REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1. REPORT DATE *(DD-MM-YYYY)*	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED *(From - To)*
03-29-2021	Master of Military Studies (MMS) thesis	AY 2020-2021

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
Eliminating Micromanagement and Embracing a Mission Command Culture

5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
N/A

5b. GRANT NUMBER
N/A

5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
N/A

6. AUTHOR(S)
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5d. PROJECT NUMBER
N/A

5e. TASK NUMBER
N/A

5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER
N/A

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
USMC Command and Staff College
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2076 South Street
Quantico, VA 22134-5068

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
N/A

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
N/A

10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)

11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)
N/A

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release, distribution unlimited.

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT

United States Army leaders often struggle with micromanagement, weakening the Army's ability to fully embrace a Mission Command culture. In effort to establish a culture similar to the Germans during the inter-war period, the Army officially adopted its command and control doctrine known as Mission Command. However, many obstacles stand in the way of its full adoption. At the forefront of these issues is the tolerance of micromanagement among Army leaders. Several aspects of the Army feed this tendency including core aspects grounded in French military culture, risk aversion among leaders, and rigid methods of conducting professional military education. Moreover, technological advances in information sharing and communication allow commanders to hold decision making authorities at higher levels than necessary. Consequently, the Army must develop a sense of urgency within the organization to eliminate micromanagement and fully embrace a Mission Command culture. This culture is necessary if the Army expects to effectively prepare for a future great power conflict.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
Mission Command; Command Culture; Micromanagement; Command Philosophy; Decentralized Command and Control

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			USMC Command and Staff College
Unclass	Unclass	Unclass	UU		19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER *(Include area code)* (703) 784-3330 (Admin Office)

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SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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AY 2020-21

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Date: April 17, 2021

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Executive Summary

Title: Eliminating Micromanagement and Embracing a Mission Command Culture

Author: Captain Justin DeLeon, United States Army

Thesis: United States Army leaders often struggle with micromanagement, weakening the Army's ability to fully embrace a Mission Command culture.

Discussion: Studying the difference between the French and German command philosophies during the interwar period demonstrates the need to cultivate the correct command culture in the United States Army today. Organizational culture is key when producing desired leadership traits among commanders and optimizing overall unit effectiveness. In effort to establish a culture similar to the Germans in the interwar period, the U.S. Army officially adopted its command and control doctrine known as Mission Command. However, many obstacles stand in the way of its full adoption. At the forefront of these issues is the tolerance of micromanagement among Army leaders. Micromanagement is detrimental to an organization. It limits the ability of subordinates to exercise disciplined initiative while also stunting their growth. Several aspects of the Army feed this tendency including core aspects grounded in French military culture, extreme risk aversion among leaders, and rigid methods of conducting professional military education. As the Army currently prepares for a future great power conflict, it also must recognize that technological advances in information sharing and communication allow commanders to hold decision making authorities at higher levels than necessary. When this occurs, it slows the decision-making cycle making the Army inefficient on and off the battlefield.

Conclusion: The Army must develop a sense of urgency within the organization to eliminate micromanagement and embrace a Mission Command culture. This culture is necessary if the Army hopes to cultivate a professional force prepared for a future great power conflict.

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THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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Preface

This paper argues that micromanagement is an obstacle facing the United States Army's adoption of the command and control philosophy known as Mission Command. It studies differences between the French and German armies during the interwar period, as well as the recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan to demonstrate the need for a Mission Command culture in future war. The inspiration for this paper comes largely from the author's own struggle with micromanagement as a junior officer, and his recognition that the Army's culture often facilitates poor management practices among leaders.

A special thanks to Dr. Paolo Tripodi and Colonel Matthew Neumeyer for their wise counsel and thoughtful feedback throughout the writing of this paper. Both have played a significant role in this journey and freely provided insights from years of experience in military history and Army doctrine. They have enabled this paper to remain focused and relevant to the reader. Thank you gentlemen, for all your support.

Introduction

Despite officially embracing Mission Command in 2003, the United States Army has struggled to fully implement this command philosophy throughout the force. Urgency for change is needed within the organization, and the Army must take great strides to embrace a culture that promotes trust and decentralized decision making if it expects to succeed on the future battlefield. Nevertheless, tolerance of micromanagement among leaders is one of the Army's largest challenges today. Micromanagement occurs at all echelons but is more rampant at the tactical level where commanders struggle to provide autonomy to subordinates. Micromanagement can be described as the opposite of Mission Command, and leaders who struggle with it often desire to personally manage every aspect of an activity with excessive control. They become increasingly involved in the process or method in which a task is done, instead of trusting subordinate leaders to meet their intent.

