

DIRECTIVE STYLE OF COMMAND

INTRODUCTION

Commanders at all levels had to act more on their own ; they were given greater latitude to work out their own plans to achieve what they know was the Army Commander's intention. In time they developed to a marked degree of flexibility of mind and a firmness of decision that enabled them to act swiftly to take advantage of sudden information or changing circumstances without reference to their superiors.

- Sir William Slim¹

Directive Control is the British term for the German word *Auftragstaktik*. The US Army refers to it as Mission Oriented orders. It is based on the effective delegation of authority. An underlying reason for promoting this concept of command and control is that the battlefield is a scene of uncertainty and that success in battle will come to those who exploit uncertainty to their advantage. Thus directive style of command depends on the commander giving a full and clear concept of operations and then relying on the initiative of his subordinates to carry out their assigned tasks without detailed and restrictive orders. The commander, however, must ensure that realistic goals are set and sufficient resources are allocated to achieve objectives.

Historically, in striking a balance between orchestrating operations and granting freedom of action to subordinates, commanders have used two methods of control-- *detailed control* and *mission control*. When using detailed control, a commander controls with a "tight-rein". Command and control is centralized. Orders and plans are explicit . Such control emphasizes vertical information flow, with information flowing up the chain of command and orders flowing down. Detailed control is often the preferred method when time is not a critical factor, when procedures must be closely adhered to for safety reasons, or when restrictive rules of engagement demand close monitoring and extensive reporting of events. Detailed control, however, does not normally work well in a rapidly changing situation; nor does it function well when the vertical flow of information is disrupted. Therefore, it is not the preferred method of control under conditions of great uncertainty and time constraints.

It would appear as if Directive command is the panacea for all problems. The reality is that both Detailed and Directive styles are viable methods of command and control in modern warfare. Both have advantages and disadvantages and both can be used as the situation demands. The need is to analyse the concept of Directive Style of Command and determine whether it meets our requirement. We also need to discuss the methodology of training, and changes needed to implement this style of command and control.

AIM

The aim of the essay is to cover a basic understanding of the concept of Directive Style of Command and examine the feasibility of introducing it as a doctrine within the Army.

METHODS OF CONTROL

Now in war there may be one hundred changes in each step. When one sees he can, he advances; when he sees that things are different, he retires. To say that a General must await commands of the sovereign in such circumstances is like informing a superior that you wish to put out a fire. Before the order to do so arrives the ashes are cold. And it is said that one must consult the army supervisor in three matters! This is as if in building a house beside the road one took advice from those who pass by. Of course the work will never be completed.

- Sun Tzu in Art of War

Two competing Command and Control (C2) philosophies have emerged from the attrition and maneuver styles of the operational art. These concepts are the Detailed Order Tactics approach (centralized control) and the system of Directive Style (mission tactics decentralized control).

Detailed Control

Detailed command stems from the belief that success in battle comes from imposing order and certainty on the battlefield. A commander who practices detailed command seeks to accomplish this by creating a powerful, efficient Command and Control (C2) system able to process huge amounts of information, and by attempting to reduce nearly all unknowns to certainty. Detailed command centralizes information and decisionmaking authority. Orders and plans are detailed and explicit, and successful execution depends on strict obedience by subordinates, with minimal decisionmaking and initiative on their part. It emphasizes vertical, linear information flow, where information flows up the chain of command and orders flow down. The commander ensures compliance with all details of the plan by imposing discipline and coordination from above. Detailed command achieves unity of effort through detailed, prescriptive techniques.

Commanders who use this C2 concept command by personal direction or detailed directive. They make many—often too many—decisions personally, not all of which are the important ones. Often, they make these decisions prematurely. Detailed command techniques may result in a high degree of coordination during planning. However, during execution, they leave little room for independent adjustments by subordinates; subordinates must consult the higher commander before deviating from the plan. Detailed command is ill-suited to taking advantage of rapidly changing situations. It does not work well when the communications and information flow is disrupted. It inhibits the judgment, creativity, and initiative required for success in fluid military operations.

