

Mission Command: The Historical Roots of Mission Command in the US Army.

A Monograph

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Abstract

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Mission orders as described in ADP 6-0, are the foundation of mission command, because it sets the tone of a command climate. Mission orders tell a subordinate what to do and why he is doing it, but does not tell him how. By not telling a subordinate how to do something they can better account for and deal with the friction and fog of war to accomplish the commander's intent. ADP 6-0 *Mission Command* published in September 2012 lays out principles and tasks for commanders and staffs to prepare orders, and to execute command and control operations. ADP 6-0 states that army mission command comes from the German concept of *Auftragstaktik*.

This study analyzes the U.S. Army's historical examples of mission command in using three distinctly different American general officers from three separate periods of American military history. Mission command existed in the American army prior to the Prussian army of the mid to late nineteenth century and the US Army's formal adoption of mission command in the 1980. Analysis of the military careers of Generals Zachary Taylor, Ulysses S. Grant, and John J. Pershing shows these military commanders successfully displayed a mission command style of command. To conduct this analysis a short biography that shapes the traits, personality, and education of the general is important along with a description of the military environment of their respective period. These two important aspects place in context the detailed analysis of how they applied mission command to achieve operational and strategic success through military means.

Historical examples of mission command educate leaders and provide tools to draw from, so they can effectively lead soldiers in combat when a lack of combat experience exists. American commanders applied mission command throughout all conflicts the United States has participated in, and it began prior to German *Auftragstaktik*. American examples are more applicable for American leaders as the U.S. military culture of citizen soldiers is very different from the militaristic society of Germany that produced *Auftragstaktik*. There is a current a gap in historical examples of mission command that portray the command style used by historical American leaders. By educating current army leaders with successful historical examples of mission command, they can effectively apply mission command.

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Acronyms

ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
AEF	American Expeditionary Force
CSA	Confederate States of America
FSR	Field Service Regulation
MDMP	Military Decision Making Process
US	United States

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Introduction

“Never tell people how to do things, tell them what to do, and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.”¹ —General George S. Patton Jr.

Doctrinal Foundation

Mission command in essence is the way commanders and leaders guide their organizations to accomplish the operational end state through allowing subordinate leaders to account for the inherent friction in war through their individual initiative.² Mission orders are the foundation of mission command. Mission orders tell a subordinate what to do, not how to do it.³ By not telling subordinates how to do something it allows leaders closest to the friction and fog of war to make independent decisions within the commander’s intent to achieve objectives. ADP 6-0 *Mission Command*, published in September 2012, lays out principles and tasks for commanders and staffs to prepare orders, and execute command and control of operations. ADP 6-0 also states that the mission command concept originates from the German concept of *Auftragstaktik*.⁴ As in most modern army doctrinal manuals, ADP 6-0 provides a descriptive approach to the art of mission command, but fails to provide the historical context for the doctrine’s concept. The doctrine of mission command fails to provide the synthesis through historical examples to allow

¹ Colin P. Mahle, “Leadership in the Shenandoah Valley and North Africa: Historical Studies in Mission Command” (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2013), 32.

² Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission Command* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 1. Mission Command 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.

³ Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission Command*, 5.

⁴ Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission Command*, v.

leaders to understand and develop a useful framework with which to apply the art of mission command. The lack of practical synthesis and the credit given to German Field Marshal Helmuth Von Moltke for creating mission command in American army doctrine leaves leaders looking to the Prussian army for a framework to apply mission command.

There are American generals that exhibited the principles of mission command prior to Moltke's adoption of Auftragstaktik in the 1860s. The cultural and historical differences between Prussia and America are significant enough that American military leaders should also look to their own past to gather lessons learned to develop frameworks to practice mission command. Moltke may have coined the term Auftragstaktik, which means mission orders or decentralized tactics, but he is not the founder of mission command.⁵ Mission command evolved independently in leaders based on variables within command environments, the experiences leaders go through, and reflection on those experiences. Mission command emerges in successful leaders as they adapt their leadership style to best execute operations in a complex combat environment. The environment, the nature of warfare, and a leader's personal experience influence their individual practice of mission command. Mission command is an art learned through practice and not through lecture. More often than not, leaders have no idea they are executing the art of mission command, nor consciously think of it when leading. The lack of specific writings on mission command by mission command practitioners only feeds the current confusion on what mission command is and how to apply it.

The Rise of Mission Command

The modern context of mission command or decentralized command started with Napoleonic warfare. Carl Von Clausewitz described that the fog and friction of war is a state in warfare where the easy tasks become hard to accomplish. This making the easy seem hard

⁵ Geoffrey Wawro, *The Franco Prussian War: The German Conquest of France in 1870-1871* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 54.

prevents leaders from effectively controlling every detail of an operation.⁶ Napoleon's staff system, corps structure, experienced citizen soldiers at all levels, and flexible tactics gave rise to a modern concept of mission command, and allowed him to command and control a field army of over 200,000 for the first time in modern history.⁷ The Napoleonic wars change in scale and nature began the modern concept of mission command. The adoption of new tables of organizations and sizes of armies, combined with the fog and friction of war, forced the decentralization of control to deal with the uncertainty of war. In the nineteenth century, the size of armies exceeded the technology to control their every movement during campaigns, which forced the need for decentralized control in order to defeat the enemy's center of gravity.⁸ Senior American military commanders since the formation of the US Army in 1775 developed, fostered, and used the philosophy of mission command to lead their formations in combat prior to German Auftragstaktik and the American adoption of mission command in the 1980s.

The American Gap in Mission Command

There is a gap and lack of adequate research and analysis on early examples of American mission command. Due to the military infatuation with WWII German combined arms mobile warfare doctrine, and extensive military writings from Prussian military theorists, the US Army studies the Prussian and German examples of mission command from the nineteenth and twentieth century instead of their own. The lack of coverage on American examples of mission command is in part because the military theorists that wrote and influenced the thoughts on mission command came from Europe during the nineteenth century. The writings of theorists

⁶ Carl Von Clausewitz, Carl, *On War*, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 114-121.

⁷ Robert M. Epstein, *Napoleon's Last Victory and the Emergence of Modern War* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 24.

⁸ Robert Citino, *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 143 and 148-149.

Henri Jomini, Carl Von Clausewitz, and Helmuth Von Moltke articulated their experiences in war with the modern division and corps systems and general staff gave military historians a lot of material to work with in the analysis of mission command.⁹ Orders and correspondence from the time mostly represent field commanders' dialogue back to Washington D.C. or from commanders to their individual corps and division commanders. This leaves quick written orders between leaders that do not provide the context of the why they issued the order. The lack of communications technology and the fear of written messages falling into enemy hands likely created this condition. Writings on American conflicts of the nineteenth century fall into three categories, either biographies, memoirs, or historical books. These tend to be descriptive of the events versus analysis of how generals approached their style of command to achieve success on the battlefield.

Recent American military theorists cover the art of mission command, but fail to use early American examples that display how the command style of the American army developed over time beginning in the nineteenth century. Instead, recent military theorists on mission command use German and Israeli examples. American writers and theorists of the twentieth and twenty-first century include Robert R. Leonhard, William S. Lind, Michael D Mathews, and Don Vandergriff. These writers cover American examples and developments in mission command, but focus on World War II to present. They give little representation to the American military leaders of World War I and earlier. The one exception they reference is Ulysses S. Grant, but they fail to put his actions in context of the current understanding of mission command. They also fail to

⁹ Martin van Creveld, *Command in War* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA: 1985), 103-122; David G. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1966), 158-163.

explain why General Grant's command style is a sound framework to apply the art of mission command.¹⁰

Approach to a Study on American Mission Command

This study analyzes the US Army's historical examples of mission command in using three American general officers from three separate periods of American military history. Analysis of the military careers of Generals Zachary Taylor, Ulysses S. Grant, and John J. Pershing shows these military commanders successfully used the art of mission command. The analysis of each general begins with a short biography that shaped the traits, personality, and education of each general, followed by a campaign analysis through the lens of the principles of mission command. The six principles of mission command are to build cohesive teams through mutual trust, create shared understanding, provide a clear commander's intent, exercise disciplined initiative, use mission orders, and accept prudent risk.¹¹

Historical examples of mission command educate leaders and provide tools to use as a framework to lead soldiers in combat despite no prior personal combat experience. American commanders applied mission command throughout all conflicts the United States has participated

¹⁰ The modern military theorists Robert R. Leonhard in his book *The Art of Maneuver: Maneuver Warfare Theory and Airland Battle* use the examples of Russian theorist Field Marshal Mikhail N. Tukhachevskii, Sun Tzu, Genghis Khan, Napoleon, Helmuth von Moltke and Liddell Hart to reference command styles for modern combat. William S. Lind in his book *Maneuver Warfare Handbook* references General U.S. Grant in one sentence, but uses the Germans and Israelis to explain decentralized execution and mission orders over two of the books chapters. Don Vandergriff in his book *The Path to Victory* largely uses General Pershing of World War I and General Marshall of World War II to describe a complete lack of mission command in the US Army and describes a culture of centralized command where there is no toleration for mistakes. Vandergriff fails to recognize numerous examples of decentralized command styles that used mission orders throughout all American conflicts to justify his argument that the US Army should transition for an authoritarian centralized command style to mission command. Michael D Mathews in his book *Head Strong: How Psychology is Revolutionizing War* talks about decision-making and the issuing of orders in difficult and fluid environments, but uses examples from World War II to the present and disregards the examples of pre-World War II.

¹¹ Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission Command*, 2.

in, and it began prior to German Auftragstaktik. American examples are more applicable for American leaders as the US military culture of citizen soldiers is very different from the militaristic society of Germany that produced Auftragstaktik. There is a current a gap in historical examples of mission command that portray the command style used by historical American leaders. By educating current army leaders with successful historical examples of mission command, they can effectively apply mission command.

General Zachary Taylor

“No Soldier could either face danger or responsibility more calmly than he. These are qualities more rarely found than genius or physical courage.”¹² --
General Ulysses S. Grant in describing General Zachary Taylor in his memoirs

General Taylor Introduction

General Zachary Taylor was a soldiers’ commander. He felt that doing the right thing and success was more important than the process. The beginnings of General Taylor’s life provide an understanding of how he grew into the leader that led the US Army into Mexico in 1846. General Taylor was born in Virginia to a farmer and citizen soldier.¹³ General Taylor grew up on a farm along the Ohio River near Louisville, Kentucky. His father’s public and military service contributed to the development of his strong character. General Taylor received a commission as a first lieutenant in the 7th Infantry in 1808 as part of the army expansion under

¹² Ulysses S. Grant, ed. James M. McPherson, *Ulysses S. Grant: Personal Memoirs* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1999), 51.

¹³ K. Jack Bauer, *Zachary Taylor: Soldier, Planter, Statesman, of the Old Southwest* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 1. General Taylor’s father was educated at William and Mary College, served with the Continental Army, rose through the ranks from Lieutenant to Lieutenant Colonel, and served in the Virginia assembly.

President Thomas Jefferson.¹⁴ In 1811, he received the promotion to captain, and after several small assignments between New Orleans and Memphis he commanded Fort Harrison in 1812.¹⁵

At Fort Harrison, a young Zachary Taylor earned fame for his skill and resourcefulness in the stubborn defense of the fort against a superior Indian force.¹⁶ Taylor's force of sixteen healthy men with another thirty-four who were ill with fever defeated Tecumseh's attacking force of 450 braves. At Fort Harrison Taylor learned how to organize and lead men in a desperate situation, to give orders in chaos, and the ability to develop solutions making use of available resources.¹⁷

Zachary Taylor's boyhood personality had an independence of character, inflexibility of purpose, frank and open disposition, foresight, full of energy, inquiring mind, modest, and thoughtful.¹⁸ He loved bold challenges and once swam across the Ohio River filled with floating ice.¹⁹ His early life and experiences at Fort Harrison provide a peek into the determined leader that his future soldiers come to admire. Just as many did on the frontier, he accepted his situation for what it was and did not let that deter him in desperate situations.

