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Air Occupation

Asking the Right Questions

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Among the many devices by which domestic factions avoid joining the essential, but all too touchy issues, is to debate the timing of a crucial decision without ever discussing whether or not the move should be made at all.

—Fred Charles Iklé

ONE OF Col John A. Warden's controversial ideas is that airpower permits the virtual occupation of enemy territory by aircraft without requiring a potentially entangling and costly ground occupation. Although this concept of air occupation has received some attention lately, the idea is not new. Unfortunately, the age of the concept has not added clarity to its definition. Many of the related studies and arguments focus too much on the "how" and not enough on the "why." As alluring and parochially rewarding as air occupation may seem, the US Air Force (USAF)

can not afford to commit dwindling resources to missions or capabilities that are not compatible with US foreign policy or the service's core competencies. We need to understand the definition and implications of air occupation because the question may not be "can we?" but "should we?"

To many people, the increasingly frequent use of the term *air occupation* is the equivalent of distant war drums—a precursor to the upcoming battles over the dwindling budget and relevance in the post-cold-war environment. This subject is clearly polarized between those who love and those who hate the concept. Adding fuel to the fire is the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) directed by the Armed Forces Structure Review Act of 1996. The charter of this review is to determine the defense strategy and establish a Revised Defense Program through the year 2005. No doubt, the USAF should focus on key strategic, rather than supporting, roles and missions in order to preserve its autonomy.[1] The USAF's survival as a dominant service will hinge on where it focuses its scarce resources to prepare for the challenges of the twenty-first century. If current trends continue, when the ball drops in Times Square on 1 January 2000, the USAF will be a smaller service, subsisting on an ever-shrinking defense budget. By the year 2000, the US armed forces will lose another 64,000 active-duty troops, leveling at approximately 1,418,000—35 percent smaller than the cold war force of 1987.[2] Procurement has stagnated for more than a decade, but fiscal year (FY) 1997 was supposed to be the turn around year. Unfortunately, or some may say predictably, the FY 1997 procurement budget dropped again, "falling to the lowest level since before the outbreak of the Korean War."[3] As a share of US gross domestic prod-

Eagles in the Gulf. Air warfare remains distinctly American—high tech, cheap on lives, and quick; to America's enemies—past, current, and potential—it is the distinctly American form of military intimidation.

uct (GDP), defense spending dropped to 3.2 percent in 1997 and is forecast to drop to 2.7 percent in FY 2002—less than half the 6.3 percent of GDP allocated to defense in the "growth" years of the mid-1980s.[4] In fact, the USAF Program Objectives Memorandum 98 (POM FY 1998–2003) leaves $15.7 billion of validated, unfunded requirements.[5]

In this fiscally constrained environment, the adage "be careful what you wish for—you may get it" should be on the minds of airpower advocates coveting the air occupation mission. It could very well be a double-edged sword that expands the relative influence of the USAF but also saddles it with a complex, persistent, and costly mission. For example, the trend of open-ended commitments of US airpower-only force packages to "stabilize" scenarios (e.g., Operations Provide Comfort and Southern Watch in Iraq) would accelerate if the concept of air occupation is embraced by our leaders. How far can this "residual" airpower role be stretched before it affects our ability to respond to major contingencies or a true peer competitor (e.g., China)?

The USAF must ensure that it asks the right questions before embarking on a serious campaign to "win" the air occupation debate. The discourse on the concept of air occupation has swirled primarily around issues of how airpower could be used in an occupation role. Typically, the focus is on innovations in sensor and weapon technology that could reduce or eliminate the need for troops on the ground. The USAF Scientific Advisory Board identified numerous sensor requirements for the twenty-first century: low-cost, space-based surveillance systems on small satellites launched on demand; broadband low-frequency synthetic aperture radar (SAR) to detect concealed targets; unattended seismic, acoustic, or chemical ground sensors; and detectors placed in food, equipment, manufacturing facilities, or even in personnel to measure anxiety and stress.[6]