As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan wind down after two decades of conflict the United States has entered a post war period. It finds itself amid a great power competition and the nature of war is becoming increasingly complex. The integration of new technologies in the cyber and electromagnetic domains add to this complexity, and improvements in adversarial fires are forcing the Army to operate in a dispersed manner with limited signature emission. As a result, eliminating micromanagement and embracing a Mission Command culture is vital if the Army expects to win on the future battlefield.

France and Germany During the Interwar Period

The interwar period and the beginning of the Second World War in Europe shows the importance of establishing the proper command culture. Moreover, it highlights the potential

consequences if an army fails to do so. In May of 1940, the German Army advanced into the Ardennes forest officially opening the western front of the Second World War. Shortly after, the British were forced to retreat at Dunkirk and France was defeated in a matter of only six weeks. This remarkable offensive raises an important question: How was the German Army so dominant when the French were seemingly so unprepared for war? Certainly, the German Blitzkrieg tactics played a role, but the answer is also due to the German Army's command philosophy embraced during the interwar period. During this period, France exercised rigid adherence to flawed doctrine while their command and control methods over centralized decision making. This created a risk averse culture that was prone to a high degree of micromanagement among leaders, while laying the foundation for a military that was not conditioned to think critically or seek innovative methods to fight a future war. Conversely, German culture empowered leaders and encouraged them to exercise disciplined initiative during garrison and battlefield operations. This encouraged leaders at the operational and tactical levels to challenge the status quo and enabled the German Army to identify innovative methods when employing new technology.

During the interwar period French doctrine was largely developed in a vacuum and only a small group of individuals were involved in the endeavor. This stove piped effort led the French to focus on lessons learned from only a few significant battles from 1918.[1] It set the French Army up for catastrophe as they failed to see the German Army would develop concepts outside the parameters of their own view of war. The French historian Marc Block explains that "Our leaders or those who acted for them, were incapable of thinking in terms of a new war... and did our thinking in terms of yesterday or the day before."[2] Once published by the French high command, doctrine became law and dissenting opinions were not tolerated.[3] Discouraging critical thought, produced a generation of officers that were largely unable to adapt outside the

parameters of doctrine. This culture permeated throughout the organization during the interwar years stunting innovation and creativity, while also setting the stage for a devastating defeat at the onset of the German invasion.

The main doctrinal principle developed by the French in the interwar period was known as "methodical battle". Methodical battle was a process where infantry were required to advance under the cover of artillery suppression on enemy positions. The infantry would make large bounds to seize intermediate objectives, and then adjust artillery fires before advancing forward again.[4] Although, this proved to be an effective concept in the conditions experienced during The Great War, it did not allow the French to comprehend the rapid depth of battle they would experience in 1940. When employing the methodical battle concept, high-level French commanders chose to exercise extreme centralization of command to ensure artillery and infantry elements were properly integrated. This improved coordination efforts, but the strict and rigid obedience required deprived lower-level commanders of exercising initiative in battle. As Robert A. Doughty writes: "The entire system was designed to be propelled forward by pressure from above, rather than by being pulled from below."[5] This became fatal in May of 1940, as the French failed to see a mobile force's ability to conduct a rapid and deep penetrating assault, and the German Army exercised extreme speed of action before the French could react. [6]

The German Army approached the interwar period differently and worked to build a professional officer corps whose culture stressed intellectual excellence. [7] This mentality produced a German Officer Corps that unlike the French was encouraged to debate and question doctrinal concepts.[8] Additionally, it prompted leaders at all levels to refine tactics and operations instead of executing through blind obedience. Doctrine during this period was developed by 57 committees of officers and civilian experts.[9] This comprehensive approach allowed committees

to not only develop maneuver tactics, but also how the German Army should exercise command and control. Key tenets within the emerging doctrine included: decentralizing operations and decision making to the lowest level possible, ensuring officers and non-commissioned officers on the ground were the primary decision makers, and emphasizing the need for leaders to always exercise initiative.[10] These tenets were grounded in the Prussian philosophy of command known as *Auftragstaktik*.

Auftragstaktik officially came into being through the German publication of *1888 Drill Regulations.*[11] It was born out of the minds of several Prussian generals such as Gerhard Johann David von Scharnhorst, August von Gneisenau, and Helmuth von Moltke.[12] The growing size of armies and the time needed to mobilize them required immediate decisions to be made on the battlefield to achieve dominance over one's enemy. Auftragstaktik provided subordinate commanders with defined parameters or commander's intent to work within and nothing more, granting them the latitude to operate and make decisions based on the ever-changing environment. It obliged leaders at all levels to remain flexible and exercise disciplined initiative to exploit fleeting opportunities. This command culture produced extreme speed of decision making and maneuver on the battlefield, but also cultivated freedom of thought among German leaders that greatly enabled innovation when employing new technologies.