¹⁴ Bauer, *Zachary Taylor: Soldier, Planter, Statesman, of the Old*, 5. The President Jefferson military expansion was in response to the Chesapeake affair that tripled the army in size.

¹⁵ William K. Bixby, *Letters of Zachary Taylor from the Battle Fields of the Mexican American War* (Rochester, NY: The Post Express Printing Company, 1908), xn.

¹⁶ *Ibid*; Bauer, *Zachary Taylor: Soldier, Planter, Statesman, of the Old Southwest*, 14-16.

¹⁷ Holman Hamilton, *Zachary Taylor Soldier of the Republic* (Norwalk, CT: The Easton Press, 1941), XV.

¹⁸ Henry Montgomery, *The Life of Major General Zachary Taylor* (Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 1847), 15.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 16.

Northern Mexico Campaign 1846

General Taylor built a cohesive team during the Mexican American war that trusted in each other to accomplish the mission. During the buildup of the Army of Observation prior to the starting of the war, General Taylor remembered his earlier failures with volunteers during the Seminole Wars. This failure with volunteers resulted in of a lack of trust between him and the volunteers.²⁰ To rectify his earlier failures with volunteer forces he trained and professionalized the volunteers to integrate them into the larger team.²¹ His efforts joined the volunteers with the regulars as a more capable and cohesive combat team.

When soldiers trust their leaders, they follow them through the rigors of the crucible of combat. General Taylor over his career built a reputation where his men respected and trusted him. He shared their hardships, put their needs above his own, and built a reputation through action where his men respected and trusted his leadership. In an incident dealing with General William Worth, one of his subordinate commanders during the Mexican American war, a conflict arose over the brevet ranks of Brigadier General. The conflict was between General David Twiggs and General Worth over who was senior. General Worth would not accept President Polk's ruling that Twiggs' linear rank had seniority over Worth's brevet rank.²² This led to, in Taylor's eyes, an unpatriotic resignation by Worth and a refusal to serve. Eventually Twiggs received a proper promotion and a separate command resulting in a regular commission opening for Worth. Taylor did not hold a grudge and placed General Worth right back into command despite his leaving the area until the situation was resolved. Taylor's handling of the situation

²⁰ Montgomery, *The Life of Major General Zachary Taylor*, 34-39.

²¹ Bauer, *Zachary Taylor, Soldier Planter, Statesman, of the Old Southwest*, 111-120

²² Felice Flanery Lewis, *Trailing Clouds of Glory: Zachary Taylor's Mexican War Campaign and His Emerging Civil War Leaders* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2010), 50 and 92.

allowed both Twiggs and Worth to continue to serve as part of the larger team. Taylors's action prevented petty officer egos from tearing apart his army and he managed to maintain a capable team to combat the Mexican Army.²³

Another way he built trust was through his exposure to the same dangers and conditions as the soldiers he commanded. General Taylor repeatedly moved forward with his troops to see through his own eyes how the battle was unfolding.²⁴ At the battle of Palo Alta, he was forward in order to ensure the artillery was at the right place to support the infantry. At the Battle of Buena Vista, he observed the battle from so close that his coat ended up riddled with holes from grape shot.²⁵

General Taylor created a sense of shared understanding in his unit under both combat and pre-combat conditions. The first way that General Taylor shared his vision, thoughts and ideas was through the holding of court.²⁶ He encouraged any member of his command to talk freely with him and join him for conversation while encamped. Knowing the circumstances they were under, it is easy to see how soldiers and young officers alike would seek his opinion on how to fight the Mexicans and where there campaign would lead next. This rare access to a senior officer in such a low stress environment undoubtedly led all members of the command to understand the army's situation. It allowed them to know General Taylor's ideas and concept for

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Grant, *Ulysses S. Grant: Personal Memoirs*, 72.

²⁵ Tom Bowen, *The Taylor Anecdote Book: Anecdotes and Letters of Zachary Taylor* (New York, NY: Appleton and Company, 1868), XIX; William K. Bixby, *Letters of Zachary Taylor from the Battle Fields of the Mexican American War* (Rochester, NY: The Post Express Printing Company, 1908), 3.

²⁶ Edward J. Nichols, *Zach Taylor's Little Army* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company INC, 1963), 31.

the campaign. General Taylor's force knew how their commander understood different situations because of this practice, and it again built trust through open dialogue.

During the entire campaign, he and the officers under his command shared the same poor living conditions as the soldiers.²⁷ There are several examples of how General Zachary Taylor was not above talking to the common soldier, which occurred in both passing or in addressing formal grievances of his men. General Taylor built a reputation where his men believed they all had an equal importance, which reinforced their trust in him. It also built a cohesive team, as officers and enlisted men alike knew him, and most importantly, he knew them.

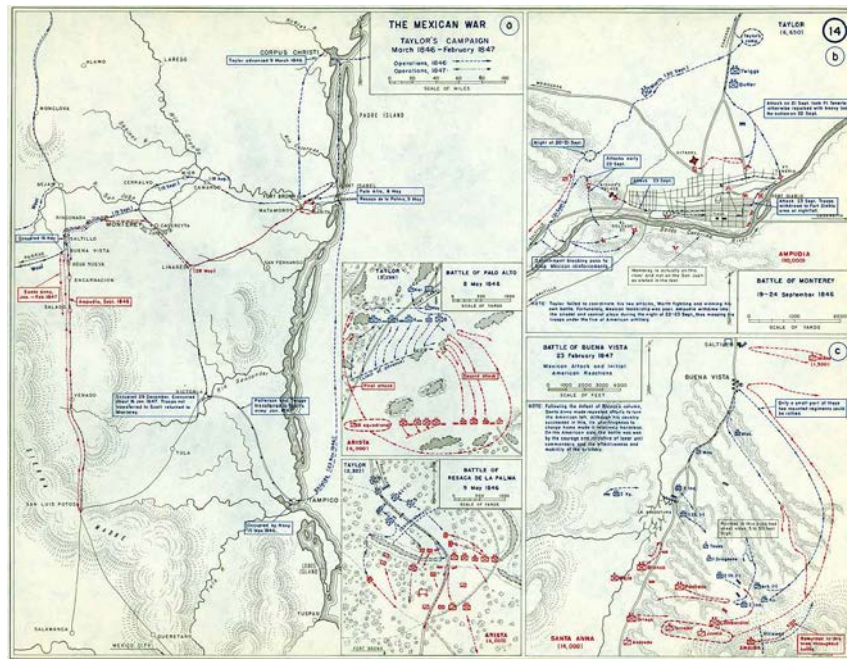


Figure 1. General Taylor's Northern Mexico Campaign 1846-1847

Source: West Point, "Taylor's Campaign, 1846 – 1847," Department of History Atlases, Accessed December 26, 2014, http://www.westpoint.edu/history/SiteAssets/SitePages/Mexican%20War-/mexican%20war%20map_Talyer%2014.jpg.

²⁷ Bauer, *Zachary Taylor, Soldier Planter, Statesman, of the Old Southwest*, xv.

General Taylor displayed the use of prudent risk during almost all of his operations. Always outnumbered and with incomplete information Taylor had to accept risk to achieve success. The best display of Taylor's acceptance of prudent risk was his march to relieve the besieged Fort Texas. He did not know the enemy positions along the route to Fort Texas, but most certainly knew enemy contact was likely. General Taylor weighed the cost of the loss of Fort Texas as a basing location to begin his campaign, loss of its artillery, the loss of soldiers based there, and the risk to a force attacking to relieve the fort. He felt that attacking to relieve the fort outweighed the risk of encountering a Mexican force along the route.²⁸ He also weighed the risk of waiting on the appropriate amount of reserves and wagons to move his force versus immediately moving to relieve it. Taylor realized any more delay would most certainly result in Fort Texas falling and a disadvantaged engagement with a larger Mexican force, because the Mexican Army could mass on his column after the fall of Fort Texas.²⁹

Following the successful battle of Palo Alto on 8 May 1846, Taylor faced a superior Mexican force between him and his forces who needed relief at Fort Texas. To solve the problem General Taylor held a council of war on 9 May 1846, and shared his understanding of the situation with his subordinate leaders.³⁰ At this council, they discussed whether to attack towards the Mexicans to relief the besieged soldiers at Fort Texas. General Taylor's council of war after the battle of Palo Alto shows he placed a premium on the importance of a shared understanding of the situation and the counsel of his subordinates. After holding council with his subordinates, the general held a vote on whether they should attack or not. The results were four votes to attack

²⁸ Bauer, *Zachary Taylor, Soldier Planter, Statesman, of the Old Southwest*, 148-152.

²⁹ Lewis, *Trailing Clouds of Glory: Zachary Taylor's Mexican War Campaign and His Emerging Civil War Leaders*, 70-89; Edward J. Nichols, *Zach Taylor's Little Army* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company INC, 1963), 71-88.

³⁰ Bauer, *Zachary Taylor: Soldier, Planter, Statesman, of the Old Southwest*, 77.

and seven votes opposed. Despite this, he ordered his men to prepare to attack.³¹ The decision to attack in order to rescue the soldiers at Fort Texas, although contrary to his subordinates' recommendation, allowed them to still feel part of the decision process and maintain the cohesiveness of the team.

To carry out his advance against the Mexican army on the 9 April 1848, Taylor could not continue to move with his combat trains. The trains slowed his movement, so they would need to move separately and secure themselves for General Taylor's main force to be more maneuverable. Lieutenant Jeremiah Scarritt wrote, "General Taylor directed me to secure the trains in the best manner possible."³² In support of this order, General Taylor left a few cannons behind to assist Lieutenant Scarritt. Scarritt organized the trains to defend itself and move separately to enable the main attack and to support the main force.

The battle of Monterrey, conducted in September of 1846, provides an example of how General Taylor used mission orders. His mission orders allowed his subordinate commanders to operate using disciplined initiative. Taylor used mission orders in this instance for several reasons. His command consisted of three divisions that would all engage the Mexicans in a ferocious fight simultaneously, which limited his ability to control the entire force beyond reinforcing success with reserve forces or artillery. Second, he would not have time to dictate the exact movements and employments of the divisions in real time due to the complexity of terrain and the time that actions would happen. Runners relaying orders between commanders

³¹ K. Jack Bauer, *The Mexican War: 1846-1848* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1974), 59.

³² George Smith and Charles Judah, *Chronicles of the Gringos* (Albuquerque, NM: The University of Mexico Press, 1968), 64, 65, and 68. Lieutenant Jeremiah Scarritt in his 12 May 1846 report to Colonel Joseph Totten he describes his observations of the battle of Palo Alto and Resaca De La Palma. Scarritt served temporarily as General Taylor's assistant aide on 8 and 9 May 1846.

could not keep pace with the speed of the battle and were of little use for the tactical control of forces.³³

General Taylor's concept of the operation was to envelop the city from both the west and east. General Worth led the column that would attack along the Saltillo road to the west of the city that served two purposes. First, it prevented enemy escape through protected mountain passes. Second, it would destroy the prepared works at Bishops Palace located on high ground. After a reconnaissance to determine the validity of the plan, General Taylor held a council of war among his subordinate commanders.³⁴ Captain Electus Backus wrote on 20 September 1846 that General Worth was ordered by General Taylor to, "Gain the Saltillo road, and cut off enemy retreat and supplies in that direction, to capture several works at the west of the town."³⁵ Taylor articulated what he needed Worth to achieve, but gave him no guidance on how to accomplish it and left him the ability take the initiative to destroy enemy works and positions along the west side of the city as he saw fit.

