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# *Auftragstaktik*, or Directive Control, in Joint and Combined Operations

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Joint Publication 3-56, *Command and Control for Joint Operations*, seeks to provide a fresh vision of command and control in operations involving more than one branch of the armed services. At the same time, several of the principles articulated in this keystone doctrinal publication are timeless. Instrumental to command and control for modern joint operations is the concept of *Auftragstaktik*, which is expressed in English by two closely related terms, "directive control" and "mission-type orders," with both suggesting general guidance as opposed to prescriptive oversight. In an analysis appearing more than a decade ago in *Parameters*, John Nelsen identified significant problems with usual interpretations of the concept.[1] Above all, he suggested, *Auftragstaktik* means more than the terms usually employed in English, "mission orders" or "mission-oriented tactics." Assuredly, it does. *Auftragstaktik* subsumes all the following concepts: individual initiative, independent decisionmaking, and thinking leaders reaching tactical decisions on their own accord. In short, a commander would specify to subordinates *what* to do, not *how* to do it. The result of an evolutionary process in German doctrine, *Auftragstaktik*--for our purposes here used interchangeably with "directive control"--can be characterized more fully as follows:

Command is based on task (*Auftrag*) and situation. The task lays down the aims to be achieved, which the commander charged with achieving it must keep in the forefront of his mind. Task and situation give rise to the mission . . . . The mission must be a clearly-defined aim to be pursued with all one's powers . . . . The commander must leave his subordinates freedom of action, to the extent that doing so does not imperil his intention.[2]

## Past as Prologue

Why *Auftragstaktik*? Useful insights about current operations can be gleaned through inquiry into the employment of directive control of forces in conflicts past. *Auftragstaktik* represents a capstone command and control doctrine in the German armed forces dating back to the early 19th century. Its origins can be found in the Prussian military reforms beginning in 1808, following Prussia's disastrous defeats by Napoleon.[3] Doctrinal evidence of acknowledgment in Prussia of the need for fresh thinking about the nature of war can be found as far back as 1806:

Long-winded orders on dispositions must not be given before a battle. [The commander] looks at as much of the ground as he can, . . . gives his divisional commanders the general idea in a few words, and shows them the general layout of the ground on which the army is to form up. The manner of deployment is left to them; fastest is best. The commander cannot be everywhere. He must always keep the picture as a whole in his mind's eye and shape it, mainly by sound handling of the reserves.[4]

Eventually, it would become a key feature in the warfighting philosophy of several nations.[5] *Auftragstaktik* incorporated facets of leadership, battle tactics, command and control, senior-subordinate relationships, and even war conceptualization. The approach was comprehensive, and it presupposed intuition, initiative, flexibility, and decisive action.

Notably, a similar development took place in the early 19th-century British navy. There it would become widely known as the "Nelson touch," serving the British well at sea. In the present century, *Auftragstaktik* was crucial in many German land campaigns, particularly on the Western Front and in North Africa during the Second World War, often allowing German units to fight outnumbered and win. British and German experiences with directive control bear out

Carl von Clausewitz's observation that no hard and fast rules governing the conduct of war ever present themselves; rather, the actions of the commander, for better or worse, decisively influence the course of events in the battlespace.[6] This notion was articulated in Germany's 1933 Field Service Regulations: "Leadership in war is an art, a free creative activity based on a foundation of knowledge. The greatest demands are made on the personality." [7]

Directive control became a leading catchword in the US military in the 1980s. This is not to suggest that the adoption of the concept was trendy or faddish. On the contrary, since adoption, the concept has shown considerable staying power. In preparation for 21st-century operations, what is now needed is more extensive doctrinal anchoring and attendant discussion of directive control in the secondary doctrinal literature. These steps will, in turn, foster more instruction of this command and control philosophy at various levels of command. Skillful commanders, guided by doctrine, should be able to develop and exercise suitable tactical moves in an operation on their own initiative, achieving mission objectives in accordance with theater operational and strategic goals.[8] Directive control allows commanders to adapt to changing circumstances, exercise flexibility, demonstrate initiative, anticipate events, and thereby gain tactical and operational advantage.

More than a decade ago, the US Army wrestled with the question of whether or not to formally adopt the concept of *Auftragstaktik*. Field Manual 100-5, *Operations* (1986), alluded to directive control as a warfighting philosophy without actually according it doctrinal sanction. With the end of the Cold War there has been a transformation of the threat, and with it questions about the utility of power itself in dealing with regional powers, rogue states, and ethnic or extremist forces opposed to US interests. The new contours of 21st-century warfare will effect yet more, presumably profound, changes. Politically delicate situations complicate the fundamentally complex nature of conflict. Uncertain environments pose challenges to all forces, especially to those that are joint or operating in coalition. The United States must be adequately prepared for developing circumstances, for new missions, for evolving threats.

