



Transmission and Reception of Commander's Intent in a Hierarchical Chain of Command

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Method

- Command & Control builds on two leading principles: good overall understanding and great flexibility.
- Good overall understanding is necessary for making commanders take own initiatives.
- Swedish military act according Mission type tactics

Background

- Mission type tactics include commanders that see an opportunity and act fast, even though the orders does not say exactly how to solve the situation.
- Commanders has to provide plans and issue the overall view to the subordinate commanders, partly as Commanders Intent (CI)

Background

- The Swedish Armed Forces define CI as:
“The commander’s intent (CI) is the foundation for subordinate commanders’ possibilities to take initiatives when unexpected possibilities occur. CI shall be expressed briefly and is mandatory for all orders.” [from Försvarsmakten, 2008, p.66]

Background

- *US Army defines CI in a similar but somewhat different way:*

“The commander’s intent is a clear, concise statement of what the force must do and the conditions the force must meet to succeed with respect to the enemy, terrain, and the desired end state.” [from Headquarters Department of Army, 1997, 5-14]



Background

- CI gives the receivers possibility to act from local information.
- To much control may inhibits initiatives.
- To little control may jeopardize coordination and counterproductive actions may occur.

Background - Shattuck & woods (2000)

- Investigated CI in a simulation and showed that company commanders only matched battalion commanders in 34% of the episodes.
- This indicate a problem with possible severe consequences

Background - (Winner, Freeman, Cooke, & Goodwin, 2007).

- Subordinates are more likely to share and adapt to CI when it expresses the values by which the action should be selected.
- Less adaptable to unexpected changes when the mission is stated concretely with specific tasks.

Background — Lindoff et. al, 2006

- Research also supports the finding that statement composition can affect the interpretation of CI.
- CI expressed in terms of effects produce better products and gives better understanding than CI expressed in terms of capabilities.

Method - purpose

Investigate transmission and reception of CI
in the hierarchical command chain

Method

- A brigade battle field exercise with regular military activities.
- A defensive operation with purpose to enforce a peace plan.
- Possibilities to collect data somewhat limited.
- High external validity with subjects in their natural environment.