British Field Marshal Slim's defensive battle around Imphal in 1944, in the Burma Campaign, is a shining example of what an attrition approach can accomplish. Without any real external reinforcement, Slim's victory so shifted the balance of forces that he was able to go on the offensive in 1945. Tellingly, Slim's success was dependent upon the Japanese decision to attack. His Allied forces, placed at the end

of Japanese supply lines, allowed the enemy to attack itself beyond its culminating point.

Directive Command.

“When you see the correct course, act; do not wait for orders.”

-- Sun Tzu

In contrast, mission control seeks to cope with the effects of uncertainty and time by creating a system that can respond quickly in combat. Rather than seeking certainty prior to making decisions, we lower the degree of certainty needed before we decide and act. When using mission control, a commander controls with a “loose rein.” Command and Control is decentralized and flexible. Orders and plans are succinct. In addition to keeping the commander informed, mission control emphasizes horizontal information flow among subordinate commands. The commander guides the action of subordinates by imparting an understanding of mission requirements, then allows them freedom of action. Unity of effort is not attained by conformity imposed from above, but grows instead from spontaneous cooperation among all elements of the force. By decentralizing decision making authority, we seek to heighten the tempo of operations and improve the force’s ability to deal with rapidly changing situations. Moreover, because it relies on implicit understanding of mission requirements, mission control is much less vulnerable to disruption than detailed control.

Erich von Manstein, the famous German general who conceived the 1940 campaign plan against France, explained the difference between the two approaches this way;

“It had always been the particular forte of German leadership to grant wide scope to the self—dependence of subordinate commanders—to allot them tasks which leave the method of execution to the discretion of the individual. From time immemorial—certainly since the elder Moltke’s day—this principle has distinguished Germany’s military leadership from that of other armies. The latter, far from giving the same latitude to subordinate commanders on the tactical plane, have always tended to prescribe, by means of long and detailed directives, the way orders should actually be carried out or to make tactical action conform to a specific pattern. On the German side this system was considered a hard one. It would admittedly; appear to reduce the risk of failure in the case of a mediocre commander. Yet it only too easily leads to the executant’s having to act against the exigencies of the local situation. Worst of all, in its preoccupation with security it waives the opportunity that may occur through the independent action of a sub ordinate commander in boldly exploiting some favourable situation at a decisive moment.”

Advantages of Directive Control. Directive Control confers the following

advantages on the commander:-

- Subordinate commanders would be better trained to cope with the conditions likely to be experienced on modern battlefields. Specially, freedom of subordinate action allows tactical and operational commanders to exploit the fleeting opportunities presented in wars while minimising the adverse effects of confusion.

- Commanders will be collectively less predictable in the execution of tasks. The free development of individuality, which is so much a featuring of Directive Control, should increase the likelihood of success while decreasing the opportunities for enemy interference.
- Low and Escalated Low-Level Conflict will require a Command and Control system which encourages independent action among subordinates. Directive Control largely satisfies this condition.

Directive Control caters of a wide range of talent within an army. It allows subordinates to exercise initiative commensurate with their ability and experience.

Disadvantages of Directive Control. The following disadvantages inherent in Directive Control are almost exclusively non-military in origin:-

- Commanders need to be free from the constraints of political and media interference to the extent that these influences do not determine the way in which they execute their tasks. While not a problem inherent in Directive Control per se, it is certainly a factor in its successful introduction.
- The training required to institute such a system may inhibit the success achieved by a rapidly expanded commissioned and non-commissioned officer corps.
- Directive control can lead to chaos. Decentralised operations are inherently disunited. In order to compensate for this centrifugal trend, mission tactics doctrine must emphasis the unifying ideas of “commander’s intent” and “the main effort”. That is, authority is delegated with the caveat that the subordinates’ decisions must serve the superior commander’s overall intent. By designating a main effort, the commander specifies a general direction and priority for the operation. Both of these ideas are intended to compensate for the inherent flaws in mission tactics.

This brings us to a comparison of the two basic forms of command and control: detailed control and directive control.