The call for greater flexibility, selectivity, and force projection in the National Military Strategy of the United States will have considerable bearing on command and control. If the US military is to prove equal to future challenges, it must address fundamental questions, some of which have to do with command and control of forces in the small wars and low-intensity conflicts that will be prevalent in coming years, and in military operations other than war (MOOTW). In addition, joint commanders must coordinate and integrate the actions of relatively large organizations under arduous circumstances; commanders at all levels must creatively out-think their opponents in what promises to be an increasingly perplexing environment.[9] Effective command and control endeavors to reduce operational uncertainty and to facilitate decisionmaking. Properly used, directive control is a fitting means to meet these two objectives.

The attributes of recurring mission sets assigned to US forces--such as noncombatant evacuation, sanction enforcement, security assistance, and counterinsurgency--inherently require the decentralization of command. Responsibility for crucial decisions invariably filters down to lower ranks in such operations. Accordingly, Joint Publication 3-56 calls for effective use of directive control and encourages innovative thinking about command. Army doctrine does so as well, conferring considerable import to initiative at relatively low echelons. By way of example, FM 100-5 (1993) specifies that "initiative requires a willingness and ability to act independently within the framework of the commander's intent." [10]

The concept of directive control surfaced in the US Army by the middle of World War II, when it was operationalized by George Patton and other successful combat leaders. Patton was arguably the leading proponent of directive control among US generals in the war. For all his reputed eccentricities and arrogance, Patton respected creative and intuitive powers in his subordinates, recognized that some judgmental error is inherent in decisive combat action, and, above all, disdained inaction and lethargy. He acknowledged that the exercise of initiative at all levels, notwithstanding individual judgmental error, offered the best chance for victory. That Patton was one of America's most successful combat leaders is not coincidental.

One observer cites instances of directive control in the American Civil War, offering Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain's famous action at Gettysburg as an example worthy of consideration:

Colonel Chamberlain's leadership at Little Round Top demonstrates the kind of creative, thinking

leadership needed at all levels to succeed on the modern battlefield. Mission-oriented command and control provides a framework within which subordinates have the latitude to act with imagination as illustrated by the Chamberlain example. Thorough understanding of the higher commander's intent serves as the basis for such independent action.[11]

Increases in firepower by the mid-19th century had compelled a much greater dispersion of units on battlefields, a situation often preventing subordinate commands from consulting with superiors while forcing junior officers to respond intuitively to battlefield vicissitudes. Chamberlain's actions at Gettysburg in 1863 were nothing if not creative and intuitive. The dreadful legacy born of the conjunction of maintaining tight control and inadequately dispersing units across battle areas is to be found in such grim spectacles as Fredericksburg in 1862.

Directive control is particularly suitable when political sensitivities obtain. An on-the-spot assessment of the situation, resulting from careful observation and *Fingerspitzengefühl* ("fingertip sense"), is essential for mission accomplishment. The approach has utility in both peace and war; with proper understanding and effective application, it is equally useful in those gray zones increasingly occurring in between. Only broad, general guidelines should be provided at higher decisionmaking levels.

### **The New Strategic Environment**

US forces and programs for major theater warfare seek to protect against both current regional threats and larger-scale threats from future adversaries. In addition, current defense strategy involves more than being ready to fight alongside allies in major theater wars. US forces must be prepared to carry out a wide range of other missions to protect and advance US interests. Although expressions such as "MOOTW"--Military Operations Other Than War--are fairly new, many of the associated missions sets are not. The field is broad, extending across a range of operational environments, indeed, spanning the spectrum from traditional peacekeeping operations, which for years had been the task of the United Nations, to what is characterized generally as low-intensity conflict.

The problem with peace operations and MOOTW from the standpoint of command and control is the apparent inclination on the part of commanders to exert authority they otherwise would not in combat situations. A recent study of military command and control during the Los Angeles riots indicates that commanders there exercised a degree of control that would have been "highly unusual and cognitively unfeasible in combat." The study suggests that "extreme centralization of control" might stem from the "ambiguous relationship during [military operations other than war] between tactical action and desired operational or strategic outcomes." [12] Centralization of execution appears to correlate tightly with the ambiguities associated with peace operations and like missions. Political sensitivities and undue concern about public perceptions may induce commanders to adopt procedures they might never consider in combat.

