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Air Power: The New Gunboat Diplomacy?

by

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A paper submitted to the Facility of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Joint Maritime Operations Department.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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AIR POWER MAY REPLACE NAVAL POWER AS THE U.S. WEAPON OF CHOICE IN INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS SHORT OF WAR. THE U.S. NAVY HAS A LONG TRADITION OF USING SEA POWER, OR GUNBOAT DIPLOMACY, FOR COERCIVE DIPLOMACY. THIS IS BECAUSE NAVIES ARE MOBILE AND SELF-CONTAINED. THEY INCUR LITTLE POLITICAL COMMITMENT BECAUSE THEY CAN BE WITHDRAWN AS EASILY AS THEY ARE INSERTED. AIR POWER DIPLOMACY IS NOT YET AS WELL DEFINED AS GUNBOAT DIPLOMACY. AS THE PRINCIPLE SUPPLIERS OF AMERICA'S AIR POWER, THE AIR FORCE AND NAVY NEED TO JOINTLY DEVELOP DOCTRINE FOR AIR POWER DIPLOMACY. MODERN AIR POWER IS UNIQUELY SUITED FOR USE IN COERCIVE DIPLOMACY. AIR POWER IS A VERY CREDIBLE THREAT BECAUSE POTENTIAL ADVERSARIES REALIZE THE IMPACT OF OUR AIR POWER. THEY KNOW AMERICAN AIR POWER CAN STRIKE AT LONG RANGE THROUGH THE MOST FORMIDABLE AIR DEFENSES AND HIT TARGETS WITH PIN-POINT ACCURACY. ADVERSARIES REALIZE THE U.S. IS MORE INCLINED TO ACTUALLY USE AIR POWER BECAUSE THERE IS LITTLE RISK OF U.S. CASUALTIES. THEY ALSO KNOW THAT AMERICAN AIR-LIFTERS CAN MOVE SIGNIFICANT AMERICAN FORCES INTO AN AREA IN A MATTER OF DAYS.

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Abstract of

Air Power: The New Gunboat Diplomacy?

Air power may replace naval power as the United States' weapon of choice in international conflicts short of war. The U.S. Navy has a long tradition of using sea power, or gunboat diplomacy, for coercive diplomacy. This is because navies are mobile and self-contained. They incur little political commitment because they can be withdrawn as easily as they are inserted. Air power diplomacy is not yet as well defined as gunboat diplomacy. As the principle suppliers of America's air power, the Air Force and Navy need to jointly develop doctrine for air power diplomacy. Modern air power is uniquely suited for use in coercive diplomacy. Air power is a very credible threat because potential adversaries realize the impact of our air power. They know American air power can strike at long range through the most formidable air defenses and hit targets with pin-point accuracy. Adversaries realize the U.S. is more inclined to actually use air power because there is little risk of U.S. casualties. They also know that American airlifters can move significant American forces into an area in a matter of days. Air power diplomacy is not appropriate in all circumstances. When used, it should be part of an integrated strategy of coercive diplomacy and under the direction of a Joint Force Commander.

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INTRODUCTION

. . . it would appear that positive outcomes occurred more frequently when land-based combat aircraft were used than when major ground force or naval force components were introduced. It is worth noting that, like nuclear-associated units, land-based combat aircraft were never used as a latent instrument. It is likely that target actors view the distinctive capabilities of these two types of forces with greater alarm and that they also perceive their use as signaling greater determination on the part of U.S. policy makers.

Barry Blechman and Stephen Kaplan, *Force Without War*

"Gunboat diplomacy" is the use of sea power in international disputes short of war. The term "gunboat diplomacy" has been used so extensively in naval literature that the U.S. Navy has adopted the peacetime uses of naval power as one of its primary missions. Given the potential, and actual use, of modern air power it is surprising that air power has not developed a corollary to gunboat diplomacy. America has used forms of "air power diplomacy" over the years, but its use has not been codified. The two principle suppliers of American air power - the Air Force and the Navy - need to work together to develop a doctrine of "air power diplomacy" because air power is often the best choice in operations other than war.

Naval experts rightfully declare that attributes of a blue-water navy -- mobility, tactical flexibility, and a wide geographic reach -- make it useful as an instrument of policy even in the absence of hostilities.[2] The operational flexibility of naval forces allow policy makers to deploy naval forces within a few days - or weeks at most - to any littoral region without worrying about access to foreign

bases. Naval forces can come and go as they please without the political commitments land forces generate.

However, the time has come to recognize that modern air power has become an equally powerful tool in international affairs. Air power projects a more credible threat because of its speed, accuracy, and low risk of American casualties. It is the weapon American decision makers turn to when they get serious with an opponent. Today's air power can reach any spot on the globe within hours, penetrate nearly any air defense shield and deliver powerful strikes with pin-point accuracy. America's airlift fleet can lift tons of material anywhere in the world from the United States in a fraction of the time surface-delivered material takes.

Given these facts, it is time to recognize that "air power diplomacy" exists. To prove that air power diplomacy exists, the term must be defined. A study of historical case studies will then show that actual applications of air power fit this definition and that air power diplomacy is alive and well. Finally, I will conclude with a suggested framework for application of air power diplomacy.

CHAPTER II

FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

What is "gunboat diplomacy?" Can this concept apply to air power? The term

was first used to describe activities by the Royal Navy when Britain reigned

supreme during the 19th century. The theory was that a single frigate could

effectively impose the will of Her Majesty's Government on recalcitrant coastal

states the world over as long as the Royal Navy had a globally superior fleet, [3]

With the advent of relatively cheap and effective anti-ship missiles, many

observers felt that gunboat diplomacy had met its match by the late 20th century.

