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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE / COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES
CSC 29 / CCEM 29

EXERCISE/EXERCICE NEW HORIZONS

MISSION COMMAND IN THE 21ST CENTURY

By MAJOR J M BROWN RLC

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9TH MAY 2003

ABSTRACT

Many military forces and the media have undergone a technological transformation in recent years. The issues posed by the RMA and the media can affect the way in which warfighting is conducted and commanded. As a result, there is some belief that a “command dilemma,” exists. This calls for an examination of the relevancy of mission command as the command philosophy for the 21st century. The belief that mission command remains a relevant command paradigm can only be determined after the examination of several areas. Having examined mission commands’ relevancy and current practise, the RMA and the media are looked at in conjunction with the threat that they pose to the mission command paradigm. The ramifications of the loss of mission command as a tenet is explored, whilst consideration is given to past forms of command or the requirement for a new paradigm. The paper concludes that it is necessary for mission command to be retained as the command philosophy for 21st century warfighting.

MISSION COMMAND IN THE 21st CENTURY

“Merely because technology plays a very important part in war, it does not follow that it alone can dictate the conduct of war or lead to victory.”

- Martin Van Creveld

Warfighting, as seen on recent television news, worldwide, is a particularly brutal human endeavour. To be prosecuted effectively, it requires much in the way of human effort and the utilisation of technology to gain an advantage over the enemy and, ultimately, to win. Under the regime of technological advance and the watchful eye of the media, commanders are increasingly expected to fight in different and more effective ways, always aware that, potentially, their commanders’ and the public can see the results of all decisions and subsequent actions live.¹ Ultimately, in war, a commander must command troops and then must fight, but the arena in which this activity takes place is changing. The Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA)² has changed the way in which war is conducted and fought by soldiers, whilst the media³ and the so-called ‘CNN Factor’⁴ have changed the way in which war is viewed by the public, the military and politicians alike.

The offensive military operations that have recently taken place in Iraq under the name of Operation ‘Iraqi Freedom’ have amply demonstrated the remarkable power of modern technology, and the exploitation of it, by both the military and the media.

Continued footage of operations in Iraq may, by now, have lost the power to amaze, but

¹ An example of press coverage referring to this is by Douglas, Torin. “TV War Brings Live Action Home.” BBC News World Edition. 24 March 2003. <http://news.bbc.co.uk>.

² RMA. In this paper the RMA is referred to as an all-encompassing term of modern technology. Its effect on the military will be examined during this paper in relation to the thesis.

³ For this paper, the term media refers primarily to satellite enabled television broadcasting. (Real-time or otherwise).

⁴ Gowing, Nik. “Conflict, the Military and the Media – a New Optimism ?” The ARRC Journal, p.16. September 1997.

nevertheless, prove the staying power of media influence. The remarkable live broadcasts of combat being fought in Basra and Baghdad that appeared on television, world-wide, have given the media-saturated world a new type of entertainment, ‘combatvision’⁵. Whilst many military forces have been undergoing a RMA, the media appears to have also undergone a technological transformation. The two factors of the RMA and ‘combatvision’ manage to convey a truly human drama occurring, as we watch manpower combined with technology, fighting a war in the glare of publicity. It is clear that the issues posed, by both military modern technology and by the power of the media where, “...sometimes over-emphasis is given to the trivial,”⁶ can affect the way in which warfighting is conducted.

The RMA has produced an array of technological advances and there is little sign of the development of technology slowing down. The media has advanced in capability and it is highly likely that ‘combatvision’ is here to stay. With technology comes the risk of interference in a commander’s conduct of military operations, as technology and the media ‘glare’ possibly affect the thought process. Such things as ‘combatvision,’ network-centric warfare and digitisation, allow senior military commanders and politicians to see what is happening on a battlefield thousands of miles away, whilst it is happening. The power to communicate is also vast and satellite communications are almost globally available with the right equipment. Marcus Cobin states, “... the ability of headquarters to communicate directly with troops on the ground increases the risk that the general staff will stifle the initiative of field commanders, who are in a better position

⁵ ‘Combatvision’ – A term the author uses to describe live television broadcasts of troops engaged in real-time combat.