Definitional imprecision is not, of course, a new problem in political-military affairs.[13] The term "low-intensity conflict" came into vogue some 15 years ago to describe conflicts of a lesser order.[14] Lacking precise definition then and now, the term came to encompass most lesser-order conflicts from the Korean War to counterterrorism.[15] Largely because of the evolution in the nature of conflicts and military missions, definitional problems have become increasingly difficult. Be that as it may, the US military still bears responsibility for more traditional deterrence missions, both nuclear and conventional, as well as major regional contingencies. US strategy still alludes to the necessity of being able to fight two near-simultaneous major regional contingencies.[16]

Directive control encourages flexibility and agility in operations to support the maneuver of forces, while engendering more autonomous command throughout the area of operations. Thus, directive control as a command and control philosophy conforms to--indeed, complements--current and emerging warfighting doctrines. Foremost among these is maneuver warfare, an operational concept that has been widely embraced by the services. The hallmarks of maneuver warfare--mobility, nimbleness, offensive surprise, penetration, and swift operating tempo--place a high premium upon adaptability to unfolding circumstances and the ability to exploit rapidly developing opportunities. Specific battle area developments may prove different from those initially anticipated; in fact, maneuver warfare strives to increase battlespace volatility and to exploit it. As a rule of thumb, one must simply expect the unexpected. By breaking enemy will and spirit through the sudden shock actions of mobile units, maneuver warfare offers a psychological force

multiplier.

Conducting maneuver warfare presupposes battlespace intuition and is predicated upon independent action by subordinate commanders. Success depends on recognition of opportunities and the seizure of initiative. Moreover, windows of battlespace opportunity tend to be ephemeral. Subordinate commanders need the free scope to leap through on a moment's notice.

A present challenge is to develop military leaders capable of leading under various conditions, in diverse environments, and on assorted missions, just as the United States and its allies must field forces capable of carrying out a broad range of tasks, some of which were conferred such a low priority during the Cold War as to warrant inadequate doctrinal review. To that end, development of a more coherent *joint* philosophy of command and control for military operations is overdue. Directive control should be the cornerstone of this philosophy, with Joint Publication 3-56 providing the doctrinal basis. While advocating better implementation of joint doctrine on the part of the individual services, a recent analysis in *Joint Force Quarterly* criticizes some current joint doctrine as having limited value, above all because of its inclination to cater to the least common denominator.[17] Closer bonding of joint doctrine to the National Military Strategy through a more coherent national military strategic plan, it is argued, should engender better doctrine, and hence more effective operations.

How does one better translate doctrine into practice? Discernible advantages accrue from the systematic use of directive control. On an individual level, such a command and control approach induces initiative and innovative leadership. On a higher level, directive control causes commanders and their staffs to ask fundamental questions associated with the principles of war.

Can directive control assist in overcoming the inevitable fog and friction of war? Viscount Horatio Nelson thought so. Nelson regarded war's fog as he did its close physical equivalent, the darkness of night, using both when he could to his operational purpose. One of Nelson's great victories, at Aboukir Bay in 1797, was fought in the dark under seemingly adverse conditions. But Nelson seemed in his element: "I had the happiness to command a Band of Brothers; therefore, night was to my advantage. Each knew his duty, and I was sure each would feel for a French ship." [18]

A grave contemporary mistake is to regard technological advances in communications as a means finally to overcome the fog and friction of war. Technological sophistication should not deter us from endeavoring to identify lessons from the past and, accordingly, to learn from the successes as well as the failures of earlier warriors. Nelson, for his part, insisted that once his subordinate captains were acquainted with his ideas and intentions, signals became almost unnecessary.[19] One contemporary observer has been prompted to suggest that whatever the advances in radios, computers, satellites, and sophisticated electronic communications systems, war's fog will remain as resistant to technological fixes as the common cold has to the march of modern medicine.[20] This notion accentuates the need to consider enduring fundamentals.

Command micromanagement, for example, is and will remain detrimental. Past is also prologue here. Although the functions of command and control have become increasingly interconnected with technology, and the tempo of technological advancement has often been so great as to be justifiably labeled revolutionary, command and control still involve the vast and largely unquantifiable realm of human judgment and intellect, at least as much as in Nelson's day, perhaps more so. And technology can be a two-edged sword, especially when developments lend themselves to ever-greater centralization of execution, and in extreme cases to battlefield micromanagement. Helicopter command posts in the Vietnam War became almost proverbial. Instead of allowing junior officers on the ground to exercise command in accordance with their experience and assessment of the specific circumstances, some commanders could not resist the temptation to direct execution from above, largely because it had become technologically feasible to do so.