However, in his exhaustively researched book, *Gunboat Diplomacy 1919-1979:*

Political Applications of Limited Naval Force, Sir James Cable listed over two hundred

incidents of gunboat diplomacy, proving that gunboat diplomacy is still alive and

well in the late 20th century.

Cable has a succinct and useful definition of gunboat diplomacy:

The use or threat of limited naval force, otherwise than as an act of war, in order to secure advantage, or to avert loss, either in the furtherance of an international dispute or else against foreign nationals within the territory or the jurisdiction of their own state.[4]

We could substitute "limited air power" for "limited naval force" and derive a

workable definition, but this would beg the question of what "air power" is. There

is an unfortunate tendency to equate air power with Air Force-only operations. This

is exacerbated by the Navy's tendency to include naval air power as simply another

method to project naval power and the Air Force's tendency to exclude the

significant contributions of Army aviation from its concept of air power. To encompass America's air power, regardless of service component, the term air power is defined as "the various uses of airborne vehicles and forces to achieve national needs by the projection of military power or presence at a distance."[5]

With this point clarified, the definition of air power diplomacy is:

> *The use or threat of a limited application of air power, otherwise than as an act of war, in order to secure advantage, or to avert loss, either in the furtherance of an international dispute or else against foreign nationals within the territory or the jurisdiction of their own state.*

What is it about air power that makes it well suited for use in international situations short of war? Table I (pg. 31) breaks down air power's general advantages over sea power. Specifically, air power has the following advantages:

Speed: Air power can deploy forces to a trouble spot within hours of notification. It can take days or weeks to deploy sea power.

Range: With modern air refueling, air power can reach any spot on the globe. Sea power enthusiasts are quick to point out that three-fourths of the world's population lives near the ocean. With aerial refueling, air power covers 100% of the world's population.

Logistics: Land-based air power does not require a great deal of logistical support, besides runways, fuel and ordinance. Sea-based air power is self-contained. Sea power requires an extensive network of ports and support vessels to project power.

Manpower: Air power puts fewer troops at risk. A few hundred airmen can sustain a large force of air power (particularly land-based air power). It can take thousands of sailors to project power in a medium to high threat area.

Lethality: Air power can deliver more concentrated fire power than any other form of power. Precision guided munitions (PGMs) and stealth put nearly every conceivable target at risk.

Risk: Air power does not risk significant U.S. casualties. Stealth technology and cruise missiles allow penetration of the most heavily defended targets with nearly zero risk of casualties. Stand-off PGMs allow conventional aircraft to deliver devastating firepower from beyond the range of enemy air defenses.

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Seapower has become increasingly vulnerable to long range missiles and mines - exposing large numbers of sailors to risk.

Indeed, a Brookings Institute study confirmed that land-based combat aircraft were the most effective form of military power (other than nuclear forces) in international confrontations. This is because they project greater U.S. resolve (see Table II on pg 32). Unfortunately, data is not available for the effectiveness of sea-based air power because the study does not differentiate between sea-based air power and conventional naval power. The study examined 215 international incidents short of war between 1946 and 1975 involving the U.S. Their goal was to determine what types of forces and activities were most effective in accomplishing American political objectives during these incidents. The study clearly showed that naval forces were used more <u>often</u> than any other type of force (they were used in more than 80% of the incidents as compared to only 47% for land-based air).[6] However, it also found that land-based air power was the most <u>effective</u> type of force:

> . . . it would appear that positive outcomes occurred more frequently when land-based combat aircraft were used than when major ground force or naval force components were introduced. It is worth noting that, like nuclear-associated units, land-based combat aircraft were never used as a latent instrument. It is likely that target actors view the distinctive capabilities of these two types of forces with greater alarm and that they also perceive their use as signaling greater determination on the part of U.S. policy makers.[7]

Another reason other countries view land-based air power as a particularly grave threat is because the U.S. has historically turned to land-based air when using the highest level of violence in international affairs. The study observed that:

> When policy makers have considered it necessary to use the highest force levels they have turned first to land-based air, second to naval, and third to ground forces. Quite clearly, ground forces have been used only with the greatest reluctance.[8]

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The study went on to conclude:

> *It was also observed that positive outcomes were much more frequent when only*
> *land-based ground forces were used as compared with the use of only ship based*
> *ground forces--leaving aside the use of other types of forces. This and the suggestion*
> *above about the efficacy of land-based combat aircraft suggest the generally greater*
> *utility of land-based forces as compared with sea-based forces.*[9]

The conclusion that forces deployed on foreign soil were more successful

than were naval forces is interesting because it runs counter to U.S. practice. The

study showed that the Navy has been the primary military force in discrete U.S.

political operations. Naval forces participated in more than 80 percent of the

incidents studied. The reason for this is obvious. Naval forces can be used subtly to

support foreign policy initiatives without tying the President's hand. However, it is

precisely this fact that may diminish the effectiveness of naval forces in a political

role. Foreign decision-makers also recognize that warships can be withdrawn as

easily as they came and, therefore, the commitment implied is simply not as firm as

that implied by land-based units. Indeed, the study suggested that:

