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THE MISSION COMMAND CONCEPT IN MILITARY COMMAND AND CONTROL AND MILITARY EDUCATION: A SCIENTIFIC REVIEW

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Abstract. The article provides a scientific review of the Mission Command concept as a contemporary model of military command and control and as a methodological reference point for the development of military education. Ukrainian and international scholarly publications and doctrinal sources are analysed, covering the evolution of Mission Command, its relationship with the Auftragstaktik approach, manoeuvre concepts, and NATO standards.

It is shown that domestic research predominantly addresses the concept within the framework of doctrinal and managerial approaches, whereas international discourse closely links Mission Command to the system of professional military education (PME). The pedagogical potential of Mission Command is substantiated as a framework for training a new type of officer, with an emphasis on autonomy, disciplined initiative, responsibility, and learning under conditions of uncertainty. Educational technologies relevant to this concept are identified.

Key words: Mission Command, military education, training of future officers, autonomy, disciplined initiative, competency-based approach, NATO standards.

Introduction. The full-scale war in Ukraine has significantly intensified the need to rethink approaches to military command and control and the training of officer personnel. The contemporary operational environment is characterised by high dynamics, information overload, fragmented data, rapidly changing situations, and persistent uncertainty regarding the course of events. Under such conditions, traditional directive command models, based on detailed regulation of subordinates' actions and rigid vertical control, gradually lose their effectiveness. Instead, approaches that ensure flexibility, responsiveness, and initiative at the unit level are gaining importance, as well as commanders' ability to make decisions under time pressure and incomplete information.

One of the concepts that has become central in the military thinking of NATO countries and is increasingly integrated into contemporary military discourse is Mission Command. Within this concept, achieving objectives relies not on detailed control over the execution process, but on clearly articulating the mission and the commander's intent, delegating authority to lower echelons, and developing subordinates' disciplined initiative. Mission Command is grounded in the assumption that effective action in a complex operational environment is possible only within a command culture characterised by mutual trust, responsibility, and the autonomy of servicemembers.

At the same time, Mission Command is not only a command and control tool but also an important reference point for the modernisation of military education, as its effective implementation directly depends on the level of professional preparedness of the officer corps. In international discourse, the Mission Command concept is considered inseparable from professional military education, where military educational institutions perform the function of shaping a new type of officer—capable of professional judgement, critical thinking, autonomous decision-making, and responsible conduct under conditions of uncertainty. Thus, the key issue is not merely the adaptation of organisational command procedures but also the renewal of pedagogical approaches, educational environments, and learning technologies that must reflect the logic of Mission Command.

This issue is of particular importance in the Ukrainian context, where the security and defence sector is undergoing transformation toward Euro-Atlantic integration, and the need is increasingly recognised for systematic officer training capable of effective performance in modern wartime conditions. In this regard, the pedagogical interpretation of Mission Command as a framework influencing the content and objectives of professional training, competency development, the organisation of the educational process, and the criteria for assessing learning outcomes becomes especially relevant. It is also important to note the перспективність (promise) of considering Mission Command in the training of officers with a гуманітарне спрямування (humanitarian orientation), who support moral and psychological resilience, trust, and cohesion within units – factors critical to the effectiveness of decentralised command.

Therefore, the relevance of this study is determined by the need for a comprehensive understanding of Mission Command as a multidimensional concept combining managerial and pedagogical potential and serving as a methodological reference point for the development of contemporary military education.

The aim of the article is to conduct a scientific and theoretical analysis of the Mission Command concept in military command and control and to determine its role and place within the system of military education as a methodological reference point for training a new type of officer capable of autonomous decision-making, disciplined initiative, and responsible professional activity under conditions of uncertainty.

To achieve this aim, the following **objectives were formulated**:

1. To analyse scholarly and doctrinal approaches to understanding the Mission Command concept in contemporary military theory and practice.

2. To outline and compare the features of Mission Command interpretation in domestic and foreign sources, particularly in the context of Auftragstaktik, the manoeuvre approach, NATO standards, and professional military education (PME).

3. To substantiate the pedagogical potential of Mission Command as a methodological framework for modernising military education and shaping the target model of officer training (autonomy, responsibility, disciplined initiative, and decision-making under conditions of uncertainty).

4. To identify educational technologies most relevant to the logic of Mission Command and to outline prospects for its integration into the training of future officers, including those with a humanitarian orientation.

