„Vadovavimo menas glūdi mokėjime rasti pusiausvyrą tarp to, kas turi būti paties vado įsakoma, ir to, kas turi būti paliekama valdinių iniciatyvai. Reikia daug nujautimo, daug takto, savumų, kurie įgyjami tik nuolatine praktika ir sekant.“

Gen. št. plk. ltn. Grinius
„Mūsų žinynas“, 1933 m., Nr. 100

AUFTRAGSTAKTIK

How do we develop officers who can take decisions and command?

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Auftragstaktik is a time-tested military philosophy that has its roots in the 19th-century Prussian military, specifically the concept of 'Auftragstaktik', or 'mission tactics'. Emphasising adaptability and decentralised decision-making, mission command provides subordinates with a clear understanding of the commander's intent and desired outcomes while granting them the autonomy to determine the best approach to achieve those objectives. This approach fosters a culture of innovation and adaptation in response to changing circumstances, making it an effective way to develop skills. Over the years, mission command (Auftragstaktik) has proven to be an asset in various historical instances, such as the Napoleonic Wars, the Austro-Prussian War and the early years of World War II. Today, mission command remains a cornerstone of military command and control choice for numerous nations, as modern warfare demands rapid, flexible responses to ever evolving and complex conflicts.

Mission Command philosophy has been shaped and refined by influential thinkers such as Carl von Clausewitz[1], Helmuth von Moltke the Elder[2], John Boyd[3], Martin Dempsey[4], Paul Van Riper[5], Eitan Shamir[6] Donald Vandergriff[7] and Jörg Muth[8]. These theorists have emphasised the importance of decentralisation, adaptability and individual initiative in achieving military objectives. However, the implementation of mission command principles in various military organisations, including those of the US, UK and Israel, has faced challenges such as cultural resistance[9], overemphasis on technology[10], gaps in training and education[11], political considerations[12] and risk aversion[13]. Muth[14] argues that mission command is a crucial leadership philosophy for military organisations, particularly in the context of modern warfare.

Theorists have emphasised the importance of decentralisation, adaptability and individual initiative in achieving military objectives. They have contributed valuable insights into the principles and practices of mission command, highlighting its

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1 Clausewitz, *On War*.

2 Moltke, *Moltke on the Art of War: Selected Writings*.

3 Boyd, *A Discourse on Winning and Losing.*

4 Dempsey, *Mission Command.*

5 Van Riper, *Information Superiority and Decision-Making: An Elusive Decision.* 46–50.

6 Shamir, *Transforming Command: The Pursuit of Mission Command in the 21st Century*.

7 Vandergriff, *Raising the Bar: Creating and Nurturing Adaptability to Deal with the Changing Face of War.*

8 Muth, *Command Culture: Officer Education in the U.S. Army and the German Armed Forces, 1901–1940, and the Consequences for World War II*.

9 Shamir, *Transforming Command: The Pursuit of Mission Command in the 21st Century*.

10 Van Riper, *Information Superiority and Decision-Making: An Elusive Decision*, 46–50.

11 Vandergriff, *Raising the Bar: Creating and Nurturing Adaptability to Deal with the Changing Face of War*.

12 Dempsey, *Mission Command*.

13 Shamir, *Transforming Command: The Pursuit of Mission Command in the 21st Century*.

14 Muth, *Command Culture: Officer Education in the U.S. Army and the German Armed Forces, 1901–1940, and the Consequences for World War II*.

effectiveness in various historical instances and its relevance in modern warfare.

To fully embrace mission command, militaries must foster a culture that encourages trust, shared understanding and decentralised decision-making. By understanding and learning from the insights provided by above-mentioned influential thinkers, modern military organisations can overcome mission command implementation challenges and enhance their effectiveness in the rapidly changing and complex world of modern warfare.

Discussion: How do we educate future officers to exercise mission command?

The discussion revolves around various key aspects of educating future officers to effectively exercise mission command. These include understanding the principles of *Auftragstaktik*, implementing the officer development triangle model, fostering trust and having skilled instructors utilising innovative teaching methods, incorporating AI technology and considering future trends in military education and training.

Understanding Auftragstaktik

Mission command is viewed as a command philosophy, but it is not without its sceptics. Some argue that it is impossible to exercise mission command unless an individual is born and raised within a culture that embraces its principles. They believe that the inherent traits and mindset required for mission command cannot be simply taught or instilled through training. However, proponents of mission command maintain that while cultural factors may influence the adoption of this leadership philosophy, it can still be effectively taught and internalised through comprehensive education, training and mentorship. By fostering an environment that values trust, initiative and decentralised decision-making, military organisations can help develop leaders who are capable of exercising mission

command, regardless of their cultural background.

