



# Leadership Paradigms – 2: Strategic Leadership

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# Session Aim and Scope

- Aim: Critically evaluate and reflect on the theoretical concepts exploring leadership at the Strategic level.
- Scope:
  - Strategic Leadership Environment
  - Strategic Leadership
  - Mission Command
  - Questions and Discussion

# **Strategic Leadership Environment**



## What We Know?

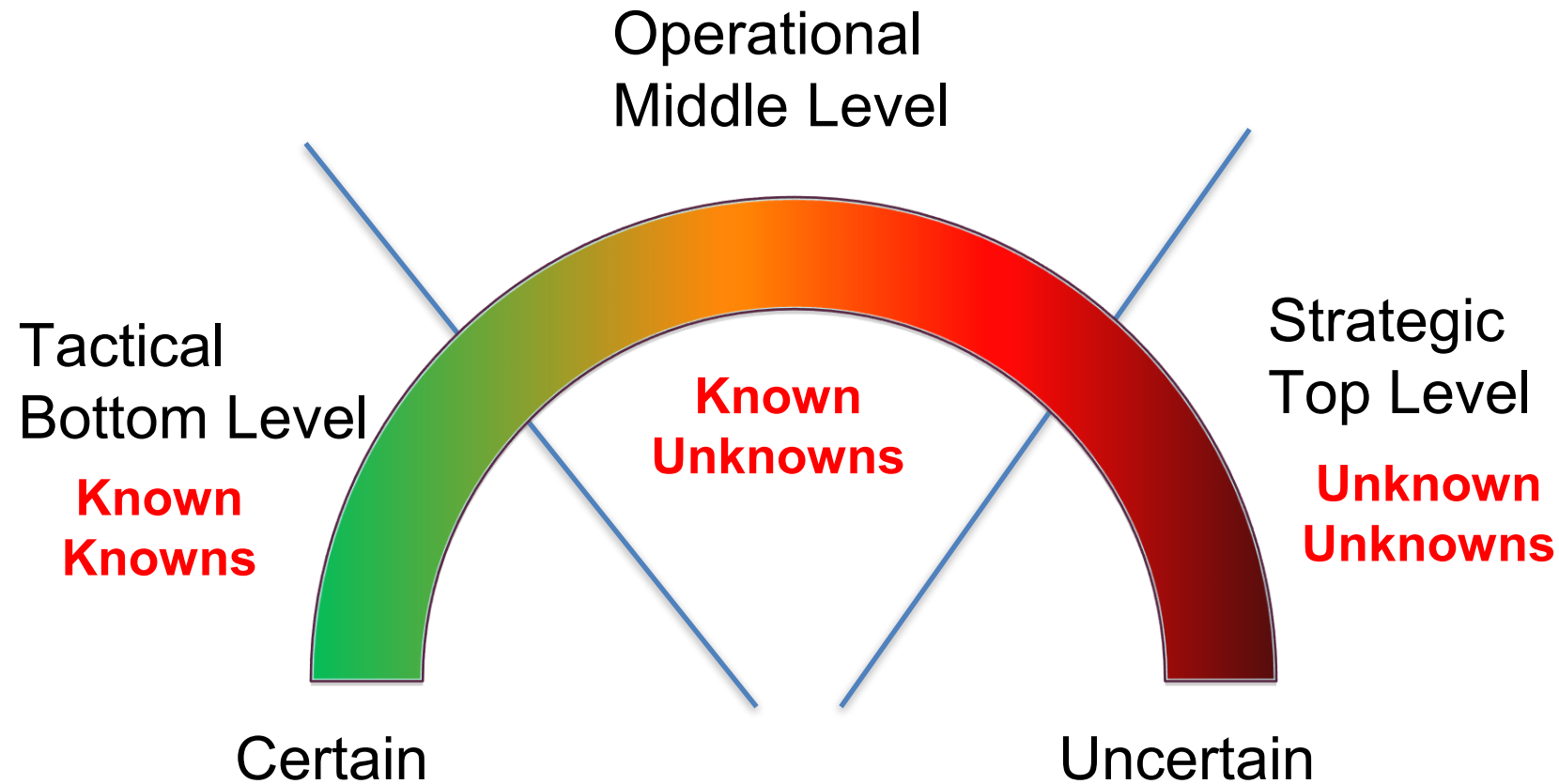
*“There are known knowns; there are things we know we know.*