The study was conducted as a scientific review using a set of general scientific **methods** of theoretical analysis. The following methods were applied:

- analysis, synthesis, and generalisation – to systematise scientific approaches to Mission Command and to identify its managerial and pedagogical dimensions;
- comparative analysis – to compare domestic and international perspectives on the Mission Command concept and its integration into professional military education;
- structural and logical method – to construct a holistic understanding of Mission Command's place in the military education system and to determine its functions at the value-cultural, competency-based, and technological levels;
- content analysis of scholarly publications and doctrinal documents (including ADP 6-0, AJP-01) – to identify key categories, principles, and educational implications of Mission Command.

Analysis of Research and Publications. In contemporary military science, the concept of Mission Command is considered one of the key models of command and control under conditions of high operational tempo, informational uncertainty, and the need for rapid adaptive decision-making. The increasing complexity of the operational environment and the reduction of time available for decision-making necessitate a shift from directive command toward decentralised approaches grounded in subordinates' initiative, orientation to the commander's intent, and mutual trust. In this

context, Mission Command gains relevance not only as a doctrinal philosophy of command, but also as a methodological guideline for the development of the modern system of military education and officer training.

In Ukrainian scholarly sources, the issue of decentralised command is most often examined through the historical and conceptual origins of Mission Command, in particular through the notion of *Auftragstaktik* (“mission-type tactics”), which in the military-theoretical tradition is regarded as the foundation of contemporary mission-oriented command models. In this regard, the study by V. S. Korendovych (Korendovych, 2020) is significant: it analyses the German experience of *Auftragstaktik* and emphasises its importance for enhancing command effectiveness under conditions of modern (including hybrid) warfare. The author demonstrates that decentralisation of command and delegation of authority to lower levels can substantially increase unit adaptability, responsiveness, and mission effectiveness, provided that personnel are appropriately trained and a trust-based command culture is established.

Another important research direction involves examining Mission Command within the framework of the manoeuvrist approach and the application of NATO standards in operational planning and conduct. In Ukrainian scholarship, this aspect has gained particular importance due to the ongoing transformation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in line with Euro-Atlantic standards. For instance, the joint work by I. Rolin, D. Kupriienko, and V. Marushchak (Rolin, 2022), devoted to the conceptual approach to planning and conducting land operations according to NATO standards, states that Mission Command principles constitute one of the basic foundations of the manoeuvrist approach, which orients command toward achieving results and ensuring flexibility, asymmetry, and speed of action. Within this logic, Mission Command emerges as a concept that ensures effective command through mission definition and articulation of intent rather than through rigid regulation of subordinates’ actions.

At the same time, contemporary Ukrainian academic discourse also features attempts to systematise Mission Command principles as a concept of command focused on achieving the end state. In particular, the article by Yu. Repilo, V. Rossiitsev, and O. Ishchenko (Repilo, 2022), devoted to the analysis of core principles and concepts of doctrinal support in the armed forces of leading countries, considers Mission Command within the system of modern doctrinal approaches. The authors emphasise that Mission Command requires subordinates to focus on the outcome (desired end state) rather than on detailed prescriptions regarding task execution, which is critically important for command under uncertainty. The study also highlights the value of a concise, standardised form of mission articulation (mission statement) as a mechanism for communicating the commander’s intent.

A separate group of sources includes publications in which Mission Command is described as a broader philosophy of command and is linked to the human factor and behavioural patterns of commanders and subordinates in the operational environment. A representative example is the publication by I. Rolin, D. Kupriienko, O. Serpukhov, and V. Marushchak (Rolin, 2025), where Mission Command is defined as a philosophy of directing military operations based on the consideration of the human factor, autonomy, initiative, and responsibility. The authors stress that the effectiveness of Mission Command depends not only on formal structural decentralisation but also on the development of a command culture and on commanders’ ability to formulate clear intent and ensure shared understanding within the unit.

However, the analysis of domestic publications indicates that in most works Mission Command is examined primarily within the domain of military command and control, operational planning, and doctrinal support, whereas the military-educational aspect of this concept is presented less systematically in the literature. Available sources allow the conclusion that the full implementation of Mission Command requires not only organisational modernisation of the command system but also changes in officer training aimed at developing competencies related to autonomous decision-making, critical thinking, disciplined initiative, and responsibility for outcomes. Accordingly, the mechanisms for

integrating Mission Command principles into the military education system require further scholarly analysis – particularly with regard to the training of cadets and officers in humanitarian specialisations, who ensure the moral and psychological component of combat readiness and play an important role in sustaining trust and cohesion within units.

