



Mission Command in the Networked Era

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Outline of talk

- Introduction
- Origins of mission command
- Command approach in the modern era
- Conceptual examination of command approach
- Conclusions



Mission Command

- An approach to command characterised by:
 - Timely and effective decision making
 - Shared understanding of commander's intent
 - Subordinates' responsibility to deliver that intent
 - Decentralisation of authority
 - Mutual trust



Mission Command

“Mission command allows” the commander “the latitude, as well as the means, to select and execute the most appropriate course of action necessary to achieve his objectives. However, reality dictates that the degree of freedom afforded will depend on the nature of the conflict.” (UK JWP 3-00)

“...There is a fluid middle ground that I will call adaptive control. There are circumstances in which, on one day, I may need to command certain assets centrally, and on another day, I may not.” (ACM Burrige)



Origins of Mission Command

- Twin battles of Jena / Auerstedt 1806
- Comprehensive defeat of the Prussian Army by Napoleon's Grande Armée
- Prussian military reforms were grounded in an analysis of Napoleon's forces.
- Reforms shaped the subsequent development of the Prussian and German Armies
- The widespread adoption of mission command in late 20th Century was, in part, driven by analyses of WWII German forces.



What influences command approach?

- Personnel (selection / training)
- Process (grounded in doctrine, concepts, experience)
- Organisation (structure)
- Technology (weapons, vehicles, communications etc.)



The Influence of Technology

- By the late 18th Century central control of forces was becoming unrealistic owing to:
 - Improved weapons technology
 - Requirement for reduced concentration
 - Formations broken up
 - Communications could not keep up
- Historically, junior officers' roles were focused on motivation rather than direction
- “Only when modern weapons forced armies to burrow into the ground and wear uniforms that made them hard to see did junior officers have to become minor tacticians.”
(Desmond Morton)
- The ability to delegate command authority was advantageous



Battlefield Dispersion

| | Area KM² | Depth | Front |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Antiquity | 1 | 0.15 | 6.5 |
| Napoleonic Period | 20 | 2.5 | 8 |
| WWII | 2,750 | 57 | 48 |

Dispersion of 100,000 personnel
(source: T. Dupuy, 1980)



Prussia: Military reform after 1806

| <i>Before</i> | <i>After</i> |
|--|--|
| Personnel: Officers: primarily nobility / junkers Soldiers: majority are foreign, many 'pressed' men, discipline was savage | Officers: Increased meritocracy Soldiers: motivated, patriotic, reserve General staff officers: selected and trained |
| Organisation: Linear, rigid, drilled | All-arms Corps system introduced General Staff instituted |
| Process Centralised decision making Reliant on the commander's capability | Directive command Führen durch Auftrag 'Institutionalised excellence' |



Auftragstaktik

- Effective reform required more than structural change
- Responsiveness of French commanders to the will of Napoleon
- Gneisenau promotes the concept of command by direction:
 - Clarity of objectives
 - Only general indications of method
 - Enables initiative in the face of opportunity
- Moltke blends these ideas with Clausewitz's notion of chaos
 - Control should be devolved to the level at which the commander can read the battle
 - Orders are prone to obsolescence as situations change
- These reforms took time to embed in the culture



‘A favourable situation will never be exploited if commanders wait for orders. The highest commander and the youngest soldier must be conscious of the fact that omission and inactivity are worse than resorting to the wrong expedient’

Moltke the Elder



A continuum of command approach

- Decentralised vs Centralised
- Example frameworks:
 - Czerwinski (1996)
 - Command by Influence
 - Command by Plan
 - Command by Direction
 - Alberts and Hayes (1995)
 - Mission Specific
 - Objective Specific
 - Order Specific



Mission Command and NEOps

- New CIS technology:
 - has caught up!
 - supports any command approach
 - “At the tactical level, network-enabled capabilities enhance forward command.” (UK ADP Land Operations 2005)
 - Soviet forces used “C3I systems to strengthen top-down authority in a system described as ‘forward command from the rear’” (Toffler, 1994)



What influences command approach?

- The ability to alter command approach may enable:
 - Risk reduction
 - Agility
- But in the complex / dynamic situations likely in ‘full-spectrum operations’
 - Centralisation can only support a narrow focus (e.g. reachback for individuals / sub-units)
 - Mission command is essential elsewhere
- Mission command relies on commander’s intent



Field Marshal Slim

“ Commanders at all levels had to act more on their own; they were given greater latitude to work out their own plans to achieve what they knew was the Army Commander’s intention. In time they developed to a marked degree a flexibility of mind and a firmness of decision that enabled them to act swiftly to take advantage of sudden information or changing circumstances without reference to their superiors. ...This requires in the higher command a corresponding flexibility of mind, confidence in subordinates, and the power to make its intentions clear through the force.”

Quoted in UK ADP Land Operations

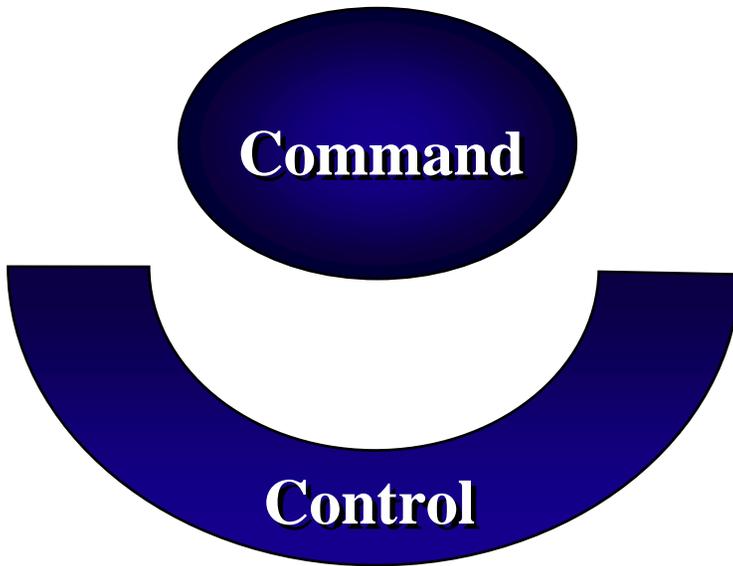
“I have published under my name a good many operational orders and a good many directives... but there is one paragraph in the order that I have always written myself... the intention paragraph.”

Quoted in CFP 300(3) Land Command



Conceptual Framework for C²

(Pigeau and McCann)



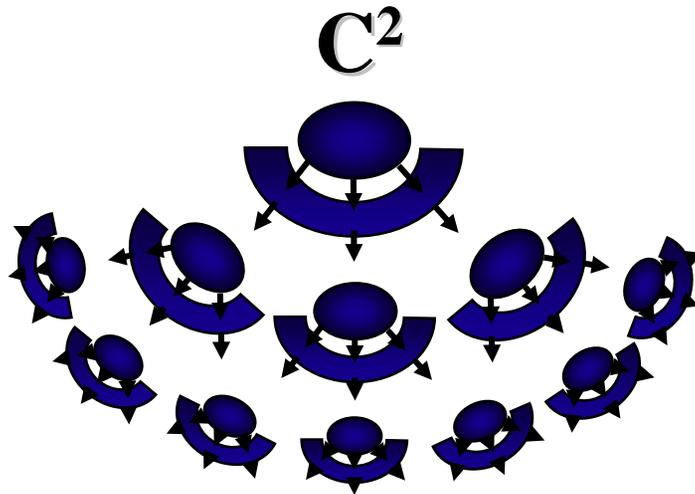
The creative expression of human will necessary to accomplish the mission.

Those structures and processes devised by Command to enable it and to manage risk.



Conceptual Framework for C²

(Pigeau and McCann)