Of course, sensors are not a panacea. During the Vietnam War, the United States had the Ho Chi Minh Trail "wired like a pinball machine" with sensors but still failed to stop the flow of North Vietnamese men and supplies.[7] Even if the sensors of the twenty-first century are more reliable, control requires not only situational awareness but also the political will and capability to influence or stop unacceptable activity. In a politically sensitive environment, nonlethal weapons would be invaluable—weapons that incapacitate rather than kill, or disable rather than destroy equipment. These include, for example, caustic substances that destroy a weapon's sensors or lasers that blind the operators; "infrasound" that disrupts human beings' capacity to function or foam so sticky they cannot move; and lubricants so slippery that equipment cannot maintain traction.[8] Before initiating a costly sensor and nonlethal-weapon shopping spree, the USAF must first ask and answer two important questions:

The USAF's survival as a dominant service will hinge on where it focuses its scarce resources to prepare for the challenges of the twenty-first century.

- What do we mean by the term *air occupation?*
- What are the US foreign policy implications of air occupation?

In the minds of many airpower enthusiasts, the USAF may have already conducted air occupation campaigns, but is this justification that we *should?* We must develop consensus on a proper definition as it relates to objectives and tasks—only then can we assess the likely implications and utility of the concept to our national leaders. If air occupation does not align with anticipated US foreign policy, then we cannot afford to commit scarce resources and assets to a "product" with no market. Conversely, if air occupation is a likely tool that our national leaders will demand, then we must understand the implications. As the only full-time airpower service, it is the re-

The battleship—symbol of old-style, coercive gunboat diplomacy. Some analysts contend that airpower may replace naval power as the United States' weapon of choice in international conflicts short of war. In fact, it probably already has.

sponsibility of the USAF to define and explore the implications of air occupation.

What Do We Mean by **Air Occupation?**

Airpower is the most difficult of all forms of military force to measure, or even to express in precise terms.

—Winston Churchill

The term *air occupation* usually elicits either a visceral response or a parochial mantra. A typical rejoinder to an air occupation advocate is "airpower has never held ground." In many cases, people who debate the viability of air occupation talk past each other because the terms of reference are inconsistent. Adding fog to the doctrinal landscape is the grab bag of related terms used by airpower advocates: *air control, air dominance,* and *air pressure*. *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines *occupation* as "the invasion, conquest, and control of a nation or territory by a foreign military force." According to Gen Ronald Fogleman, former USAF chief of staff, "In Iraq, we have used land-based and carrier-based air forces to maintain an air occupation of Iraq for the past five years. That operation has contained Iraq, it has enforced UN sanctions, and it has compelled Saddam Hussein to accept the most intrusive UN inspection regime in history."[9]

If we turn to official joint and USAF doctrine for descriptive guidance, we find that none of the previously mentioned terms—or the word *occupation*—are defined in Joint Pub 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms;* Air Force Manual (AFM) 1-1, *Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the*

United States Air Force; or the draft of the new Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine*. In order to truly understand what air occupation means, we must define the objectives and tasks associated with the mission. Ultimately, this process will clarify the concept and help us decide if the term *air occupation* is appropriate.

Air Occupation Objectives

Common objectives for gaining control over enemy territory are to coerce the opposition, enforce sanctions, obtain a buffer zone, obtain raw and natural resources, control cultural assimilation, annex territory, and exact revenge. Depending on the objectives, Paul Seabury and Angelo Codevilla define enforcement options that include merely making the enemy government relinquish its unacceptable objectives (e.g., the British following the American Revolution) or at worst, "replacing its government and cleansing the defeated society of those responsible for the conflict, punishing it, and exacting reparations" (e.g., those parts of Germany occupied by the Soviets after World War II).[10] It is important to note that the attainment of these objectives does not necessarily require actual fighting. Merely the threat of force has prompted some twentieth-century governments to abandon contentious objectives (e.g., Taiwan) or relinquish control of their country (e.g., Haiti).