<u>Directive Style</u>		<u>Detailed Control</u>
Probabilistic Unpredictable	Assumes war is	Deterministic Predictable
Disorder Uncertainty	Accepts	Order Certainty
Decentralization Spontaneity Informality Loose rein Self-discipline Initiative Cooperation Acceptable decisions faster Ability all echelons Higher tempo	Tends to lead to	Centralization Coercion Formality Tight rein Imposed discipline Obedience Compliance Optimal decisions, but later Ability focused at the top
Implicit Vertical and Horizontal Interactive	Communication types used	Explicit Vertical Linear
Organic Ad hoc	Organization types fostered	Hierarchic Bureaucratic
Delegating Transformational	Leadership styles encouraged	Directing Transactional
Art of War Conduct of operations	Appropriate	Science of war Technical/procedural tasks

Figure 1. Concepts of Command and Control

Selecting the Right Systems

Selection of a Command and Control system must be based on a diverse range of criteria. An ideal system will cater for all, or most, of the following factors:-

- ✓ The degree of technology which exists on the battlefield.

- ✓ The force ratios which are likely to apply.
- ✓ The standard of training of the army.
- ✓ The capacity and willingness of commanders to exercise leadership or forward command.
- ✓ The responsiveness of troops, or their ability to react to rapidly changing circumstances.
- ✓ The intelligence and initiative of the commissioned, junior commissioned officers and noncommissioned officer corps, including their willingness to accept responsibility.
- ✓ The anticipated level of political and media interference.
- ✓ The level of intensity and location of the operations being undertaken.

The Solution. Analysis of combat proven command and control systems still does not make it possible to select one “off the shelf”. Success in mobile operations over the last four decades indicates that certain characteristics are required to maximise opportunities and minimise confusion. Systems must evolve according to available technology. The command and control of mobile forces requires the lowering of the command threshold to the lowest possible level. This decentralisation of command appears to suit the high-technology battlefield of the future. There is no evidence to suggest that the exercise of leadership through forward command is less important than in the past: if anything it is even more important. Commanders must still exercise command and control over their subordinates when the operational situation is beyond the subordinate’s capacity to deal with it.

In practice, no commander will rely solely on either detailed or mission control. The type of control he uses will depend on the nature of the operation or task, the environment, the nature and capabilities of the enemy, and – perhaps most of all— the qualities of his own people. Detailed control may be more appropriate in performing specific, precise tasks of a procedural or technical nature—such as controlling airspace—but it is less effective in the conduct of high-tempo operations where judgment, creativity, and initiative are required. As being the more ambitious form of control, however, mission control demands more of leaders at all levels.

Another point which needs to be restated is that though maneuver warfare travels in the vehicle of Directive Command, it can just as easily revert to Detailed Command for a specific operation, for instance the reduction of a node or a strong point. Also, even though maneuver warfare and Directive Command are compatible and familiar buddies, it is not implied that Directive Command cannot be used elsewhere. Anyone with experience in counter insurgency operations will confirm that Directive Command is most effective in conduct of such operations. Units and sub-units and often even patrols resort to Directive Command when assigned missions.

Requisites of Directive Style of Command.

The real basis of directive control...is an unbroken chain of trust and mutual respect running from the controlling operational commander to the tank or section commander.

Richard Simpkin

Directive Control is a command and control system in which subordinate commanders are provided with a full and clear concept of operation; the required resources; and a statement of any limitations which apply to the completion of their task. Subordinate commanders complete their task relying on their own initiative, without detailed and restrictive orders. This is rather a clinical definition and does not indicate the extent to which Directive Control is a “hands off” philosophy for command and control. The accepted prerequisites for the system to be effective are listed below.

Uniformity of Operational Thought. Uniformity of Thought is necessary to allow the subordinate to understand what the commander hopes to achieve. Although generally accepted as being needed two levels up and down, under some circumstances, particularly at the lower tactical command levels, it may be required three levels up.

Subordinate Responsibility. Subordinates should be willing to accept responsibility and to exercise initiative when completing assigned tasks. This necessitates training which encourages independence of action while still maintaining uniformity of thought.