General Taylor at one point in the battle realized that the Mexican forces identified General Worth's column moving their way via the Saltillo highway. General Taylor then sent an order to Lieutenant Colonel Garland to attack as a show force to distract forces away from General Worth's attack.³⁶ Taylor issued Garland a verbal order of, "Colonel, lead the head of your column off to the left, keeping well out of reach of the enemy's shot, and if you think...you can take any of them little forts down there with the bayonet you better do it, but consult with

³³ Lewis, *Trailing Clouds of Glory "Zachary Taylor's Mexican War Campaign and His Emerging Civil War Leaders,"* 141-143.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 127-128.

³⁵ Smith, *Chronicles of the Gringos*, 79-80; Lewis, *Trailing Clouds of Glory "Zachary Taylor's Mexican War Campaign and His Emerging Civil War Leaders,"* 128.

³⁶ Smith, *Chronicles of the Gringos*, 79-80; Hamilton, *Zachary Taylor Soldier of the Republic*, 207-208; Bauer, *The Mexican War: 1846-1848*, 93.

Major Mansfield, you'll find him down there."³⁷ The demonstration took place in front of the town to prevent the enemy from reinforcing against General Taylor's main effort, which was Worth's 2nd Division. Lieutenant Colonel Garland executed the correct action because General Taylor articulated a clear task and purpose to him. General Taylor provided the why behind the order to Garland, and encouraged him to seek and take advantage of opportunities presented by the enemy if he could identify any. The order issued by General Taylor to Garland shows the confidence he had in his subordinates to coordinate details between themselves to execute his intent. The use of mission orders by General Taylor prevented the misinterpretation of the order by keeping it simple.³⁸

During General Worth's movement, he realized upon gaining a greater appreciation for the terrain that he must control the heights of Independence Hill and El Soldado.³⁹ Although this was not in General Taylor's initial orders, Worth attacked to occupy these hills based on commander's intent. General Worth knew his force was necessary to hold the Saltillo road. To support his attacks on the Hill he sent a note to General Taylor explaining the situation and asking for a diversionary action to support the attacks, which led to General Taylor's order to Lieutenant Colonel Garland.⁴⁰ General Worth's initiative and trusted dialogue between the two commanders, Worth secured the Saltillo road. General Worth then realized that the Mexican artillery located on Federation Ridge was a threat for American troops assaulting the city, so again he took the

³⁷ Bauer, *The Mexican War: 1846-1848*, 95. Major Mansfield was conducting a reconnaissance mission of enemy positions previously ordered by General Taylor.

³⁸ Lewis, *Trailing Clouds of Glory "Zachary Taylor's Mexican War Campaign and His Emerging Civil War Leaders,"* 131-133.

³⁹ Bauer, *The Mexican War: 1846-1848*, 93-96; Lewis, *Trailing Clouds of Glory "Zachary Taylor's Mexican War Campaign and His Emerging Civil War Leaders,"* 133.

⁴⁰ Lewis, *Trailing Clouds of Glory "Zachary Taylor's Mexican War Campaign and His Emerging Civil War Leaders,"* 134.

personal initiative to assault Federation Ridge.⁴¹ The sequence of Worth's initial actions are important because they show how mission orders and the allowing of disciplined initiative facilitated Taylor's overall success despite not knowing exactly what would take place before hand. The command style General Taylor applied in combat took into account the uncertainty encountered in battle due to incomplete information, and allowed his subordinates to use initiative to seize opportunities to meet his intent.

General Taylor also held councils of war as a way to give verbal operations orders and to share ideas among the leaders on how to precede against the enemy. Prior to most battles throughout his career General Taylor would hold these councils. They served as crude version of the military decision making process (MDMP) and the orders issuing process. Prior to the battle of Buena Vista, he arrived on the future battlefield and talked with General John Wool. They discussed a course of action taking into account the size of the anticipated enemy force from the Mexican General Santa Anna and the rough and restrictive terrain of the battlefield. General Taylor told Wool, "General as you have reconnoitered the ground, and I have not, you will select the field of battle and make such dispositions of the troops on the arrival of the enemy as you may deem necessary."⁴² He approved General Wool's recommendation to use a defile to maximize the effectiveness of their smaller force.⁴³ The approach that General Taylor approved provides an example of the trust that developed between himself and his subordinate commanders. It also created a strong cohesive team through a planning process that involved the thoughts and ideas of subordinate commanders and leaders. This trust between himself and his subordinate leaders

⁴¹ Samuel J. Martin, *General Braxton Bragg, CSA* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2011), 45-46.

⁴² Bauer, *The Mexican War: 1846-1848*, 209.

⁴³ Gregory Hospodor, "Forgotten Transcendence: The Battle of Buena Vista, 1847," (documentary), Dole Institute of Politics, posted October 2, 2014, accessed October 10, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mFf7w0DooM>.

grew after a display of professionalism and competence by General Taylor's forces in several battles in 1846 and 1847.

General Taylor practiced the art of mission command to execute his campaign against the Mexican Army in Northern Mexico. Through a military career spanning several conflicts, Zachary Taylor developed and honed his use of the principles of mission command. The use of these principles emerged from experiencing failures and successes, and learning from them. Due to the dispersion of forces on the battlefield and the speed at which combat took place; General Taylor relied on subordinate commanders to operate in a decentralized manner to seize the initiative when opportunities presented themselves. He relied on his professionally trained lieutenants and captains as well as his subordinate generals to assist in determining courses of action to engage the Mexican Army. His character was one that sought the input of others and trusted their advice as well as relying on their loyalty. The mission command style that General Taylor exhibited in the Northern Mexico campaign resulted from a combination of competently trained West Point officers, a larger battlefield that demanded decentralization, and his personal character.⁴⁴

General Ulysses S. Grant

General Grant Biography

General Ulysses S. Grant was born in rural Ohio and was a quiet boy. Through political connections, his father secured the future general an appointment to the Military Academy at West Point from Congressman Thomas L Hamer.⁴⁵ Grant did not especially want to attend West

⁴⁴ Bauer, *Zachary Taylor, Soldier Planter, Statesman, of the Old Southwest*, 60, 116, 117, and 181. Some of the West Point graduates and future Civil War Generals that served under General Taylor were General Ulysses S. Grant, General Braxton Bragg, General John Reynolds, General George Meade, and Confederate President Jefferson Davis.

⁴⁵ Grant, *Ulysses S. Grant: Personal Memoirs*, 14.

Point due to his fear of failure.⁴⁶ While at West Point Grant excelled in horsemanship and built himself a reputation with the other cadets in this area.⁴⁷ He kept to himself and tended to study others closely and learn from them instead of needing to be the center of attention.⁴⁸ When Grant arrived as a plebe, he was seventeen years old in 1839. Jack Lindsay a fellow cadet and a much larger man looked at the unassuming Grant, who stood only five foot one and weighed 117 pounds, and mistook Grant's politeness for weakness and shoved Grant out of a line. Grant preceded to punch him once knocking him to the ground.⁴⁹

General Grant's first assignment was to the US 4th Infantry.⁵⁰ General Grant experienced and learned several lessons that shaped his future military leadership during the Civil War from his experiences in the Mexican American War. He served under General Zachary Taylor in the Northern Mexico campaign as a lieutenant, and under General Winfield Scott during the campaign to Mexico City. He saw General Taylor as a leader that respected all men and earned respect through his actions. He also saw General Taylor as a leader who was clear, concise, and to the point and developed plans to meet the emergency. General Scott he saw as a capable officer that reveled in being a general officer who relied heavily on his staff.

General Grant exposed himself to great danger at the battle of Monterrey. He rode his horse to deliver ammunition forward of US forces and exposed himself to enemy fire. At the Battle of Mexico City, he personally placed mortars into a church tower to destroy Mexican Army positions. On these occasions and several like them, he realized that he remained calm

⁴⁶ Michael Ballard, *U.S. Grant The Making of a General, 1861-1863* (New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 2.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Charles Bracelen Flood, *Grant and Sherman: The Friendship that Won the Civil War* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2005), 11.

⁵⁰ Grant, *Ulysses S. Grant: Personal Memoirs*, 19.

under fire.⁵¹ General Grant observed through serving two very professional and competent generals that good generalship, no matter the style, made the difference, and that results counted more than the method.⁵² General Grant learned that if going by the book did not work, then he would develop his own methods to managing campaigns and battles.⁵³ Grant saw from the Mexican-American War that a series of campaigns filled with success and setbacks win wars, and not one single decisive action.⁵⁴ Additionally, it takes a team to win, which was evident by the army's reliance on the navy on several occasions supporting the Mexican-American War.⁵⁵

Early Civil War

Early battles at Belmont, Fort Henry, Fort Donelson, and Shiloh allowed General Grant to make mistakes and learn from them, while simultaneously building cohesion with his subordinate generals.⁵⁶ Grant recognized opportunity, seized the initiative, and led an expedition to Paducah in order to keep it from falling into Confederate hands. He asked permission from General John Fremont, and receiving no response he executed. Upon returning to his headquarters, he received a letter authorizing the action. Grant as a result learned to take action and seize on opportunities instead of losing opportunities by waiting on permission.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Ballard, *U.S. Grant The Making of a General, 1861-1863*, 5; Flood, *Grant and Sherman: The Friendship that Won the Civil War*, 17.

⁵² Ballard, *U.S. Grant The Making of a General, 1861-1863*, 12.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Flood, *Grant and Sherman: The Friendship that Won the Civil War*, 142.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Arthur L. Conger, "The Military Education of Grant as General," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Volume IV, no. 3, March 1921, 17.

⁵⁷ Ballard, *U.S. Grant The Making of a General, 1861-1863*, 15.

General Grant received orders to send a detachment to force the Confederate forces of Jeff Thompson from Missouri back into Arkansas. General Grant chose R.J. Oglesby for the task. General Grant in issuing orders to R. J. Oglesby, wrote, "The object of the expedition is to destroy this force, and the manner of doing it is left largely at your discretion, believing it better not to trammel you with instructions."⁵⁸ This order from General Grant displayed trust in his subordinate commander that expected R.J. Oglesby to determine the tactical details of how to execute the task given to him. Following the successful attacks on Belmont his subordinate brigade commanders Generals John McClelland and Colonel Henry Dougherty wrote in detail of the tactical actions executed by their formations during the battle. In contrast, these tactical details General Grant left out in his reports and memoirs.⁵⁹ General Grant saw his role as a planner that could look at maps and develop a larger concept of action, while expecting his subordinates to use initiative to develop tactical details to accomplish the mission. The success of the operation at Belmont and the flanking maneuver combined with the incorporation of naval forces shows that General Grant planned the operation and did discuss the concept of the operation with his brigade commanders.⁶⁰ General Grant built a team through nesting plans from higher to lower headquarters, and trusting subordinates to execute tactical actions to accomplish mission tasks.

These examples of General Grant's early Civil War military career paint a picture of how General Grant would apply the art of mission command during the Vicksburg Campaign. General Grant was a commonsense leader that understood he made mistakes and so would his subordinates. He knew that learning from failure was important, and to adapt and move forward. He trusted his subordinate commanders until they proved incapable of command. He remained

⁵⁸ Ballard, *U.S. Grant The Making of a General, 1861-1863*, 17.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 21.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 22.

calm under fire and shared in the hardships of his men. General Grant expected subordinate commanders to plan and to figure out for themselves the how to of a task given to them.