So, what are the objectives of air occupation? Do we mean to imply that airpower is appropriate for all occupation objectives and scenarios? More than likely, air power is most applicable to those less-intrusive scenarios with objectives that involve coercion, enforcement of sanctions, and creation of a buffer zone—influencing another state but not replacing a government or annexing territory. "The Gulf War confirmed the Air Force's ever-increasing ability to destroy military things and people, but air power did not demonstrate an ability to change governments."[11] In the Gulf War Air Power Survey, Richard Hallion described how air occupation was employed in Operation Desert Storm: "Airpower can hold territory by denying an enemy the ability to seize it, and by denying an enemy the use of his forces. And it can seize territory by controlling access to that territory and movement across it. It did both in the Gulf War."[12]

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The people who decide whether or not to use air power should consider the scale of conflict or effectiveness of the cease-fire; the number, discipline, and accountability of contending parties; the efficacy of local government; the degree to which law and order exists; and the willingness of the population at large to cooperate.[13] The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan from 1980 to 1986 eventually relied almost entirely on airpower.[14] Failure to understand the contextual elements and their impact on airpower ultimately led to an embarrassing and costly Soviet defeat. By recognizing that air occupation applies only to a subset of the military occupation objectives, we can focus on a more realistic and manageable set of tasks to achieve the mission.

Air Occupation Tasks

Carl Builder identified four tasks the USAF must accomplish to operate in what he calls the constabulary role: immediately engage and suppress heavy weapons fire; stop surreptitious flights by low and slow flyers; suppress street disorders and violence; and insert/recover a small package of people and equipment in austere conditions.[15] Although these are important tasks, air occupation entails more than merely functioning as air police. The search for applicable occupation tasks could begin with Army doctrine.

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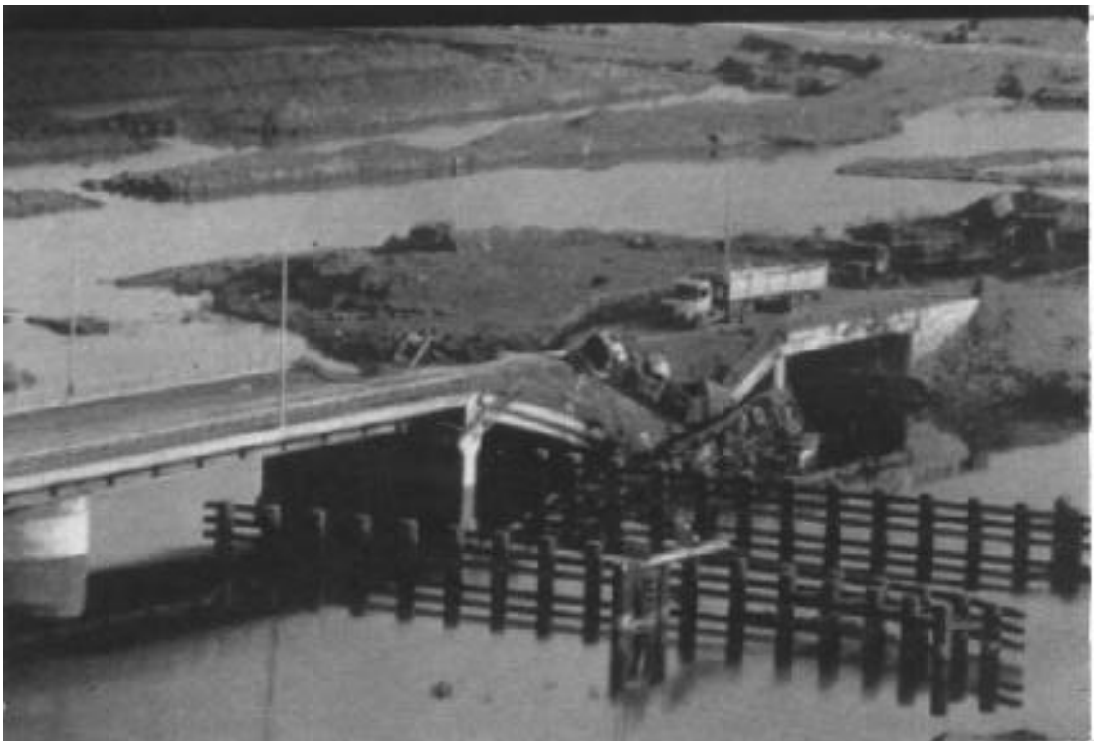