Mutual Trust. The essence of mutual trust is a level of familiarity between individuals within an organisation. Superiors should know their subordinates and understand their capabilities. Subordinates need to develop faith in ability of their superiors to take the best course of action in any operational situation.

Resources. Commanders should provide subordinates with adequate resources. Equally, tasks should be realistic within the resource allocation available. This implies that commanders must not only be aware of the quantity of resources available to subordinates but that they have a realistic understanding of force ratios, and the battle-worthiness of those resources at any stage.

Speed of Decisive Action. The conflict is likely to be short, probably intensive, tight politically controlled and it will incorporate highly sophisticated technology. The future battlefield commander may have the opportunity to win or lose a major engagement or perhaps even the war in a matter of few hours.

Initiative. Initiative is a virtue that is eagerly sought and painstakingly developed in the training institutions of most of the armies of the world. In essence it is acting without the prompting of others and it is highly regarded and a critical element of leadership.

Unity of Purpose. Fundamental to an understanding of the unity of purpose is the concept of directive control is an examination of the mission and the intent of the superior commander.

Mission Type Orders.

All orders will have to be as brief as possible. They should be based on a profound appreciation of possibilities and probabilities which....will generally lead to a series of alternatives.

Fuller

The Germans of Wehrmacht vintage set great emphasis on written executive or confirmatory order. These were extremely short and simple. An army order for a major operation might fit on one quarter page and would never extend beyond three or four pages. The purpose of these orders was to get everyone off to a clear start on common ground. They were not cluttered with intelligence, executive and logistic details which could be dealt with on staff channels. They set out simply and clearly the controlling commander's intention, his subordinates tasks, the resources available to them, and the constraints they must observe.

FORWARD COMMAND²

France, 13 May 1940. The situation was desperate! The machine gun fire from the French positions on the west side of the Meuse River had stopped the German assault cold. Four times the men of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Rifle Regiment, 7th Panzer Division, had tried to cross to the west bank of the Meuse River...four times they had failed. Demoralised and stunned, the battalion hugged the cover of the east bank and waited.

A fast moving German staff car kipped into a position on the east bank, almost jolting its occupants out into a ditch. The division commander, climbed down and asked the nearest soldiers for the location of the battalion command post. Within minutes, he took command of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Rifle Regiment of the 7th Panzer Division. Using the battalion's wireless equipment the divisional Commander organized direct fire support from several Panzer IIIs and IVs and a troop of artillery that he had seen racing after him to this decisive point in the division's attack. Under his direction the tanks began to plaster the French pillboxes with accurate direct fire. Organising the battalion's assault teams, the GOC personally led the 2nd Battalion in a coordinated assault to cross the Meuse River. Soon, the enemy machine guns had been silenced by the tanks, and the assault infantry had crossed the river in rubber rafts. Name of the Commander, 7 Panzer Division? None other than Rommel, arguably the best field commander of World War II. Is there a dichotomy? Was he taking over the tasks of the subordinate commanders and micromanaging them? Forward Command was the essence of Auftragstakt.

Auftragstakt – How Successful Was It?

The concept of Auftragsktik is widely regarded as being responsible for the Wehrmacht's early success. Comments such as "this concept, well proved in peace and war" are characteristic of descriptions of Auftragsktik. An analysis of the campaigns in Poland, France and Russia indicates that it was not always subordinate actions which carried the day.

During all three campaigns inexperienced subordinate commanders failed to seize the initiative or take advantage of fleeting opportunities. Much of the German's success is attributable to the presence of well forward command. Both Rommel and Guderian commented in their diaries regarding the performance of junior tactical commanders. Rommel notes "It is a mistake to assume that every unit officer will make all that there is to be made out of his situation; most of them soon succumb to a certain inertia. Then it is simply reported that for some reason or another this or that cannot be done – reasons are always easy enough to think up. People of this kind must be made to feel the authority of the commander and be shaken out of their apathy". The aura of the well disciplined and highly responsible German officer tends to disintegrate when the criticism is applied to most unit officers. To the credit of the

German General Staff Officers the major battles of 1940 were anticipated and warned during training; this training prepared commanders, and lessened the impact of any poor quality of officers.