Vicksburg Campaign

The first part of the Vicksburg campaign developed by General Grant was a two-pronged attack with him leading a force overland from Holly Springs, Mississippi, while General Sherman led an assault down the Mississippi River through the Yazoo River to the north of the city of Vicksburg at Chickasaw Bayou.⁶¹ On 15 November 1862, General Grant sent word for General Sherman to meet him at his headquarters to discuss the details of the first set of operations towards the capture of Vicksburg.⁶² At the meeting, the two men discussed over a map the force allocation, the concept of the operation, and the commander's Intent. On 8 December 1862, Grant set the plan in motion issuing orders to General Sherman to organize his force and move down the Mississippi river to attack Vicksburg as soon as possible. General Grant told General Sherman, "As soon as possible move down river to the vicinity of Vicksburg, and with the cooperation of the gunboat fleet under command of Admiral Porter proceed to the reduction of that place in such a manner as circumstances, and your own judgment, may dictate."⁶³ General Grant chose General Sherman to lead the expedition due to his competence. General Grant stated, "He wanted a competent commander in charge."⁶⁴ This is why the operation occurred when it did. At this time, General Grant was worried that General McClelland would arrive in time to lead the operation down the river, so General Sherman needed to begin the operation before

⁶¹ J.F.C. Fuller, *The Generalship of Ulysses S. Grant* (Lexington, KY: Da Capo Press, 1956), 127.

⁶² Grant, *Ulysses S. Grant: Personal Memoirs*, 231; William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of General W.T. Sherman* (Lexington, KY: Renaissance Classics, 2012), 137-138.

⁶³ Grant, *Ulysses S. Grant: Personal Memoirs*, 232.

⁶⁴ Michael Ballard, *Vicksburg: The Campaign that Opened the Mississippi* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 111.

McClelland arrived.⁶⁵ During this time, General Grant continued the overland approach in northern Mississippi to force Confederate General Pemberton into the open north of Vicksburg.⁶⁶ The operation ended in failure. General Grant, due to disrupted lines of communication caused by a Confederate cavalry raid at Holly Springs, returned to Memphis in late December. General Sherman unaware of Grant's situation executed an attack at Chickasaw Bayou from 26 to 29 December 1862. Due to a combination of environmental conditions and tactics, the Confederates holding the high ground forced Sherman to withdraw back to Memphis.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Ballard, *Vicksburg: The Campaign that Opened the Mississippi*, 110-111.

⁶⁶ Ballard, *U.S. Grant The Making of a General, 1861-1863*, 88.

⁶⁷ Fuller, *The Generalship of Ulysses S. Grant*, 181.

Grant's operations within the Vicksburg campaign required decentralized execution, so he needed flag officers he could trust and that trusted him, and they needed to work together. In assigning leadership to his forces, he had the combat proven General Sherman, who he trusted implicitly due to his combat record and their personal relationship. General Grant chose Sherman to lead the independent force down the Mississippi for that reason. General Grant then chose General James B. McPherson, who he trusted but less proven, to lead a division under him along the overland approach.

General Grant had the option of waiting and giving the river approach command to General McClernand, who was senior to Sherman and fought under Grant at the Battle of Belmont, but did not due to a lack of trust.⁶⁸ Grant wrote in his memoirs that he did not trust General McClernand for both his military competency and performance at Fort Donaldson, and his political posturing with Washington to achieve a separate command in the West.⁶⁹ Despite this, he commended General McClernand for his actions as a brigade commander at the Battle of Belmont and trusted him to develop and execute his tactical actions on his own. General Grant's choice of the river command and feelings about General McClernand was not because of military competency, but due to General McClernand's undermining of his command through political posturing.

General Grant felt the incorporation of the navy was important to his team. General Grant went and met Admiral David Porter at his location and discussed the value of Porter's forces to his plan to seize Vicksburg. General Grant's presence, demeanor, and humble nature won Admiral Porter over, who proved a valued member of the team and critical to the success of

⁶⁸ Ballard, *U.S. Grant The Making of a General, 1861-1863*, 22.

⁶⁹ Grant, *Ulysses S. Grant: Personal Memoirs*, 233.

the campaign.⁷⁰ He brought Porter in as a valued member of the team by listening to his council and tactical advice on amphibious operations that involved both army and naval forces.⁷¹

In building his team, trust was very important for General Grant in determining who would command what force, and it was especially important due to General Grant's leadership style of issuing mission orders. General Grant built a shared understanding through meetings and written orders. He met face to face with General McPherson to discuss the campaign and then General Sherman at Columbus to discuss it. In the 8 December 1862 written order to General Sherman, Grant issued a mission order telling General Sherman what he wanted to happen, but left the how and timing to General Sherman.⁷² General Grant after issuing his intent and concept of the operation encouraged his subordinates to coordinate the details for actions. General Sherman and Admiral Porter together planned and coordinated the details for the amphibious assault at Chickasaw Bayou.⁷³

General Grant displayed prudent risk during the first operation of the campaign. First, he separated his force in an attempt to draw Confederate General Pemberton away from Vicksburg to allow General Sherman a greater chance of success. The risk was the inability of either force to support each other upon contact with a larger force. General Grant despite this felt the potential gain outweighed the risk. Confederate General Pemberton's forces could not defeat either General Sherman or Grant in detail before either force had an opportunity to withdraw.⁷⁴ General

⁷⁰ Flood, *Grant and Sherman: The Friendship that Won the Civil War*, 142.

⁷¹ Ballard, *U.S. Grant The Making of a General, 1861-1863*, 101-102

⁷² Grant, *Ulysses S. Grant: Personal Memoirs*, 232. In an order to General Sherman on 8 December 1862 General Grant told General Sherman to, "as soon as possible move with them down the river to the vicinity of Vicksburg, and with Admiral Porter proceed to the reduction of that place in such a manner as circumstances, and your own judgment dictate."

⁷³ Flood, *Grant and Sherman: The Friendship that Won the Civil War*, 142.

⁷⁴ Fuller, *The Generalship of Ulysses S. Grant*, 128.

Grant also accepted risk in his inability to have any control to coordinate movements with Sherman's forces, due to terrain and the enemy forces between them. He accepted this risk because of the trust, and knowing that General Sherman clearly understood his intent. The complete lack of control by General Grant of Sherman's forces, although good to allow freedom of action for General Sherman, resulted in General Grant's portion of the operation ending before necessary. The lack of communication between the flag officers prevented the coordination of resupply of the overland force via the Yazoo River, and resulted in General Grant abandoning the operation.

The attack on Arkansas Post following Chickasaw Bayou exemplified the team building, mutual trust, and taking of the initiative that existed in General Grant's command. The mutual trust in General Grant's command allowed subordinate commanders to quickly form a team, measure risk, and seize the initiative within the commander's intent to take advantage of an operational opportunity. General Sherman, learning of a supply post and a 5,000 man Confederate force at Arkansas Post, immediately met with Admiral Porter and General McClernand, now in command of Sherman's Corps, to devise a plan to attack and reduce the post.⁷⁵ The environment of mutual trust provided the freedom of action needed for the three officers to reduce the Confederate force that could impede future operations against Vicksburg. The risk was worth taking to defeat the threat that could pose a future threat against extended union lines of communication during future operations to seize Vicksburg.⁷⁶ A command climate of mission command facilitated three officers to seize an opportunity to destroy Arkansas Post, and facilitate future operations against Vicksburg.

⁷⁵ Grant, *Ulysses S. Grant: Personal Memoirs*, 238.

⁷⁶ Ballard, *Vicksburg: The Campaign that Opened the Mississippi*, 147.

From January 1863 until March 1863, Grant's forces embarked on a series of expeditions in an attempt to defeat the Confederate forces through avoiding the strength of the Vicksburg river artillery batteries and the poor terrain of Chickasaw Bayou. During early 1863, General Grant largely worked on a proposed course of action he eventually put into action in April 1863. However, he had to manage relationships to maintain a cohesive team that was necessary for the campaign plan to succeed. He faced the dilemma of wanting General Sherman as a corps commander, but General McClernand was senior to Sherman. In early 1863, General McClernand lost the trust of General Sherman and Admiral Porter due to his arrogance.⁷⁷ To remedy the lack of trust in General McClernand from his peers General Grant took direct command of the Vicksburg campaign. He placed Generals McClernand, Sherman, and McPherson all in command of their own corps under him.⁷⁸

For the next phase of the campaign, General Grant settled on a concept of marching down the west bank of the Mississippi, and then crossing below Vicksburg to make the final land approach towards the city. General Grant had to build a consensus and a shared understanding of the plan with his subordinate commanders, because initially only General McClernand supported the plan.⁷⁹ General Grant's investment in building mutual trust with his subordinates created the environment for them to execute his course of action as if it was their own. Part of this came from General Grant's willingness to overlook McClernand's political posturing that amounted to insubordination over the command situation.⁸⁰ That single act of trusting in General

⁷⁷ Grant, *Ulysses S. Grant: Personal Memoirs*, 233; Ballard, U.S. *Grant The Making of a General, 1861-1863*, 101.

⁷⁸ Ballard, *Vicksburg: The Campaign that Opened the Mississippi*, 157; Grant, *Ulysses S. Grant: Personal Memoirs*, 239.

⁷⁹ Ballard, U.S. *Grant The Making of a General, 1861-1863*, 110.

⁸⁰ Grant, *Ulysses S. Grant: Personal Memoirs*, 239.

McClermand's competency as a commander created the environment to gain his support to help make the argument to the other corps commanders for his final plan to seize Vicksburg.

In March 1863, General McClermand and General McPherson marched south along the western bank of the Mississippi.⁸¹ Admiral Porter assumed risk and ran past the Vicksburg batteries from north to south to link up with General Grant's army in order to move them across the river south of Vicksburg.⁸² General Sherman created a diversion north of the city along the Yazoo River at Haines Bluff, and then eventually marched south and crossed the Mississippi south of Vicksburg to link up with rest of General Grant's army.⁸³ General McClermand's corps crossed the Mississippi first, and immediately took the initiative to expand the lodgment on the eastern shore. He seized Port Gibson before the Confederates could destroy bridges across Bayou Pierre.⁸⁴ Upon successfully crossing the Mississippi and gaining a stronghold with his corps on the east side of the Mississippi, Grant confronted the question, what to do next. He had to decide whether to march on Vicksburg directly and potentially have Confederate forces attack his rear from Jackson, Mississippi or attack Jackson first then Vicksburg. What facilitated his ability to make this important decision was his command style. With mission orders issued to corps commanders and General Grant's army now executing mutually supporting activities, he had time to think of the next step along his line of operation instead of focusing on current operations.

⁸¹ Ballard, *Vicksburg: The Campaign that Opened the Mississippi*, 191; Ballard, U.S. *Grant The Making of a General, 1861-1863*, 110; Fuller, *The Generalship of Ulysses S. Grant*, 137 and 188; Flood, *Grant and Sherman: The Friendship that Won the Civil War*, 154.

⁸² Ballard, U.S. *Grant The Making of a General, 1861-1863*, 110; Fuller, *The Generalship of Ulysses S. Grant*, 137 and 188; Flood, *Grant and Sherman: The Friendship that Won the Civil War*, 154.

⁸³ Grant, *Ulysses S. Grant: Personal Memoirs*, 260.

⁸⁴ Ballard, *Vicksburg: The Campaign that Opened the Mississippi*, 223.

General McClelland screened the left flank of Grant's Army and secured all river crossings.⁸⁵ General Sherman moved south from the Chickasaw Bayou area and crossed the Mississippi River on 7 May 1863 to link up with the rest of General Grant's Army.⁸⁶ General Sherman moved south along the western side of the Mississippi, and secured the logistics line on his own. General Grant placed a large amount of trust and confidence in General Sherman in order for his campaign plan to succeed. Due to the disposition of General Sherman's corps General Grant had to rely completely on decisions General Sherman made to execute General Grant's intent. General McPherson moved toward Raymond, Mississippi and subsequently entered into battle with the Confederates from General Long's Division.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Grant, *Ulysses S. Grant: Personal Memoirs*, 270.

