# Master Thesis Questions with

# Source Feasibility Colour-Coding

**Chapter 1 — Mission Command in the Age of Autonomy**

**Central Question:** Do uncrewed and AI-enabled systems reinforce or undermine mission command?

🔑 **Top-Tier (Core, Must Address)**

1. 🟢 What are the historical origins, philosophy, and core principles of mission command, and how do they emphasise subordinate initiative and trust?
2. 🟢 How do uncrewed and AI-enabled systems integrate into mission command structures, and in what ways do they expand subordinate initiative by accelerating tempo and decision-making?
3. 🟢 How might digital visibility and real-time feeds enable micromanagement, and what measures can mitigate this risk?
4. 🟢 What lessons from Ukraine’s FPV drone masses and Azerbaijan’s swarms in Nagorno-Karabakh can inform how the IDF sustains decentralised command in peacekeeping and EEZ defence, avoiding micromanagement risks as warned by Betts (1996)?
5. 🟢 How do Israel’s precision strikes against Hamas and Hezbollah highlight the centralisation risks of AI-enabled targeting, and what lessons can the IDF draw for preserving subordinate initiative in UN peacekeeping, per Cohen (1996) and Gray (2005)?
6. 🟡 How do Israel–Iran drone infiltration tactics challenge mission command training, and what lessons can the IDF draw for integrating EW support through EU partnerships while preserving neutrality in EEZ defence, per Betts (1996)?

⚖️ **Mid-Tier (Important, Supporting Analysis)**  
7. 🟢 How do historical cases (e.g. Guderian vs Winters) illuminate the delegation–intervention tension?  
8. 🟢 How do autonomy and AI systems affect trust and risk-taking between commanders and subordinates?  
9. 🟢 How might the Irish Defence Forces embed restraint into doctrine to preserve delegation?  
10. 🟢 How do North–South Korea’s drone incursions illustrate the strain persistent ISR places on decentralised command, and what training reforms could the IDF adopt to preserve initiative in low-intensity missions, per Cohen (1996)?  
11. 🟢 What do Houthi drone attacks on Saudi defences reveal about the limits of micromanaged defensive command, and how can the IDF apply this insight to counter-UAS doctrine for EEZ protection, per Stimson Center (2015)?  
12. 🟢 How can the IDF, learning from Israel–Hamas and Russo–Ukraine ISR practices, guard against “sofa generals” syndrome — the temptation for senior leaders to intervene via live feeds — during neutral overseas operations, per Owens (2002)?  
13. 🟢 How do leadership culture and strategic culture shape autonomy’s impact on mission command, and how might Ireland’s tradition of neutrality and peacekeeping ethos explain its reticence to adapt? (HINTON\_2020)  
14. 🟢 What institutional incentives encourage micromanagement despite doctrine?  
15. 🟢 How must training adapt to support mission command and prevent centralisation in the age of autonomy?  
16. 🟢 What evidence from exercises and past conflicts illustrates autonomy reinforcing or undermining mission command?

🧩 **Lower-Tier (Adds Depth)**  
17. 🟢 Can persistent ISR at tactical level strengthen subordinate confidence?  
18. 🟢 How does Betts’s warning about misuse of technology apply to autonomy in command?  
19. 🟢 To what extent do Owens’s “systems of systems” require decentralisation to function?  
20. 🟢 How do commander’s intent, Auftragstaktik, and human-AI teaming interact under autonomy?  
21. 🟢 How does technology foster or inhibit trust within command relationships?  
22. 🟢 What ethical concerns emerge when AI enables remote micromanagement of operations?  
23. 🟢 How do communication bandwidth limitations affect the balance between autonomy and centralisation?  
24. 🟢 How might AI algorithms accelerate initiative-taking at lower echelons of command?  
25. 🟢 How could uncrewed systems undermine trust between commanders and subordinates?  
26. 🟢 What metrics can measure whether AI accelerates or hinders initiative in tactical scenarios?  
27. 🟢 What policy recommendations could ensure AI reinforces rather than undermines mission command?  
28. 🟢 How might autonomy reshape the professional military identity of junior leaders?  
29. 🟢 How do autonomy and degraded communications interact in practice?

**Chapter 2 — Organisational Adaptation: Evolution or Revolution?**

**Central Question:** Do uncrewed and AI-enabled systems compel revolutionary organisational adaptation, or are they absorbed incrementally?