The Auftragstaktik command philosophy enabled the German Army to identify new and innovative ways to employ the tank. In fact, the French owned more tanks than the Germans in 1940 but failed to effectively incorporate them into combat believing they were simply an extension of the infantry.[13] The German Army still recognized the tank's importance in a mechanized combined arms framework but saw that when armored units were not tied to advancing artillery and supporting foot infantry, they were able to use their inherent speed most

effectively.[14] Although the allies developed an intricate in-depth defense, this speed of action enabled the German Army to conduct combined arms attacks during the invasion of Belgium and France that quickly penetrated the allied line. These tactics known as the blitzkrieg became famous for their bold success, but essential to their triumph was the German's ability to decentralize decision making and trust subordinates on the battlefield as they penetrated deep into enemy territory. Blitzkrieg operations could never have been imagined by the French military which developed an over centralized command culture and deliberately micromanaged tactical leaders.

Organizational Culture

As the United States enters the current post war period, studying the interwar years between the First and Second World Wars shows that establishing the correct culture is paramount for the Army's future success. An organization's culture plays a significant role in how leaders manage and lead subordinate teams. Policies, regulations, and codified systems will encourage certain leader behaviors at all levels. Edgar H. Schein speaks to this very notion in his book *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. Schein argues that establishing a positive organizational culture is the key to developing effective leaders and minimizing negative management styles such as micromanagement. He adds that how an organization rewards its leaders and how they are selected for promotion play a large role in the formation of an organization's culture as well.[15] Therefore, if leaders are positively rewarded and promoted for empowering subordinates, they will be motivated to continue this practice and micromanagement tendencies will begin to diminish. Without this practice, empowerment of subordinates will vary depending on the beliefs and values of each individual leader.[16]

In his book *Creating Passion Driven Team's*, Dan Bobinski explains that leaders can be categorized as builders or climbers. Builders reside on one side of the spectrum while the other side houses climbers with combinations of the two lying somewhere in between. "Builders devote their efforts to building up the people in their organization and are dedicated to the mentoring and coaching of others."[17] Conversely, climbers place their personal goals above the organization and tend to manage through fear and intimidation.[18] Although Bobinski argues that extensive training can correct unhealthy management practices, individuals certainly have natural management tendencies they tend to adhere to. This emphasizes the need for organizations to manage their leadership culture accordingly. When an organization reinforces a culture that discourages micromanagement and applauds healthy leadership, leaders will have no choice but to conform to the constructive culture or exit the organization.

Mission Command

The interwar period and invasion of France show that creating a culture liken to the German way of thinking promotes innovation and creativity at the operational and tactical level. Leaning toward the French example of extreme centralized command leads to the micromanagement of leaders and slows decision making on the battlefield. The U.S. Army has already made large strides to create a similar command philosophy through the official adoption of Mission Command. Army Doctrine Publication 6-0 defines Mission Command as "The Army's approach to command and control that empowers subordinate decision making and decentralized execution appropriate to the situation."[19] Another definition of Mission Command describes it as "The practice of decentralizing decision-making and authority to the lowest possible echelon, to include cultivating the initiative of the individual Soldier."[20] It is the

essential element of command that produces timely and informed decisions delegated to the appropriate level of leadership. Major Ben Summers explains "Mission Command is truly about fostering a culture of trust and empowerment so subordinate leaders can exercise initiative and creativity to meet their commander's intent."[21] This is what gave the German Army the ability to fully embrace a similar philosophy, its leaders found a way for it to penetrate deep into their culture.[22] The Army's Mission Command doctrine carries seven main principles that must be applied to achieve proper implementation. These principles include competence, mutual trust, shared understanding, commander's intent, mission orders, discipline initiative and risk acceptance.[23]

General James Mattis sets the example of how to establish a Mission Command culture within an organization. While in command of the Seventh Marine Regiment and the First Marine Division, Mattis made efforts to build an organization that always operated in harmony with one another.[24] He accomplished this through rigorous training which built trust among units and between superiors and their subordinates. Under Mattis, speed and decisive action became the culture and units were expected to exercise judgment and initiative on the battlefield. He had no temptation to use excessive control, because he recognized that opportunities on the battlefield were fleeting and only through decentralized decision making and disciplined initiative could they achieve the speed necessary to capitalize.[25] Mattis also articulated to his subordinates that they had the freedom to deviate from original plans when facing unexpected variables on the battlefield as long as they remained within his commander's intent.[26] This emphasized the need for clear and open communication, to ensure his subordinates understood his intent at all times. He stated that "shared situational understanding, commander's intent, and decentralized implementation enable us to place an adversary on the horns of a dilemma that overwhelms him

through cascading tactical events that collapse his will to fight."[27] Among many accolades, Mattis' innate ability to establish a Mission Command culture enabled the 1st Marine Division to conduct the deepest penetrating ground operation in Marine Corps history during the 2003 Iraq Invasion.