⁸⁶ Ballard, *Vicksburg: The Campaign that Opened the Mississippi*, 257.

⁸⁷ Grant, *Ulysses S. Grant: Personal Memoirs*, 270-271.

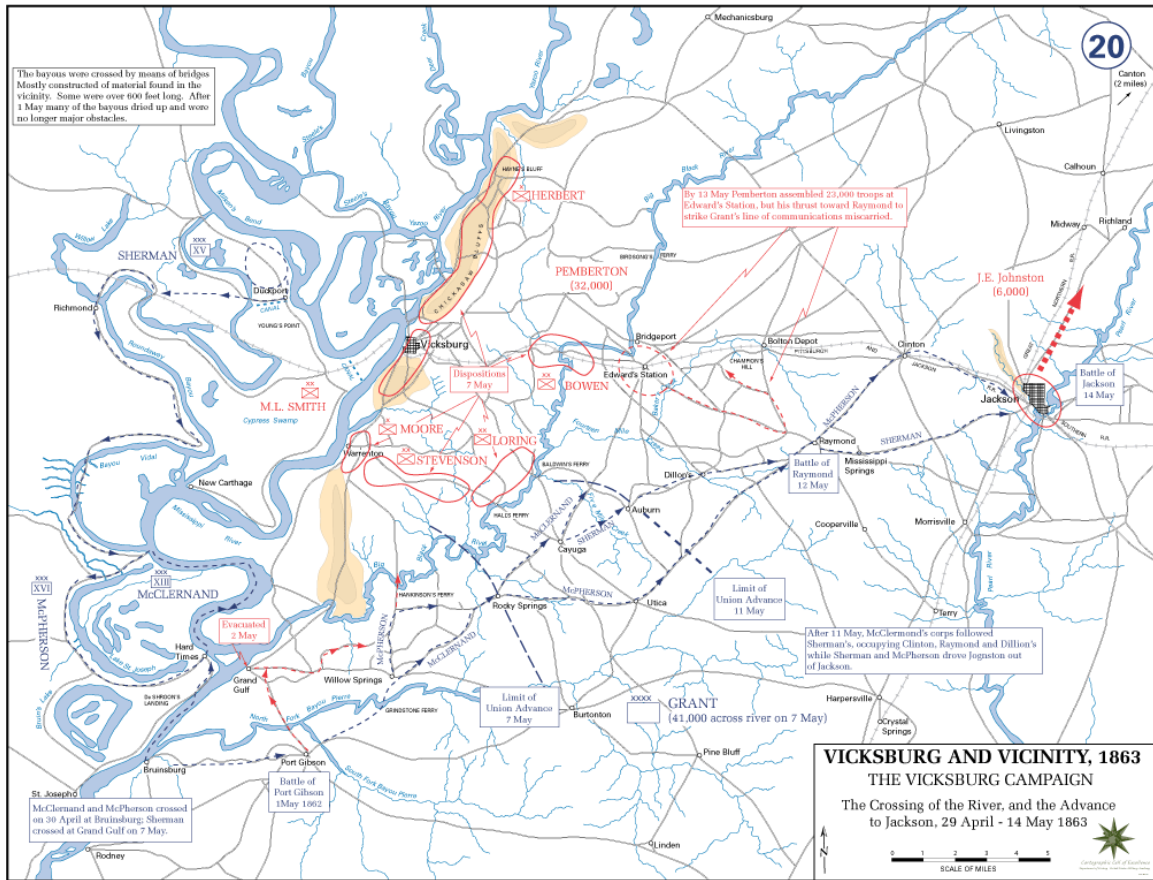


Figure 3. General Grants Spring 1863 Southern Approach to Vicksburg

Source: West Point, "Vicksburg and Vicinity, 1863 - The Crossing of the River, 29 April-14 May," Department of History Atlases, accessed December 26, 2014, <http://www.westpoint.edu/history/SiteAssets/SitePages/American%20Civil%20War/ACW20.gif>.

General Grant weighed the risk of marching inland against Jackson against the current situation of politics, terrain, logistics, and the enemy. General Grant knew Washington wanted him to combine forces with General Nathaniel Banks, and then march to Vicksburg, because of a message Grant received from General Henry Halleck on 11 May 1863. General Grant then weighed his options, and despite that, he marched on Jackson, Mississippi and attacked.⁸⁸ He

⁸⁸ Flood, *Grant and Sherman: The Friendship that Won the Civil War*, 162; Grant, *Ulysses S. Grant: Personal Memoirs*, 273.

took the initiative and quickly moved to defeat Confederate General Joseph Johnston at Jackson, and then General Pemberton at Vicksburg before they could mass.⁸⁹ He accepted prudent risk to gain an advantage against the enemy that his higher headquarters could not appreciate, but his actions still moved towards his superiors' strategic goal of seizing Vicksburg.

General Grant's successful tactical defeat of Confederate General Johnston at Jackson Mississippi was due to the coordination conducted between Grant's two subordinate commanders McPherson and Sherman.⁹⁰ As General Grant described in his memoirs he gave orders to General Sherman and McPherson to advance on Jackson on May 6, 1863, but left the coordination up to them.⁹¹ General Grant made the decision to attack Jackson to facilitate larger campaign goals, but left the tactical details to his subordinates. General Grant's command style facilitated an environment where subordinate commanders could organize and coordinate tactical details and execute as a unified team within Grant's intent. Generals McPherson and Sherman were not worried about who received credit for victory, but were instead interested in a unified effort to achieve victory.

Following the battle of Jackson General Grant moved towards Vicksburg. In vicinity of Champion Hill General Grant's army made contact with Confederate General Pemberton's forces, who moved from Vicksburg to attack Grant's rear. General McClernand moved west along the Middle and Raymond roads towards Edwards Station with orders not to bring on an engagement unless success was certain.⁹² General Grant ordered General McClernand to, "Cautiously feel the Confederate positions, but not to bring on a fight unless he was confident

⁸⁹ Grant, *Ulysses S. Grant: Personal Memoirs*, 273.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 275.

⁹¹ Ballard, *Vicksburg: The Campaign that Opened the Mississippi*, 275.

⁹² Grant, *Ulysses S. Grant: Personal Memoirs*, 278; Fuller, *The Generalship of Ulysses S. Grant*, 150.

that he was able to defeat him.”⁹³ General McPherson moved west towards Vicksburg from Jackson along the Clinton road north of McClernand.⁹⁴ The fighting of Champion Hill mostly took place around Champion Hill itself between CSA General Bowen and General McPherson. General Grant initially stayed out of the tactical fight and monitored the action of all corps, and looked for an advantage to exploit. He then led reinforcements to General McPherson’s corps and defeated a Confederate counter attack.

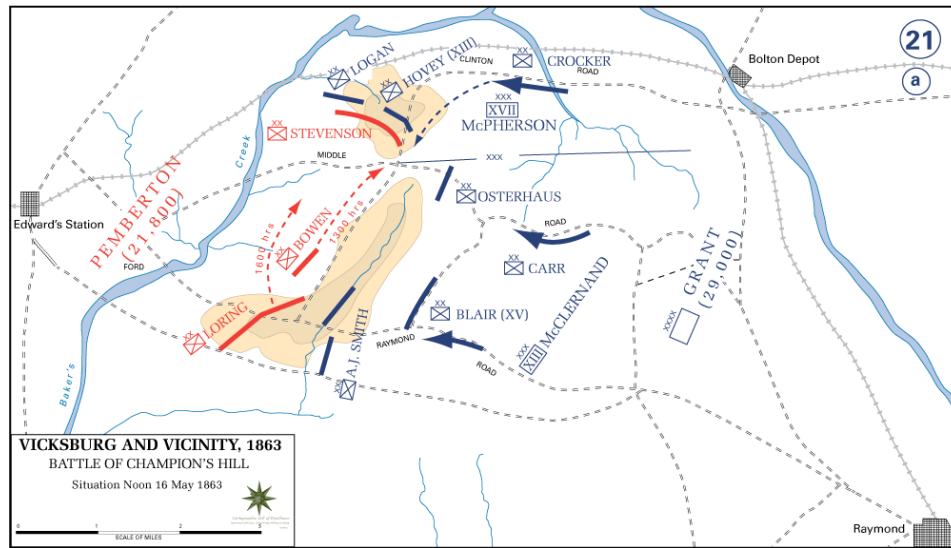


Figure 4. Battle of Champions Hill

Source: West Point, “Grant's Advance from Jackson to Vicksburg, 15-19 May 1863,” Department of History Atlases, accessed December 26, 2014, <http://www.westpoint.edu/history/SiteAssets-/SitePages/American%20Civil%20War/ACW21a.gif>.

General Grant placed himself with General McPherson and not in a good position to communicate with both corps commanders easily. The terrain and crowded roads further hindered

⁹³ Timothy Smith, *Champion Hill* (New York, NY: Savas Beatie, 2006), 115; Mary Townsend, *Yankee Workhorse: A Biography of Major General Peter Osterhaus* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2010), 100.

⁹⁴ Fuller, *The Generalship of Ulysses S. Grant*, 150.

communications.⁹⁵ General Grant saw an opportunity to defeat Confederate General Bowen and over all Confederate forces Commander General Pemberton in the open, and several times urged General McClernand to attack along the Raymond and Middle road. General Grant trusted General McClernand to aggressively attack based on past performance and re-enforced by the constant contact he maintained with the Confederates through skirmishing and large attacks since crossing the Mississippi.⁹⁶ General McClernand moved cautiously however, and never fully committed to the engagement, because he wanted to be sure that General Grant was ready for him to attack.⁹⁷ This cautiousness by General McClernand despite his usual aggressive behavior, allowed Pemberton to retreat with a majority of his force and subsequently hold out in Vicksburg for two more months.⁹⁸

General Grant largely blamed McClernand for allowing Pemberton to escape due to what he perceived as General McClernand not following his repeated orders to attack.⁹⁹ This was due to a mission command failure on General Grant's part and not completely General McClernand's fault. General Grant gave unclear and conflicting guidance, while relying on General McClernand past behavior. Additionally, General Grant when sending messages to General McClernand, failed to give him a shared understanding of the larger situation. General Grant needed to maintain a position to better communicate in a timely manner with his commanders, and if needed ride to and communicate face to face to convey critical orders.

⁹⁵ Ballard, U.S. *Grant The Making of a General, 1861-1863*, 130; Mary Townsend, *Yankee Workhorse: A Biography of Major General Peter Osterhaus* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2010), 101.

⁹⁶ Ballard, *Vicksburg: The Campaign that Opened the Mississippi* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 274.

⁹⁷ Townsend, *Yankee Workhorse: A Biography of Major General Peter Osterhaus*, 101.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 104.

⁹⁹ Ballard, U.S. *Grant The Making of a General, 1861-1863*, 131-132; Fuller, *The Generalship of Ulysses S. Grant*, 152.

Although General Grant's normal modus operandi to trust in typical behavior of subordinate commanders and to provide mission orders usually worked for him, it failed to work at Champion Hill. General Grant failed to create a shared understanding among his corps commanders in the heat of battle or a clear commander's intent prior to the battle. This resulted in General Pemberton's escape from the battlefield.