Army Field Manual (FM) 100-5, *Operations,* outlines postconflict operations that appear to be likely occupation tasks: control population and refugees, control prisoners, mark minefields, destroy unexploded ordnance, provide emergency health service and humanitarian assistance, provide emergency restoration of utilities, and support the social and civil-affairs needs of the population.[16] If we dig deeper, we find another set of possible occupation tasks defined in FM 100-23, *Peace Operations:* observation and monitoring of truces and cease-fires, restoration and maintenance of order and stability, protection of humanitarian assistance, guarantee and denial of movement, enforcement of sanctions, and the establishment and supervision of protected zones.[17] Unfortunately, this comparative method exemplifies a common handicap of airpower advocates—our dependence on Army terminology. According to airpower historian Phillip Meilinger, "the Army provided a ready vocabulary for early airmen, but by adopting a lexicon that centered on surface warfare, advocates of land-based airpower became trapped in a prison house of language. They continued to rely on an adopted language that not only circumscribed their thinking, but also included an increasingly inadequate collection of terms and categories to describe the nature of air warfare and its objectives."[18]

This warning invites the question, Do we merely step through the tasks of a traditional military occupation and apply airpower, or do we start with a blank piece of paper? Rather than build our definition on a classical perception that relegates airpower to a merely supporting role, we should reconsider the likely air occupation objectives: coerce the enemy, enforce sanctions, and deny the use of territory. Air occupation tasks to achieve these objectives would include a combination of presence, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, humanitarian airdrops and airlift, and punitive strikes. The last two tasks provide the "carrot and stick" of coercion and enforcement. If we stopped there, we would forgo a tremendous tool: aerial psychological operations. In his book *Occupation,* Eric Carlton makes a very important point: "Control is normally achieved through a combination of force which induces compliance, and persuasion and/or indoctrination which generates a sense of commitment. In other words, control is either attained by compulsion, which in the end, is frequently counter-productive, or by some kind of value-consensus which is often very difficult to effect, but which can pay handsome dividends."[19]

Many of the studies addressing the concept of air occupation focus on coercion but fail to explore value control, which was so expertly employed by Gen Douglas MacArthur during the occupation of Japan after World War II. Of course, fear that Japan would fall into the sphere of communism was the primary motivation for the seemingly altruistic US occupation policy: "Never before in recorded history had a great power moved in upon another, taking over its affairs almost completely at first, gradually relinquishing control, and finally restoring sovereignty with such a minimum of friction and such a large measure of benevolence."[20]

Some form of physical repression may be necessary, but focusing on the cultural aspects to exploit the population's existing system of checks, balances, and norms is the key to long-term success. In fact, psychological operations to win the hearts and minds of the population are probably easier to conduct without the intrusive "in your face" presence of ground troops. Some ready examples of aerial psychological tasks are leaflet drops, television programming, and radio broadcasts—this would also include denial of these mediums to subversive groups.

Accomplishing air occupation tasks to achieve the associated objectives may require nothing more than combining existing technology and systems in new and innovative ways (e.g., gunships; unmanned aerial vehicles [UAV]; airborne warning and control system [AWACS] aircraft; joint surveillance, target attack radar system [JSTARS] aircraft; V-22 Ospreys; and space-based assets). As we consider the possibilities, one nagging question persists: given the doctrinal void on the sub-

ject of occupation, is *air occupation* an appropriate term?

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Appropriateness of the Term Air Occupation

Conventional international law recognizes only one form of military occupation: belligerent occupation. According to the Hague Regulations and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, "as long as the territory as a whole is in the power and under the control of the occupant and as long as the latter has the ability to make his will felt everywhere in the territory within a reasonable time, military occupation exists from a legal point of view."[21] The classical definition of belligerent occupation recognizes that armed conflict is not always a prerequisite. In some cases, merely the threat to use force coerced a government to relinquish control of its territory (e.g., Haiti). Article two of the Fourth Geneva Convention states that "belligerent occupation and the responsibilities of occupants shall apply even to an occupation that meets with no armed resistance."[22]

If the operation is labeled an "occupation," the occupier is bound by international law to certain responsibilities: the occupying power is not permitted to annex the occupied territory, is expected to "respect and maintain the political and other institutions that exist, and is responsible for the management of public order and civil life in the territory under its control."[23] The purpose of the law of occupation is to prevent the imposition of disruptive changes in the occupied territory and balance the occupant's military requirements with humanitarian interests.[24]