*We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know.*

*But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones we don't know we don't know.”*

Donald Rumsfeld, 12 February 2002

# Arc of Uncertainty



*"In these matters the only certainty is that nothing is certain."*

Pliny the Elder, AD 23–79

# Unknowns – The VUCA Environment

## Volatility

- Change happens rapidly and on a large scale

# VUCA - Leading and Managing in a Complex World

## How to handle: VUCA Prime

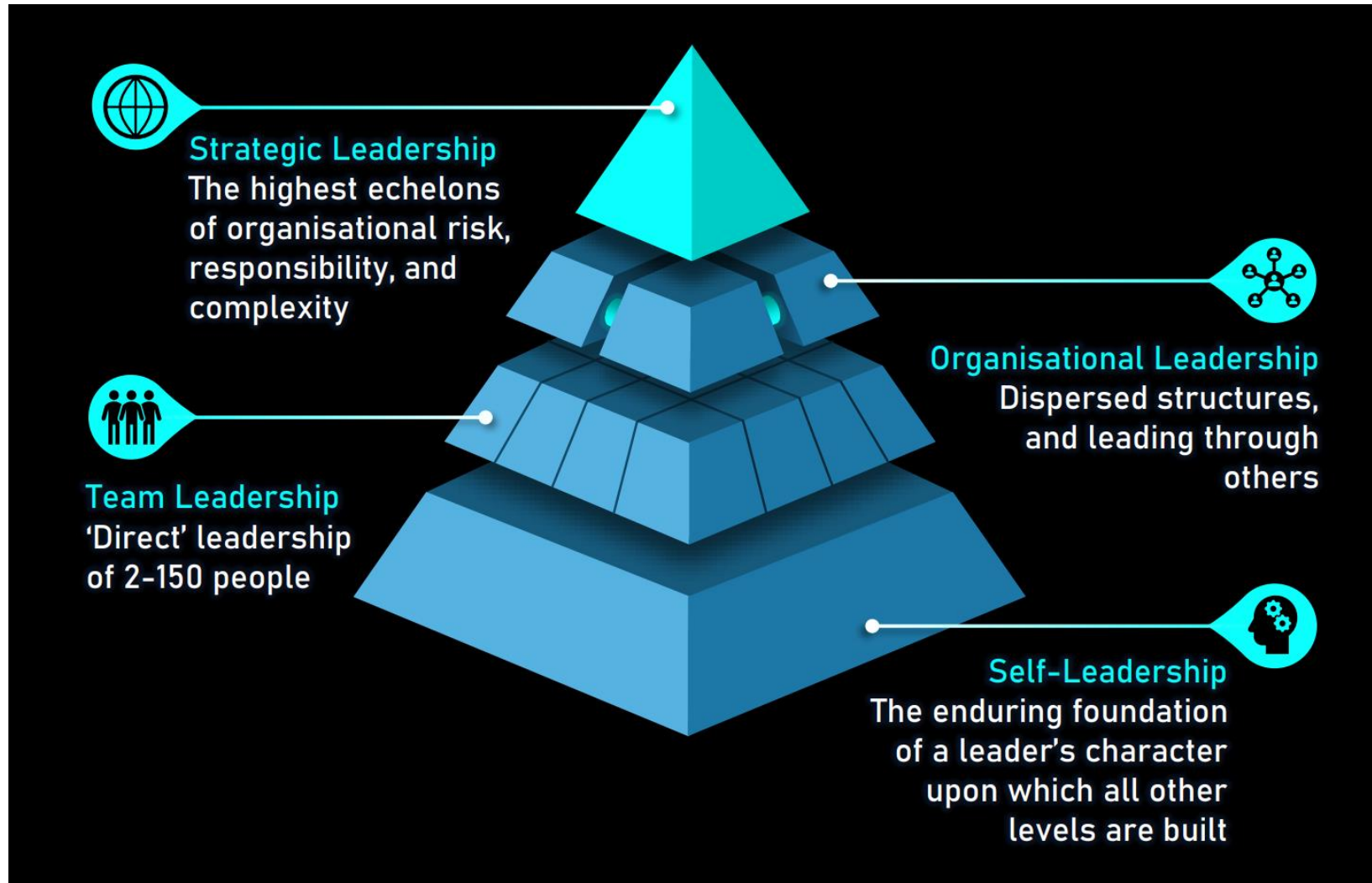
- Volatility = Vision
- Uncertainty = Understanding
- Complexity = Clarity
- Ambiguity = Agility