Joint doctrine should be geared to encouraging higher commanders to think hard about the broader battlespace, about the objective of the overall operation, about the *what* as opposed to the *how*. Commanders should avail themselves of the opportunity to provide vision, in lieu of the specifics of implementation. According to Clausewitz, providing vision is the single most important function of the operational commander. When commanders accurately assess the precise

nature of the conflict in which they are engaged, when they align military means with political ends, they are exercising strategic vision.[21] In Clausewitz's words:

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the commander makes is to establish the type of campaign upon which he is embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something alien to its nature . . . .

What is required is a sense of unity and power of judgment raised to a marvelous pitch of vision.[22]

## **Implementing the Approach**

Joint Publication 3-56 affords perspectives on the development of initiative by military leaders at all levels of command. Directive control should be embraced as more than merely a command and control philosophy. Rather, it should represent a critical facet of a more comprehensive approach to warfighting. Directive control has five principal facets whose overall objective is to achieve battlespace dominance through the successful and independent decisionmaking of subordinate commanders.

The first of these is scope for initiative. Commanders at all levels must be accorded considerable leeway for initiative. Such latitude can generate the speed of response critical to battlespace success. The fog and friction of war may invalidate the carefully wrought plans of higher authority, leaving the individual commander the best judge of the immediate tactical situation.

The second is prudent risk-taking. Risk-taking stems from initiative. What is different about risk-taking in this context is the importance attached to making an independent decision when circumstances dictate. An incorrect but earnest decision is far preferable to lack of action. Approaches to command should encourage subordinate commanders to exercise tactical initiative, while recognizing that errors and reverses will occur. The aggregation of successes on the part of commanders exercising battlespace initiative, so it is reasoned, will overcome the occasional setbacks. A "zero defects" mindset tends to discourage subordinate initiative.

The third facet concerns the centrality of the commander's intent to the entire command and control process. Commander's intent binds together various tasks, and defines the desired end-state. In determining the prudence of their decisions, subordinates should assess their projected initiatives in accordance with the commander's intent.

Fourth, superior-subordinate relations must be characterized by mutual trust. Such trust furnishes the subordinate with the confidence to exercise tactical initiative without concerns about reprimand for error or bad judgment. Likewise, superiors have confidence that subordinates will carry out orders and exercise their initiative consonant with the superior's intent. Mutual trust is thus a manifestation of superior-subordinate professionalism. Mutually trusting individuals, moreover, are those most likely to anticipate one another's actions, to understand intuitively how the others are thinking, hence setting in train a harmony of minds whereby detailed instructions are unnecessary.

Fifth, directive control presupposes subordinate initiative and feedback. Subordinates are expected to solve problems at their level of control, in lieu of appealing to higher authority. Decentralized execution must foster individual initiative at all levels. Centralized planning also requires feedback from all levels. Subordinates are expected to make specific recommendations for changes based upon their assessment of the situation. Open discussion is at all times appropriate. Nelson, for his part, made a habit of availing himself of frank discussions and the sharing of ideas among officers well attuned to one another. Nelson was said to have quipped that an order is a good basis for discussion. As a subordinate commander, he repeatedly "modified" orders to accommodate changing circumstances, the most famous instance coming at Copenhagen in 1801 and producing a swift and stunning victory.[23] A man of indomitable determination, Nelson shaped battlespace circumstances to his will, rather than merely responding to them as lesser men might.

Initiative and feedback involve significant delegation of authority. The implementation of directive control as envisaged for the 21st century entails a new dynamism in command and control, whereby the effects of particular actions are reported to higher commanders, affording them the opportunity to assess them and to react accordingly. Modern technology increasingly permits the continuous flow of information about unfolding situations and results of actions.

War, Clausewitz noted, is the playground of chance, compelling commanders to assess risks, and to judge probability and feasibility.[24] Through the like-mindedness engendered by doctrine, junior officers and NCOs must gain an appreciation for one of the conspicuous challenges of the modern battlefield: the pressures for technologically induced centralization of execution on the one hand, and the decentralizing imperatives of operations on the other.[25] Doctrine and experience are both involved in resolving the paradox that pits the need for directive control at the tactical level against the ability of generals to communicate with squads.

"Operational art" refers principally to the fundamentals of effective command and control at the operational level. In discussions of post-Cold War missions and mission sets, observers have made much of the "renaissance" of the operational level of war in light of a different environment, fewer resources, and relatively small but high-quality forces. These particulars bespeak the urgency for a broader understanding of directive control. Proficient use of small, high-quality forces is a chief accruing benefit, and no country has the luxury any longer of being able to mass forces in operations, effectively substituting numbers for skill and dexterity. The psychological force multiplier that is inherent in maneuver warfare doctrine may be realized by comparatively small, highly mobile units. Extensive physical dispersion of troops on the modern battlefield and high general operational tempo, including that of enemy responses, render independent decisionmaking on the part of relatively junior commanders more critical than ever. Tempo of operations is a widely discussed aspect of modern operations, and it is reasonable to assume that operational time pressures will become even greater. If lack of time to request instructions from higher commanders was a problem at Gettysburg, one need not long speculate about the salience of such a problem in the 21st century. In short, directive control facilitates the development of command and control relationships that have increased chances of success in a high-tempo combat environment.