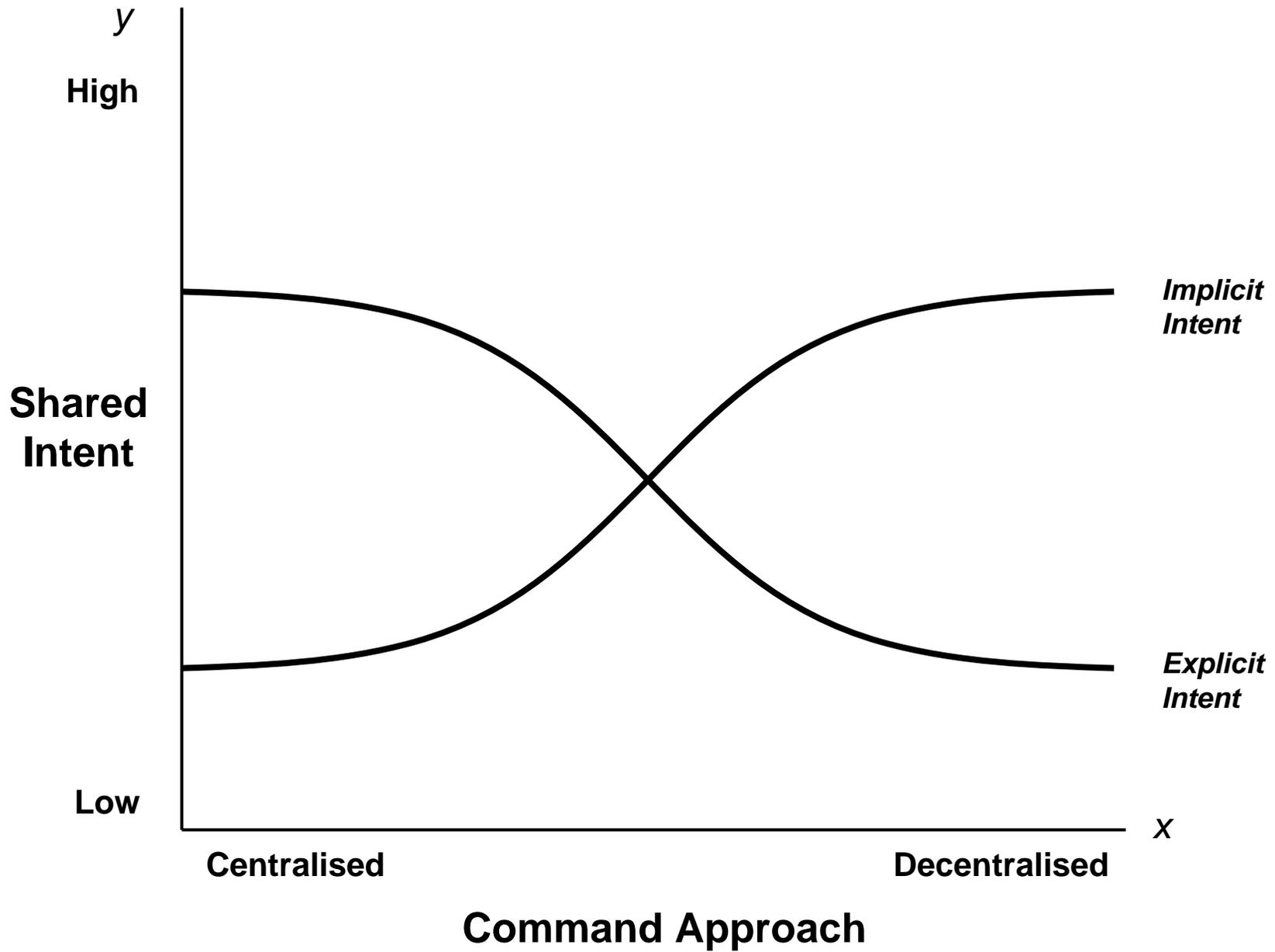
The establishment of common intent to achieve coordinated action.

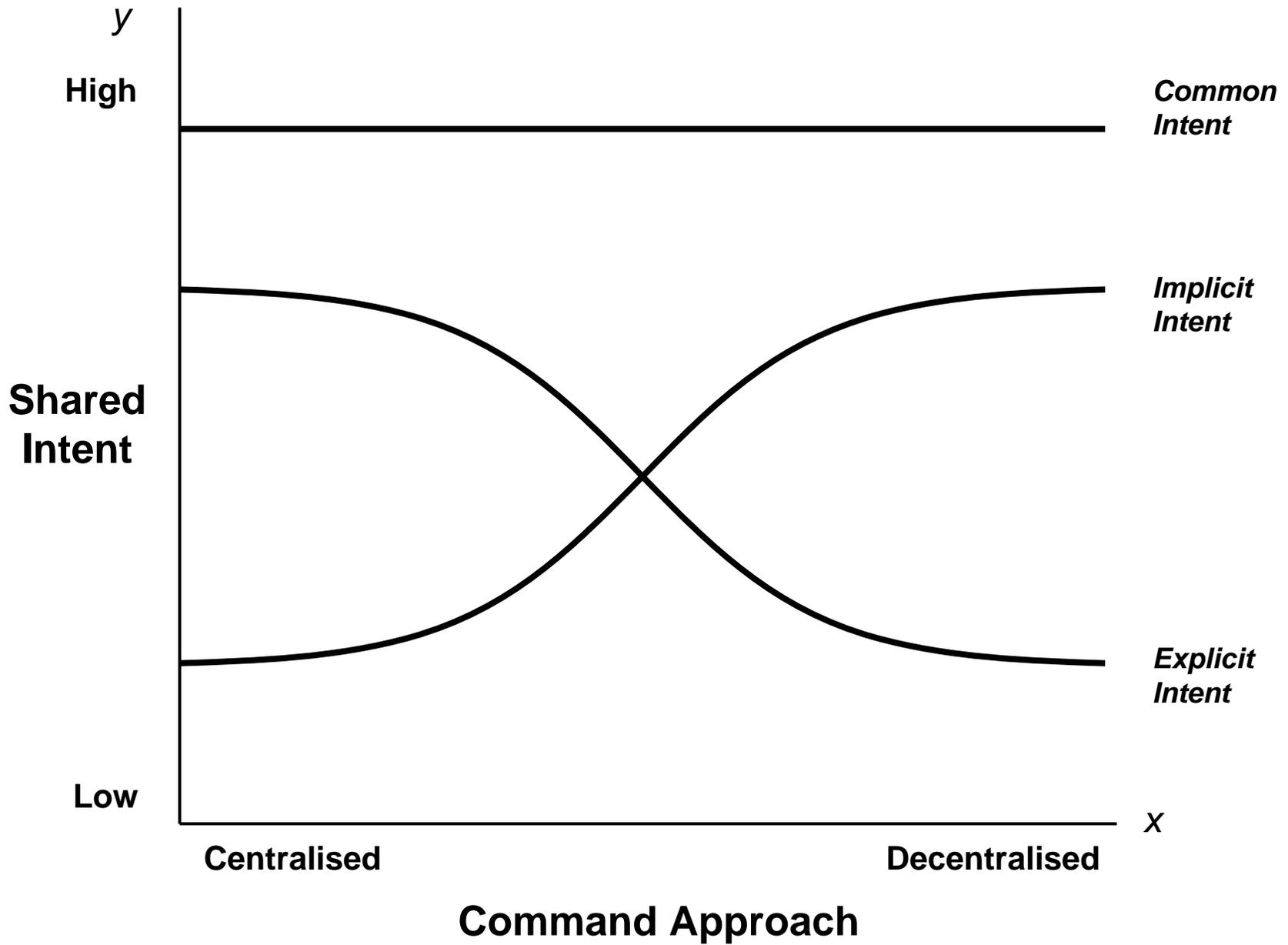
- Common Intent: The sum of shared explicit intent plus operationally relevant shared implicit intent.