The concept of Mission Command has been in U.S. Army doctrine since the mid 1970's when the Army released its initial version of Field Manual 100-5 *Operations*. FM 100-5 refers to the term "Mission Orders," and explains that "Mission Orders, as which specify what the subordinate commands are to do without describing how they must do, are often the best."[28] Additionally, FM 100-5 recognizes the need for taskings to allow operation and tactical freedom to subordinates.[29] Nonetheless, the Army struggled to implement this concept in the years following the Vietnam War. In fact, FM 100-5's architect General William E DePuy, played a large role in stunting Mission Command. Serving as the Commanding General of U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, DePuy used this role to stifle creative thought most notably at the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College. DePuy squashed proposed reforms to the professional military education system and made clear he wanted the school to be focused on doctrinal tactics rather than the "art of war." When addressing the Commanding Officer of Fort Leavenworth and the field grade students, DePuy is quoted saying "Don't get too lofty or philosophical… wars are won by draftees and reserve officers. Write so they can understand."[30] Subsequently, the Army produced field grade officers who would be tactically and technically proficient, but untrained in intellectual and strategic thought.[31] As a result the Army would dominate on the battlefield in the 1990's and early 2000's, but commanding generals often failed to understand how to navigate environments following conventional conflict. The Army officially recognized the need for change in 2003 when it officially introduced Field Manuel 6-0

Mission Command to the force. Curiously, the manual states that its focus is on tactical commanders at the corps-level and below but is also applicable to higher level commands as well.[32]

Negative Effects of Micromanagement

Simply adding the Mission Command concept to Army doctrine does not ensure its adoption, and too often leaders are evaluated on their ability to follow a checklist of doctrinal tasks rather than demonstrate their ability to foster an environment that encourages discipline initiative in garrison or battlefield operations. Additionally, the Army is often accepting of poor management styles among leaders who produce short term results. The frontrunner among poor management practices in the Army today is micromanagement.

Micromanagement is hazardous as it deprives subordinates of purpose and narrows a leader's focus away from the greater picture. It dulls creativity and slows decision making reducing the speed in which a unit can react on the battlefield. Moreover, micromanagement harms the development of junior leaders, as it limits opportunities to manage duties autonomously. In his book *Drive: The Surprising Truth about what Motivates us,* Daniel Pink discusses the negative effects of micromanagement and other controlling management strategies. He refers to two competing methods of motivation: Motivation 2.0 and Motivation 3.0. Motivation 2.0 refers to commonly accepted management principles that use control to ensure subordinates are always conducting themselves appropriately while relying on extrinsic motivation techniques. Conversely, Motivation 3.0 relies on intrinsic motivation and provides more autonomy to subordinates.

Pink explains that leaders who desire more control over their subordinates tend to lead through the use of extrinsic motivators. Extrinsic motivation rests on the concept that individuals receive rewards or punishments based on performance. This type of motivation, which Pink refers to as "carrots and sticks," often narrow an individual's focus and stunt creativity.[33] Therefore performance and productivity often diminish as subordinates struggle to think past the task at hand with any future vision in mind. Lastly, he argues that this type of motivation may also lead to poor or unethical behavior. If an individual is motivated with extrinsic rewards, it will raise the temptation for that individual to find the quickest route possible, even if that requires the individual to take a questionable shortcut. [34]

Conversely, Pink argues that those who are intrinsically motivated are rewarded by the activity itself where they receive heightened learning and experience.[35] When individuals are driven by the process and motivated to excel out of pride and responsibility, they produce more effective results. Pink points to studies conducted by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan to illustrate his point. In their most prevalent study from 2004, Deci and Ryan compared several investment bank businesses that used both controlling and autonomous practices. The results of this study concluded that employees that were given more autonomy, gained greater conceptual understanding of overall operations, were more productive, and had a higher level of job satisfaction.[36] Moreover, the businesses that practiced autonomous principles grew at a rate of four times their competitors. The Motivation 3.0 concept assumes that people desire control over their efforts and want to be accountable for them. It is interesting to note the similarities in Pink's motivational concept to the Prussian Auftragstaktik model which encouraged leaders to acquire a "joy of taking responsibility" for their actions and decisions. In his essay titled "How the German's Defined Auftragstaktik", Donald Vandergriff notes that the most important quality of

a German military leader was the joy of taking responsibility as it is what made leaders resilient and enduring on the battlefield.[37]

As micromanagement and control dampens creativity, the opposite is true when subordinates are given autonomy. Intrinsic or autonomous motivation allows people to have the power of choice which has a strong effect on performance. One CEO interviewed by Pink brings to light the key differences in autonomous motivation from older extrinsic methods. "My dad's generation views human beings as human resources. They're the two-by-fours you need to build your house," he says. "For me it's a partnership between me and the employees. They're not resources. They're Partners."[38] This idea of partnership was also applied by General Mattis while in command of the First Marine Division. Mattis professed that he took considerable care to view all subordinate commanders as his equal.[39] He sought to establish a unified group of commanders and referred to himself as a quarterback calling plays as part of the team rather than a superior directing from above. This command culture produced motivated and empowered leaders while cultivating extreme trust within his command.