> *Positive outcomes were particularly frequent when land-based combat aircraft were*
> *involved in an incident. This would suggest, particularly in view of the much*
> *greater mobility of modern land-based tactical air units, that the Air Force might be*
> *used more frequently in political-military operations than has been the case in the*
> *past. The Soviet Union has often utilized land-based air force units in limited ways*
> *for political objectives. Soviet pilots and aircraft are reported to have taken part in*
> *wars in Sudan, Yemen, and Iraq, a full Soviet air defense system, including*
> *interceptor aircraft, was established for a time in Egypt; and Soviet tactical aircraft*
> *detachments have made goodwill visits to Sweden and France. In view of our*
> *findings, the United States might do well to emulate this greater reliance on*
> *land-based air units under certain circumstances.*[10]

Although for analytical purposes I will examine air power diplomacy in

isolation, this is not how air power diplomacy is used in <u>practice.</u> If used, air power

diplomacy will always be a component of America's overall coercive diplomacy

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strategy in a given situation. Noted political scientist Alexander George defines coercive diplomacy as "efforts to persuade an opponent to stop and/or undo an action he is already embarked upon."[11] George advocates using the full spectrum of U.S. power to persuade an opponent. Each action in coercive diplomacy must be coordinated to send a clear message to an opponent. The goal is "to create in the opponent the expectation of costs of sufficient magnitude to erode his motivation to continue what he is doing."[12]

George asserts that coercive diplomacy is highly context-dependent. This is an important concept for air power diplomacy because it affects whether, or to what extent, air power diplomacy is used in a coercive diplomacy strategy. Air power diplomacy is a flexible tool but it doesn't fit in every situation. Obviously, one would not strike Paris with stealth fighters to resolve differences with France over agricultural subsidies. Hence, it is important to review George's principles as they apply to air power diplomacy:

> **Type of Provocation:** Some types of provocation are easier to stop or undo. A successful *fait accompli* such as the Israeli raid on the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osirik is impossible to undo. The Sarajevo airlift can be modified at will.

> **Magnitude and Depth of the Conflict of Interest:** Determines how committed are parties to a dispute. This is covered more fully in the following paragraph.

> **Image of War:** The more horrible the image of war, the less likely it will occur. Images of U.S. PGMs in action and the infamous "highway of death" outside Basra are powerful deterrents.

> **Time Pressure to Achieve Objective:** A sense of urgency can have a positive effect on resolving conflicts quickly. The ability to rapidly deploy or strike with air power supports this.

> **Unilateral or Coalitional Coercive Diplomacy:** Coalitional coercive diplomacy can bring greater resources to bear, but is more difficult to achieve. Land-based air fits into coalitional diplomacy well because it can deploy to

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allied countries to show support or resolve. Sea-based and long-ranged land based air power are available for unilateral operations.

⋋ Strong Leadership: Self- explanatory. Neville Chamberlain wasn't good at coercive diplomacy.

Isolation of the Adversary: Coercive diplomacy is more effective against a diplomatically isolated opponent. It is much easier to gain access to airfield and airspace near an opponent if it is diplomatically isolated. Air power can enhance isolation on an extreme level by inflicting a "spectrum of denial" on an opponent. Air power can destroy an opponent's communications systems, cut his lines of communication, eliminate his electrical power grid, and, finally, destroy his economic production, if necessary.

The Preferred Post Crisis Relationship with an Opponent: Adversaries who want a productive relationship after a crisis will not use extreme measures during the crisis. For example, Kennedy turned to traditional gunboat diplomacy instead of air power in the Cuban missile crisis. This was because he needed a strong working relationship with Khruschev afterwards crisis.[13] In cases like this, expressive use of air power is best. Once air power is actively employed the chances for an amiable post crisis relationship are severely reduced.[14]

George's comments about the interests and values at stake in a dispute are important for future applications of air power diplomacy. In today's New World Order the U.S. won't run into situations often where the stakes are high enough to generate public support for significant U.S. casualties. America will face fighting "other people's wars" in places like Bosnia or Somalia. Public opinion simply won't stand for a large number of U.S. troops at risk in these situations. Air power will probably become America's contribution to policing the New World Order in these cases. American air power can become a great equalizer for victims of aggression by providing massive fire power with a low risk of U.S. casualties. It can do so without the political commitment produced by using other forms of power.

CHAPTER III

CASE STUDIES

Now that a theoretical basis for air power diplomacy is established, it is time to determine if it has been effective in actual practice. Cable proved that gunboat diplomacy is a flexible tool by dividing it up into four analytical categories - definitive, purposeful, catalytic, and expressive force. The categories range from accomplishing a very specific, limited goal with definitive force to merely emphasizing national attitudes with expressive force. To prove that air power diplomacy is equally flexible, I'll use two of Cable's categories - definitive and purposeful - and fuse catalytic and expressive force into a single category - presence. The selected case studies reflect each of these categories.

Definitive Force

Cable's first category is **definitive force**, which is force applied to achieve a defined and limited objective that, if achieved, the target nation is willing to accept rather than risk war. Definitive force applies military power to create a *fait accompli* the target nation can neither prevent nor undo, leaving the target nation a choice between acquiescence and escalatory retaliation.[15]

Cable's example of definitive naval force was the Pueblo incident, in which the North Korean Navy seized a U.S. Navy spy ship before the U.S. could react. In this case North Korean naval power attained a limited objective and presented the U.S. with a *fait accompli* that it could retaliate for, but not redress, without going to war.