(Lawrance, 2013)



# Strategic Leadership

# Levels of Leadership (MOD, 2024)



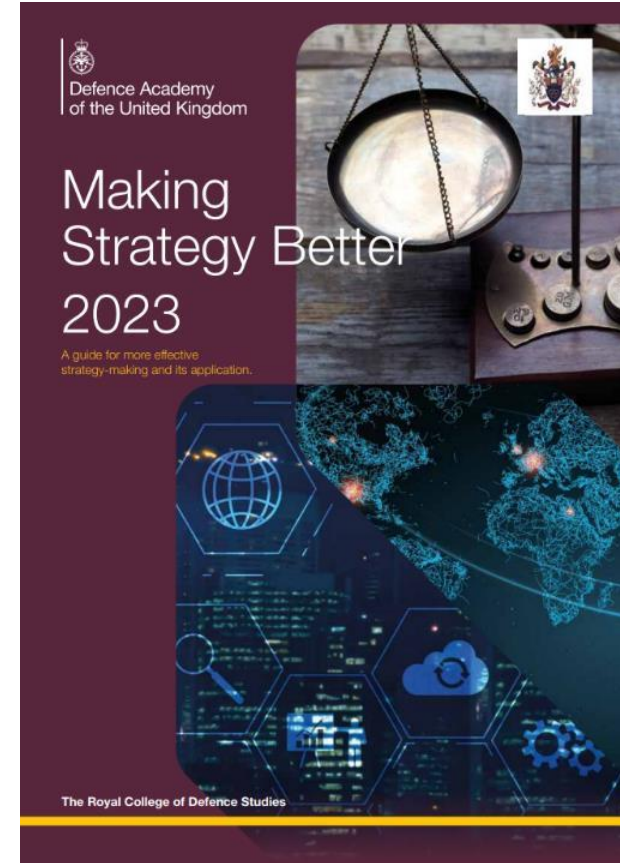
## What is Strategic Leadership? (Yukl & Gardiner, 2020)

In pairs discuss the two critical responsibilities of a strategic leader?

1. Monitoring the external environment to identify threats and opportunities.
2. Formulating strategy for the future survival and prosperity of the organisation.

# Capabilities of a Strategic Leader (MOD, 2023b)

- The confidence to operate in a province of uncertainty.
- Making and sustaining sufficient space to consider and act strategically.
- The ability to operate under intense media pressure.
- Acknowledging human limitations.
- Respect.
- Recognising the benefits of collaborative working.



## Functions of a Strategic Leader (Adair, 2010)

- Providing direction for the organization as a whole. (Vision)
- Getting strategy and policy right. (Strategic thinking and planning)
- Making it happen. (operational/administration)
- Organizing and reorganizing. (organisation fitness to the situation)
- Releasing the corporate spirit. (energy, morale, confidence, ethos)
- Relating the organization to other organizations and society as a whole. (allies, partners and stakeholders)
- Developing tomorrow's leaders. (teaching and leading learning)

# General David Petraeus – The Strategic leader (Petraeus, 2016)

*“In essence there are four tasks:*

- 1. The first is to get the big ideas right.*
- 2. The second is to communicate them effectively throughout the breadth and depth of the organization.*
- 3. The third is to oversee the implementation of the big ideas.*
- 4. And the fourth is to determine how the big ideas need to be refined, changed, augmented, and then repeating the process over again and again and again.”*



# Mission Command

## Definition - Mission Command (MOD, 2021)

Mission Command focuses on **achievement of intent**. It promotes decentralised command, freedom of action, initiative, and speed. **It relies on trust, mutual understanding, and initiatives at all levels**, all nurtured by good leadership and balanced by sound judgment.