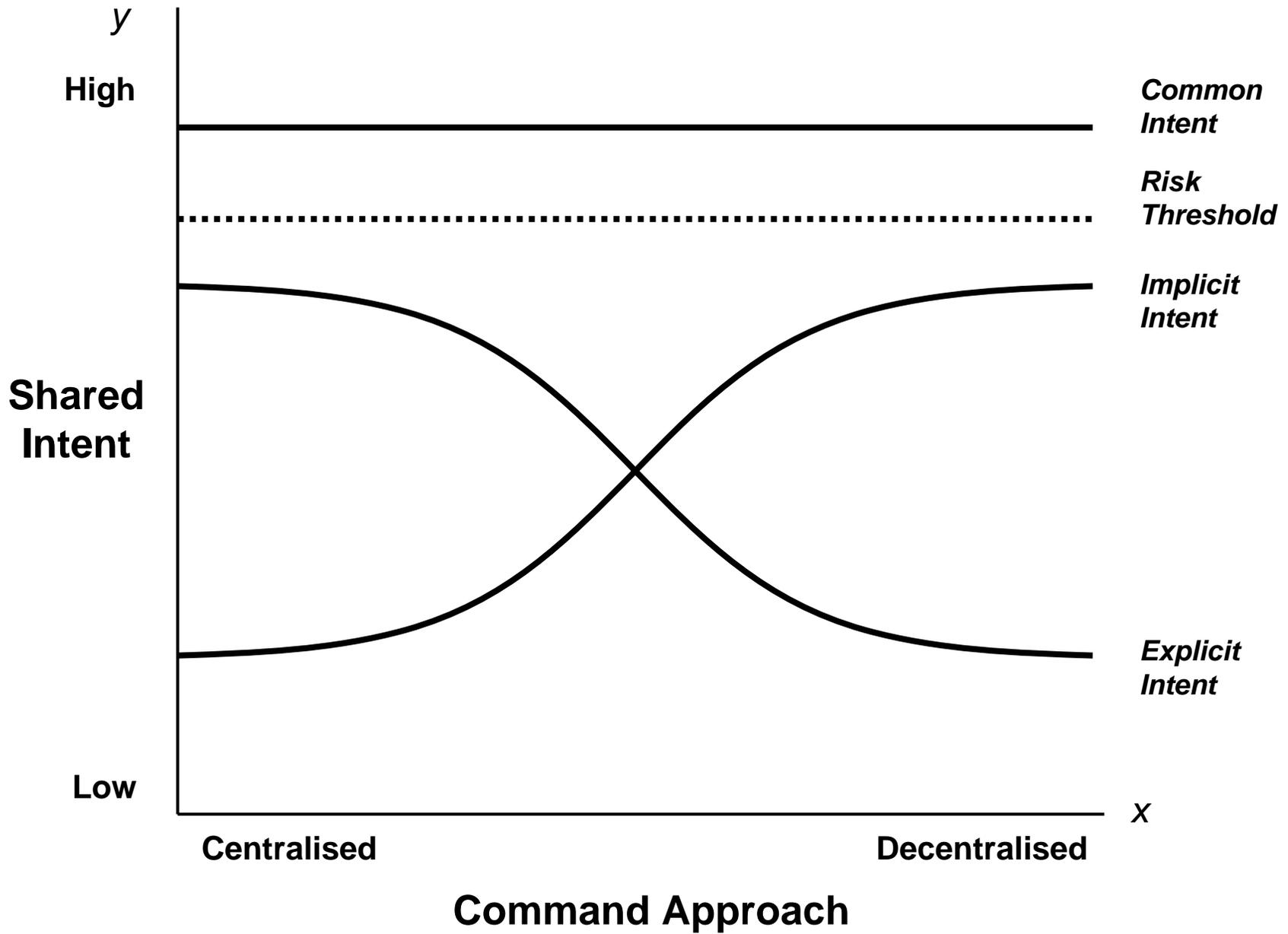


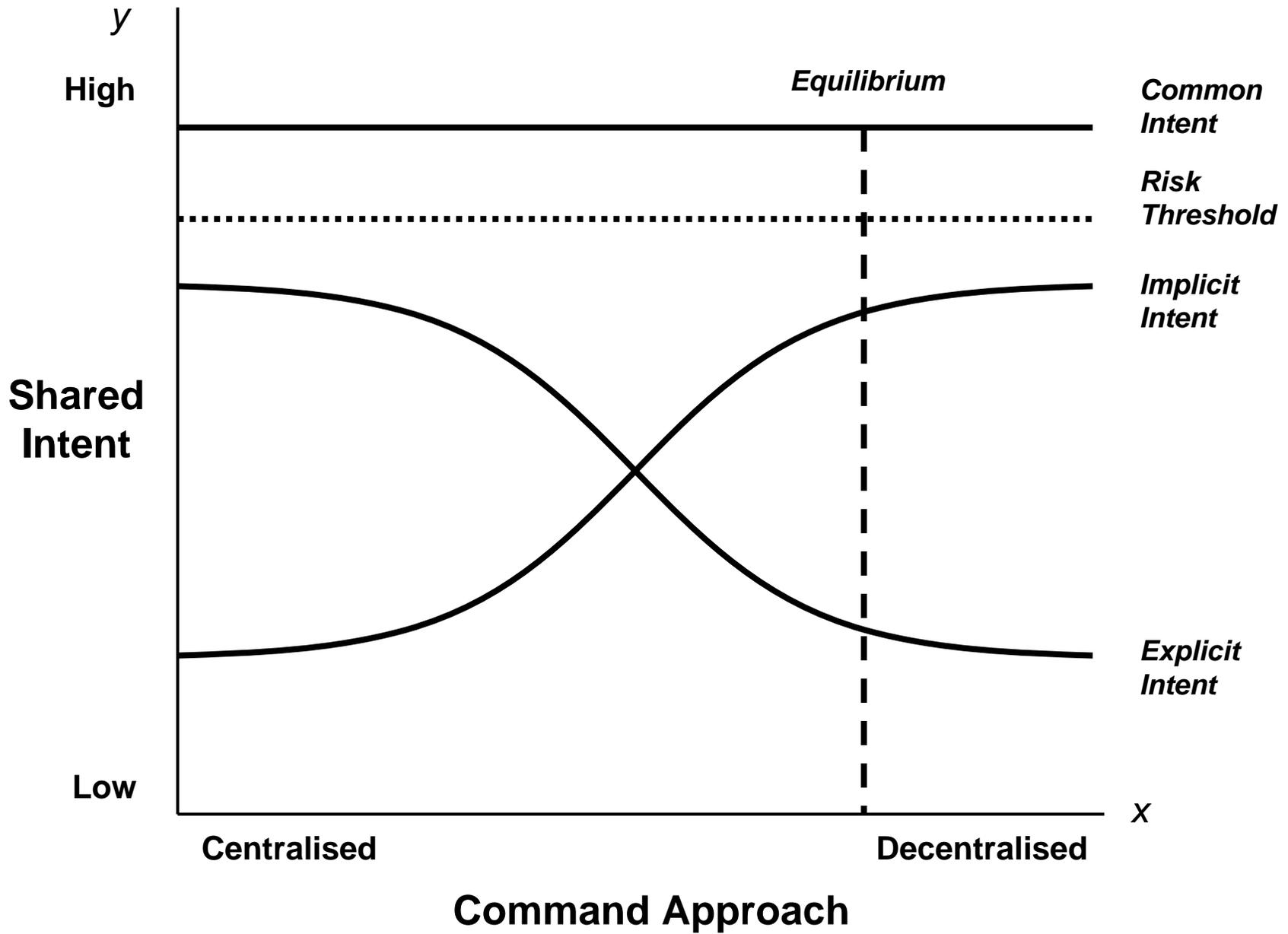
What influences command approach?

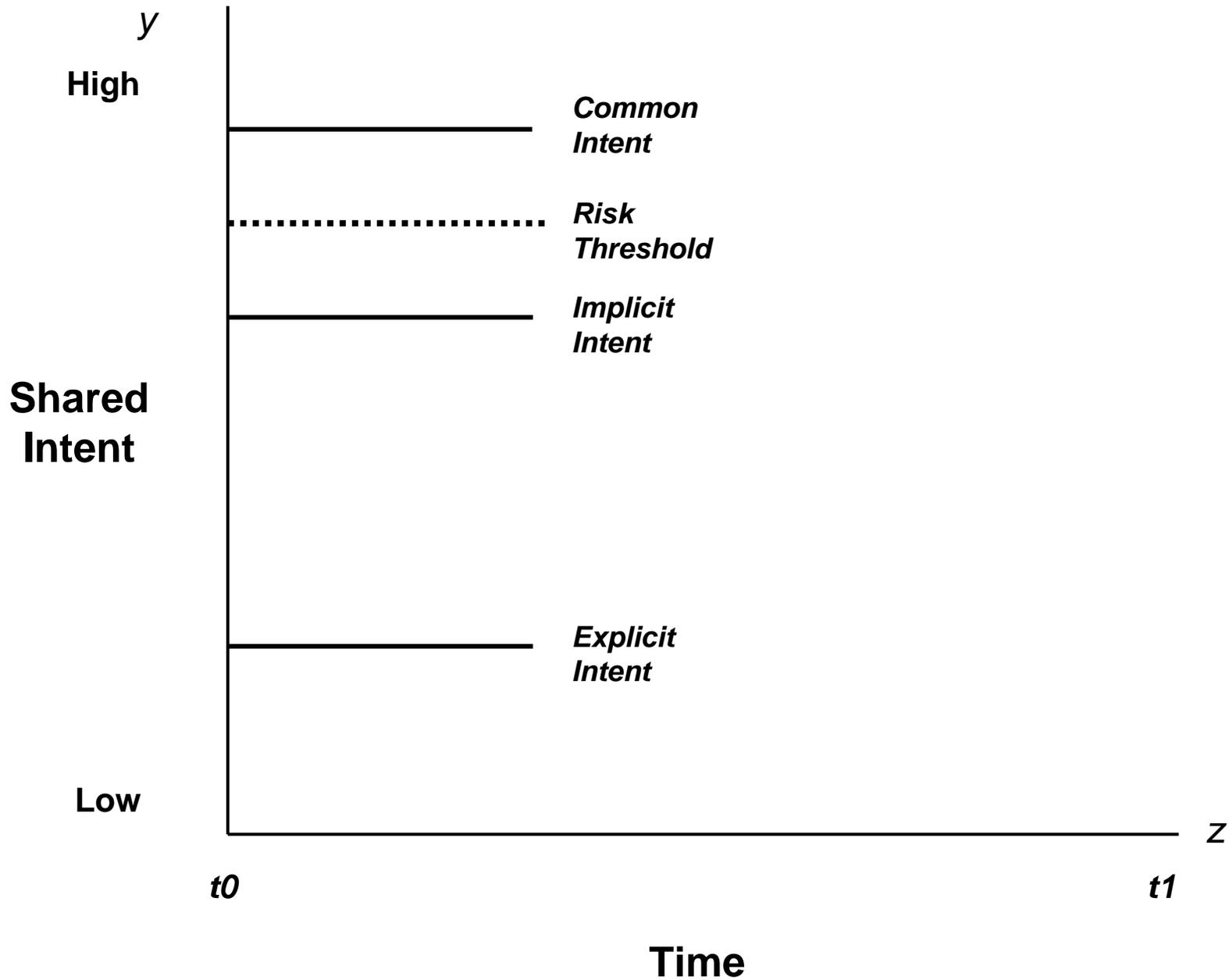
- Pigeau and McCann (2006)
 - 3 factors underpin the balance of explicit vs implicit intent
 - shared knowledge,
 - comparable reasoning ability
 - shared commitment and motivation
- Common intent underpins performance can be used as an indicator of risk