Auftragstaktik is based on trust, but this trust did not exist at the strategic level. It did exist to a measured degree, at the operational and tactical levels. When describing the Commanders of his three divisions Guderian says "I had complete trust in their competence and reliability. They knew my views and shared my belief... and could follow it even though they might receive no orders for long periods of time once the attack was launched". Despite this trust Guderian did not over estimate their ability—he was usually well forward.

At no stage did the presence of the senior commander with or actually leading the subordinate's unit, cause any disharmony or implied lack of trust. More often than not the presence of the higher commander inspires the troops to achieve what they had previously thought was impossible. This confirms that initiative and acceptance of responsibility are not always a match for training and experience.

In summary, the concept of Auftragstaktik, which theoretically placed such great emphasis on subordinate initiative, also relied heavily on the practice of forward command. This combination, coupled with sound staff preparation, minimised the effects of subordinate inexperience and was critical to the Wehrmacht's early success. As the war progressed, and pool of well trained junior officers decreased, forward command became increasingly important as a means of providing support to subordinate commanders.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION WARFARE.

Centralised Vs Decentralised Control. Information technologies are already affecting the elements of control: information, communication, and structure. However, they do not detract from the elements of command: authority, decisionmaking, and leadership. In fact, commanders can use digital INFOSYS to increase the effectiveness of decisionmaking and leading. Modern INFOSYS allow commanders to devote more time to the art and human sides of command, and to support their achievement and use of visualization. Never have commanders had more ability to exercise increased direct control, yet never have they had less reason to do so. Information is the springboard of initiative and independent action. Using information technologies to empower subordinates has the potential to increase the tempo of operations beyond the level at which adversaries can hope to respond.

Micromanagement. The availability of the technical resources to manage information gives rise to a behaviour that is particularly conspicuous at higher levels of command, namely, micromanagement. These higher command levels often and incorrectly believe they know better than lower command levels. Consequently, they interfere directly with lower command levels, with the laudable intention of making their information available to everyone. Therefore, to translate the information

advantage into an actual time advantage, intermediate command levels are skipped, and the information is passed directly to the intended recipient, while the actual responsible level is only included at most as an information addressee. In such a situation, the actual responsible command level degenerates into an information administrator while the superior level involves itself in matters of excessive detail. Today, this danger is linked with micromanagement.

It is unacceptable that subordinate levels are disregarded and that higher command levels skip intermediate command levels and interfere with tactical decisions on the ground. In addition to the implications for freedom of action and the operations of soldiers, risks emerge for the tactical and operational levels of military command.

The CNN Factor. In their recently published respective memoirs, U.S. Army General Wesley K. Clark, former Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, and General Dr. Klaus Reinhardt, former Kosovo Force commander, described a number of political interventions into their areas of responsibility. Clark recalled that he had just given a press conference in connection with NATO air attacks in Kosovo in April 1999 when Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), General Hugh Shelton called that evening and said, "The Secretary of Defense asked me to give you verbatim guidance, so here it is: 'Get your f-----g face off the TV. No more briefings, period. That's it.' I just wanted to give it to you like he said it. Do you have any questions?"

Low Intensity Conflict Operations (LICO) in particular are subject to intensive media coverage. Every action a soldier takes is broadcast into living rooms in almost real time, and political leaders must answer for those actions immediately. The pressure on the political leadership to act or to explain is particularly acute. This pressure frequently generates a tendency to want to control everything. This tendency often finds its expression in direct interference with the operational and tactical leadership on the ground. If terrorists take over an important shrine like Hazratbal time will not permit directions to be passed from political leaders through proper chain of command. Intermediate formations will be bypassed. How do we cope up with this type of situations ?