For more than twenty years in the Military Academy of Lithuania, cadets had been primarily assessed on their ability to memorise materials from presentations with extracts from doctrines, field manuals and textbooks word-for-word and reproduce them accurately during written or oral exams. Quick decision-making and critical thinking was not a requirement, nor was it encouraged, resulting in foreseeable consequences during later officers' careers. Eventually, however, 5–10 years ago the emphasis shifted towards troop-leading procedures, and some exercises were developed that required cadets to make decisions and issue quick battle orders, fostering a more dynamic and adaptable approach to command-and-control practices.

The model

Military operations rely on the tactical function of command and control (C2), which involves planning and coordinating all elements of the military to achieve mission objectives. C2 is exercised by a designated individual or group that has the authority to direct and supervise subordinates in making decisions and allocating resources effectively. The most preferred type of C2 is Auftragstaktik, which delegates authority to subordinates and empowers them to achieve shared mission goals.

The so-called officer development triangle model is applied at the Military Academy of Lithuania. This framework is used to design learning objectives to educate officers in the military and other professional contexts. The model comprises three angles: human, commander and teacher. It aims to develop a holistic understanding of the role of an officer, with each angle representing a crucial aspect of their development.

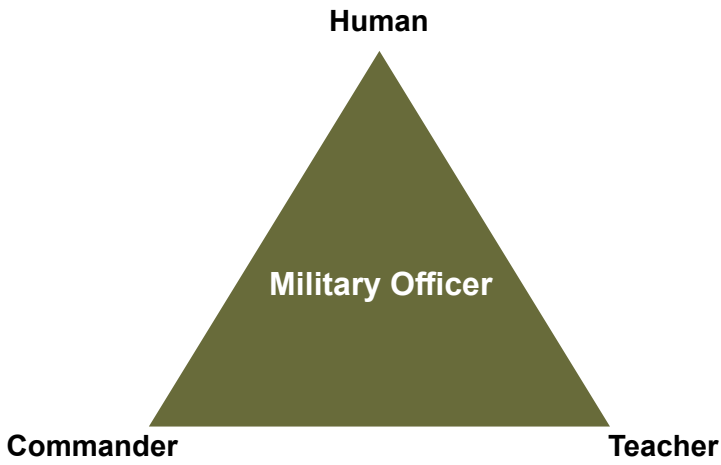

Figure 1: Officer development model – triangle model (created by author)

The human angle recognises the importance of future officers' personal qualities, such as self-awareness, empathy and emotional intelligence, in building effective relationships with subordinates and achieving mission objectives.

The commander angle focuses on the tactical (training) and strategic skills fostered during the education process necessary for decision-making, planning and communication. This aspect of the model emphasises the significance of the command and control (C2) function and the principles of Auftragstaktik, which allows officers to delegate authority and empower their subordinates to make critical decisions on the battlefield.

The teacher angle highlights the importance of continuous learning and professional development, for both the individual officer and the organisation. It underscores the need for military leaders to be educators, mentors and role models, fostering a culture of learning and growth within their units[15].

The officer development triangle model, encompassing the human, commander and teacher angles, serves as a comprehensive

[15] Vandergriff, *Raising the Bar: Creating and Nurturing Adaptability to Deal with the Changing Face of War.*

framework for developing well-rounded military officers capable of effectively implementing mission command. By integrating these three crucial aspects, the triangle model has effectively set a foundation to develop military officers to exercise mission command, fostering adaptability, innovation and effective leadership in the complex and dynamic landscape of modern warfare.

Trust and instructors

The core element of mission command is trust, which is essential in fostering a command culture that empowers officers to make decisions and adapt to changing circumstances. To effectively instil this trust, it is imperative to have the best instructors, who are not only subject matter experts but also possess strong pedagogical skills. These educators play a crucial role in shaping the mindset and skills of future officers, preparing them to exercise mission command confidently and effectively.

As General Stanley McChrystal et al.[16] state in their book, *Team of Teams*, *New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World*, trust is the lifeblood of the new networked organisation. He emphasises that trust is the foundation for fostering collaboration, adaptability and a shared sense of purpose among military personnel.

To develop trust and a strong command culture within the military, it is vital to invest in the education and professional development of officers. This includes recruiting and retaining instructors with a demonstrated expertise in their field, and a commitment to excellence in teaching. As Muth[17] argued, an organisation that prioritises learning and growth will draw and keep the most skilled instructors, who will subsequently play a vital role in moulding the future military leaders.

In conclusion, trust is the cornerstone of mission command and it can only be effectively cultivated through the dedicated efforts of skilled instructors. By investing in the education and development

[16] McChrystal et al. *Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World*.
[17] Muth, *Command Culture: Officer Education in the U.S. Army and the German Armed Forces, 1901–1940, and the Consequences for World War II*.

of future officers, the military can build a command culture that promotes trust, adaptability and innovation, leading to greater success in complex and dynamic environments.