The Israeli Air Force provides an example of definitive force in air power diplomacy. By 1981, the Israeli's were increasingly concerned over evidence that Iraq was developing a nuclear weapons program centered on their research reactor at Osiraq. After a great deal of debate the Israeli government decided to destroy Osiraq. They decided air power was the only weapon that could both destroy the reactor and send a firm, overt signal that Israel would not tolerate acqusition of nuclear weapons by her enemies.

The Israeli Air Force launched a raid consisting of U.S. built F-15's and F-16's supported by tanker aircraft against Osiraq on 7 June 1981. The raid flew in tight formation and used airline call signs to bluff its way through Jordanian and Saudi airspace into Iraq. The F-16's destroyed the reactor vessel within two minutes over target without using PGMs.

In a single stroke of air power, the Israelis struck across 1,000 miles of desert to insure they remained the sole Mid-East nuclear power . The raid set the Iraqi nuclear program back by several years, until it was severely damaged, again by air power, in 1991.[16] The Iraq was the victim of a definitive use of air power - the IAF had struck in a precisely controlled manner to achieve a limited objective that the Iraqis could retaliate for, but not undo.

Operation Southern Watch is another example of air power as definitive force. Southern Watch began in August 1992 to enforce a U.N.- mandated no-fly zone over Southern Iraq. Its mission was to impose an aerial quarantine over southern Iraqi in

response to Iraqi Air Force attacks on Shiite dissidents. Southern Watch involved a composite wing of USAF aircraft based in Saudi Arabia and a USN carrier.

Iraqi attacks on dissidents were hardly the only dispute the U.S. had with Iraq at the time. There were also on-going disputes over U.N. access to Iraqi nuclear sites. Southern Watch gave U.S. and Saudi leaders the political excuse they needed not only to maintain U.S. air power in the region, but to acces˹ ˺oximately two-thirds of Iraqi airspace (counting airspace access previously gained by Operation PROVIDE COMFORT in northern Iraq).

Southern Watch illustrates how diplomacy can overcome a limiting factor with air power. Access to airfields and airspace near crisis areas has always been the Achilles heel of air power. Land-based air power requires over-flight rights and the presence of allies in the theater concerned. Sea-based air power requires conflict in the littoral regions to gain access.

Access can still be a problem, but two important changes have combined to reduce its effects. The first is technical - the development of aerial refueling techniques that can project air power on a global scale. The second change resulted from the end of the cold war - the increased effectiveness of the U.N. Internationally sanctioned access to airspace and airfields in trouble spots isn't the problem it once was. In Somalia, Iraq, Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia U.N. resolutions have given access to the airspace of aggressor and victim states alike.

The U.S. proceeded to use its air power and this internationally-sanctioned access to Iraqi airspace to make it clear they had the force and resolve needed to

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strike Iraq if necessary. Maneuvers carried out by Operation Southern Watch aircraft over Iraq goaded Iraqi defense forces to shoot at U.S. aircraft on several occasions. This resulted in the loss of two Iraqi aircraft and prompt U.S. retaliatory raids on several Iraqi air defense sites.

The fact that the U.S. used aircraft based in Saudi Arabia to respond to Iraqi attacks was the key in convincing Saddam Hussein that U.S. air power was there to stay. Saddam had clear evidence that the U.S. had enough Allies in the area to make U.S. air power a permanent feature in the Gulf region.

Operation SOUTHERN WATCH undoubtedly convinced Saddam to cooperate more fully with the U.N. because this permanent presence of American air power convinced Saddam he was out gunned and vulnerable. Schelling believes this asymmetry of power and vulnerability is very important in coercive diplomacy. If an opponent realizes he is overmatched or vulnerable to a particular form of military power he will conform (again, assuming he is a rational decision maker). Of all the worlds' leaders, Saddam Hussein is the most aware of what American air power can do to slice through air defenses!

Operation SOUTHERN WATCH succeeded as an application of definitive air power. It achieved the defined, limited, objective to effectively quarantine a large portion of Iraq. This left Iraq with a *fait accompli* that they could only redress by escalating the conflict. However, the asymmetry of vulnerability created by the presence of U.S. air power ensured that Saddam Hussein did not take that option.

Purposeful Force

Cables' next category is **purposeful force** or:

> *Limited naval force employed purposefully in order to change the policy or character of a foreign government or of some organized group whose relationship to the assailant is, for practical purposes, substantially that of a foreign government. In its purposeful application force does not itself do anything: it induces someone else to take a decision which would not otherwise have been taken.*[17]

Cable's example of purposeful force was the Royal Navy's deterrence of a threatened Iraq invasion of Kuwait in 1961 by reinforcing Kuwait with a battalion of Royal Marines and three aircraft carriers.[18] Although the British task force did not engage in combat, its swift insertion proved to Iraq that British warnings had teeth and convinced Iraq to abandon its invasion (for the time being!).

When an actual Iraqi invasion happened in 1990, the U.S. responded with air power. Less than 48 hours after Operation DESERT SHIELD began, a squadron of USAF F-15s were the first American weapons to arrive in Saudi Arabia from the continental U.S. An airlifted brigade of the 82d Airborne Division wasn't far behind them. Two carrier air wings and five squadrons of USAF fighters (over 120 aircraft), plus supporting AWACS, RC-135's and tankers were in theater by the end of the first week of DESERT SHIELD.[19] Air power had provided the air lift and aircraft needed to counter further Iraqi aggression.

