then it may prove easier for a British formation to work as subordinate to an American formation, than for an American formation to work as subordinate to the British. If a British formation chooses to reduce freedom of action, there is a doctrinal precedent for doing so: the potential requirement to exert more control, even to the point of adopting a *Befehlstaktik* model, is acknowledged in doctrine. American doctrine does not have the inverted capacity to ease control, beyond the *in extremis* capacity of the subordinate to act beyond his superior's intent when in the decision-making "grey area."

The difficulty of this adaptation to an alternate command philosophy is that, even when apparently supported in doctrine, a cultural misalignment is still established. If a British formation adopts an American command philosophy it is acting in such a way that is neither reflective of, not necessarily supported by national military culture.²³⁷ There are two further implications from this. First, the adoption of the other army's command philosophy should be restricted—as far as possible—to the adopting army's headquarters, while within the subordinate formation the national command philosophy continues to be used. So if country X is the superior and country Y is the subordinate, country Y should fulfil the role of the subordinate—according to country X's command philosophy—when engaging with country X. However, within its own formation, its own national command philosophy should continue to be used. This mitigates the impact of the divergence, while reducing the extent of misalignment experienced within the subordinate formation. The

²³⁷ Because while doctrine allows for the exercise of greater control within mission command, the exertion of greater control seems to be assumed as a temporary measure. It is the permanent—at least medium term—shift to an alien philosophy which is problematic.

second implication is that if this is not practical—i.e. if there has to be a more general change in the command philosophy—then it should be accompanied by changes to some of the cultural artifacts surrounding the exercise of command: e.g. the size of headquarters, and the number and seniority of staff officers. This could be a blunt tool for making an alien command philosophy more, albeit not wholly, culturally acceptable.

The third implication of the findings returns to the starting point of the thesis: the intention to achieve a near seamless interoperability between British and American formations. The implication of the difference between mission command philosophies, and the extent to which they are rooted in culture, is that while effective interoperability is possible, a unit or formation of one army will never be able to operate as effectively as the subordinate of the other, as it does within a purely national context. Interoperability is possible; seamless interoperability is not. Given the choices open to a subordinate unit or formation, if it sticks to a national philosophy of mission command, it necessarily introduces a degree of tension or confusion into the relationship between superior and subordinate; if it adapts to the philosophy of the superior, it creates a degree of cultural misalignment with its own doctrine. For interoperability to be truly seamless, a much closer alignment of doctrine and of culture would be necessary.

Suggestions for Further Research

In the course of writing this thesis, a number of areas for further research have been identified.

This thesis has considered differences between mission command philosophies between the American and British armies. It did not consider sister services, nor did it consider the impact of working alongside other governmental or non-governmental

organizations. An examination of the challenges of executing a mission command philosophy as part of a joint operation would be useful.

In considering the exercise of mission command, the focus of this thesis has been on the way in which a mission command philosophy is likely to be exercised on operations. It is an obvious point, but the vast majority of an army's time is spent not on operations, nor even on exercise, but instead in barracks. A thesis which examines the management style which is used in either the British or American armies "in camp", and the manner in which it either accords or conflicts with the mission command philosophy would be useful, and could identify significant challenges.

There are few good and comprehensive studies of British army culture. The paucity of comprehensive studies drove the format of this thesis in as much as it caused great weight to be placed on the study of artifacts—i.e. the tangible elements of culture—rather than on the attitudes and assumptions that lay beneath. A comprehensive study of British army culture, perhaps including elements of attitude or perception surveys, would be extraordinarily useful, and would fill a gap in the available literature.

Finally, a detailed examination of the exercise of mission command by British and American brigades as they make their way through training cycles would be a worthwhile focus of study. Rather than relying on apparent discrepancies between doctrine and culture to determine a praxis gap, it would provide a weight of evidence for how mission command is actually practiced. It would also enable a judgment as to the tolerance for risk and acceptance of mistakes within the British and American armies, based on information from a quasi-operational context, rather than one that is extrapolated from wider societal trends, or based on perceived attitudes.

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