Following the success at Champion Hill and a quick engagement at the Big Black River, General Grant's army arrived at Vicksburg and placed it under siege. General Sherman positioned northeast of the city, General McPherson to the east, and General McClernand to the south and west. General Grant gave all of his corps commanders the order to attack to prevent Confederate General Pemberton from reinforcing any specific positions along his defensive lines. During the attack, all three corps took heavy casualties with General McPherson and German Sherman failing to secure a breach. General McClernand sent a message to Grant urging for reinforcements due to his success in seizing a foothold and occupying Confederate trenches.¹⁰⁰ General Grant did not believe the success to be true, but ordered McPherson to send reinforcements to McClernand as well as telling Generals Sherman and McPherson to reassume the attack.¹⁰¹ Again, trust and not positioning himself to visualize the action through his own eyes caught him off-guard. Even though General Grant felt that General McClernand's description of his success was not true, he failed to verify through supervision by commanding from a central location. General McClernand deceived his commander, because he knew General Grant would trust him. General Grant's failure to verify his doubts cost several hundred Union lives in the renewed attack by Generals Sherman and McPherson.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Ballard, U.S. *Grant The Making of a General, 1861-1863*, 139.

¹⁰¹ Sherman, *Memoirs of General W.T. Sherman*, 159.

¹⁰² Ballard, *Vicksburg: The Campaign that Opened the Mississippi*, 344-345.

Throughout the Vicksburg campaign, General Grant displayed the ability to create and manage a team built on mutual trust. He and his leaders continually exploited opportunities due to a shared understanding of the situation and his intent. Success was limited in the instances when he was unable to provide a shared understanding or intent during the battle of Champion Hill. He continually looked at risk and took prudent risk to achieve victories and gain a position of advantage. The command style of mission command exhibited by General Grant was due to how he adapted his command style based on what he learned through his combat experiences. The scale and pace of the battlefield operations during the Vicksburg campaign demanded a decentralized command style based on the principles of mission command. A centrally controlled command style that does not allow for disciplined initiative by subordinates would have led to failure during the Vicksburg campaign. General Grant's application of the mission command principles allowed him to conduct the Vicksburg campaign before his supply trains ran out and before Confederate Generals Johnston and Pemberton could mass to counter General Grant's force.

General John J. Pershing

General Pershing Introduction

The third case study looks at the leadership style of General John J. Pershing during his command of the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe during World War I. As Zachary Taylor influenced the development of numerous Civil War generals, General Pershing influenced several future generals of World War II. General Pershing was born in the small Midwestern town of Laclede, Missouri.¹⁰³ Upon graduation from high school, General Pershing taught for a

¹⁰³ Fredrick Palmer, *John J. Pershing General of the Armies* (Harrisburg, PA: The Military Service Publishing Company, 1948), 8.

few years in Grand Mound, Missouri and labored on a farm in the summer months.¹⁰⁴ At West Point, he was influenced by Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan, Emory Upton; and former Civil War Generals William Sherman, Philip Sheridan, John Schofield, and Ulysses Grant. President Grant, during a visit to the academy, displayed a humble manner and in Pershing's young view, he was the greatest general the country had produced.¹⁰⁵ On that day Grant became his hero, which would reveal much about his leadership and character qualities. Studies at West Point included writings of Emory Upton, which placed a primacy on the rifleman and his bayonet.¹⁰⁶ Two key assignments of General Pershing as a young officer was his assignment in September 1891 as the Professor of Military Science and Tactics at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, a position he held until 1895, and in 1897 his appointment to the West Point tactical staff as an instructor.¹⁰⁷

General Pershing's young cadet and officer life provides insight into his development as a leader and the style he would come to use. He developed a strong teaching background and an appreciation for education and military training. His view on the importance of education resulted in his emphasis on hiring Fort Leavenworth educated staff officers, and the development of tactics and staff officer training schools in France. Through admiration for Ulysses S. Grant and the study of Emory Upton, he understood campaigning, the primacy of human will in combat, and the employment of infantry soldiers in operations. As Brian McAllister Linn wrote in his book, *The Echo of Battle*, a hero is one that relies on the commander and soldier's will and

¹⁰⁴ Palmer, *John J. Pershing General of the Armies*, 16; Frank E. Vandiver, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1977), 770.

¹⁰⁵ Vandiver, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing*, 770.

¹⁰⁶ Peter Paret, *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 439.

¹⁰⁷ Vandiver, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing*, 27.

determination to succeed in combat, and that the experience of war are important to learning for a combat leader.¹⁰⁸ General Pershing was what Linn describes as a hero who derived historical lessons from a perspective of will, determination, and personal combat experiences to succeed in combat.

Commanding General of the AEF

The myth of General Pershing is that he was a micro-manager, and fired commanders on a whim. The myth however is untrue and paints Pershing in an unfair light. Mark Grotelueschen in his book *The AEF Way of War* and Richard Faulkner's book *The School of Hard Knocks, Combat Leadership in the American Expeditionary Forces*, wrongly put General Pershing into the box of a micromanager. They also attack him as a naive leader stuck in the past and unable to understand that the infantry and rifle in open warfare was not the answer. They try to portray that General Pershing was unable to understand that artillery and machine guns needed relied on heavily to achieve success on the battlefield.¹⁰⁹ Both authors fail to follow Clausewitz's critical analysis process from book two chapter five by not placing their analysis into context and using not using their military experience to understand the situation and environment Pershing was in during World War I. Clausewitz's rules for critical analysis provides the best understanding of Pershing's command.¹¹⁰ Once done, it is relatively clear to see what led General Pershing to his leadership style during World War I. General Pershing in the development of the AEF in 1917 through 1918 used the principles of mission command, which produced both unintended and

¹⁰⁸ Brian McAllister Linn, *The Echo of Battle: The Army's Way of War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 232-236.

¹⁰⁹ Richard S. Faulkner, *The School of Hard Knocks: Combat Leadership in the American Expeditionary Force* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2012), 116 and 267; Mark Ethan Grotelueschen *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 31.

¹¹⁰ Clausewitz, *On War*, 156-169.

intended consequences. Pershing focused on building a fighting force based on the principles of mission command and he attempted to build a team through mutual trust, a shared understanding among commanders, mission orders to allow for subordinate initiative, and to provide a clear commander's intent.

General Pershing's task to build a cohesive expeditionary army started with a strength of 80,000 soldiers on active duty with less than 6,000 officers that would expand into a force of over seventy divisions through the mobilization of nearly 4 million men by 1919.¹¹¹ Pershing after witnessing the stalemated trench warfare in Europe saw the importance of instilling the fighting spirit, or spirit of the bayonet, into the infantryman to fight in open warfare. General Pershing believed he needed commissioned and noncommissioned officers in key positions with dashing, optimism and resourcefulness, quick to assess a dynamic situations, relentless determination, and had rapidity of decision and action. General Pershing believed his leaders needed to be inspired to assume an internal spirit and action to lead men to fight, and that initiative by leaders would make the difference between winning and losing.¹¹²

To execute open warfare General Pershing acknowledged needing a trained force.¹¹³ He needed a trained army with leaders he could trust that would fight with a great determination and will. He needed leaders that could seize the initiative and react to dynamic situations on the ground to achieve victory over the enemy. In Pershing's eyes, the most important factor in

¹¹¹ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War*, 11.

¹¹² Vandiver, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing*, 964; Geroge C. Marshall, *Memoirs of My Services in the World War 1917-1918* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976), 172.

¹¹³ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War*, 39.

building an army was the selection of its leaders, and his experience taught him that conscientious officers failed for want of initiative.¹¹⁴

To build cohesive teams General Pershing developed training schools in France. In December of 1917, he directed that the Langres candidates school instruction in minor tactics would focus on the infantry tactics of reconnaissance, security, attack, defense, and the issuing of combat orders.¹¹⁵ Langres also contained a General Staff College for selected officers.¹¹⁶ For General Pershing everything depended on the proper personnel in the right positions. At Valbonne France, the candidate school better reflected General Pershing's directives on training and focused on the tactics of open warfare that consisted of three months of training.¹¹⁷ Through his school and training system, and small rotations to the front lines General Pershing assessed his units and leaders and strived for an even level of efficiency by placing good commanders with less capable units and less capable officers with well trained and proven units. He attempted to create a level of trust with his subordinate units, because he knew resourcefulness and leader initiative would lead to success. General Pershing knew he had little ability to affect the fight once it started, due to scale of the fight and the communications systems of the era. This made training and leader placement critical to success.

The implementation of the AEF training systems and desire to have dynamic, resourceful, and aggressive leaders had mixed results across the AEF in achieving a cohesive combat team he could trust. Following the battle of St. Mihiel he talked to General George

¹¹⁴ John Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, Vol. 1 (New York, NY: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1931), 134.

¹¹⁵ Faulkner, *The School of Hard Knocks: Combat Leadership in the American Expeditionary Force*, 176.

¹¹⁶ Vandiver, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing*, 772.

¹¹⁷ Faulkner, *The School of Hard Knocks: Combat Leadership in the American Expeditionary Force*, 176.

Cameron who claimed his men were tired despite seeing little combat. General Pershing suspected that it was the commander who was actually tired and not his soldiers. Not long afterward Cameron's corps lost its cohesion in battle, and General Pershing relieved him.¹¹⁸ General Pershing sought the counsel of his subordinates in replacing leaders. Although General Pershing is credited with firing General John McMahan of the 5th Division and General Beaumont Buck of the 3rd Division, he actually received the recommendations from General Hunter Liggett, their Corps Commander.¹¹⁹ The firing of incompetent officers left some of his leaders unable to make independent decisions, and this added to the situation of wanting to find aggressive officers capable of making independent decisions to achieve results.¹²⁰ He fired leaders he believed to be incompetent to find leaders that could thrive in an environment of mission command during the fog of war. Among the vastly inadequately trained leaders, this had the opposite effect. The insistence on sending soldiers and leaders to the training schools disrupted unit cohesion due to unexpected departures of leaders at critical points prior to operations to attend these schools.¹²¹ The schools needed to train the force came at the cost of unit cohesion along the front. General Pershing did not fire dynamic, confident, and capable commanders such as Robert Bullard, Charles Summerall, and John Lejeune. Instead, he rewarded and encouraged such leaders that despite failure continued to act aggressively to defeat the enemy.

¹¹⁸ John Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, Vol. 2, (New York, NY: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1931), 272; Pierpont Stackpole, ed. Robert H. Ferrell, *In the Company of Generals: The World War I Diary of Pierpont L. Stackpole* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2009), 189. Pierpont Stackpole felt that when Cameron met with General Liggett about his relief that he deserved it as he was a treacherous eel.

¹¹⁹ Donald Smythe, *Pershing: General of the Armies* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986) 214-215. Pierpont Stackpole, *In the Company of Generals: The World War I Diary of Pierpont L. Stackpole* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2009), 171.

¹²⁰ Faulkner, *The School of Hard Knocks: Combat Leadership in the American Expeditionary Force*, 322.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 181.

These commanders achieved results for General Pershing because of the mutual trust shared. They adjusted their doctrine and techniques much faster than other divisions. They incorporated the use of artillery and machine guns along with the open warfare use of the infantry described by General Pershing.¹²² General Summerall operated with a substantial amount of latitude within his division and the trust he shared with General Pershing he transferred to his subordinate commanders.¹²³ On 20 July 1918, the 1st Division attacked the town of Berzyle-Sec and failed. However, because of General Summerall's aggressive tenacity, he re-evaluated the situation and on 21 July 1914, with the use of artillery and machine gun fire, Summerall captured the city.¹²⁴ General Pershing gave great latitude to aggressive proactive leaders who displayed the qualities he was looking for in leader, and allowed them to learn from their mistakes. General Summerall established the policy that his brigade commanders could halt or recall artillery in order for them to react to the evolving enemy situation and to seize opportunities.¹²⁵ The environment of mission command in General Summerall's division was the one General Pershing desired for all of his divisions, however his actions taken to achieve it did not work across the entire AEF.