⁶ Elliot C L, Brigadier. “The Impact of the Media on Contemporary Warfare.” British Army Review, p.38. Date Not Known.

to assess unfolding situations.”⁷ Initiative is a crucial tenet of the philosophy of mission command, which in turn is a vital part of how war, and in particular, manoeuvre warfare is conducted. This can lead to the conclusion that if initiative can be affected, along with other factors of command and combat, then the impact of technology and the media could dramatically affect commanders and the way they command in the future. There is some evidence to suggest that a, “command dilemma,”⁸ exists and further, it can be surmised that this dilemma is made no easier by the advances in technology, which is utilised by both the military and the media. The thesis of this paper is that, despite the command dilemma, which is exacerbated by technology and the media, mission command continues to be an essential, and therefore, relevant command philosophy for the 21st century and should be retained.

The belief that mission command remains a critical and relevant command philosophy can only be determined after the examination of several related areas, utilising examples of many military forces from around the world. A definition of mission command, followed by an examination of its necessity and relevancy, is an essential requirement for this paper in order to gain a context of its importance. Following this, a definition of the RMA will be given for context. The issues of the RMA and the media must then be looked at in conjunction with the threat, both real and speculative, that they pose to the mission command paradigm. The ramifications of the loss of mission command as a tenet will then be explored, whilst brief consideration will be given to a return to past forms of command or the requirement for a new paradigm. The paper will

⁷ Cobin, Marcus. Centre for Defence Information, Washington. Quoted in “Clipping the Enemy’s Wings”. The Economist, p.74. March 8

then conclude that it is necessary for mission command to be retained as the essential command philosophy for 21st century warfighting.

Much of the history of mission command as a warfighting command philosophy is attributed to the Germans and their use of, "...*Auftragstaktik*, meaning 'directive control,' as opposed to *Befehlstaktik*, meaning 'control by detailed order.'"^{9, 10} Suffice it to say, its early development, rooted in German tactics at the end of WWI and developed in WWII, was eventually taken up by the US as mission orders in its development of manoeuvre warfare. Similar doctrinal developments took place in many other armies, including the Canadian and the British who termed it 'mission command.' The Canadian definition is similar to that of the British and a full quote of the Canadian version is given to enhance understanding:

Mission Command, the army's philosophy of command within the Manoeuvre Warfare approach to fighting, has three enduring tenets: the importance of understanding a superior commander's intent, a clear responsibility to fulfil that intent, and timely decision making. The underlying requirement is the fundamental responsibility to act within a framework of the commanders intentions. Together, this requires a style of command that promotes decentralized decision-making, freedom and speed of action, and initiative. Mission Command meets this requirement and is thus key to the army's doctrine.¹¹ (*sic*)

To the British, mission command is the, "second fundamental tenet [in its] joint and army doctrine, [second only] to that of manoeuvre warfare."¹² Whilst some would argue that mission command or mission orders are not effective at the tactical level,¹³ it is

⁹ Leonhard, Robert R. *The Art of Maneuver*, p.113. Presidio, 1991.

¹⁰ For the reader's information, *Auftragstaktik* and *Befehlstaktik* are proper nouns and, therefore, will start with a capital letter throughout the paper.

¹¹ Canada, DND. Land Force Volume 3 – *Command* – B-GL-300-003/FP-000, p.3-6. 1996.

¹² Melvin, R A M S, Brigadier, Director Land Warfare, UK MOD. Lecture, "Continuity and Change; How British Army Doctrine is Evolving to Match the Balanced Force." *RUSI Journal*. August 2002, Vol 147 No 4.

¹³ Johnson, John D. Abstract - "Mission Orders in the United States Army: Is the Doctrine Effective ?" http://stinet.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/fulcrum_main.pl.

clear that many armies give as much credence as the British to the philosophy of mission command, and, it has had proven success in battle. An example is that of the Israeli army, which from the outset of their formation, “had emphasised an informal, innovative command style, colloquially known as organised chaos.” Further, “...the Israeli training system sought to ensure that commanders be trained [in order to make them] as little dependant on his superior as possible in deciding on how to act.” As a result, during the 1967 Sinai Campaign, Brigadier-General Gavish, Commander Israeli Southern Command, practised mission command as his technique of leadership. His Ugdah commanders were given orders and then, “left to accomplish their mission bearing in mind their task, their forces, and their own personalities.”¹⁴ Largely as a result of this, the Six Day War ended in success for the Israelis, whilst their opposition,¹⁵ who tended toward *Befehlstaktik*, were left comprehensively defeated.