Thus, the review of scholarly sources makes it possible to state that Ukrainian military-scientific literature contains theoretical and doctrinal approaches to decentralised command and Mission Command; however, there remains a need for a more systematic understanding of the concept as an interdisciplinary framework combining managerial, psychological, and educational dimensions. This determines the relevance of further research on Mission Command in the context of military education development and professional officer training in the conditions of contemporary warfare.

In foreign military-scientific and military-educational discourse, Mission Command is regarded not only as a principle of command and control but also as a fundamental framework for shaping officers' professional competencies within the system of professional military education (PME). In works by American, NATO, and European authors, Mission Command is positioned as a response to the challenges of the modern operational environment: high operational tempo, uncertainty, information overload, dispersed forces, and reduced time for decision-making. Accordingly, implementing Mission Command requires training officers capable of acting autonomously, deliberately, and responsibly, while maintaining coherence of action through understanding the commander's intent.

In US and NATO doctrinal documents, Mission Command is defined as a philosophy of command based on decentralised decision-making and orientation toward goal achievement rather than process control. Importantly, alongside procedural aspects, these sources emphasise psychological and cultural conditions of effectiveness: mutual trust, shared understanding, the development of initiative, and willingness to accept prudent risk. This approach establishes a pedagogical logic: Mission Command can function only when a specific professional culture and personnel readiness are deliberately developed through a targeted system of education and training (ADP 6-0, 2019; AJP-01, 2022).

Within the context of military education, foreign authors emphasise that Mission Command cannot be “implemented by order.” This concept requires the transformation of the educational environment, since officer competence within Mission Command is grounded in the development of thinking, autonomy, and responsibility. In particular, N. Murray (Murray, 2014), writing in *Joint Force Quarterly*, argues that the effectiveness of Mission Command is directly associated with the quality of PME, which should cultivate officers' ability to act in complex situations, interpret the commander's intent, and make decisions under conditions of incomplete information. The author stresses that military education must go beyond the transfer of knowledge and standard procedures by fostering strategic thinking, professional judgement, and readiness for independent leadership.

Publications focused on the pedagogical implementation of Mission Command are also illustrative. In the article “Mission Command in Education” (Mission Command in Education, 2016), the Mission Command concept is directly translated into the domain of learning and officer preparation. It is emphasised that instructors and faculty should reproduce conditions in the educational process that cultivate cadets' disciplined initiative and autonomy. Within this approach, the learning process is conceptualised as an environment where cadets learn to act under uncertainty through decision-making practice, analysis of mistakes, and reflection rather than through reproducing a single correct algorithm. Thus, Mission Command is pedagogically transformed into a learning model that shapes not merely skills but, above all, an officer mindset (Army University Press, 2016).

An important theoretical foundation of contemporary interpretations of Mission Command in international literature is the historical concept of *Auftragstaktik*, understood as a form of “intent-based command” that provides subordinates with freedom of action within the boundaries of the assigned purpose. In studies on the history of military thought, *Auftragstaktik* is viewed as a cultural and educational system in which officers must be able to act independently and responsibly.

This highlights a pedagogically crucial aspect: the effectiveness of Mission Command cannot be achieved without an appropriate educational foundation that fosters intellectual autonomy, adaptability, and internal discipline.

In modern interdisciplinary research, Mission Command is also examined through a psychological and pedagogical lens, particularly through the concepts of autonomy and intrinsic motivation. For example, in studies grounded in self-determination theory, Mission Command is interpreted as an autonomy-supportive leadership model that facilitates the satisfaction of service members' basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness), which positively affects engagement, effectiveness, and psychological resilience (Knevelsrud, 2023).

A distinct body of foreign publications addresses educational technologies most consistent with the logic of Mission Command. Contemporary PME approaches devote considerable attention to case-based learning, scenario-based training, tactical decision games, and the After Action Review (AAR) system as a core mechanism of professional learning through reflective analysis of actions. These tools aim to develop critical thinking, situational awareness, and decision-making under uncertainty – competencies central to the officer profile within the Mission Command paradigm. A defining feature of such approaches is the shift of emphasis from “correct” execution of an algorithm to the soundness of decisions and the ability to act in accordance with the commander's intent.