🔑 **Top-Tier (Core, Must Address)**  
30. 🟢 What distinguishes evolutionary from revolutionary organisational change, and why does Krepinevich stress reorganisation as essential?  
31. 🟢 How does Betts’s “conservative progressivism” describe military culture?  
32. 🟢 What does Owens’s vision of a “system of systems” imply for service stovepipes and joint integration?  
33. 🟢 How does Metz’s argument that weakness spurs innovation apply to small states?  
34. 🟢 Can AI-enabled swarms truly invalidate divisions and brigades as organising units?  
35. 🟢 How do CODF and HLAP frame adaptation opportunities for Ireland?  
36. 🟡 How did Azerbaijan’s drone integration in Nagorno-Karabakh, contrasted with Ethiopia’s reliance on external suppliers, illustrate different paths of organisational adaptation, and what lessons can the IDF draw for reforms under CODF 2022, per Krepinevich (1992) and Alach (2008)?  
37. 🟢 Why did Armenia fail to adapt organisationally in Nagorno-Karabakh, and what caution does this provide for Irish Defence Forces reforms under CODF and HLAP, per Stimson Center (2015)?

⚖️ **Mid-Tier (Important, Supporting Analysis)**  
38. 🟢 How do Saudi Arabia’s struggles against Houthi drones highlight the risks of bolt-on autonomy, and what does this suggest for the IDF’s PESCO-aligned reforms, per Betts (1996)?  
39. 🟢 How has Ukraine’s improvised drone industry created new cadres of specialists, and could the IDF pursue a similar niche capability rather than building a full UAS branch, per Krepinevich (1994)?  
40. 🟢 What does Pakistan’s absorption of drones into a nuclear-constrained force structure show about evolutionary adaptation under strategic limits, and what lessons apply to Ireland’s resource-limited reforms under neutrality, per Gray (2005)?  
41. 🟢 How does Israel’s rapid cycle of drone innovation and cadre development demonstrate opportunities and risks for creating new professional identities in a small state military, per Owens (2002) and Husain (2021)?  
42. 🟡 How do Israel–Iran drone countermeasure cycles illustrate the need for agile organisational reform, and what PESCO partnerships could support Irish adaptation under CODF 2022, per Krepinevich (1994)?  
43. 🟡 How do China–India’s reliance on vulnerable drone supply chains illustrate risks for IDF materiel procurement, and what PESCO strategies could enhance resilience under CODF 2022, per Metz (2000)?  
44. 🟢 How might autonomy reshape procurement and training pipelines?  
45. 🟢 What historical analogies (tanks, submarines, radios) inform debates on autonomy-driven adaptation?  
46. 🟢 Could autonomy generate new organisational cadres or hybrid human-AI teams?  
47. 🟢 What evidence shows that drones have become indispensable but not transformative?  
48. 🟢 What institutional barriers — inertia, culture, rivalries — limit revolutionary change?

🧩 **Lower-Tier (Adds Depth)**  
49. 🟢 How does Gray’s emphasis on culture limit revolutionary potential?  
50. 🟢 Does Alach’s critique of RMA rhetoric undermine the revolution thesis?  
51. 🟢 How does Nicholescu’s finding that ISR dominates shape organisational change?  
52. 🟢 What role do leaders play in deciding between bolt-on integration and structural reform?  
53. 🟢 How do Keller’s findings on Pentagon inertia apply to other bureaucracies?  
54. 🟢 What does Rassler’s analysis of non-state innovation suggest about adaptation speed?  
55. 🟢 Are organisational revolutions more likely in small or large militaries?  
56. 🟢 How does institutional identity constrain absorption of autonomy?  
57. 🟢 How do budgets, rivalries, and alliances affect whether adaptations are evolutionary or revolutionary?  
58. 🟢 What case evidence (state and non-state) shows the limits of revolutionary organisational shifts?  
59. 🟢 What metrics evaluate whether adaptations are evolutionary or revolutionary in nature?

**Chapter 3 — The Character of Warfare: Evolutionary Cycles or RMA?**

**Central Question:** Do uncrewed and AI-enabled systems alter the character of war in revolutionary ways, or do evolutionary cycles still prevail?

🔑 **Top-Tier (Core, Must Address)**  
60. 🟢 What defines a Revolution in Military Affairs, and how is it distinguished from evolutionary cycles and war’s enduring nature?  
61. 🟢 What do Nagorno-Karabakh and Ukraine reveal about discontinuity versus continuity in warfare?  
62. 🟢 How persuasive is Husain’s claim that AI-enabled swarms can rival larger formations?  
63. 🟢 What does Cohen mean by RMAs as hypotheses tested in war?  
64. 🟢 How do uncrewed systems alter the balance between offense and defense?  
65. 🟢 Does autonomy shift war from human tempo to machine tempo?  
66. 🟢 How does persistent ISR and AI-enabled sensing alter concealment, surprise, and battlespace awareness?  
67. 🟢 How much of autonomy’s impact is material versus psychological perception?  
68. 🟢 Did drones in Nagorno-Karabakh transform the character of war, or were outcomes driven more by Armenian weaknesses, and what implications does this hold for Ireland’s small-state maritime posture, per Gray (2005)?  
69. 🟢 How does Ukraine’s iterative cycle of drone innovation, countermeasures, and dispersal illustrate evolutionary adaptation rather than clean revolution, and what lessons can the IDF draw for neutrality-based ISR niches, per Husain (2021)?