It is of note that the debate on the relevance of mission command is by no means over. The adoption of mission command, or what Thomas Czerwinski terms as, “command-by-influence,” and his assertion that only such “models are likely to be consistently successful in the 21st century, [are] supported by many military communities, especially the US Marine Corps.”¹⁶ His assertions are not, however, supported by all analysts, notably Michael Geyer and Shimon Naveh who criticised Czerwinski’s analysis of WWI and II German tactics and effectively stated that mission command is a poor

¹⁴ The paraphrased description and quotes reference the Six Day War are from an essay by Mader, L R, Major, CD. “The 1967 Sinai Campaign - Some Lessons About the Manoeuvrist Approach to Operations.” *The Army Doctrine and Training Bulletin*, Volume 5, No.3, p.39. Canada DND. Fall 2002.

¹⁵ Egypt, Syria and Jordan.

¹⁶ Sharpe, G E, Brigadier-General (Retired) and English, Allan D, PhD. *Principles for Change in the Post Cold War Command and Control of the Canadian Forces*, p.68. Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2002.

foundation for a modern command system.¹⁷ It appears the basis of this view was as a result of disagreement with Czerwinski's views. However, this does not necessarily validate mission command to be a poor foundation for modern command and it will be shown, in accordance with the thesis statement, that mission command is, in fact, a basis for successful command in the 21st century.

Despite such contrary views as those above, it is contended that mission command must be seen as an essential for modern battle and success. A historical example of the lack of a mission command philosophy, which resulted in failure, is that of the US despatch of a battalion of Marines into Lebanon in 1984. They were sent as a peacekeeping force and, "that description was apparently the only strategic mission statement given,"¹⁸ to them. Having no clear operational or tactical mission statement and therefore no understanding of the commander's intent, the force lacked the capability to carry out mission command as they had no way to use initiative or make decisions in context. If they had been able to utilise mission command, it is likely that the, "Lebanon débâcle [where] the US eventually extracted its military forces without apparently ever having achieved anything positive in the way of national goals,"¹⁹ may never have happened. Whilst this is conjecture, both this historical example and the move in the nature of warfare to the non-contiguous battlefield suggest a required thought process by commanders, given to "battlefield agility."²⁰ This in turn suggests that, "agility implies freedom to manoeuvre... [and] demands flexibility of thought and action, setting the

¹⁷ Sharpe, G E, Brigadier-General (Retired) and English, Allan D, PhD. Principles for Change in the Post Cold War Command and Control of the Canadian Forces, pp.68-69. Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2002.

¹⁸ Newell, Clayton R. The Framework of Operational Warfare, p.66. Routledge, 1991.

¹⁹ Ibid. p.66.

²⁰ Melvin, R A M S, Brigadier, Director Land Warfare, UK MOD. Lecture, "Continuity and Change; How British Army Doctrine is Evolving to Match the Balanced Force." RUSI Journal. August 2002, Vol 147 No 4.

conditions for initiative and is [therefore] directly enabled by mission command.”²¹ As will be seen, despite mission commands’ current status and historical relevance, this in no way assures its future in the face of 21st century technology and media.

The emergence of the RMA has some believing that, “within the Western technological Utopia paradigm, digitisation of the battlefield is seen as a critical enabler.”²² Whilst digitisation is the main component of the RMA, in fact the RMA, with the US leading, incorporates a host of technological advances, notably in precision-guided munitions, communications, situational awareness aids and computers. There are several definitions of a RMA but the closest in the context of this thesis is,

...a major change in the nature of warfare brought about by the innovative application of technologies which, combined [with] dramatic changes in military doctrine and operational and organisational concepts fundamentally alters the character and conduct of military operations.²³

There are many areas benefiting from RMA technology such as the new equipment being developed by the British called Future Integrated Soldier Technology (FIST). FIST is being designed with situational awareness aids to allow sections of dismounted close combat troops (infantry) to be used as a weapon system with the sum being greater than the whole. Regardless of this supposedly new concept of infantry fighting tactics, it is the practical **creation of this kind of digitisation** that is the **true** RMA breakthrough.