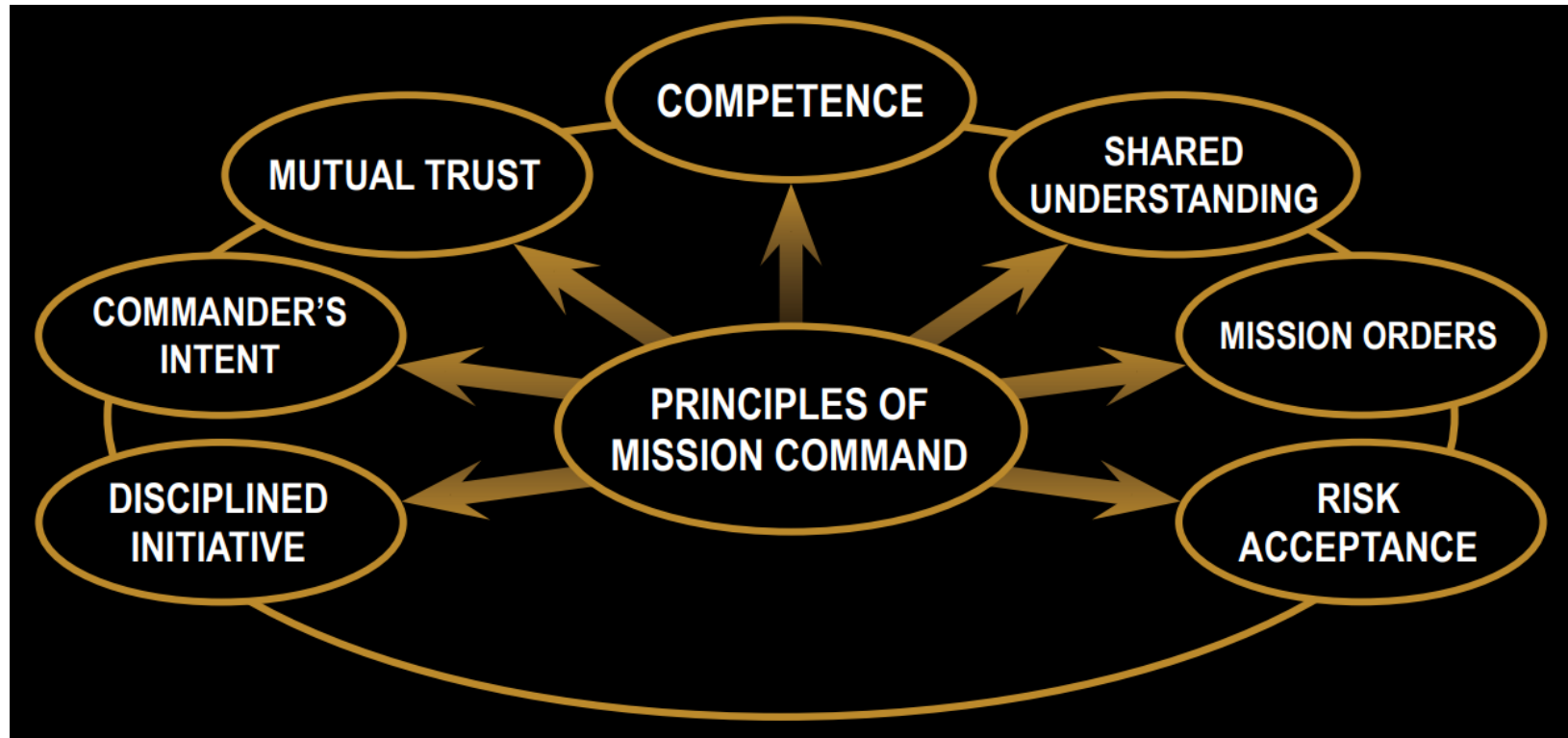
Mission Command, an organisational leadership philosophy that promotes decentralised command, freedom, speed of action and initiative, responsive to superior direction.