Throughout his discussion, Pink takes care to note however that autonomy does not imply subordinates should conduct themselves independently, but instead they now have freedom of choice which empowers them to choose how to work interdependently with others.[40] He also discusses the four essentials of autonomy and highlights the need to provide subordinates control of the techniques used to accomplish tasks. This resonates with a Mission Command culture that requires subordinates to identify and to employ courses of action through ingenuity to accomplish the mission within the commander's intent. As General George Patton famously said, "Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity."[41] Pink concludes by arguing that leaders need to resist the temptation to control

events and therefore micromanage people. Instead, leaders should provide appropriate levels of autonomy to their subordinates. This intrinsically motivates subordinates who take responsibilities seriously and leads to higher levels of performance individually and collectively.

The Army has at times referred to these different leadership styles as transactional and transformational.[42] Transactional leaders tend to use extrinsic motivators through the use of awards and punishments. They are also task-outcome oriented and pay close attention to how subordinates perform their duties. On the other hand, transformational leaders seek to acquire buy-in from their subordinates and build a collective focus on the future vision rather than a specific set of tasks.[43] Additionally, these leaders focus on intrinsically motivating Soldiers while taking deliberate efforts to facilitate their development. Nevertheless, despite efforts to formally include these leadership styles in professional military education, the Army has struggled to permeate these practices throughout the force.

The U.S. Army's Heritage in French Military Culture

Despite striving to align itself with the German Auftragstaktik philosophy, the Army often neglects to recognize that its organizational culture it is largely grounded in French military culture instead. Upon deployment of U.S. forces to Europe during the First World War, U.S. Army officers were largely instructed at French military schools which taught them to fight in a centralized manner through rigid adherence to doctrinal standards and principles. Although this may have improved short term effectiveness on the battlefield, the Army lacked speed and initiative at the operational and tactical level. In May of 1918, the impact was felt during the American Expeditionary Force's first offensive as the 28th Infantry Regiment lacked flexibility at the battle of Cantigny. This resulted in a high number of casualties and several opportunities to

gain initiative passed without being exploited.[44] Following the First World War the United States continued to align its doctrinal concepts with the French. In his book *Adopting Mission Command: Developing Leaders for a Superior Command Culture*, Donald Vandergriff explains that "When the French developed methodical battle in the interwar years, the United States copied it with all its accompanying process focused education."[45] The Army would go on to institutionalize the linear French way of tactics and leader development at the Fort Benning Infantry School throughout the 1920's and 1930's.[46]

This French influence is still visible in the Army's strict adherence to doctrine at times today. One must note the development of and adherence to doctrine is not wrong, but Army leaders must understand that it is largely based on lessons learned from past conflicts or on predictions of what a future conflict may look like. Army Doctrine Publication 3-0 *Operations* acknowledges this and reads that "Doctrine acts as a guide to action rather than a set of fixed rules."[47] Therefore, officers must be encouraged to be critical of all doctrine and challenge assumptions while employing them in training. Liken to the German Army during the interwar period, this will enable Army leaders to refine doctrinal concepts and better prepare the force for a future fight.

French influence can also be seen in the strict use of the Army's Military Decision-Making Process and the Marine Corps' Marine Corps Planning Process. Both are based on the French Cartesian approach which was implemented after World War I to promote thorough analysis and slow down the decision cycle. Vandergriff argues that these approaches turn planners inward and focus their efforts on producing products that please superiors instead of producing timely products focused outward toward the enemy.[48] These planning methods play into the American desire for control which can motivate leaders to foolishly attempt "to impose

order on war without acknowledging its disorderly nature."[49] This desire for control and the development of scientific methods and principles to maintain control can encourage leaders to micromanage. In fact, if doctrine is too blindly enforced and leaders are not allowed to employ appropriate levels of creativity on the battlefield, the system itself can become a micromanaging instrument.