Whilst, as stated previously, digitisation is the main component of the RMA, it should not be forgotten that there are other elements of it. Weapons and various support systems are being developed across the military spectrum, and with them, the RMA is

²¹ Melvin, R A M S, Brigadier, Director Land Warfare, UK MOD. Lecture, “Continuity and Change; How British Army Doctrine is Evolving to Match the Balanced Force.” RUSI Journal. August 2002, Vol 147 No 4..

²² Goodyer, Michael, Colonel. “The Impact of Digitisation on the Australian Army.” Australian Army Journal, p.62. Issue 2000.

²³ Lambeth, Benjamin S. Quoted by Sloan, Elinor C. The Revolution in Military Affairs – Implications for Canada and NATO, p.3. McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002.

adding to the overall technological make-up of the battle-space. Therefore, all elements can be seen as a part of the change in warfighting methodology. This methodology is, in effect, the use of technology to try to speed up the decision making process for commanders. A faster decision making process enables the commander to cause actions against the enemy, quicker than the enemy can react to them, thereby breaking into the enemy's decision cycle. Breaking the enemy's decision cycle is a central tenet of manoeuvre warfare. Added to the adherence to the aforementioned tenet, is the use of such weapons as precision-guided munitions. In conjunction with new computer technology and sensors, modern munitions are classed as a force multiplier as you can achieve more effects against the enemy with less mass and less risk to friendly forces. The belief that technology can achieve some of these laudable capabilities has led to prognostic views of some "...proponents of information warfare [who] believe that the compression of the factors of time and space [due to situational awareness] has eliminated the clear separations among the strategic, operational and tactical levels."²⁴ In effect, such proponents seem to suggest that the link between the strategic commander and the soldier on the ground is viable and could possibly become a preferred method of command. Such a relationship could, therefore, eliminate the operational commander and even tactical commanders from the command equation.

The perception of the dangers to mission command posed by the RMA are mainly inherent in the proponents given to the view above. Indeed, the simple fact that strategic, operational and tactical commanders have excellent battle space awareness as a result of technology means that there is the real risk of commanders, and even politicians, trying to

²⁴ Dahl, Erik J, Commander, US Navy. "Network Centric Warfare and the Death of Operational Art." Defence Studies, Vol 2, Number 1, p.9. Spring 2002.

interfere with subordinates throughout the chain of command. Historically this has always been a concern of commanders as shown by two examples. St Arnaud, Napoleon III's commander in Crimea, "thought [the telegraph] to be the death of generalship; it spelt for him the loss of all independence in the field."²⁵ The second, and, slightly more modern example is from WWII:

Modern developments, such as wireless and telephones, may constitute serious dangers for the commander in the field, if these systems are made use of by politicians to endeavour to influence operations without being conversant and familiar with the circumstances prevailing in that theatre of operations. Wellington was indeed fortunate!²⁶

The modern capability to micro-manage commanders in lower formations during battle as a result of better situational awareness is a real issue that produces what the British have termed the "command dilemma."²⁷ The British see two interconnected risks as a result of modern technology,

The first is the risk of superior levels of command 'micro-managing' operations at lower levels. The second is too heavy a reliance on communications, which has the effect of undermining the longer term ability of subordinates to take the initiative.²⁸

Both of these elements directly affect the use of mission command and the British have recognised this danger and their doctrine addresses the issue to a small degree.²⁹

However, the British perspective does not provide a guarantee that all commanders will adhere to the mission command philosophy in the future. A similar dilemma to the British model has already been seen in the future combat studies exercise, URBAN

²⁵ Keegan, John. *The Mask of Command*, p.210. Pimlico. 1987.

²⁶ Alanbrooke, Field Marshal Lord. *War Diaries 1939–1945*, p.83. Edited by Alex Danchev and Daniel Todman. Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London, 2001.