Defence Forces, 2023



# Principles of Mission Command (MOD, 2017)

Mission Command's Guiding Principle:  
**“The absolute responsibility to act to achieve the superior commander's intent”**



## The British Way – Mission Command (MOD, 2022)

- Mission command is founded on the clear expression of **intent by commanders** and the **freedom of subordinates to act to achieve that intent**.
- Mission command is a form of **decentralised decision-making**, which promotes initiative and the ability to dictate tempo, but which is responsive to superior direction.
- Mission command is essential to integration and **integrated action** at the lower operational and tactical levels.
- Mission command emphasises the importance of making a **timely decision**, and the importance of understanding the intention of the commander. There is a responsibility to fulfil that intention based on clear understanding of **common doctrine**.



## Mission Command 2

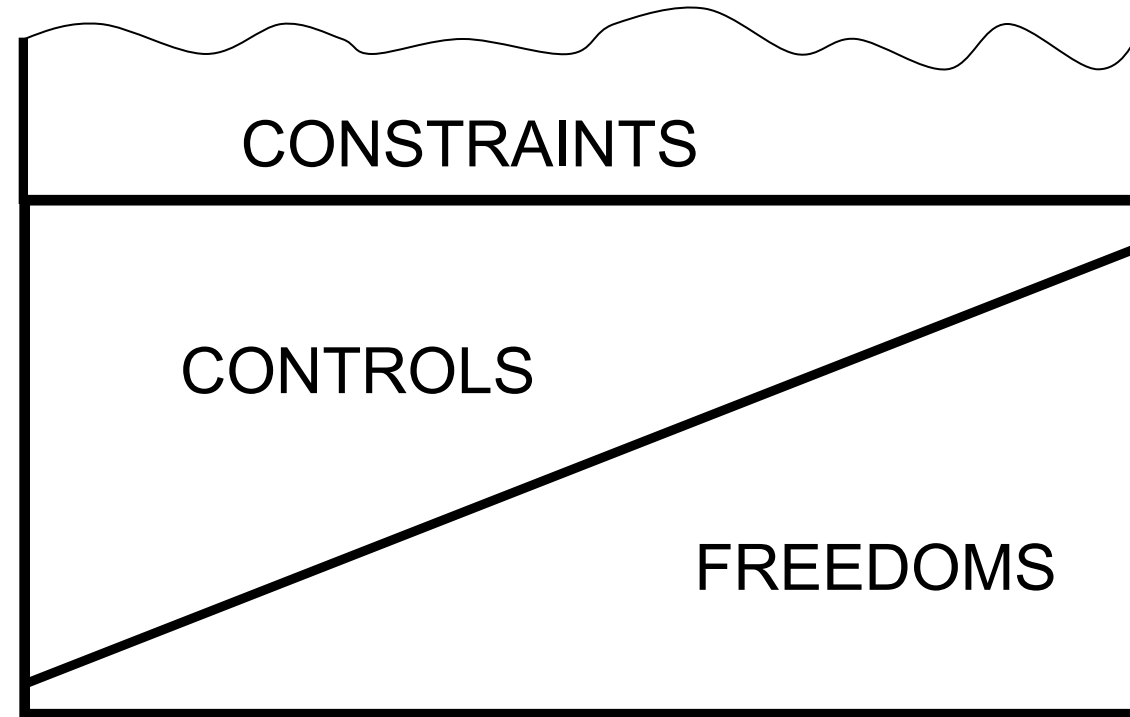
- **Trust is a prerequisite of mission command.** Trust – by commanders in their superior's plans and by commanders in their subordinates that they will sensibly interpret their intent and persevere to achieve it – can only be developed through shared experience, training and testing. **Trust is earned and cannot be demanded.**
- Commanders will decide the extent of delegation based upon the specific context and **judgement of their subordinates.**
- A commander must understand which subordinates will thrive and excel with fewer constraints, and which will require more direction and control. **This is likely to inform the kind of tasks different subordinates receive.**

# Admiral Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar 1805

- Early in his career he asked the question: *'What would my commander wish me to do if he could see what was in front of me?'*
- He wrote to Admiral Duckworth: *'I know who I can trust, and that it is not necessary to enter into the detail of what needs to be done'.*
- Before the Battle of Trafalgar, he said to his captains: *'No Captain can do very wrong if he places his ship alongside that of an enemy.'*
- Before the Battle of Trafalgar, he signalled to the fleet: *'England expects that every man will do his duty.'*