Teaching methods

A commander's main function is to make decisions, and decisions must become actions. The US officers were trying take over best education practices from Germans. As Muth[18] writes, the Germans were ahead of their American counterparts in adopting innovative teaching methods for their officers, including understanding a procedure and applying it to various situations. Although American tactics instructor Arthur L. Wagner was aware of the German approach[19], he admitted that the US Army was slow to adopt these methods. By the time Americans started incorporating these techniques, the Germans had already moved on to more advanced methods, such as role-playing exercises, free war games and decision-making cases. These teaching methods were later borrowed by American's universities and showed enormous success.

The primary objective of officer education is to foster rapid thinking and quick decision-making in a precise manner. When it comes to teaching methods for developing officers' mission command skills, a multifaceted approach can be highly effective. First, practical exercises and simulations should be utilised to provide officers with hands-on experience in decision-making and decentralised command. These exercises can simulate realistic scenarios, allowing officers to practise analysing situations, make timely decisions and delegate authority to subordinates. This helps officers develop critical thinking skills and adaptability by exposing them to a wide range of dynamic and changing environments.

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[18] Muth, J. (2011). Command Culture: Officer Education in the U.S. Army and the German Armed Forces, 1901–1940, and the Consequences for World War II. University of North Texas Press.

[19] Ibid.

Furthermore, incorporating case studies and historical examples into the curriculum can provide valuable insights into successful mission command implementations. Analysing past military operations and studying the decision-making processes of accomplished commanders helps officers understand the practical application of mission command principles in real-world situations. This historical perspective allows them to learn from both the successes and failures of previous leaders and adapt their approach accordingly.

In addition to practical exercises and historical analysis, effective communication training is essential. Officers must be able to clearly articulate their intent, provide concise guidance to subordinates and actively listen to their input. Communication exercises and role-playing scenarios can help officers practise effective communication techniques, ensuring a shared understanding of mission objectives and promoting a culture of open dialogue within their units. Given the context of NATO and international cooperation, proficiency in English radio procedures is of paramount importance. It allows officers to seamlessly communicate with their multinational counterparts during joint operations, exercises and deployments. English serves as the common language for radio communications within NATO and international military contexts, facilitating interoperability and enhancing operational effectiveness.

Lastly, integrating the OODA loop concept into training methodologies is crucial, particularly when evaluating officers' performance on simulated battlefields. By incorporating evaluation criteria that emphasise fast decision-making and prompt implementation, officers can enhance their ability to swiftly observe the situation, orient themselves to the changing dynamics, make informed decisions and execute actions effectively.

During simulated battlefield exercises, officers should be evaluated based on their ability to rapidly assess the situation, analyse available information and formulate decisive courses of action. Evaluation criteria can include factors such as the speed and accuracy of their decision-making, the effectiveness of their

communication in conveying intent and guidance to subordinates, and the efficiency with which they execute planned actions.

Time-sensitive scenarios and rapid decision-making drills can be utilised to simulate the pressures and challenges faced in dynamic battlefield environments. Officers can be evaluated on their capacity to make well-informed decisions within tight time constraints, demonstrating adaptability and agility in response to evolving situations. The emphasis on fast decision-making and implementation in evaluation criteria reinforces the importance of maintaining the initiative and staying ahead of adversaries.

Additionally, debriefing sessions following simulation exercises provide valuable opportunities for officers to receive feedback on their decision-making and implementation. These sessions can focus on identifying areas for improvement, discussing alternative approaches, and reinforcing the importance of speed and adaptability in executing mission command.

By integrating evaluation criteria that prioritise fast decision-making and implementation on simulated battlefields, officers are challenged to develop their skills in observing, orienting, deciding and acting swiftly within realistic scenarios. This approach reinforces the importance of the OODA loop concept and empowers officers to enhance their decision-making speed and adaptability, ensuring their readiness for the complexities of real-world military operations.

In conclusion, by creating an open, candid learning environment and adopting a mentorship and coaching approach, instructors can cultivate a collaborative atmosphere where cadets actively engage with mission command principles and their practical applications. This environment promotes the development of critical thinking skills, effective communication and a deep understanding of the significance of decentralised decision-making. It equips cadets with the knowledge and mindset necessary to apply mission command principles in real-world military scenarios, leading to effective leadership, operational success and the accomplishment of mission objectives.