²⁷ British Defence Doctrine. *Joint Warfare Publication 0-01*, 2nd Edition, p.3-7. October 2001.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p.3-7.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 3-7. Also, Chapter 7 stresses the importance of mission command as being, "at the core of the UK's philosophy of command and is a central theme that permeates through British doctrine."

CHALLENGE 2002, run by the Canadian Director of Land Strategic Concepts. Utilising high levels of technical situational awareness aids:

Commanders, capable of gaining quick access to detailed information events or developments in any part of their AO, were confronted with a *Command* choice: devolve command decisions downward or exert directive control. Alternative means of **taking advantage of the intrinsic strengths of a mission command philosophy were debated, but the issue was not resolved.**³⁰

It can be seen, therefore, that the risk to mission command is tangible, realistic and of concern to modern forces. Indeed, not only is it of concern, several examples prove that mission command, whilst preached, is not always practised. A study by Charles Breslin, in early 2000, on US Army organisational culture indicates that micro-management is alive and well in the [US] military.³¹ The Canadian Forces have similar indications that, "...the ranks of Lieutenant-Colonel and Major perceive they are being micromanaged and that NDHQ does not understand what is going on the field."³² As a final example, and to prove that mission command is subject to interference at all levels, LGen Michael Short, "complained that video teleconferencing [during the Kosovo Campaign] allowed his superiors to micromanage the air campaign to the detriment of its effectiveness."³³

The aforementioned advance in media technology exacerbates the issue of

³⁰ Canada DND, Directorate of Land Strategic Concepts. *Future Army Experiment – Operations in the Urban Battle Space*, p.8. Fort Frontenac, Kingston. May 2002. *Italics* are a direct copy of the quote. **Bold** by this author to add emphasis.

³¹ Sharpe, G E, Brigadier-General (Retired) and English, Allan D, PhD. "Principles for Change in the Post Cold War Command and Control of the Canadian Forces," p.60. Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2002.

³² *Ibid.* p.61.

³³ *Ibid.* p.64.

technology, *per se*, affecting mission command. Since 1997,³⁴ when Nik Gowing discussed the 'Toko' satellite up-link transmitter that allowed reporters to transmit with a delay time of only one hour, the media have chased instantaneous television and have maximised their technological expertise and capability. 'Combatvision' is therefore not a new concept; it is only now that it is a reality. The dangers presented by 'combatvision' are much talked about by current students in the Canadian Forces College in that, "War, to put it bluntly, is good for the media business...[but the question now is] whether the media are good for the business of waging war."³⁵ This question will, no doubt be debated by militaries for the foreseeable future. The operations in Iraq, so prominently featured on CNN, amongst other networks, have effectively belied the fact that the progress of war and battles can change in an instant, despite the deaths of over one hundred US and British soldiers. It is worth considering a small vignette:

What would a politician or military leader of modern western persuasion do if they saw the destruction and bloodshed of a friendly unit - not an individual - a unit such as a company of infantry soldiers, being destroyed before their eyes on CNN, by artillery and small-arms fire. Not only do they see the dying, they see the wounded and hear the screams of wounded soldiers, some calling for their mothers, and no-one is there to help them...

This may sound far-fetched but it is entirely possible as everyone in the military appreciates. It is this author's view that the commanders in the field would soon be answering numerous and almost instant telephone calls in order to explain such a 'disaster' to everyone from their Chiefs of Defence Staffs to Ministers. The element of mission command would likely fade as the field commander is offered 'advice' and given orders on how to improve the situation. Meanwhile, a distraught wife calls her local Member of Parliament demanding to know why she saw her husband lose his legs on television. The media is in frenzy, telephoning families of the dead and accusing the

³⁴ Gowing, Nik. "Conflict, the Military and the Media – a New Optimism ?" The ARRC Journal, p.14. September 1997.

³⁵ Taylor, Philip M. "War and the Media," lecture delivered at the media-military relations conference at RMA Sandhurst, 1995. Quoted in Essay, "The Truth, The Whole Truth or Nothing: A Media Strategy for the Military in the Information Age," by Williams, R M, Colonel. Canadian Military Journal Vol 3, No 3, p.12. Autumn 2002.

military of incompetence. The commanders in the field are still trying to fight the battles...