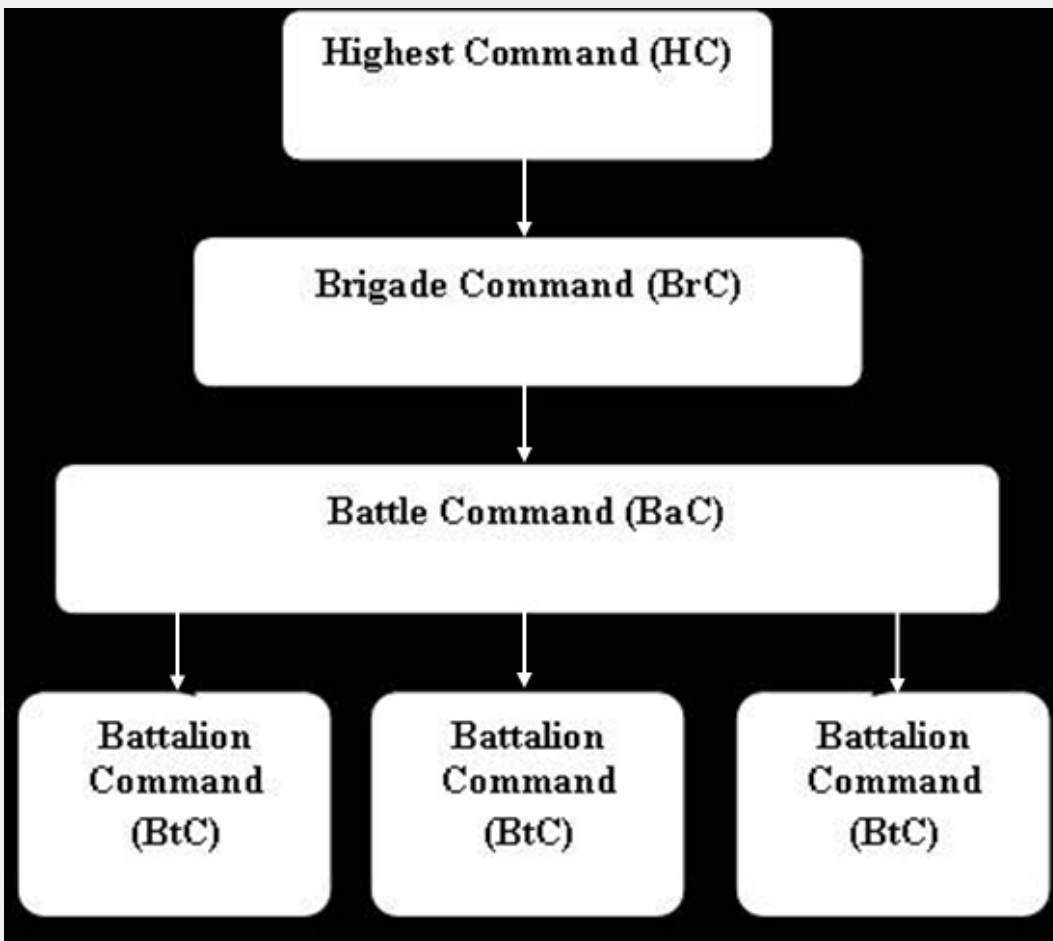
Method - environment



Method

- Communication between staff members by phone, mail, computer network area, and various C2 systems (SLB).
- 100 officers during the exercise.
- Trained to command 6000 soldiers and be a part of the European Union group of 60 000 soldiers.
- 11 officers in this study.

Method - participants



1 Commander

1 Commander

6 Commanders

3 Commanders

Method - questionnaires

- One questionnaire for each command level
- 7-point rating scale
- Open questions

CI questions included:

- the most important content of CI during the scenario
- transmission and reception of CI
- changes in CI after feedback from subordinates

Results – open questions

CI from HC:

- Create a safe and secure environment.
- Implement peace agreements.
- Neutralize irregular troops.
- Implement a control zone-of-separation.
- Provide the local authorities the possibility to act.

Results – open questions

CI from BrC:

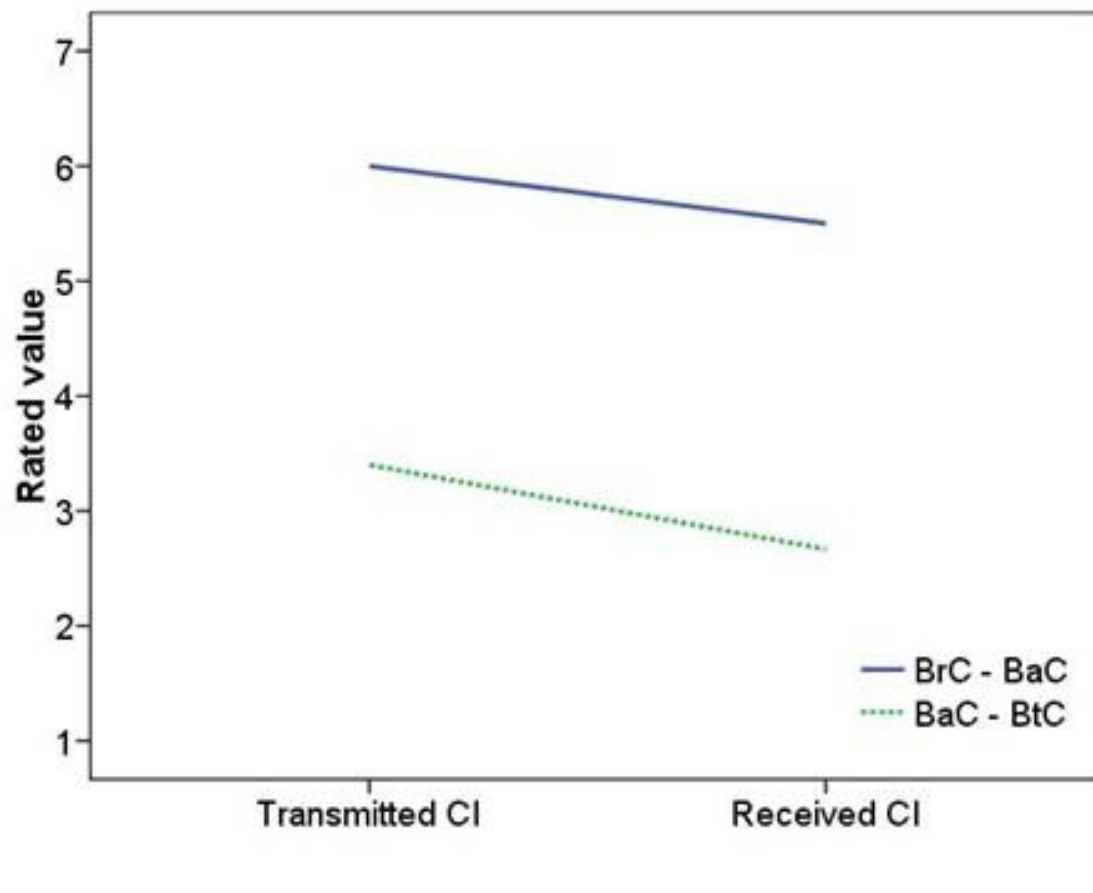
- Altered CI to handle problems in different areas, prepare for a possible hostile attack, and finalize the operation.
- This is different from HC, who formulated CI more abstract and overall.