⚖️ **Mid-Tier (Important, Supporting Analysis)**  
70. 🟢 What does North Korea’s use of drones for infiltration suggest about perception-driven disruption in static conflicts, and how might this shape Irish Defence Forces assessments of low-intensity threats under Ceannaireacht 2023, per Betts (1996)?  
71. 🟢 How have Israel’s campaigns against Hamas and Hezbollah highlighted both battlespace transparency and the persistence of attrition and morale, and what does this suggest for IDF roles in UN missions, per Nicholescu (2023)?  
72. 🟡 Do Iranian drone exports to proxies represent revolutionary diffusion of capability or continuity in traditional proliferation, and how should the IDF anticipate such asymmetric threats, per Alach (2008)?  
73. 🟡 How do China and India’s drone deployments in Ladakh illustrate autonomy’s role in contested grey zones short of open war, and what lessons can the IDF apply to EEZ surveillance under neutrality, per Krepinevich (1992)?  
74. 🟢 What overarching lessons from Ukraine, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Israel–Hamas conflicts are most applicable to Ireland’s balancing of asymmetric threats, peacekeeping, and EEZ defence under CODF 2022, per Stimson Center (2015)?  
75. 🟢 How do small drones striking infrastructure alter deterrence psychology?  
76. 🟢 Did Desert Storm prove or disprove the RMA thesis?  
77. 🟢 How does Gray’s cultural critique challenge revolutionary claims?  
78. 🟢 What does Alach mean by “rhetorical excess” in RMA debates?  
79. 🟢 How does the Stimson Center’s finding of bureaucratic absorption shape continuity arguments?  
80. 🟢 What does Rassler’s study of non-state adoption show about evolutionary cycles?  
81. 🟢 Does Nicholescu’s evidence of ISR dominance contradict or refine revolutionary claims?  
82. 🟢 What role do attrition, morale, and political will continue to play despite autonomy?

🧩 **Lower-Tier (Adds Depth)**  
83. 🟢 What lessons from past RMAs and transformation theories inform current autonomy debates?  
84. 🟢 How does Betts’s warning on misuse apply in contemporary drone campaigns?  
85. 🟢 Proxy wars and non-state adaptations — what do they show about autonomy’s trajectory?  
86. 🟢 How does the integration of AI affect the human element in the fog of war?  
87. 🟢 What examples illustrate revolutionary alterations in warfare character due to autonomy?  
88. 🟢 How do ethical and legal considerations influence perceptions of warfare’s changing character?  
89. 🟢 How might AI exacerbate or mitigate asymmetries in global conflicts?  
90. 🟢 How do adversaries counter or mitigate autonomy advantages?  
91. 🟢 What conditions enable autonomous technologies to produce systemic transformation?  
92. 🟢 How do environmental factors (urban terrain, EW, logistics) interact with autonomy in shaping warfare’s character?  
93. 🟢 How do autonomy and AI systems alter traditional combat power calculations?  
94. 🟢 What future research is needed to better understand autonomy’s role in warfare evolution?

**📌 Quick Ratios**

* **🟢 Safe:** 80 questions (strong coverage)
* **🟡 Usable but sparse:** 12 questions (Ethiopia reliance, Israel–Iran infiltration, China–India supply chains, Ladakh, Iranian diffusion)
* **🔴 High-risk:** 2 questions (Lavender AI, but you’ve already dropped it here)

Here are 5 topics where your **literature coverage is thinner** (linked to the amber-coded questions), so targeting these will help close the gap toward 75%:

1. **Ethiopia–Tigray drone reliance and its organisational/command impact** → most coverage is journalistic or policy-report based; academic depth is limited.
2. **Israel–Iran drone infiltration and countermeasure cycles** → indirect coverage exists via proxy use (Houthis, Hezbollah), but little on doctrinal mission-command implications.
3. **China–India drone deployments in Ladakh (grey-zone ISR/contested borders)** → coverage is mainly regional (IDSA, ORF, PLA sources), sparse in Western doctrine-focused literature.
4. **Drone supply chain vulnerabilities (China–India, Ethiopia imports, Iranian Shahed production)** → industrial/policy sources are available, but integration into RMA/organisational adaptation debates is thinner.
5. **Iranian drone exports as “revolutionary diffusion” vs continuity in arms proliferation** → strong evidence on exports, but limited academic framing in RMA/character-of-war debates.

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