Reactions to the fictitious vignette, above, can only be surmised, but as Brigadier Reith states in an essay that considers similar issues, "...this is bound to place restrictions on the way we fight, particularly in planning at the operational level, where political direction is converted into military action."³⁶ It is now a truth that increased media presence on the battlefield is inevitable and this will affect the view and conduct of war. "As an administration official, it's gotten increasingly difficult to sort out what we know from intelligence and what we know from CNN,"³⁷ stated former Secretary of Defence Dick Cheney with regard to media coverage of Operation Desert Storm. This situation has been exacerbated to an extraordinary degree for Operation

plan, and so on. It appears however, that the wish of the military and politicians to control media output and the wish of the media to be in the forefront of action coverage has led to a, “shotgun marriage,”⁴⁰ which may or may not be repeated in the next war. Its effect on military operations in Operation ‘Iraqi Freedom,’ will be analysed over the coming months. The resulting military decision on media participation in the next conflict will be an indication of what politicians are prepared to tolerate the public seeing, and, what the effect was on operational and tactical capability, a crucial issue of which will have been the effect on command. The ramifications of, “the conflict between operational security and the need to fill the airwaves with compelling coverage will always drive both producers and generals crazy.”⁴¹ The post-operational reports of combat officers and soldiers to their superiors, about the media issue in Iraq, will be crucial. Despite the media relish of ‘embedding’, it is this author’s view that the media will not like what the military will have to say.

Whilst the strategic level and even operational level briefings have alluded to the fact that what happens tactically is up to the commander on the ground, the effects of a camera being present whilst engaging in combat cannot be understated. It is a factor that must be taken into account by all commanders at all levels, just like any other combat factor. It may be that ‘embedded’ journalists become the greatest media-military cooperation success story ever, but Allan English states that, “over-sensitivity to media influence,” was a problem identified with senior leadership in the Canadian “Debrief The

⁴⁰ MacKenzie, Lewis. “Shotgun Marriage – The Military and the Media.” National Post. Monday, March 24, 2003. www.national.post.co.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Leader Project.”⁴² True or not, this kind of perception clouds the views of military personnel, and it will take much to overcome it. There is also an inherent distrust of the media by the military and many journalists see this as natural:

I come from a school of journalists that believes that it is natural that there should be a conflict between the armed services and journalism and the media...it is natural that a state of war exists between us.⁴³

Whilst it appears that some of the antagonism that has accompanied military-media relations since the Vietnam War has faded as a result of ‘embedding,’ it is unlikely that the relationship will ever truly become symbiotic. The issue of complicated combat scenarios is exacerbated by media accompaniment, simply because the media crews are physically there. Recent discussions with US Army officers have indicated that their colleagues in Iraq have found embedded media crews to be, “inconvenient, irritating and constantly in the way.”⁴⁴ In short, the media has made command more difficult.

The RMA has not then, produced a panacea for the ideal of command, despite better situational awareness across the battle space, and despite the futuristic visions of some. Further, the influence of the media can arguably be seen as negative on the practical application of command. In the face of these assessments, this author contends that the validity of mission command remains. It is therefore essential to understand the ramifications of mission command not surviving as a command philosophy, so that this validity is viewed with some objectivity.

⁴² English, Allan. “Contemporary Issues in Command and Control.” Essay based on a paper prepared by Allan English for the Canadian DCDS Retreat, Kingston, Feb 2001.

⁴³ Burnet, Alistair. ITN Journalist, 1970. Quoted in essay by Elliot C L, Brigadier. “The Impact of the Media on Contemporary Warfare.” *British Army Review*, pp.39-40. Date Not Known. Comment: The author of this paper was a Media Operations Officer in the Joint Headquarters British Forces Cyprus, 1998-2000. Both the military and journalistic attitudes prevailed.

⁴⁴ Canadian Forces College, CSC 29. Exercise STALWART WARRIOR 2003. Conversations between author and US Army and Marine officers attached to the exercise. Names of officers in Iraq not disclosed.