Results – open questions

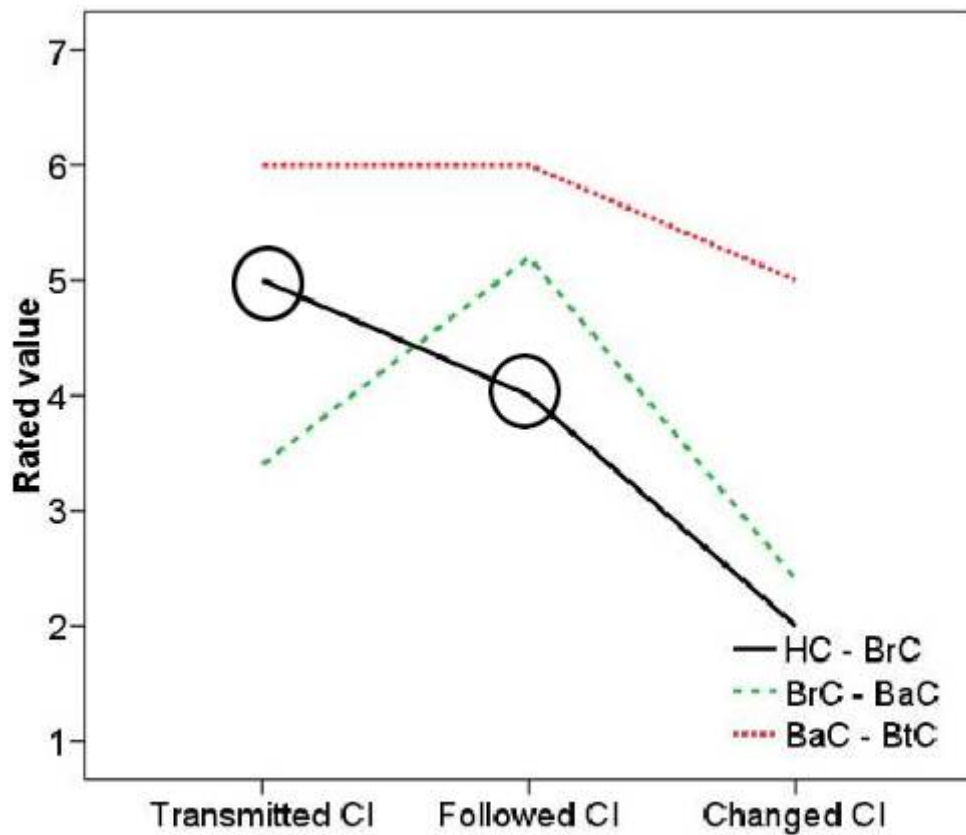
CI from BaC & BtC:

- The BaC view of CI correlates well with the BrC view, and somewhat less with the HC more overall and abstract view.
- BtC is on a pragmatic operational level and explained CI with less details than on superior levels (BrC and BaC). One battalion commander also expressed some concern about the overall goals of the operation, which was not the case at any other level.