Thus, international literature presents Mission Command as a comprehensive concept combining managerial, cultural, and educational dimensions, in contrast to part of the domestic scholarship where Mission Command is mainly addressed from doctrinal and organisational perspectives. International studies clearly emphasise PME as a key condition for Mission Command implementation. This makes it possible to interpret Mission Command as a pedagogical model of officer training that entails cultivating autonomy, responsibility, disciplined initiative, the capacity for analysis and self-correction, and readiness to act under uncertainty – competencies critical to the contemporary officer corps.

In the context of modernising military education and adapting officer training to contemporary requirements, not only the formation of professional competencies but also the development of value-meaning and personal characteristics of the future officer becomes particularly significant. In particular, in our previous publication we substantiated that cadets' professional identity constitutes a key pedagogical factor of readiness to perform service and combat tasks under the complex conditions of war and uncertainty, as it integrates motivation, value orientations, internal responsibility, and awareness of the officer's role as a bearer of a professional mission (Yurkov, 2025).

From this perspective, Mission Command can be viewed as a promising managerial and educational framework that requires service members not only to demonstrate исполнительная дисциплина (executive discipline) but also autonomy, disciplined initiative, and mature responsibility – qualities that directly rely on a well-formed professional identity of the future officer.

Results and Discussion

Mission Command in the Military Education Process: Role, Place, and Pedagogical Implications

Within the context of professional military education (PME), the Mission Command concept should be regarded not only as a doctrinal model of military command and control, but also as a pedagogical framework for preparing an officer capable of operating under conditions of uncertainty and high operational tempo. This implies that Mission Command establishes requirements not so much for a particular subject or training module as for the target graduate profile, the educational environment, teaching and learning methods, and the logic of assessing training outcomes.

Mission Command substantially transforms the traditional didactic paradigm of military education. While the classical (directive) model predominantly focuses on precise adherence to instructions, compliance with algorithms, and reproduction of formally standardised procedures, the Mission Command paradigm requires military education to develop the future officer's ability to make inde-

pendent decisions while maintaining coherence with the commander's intent and the overall operational purpose. Accordingly, the central educational task becomes the preparation not of a mere "executor of orders," but of an agent of officer professionalism characterised by disciplined initiative, adaptability, responsibility, and professional judgement.

The role and place of Mission Command in military education can be analysed at three interrelated levels: the value-cultural, competency-based, and technological levels.

1. Mission Command as a Value-Cultural Regulator of the Educational Environment

Mission Command assumes that an officer executes tasks not only within the boundaries of formal discipline but also within a space of mutual trust, where initiative is supported and responsibility for decisions is recognised as a prerequisite for effectiveness. This directly affects the educational environment: a military educational institution must fulfil the function of cultivating a culture of responsibility and trust, within which cadets learn to act under supervision—but not under micromanagement.

Within such an educational culture, the following become particularly important:

fostering professional autonomy as an internal readiness for independent action;

forming an orientation toward responsibility for outcomes, rather than for the "correctness of procedure";

maintaining the psychological safety of learning, where error is treated as a resource for analysis and learning rather than solely as a disciplinary failure.

Thus, within PME, Mission Command functions as a mechanism of cadets' pedagogical socialisation into officer culture – one in which trust, results-orientation, and readiness to make decisions under time pressure are central.

2. Mission Command as a Competency Model for Officer Training

In educational terms, Mission Command defines a set of competencies that are critically important for officer performance in modern warfare. These include:

- the ability to interpret the commander's intent and translate it into concrete actions;
- decision-making under uncertainty;
- critical thinking and the ability to reassess changing situations;
- situational awareness as a basis for adaptive behaviour;
- disciplined initiative as a synthesis of autonomy and adherence to norms;
- responsibility and self-regulation as foundations of professional maturity.

Given this, Mission Command should be integrated into military education not as an isolated topic, but as a cross-cutting principle embedded across academic disciplines, field training, command-post exercises, and assessment systems.

Mission Command as Didactic Logic and Educational Technologies

Mission Command requires educational technologies that reproduce the real nature of military command: high dynamics, incomplete information, competing objectives, time pressure, and the need for initiative-driven action. For this reason, international PME practice prioritises active learning methods, among which the following are most consistent with the Mission Command logic:

- scenario-based learning;
- case-based learning;
- tactical decision games;
- wargaming;

After Action Review (AAR) as a foundational mechanism of learning from experience.