Mission Command relies on the following fundamentals: Unity of effort, decentralized authority, trust, mutual understanding and timely and effective decision-making.⁴⁵ All of these are human actions and interactions, although machines can perform a decision making process, albeit automated. On the non-linear, non-contiguous and asymmetrical battlefields of the 21st century, the use of these fundamentals allows the trained commander to act decisively and rapidly, providing that mission command philosophy is understood. Tools and technology support personnel in order to achieve the decisive and rapid action required in a fluid environment, but in some cases, technology is seen as the sole capability whilst the human capability is ignored.⁴⁶ This implies that the requirements of the military, the commander and the conduct of warfighting are secondary to the capabilities of technology. Further, it suggests that the style of command utilised is irrelevant.

The ramification of this type of opinion means effectively, a dismissal of the importance of the commander, making the human element a minor equation in the warfighting spectrum. Therefore, this discounts human ingenuity, initiative and makes command of people irrelevant. Clearly, this cannot be so and, in the view of the author, such opinions are naïve, for whilst this paper does not allow for a complete review of command and leadership under battle conditions, suffice it to say that military history is replete with examples showing that under fire, soldiers require strong leadership by other people. Machines and computers cannot lead soldiers in battle and neither can

⁴⁵ See the following publications for full explanations. 1. British Defence Doctrine. Joint Warfare Publication 0-01, 2nd Edition. October 2001. 2. Canada, DND. Land Force Volume 3 – Command – B-GL-300-003/FP-000. 1996. 3. Design for Military Operations – The British Military Doctrine. Army Code 71451. D/CGS/50/8. 1996.

⁴⁶ VCEMD, Director Defence Analysis. DND/CF Concept Paper, Chapter 5 – The Development of Human Capability. www.vcds.forces.gc.ca.

commanders who are relying on technology and media sound bites to see the battle, from thousands of miles away. The fact remains that in battle, “successful warfighting organizations and leaders are on ‘the edge of chaos in the constantly shifting battle zone between stagnation and anarchy, the one place where a complex system can be spontaneous, adaptive and alive.’”⁴⁷ Further, “there is still a requirement to feel and touch the battlefield, to breathe its smells and to sense the ripples, ebb and flow of battle on the ground.”⁴⁸ This means that the human element must be factored in, and, in order to alleviate the difficulties associated with the Clausewitzian ‘fog of war,’ a command style must reflect the ability to cope with the aforementioned “chaos.” Should this not be the case, then, “...an improper command style, using tools improperly will not work” and further, “I assure you that *Befehlstaktik* won’t last long in a fight.”⁴⁹ This supports the requirement for a style of command that allows inherent flexibility and requires initiative. In effect, if the fundamental tenets of mission command are removed, there is little scope for humans to solve complex issues. Further, and perhaps more importantly, a lack of mission command philosophy removes the capability for the commander on the battlefield to influence events around him in order to adjust issues relating directly to people. If the human aspects of warfighting are ignored, then the moral component of getting people to fight, utilising morale, leadership, motivation and management,⁵⁰ will be ignored. Regardless of technology, this is a philosophy likely to fail.

⁴⁷ Waldrop, M Mitchell. Quoted by Van Riper P, Lt Gen, USMC (Ret.) and Hoffman F G, Lt Col, USMCR. “Pursuing the Real RMA: Exploiting Knowledge-Based Warfare.” *NSSQ*, p.6. Summer 1998.

⁴⁸ Melvin, R A M S, Brigadier, Director Land Warfare, UK MOD. “Modern Warfare.” *British Army Review No 130*, p.7. Autumn 2002.

⁴⁹ Anlat, John, Colonel, US Army, III Corps. Lecture to Canadian Forces College Land Component. “III Corps – Counteroffensive Force.” Toronto, 26 March 2003.

⁵⁰ *Design for Military Operations – The British Military Doctrine*, pp.4-5 to 4-6. Army Code 71451. D/CGS/50/8. 1996.