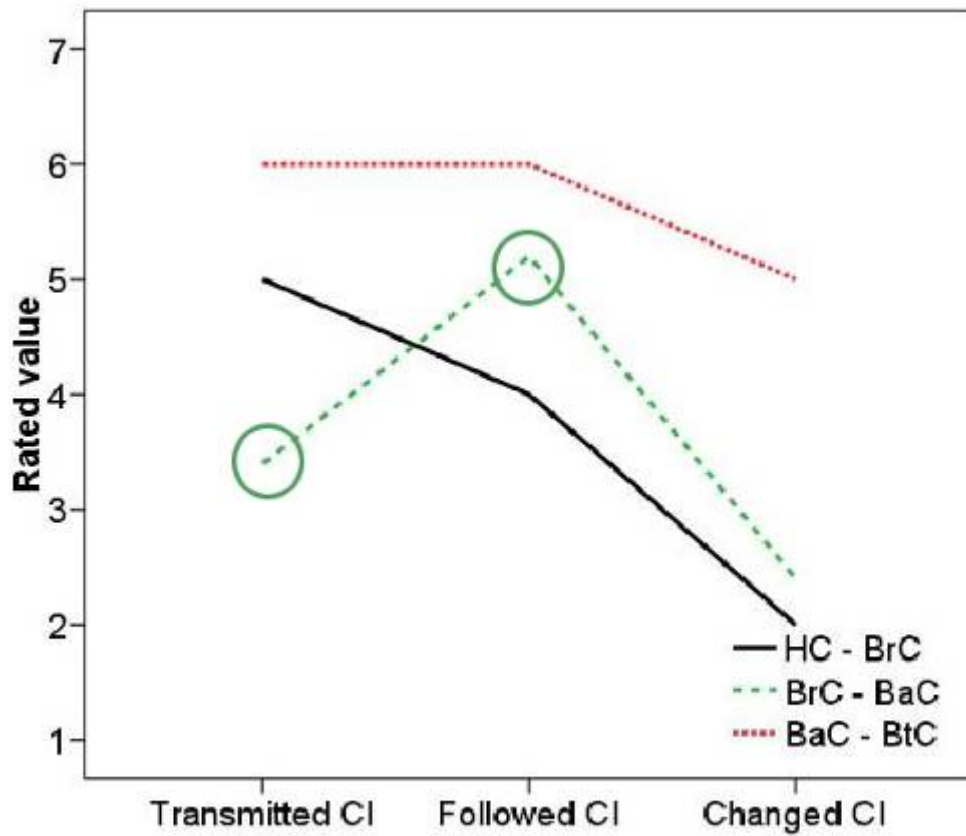
Results - clearness



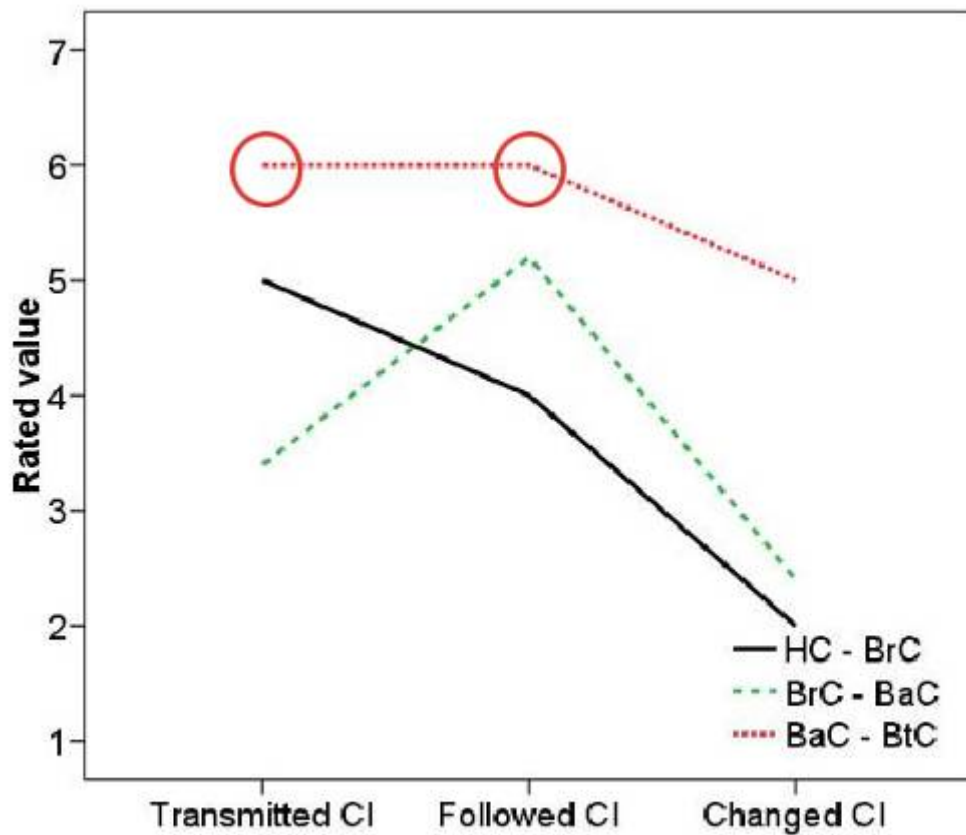
Results - transmitted/followed



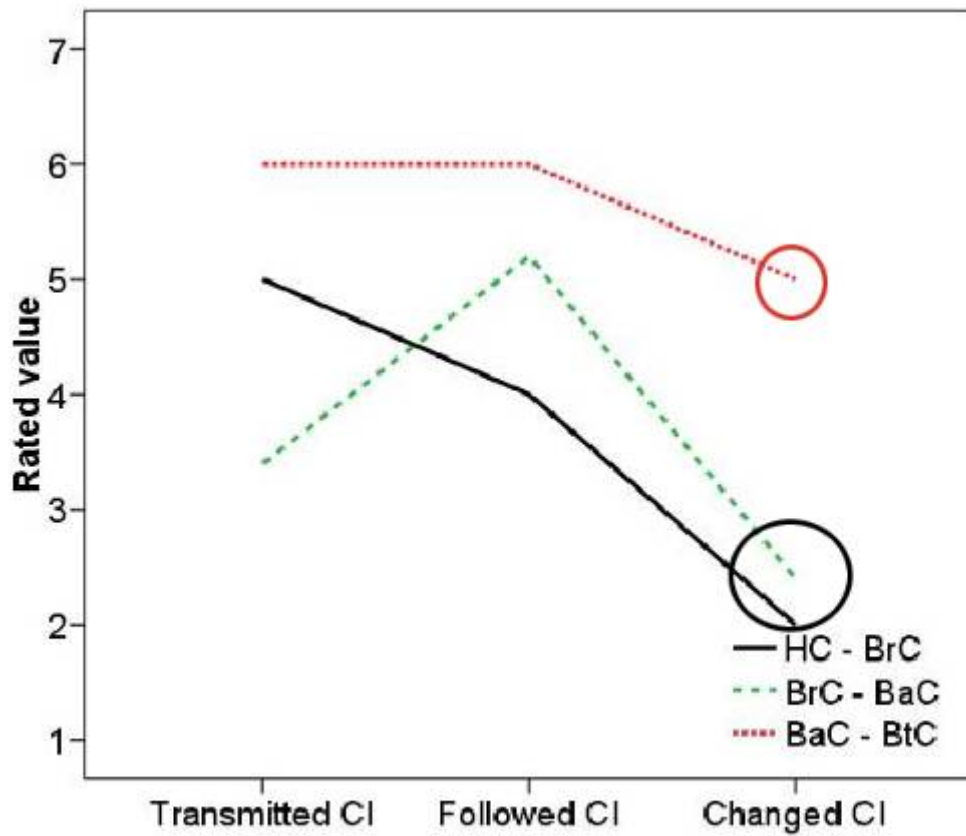
Results - transmitted/followed



Results - transmitted/followed



Results - changed



Discussion

- The lower part of the chain of command rated clearness of CI lower.
- A problematic break of CI since BrC did not follow HCs intent and because BaC changed CI without communicating to higher commanders.

Discussion

If CI is not fully understood, or potentially even altered, the risk increases for misinterpretation of CI at lower levels, e.g. by a company commander in the field.

Potential consequences can be that commanders' act according to what they (erroneously) believe is the intent of the HC, which might lead to unwanted or even critical results.

Discussion

One important question for future research is how to implement CI in a new C2 system (SLB).

The method for how CI should be presented and distributed in the network is not fully developed.

Questions like how the text part of CI should be formulated, if overlays always should be used, and how distribution should be done, are of interest for further studies.

Discussion

Thank You!