The utopian nature of the law of occupation has prompted the United States and other states victorious in war to avoid labeling operations in conquered territory as occupations, thus precluding the restrictions and responsibilities. Common excuses include the following: the use of force was in support of another state whose government asked for intervention (e.g., the Soviets in Afghanistan and the United States in Grenada); the occupants were interested in permanent control over enemy territory (e.g., Iraq taking Kuwait and Indonesia taking East Timor); or disputes by warring factions over the historic ownership of territory (e.g., Israeli-occupied territories). Another more recent excuse for not invoking the term *occupation* is to avoid creating the impression that the occupant plans to stay in the territory for a long time (e.g., Operations Provide Comfort and Southern Watch in Iraq).[25]

Clearly, use of the term *occupation* is a contemporary taboo that places a cloud of doubt over the utility of the term *air occupation*. Rather than carry all the baggage associated with *occupation*, perhaps we should consider an alternative term.

Alternative for the Term Air Occupation

As mentioned earlier, many terms compete with *air occupation* in the intellectual marketplace: *air control*, *air pressure*, and *air dominance*, to name a few. Unfortunately, none of these prevailing terms adequately captures the air occupation objectives and tasks defined earlier. Air control and air pressure are not appropriate because they appear to focus exclusively on coercion. Although air dominance is the most likely alternative, it is normally associated with air superiority and air supremacy—a prerequisite but not the underlying goal. Regardless of whether we conducted air occupation before or after hostilities, the primary desire would be to achieve our goals without war. Surely we would not conduct air occupation for its own sake, but to achieve political objectives—a better state of peace. As Capt James Poss of the Naval War College theorized, how is that different from

the gunboat diplomacy the US Navy employed for years?[26] Sir James Cable defined gunboat diplomacy as "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 territory or the jurisdiction of their own state."[27]

Ultimately, gunboat diplomacy was nothing more than intervention: "the interference of one state or government in the affairs of another," according to the dictionary definition. Although hesitant to introduce another term into the arena, the USAF could reduce some of the intellectual resistance to air occupation by using the term *air intervention* instead. This could be used to capture the military operations other than war (MOOTW) missions that can be conducted exclusively with airpower: enforcing sanctions, enforcing exclusion zones, and conducting peace operations. In fact, if we take the pulse of current doctrine and politically correct thinking, it appears that occupation has been renamed peace operations, which are "military operations to support diplomatic efforts to reach a long-term political settlement and categorized as peacekeeping operations and peace enforcement operations. Peace operations are conducted in conjunction with the various diplomatic activities necessary to secure a negotiated truce and resolve the conflict. Military peace operations are tailored to each situation and may be conducted in support of diplomatic activities before, during or after conflict."[28] For example, if we insert airpower into the definition for *peace enforcement* found in Joint Pub 1-02 (23 March 1994), it would read, "application of airpower or the threat of its use, normally pursuant to international authorization, to compel compliance with resolutions or sanctions designed to maintain or restore peace and order."

There are two primary advantages to using the term *air intervention*. First—and most important—it unloads the parochial and legal baggage associated with *occupation*. Second, using *intervention* links the concept to the extensive intellectual discourse on why nations interfere with the affairs of another state. Air intervention should be "marketed" to the combatant commanders in chief (CINC) as merely one of the many tools available to deal with MOOTW scenarios. It is not surprising that AFDD 2-3, the USAF doctrine document on MOOTW, does not mention the concept of air occupation—after all, it is a taboo term. Removing the conceptual shackles by using a different term may be the catalyst that invigorates the USAF to explore—and eventually define—what it believes to be true about the exclusive employment of airpower to coerce and control.

US Foreign Policy Implications of Air Occupation

Airpower is an unusually seductive form of military strength, in part because, like modern courtship, it appears to offer gratification without commitment.

—Eliot Cohen
Director, Gulf War Air Power Survey

Just as in war, one can also apply airpower in MOOTW to achieve political goals. The concept and practice of exclusive reliance on airpower to achieve national objectives is nothing new—historic precedents exist. The question is, Can we conclude that our leaders will call upon airpower to conduct air occupation missions in the future? If we determine there is no demand for air occupation, we must decide whether the product is worthy of the time and energy necessary to create a market for it. Alternatively, if we believe that air occupation will be a popular military tool in the future, we must ensure that we understand the implications and shape expectations. To assess the air occupation market, we can project into the future using the current national security strategy (NSS) as a predictor of need. Of course, actions speak louder than words—to capture this variable, we can extrapolate from the US intervention trends of the last 15 years.