Despite this view, arguably, *Befehlstaktik* and other command paradigms have their place in the military. With new countries being accepted into NATO, who have a command paradigm of rigidity and absolute obedience to orders, inherited from the Soviet Union, it may be that mission command orientated militaries have to revert to ‘old school’ command in the future, on combined operations. However, conflict is conducted in the well-known Clausewitzian, ‘fog of war’ and this being the case, why return to a command philosophy with no flexibility for the kind of confusion that can emerge from battle? No doubt, some will proclaim technology to be the answer to this problem. This proclamation, however, is shortsighted for all the reasons expressed so far, and the answer therefore lies with education and training in the mission command philosophy, followed by employment in accordance with capability. Another option is to invent a new command paradigm, or to ‘mix and match’ *Auftragstaktik* and *Befehlstaktik*, or re-adjust current leadership theories to match new circumstances. Perhaps the metaphor of a, “spectrum of tight leash and loose rein or tight rein, as necessary,”⁵¹ is a paradigm worth investigation. However, it is this author’s view that mission command allows, within its fundamental tenets, the capability for all of these and other command paradigms to be utilised. Further, “it has been proven on operations and is now an established part of ...warfare.”⁵² It is, therefore, essential that the military requirements for future battle reflect the recent, successful warfighting operations in Iraq, where technology took its place as a force multiplier for troops on the ground, but did not

⁵¹ Anlat, John, Colonel, US Army, III Corps. Lecture to Canadian Forces College Land Component. “III Corps – Counteroffensive Force.” Toronto, 26 March 2003.

⁵² Melvin, R A M S, Brigadier, Director Land Warfare, UK MOD. “Modern Warfare.” British Army Review No 130, p.8. Autumn 2002.

replace them. The future remains with the people who have to fight and therefore the command requirement will remain.

The recent events in Iraq have shown that, "...where once commanders had to bark orders across small battlefields and men advanced shoulder to shoulder, modern commanders collaborate over a network."⁵³ Whilst this takes place, the media provides, "wall-to-wall coverage, correspondents and cameras in every conceivable location, running commentaries and punditry, and most astonishing of all – live action and interviews with combatants."⁵⁴ The shift in technology, in terms of the military RMA, has been matched by the media who have undergone their own technological transformation. Despite these advances, the requirement for military co.15997 TmR2eadto hanot die m

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Despite the current adherence to mission command philosophy by many militaries, and its historical importance, some commentators do not see it as a good basis for a command philosophy, although this argument appears limited to criticism levelled at a certain commentator who analysed German WWI and WWII experiences of command. It is of note however, that mission command's relevancy is still under debate and therefore its future is not assured.

The effect of the RMA on mission command seems to be related almost directly to digitisation, although it is clear that the RMA is broad in its parameters and thus the RMA as a whole has relevancy to the mission command debate. The risk that technology poses to command has been present historically, as evidenced from Napoleonic and WWII examples. It is within the context of RMA that the British recognize the "command dilemma," and the issues of micro-management and possible over reliance on technology. This issue is highlighted in British military doctrine and thus is a recognised problem. The Canadian Forces recognise this issue also and it has been debated, but not finalised, during trials of future combat studies. The risk to mission command as a warfighting philosophy is shown to be a real concern and there is a belief by some that technology is the answer to all military problems. Current practises in some forces, highlighted by examples from the US Army, the Canadian Forces and the Kosovo Campaign, prove that command philosophy is a historical, current and future issue of concern.

The immediacy of the media's coverage of the military has brought renewed attention to war as a result of the recent offensive operations in Iraq. The 'embedding' of reporters and 'combatvision' has changed the way in which war is viewed and is likely to

affect the way operational and tactical commanders conduct warfighting in some way. The invented vignette gives pause for reflection, but the “shotgun marriage” named by General (Retired) Mackenzie, describes the current military-media relationship. Whilst the media appear to favour ‘embedding,’ it is unlikely that all military personnel will say the same, and it seems that ‘embedded’ media, at the tactical level, are an encumbrance.

As the belief in technology, as a primary, functional war-winning component, is pushed to the fore, the effect of not having mission command as a command philosophy means that the human element of warfare is removed. This view is naïve, as ultimately soldiers must fight and therefore they will require leadership and command. This means the human component must have its place in battle in order to command, thus meaning technology is an enabling tool, and therefore not a replacement for the command function. Therefore, whilst other command paradigms are briefly considered, it is apparent that within the fundamental tenets of mission command philosophy, there is enough scope for commanders to apply any version of command paradigm they wish, within a mission command context. As a result, despite any imagined or real command dilemma, there is no doubt that mission command is a relevant command philosophy for the 21st century and should be retained.

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