INDIAN CONTEXT

It is not as if the directive style of command at lower levels is unknown to the Indian Army. When it comes to patrolling, for long have we been used to the technique of tasking and briefing the patrol commander and leaving the execution and the imponderable to his imagination. But this is done not so much because it is intended to give this kind of free run in execution of tasks to subalterns but because the possibility of working out a cast—iron plan does not exist. The principle that we have generally accepted is that a detailed plan with explicit instructions is the norm except when it is impossible to do so. Perhaps there is a requirement to do a complete turn around and accept as the norm that a subordinate should be set a task and be allowed to choose his method of executing it in the light of his own skills, reactions and style.³ There are many shining examples of initiatives and decisive action among junior commanders. A study of citations of our award winners in LICO show that our junior commanders are able to act independently if the need arises.

Doctrine. Though with the advent of Army Training and Doctrine Command (ARTRAC) lot of work has been undertaken on concepts and doctrine. However, the process of introduction of any new concept and doctrine is still not very clear. New concepts prevalent in advanced armies of the world are discussed in a few

classroom lectures/discussions in courses of Defence Services Staff Collage, Army War College and National Defence College. A seminar may be organised at one of the cat A establishment by ARTRAC. But the involvement of complete Army in the debate, thinking, and implementation is missing. For example, we had heard about Air Land Battle, Maneuver Warfare and now Information Warfare for long. New terminology of Effect Based Warfare (EBO), Network Centric Warfare (NCW) are being advocated. But what is our doctrine ? Are we following the concept of Air Land Battle, Maneuver Warfare or Information Warfare ? Should it be left in the hands of a very few forward looking and thinking field commanders and discussions at DSSC/AWC ? However, the doctrine of Indian Army is under review. Hopefully the new doctrine will address this issue.

There has to be uniformity in tactical doctrine. We are obsessed with battle drills. Drill should be left with unit commanding officers. The formation commanders must sort out the major staff duties, tactical principles, the concept and 'why' of the operation. "Fetishism for battle drills has been largely responsible for sanitizing imagination, creativity and mental mobility in infantry ranks. Battle drills are ... a set of reactions ... Conversely, tactics are a thought out plan to overcome the threat, the two are therefore dissimilar." ⁴

Current System Weaknesses.

The weaknesses inherent in our current Command and Control system are :-

- ✓ Subordinates are only aware of the commander's detailed plan one level down.
- ✓ Pace of today's training Exercises often precludes subordinate counseling. Mostly past exercise activities concentrate on maintenance of equipment, organization for moving back returning equipment, sending personnel on leave and resuming all mundane all encompassing routine peace time activities take precedence over Lessons Learnt and their follow up procedures.
- ✓ The current system seldom gives right type of officers. Patton said "What they deserve when they are right and what they deserve when they are wrong." Professional competence has to be the main driving force for promotion. Our current system does not dismiss poor junior officers, it satisfies officers shortfalls by continuing to promote otherwise less suitable officers.
- ✓ We are totally predicable, Encouragement to innovation, initiative, creativity and audacity is missing.

Defence Institute of Psychological and Allied Sciences (DIPAS) conducted a study on the IQ levels and psychology of the Indian soldier. The conclusions were⁵:-

	INTRINSIC	SYSTEM INDUCED
STRENGTHS	Tough Stoic Simple Sacrifice	Loyal Disciplined Improviser Responds to training and leadership
WEAKNESSES	Low IQ Non self oriented Lack of Commitment	Low initiative No risk taking Disinclination to external authority

We have to consider our formidable strengths of our men as well as their perceived weaknesses and develop our concepts and doctrines accordingly. At unit and subunit level application of directive style of command may not have similar effect with say Gorkha troops vis-à-vis Sikh troops.

MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE ⁶

The Army must be tended with care; we cannot suddenly change the shape or growing conditions of only one part without affecting others by withholding similar or compensatory treatment. Auftragstaktik is such a change, teaching our officers is not enough, we must be prepared to provide the entire tree with this fertilizer. And the change must be tended with care, lest the entire structure be irreparably damaged.

It is well and good that we have started to teach our officers about the concepts of Auftragstaktik, but that is only scratching the surface. Until the expectations of the system change, officers will volubly speak of Auftragstaktik while on course, then swiftly withdraw to the less daring expectations of the status quo on return to their duties. We must select our next lines of advance carefully.