General Pershing fell victim of trying to develop a well-trained flexible force with dynamic, aggressive, and independent leaders, while simultaneously expanding an untrained force engaged in combat. When his desires met the reality on the ground it appeared as if General Pershing was a micro-manager and fired leaders whenever a leader made a mistake, which is not

¹²² Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War*, 347.

¹²³ Smythe, *Pershing: General of the Armies*, 230.

¹²⁴ Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, Vol. 2, 161.

¹²⁵ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War*, 107.

true. His motivation was not a personal desire to have direct control over all actions, but a result of the command pressure of failure not being an option.

General Pershing created a shared understanding and distributed his commander's intent through several effective means. His overall intent for the style of open warfare distributed through the AEF training programs left little doubt on how he expected his commanders to fight. Most importantly, he knew he could not control every detail or personally get every piece of guidance to all leaders himself. To this end, he built a General Staff School and trained leaders through professional schooling, which resulted in our modern staff system.¹²⁶ This allowed him to quickly distribute information and allow staffs to synchronize details while commanders led their organizations from the front and seized on opportunities. Lessons learned from combat shared throughout the various commands in the AEF in tactical notes allowed for capable leaders to learn from each other's mistakes and successes. He provided guidance for tactical leaders through combat instructions to employ artillery and machine guns to suppress enemy strongpoints, and then for infantry to maneuver to attack flanks and through gaps.¹²⁷ Division commanders distributed these instructions from General Pershing throughout their own formations in tactical notes, and in these notes, they added their own additional guidance.¹²⁸

The 28th Infantry Division during the Meuse Argonne campaign was under performing. It was not due to its commander, but due to the lack luster performance of the division staff to develop plans and to control the division. General Pershing knew the importance of a general staff to formulate plans and to control a unit in order to free up a commander to command and

¹²⁶ Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, Vol. 1, 151.

¹²⁷ Faulkner, *The School of Hard Knocks: Combat Leadership in the American Expeditionary Force*, 267.

¹²⁸ Headquarters Thirty-Second Division of the AEF, Tactical Note No. 7, 24 September 1918.

inspire the formation. General Pershing assigned two of his staff officers temporarily to the 28th Infantry to rectify their staff problems.¹²⁹

General Pershing's general staff freed him for a very important role to communicate face-to-face with subordinate commanders.¹³⁰ General Pershing, from the German offensive in the spring and summer of 1918 and through all subsequent fighting, moved from commander to commander at various levels to provide guidance, understand the situation, and share what he was seeing with the various commanders.¹³¹ On 18 September 1918, General Pershing visited General Robert Allen, the 19th Division Commander, to receive a situation report and recommendations for moving forward. Following the visit, he stopped by to see General Liggett, General Allen's corps commander, to tell him of his visit and that he was pleased with what he saw.¹³²

Throughout the Meuse-Argonne campaign, he continued this trend and visited one unit after the next to provide inspiration and reinforce success.¹³³ General Pershing's battlefield circulation provided him a perspective and appreciation for the situation, and allowed him to inspire subordinates. This however, prevented him from direct control of the fighting, because he was never in a position at any one moment to have a clear picture of the entire AEF situation to direct individual division or corps tactical actions. He saw his role as inspiring formations after the publishing of mission orders, and he relied on the subordinate commanders to figure out the

¹²⁹ Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, Vol. 2, 299.

¹³⁰ Smythe, *Pershing: General of the Armies*, 181-183.

¹³¹ Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, Vol. 2, 166-167. On July 15th, 1918 General Pershing visited the 3rd Division commander General the 28th Division commander General Muir, the headquarters of the I Corps and its' commander General Liggett, the 1st Division staff, the III Corps commander General Bullard, and the 2nd Division commander General Harbord.

¹³² Stackpol, *In the Company of Generals: The World War I Diary of Pierpont L. Stackpole*, 146.

¹³³ Smythe, *Pershing: General of the Armies*, 214.

how and to take initiative during the fight.¹³⁴ The second part of his role was to order reinforcements forward as the situations dictated from the shared understanding from daily reports and his own observations on the battlefield.¹³⁵

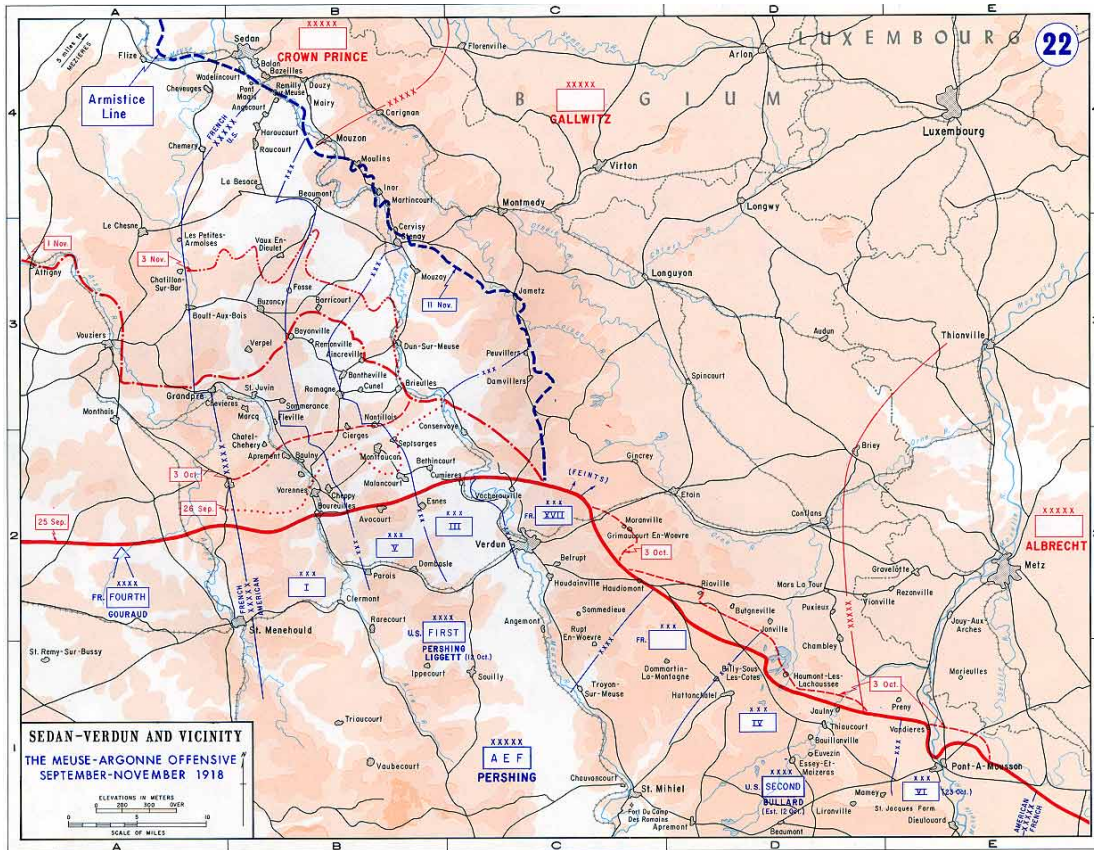


Figure 5. Meuse-Argonne Campaign

Source: West Point, “The Meuse and Argonne Offensives,” Department of History Atlases, accessed December 26, 2014, <http://www.westpoint.edu/history/SiteAssets/SitePages/World-%20War%20I/WWOne22.jpg>.

General Pershing’s staff developed and issued mission orders to execute the Meuse-Argonne offensive. These mission orders showed the trust General Pershing had in his subordinate division and corps commanders to develop the “how” to achieve their assigned tasks.

¹³⁴ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War*, 55.

¹³⁵ Marshall, *Memoirs of My Services in the World War 1917-1918*, 187; Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, Vol. 2, 302.

General Pershing's First Army Field Order no. 20 for the initial attack of the Meuse-Argonne operation was only six pages long for an operation that included three corps and a reserve of three divisions. General Pershing wanted concise simple orders that directed subordinates to accomplish mission tasks that left the subordinates the task of figuring out the how to accomplish their assigned mission tasks. First Army Field Order no. 20 dated September 20, 1918 stated the following for III corps:

(D) The III Corps:

(1) The III Corps will attack the front from the Meuse exclusive to Malancourt exclusive, as indicated on map.

(2) Zone of Action:

Right boundary---the Meuse exclusive.

Left boundary---Malancourt exclusive---Cuisy inclusive---Septsarges inclusive---Nantillois exclusive---Cunel exclusive---Hill 299. 2 km. northeast of Cunel inclusive (double red line).

(3) Mission:

(a) By promptly penetrating the hostile second position it will turn Montfaucon and the section of the hostile second position within the zone of action of the V Corps, thereby assisting the capture of the hostile second position west of Montfaucon.

(b) With its corps and divisional artillery it will assist in neutralizing hostile observation and hostile fire from the heights east of the Meuse.

(c) Upon arrival of the V Corps at the corps objective (dashed brown line) it will advance in conjunction with the IV Corps to the American Army objective (full brown line).

(d) It will protect the right flank of the advance and organize the line of the Meuse for defense.

(e) When ordered by the army commander it will continue the advance from the Combined Army First Objective (full brown line) to the north, in the zone between Meuse exclusive, and the line 1 km. west of Aincreville -- Villers-devant-Dun inclusive---1 km. west of Montigny-devant-Sassey¹³⁶

The portion of the field order for III Corps told the corps commander General Robert Bullard what tasks to accomplish and what effects to place on the enemy, but the application resources to accomplish his mission tasks was up to him and his staff to determine.

¹³⁶ Center for Military History, *United States Army in the World War 1917-1919: Military Operations of the American Expeditionary Forces*, vol. 19 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1990), 83-84.

On October 7 and 8 of 1918 General Liggett, the commander of I Corps, displayed understanding of the situation and accepted prudent risk, in taking the initiative and ordering a daring attack sideways into the Argonne forest to save the Lost Battalion of the 77th Division.¹³⁷ The attack executed by one brigade from the 82nd Division forced the German forces that had the Lost Battalion isolated to withdraw.¹³⁸ General Liggett felt comfortable to order such operations due to the trust built between himself and General Pershing.

During the Meuse-Argonne campaign in October of 1918 General Fox Conner, then operations officer of the AEF, met with General George Marshall the chief of operations for the First Army to discuss the current situation. During the conversation, General Conner realized an opportunity to attack Sedan, and told Marshall that it was the order of General Pershing to have General Liggett's First Army attack Sedan. General Marshall realized that General Conner decided to attack Sedan during their discussion and not from an earlier order issued by General Pershing.¹³⁹ General Pershing's subordinates held a tremendous amount of latitude to make decentralized operational level decisions to seize on opportunities and maintain the offense as long as it fit within his intent. During October of 1918, Pershing continued to visit commanders and push them to drive forward with all possible force.¹⁴⁰

As General Pershing was inspiring the offensive mentality, he realized how creative his subordinate commanders were in adapting techniques to accomplish his intent and accomplish the mission. Units were learning to employ grenades against gun positions, using terrain to flank machine guns, and the use of bounding over watch to facilitate forward movement under fire.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Smythe, *Pershing: General of the Armies*, 205.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Marshall, *Memoirs of My Services in the World War 1917-1918*, 189-190.

¹⁴⁰ Vandiver, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing*, 968.

¹⁴¹ Vandiver, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing*, 972.

What allowed these unit leaders to develop techniques was the atmosphere of mission command that General Pershing facilitated. General Pershing focused on the outcome of results and expected leaders to aggressively pursue those results and continue to try despite previous failure. He left the how to accomplish the mission or the techniques used up to subordinate leaders, and largely expected officers and noncommissioned officers to use their initiative to solve tactical problems on their own.