Another example of purposeful air power is Operation EL DORADO CANYON - the 1986 raid on Libya. EL DORADO CANYON is illustrative for two reasons 1) it shows why it is important to take decisive, focused action to back up a clearly defined threat, and 2) it illustrates a continuum of U.S. commitment that

progresses from diplomatic maneuverings, to expressive demonstrations of naval

power, and finally, to use of air power as demonstrations of U.S. will.

Events leading to EL DORADO CANYON began in December of 1985 when

simultaneous terrorist attacks were carried out on the Rome and Vienna airports.

President Reagan knew Libyan Leader Moymar Gaddafi was responsible for the

attacks and on 23 January 1986 ordered a week of naval flight operations to begin in

Libya's flight operations zone. Although the operations would not cross over the

disputed 32' 30"N "Line of Death" in the Gulf of Sidra, U.S. officials made it plain

that U.S. Navy planes would be clearly visible on Libyan radar screens. These

operations were to demonstrate U.S. resolve to continue to exercise freedom of

navigation in international waters.[20]

The exercises continued in February and early March but their only effect was

to express Reagan's intent to keep provoking Gaddafi until something happened.

By 14 March, Reagan concluded Gaddafi was not 'getting the message' and

authorized U.S. naval forces cross the 'line of death' into the Gulf of Sidra with three

aircraft carriers. On 24 March, the Libyans fired surface-to-air missiles at Navy

warplanes over the Gulf. In response, U.S. planes attacked a Libyan missile site and

sunk three missile patrol boats.[21]

Unfortunately, U.S. naval and air activity in the Gulf of Sidra had an opposite

effect than what Reagan intended. Gaddafi felt the U.S. had taken him on without

seriously damaging him, giving him more credibility with Arab extremists. This

encouraged him to launch the series of terrorist attacks that culminated in the disco bombing in Berlin.[22]

Thomas Schelling offers a partial explanation for why this effect occurs in his book, *Arms and Influence*.[23] Schelling would contend that Gaddafi really wasn't 'getting the message' from the Sixth Fleet's activity. Schelling's first requirement for coercive diplomacy is reasonably clear communications and rationality by both parties - "If he cannot hear you, or cannot understand you, or cannot control himself, the threat cannot work and you very likely will not even make it."[24]

In this case the naval action did not clearly communicate the U.S. desire for Gaddafi to stop supporting terrorism. After all, why did the U.S. take action to protest freedom of navigation if its goal was to stop Libyan terrorist support? Exercising coercive force is tricky business in ideal circumstances. This is because it can only operate through the filters of others' perceptions, which makes sending messages with armed force inherently unpredictable.[25] Hence, as Schelling suggested, its best to send the clearest message possible in the first place. Apparently, Gaddafi did not 'get the message' until air power struck at him directly.

Schelling also said that the initiator must present a credible threat - the recipient must realize the force threatened or used is symbolic of the initiator's resolve and that the force can achieve its specific purpose. The purely sea-based action did not effectively communicate U.S. resolve. Gaddafi knew the U.S. used naval forces because they did not have international support for their actions against Libya. Italy was hesitant to provide open support. Even stalwart allies such

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as Germany and France did not publicly support Reagan's stance against Gaddafi. Gaddafi knew he could "wait out" the Sixth Fleet as long as Reagan lacked European support. He knew the Sixth Fleet could be withdrawn as easily as it appeared, which may have given him a false impression of Reagan's commitment to change Libyan behavior.

After the bombing of the La Belle disco in Berlin in on 5 April 1986, Reagan turned to air power diplomacy to clearly express American resolve to Gaddafi. Operation EL DORADO CANYON was launched on 19 April 1986. The raid used 32 bombers and nearly 70 support aircraft to attack targets associated with terrorist support in Tripoli and Benghazi. USAF F-111's flew from their home bases in England and struck targets in downtown Tripoli with laser-guided bombs. Simultaneously, Navy aircraft struck Libyan air fields near Benghazi to keep the Libyan Air Force out of the fight.

The Air Force/Navy strike fulfilled all of Schellings requirements for coercive diplomacy. The threat was clearly communicated by strikes against terrorist support facilities and Gaddafi's personnel residence. By risking both land-based and sea-based aircraft in a massive air raid, Reagan showed his resolve to take direct measures against Gaddafi. The damage inflicted by the strike clearly demonstrated the U.S. had weapons capable of achieving that purpose and that the U.S. could have done more damage if it wanted to.

The use of Air Force aircraft based in Great Britain was particularly important because it proved that the U.S. was not alone in the fight against state-sponsored

terrorism. The U.S. proved it had at least one European ally that would grant access to the bases she needed to project power from Europe.

Another significant factor was the precision displayed in striking the targets. Schelling agrees that showing restraint in coercive diplomacy is vital. Both parties must recognize that if force is used, the force used was limited - that the initiator could have done more damage - and that the initiator's intentions are limited.

A new generation of PGMs allowed American air power to meet this requirement. USAF PGMs enabled the U.S. to send a very focused signal to Gaddafi by limiting collateral damage and providing convincing evidence that they could have done even more damage if they had wanted to. Without a doubt, the shock, speed and accuracy of the raid convinced Gaddafi personally that he was extremely vulnerable to U.S. air power.