Risk Aversion

The Army's struggle to implement Mission Command and expel micromanagement tendencies can also be attributed to extreme risk aversion among leaders. In his essay "Mission Command and the Mental Block: Why the Army won't Adopt a True Mission Command Philosophy," Major Thomas Rebuck argues the Army suffers from a "bureaucratic, managerial mindset with a pathological fear of uncertainty and a squeamish aversion to risk."[50] This results in an extreme compulsion to micromanage as leaders have an unrealistic desire to impose order on the battlefield.[51] Risk aversion also stems from a lack of trust and forces leaders to develop and adhere to checklists and methods instead of taking the time to develop subordinates. This lack of trust often results from an overbearing culture of careerism among Army Leaders.[52] The primary motivator for many tends to be extrinsic rewards or punishments and officers quite often do not have the time to ensure subordinate actions will not bring them down in the form of a marginal evaluation. The policy then becomes a game of exercising constant mitigation to avoid mistakes as opposed to achieving victory as a team.[53] As a result, officers may accept the use of micromanagement practices and shy away from providing subordinates autonomy or the freedom to learn from errors.

Another aspect to this discussion is the Army's habitual problem of overstating risk. As stated, extreme risk aversion encourages micromanagement while damaging flexibility and creative thought, but the overstatement of risk multiplies these negative effects. Overstating risk adds excessive parameters to subordinates denying them the ability to be agile and use initiative to solve complex problem sets.[54] ADP 6-0 reads that "An order should not trespass upon the province of a subordinate. It should contain everything that the subordinate must know to carry out his mission, but nothing more."[55] Overstating risk trespasses upon a subordinate's ability to operate and excessively limits the parameters in which they have to exercise initiative. If risk is overstated, then intent will not leave space for subordinate action and decisions are forced to be held at higher levels than they belong. This undermines a Mission Command culture while slowing the decision-making process making the army less agile.[56]

Professional Military Education and Leader Development

The lack of a Mission Command culture and the origins of micromanagement are also seen in the Army's professional military education today. This varies greatly from the German Army during the interwar period. The German Army recognized that professional military education was decisive in its implementation of Auftragstaktik.[57] Boys as young as 14 began attending military school, and by the 11th grade they were chosen to attend University as a future officer. Upon graduation, cadets were commissioned as an ensign and sent to their first unit. These officers were then educated by real world training rather than classroom instruction and developed leadership skills from mentoring officers and sergeants.[58] Upon recommendation from the regimental commander, Ensigns would attend two years of war school and then return to their respective unit. The regimental commander would then evaluate the Ensigns performance

and decide with the input from others if that individual was worthy of becoming an officer.[59] Once an officer, German leaders devoted their lives to military education and constant self-development.

The Army excels at instructing its leaders in doctrinal principles but often struggles to educate them on how to manage relationships and develop trust within an organization. Additionally, blind adherence to doctrinal practices in training can deprive leaders of the ability to work things out themselves and enjoy taking the responsibility for their decisions.[60] As a result, junior leaders may struggle to think critically or creatively on the battlefield as they lack the confidence to take risk. The Army should address this tendency in U.S. military instruction and train all Soldiers in the tenants of Mission Command. Within this training concept all leaders should be encouraged to remain critical. Leaders must develop an open mind and should be encouraged to challenge the status quo. This will establish a culture similar to the German's during the interwar period, which was so essential in developing innovative concepts and establishing tactical prowess. The Army should work to develop junior leaders who can think creatively and solve problems independently allowing them to gain the trust of superior officers. Additionally, the Army must train its leaders to empower and place trust in subordinates. This increases unit efficiency over time, but also provides unique opportunities for subordinates to grow and develop.

Micromanagement and maintaining decisions at high echelons damages the development of future leaders. In his book *Employee Training & Development* Raymond A. Noe explains that "most employee development occurs through job experiences."[61] Employees develop most when they are challenged with tasks that are outside their current skill set. Noe refers to these as "stretch assignments" and recommends that employees be challenged regularly beyond their

current capabilities to acquire new skillsets and gain confidence.[62] A learning organization that desires to grow effective leaders encourages the delegation of tasks, authorities and decision making. Delegating power and authority helps subordinates gain a sense of responsibility while allowing them to feel the weight of their decision. As the Germans discovered when training young officers in real world scenarios, this experience brings a sense of significance and the leader experiences development they could never obtain in the classroom.

If the Army hopes to prioritize the development of junior leaders through empowerment and delegation of authorities, it must become a significant aspect of officer evaluations. Evaluating an officer or commander's ability to develop trust and encourage disciplined initiative within an organization is often overshadowed by their ability to achieve results. Accomplishing the mission is vital, but if completed at the expense of junior leader development, its effects are short lived. Moreover, if that behavior not in line with Mission Command is rewarded, it is unlikely that a leader will change in the future.