The application of these approaches makes it possible to develop in cadets not only technical and tactical knowledge, but also the capacity for cognitive reconstruction of the situation, forecasting, decision justification, risk assessment, and reflective evaluation of consequences.

AAR is of special pedagogical significance because it supports a shift from "error detection" to decision analysis, thus cultivating a culture of open professional debriefing—an essential precondition for Mission Command as a command culture.

3. Mission Command as a Criterion for Assessing Officer Training Outcomes

In traditional systems of military training evaluation, assessment often focuses on compliance with standards and procedures. However, within the Mission Command logic, officer effectiveness is determined by the ability to:

- maintain alignment of actions with the commander's intent;
- act autonomously without losing operational coherence;
- adapt to changes in the situation;
- make decisions under pressure;
- sustain the unit's combat capability and controllability.

Therefore, Mission Command requires a recalibration of assessment priorities – from procedural correctness to the soundness of decisions, flexibility, and responsibility. This should be taken into account across different stages of cadet education, particularly during practical training and field exercises.

Mission Command in the Training of Future Humanitarian-Oriented Officers

A separate and promising direction concerns the role of Mission Command in the training of humanitarian-profile officers, whose professional activity is directly linked to sustaining the unit's moral and psychological condition, levels of trust, and cohesion. These factors – trust, cohesion, disciplined initiative – are critical for Mission Command functioning. Accordingly, humanitarian specialists can be viewed as agents who maintain the “psychological infrastructure” of Mission Command by supporting a command culture of trust, resilience, and responsibility within military collectives.

Thus, within military education Mission Command should be conceptualised as a comprehensive framework shaping an educational model of training a new type of officer: autonomous, competent, capable of acting under uncertainty, and characterised by high levels of responsibility and professional judgement.

Conclusions. The analysis of domestic and international research has demonstrated that the Mission Command concept is currently regarded in military science as one of the key models of command and control under conditions of high operational tempo, information uncertainty, and the need for rapid decision-making. Its core lies in a transition from directive command to a decentralised model based on orientation toward the commander's intent, disciplined initiative, and mutual trust.

The review of Ukrainian scholarly sources indicates that the issue of Mission Command is most frequently examined through the prism of the historical origins of *Auftragstaktik*, as well as within the manoeuvrist approach and the adaptation of operational planning to NATO standards. At the same time, in most domestic publications Mission Command is interpreted primarily as a doctrinal and managerial phenomenon, whereas its educational and pedagogical potential is presented in a less systematic manner. This underscores the relevance of further scholarly reflection on Mission Command as an interdisciplinary framework integrating managerial, psychological, and pedagogical dimensions.

The analysis of foreign publications has shown that in international discourse Mission Command is directly associated with the system of professional military education (PME) and is considered a fundamental basis for developing officers' professional competencies. International authors emphasise that Mission Command cannot be implemented solely through normative or administrative measures, since the effectiveness of this concept is determined by the level of personnel preparedness and by the maturity of a professional culture grounded in trust, autonomy, and responsibility.

Based on the conducted review, it has been established that Mission Command possesses a clearly articulated pedagogical significance, as it provides:

- 1) a target model of officer training (an autonomous, adaptive officer capable of operating under conditions of uncertainty);
- 2) competency-based guidelines for military education (decision-making, interpretation of intent, critical thinking, disciplined initiative);

3) the need to transform the educational environment toward a culture of responsibility and the psychological safety of learning;

4) a priority of active educational technologies (scenario-based learning, case method, tactical decision games, wargaming, After Action Review) that facilitate the development of professional judgement and reflective decision analysis.

Special attention is given to the перспективність (promise) of applying Mission Command as a pedagogical framework in the training of humanitarian-profile officers, whose professional activity is directly associated with sustaining moral and psychological readiness, cohesion, and trust within units. In this context, humanitarian specialists may be viewed as a key factor in ensuring the “psychological infrastructure” of Mission Command in military collectives.

Thus, Mission Command can be defined as an important methodological guideline for military education reform aimed at developing a new type of officer – capable of acting autonomously and responsibly under the conditions of modern warfare. Promising directions for further research include: developing a pedagogical model for integrating Mission Command into cadet training programmes; identifying criteria and indicators of Mission Command-related competency development; and empirically assessing the effectiveness of educational technologies oriented toward fostering disciplined initiative, trust, and professional judgement.

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