The very visible effects of PGMs helps make up for another deficiency in gunboat diplomacy - lack of publicity. Naval expert Edward Luttwak found that

> *Generally, political leaders around the world understand more about ground power than air power, and more about the latter than about naval power. . . . the political leaders of the littoral states must therefore construe the capabilities and intent of the naval forces which they observe according to their efforts, and the possibilities of distortion are vast. For one thing, leaders of the smaller littoral states have ready access to naval expertise only in their own small navies, whose officers may know little about the operation of Great Power navies. With respect to political questions, one national leader is as good as another since each must make his own judgments in the light of his own world-view. But assessments of naval capabilities, of the significance of particular tactical configurations, and of the nature of the possible threats emanating from the sea require technical knowledge that many smaller states do not have.*[26]

Understanding of the impact of air power among foreign leaders has probably exceeded their understanding of ground power after the Gulf War. The publicity

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enjoyed by PGMs during the Gulf War has made American air power well known and respected in the world's capitols. Its important to remember that political leaders in most foreign countries rely almost exclusively on the media for their perception of U.S. power. The images of laser guided munitions flying down air shafts on CNN sent a powerful message to smaller states who don't have large military or intelligence organizations and must view the world through CNN. Other forms of American military power may be just as effective, but receive less publicity, and therefore receive less attention from foreign military staffs.

Presence

Presence encompasses two of Cables' categories - catalytic and expressive. Cable defines catalytic force as the deployment of forces to an area of conflict to be used if opportunity permits. These forces don't necessarily have a specific mission objective when deployed (or may deploy under cover of a mission they do not intend to use). They are nonetheless available in an area to give decision makers additional options for future military action. Expressive force is, according to Cable, the least effective category of gunboat diplomacy. Expressive force encompasses the traditional port visits and flag-showing cruises traditionally associated with naval diplomacy.

In presence forces are employed to emphasize national attitudes by providing active or passive support to an ally without becoming directly involved in conflict or by deploying to provide additional military options.

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An important distinction in presence is that forces can provide active support for an ally. This distinguishes presence from merely "showing the flag," a practice Cable believes is often over-rated, stating:

> In its expressive mode limited naval force resembles the ceremonial and representational aspects of ordinary diplomacy: equally rich in anecdotes, equally unproductive of identifiable advantages, equally dear to the romantic schoolboys who become politicians, diplomats and naval officers.[27]

Blechman and Kaplan agree that military units used in international disputes were most effective when they actually did something instead of merely emphasizing their capability to intervene. They found that the involvement of the military unit in a specific operation, such as mine laying or mine clearing for example, indicated a more serious intent on the United States' part.[28] Direct action by U.S. forces had a success rate of 79.4% in the short term verses only 60.8% for indirect and latent use. Latent force is when forces are employed to emphasize concern without relating their use to a specific threat.

The 1973 Yom Kippur War airlift is an example of air power presence that went beyond flag-showing to providing active support to an ally, thereby signaling greater determination by the U.S. The airlift was initiated to show support for Israel, who was fairing badly against an Arab attack during the Yom Kippur war.

Egypt and Syria attacked Israel on Oct. 6, 1973. The Israeli's were caught off-guard and suffered massive casualties during the first week of fighting. Israeli losses were so heavy that the next day they requested immediate re-supply from the United States. President Nixon initially refused their request because he was afraid of being drawn into the conflict. However, three days into the conflict, the Soviets

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began a massive airlift to support Egypt and Syria. The Soviet airlift and Israel's rapidly deteriorating military situation prompted Nixon to order a massive air and sea lift of reinforcements to Israel on 13 October.

The airlift delivered approximately 22,400 tons of supplies and equipment to the Israelis, to include main battle tanks, fuel trucks, radars, munitions and aircraft parts. Although only about 40 percent of the airlifted material arrived before the cease-fire, the responsiveness of land-based aircraft clearly signaled U.S. intentions to all direct and indirect participants. It also proved its global reach by flying some 14,000 miles on each round-trip.[29]

Moreover, the airlift provided a badly needed morale boost for the Israelis, a point attested to by Golda Meir when the first air-delivered tank rolled off a C-5 aircraft at Lod airport in Israel. She remarked that:

> *At last Nixon himself ordered the giant C-5 Galaxies to be sent, and the first fight arrived on the ninth day of the war, on October 14. The airlift was invaluable. It not only lifted our spirits, but also served to make the American position clear to the Soviet Union, and it undoubtedly served to make our victory possible.*

Airlifts are particularly good examples of presence because they can only be countered by a conscious, aggressive act by an adversary. The mere presence of U.S. airlifters in an area also serves to temper aggression. To use a maritime example, Soviet ships in Haiphong harbor succeeded in providing support to North Vietnam and deterring U.S. attacks on shipping in the harbor until the Linebacker II campaign in 1971. The U.S. eventually countered the Soviets by an essentially passive measure - the use of air power to mine the harbor. After the mining, ships

could not enter the harbor because the mines would damage any ship that passed - an*act that the U.S. could not control once the mines were laid.

The Berlin airlift is a contrasting example. The Soviets could not counter the airlift with passive measures, as much as they may have wanted to. The Soviets must have taken a conscious action - shooting down an American cargo plane with the probable loss of its crew and passengers - to stop the airlift. Unlike a cargo vessel, an adversary cannot board an airlifter in flight. Adversaries cannot disable an airlifter once it is on its way without destroying it. Therefore, sending cargo planes into harm's way shows greater resolve because the only way to stop one is to shoot it down. Stopping an airlift is an escalatory measure that most adversaries don't want to take.

United States tactical and strategic air power also played important expressive roles in the crisis. The U.S. transferred thirty-six USAF F-4 Phantoms, twenty USN A-4 Skyhawks and twelve USAF C-130 Hercules' to the Israeli Air Force during the crisis. This helped make up for the loss of 103 Israeli fighters and six helicopters up to that point in the war.