The size, scale, and style of warfare conducted during World War I demanded mission command for a unit to succeed. General Pershing commanded the AEF by inspiring his subordinates and providing guidance in person during battlefield circulation. He relied on his general staff to issue orders and to run and control the operations during their execution. General Pershing commanded while his staff controlled and this occurred across general staffs of the AEF. General Pershing acknowledged the need of general staffs realized that commanders cannot and should not control all aspects of directing operations, but instead should provide mission orders that articulate a commander's intent and end state. The staff would synchronize and provide the resources to subordinate commands, while the commander inspired his formations through his battlefield circulation.

General Pershing when visiting units inspired leaders to continue the attack, but did not tell them how.¹⁴² His continual movement throughout the battle space provided a common understanding of his intent, best practices, and an understanding of the operational situation to subordinates. As the AEF area of operations and size dramatically increased in the fall of 1918 during the Meuse-Argonne General Pershing realized he could no longer effectively command and inspire all of his forces. To meet the new demand he turned the AEF into an army group consisting of two armies. He assumed the role of army group commander and assigned General

¹⁴² Smythe, *Pershing: General of the Armies*, 208-209.

Liggett as the First Army commander and General Bullard as the Second Army commander.¹⁴³ Although he passionately sought to place leaders that possessed the qualities necessary to execute mission command the relief of those that did not have the qualities produced mixed results in practice. General Pershing understood the importance of mission command and its principles. The proof that he knew mission command was the correct approach to command a large organization was his understanding of the complex environment that consisted of a fast-paced dispersed battlefield, where the higher echelons did not possess the capability to control a set piece fight reminiscent of 18th century warfare. As a result, Pershing limited his combat role as one to inspire and provide guidance to subordinates, and let them solve the tactical problems.

Conclusion

American Mission Command Came First

Americans seem to forget their success of the past as a place to study and draw lessons from in order to shape successful future behavior. Instead, there is an infatuation with studying the continental powers of nineteenth century Europe to draw military lessons. US military doctrine still draws upon the principles established by French military theorists of the nineteenth century. Walter Mead writes about the modern American neglect of past foreign affairs success of the nineteenth and early twentieth century in his book *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How it Changed the World*. Americans forget that foreign affairs occurred successfully prior to 1945, and because of this, look to the Europeans to pull lessons from the past.¹⁴⁴ Also forgotten is the US Army's own doctrinal description of mission orders in the US Army's Field Service Regulations of 1914. The 1914 FSR says, "Field orders are brief short sentences that are easily understood conjectures, expectations, and reasons for measures adopted.

¹⁴³ Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, vol. 2, 335-337.

¹⁴⁴ Walter Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How it Changed the World* (New York, NY: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2002), 6.

Detailed instructions for a variety of possible events do not inspire confidence and should be avoided. An order should not trespass upon the province of a subordinate. It should contain everything beyond the independent authority of the subordinate but nothing more.”¹⁴⁵ Field orders described in US Army doctrine from 1914 are extremely similar to today’s doctrine despite it not receiving the credit for influencing today’s doctrine. The 1914 doctrine shows that the army leaders of that era understood the concept of mission command based on the US Army’s experiences of the nineteenth century.

Much like foreign policy, Americans tend to forget and ignore the historical military successes and lessons prior to World War II. Instead, focus is on the lessons provided by European theorists and the captivating maneuver warfare of the Blitzkrieg myth. Because of this, we refer to Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke and believe his adoption of mission orders and decentralized execution during the wars of German Unification is the place to pull American understanding of mission command. The distributed nature of the battlefield, mobilization plan, and separate arrival of all three Prussian armies at Koniggratz demanded decentralized execution. Field Marshal Moltke had no conceivable way to control the employment of three separate armies from one central command.¹⁴⁶ Just like Field Marshal Moltke, Generals Taylor, Grant, and Pershing used mission command due to the environment, style of warfare, and scale of the battlefield pitted against their ability to control the entire fight. These officers developed mission command through an iterative process of practice and reflection of their command style.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ United States Army, *Field Service Regulation* (FSR) (Army and Navy Journal 1914), accessed March 11, 2015, 43, https://books.google.com/books?id=KAMoAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA225&lpg=PA225&dq=Army+Field+Service+Regulation+1916&source=bl&ots=rz986LsyL5&sig=KL08ZkicG8zB3O9VNXnHkQwBN4&hl=en&sa=X&ei=dZb_VNT6PIzIsATHmYLoBA&ved=0CFEQ6AEwCQ#v=onepage&q=Army%20Field%20Service%20Regulation%201916&f=false.

¹⁴⁶ Crevel, *Command in War*, 114-115.

¹⁴⁷ Donald Schon, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1987), 22 and 39.

Mission Command develops overtime through reflecting on leadership actions and adapting the art of mission command to the context of the current environment. Field Marshal Moltke determined in the 1860s that mission command was the command style to achieve success on a dynamic battlefield. He used mission command because the size of his army dictated different lines of communication for the different armies originating from separate bases in order to sustain them and have them arrive at the decisive point ready to fight.¹⁴⁸ He adopted mission command, because he could not control their employment upon enemy contact, nor the details for subordinate army marches to arrive at the determined battlefield.¹⁴⁹ Field Marshal Moltke used mission command, because he had to due to his operational environment and he learned to use it through practice and reflecting on how he employed it. American Generals also learned theses same command lessons through American military history, and before Field Marshal Moltke. General Taylor learned mission command 1846 in his northern Mexico campaign, as did General Grant during the Vicksburg campaign of 1863, and General Pershing during World War I.

The cooperation exhibited and tactics used by General Grant and his subordinates were observable in the Prussian Army's operations at Metz and Sedan in 1870. President Ulysses S. Grant sent General Philip H. Sheridan to observe the Franco-Prussian war, and he did so at the side of Count Bismarck.¹⁵⁰ During a dinner, the leading Prussian Generals, Bismarck, and the Prussian King asked General Sheridan specifically about Grants Vicksburg Campaign.¹⁵¹ Based on the Prussian question and General Sheridan's observations to that point he felt the principles that the Germans applied to that point in the war were in a similar military fashion to Grant's.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Citino, *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich*, 151.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 152.

¹⁵⁰ Philip H. Sheridan, *Personal Memoirs of P.H. Sheridan: General United States Army*, (Boston, MA: Da Capo Press, 1992), 492.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 502.

¹⁵² Sheridan, *Personal Memoirs of P.H. Sheridan: General United States Army*, 502.

The command style and forms of maneuver uses by Moltke in 1870 seemed to be very similar with and had direct parallels to those Grant used in 1863.¹⁵³ Prussians leaders also observed Confederate and Union forces during the Civil War and the Prussians took lessons from American generals.¹⁵⁴ Sheridan's experiences with Prussian leaders during the Franco-Prussian war show that the Prussian leaders were well aware of the principles and command styles employed by Americans generals during the American Civil War, and that those leadership styles influenced their operations in France. General Sheridan's report back to Grant stated, "There is nothing to be learned here professionally."¹⁵⁵ Even more specifically, Sheridan wrote, "Then, too, it must be borne in mind that, as already stated, campaigning in France—that is, the marching, camping, and subsisting of an army—is an easy matter, very unlike anything we had during the war of the rebellion. To repeat: the country is rich, beautiful, and densely populated, subsistence abundant, and the roads all macadamized highways; thus, the conditions are altogether different from those existing with us. I think that under the same circumstances our troops would have done as well as the Germans, marched as admirably, made combinations as quickly and accurately, and fought with as much success."¹⁵⁶

The techniques of General Grant and the American forces of the Civil War migrated to Prussia and the techniques the Prussians used in the Franco-Prussian War were similar to the

¹⁵³ California Digital News Paper Collection, "Moltke and Grant," *Sacramento Daily Union*. Vol. 40 no. 7119, March 8, 1871, accessed October 5, 2014, <http://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=SDU18710308.2.17#>.

¹⁵⁴ Donald Cartmell, *The Civil War Book of Lists* (Franklin Lakes, NJ: New Page Books, 2001), 85; Robert Mackey, *The Uncivil War: Irregular Warfare in the Upper South, 1861-1865* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 82. Six generals who fought for the Union were Prussian-born, and the son of the King of Prussia Baron Robert von Massow gained firsthand experience with the South, serving in the Virginia Cavalry.

¹⁵⁵ Roy Morris Jr., *Sheridan: The Life and Wars of General Phil Sheridan* (New York, NY: Crown Publishing, 1992). 329-330.

¹⁵⁶ Sheridan, *Personal Memoirs of P.H. Sheridan: General United States Army*, 534.

practices of Grant in the Civil War. The Prussian military learned from the practices of General Grant. Marshal Helmuth von Moltke coined the phrase of Auftragstaktik first, but he is not the founder nor father of mission command as the American doctrine in ADP 6-0 claims. American generalship influenced Moltke. Moltke only deserves credit for moving the mission command concept along and bringing it to the forefront in military doctrine. The mission command theme that early American generals started in the nineteenth century continues today and enjoys a successful history, and American military leaders should study them and adopt a mission command style that they learn through study and practice.

The Application of Mission Command

During the three case studies, the American generals used the principles of mission command successfully to varying degrees. The degree to which leaders employ mission command is largely contingent on the environment and situation the leaders find themselves. Factors such as the competency of subordinate leaders, pace of the fight, complexity of the battlefield, talent, and training level of a unit all play into what degree a leader uses mission command.

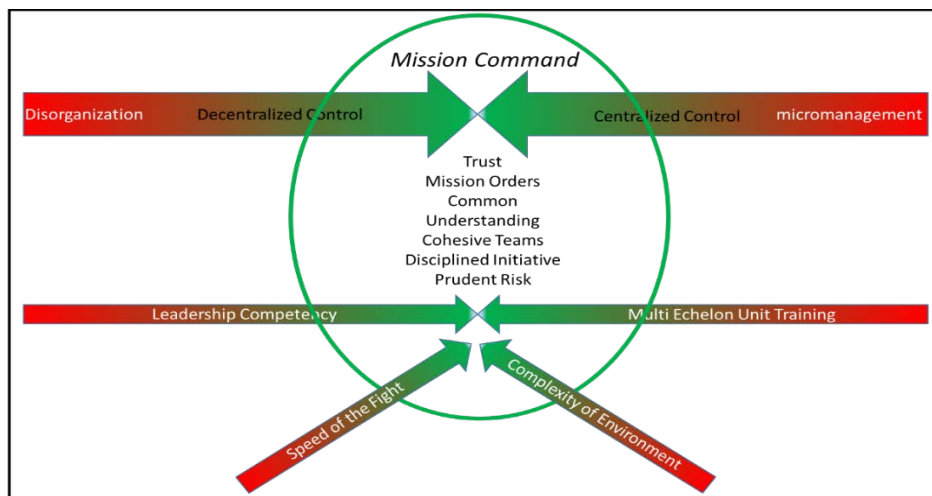


Figure 6. Mission Command Continuum

In Figure 6 there is a mission command sweet spot that is different for every leader based on the many variables that influence the command environment. On one end of the scale,

there is complete disorganization with units operating decentralized, not in a unified manner, and negatively affecting one another. On the other extreme, is micro-management. The leader can see the entire battlefield and his force, and has the capability to direct every movement. On the scale between these two extremes exists mission command and the degree to which it is practiced along the scale is influenced by many different variables. Every unit, conflict, and leader is different as seen in the three case studies. The degree to which Generals Taylor, Grant, and Pershing practiced mission command directly correlated to the variables in the environment they commanded. All three realized through the experience of interacting with these variables that mission command develops through practice and reflection to achieve an effective style of command.

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