Auftragstaktik +

Auftragstaktik was successful in the Blitzkrieg due to several factors that contributed to the effectiveness and rapid pace of the German military campaigns during the early years of World War II. **Auftragstaktik** played a vital role in the success of the Blitzkrieg: the decentralised decision-making, initiative, creativity, speed, surprise, effective communication, coordination and combined arms approach facilitated by mission command allowed the German military to outmanoeuvre and outthink their adversaries, leading to a series of rapid and decisive victories[20]. The concept is based on the idea that the side that can run the OODA loop faster will have the advantage and win.

The OODA loop concept, which emphasises the importance of speed and adaptability in decision-making processes, plays a critical role in mission command. Military technology and innovation are essential components in achieving this advantage, as they directly impact the effectiveness of running the OODA loop faster than the adversary; it was used during the Blitzkrieg, is now being used in Ukraine and it will be used in the future.

AI has the potential to significantly enhance the capabilities of military forces and act as a force multiplier in the modern battlefield. By incorporating AI technology into various aspects of the OODA loop, it can help military personnel make faster, more informed decisions and execute actions more effectively. Future officers must be taught how to integrate AI into the military arena. For example, it is extremely easy to prognosticate how AI can contribute to each phase of the OODA loop.

Observe: AI-powered sensors and data collection systems can process vast amounts of data from multiple sources such as satellites, drones and ground-based sensors, to provide a comprehensive picture of the operational environment. By leveraging AI algorithms, these systems can rapidly detect, track and identify

[20] Shamir, *Transforming Command: The Pursuit of Mission Command in the 21st Century, 44-53.*

potential threats, allowing for faster and more accurate situational awareness.

Orient: AI can be used to analyse the collected data, identify patterns, trends and anomalies, and predict the behaviour of adversaries. This can help commanders gain a better understanding of the battlefield and make more informed decisions about how to respond to emerging threats.

Decide: AI-driven decision support systems can help military personnel analyse complex situations and explore various courses of action. These systems can rapidly assess the potential outcomes and risks associated with each option, enabling commanders to choose the most effective strategy for achieving their objectives.

Act: AI can be integrated into various military platforms and systems, such as autonomous vehicles, drones and robotic systems, to execute actions more quickly and accurately than humans. These systems can perform tasks that would be too dangerous, time-consuming or resource-intensive for human operators, allowing military forces to respond more effectively to emerging threats and challenges.

By enhancing each phase of the OODA loop, AI can significantly improve the speed and effectiveness of military operations, making it a powerful force multiplier in modern warfare. However, it is essential to consider the ethical implications of AI in the military context and ensure that appropriate safeguards are in place to prevent unintended consequences or misuse of this technology.

Future education and training trends

The most exciting trend in 2023 is AGI. This refers to the development of intelligent machines that can perform any intellectual task that a human can. Serpen and Krygiel[21] argue that human–machine teaming is a key element in the future of ground forces, where artificial intelligence and human expertise work together to achieve mission objectives. They suggest that this can

[21] Serpen and Krygiel, *Human-machine teaming for future ground forces*, 217–232.

be achieved through the development of a common operational picture, shared situational awareness and the ability to collaborate effectively.

Teaching future officers to integrate AGI into training of decision making can be achieved through various adjustments to existing training programmes. Foundational education should integrate AGI-related topics, such as machine learning and human–machine teaming, to teach future officers about the potential applications and challenges of AGI in military operations. Leadership and tactics development can utilise AGI-driven simulations and virtual environments to provide realistic training scenarios, while also exposing officers to AI-enabled decision support tools to understand when to rely on human intuition and when to integrate AGI insights. Teamwork and collaboration can be fostered by training officers to work effectively with AGI systems and emphasising the importance of cooperation between different units, including those utilising AGI systems. Decision-making and adaptability can be improved through AGI-driven training tools to teach officers how to analyse complex situations and integrate AGI insights into their decision-making process. Lastly, communication skills can be enhanced through the development of advanced communication tools that facilitate real-time information exchange and coordination among different units and echelons of command.

Conclusions

In conclusion, educating future officers to exercise mission command requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses several key elements. Understanding the principles of Auftragstaktik is fundamental, as it promotes decentralised decision-making and adaptability. The officer development triangle model, implemented at the Military Academy of Lithuania, provides a comprehensive framework for officer education, emphasising the human, commander and teacher angles of development. Fostering a command culture based on trust and having skilled instructors

is crucial in shaping officers' mindset and skills. Innovative teaching methods, including practical exercises, historical analysis and communication training, enhance critical thinking, effective communication and a shared understanding of mission objectives. Integration of AI technology can accelerate decision-making and enhance the OODA loop process. Future trends, such as the development of AGI, call for integrating AGI-related topics into officer education and training, leveraging its potential for teamwork, decision-making and adaptability. By embracing these strategies, military organisations can effectively educate future officers to exercise mission command, resulting in effective leadership, operational success and the accomplishment of mission objectives.

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