## **Coalition Operations**

In future engagements, US forces will frequently operate in coalition with allies and partners. Current US National Security Strategy and National Military Strategy acknowledge the importance of coalition warfare, and one encounters recognition of its role at virtually all policymaking levels.[26] The National Security Strategy specifies that "we will act with others when we can," and calls upon US policy to "enhance the effectiveness of coalition operations by improving our abilities to operate with other nations." [27] The National Military Strategy states that "while we maintain the unilateral capability to wage decisive campaigns to protect US and multilateral security interests, our armed forces will most often fight in concert with regional allies and friends, as coalitions can decisively increase combat power and lead to a more rapid and favorable outcome of the conflict." [28] Since the United States will, in all likelihood, increasingly work through coalitions, it must plan accordingly.

Different nationalities, agendas, influences, cross-pressures, and goals are intrinsic to coalitions. Coalitions are perennially troubled by multifarious procedures, equipment, and practices. In this sense, alliance and coalition arrangements are inherently inefficient and politically charged. Command and control in coalition operations are so sensitive, and so crucial, that they could be perceived as the essence of coalition warfare.[29] Coalition operations will stand or fall largely on commanders' abilities to effect command and control of the associated forces. Directive control in such operations, underscoring the *what*, not the *how*, and focusing on overarching goals as opposed to the specific means of implementation, could reduce friction and facilitate coalition functioning.

Authorities have identified several elements affecting the command and control of coalitions.[30] The first is the physical environment within which the coalition operates. This includes political, socioeconomic, and technical conditions. The glue of common political objectives binding coalitions constitutes the center of gravity.[31] The second element is the human factor within the coalition; the third is the internal dynamics of the operation, including planning and execution. The fourth involves system interoperability. The first three have considerable bearing upon directive control and the conduct of coalition operations.

The reasons why this is so should be apparent. Coalition partners have their own agendas, have their own political considerations, and are subject to differing pressures. A country's values and beliefs shape the characteristics of its command structure, and political direction invariably will have an effect on military functions. All these aspects of coalition operations suggest the need for a general framework of command and control that would facilitate meeting the overarching political objectives of the coalition. It might even be advisable for the commander of a coalition force

to disregard how a particular national force is implementing its instructions and achieving its goals, provided of course that the force remains within the rules of engagement and the norms of the law of war.

People from different cultures and backgrounds tend to harbor distinct expectations about a given set of circumstances, and are often dissimilarly motivated. Attempting to impose a rigid, centralized command style in a cross-cultural environment, and then assuming the arrangement will function, is to court a pack of troubles. Coalition and alliance members have their own ways of doing things, and subordinate commanders will be expected to maintain control of their own troops. Yet, the nature of coalition operations entails the presence of an overall commander exercising some control of several nationalities.

Martin van Creveld has emphasized the potential complications associated with establishing new operational coalitions, related to such issues as national pride, security, and sovereignty.[32] In addition to sovereignty issues, Van Creveld points out, the manner in which decisions are made within each participating country, along with domestic political restraints, will have a profound effect on coalition decisionmaking. For example, the United States may not be alone in facing domestic political pressures that prevent its forces from being placed under the operational control of other nations' officers. Decentralized execution offers the possibility of viable compromise, whereby subordinate national commanders maintain direct command authority of their own forces, while engaging them in a broader, international operation. A fudge? Not really. Innovative approaches to directive control are conceivable and may, in fact, be desirable.

Coalitions can assume personalities of their own, with their own combinations of character and nationality, each of which can affect command requirements in ways difficult to foresee.[33] In many coalitions, especially those that are somewhat loose or ad hoc, smaller countries may be important players, at times because of their location and specialized knowledge, or simply because of their ability to influence and mediate.[34] To avoid thwarting potential strategic advantages, such countries should be allowed to take the initiative when feasible. Hence, the need for an approach to command and control that is disposed to adaptability and flexibility.