"We [the German Army] have no use for soldiers without a will of their own who will obey their leaders unconditionally. We need self-confident men [and women] who use their whole intelligence and personality on behalf of the senior commander's intent." A German author wrote these words in 1906, and they are still valid today in the difficult environment of LICO and in the presence of new forms of modern warfare. Soldiers must do more than just obey orders and operate their individual weapons. Every military leader at every level of command maintains that he has the best soldiers. If this is so, he must be allowed to prove it. It is, therefore, out of the question that a Colonel or even a General appoint himself squad leader to direct traffic at a road intersection or to instruct a patrol leader about his mission

An army survives and grows, physically, intellectually and spiritually through its risk-takers. Even legitimate risk-takers disturb the hierarchy because they refuse to "stay in the box." And there's no risk-taking, or Auftragstaktik, in the box. But how can we expect Auftragstaktik, or concentric initiative, to begin to survive in a structured hierarchy like our current career system?

The Army must change its fundamental focus on performance and expectations if we expect a shift in command methodology encompassing Auftragstaktik to be

successful. Our officers must be taught – or re-taught – that initiative is as strong a personal and professional characteristic as loyalty, and that concentric initiative can be a stronger display of loyalty to one's superior, and to the Army, than blind obedience. Our soldiers even before they are trained for, and promoted to, supervisory rank, must be imbued with the spirit of Auftragstaktik. We must teach them the concept of concentric initiative, and reward them for any reasonable attempt to apply it. Find fault with the logic used to select the approach and correct it through training, but never blame the soldier's willingness to try. We must endeavour to train the mind, as well as the body, of each and every rank level. In this manner battle drills can become what they should be, a common start point from which to develop a plan, rather than a solution in itself. In the article "Maneuver Warfare Reconsidered," Bolger states, "put a Lieutenant in the jungle with the radio and he will ask forgiveness, not permission. Try to micromanage him and he will find the off switch."⁷

Recommendations

Regimental System. It is the backbone of the Indian Army. It must be nurtured at all costs. Churchill's description of the turn-of-the-century British Regiment is equally applicable today for us, "Regiments are not like houses. They cannot be pulled down and altered structurally to suit the convenience of the occupier or the caprice of the owner. They are more like plants; they grow slowly if they are to grow strong ... and if they are blighted or transplanted they are apt to wither."

Unit Training. The German Army always placed great emphasis on unit training. Conduct of the training within units which produces uniformity of thought, trust and respect necessary for directive control unit training must emphasize the role of the junior commander. The Israelis believe that this training of lower level commander is the key to success.

Training in Cat A and B Establishments. In tactical training students should have an understanding of tactics at least two levels higher. It must concentrate on educating students to think. This will prepare them to operate independently when they return to the units. Tendency to adhere to pink solutions must be ruthlessly curbed. As Rommel used to say as instructor, "Never mind what Clausewitz thinks--- what do you think?" Commanders are unlikely to exercise initiative or exploit their freedom of action in war if they are not trained to do so in peace. Commanders must be educated to think, not just trained. As Assistant Commandant of the Infantry School in the late 1920's, George Marshall did all he could to develop young officer-students into thinking leaders who could operate in a decentralized manner. He often issued students foreign or outdated maps, provided only sketchy intelligence, and compelled them to make their own decisions by cutting off communication with higher headquarters. He routinely made them face the unexpected in order to stimulate their imagination and ingenuity. One of his first orders was that "any student's solution of a problem that ran counter to the approved school solution and yet showed independent, creative thinking would be published to the class."