Mission Command in Modern Times

Advancement in technology and communication adds to the temptation to over-centralize decision making as leaders can maintain situational awareness and communicate more effectively than ever before. This increases the temptation to micromanage and undermine a Mission Command philosophy. With new technologies and increased operational tempo, leaders at the political or strategic levels may overcentralize and unduly influence decisions that belong at lower levels of war.[63] General Stanley McChrystal speaks to this in his book *Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World*. McChrystal commanded the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) from 2003 to 2006 and the International Security Assistance Force

in Afghanistan (ISAF) from 2009 to 2010. While in command of JSOC, McChrystal recognized there was an efficiency problem within the organization. Developments in technology and communications were allowing high level leaders (including himself) to maintain control of operations that lower-level commanders were capable of managing. McChrystal admits, "For a closet micromanager, it was a new opportunity to pull the puppet strings from great distances."[64] Subordinate commanders were forced to move through a bureaucratic approval process to conduct certain mission types. This slowed the decision-making process resulting in missed opportunities. To solve the issue, he instituted a policy in line with Mission Command called "empowered execution," which delegated decision making authority down to the proper levels. As part of this initiative, McChrystal did not remove himself from the process completely, but worked to maintain visibility and make himself available to provide clarity on his intent whenever necessary. To support this policy McChrystal developed a supporting initiative known as "shared consciousness".[65]

The shared consciousness concept ensured that subordinate commanders were privy to all information and intelligence and were consistently updated on McChrystal's intent. Improvements in technology and communication allowed McChrystal to accomplish this during his morning meetings where subordinate elements would call in via video conference to receive updates in intelligence and operational guidance. This practice enabled McChrystal to influence his subordinates daily, and ensure they understood his intent as the environment changed. Additionally, it provided a forum for subordinates to communicate with one another increasing cooperation efforts among the force. The meetings developed a state of "shared consciousness" between McChrystal and his subordinates which gave him the confidence to delegate most decisions previously held at his level. The results were staggering. As a result of his empowered

execution and shared consciousness policies, the organization was able to increase its raids per month from 10 to an astounding 300.[66] Using these policies, McChrystal was able to build a lethal and efficient organization while demonstrating the positive effect decentralized operations have on the modern battlefield.

Nonetheless, as technology and communications continue to advance, commanders will have a constant temptation to micromanage and hold decision making authorities at levels higher than necessary. The Army cannot simply hope that all commanders will have the resolve and confidence to delegate decision making as General McChrystal was able to do. The Army's culture must support Mission Command and encourage commanders to develop a shared consciousness process within their respective organization. Moreover, all leaders must use advancement in technology and communications as an enabler to decentralize decision making rather than using it to exercise excessive control.

Consequences

The success achieved by General McChrystal and General Mattis is evidence to some that Mission Command has evolved in modern times. In his article "Mission Command 2.0" Anthony King argues that Mission Command has changed due to advancement in technology and mission type. He states that "Mission Command today does not involve mere local, individual initiative but rather a deep and enduring interdependence between commanders across levels."[67] To support his argument he references General McChrystal's concept of shared consciousness, which promoted cooperative efforts between commanders while keeping them in line with McChrystal's overall intent. King also uses General Mattis as an example in the evolution of Mission Command. He notes that Mattis and his staff gained expertise in identifying

decision points the First Marine Division was likely to see on the battlefield. This allowed commanders to know when decisions were likely needed with second and third order effects already fleshed out. Moreover, King argues that Mattis's subordinates "did not act on their individual initiative or instinct… [and] the system of Mission Command… no longer involved mere individual freedom and independence."[68]

King's analysis brings clarity to the modern practice of Mission Command, but his conclusions may be flawed to some extent. He takes great effort to speak of McCrystal's shared consciousness initiative but lacks depth in his discussion of empowered execution. Additionally, his analysis views Mission Command solely through the lens of high-level commands such as the ISAF, JSOC and First Marine Division. At these levels of war, it can be difficult to identify the implementation of Mission Command and its need for speed on the battlefield at the tactical level. Officers who have served in a rotation at the Army's National Training Center can attest to the difficulty to effectively maintain communications on the battlefield. All too often, companies and battalions are expected to achieve their purpose with limited communication and direction once combat operations have begun. King's argument also only references the Iraq and Afghan war. It fails to recognize the harsh realities the Army should expect to face during a peer-on-peer conflict. In a great power conflict, the Army will be forced to operate in a dispersed and disaggregated manner to avoid large casualties due to enemy fires. This will increase the need for initiative at lower levels and for decision-making to be decentralized as much as possible. Leaders must also recognize that adversarial action in the future will force the Army to operate in degraded environments where communication is denied or compromised. This emphasizes the need for a true Mission Command culture as subordinate leaders will not be able to access high level leaders in this setting. If decision making authorities are kept at too high of levels, it will

significantly disrupt operations and slow the decision-making process. This is worth mentioning as the Army cannot afford to be complacent during this post war period. It cannot rely on the ease that advanced technology and communications brought to the Iraq and Afghan wars as the environment will be largely different during a future peer-on-peer conflict.