Differences among coalition partners, tangible and intangible, sociological and psychological, necessitate constant reevaluation and, on occasion, fresh approaches to planning military operations.[35] Integrating multinational forces into effective combined operations is always complex and sometimes frustrating. Commanders will operate in fluid environments, where strategic, operational, and tactical levels become blurred, and where multilateral interests are repeatedly affected. A senior US commander in World War II identified the following areas as most worthy of consideration in coalition operations. These doubtless still apply:

- (1) Characteristic lack of clarity and firmness of directives received from the next superior combined headquarters or authority.
  - (2) The conflicting political, economic, and military problems and objectives of each of the allied powers.
  - (3) The logistical capabilities, organizations, doctrines, and characteristics of each of [the] armed forces under command.
  - (4) The armament, training, and tactical doctrines of each of the armed forces under command.
  - (5) Personal intervention and exercise of a direct, personal influence to assure coordination and success in the initial phases of the mission assigned by the next higher combined authority.
- Lastly, and in the final analysis probably the most important of all:
- (6) The personalities of the senior commanders of each of the armed services of the allied powers under command, their capabilities, personal and professional habits, and their ambitions.[36]

Although unity of command is a tenet of US doctrine, both service and joint, such an arrangement is not usually achieved, at least not totally, in coalition operations. Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, specifies, "The purpose of unity of command is to ensure unity of effort under one responsible commander for every objective. Unity of command means all forces operate under a single commander with the requisite authority to direct all forces employed in pursuit of a common purpose." Joint Publication 3-16, *Joint Doctrine for Multinational Operations*, recognizes, however, that though "unity of command established early on facilitates unity of effort . . . nations are generally reluctant to grant extensive control of their forces to one lead nation." Unity of command represents an ideal, but, as is often the case in human affairs, some compromise is necessary. At a minimum, unity of effort in a coalition



operation must be achieved. Unity of *purpose*, entailing political objectives, is the diplomatic glue holding coalitions together. Commanders will therefore be constrained by political goals and conditions.

NATO has altered its command structure to facilitate the creation and management of rapid deployment combined joint task forces, one of a number of Alliance innovations to adjust to the changing security circumstances marking the end of the Cold War.[37] NATO combined joint task forces will include components of two or more services from several countries.[38]

The combined joint task force is a means to establish a European defense capability "separable, albeit not separate" from NATO's integrated military command structure. While contributing to the European security and defense identity, the concept of combined joint operations also provides NATO with operational flexibility and acknowledges that a task force could include some non-NATO countries. The combined joint task force has wide-ranging ramifications for force structure, planning, and command and control. To the greatest extent possible, operations in such task forces should be decentralized and self-executing to allow maximum operational flexibility, and also to preserve the distinctive character of the respective forces. Moreover, recognition of NATO's "European pillar" may permit the Alliance to handle some security problems with relatively small units acting largely on their own, a marshaling of forces particularly conducive to directive control.[39] Italy's intervention in Albania in 1997, accompanied by forces from several other nations, is a harbinger of this application.

What is most important from the standpoint of command and control of a combined joint task force is consensus among allies and prospective participants about centralized planning and decentralized execution. Nations should seek such consensus prior to engaging forces in a combined operation, allowing multilateral training to employ directive control at various levels. When unity of effort is the best that can be achieved, execution though directive control dovetails with a prevailing principle of warfare: simplicity.

The operational commander should provide his intent for the operation--not the specifics of implementation--developing, clarifying, and sharing it with coalition partners. In peace operations, where shifts between routine patrolling to outright conflict can occur at a moment's notice, subordinate commanders of various nationalities need to be able to react quickly to stabilize the situation and maintain control of their forces, thereby reducing the chance that the threshold of conflict could be crossed inadvertently.

The prospect of swings between violence and relative quiet, along with expansive gray areas, suggests that the traditional distinctions between peace and war are becoming less meaningful.[40] Clearly, present forms of international interaction and conflict require a rethinking of what war is in the context of command and control. At issue are the interrelationships between civil and military authorities, and the exercise of command over forces. But such rethinking should not and need not take place in a vacuum. One can build upon past experiences and determine what has worked before. With respect to command and control of forces, one should endeavor to merge the new with the old.

## **Conclusion**

The US Army has made considerable progress toward the integration of directive control in its training and education programs. Now the other services should accord the concept similar attention. It should be endowed with more substantial philosophical underpinning, reflected in both service and joint doctrine. Officers and NCOs should gain a better appreciation for individual initiative, risk acceptance, and the assumption of responsibility as crucial facets of operations.[41] Command and leadership are tightly intertwined, reflected in the German term *Truppenführung*, meaning "troop leading" or "troop directing," and employed to describe the implementation of directive control in practice.[42] In sum, familiarization and emphasis are necessary in joint training and education.