Selection to Higher Rank

Everybody should not be given an opportunity to command. Selection procedures for both commissioning and command need to be strict. Patton in his Third Army Orders said, "Each in his appropriate sphere will lead in person. Army Commander who fails to attain his objective and is not dead or seriously wounded has not done

his job. Plans must be simple and flexible. The whole communications break down, each commander can and must so act as to obtain the objective. The order itself will be short, accompanied by a sketch, it tells what to do, not how. To operate in this way, a leader had to assume great risk willingly." To encourage this, the German Army framed two rules. First, in situations clearly requiring independent decisions, a leader had not only the latitude to make them, but the solemn duty to do so. Second, inaction and omission in such situations were considered much worse than judgmental error based on a sincere effort to act decisively. The former was the shameful antithesis of leadership. While errors in judgment might cause unsuccessful local engagements, the broad exercise of initiative by all leaders, it was felt, would carry the battle.

One cannot but remind what Gabriel and Savage ⁸ wrote about attributes of a good combat officer. These are the same characteristics that must become acceptable and desirable if we want to adjust to Auftragstaktik. Though there is nothing to be alarmed about there are some eerie similarities. One wonders why officers prefer their command tenures in CI ops areas? Why there should be extra points for serving in these areas when an officer has no say in his posting? Why should the brightest and the best officers be posted to MS Branch to implement only policy decisions whereas their services be better utilized in field areas? The "Unobtrusive indicators of the good combat officer" are:

- Distrust any officer with a perfect or near perfect record of efficiency reports. He is conforming to the existing value system and will have no interest in changing it.
- Look carefully at a man who gets low marks on "tact" and who "deviates from accepted doctrine." He may be creative.
- An officer who gets low marks on loyalty is especially valuable, for he is unwilling to acquiesce to his superior's policies without debate. He is likely to have an independent mind.
- Be suspicious of any officer who has accumulated awards for valour without having sustained physical injury. Trust a Purple Heart wearer.
- Distrust any officer who has had "all his tickets punched" and who sports an array of staff awards on his chest. He is likely to be a manager playing the system.
- Distrust all officers who use "buzz words" and have a poor vocabulary. They tend to be managers of the most obsequious type. True leadership is likely to be foreign to them.
- Trust a man who heads for the sound of the guns and has repeated tours of combat and command duty at all unit levels; it is preferable that he have only minimal exposure to staff work.
- Trust an officer who was seen by his men in combat and whose command performed well and showed low rates of drug use, fragging, body counting, etc.
- Search for the officer whose readiness reports indicate a high percentage of equipment which is deficient. He is a man addicted to the truth.

CONCLUSION

Auftragstaktik means the readiness to act independently and the capability to do so sensibly. If you try to introduce Auftragstaktik, you will be like a farmer who sows wheat in an arid desert. You are bound to fail. There is only one sure way to succeed: if you want Auftragstaktik, forget about it. Instead, create an army in which independence has become a life-style, and in which a high level of professionalism prevails as well as a cocky, well-founded self-confidence. If you create such an army, independent action and Auftragstaktik will follow naturally. Sounds easy, doesn't it?

Lieutenant General France Uhle Wettler (Retired), German Army
Extracted from "Maneuver Warfare : An Anthology" Edited by
Richmond D Hooker, Jr

Clearly, a system must be tailored to suit an army's requirements; it cannot be too rigidly not too exclusively applied. It is questionable whether any one system is universally suitable if is to be applied at all levels from strategic to tactical; in operations of differing levels of intensity; and in different geographical locations. The challenges need to be made in peacetime. Only when this occurs will the army be fit for war. Slim was correct when he wrote that: "The use of new weapons and technical devices can quickly be taught. To develop hardihood, initiative, mutual confidence, and stark leadership takes longer."

In summary, the concept of Directive Control is well suited to our Army. It is a flexible and adaptable system which suits the employment of dispersed and highly mobile forces operating in different advantage of the confusion of the modern battlefield. It encourages initiative and responsiveness in troops, thus allowing the best effect to be gained from the opportunities that are presented. Probably it is the only option of command in LICO. On the other hand, it is not a substitute for leadership; and it should not be seen as one. Despite the relevance of Directive Control, its introduction, and the training to make it effective, will require a considerable change in the mindset of commanders at all levels. We should seek to develop thinking, tough-minded, self-reliant, confident, and courageous leaders who can respond to friction, the fog of war, and unexpected enemy actions with initiative and grim determination.

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