Strategic air power presence came into play when the Soviets threatened to unilaterally deploy their already alerted airborne troops to the area. The United States responded with a DEFCON 3 alert, which raised the war readiness of all their forces, including the B-52 force. The visible deployments of the B-52's in particular sent a clear signal that the U.S. was willing to escalate the situation in response to Soviet provocation. The U.S. also put its airborne forces on full alert and began very

visible preparations to airlift them to the region. The United States may well have deterred the Soviets from intervening with airborne troops by placing U.S. airborne troops into a deployment posture roughly equal to that of the Soviets.[30]

Throughout the Yom Kippur crisis, the United States used its air power to project presence with considerable skill. The United States took advantage of the responsiveness inherent in air power by providing the support the Israelis needed to convey a signal of American commitment to the Arabs and Soviets. U.S. air power played two separate and vital roles: (1) by providing the means to airlift airborne forces quickly, it provided a means to threaten the Soviets and probably contributed to Soviet behavior modification and 3) it provided the necessary degree of military, diplomatic, and psychological support that permitted the Israelis, as they have fully admitted, to survive.[31]

CHAPTER IV

FRAMEWORK FOR APPLICATION OF AIRPOWER DIPLOMACY

Air power diplomacy is covered in joint doctrine under the aegis of

"operations other than war." JCS pub 3.0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations* states that

operations other than war are:

> *Military operations . . . (that) encompass a wide range of activities where the military instrument of national power is used for purposes other than the large-scale combat operations usually associated with war.*[32]

JCS Pub 3.0 makes it clear that joint force commanders (JFCs) are responsible

for supporting national objectives in operations other than war. They do so by

developing strategies and military operations that translate national command

authority's strategic intent into operational and tactical actions. Pub 3.0 also wisely

notes that joint force commanders must maintain a <u>close</u> working relationship with

the State Department to ensure unity of effort between military and diplomatic

actions.

For analytical purposes, air power has been separated from the other military

and political considerations that arise in international relations. This must <u>never</u>

occur in actual practice. JFCs must act as part of an interagency team to successfully

apply air power diplomacy. Each move must be coordinated with the State

Department, and perhaps even the National Command Authority, to make sure the

right signal is sent.

Figure I (pg. 33) contains a suggested command structure that facilitates

maximum interagency coordination in planning and executing air power

diplomacy. This command structure advocates using a Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC) to consolidate the efforts of each service's air elements into a cohesive effort. This is not to say that the JFACC assumes any of the Joint Forces Commander's responsibility for planning and executing military actions to support strategic goals in operations other than war. Use of a JFACC merely allows a smoother integration of available air power expertise and capability to support the Joint Force Commander's objectives.

Note the emphasis this command structure places on allied coordination. Close coordination with Allied nations is also vital for air power diplomacy. Allied cooperation is particularly important for use of land-based air power. Airfield access must be obtained, overflight rights negotiated and rules of engagement coordinated with Allies to ensure effective application of air power diplomacy.

Pub 3.0 also outlines six principles for joint operations other than war. The following are these principles adapted for the unique requirements of air power diplomacy:

Objective: Must be maintained in both active and passive forms of air power diplomacy. Requires <u>precise</u> intelligence to select the most effective targets for air power strikes.

Unity of Effort: Air power diplomacy <u>must</u> be in lockstep with State Department efforts to ensure a united effort is made against the target nation.

Security: Applies to basing considerations for air power and protection for aircraft. High terrorist threats in a deployment zone may dictate use of sea-based air power or long range deployment of land-based air power. Stealth and electronic countermeasures may be needed to provide security for air power operations

Restraint: May dictate highly restrictive rules of engagement and exclusive use of PGMs to ensure collateral damage is limited and a focused signal is sent. Lack of restraint undermines legitimacy.

Perseverance: Target nation intransigence may require deployment of substantial air power to a region for in indefinite period of time to provide deterrence or accomplish an objective. Such situations may dictate forward-basing of a large force of land-based aircraft to show commitment.

Legitimacy: Can be accomplished by securing U.N. mandate for action before applying air power. Is enhanced by use of PGMs.

Intelligence is not listed as a separate element in this structure, but is often <u>the</u> key feature in air power diplomacy. There is an Air Force adage that "Air Power is targeting and targeting is intelligence." Although this saying only strictly applies to definitive or purposeful force, it is applicable to all forms of air power diplomacy. Intelligence must divine what an adversary holds dearest, what his center of gravity is, where his critical vulnerabilities lie. Most importantly, intelligence must estimate <u>how</u> an adversary will view and react to acts of air power diplomacy. Without accurate intelligence air power diplomacy will be ineffective.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Air power has many attributes that make it useful for operations other than war. As the most flexible weapon in the U.S. arsenal, air power can deploy over very long ranges very quickly and yet be at high readiness to return or to re-deploy. It can provide a presence that will show U.S. resolve to an aggressor, or it can deliver the precise firepower with speed and surprise. Finally, unlike sea or land power, air power is capital, not labor intensive. It can use a small number of high tech systems to exert a very high military leverage while committing very few personnel to combat.

Air power signals greater national resolve than naval power, but less resolve than ground power. Naval power is easily inserted near littoral trouble spots, but is equally easy to remove, signaling to allies and adversaries that the U.S. does not want to make a firm commitment. Significant ground power deployment remains the ultimate signal of U.S. resolve, but is slow to deploy, requires large logistics tail and involves high risk of casualties.