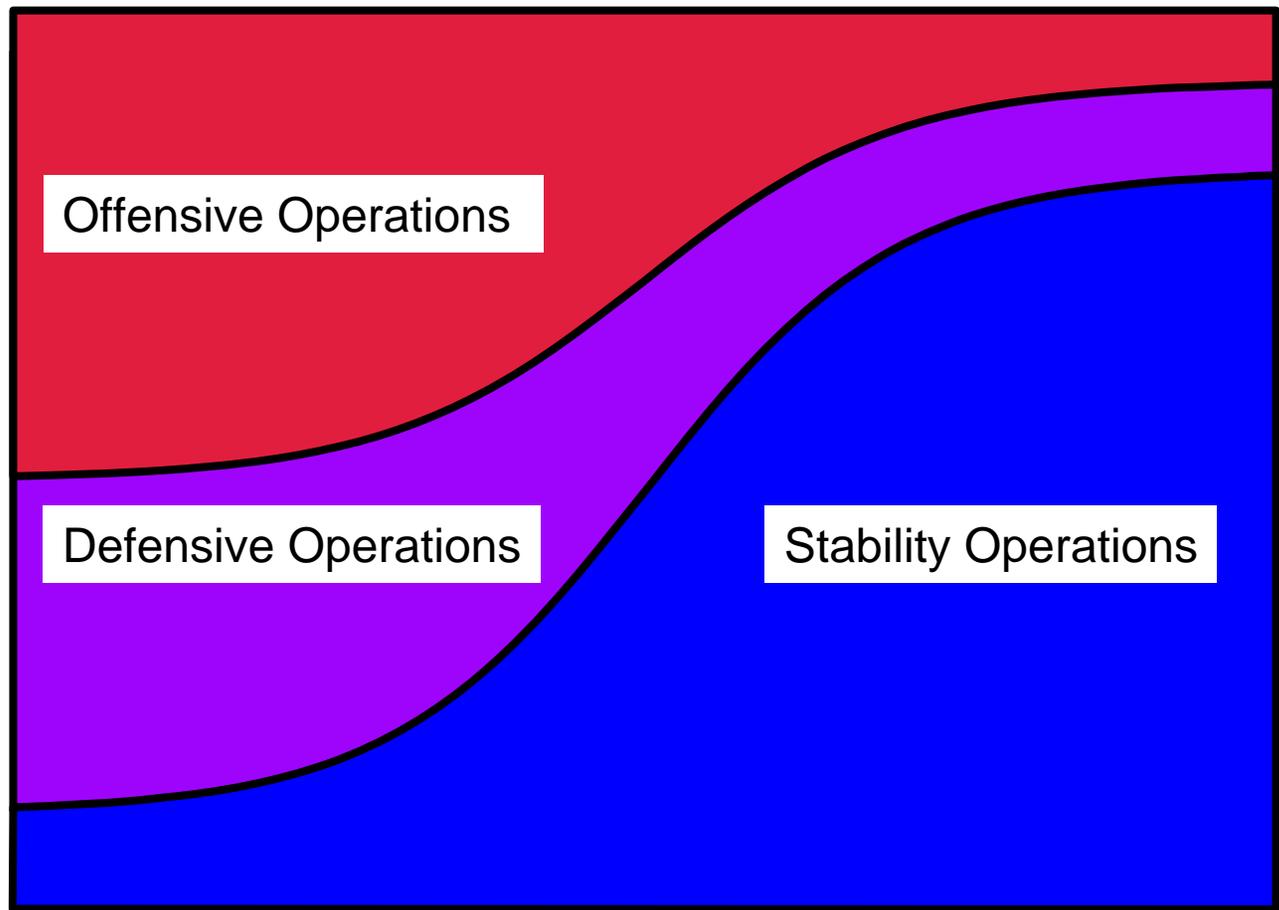




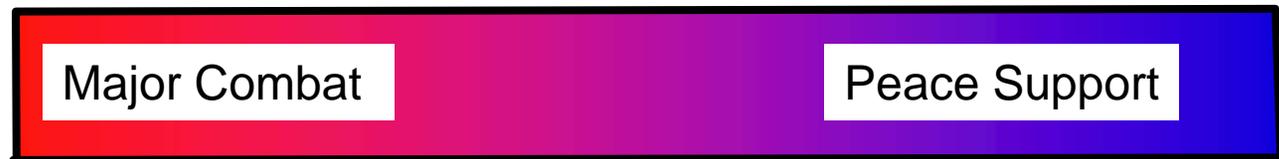




**Tactical
Activities:
Relative
Effort**



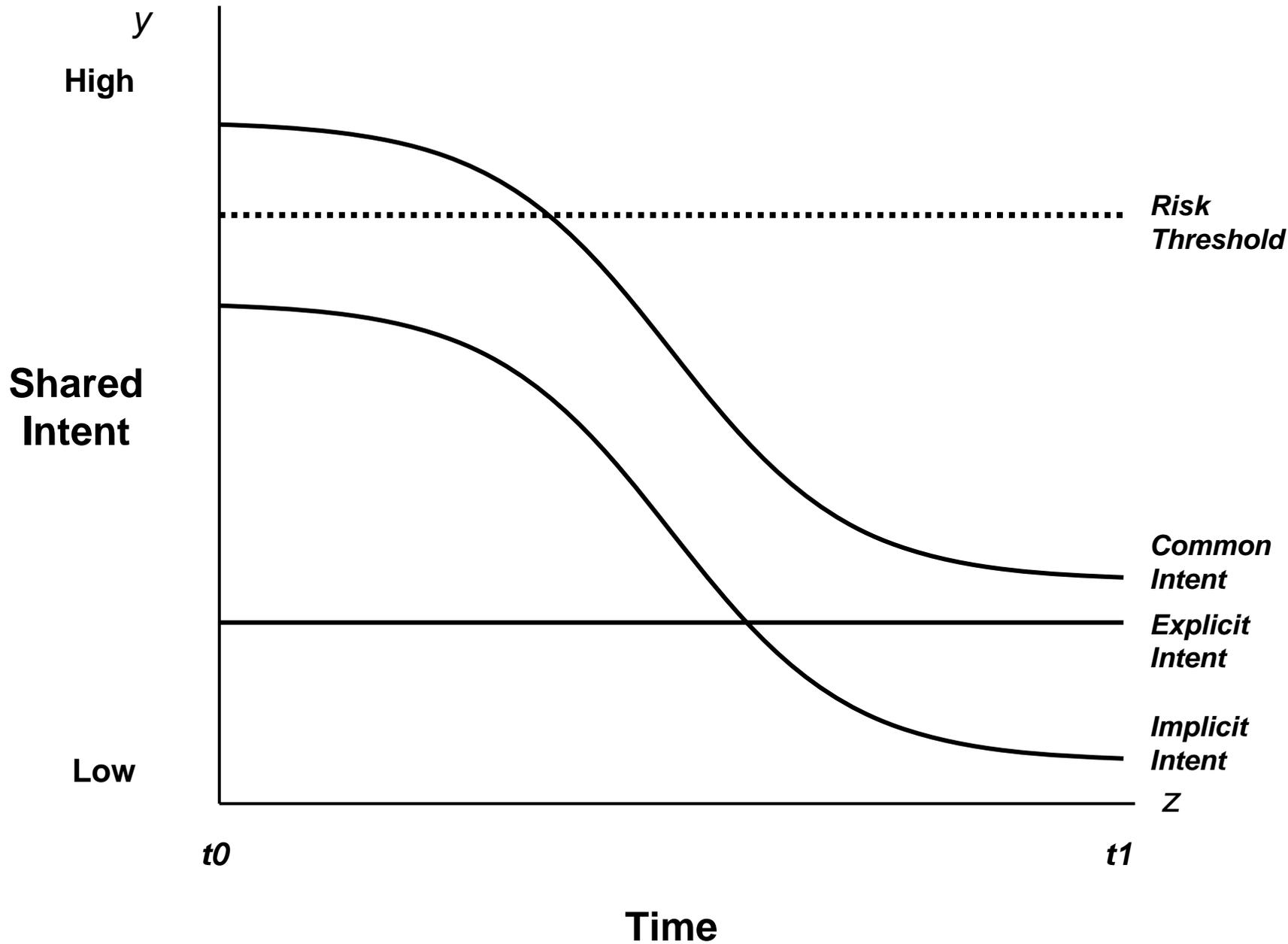
**Campaign
Theme**

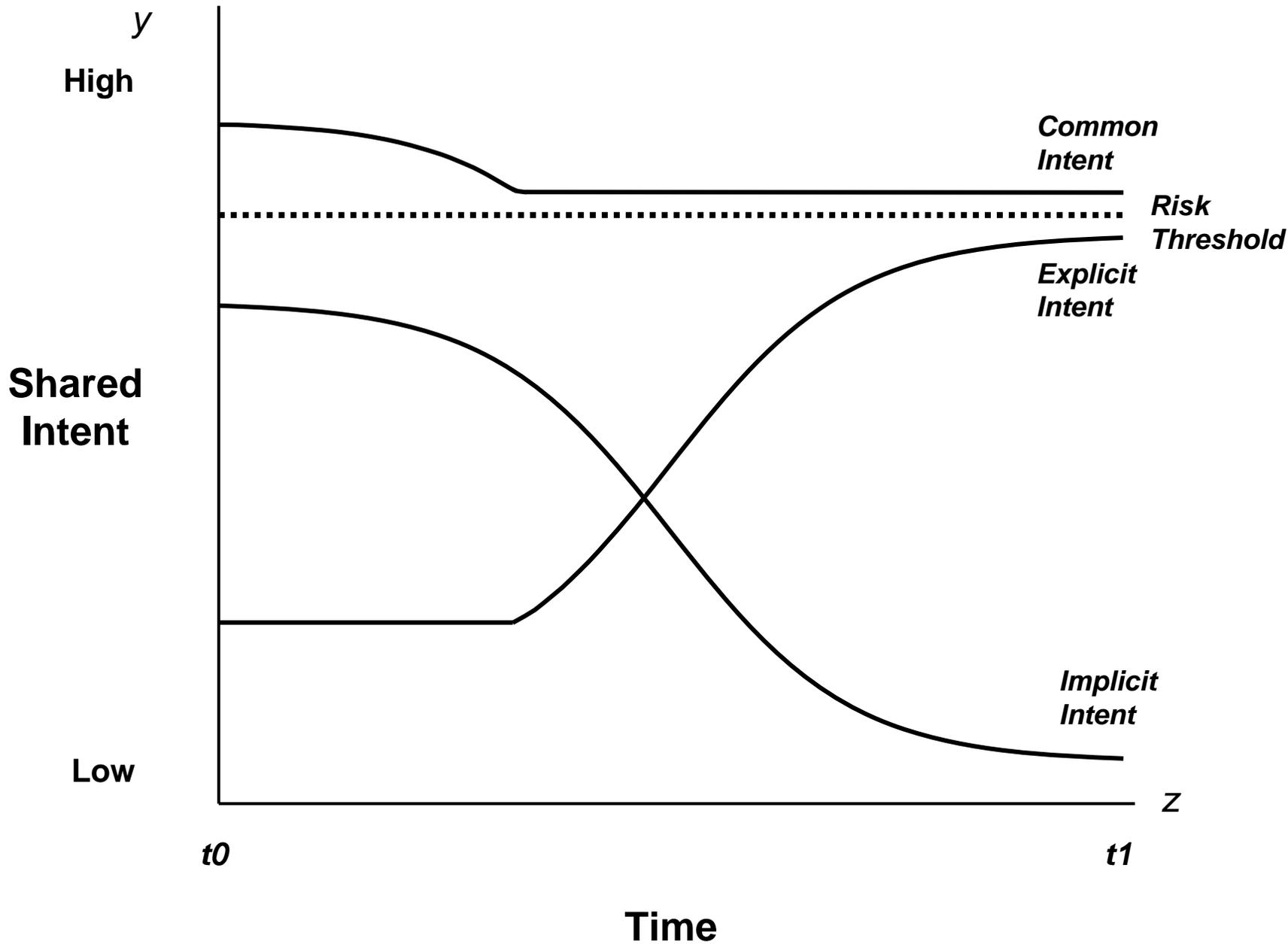


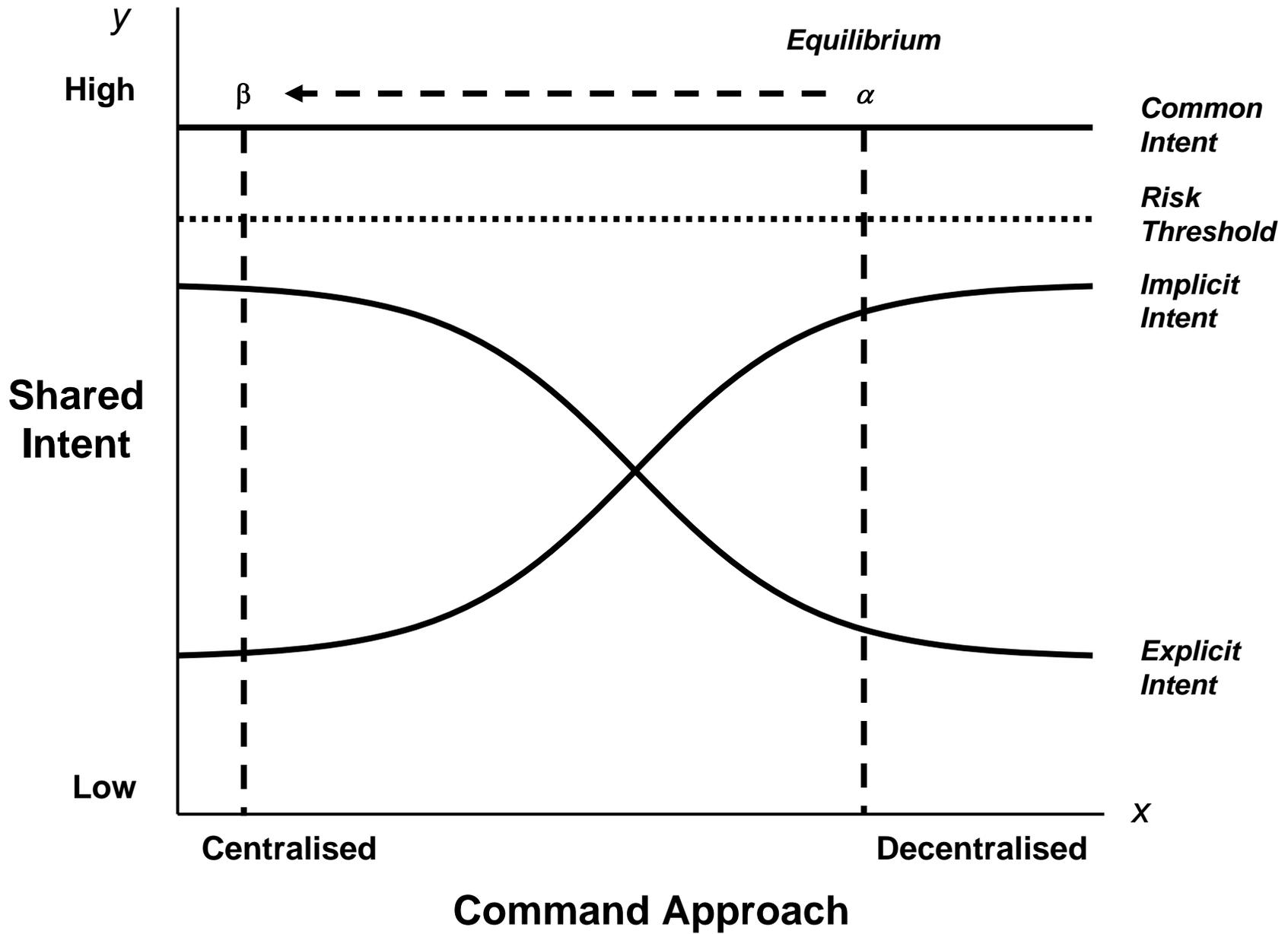
t_0

Time

t_1









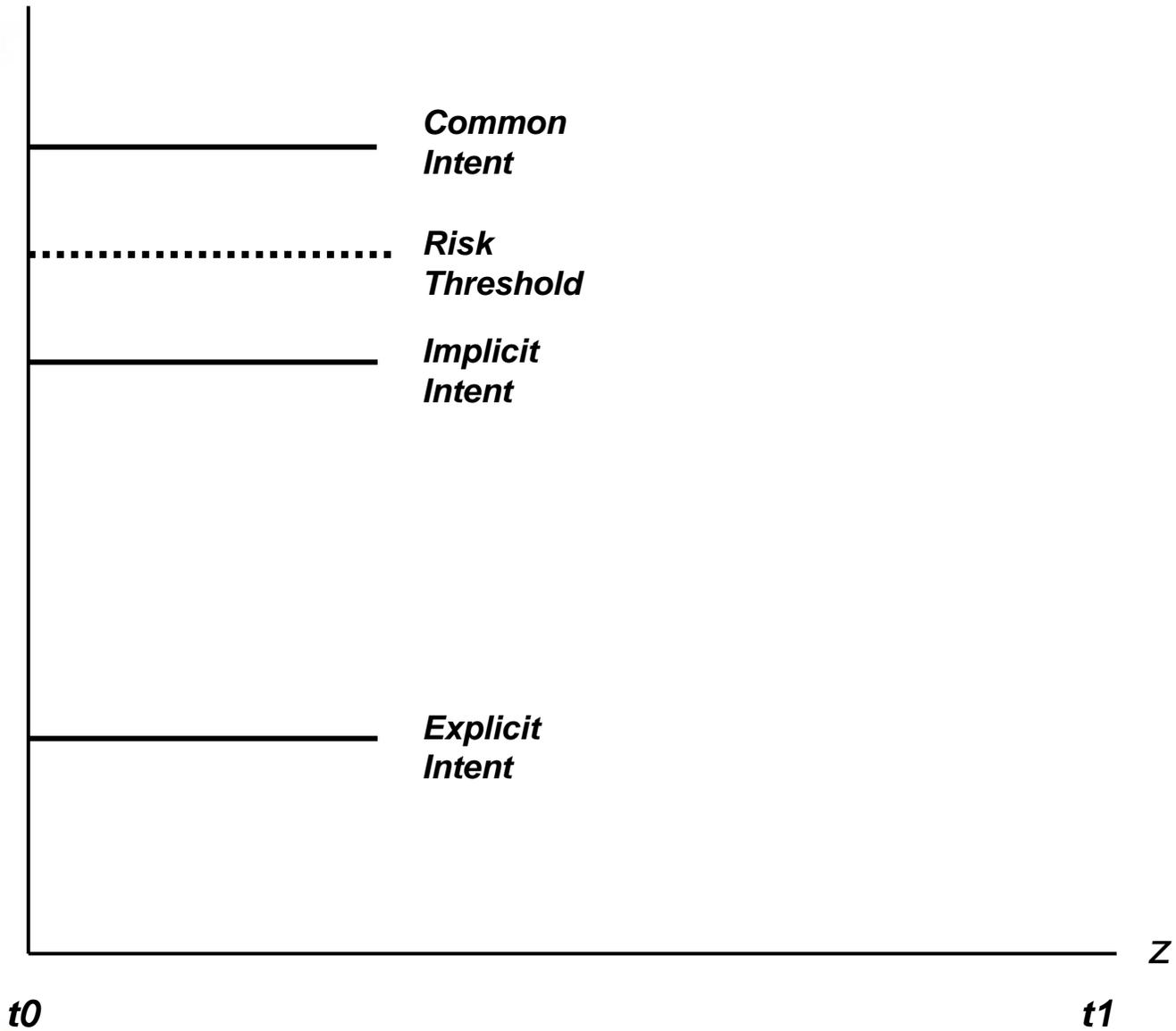
Equilibrium and elasticity

- All military organisations:
- Have a point of command and control equilibrium for which ALL lines of development are optimised
- Have a level of ‘elasticity of command’ – a capacity to move away from equilibrium
- Organisations differ in:
 - How far they can move and remain efficient
 - How long they can sustain this move
- Moving towards decentralisation requires reserves of implicit intent – ‘potential implicit intent’