Unfortunately, the United States has a track record of habitually struggling at the onset of war. In the book titled *America's First Battles 1776-1965* Charles Heller and William Stofft study the Army's struggles in initial battles. The study covers 10 battles ranging from Bull Run, to Kasserine Pass, to the famed Task Force Smith at the onset of the Korean War. Seven of the ten battles result in defeat, while the remaining three result in a victory paid with overwhelming cost. Poor training and preparation come to light as large problems during peacetime operations, but the Army's struggle with Mission Command is a constant theme throughout the book. The authors conclude that poor training for commanders and their staffs limited their ability to effectively manage the battlefield and it had a crippling effect.[69] The consistent response to inadequate command and control capabilities was almost always to "plan more thoroughly leaving as little to chance as possible."[70] This led to rigidity on the battlefield often resulting in heavy losses. The reality is, the Army has struggled to adequately train commanders and staffs for conflict. To avoid these results in a future war, urgency to avoid micromanagement and adopt a Mission Command culture is required.

The First Step

In his book *Command Culture*, Jorg Muth contends that the Army's current command culture has scarcely evolved since the Second World War.[71] The heavy reliance on doctrine has hurt the Army, and the Army's ability to develop doctrine will always be outpaced by new

developments on the battlefield. Consequently, leaders who are trained to follow doctrinal tasks and principles are often unable to succeed or exploit opportunities not spelled out in writing. Muth concludes that the most devastating weapon the Army could possess to win the war on terror is a hardened and aggressive battalion commander who is trusted by his superiors to conduct his own operations.[72]

If the Army hopes to develop tactical and operational leaders who are ready to win on the future battlefield, its culture must change. But where should the Army start? In his Harvard Business Review Article titled "Accelerate!" John Kotter defines his eight-step process for leading change.[73] This process is widely recognized as the standard blueprint for leading evolutionary or revolutionary change in an organization today. His process includes the following steps:

Step 1: Create a sense of urgency

Step 2: Build a guiding coalition

Step 3: Form a strategic vision and initiatives

Step 4: Enlist a volunteer army

Step 5: Enable action by removing barriers

Step 6: Generate short term wins

Step 7: Sustain acceleration

Step 8: Institute change

Regarding the full implementation of Mission Command, the Army has overlooked several steps in Kotter's change process. However, it first and foremost has neglected the first

step, which is to create a sense of urgency for change within the organization. All too often Mission Command has simply become another term for "command and control", and deeper meaning remains unknown for many. To correct this issue, urgency for change must start at the top and soon if the Army hopes to truly prepare for a potential great power conflict in a multi domain environment.

Conclusion

Despite its attempt to develop an effective command culture, the U.S. Army still struggles with micromanagement in garrison and battlefield operations. This is often due to a lack of trust and extreme risk aversion among leaders. As a result, leaders struggle to delegate tasks slowing the decision-making cycle, which limits unit effectiveness and stunts leader development. Additionally, Army leaders too often depend on extrinsic motivation methods. This outdated concept incorrectly motivates subordinates to complete a simple checklist of tasks rather than motivating them to use disciplined initiative and take calculated risks.

Change is needed for the U.S. Army to maintain readiness and adequately prepare during the current great power competition. The speed of war and its complexity is increasing, and the full adoption of Mission Command is essential for the Army to maintain a competitive advantage on the future battlefield. As General McChrystal puts it, "The risks of acting too slowly [are] higher than the risks of letting competent people make judgment calls."[74] Furthermore, leaders who are only capable of following doctrinal checklists will not be prepared to adapt in a multi domain war. Leaders must recognize that a future peer on peer conflict will include the cyber and electromagnetic domains, and the organization must inherently be able to find creative solutions to problems that have not yet been realized.

The greatest obstacle standing between the Army and the full adoption of Mission Command is its own culture. Donald Vandergriff explains: "Until the U.S. Army is realistic about the shortcomings of our institutional culture, it will never be able to embrace and practice Mission Command."[75] As part of the solution, the organization must communicate the hazards of overcentralized command and create an urgency among its leaders for change. Moreover, it must institute change that promotes officers who foster a Mission Command culture. If the Army hopes to attain success on the future battlefield, micromanagement at all levels must cease, and the Army must remove ineffective leadership practices at all levels of war. Only then will it develop the adaptive leaders it needs in combat, while producing the freedom of thought necessary to cultivate peacetime innovation during the current post war period.

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