Air power offers the best balance between the two. It can deploy within hours of notification, land at an allied airfield to signal a firm U.S. commitment and stand ready to deliver devastating firepower with little risk of U.S. casualties. It is an inherently credible threat because foreign powers realize U.S. aversion to casualties makes low risk, highly accurate air operations the most credible U.S. course of

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action. Indeed, especially after the Gulf War, adversaries <u>know</u> the U.S. will strike first with air power in a conflict. Air strikes and air deployments are now what they expect to see when the U.S. gets serious.

Air power is a useful tool for projecting definitive and purposeful force. The precision strike and low-risk penetration of stealth and cruise missiles virtually guarantee the asymmetry of power and vulnerability will swing in the United States' favor. Virtually every potential aggressor state in the world today is vulnerable to American stealth and cruise missile technology. PGMs and improved intelligence systems allow the U.S. to tailor air power application to match U.S. intentions exactly and limit collateral damage. The assured vulnerability of target nations makes it possible to impose a spectrum of denial from the air on an adversary with little risk of U.S. casualties. Expressive acts of air power diplomacy can provide rapid, sustained support to allies in a manner adversaries will find politically difficult to counter.

It's time to recognize that air power is America's primary weapon in coercive diplomacy. The Air Force needs to work with her sister services to construct a doctrine that details how to use air power diplomacy effectively. The Navy has rightfully expended a great deal of effort on refining gunboat diplomacy, but times have changed. Adversaries no longer respect purely naval power as they did in at the zenith of gunboat diplomacy in the 19th century. It's time to codify out how to better employ a force they do respect - air power - in a manner better suited for operations other than war.

Notes

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[2] Edward N. Luttwak, *The Political Uses of Seapower*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), pg. 1

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[4] James Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy 1919-1979: Political Applications of Limited Naval Force*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981) , pg. 39

[5] Richard P. Hallion, *Storm Over Iraq: Air Power and the Gulf War*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), pg. 4

[6] Blechman and Kaplan, pg. 40

[7] Blechman and Kaplan, pg. 101

[8] Blechman and Kaplan, pg. 57

[9] Blechman and Kaplan, pg. 108

[10] Blechman and Kaplan, pp 528-529

[11] Alexander I. George, *Forceful Persuasion: Coercive Diplomacy as an Alternative to War*, (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1991), pg. 5

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[13] Alexander I. George, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy: Laos-Cuba-Vietnam*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), pg 18

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[18] Cable, pg. 65

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[20] Tim Zimmerman, *The American Bombing of Libya: A Success for Coercive Diplomacy*, <u>Survival</u>, No. 29, May-June 1987, pg. 204

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[22] Anthony H. Cordesman, *After the Raid: The Emerging Lessons from the U.S. Attack on Libya*, <u>Armed Forces</u>, Vol. 5, No. 5, Aug. 1986, pg. 356

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[24] Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, (New Haven: Yale University Press 1968), pg. 38

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[26] Luttwak, pg. 15

[27] Cable, pp. 82-83

[28] Blechman and Kaplan, pp. 530-531

[29] David R. Mets, *Land-Based Air Power in Third World Crises*, (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 1986), pg. 106

[30] Mets, pg. 108

[31] Mets, pg. 115

[32] Joint Chiefs of Staff Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, pg. v-1

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Table I

COMPARISON OF FORCE CAPABILITIES

Characteristics	Naval Power	Air Power
Speed	Low	High
Logistical Support	Medium	Low
Fire Power	Low	High
# of Troops Involved	Medium	Low
Risk of U.S. Casualties	Medium	Low
Signal of U.S. Resolve	Low	Medium

Table II

PERCENTAGES OF POSITIVE OUTCOMES, BY LEVEL, TYPE, AND ACTIVITIES OF FORCES USED

Level, type, and activities of forces	6 months		3 years	
	Percentage of positive outcomes	*Number of instances*	*Percentage of positive outcomes*	*Number of instances*
Level of armed forces				
One or more major components and nuclear force unit	100.0	8	87.5	8
Two or more major components; no nuclear force unit	47.6	21	18.2	22
One major component or nuclear force unit	63.0	27	25.0	24
Standard component	83.3	24	70.0	20
Minor component	87.5	24	50.0	24
Type of armed forces				
Ground force	59.6	52	39.6	48
CV/BB/LPH	64.3	70	39.1	64
Land-based combat aircraft	83.3	24	48.0	25
Other	66.1	56	37.0	54
Activities				
Bombing, blockade, emplacement, or tactical support	85.2	27	35.7	28
Other	68.8	77	47.1	70

Source: Barry M. Blechman and Stephen S. Kaplan, *Force Without War: U.S.*

Armed Forces as a Political Instrument, (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1978), pg.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure I

SUGGESTED COMMAND AND CONTROL DIAGRAM FOR PLANNING AND EXECUTION OF AIR POWER DIPLOMACY

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                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │ National Command │
                    │    Authority    │
                    └────────┬────────┘
                             │
┌──────────────┐   ┌─────────┴────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
│State Department│   │   Joint Force   │   │Allied Command│
│              │---│    Commander    │---│  Structure   │
└──────────────┘   └─────────┬────────┘   └──────────────┘
                  /          │          \
        ┌────────────┐  ┌─────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
        │Land Component│  │  JFACC  │  │Naval Component│
        └────────────┘  └────┬────┘  └──────────────┘
                             │
                       ┌───────────────┐
                       │Assigned Air Forces│
                       └───────────────┘
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