Directive control works only when trust and confidence obtain throughout the ranks. Such confidence must extend to the willingness and ability of all personnel to exercise individual initiative for mission accomplishment.[43] This, in turn, involves doctrinal training and education fashioned to underscore the need for decisiveness, adaptability, flexibility, and assumption of individual responsibility in command.[44] Doctrine, a set of principles designed to engender like-mindedness, is intended to serve as a guide for commanders at all levels, particularly to subordinate commanders, by assisting the latter in the development of courses of action consistent with the commander's intent,

and drawing upon organizational strengths. Over the years, German officer training has gone to great lengths to accomplish this goal.[45] Doctrine strove to foster the common understanding of individual initiative without which the command system would have been dysfunctional. Two quotes from World War II German general officers are instructive here:[46]

We found that leaders at any level grow with their experience . . . . [T]heir initiative should be fostered in the case of a division commander as much as in the case of a platoon leader.

Generally the German higher commanders rarely or never reproached their subordinates unless they made a terrible blunder. They were fostering the individual's initiative. They left him room for initiative, and did not reprimand him unless he did something very wrong. This went down to the individual soldier, who was praised for developing initiative.

Current German army regulations describe *Auftragstaktik* in the following manner:

A command and control procedure within which the subordinate is given extensive latitude, within the framework of the intention of the individual giving the order, in carrying out his mission. The missions are to include only those restraints which are indispensable for being able to interact with others, and it must be possible to accomplish them by making use of the subordinate's forces, resources, and the authority delegated to him. Mission-oriented command and control requires uniformity in the way of thinking, sound judgment and initiative, as well as responsible actions at all levels.[47]

The chief objective of any command and control system is unity of effort. Such effort embodies an overarching principle encompassing, as John Collins expresses it, "solidarity of purposes, effort, and command, [directing] all energies, assets, and activities, physical and mental, toward desired ends." [48] Unity of command has enormous salience in military service doctrine; unity of command should be regarded as essential to unity of effort. In fact, US service doctrine often uses the two terms--unity of effort and unity of command--synonymously.[49] Be that as it may, complete unity of command is seldom achievable in coalition operations. Unity of purpose and unity of effort are usually the most one can hope for. A prominent challenge for command and control is to sustain unity of effort in operational environments of pronounced uncertainty, perplexity, and turbulence. Accordingly, Joint Publication 2, *Unified Action Armed Forces*, emphasizes flexibility in the range of command relationships and command authority. Directive control contributes to such flexibility, representing the only potentially effective means of command in a number of critical environments.

In underscoring the importance of joint force command structure, several Joint Chiefs of Staff publications specify that command and control structures must be flexible, reliable, interoperable, and secure. Advanced technology furnishes command and control capabilities far superior to those of the past, of course. Satellite and space-based technology are the most prominent but certainly not the only examples. For reasons discussed above, having to do with the turbulence and complexity of the operational environment, command and control will encounter difficulties, and will even be degraded in some instances. Articulated battlespace vision and clearly understandable commander's intent facilitate subordinate exercise of initiative, while maintaining objectives and priorities. Straightforward orders and discernible commander's intent are the basis of effective *Auftragstaktik*. "Joint Task Force 120 Fighting Instructions" explains the concept this way:

The key to the concept is simple: centralized planning and decentralized execution . . . . The basic requirement of decentralized operations in general war is preplanned response in accordance with commonly understood doctrine. Lord Nelson did not win at Trafalgar because he had a great plan. He won because his subordinate commanders thoroughly understood that plan and their place in it well in advance of planned execution. You must be prepared to take action when certain conditions are met; you cannot anticipate minute-by-minute guidance.[50]