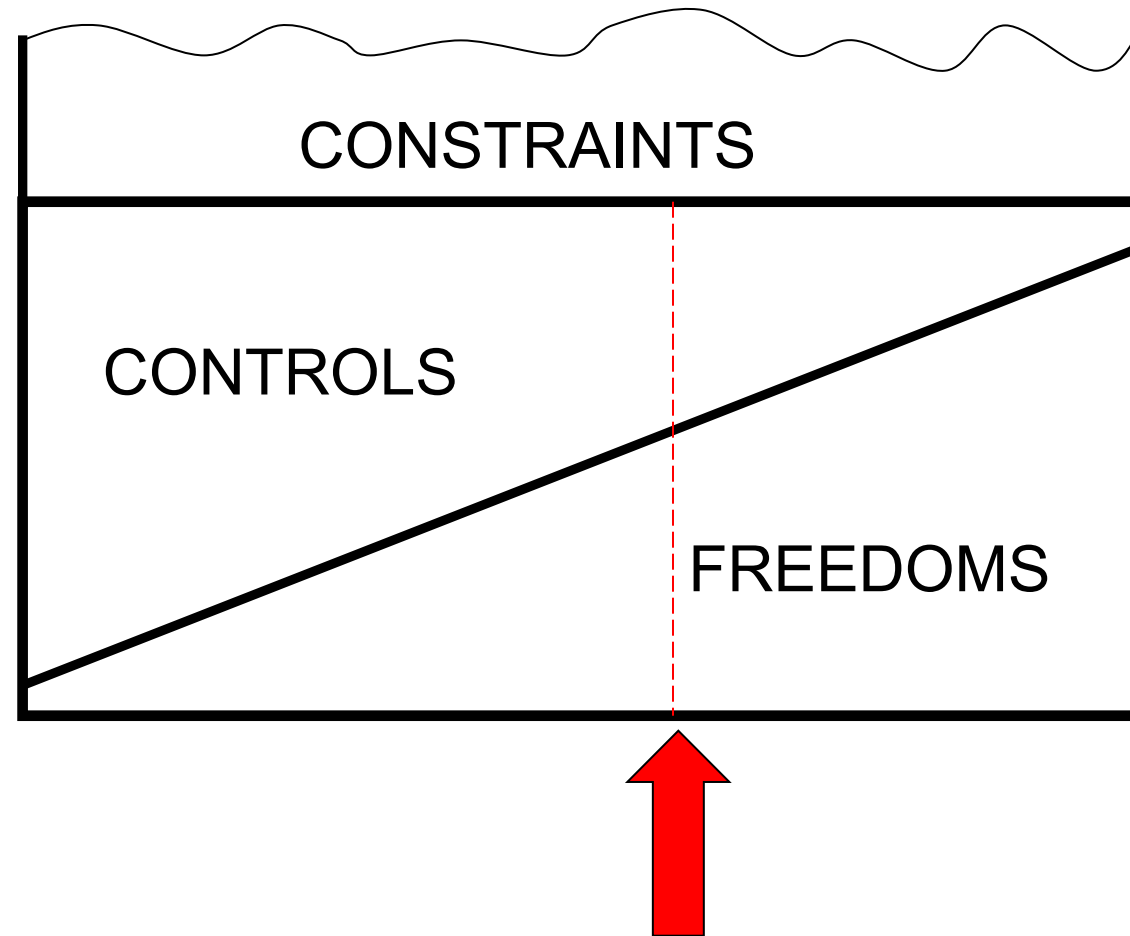


# Mission Command: A Model



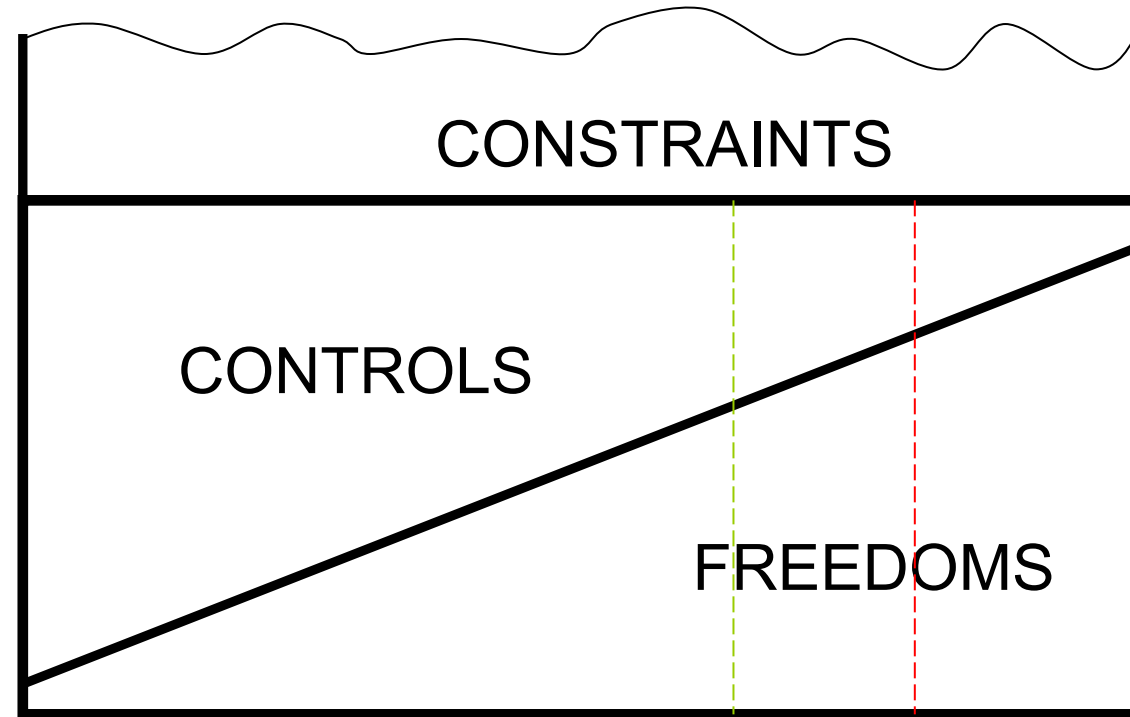
The Command space defined by constraints and characterised by a balance of freedoms and controls

# Mission Command: A Model



The Commander's Position an expression of the relationship between a commander and their superior in terms of delegated freedoms and imposed controls.

# Mission Command: A Model



The Commanders Call – cognitive or Gut?  
Its about personality and the acceptance of risk?

Variables:

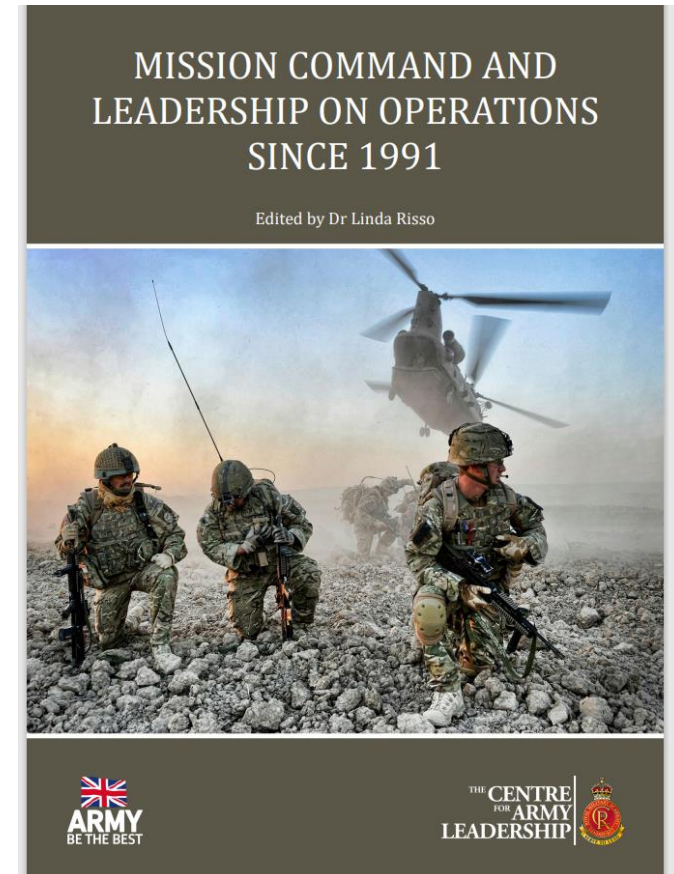
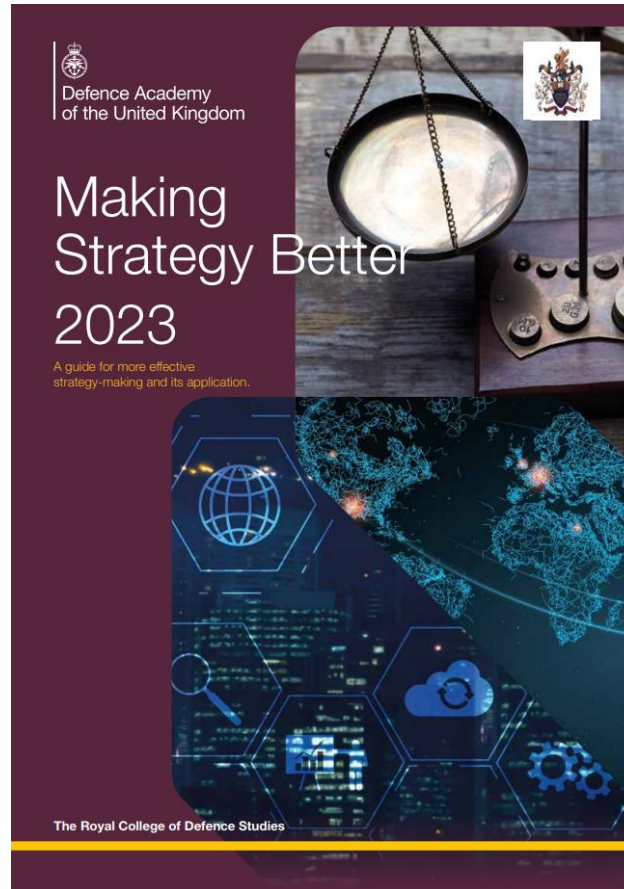
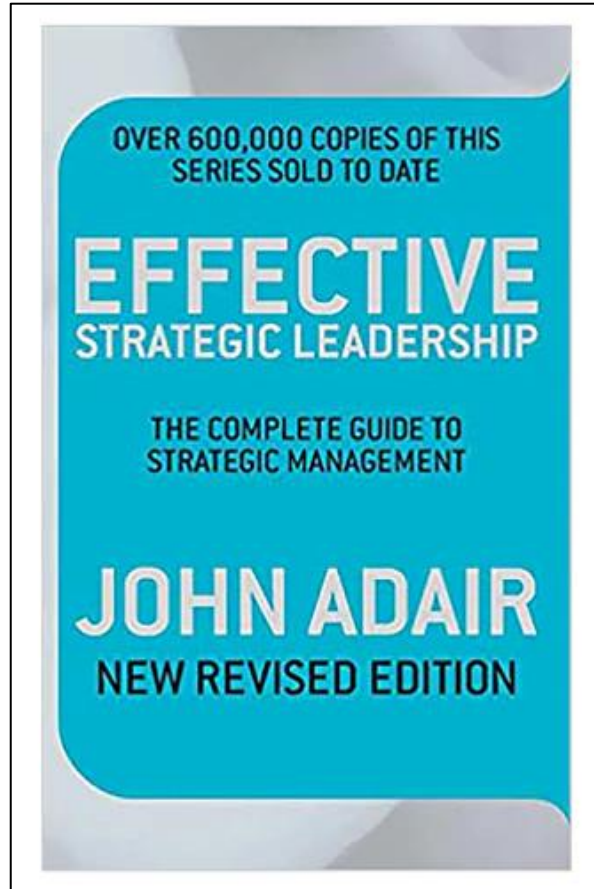
- Trust in the Commander's superior
- Trust in the Subordinate
- Situation
  - Scale of effect/consequence
- Ability to interject

Subordinate

Commander



# Further Reading





**Thank You**

**Any Questions?**

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