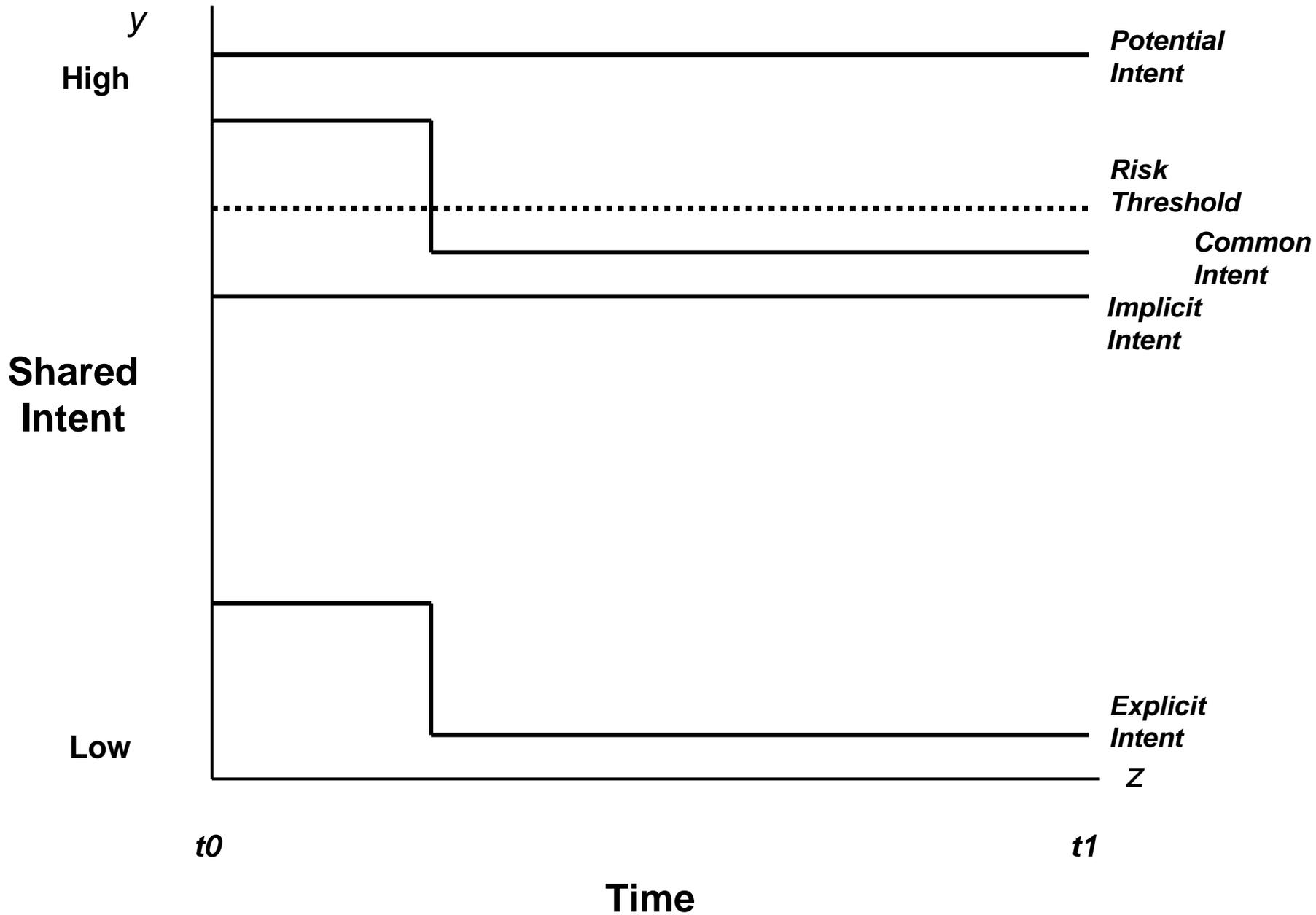


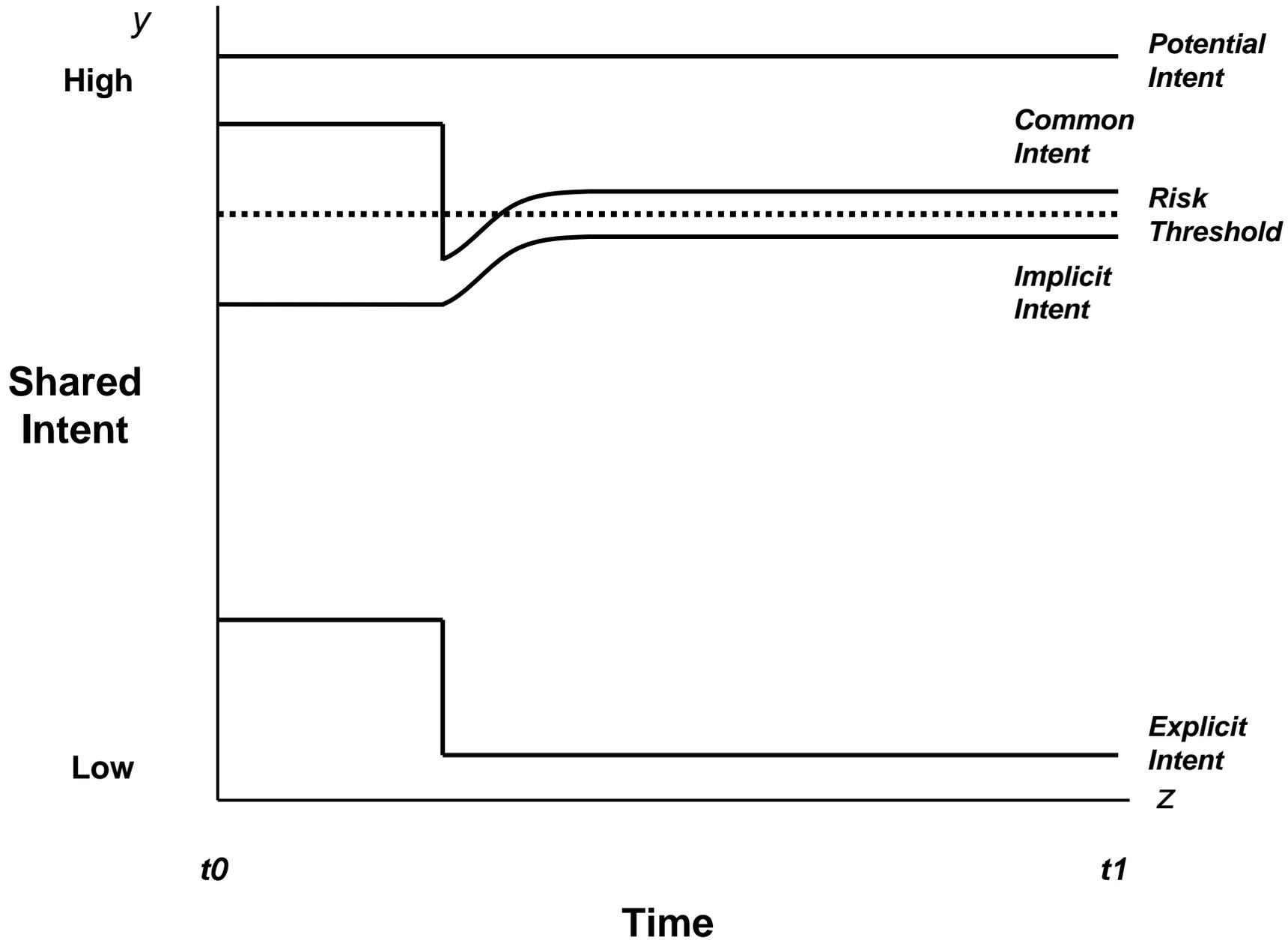
Shared Intent

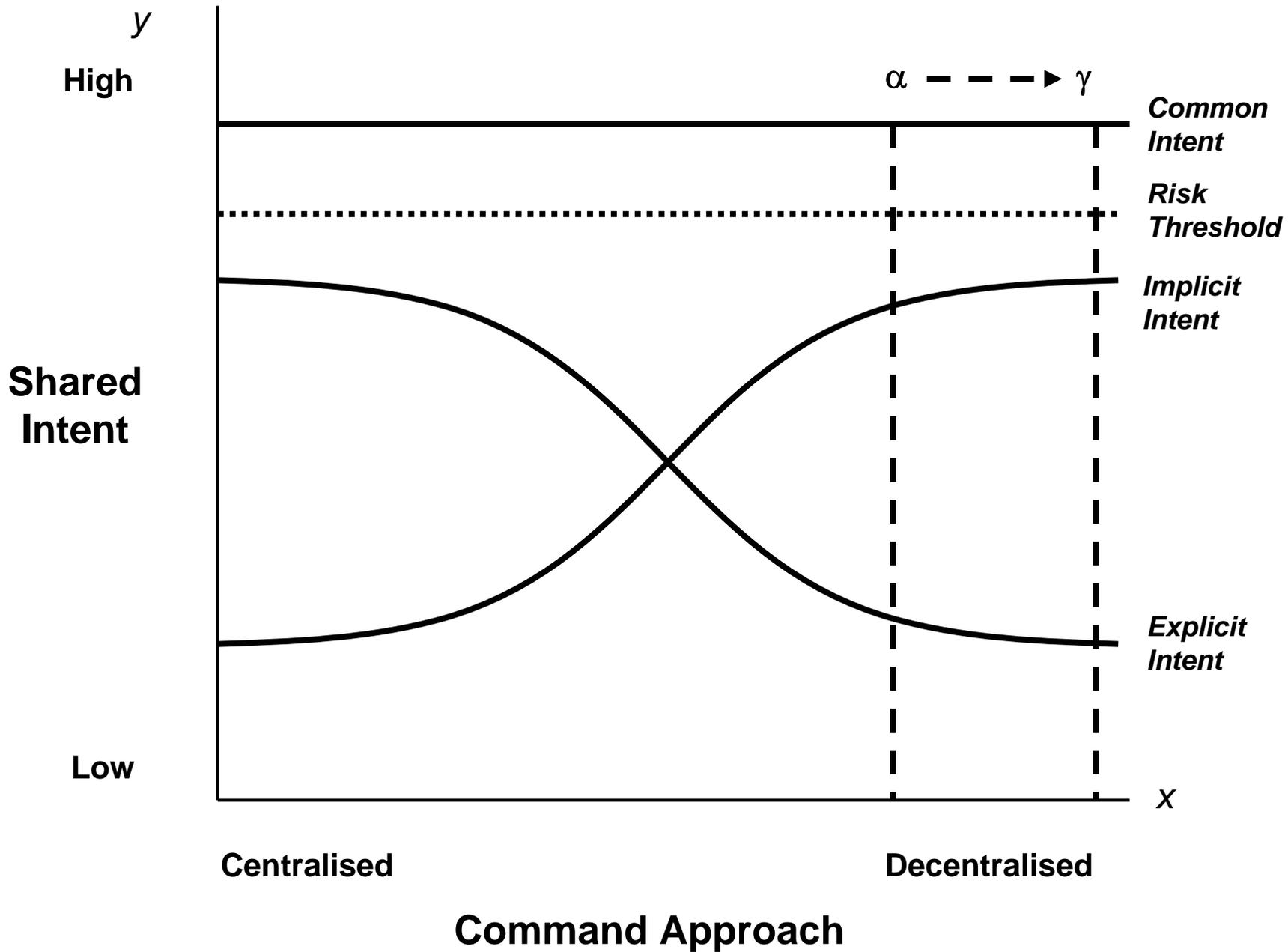
Low

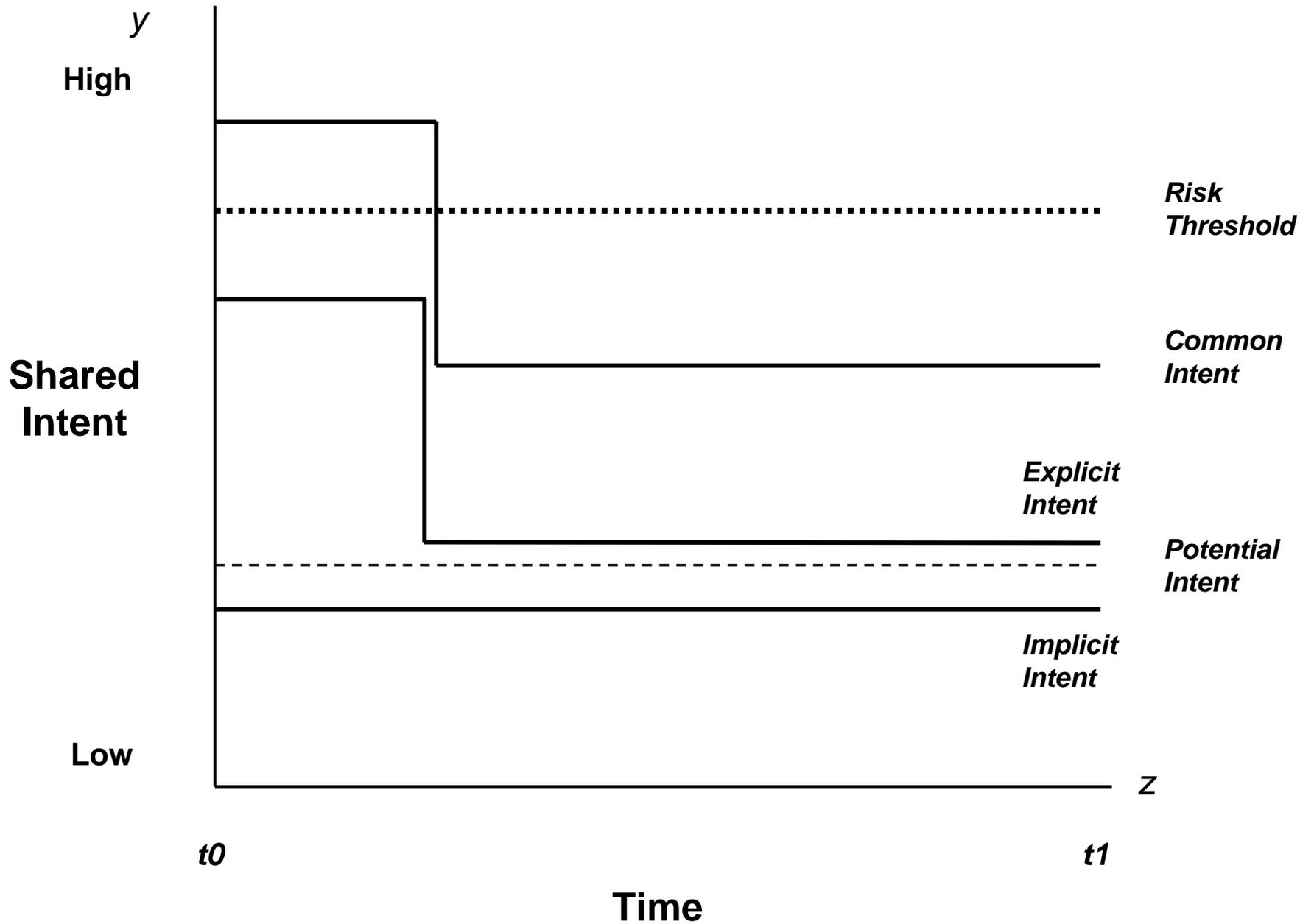


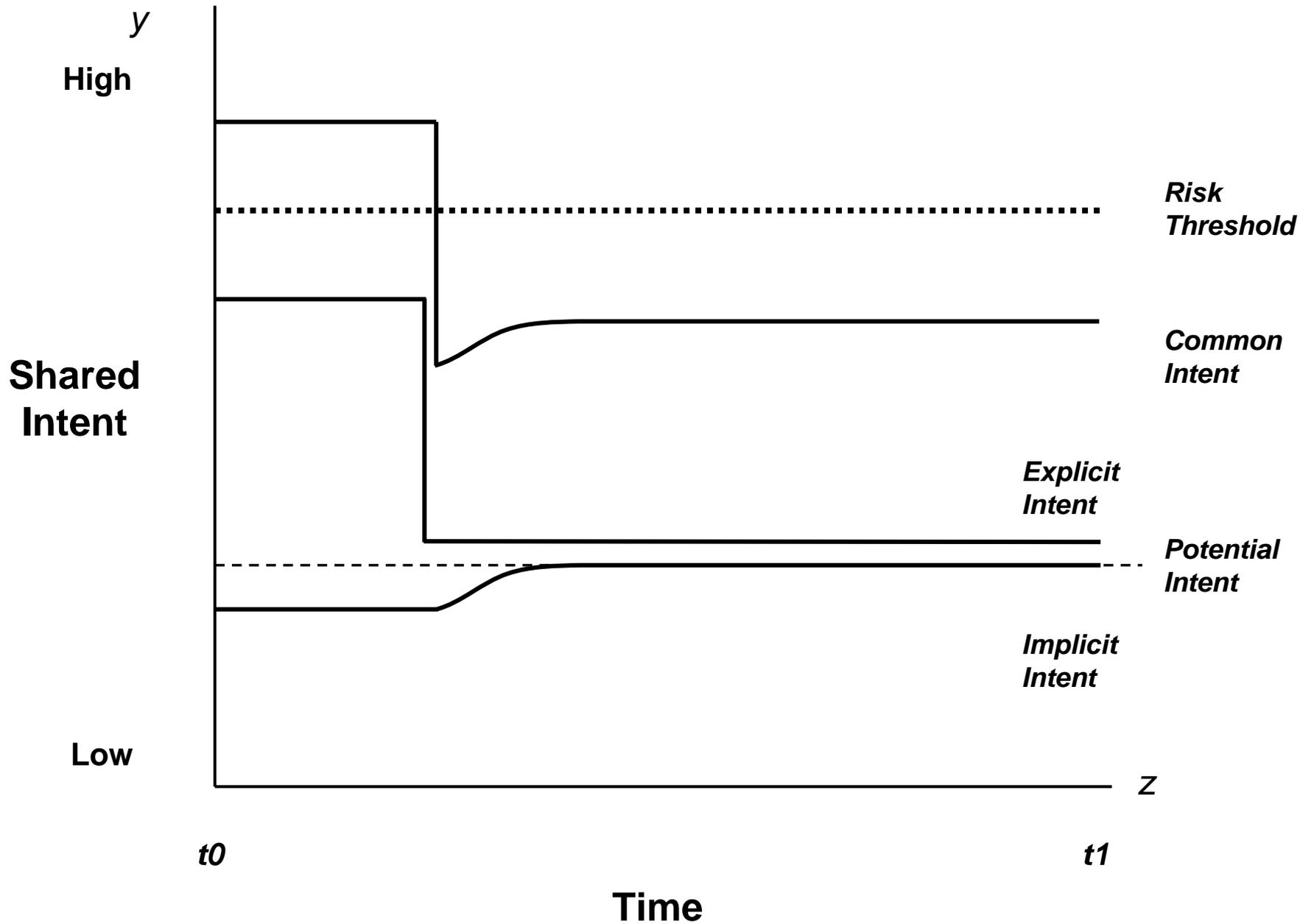
Time

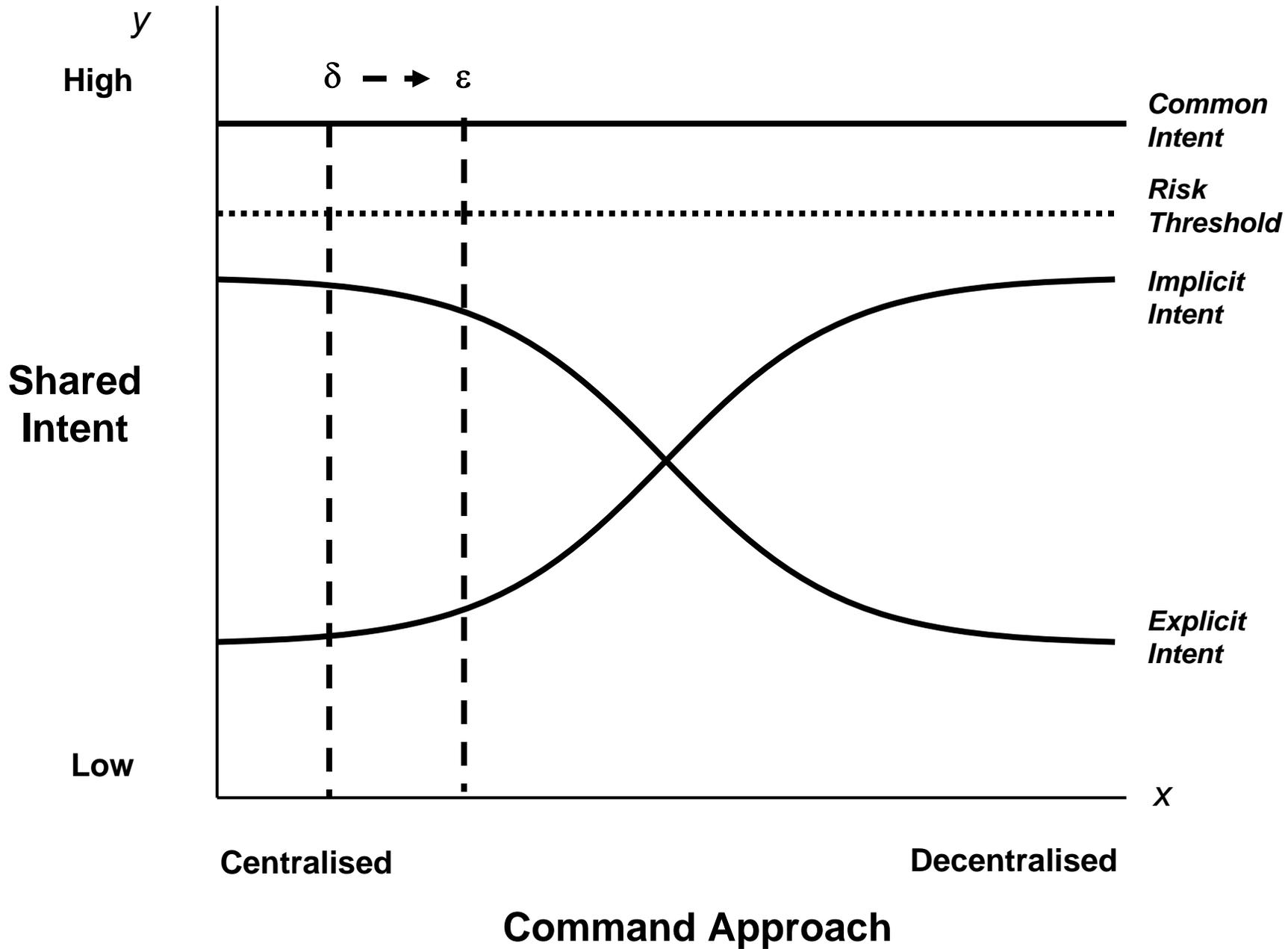














Conclusions



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Conclusions

- In the era of 'industrial war' mission command has been an efficient compromise owing to the physical and organisational structuring of military forces.
- Communications and information technology have widened the available range of command approaches.
- Decentralisation still offers the advantage in adaptation to novel situations – this is based on potential implicit intent
- Organisations that have equilibrium in the region of decentralisation can, in the short term, step down to centralised operation
- Such organisations have more 'elasticity'



Conclusions

- Mission command is based on intangible qualities of the organisation e.g. trust, expertise, experience, culture
- The aspiration for decentralisation of command requires that forces develop a deep, broad, reservoir of implicit intent.
 - Shared knowledge
 - Comparable reasoning ability
 - Shared commitment and motivation
- The adoption of command approach is a question of economics
 - Costs go up with degree of decentralisation
 - Mission command is costly
 - Mission command takes time to cultivate
 - It is reliant on all lines of development



What influences command approach?

“Conceptual grafting” of auftragstaktik into other nations’ doctrine is mistaken unless the fundamental building blocks, including culture and societal influence are in place.

Col Chuck Oliviero (1998)

- Culture: Values, beliefs, attitudes
- Trust
- Expectation of initiative
- Lack of risk aversion
- Benign non-compliance
- Mission command is bottom-up: a style of ‘followership’.

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