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## NOTES

1. See John T. Nelsen II, "*Auftragstaktik*: A Case for Decentralized Battle," *Parameters*, 17 (September 1987).

2. Quoted in Richard E. Simpkin, *Race to the Swift: Thoughts on Twenty-First Century Warfare* (London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1985), p. 228.
3. H. W. Koch, *A History of Prussia* (New York: Longman, 1978), pp. 180-87.
4. Simpkin, p. 227.
5. Nelsen, p. 21.
6. Robert C. Rubel, "Gettysburg and Midway: Historical Parallels in Operational Command," *Naval War College Review*, 48 (Winter 1995), 96.
7. Quoted in Nelsen, p. 23.
8. Raymond C. Bjorklund, *The Dollars and Sense of Command and Control* (Washington: National Defense Univ. Press, 1995), p. 49.
9. See Steven Metz, "Which Army After Next? The Strategic Implications of Alternative Futures," *Parameters*, 27 (Autumn 1997), 15-26.
10. US Department of the Army, *Operations*, Field Manual 100-5 (Washington: GPO, June 1993), p. 2-6.
11. Charles G. Sutton, Jr., "Command and Control at the Operational Level," in *The Challenge of Military Leadership*, ed. Lloyd J. Matthews and Dale E. Brown (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1989), p. 78.
12. Christopher M. Schnaubelt, "Lessons in Command and Control from the Los Angeles Riots," *Parameters*, 27 (Summer 1997), 106.
13. See David Fastabend, "The Categorization of Conflict," *Parameters*, 27 (Summer 1997), 75-87.
14. An excellent short discussion of low-intensity conflict is: Sam C. Sarkesian, "Low-Intensity Conflict: Concepts, Principles, and Policy Guidelines," *Air University Review*, 36 (January-February 1985), 4-23.
15. Harry G. Summers, *Military Review*, 65 (March 1985), 43-45.
16. See, for example, remarks by H. Allen Holmes, *Defense Issues*, 26 June 1997.
17. Douglas C. Lovelace, Jr., and Thomas-Durell Young, "Joint Doctrine Development: Overcoming a Legacy," *Joint Force Quarterly*, No. 14 (Winter 1996-97), p. 95.
18. Quoted in Michael A. Palmer, "Lord Nelson: Master of Command," *Naval War College Review*, 41 (Winter 1988), 113.
19. Michael A. Palmer, "Burke and Nelson Decentralized Style of Command," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, 117 (July 1991), 59.
20. Palmer, "Lord Nelson: Master of Command," p. 114.
21. Mitchell Zais, "Strategic Vision and Strength of Will: Imperatives for Theater Command," in Matthews and Brown, p. 85.
22. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 87-88.
23. Nelson is said to have put his telescope to his blind eye, then remarked that he could not "see" the signal to

withdraw his squadron. He then attacked.

24. Rubel, p. 97.

25. Sutton, pp. 76-77.

26. See Paul Van Riper and Robert H. Scales, Jr., "Preparing for War in the 21st Century," *Parameters*, 27 (Autumn 1997), 12-13. The authors, both US flag officers, argue: "Whether to deter or to fight, the United States probably will confront future adversaries as a member of an alliance."

27. The White House, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement* (Washington: GPO, 1995).

28. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *National Military Strategy of the United States of America 1995: A Strategy of Flexible and Selective Engagement* (Washington: GPO, 1995).

29. Anthony J. Rice, "Command and Control: The Essence of Coalition Warfare," *Parameters*, 27 (Spring 1997), 152-67.

30. See David S. Alberts and Richard Hayes, *Command Arrangements for Peace Operations* (Washington: National Defense Univ. Press, 1995), esp. pp. 41-76; and Martha Maurer, *Coalition Command and Control* (Washington: National Defense Univ. Press, 1994), esp. pp. 29-54.

31. Terry J. Pudas, "Preparing Future Coalition Commanders," *Joint Force Quarterly*, No. 3 (Winter 1993-94), p. 42.

32. Martin van Creveld, *Command in War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1985), pp. 234-57.

33. Maurer, p. 30.

34. R. L. DiNardo, "Dysfunctional Coalition: The Axis Powers and the Eastern Front," in *Peacemaking, Peacekeeping and Coalition Warfare*, ed. Fariborz L. Mokhtari (Washington: National Defense Univ. Press, 1994), pp. 271-73.

35. Armed Forces Staff College, *The Joint Staff Officers Guide 1997*, AFSC Publication 1 (Washington: GPO, 1997).

36. Quoted in Rice, p. 160.

37. See Charles L. Barry, "NATO's Bold New Concept--CJTF," *Joint Force Quarterly*, No. 5 (Summer 1994), pp. 46-54.

38. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations* (Washington: GPO, 1993).

39. W. Bruce Weinrod, "The U.S., NATO, and the Mediterranean Region in the Twenty-First Century," *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 8 (Spring 1997), 78-80.

40. Maurer, p. 31.

41. Sutton, p. 80.

42. See Simpkin, pp. 228-29.

43. Sutton, p. 78.

44. Richard F. Timmons, "Lessons From the Past for NATO," *Parameters*, 14 (August 1984), 5.

45. Simpkin, pp. 228-29.

46. Quoted in Sutton, pp. 78-79.

47. "The German Army's Mission Oriented Command and Control," *Armor*, 90 (January-February 1981), 12.
  48. John M. Collins, *Grand Strategy: Principles and Practices* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1973), p. 28.
  49. Garland Harmon Williams, *Joint Reform*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1994, pp. 159-60.
  50. Henry C. Mustin III, "Joint Task Force Fighting Instructions" (Washington: GPO, 1986), p. 1.
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