Historic Precedents—Air Control

In 1950 Elvira Fradkin conceived of an example of military air control theory. She proposed creating a United Nations Air Police Patrol (UNAPP) to allow the United States and Soviet Union to disarm by entrusting the premier instrument of military power (i.e., airpower) to the United Nations.[29] Her justification for using air policing was simple: "Airpower has the advantage of immediate availability as a disciplinary force. It has the further advantage of being able to exercise discipline without interference in the normal routine of any nation's peaceful domestic affairs. And in the third place it can reach any area on the earth's surface without effective intervention."[30]

Gill Wilson, president of the National Aeronautic Association at the time, stated that "the use of an international air police by the United Nations has intrigued the imagination of many; national sovereignty cannot exist without control of the air."[31] Although Fradkin's disarmament hypothesis is questionable, she did broach an interesting proposition predicated on the inherent strengths of airpower to unilaterally influence and control the actions of another nation.

A more practical precedent for air occupation is the British air control experience in Iraq from 1920 to 1939. Anyone who has followed the air occupation debate is probably weary of comparisons with the British in 1920, but the similarities are striking and worth repeating. Although victorious in World War I, Britain still "had to deal with restive populations and disorders of all sorts in its empire."[32] Tribal warfare and border conflicts were common in the Middle East and Africa—as is the case today. Costs associated with garrisoning all these locations were tremendous and quickly became unacceptable to the British people. As a cheaper alternative, the Royal Air Force (RAF) proposed the exclusive use of airpower to control the territories of the empire. This proposal was accepted, and in 1919 Winston Churchill declared that "the first duty of the RAF is to garrison the British Empire."[33] This initiative not only filled a need for the British government but also prevented the RAF from being downsized, allowing it to capture a larger share of the dwindling military-resources pie. For more than eight years, the RAF successfully accomplished the air-control goals of long-term political stability, pacification, and administration.[34]

Reemergence of the issue of air occupation or air control is not surprising. The US economic "empire" spans the globe—a world torn by increasing ethnic, religious, and nationalistic tensions. The task and costs of protecting our interests in this volatile environment are enormous. Some people may say that the rekindling of the air occupation discussion is driven by the USAF's fear of downsizing initiatives—specifically, the QDR. Although this may be true, it does not discount the precedence of achieving political goals through the exclusive employment of airpower to successfully control activity on the ground. Of course, we must be cognizant of the fact that this took place in a low-threat environment, in the desert, and with very limited objectives. In fact, these conditions are very similar to those that exist in Operations Southern Watch and Provide Comfort in Iraq. Obviously, a Vietnam or Bosnia scenario offers a distinctly different set of challenges. Regardless of the threat environment or geography of future US interventions, the NSS should still apply.

National Security Strategy

The central goals of the United States, as defined in the current NSS, are to "enhance our security with military forces that are ready to fight and with effective representation abroad, bolster America's economic revitalization, and promote democracy abroad."[35] The underlying premise of the document is that economically stable and democratic states "are less likely to threaten our interests and more likely to cooperate with the United States to meet security threats."[36] At first glance, this may seem utopian; nonetheless, the desire to enlarge the community of "secure and democratic nations"

Enforcing sanctions and creating buffer zones—Operation Provide Comfort. Of the many historic occupation objectives, air occupation most likely applies to less intrusive scenarios that attempt to coerce, enforce sanctions, or create buffer zones.

was used as justification for the US intervention in Haiti.[37] Of course, this discounts the fact that preventing a potential refugee crisis on the shores of Florida, a key electoral state, was politically expedient. The NSS supports the concept of a less intrusive air occupation option—allowing the indigenous society to resolve its problems and using the military merely to provide a window of opportunity: "We recognize, however, that while force can defeat an aggressor, it cannot solve underlying problems. Democracy and economic prosperity can take root in a struggling society only through local solutions carried out by the society itself. We must use military force selectively, recognizing that its use may do no more than provide a window of opportunity for a society—and diplomacy—to work."[38]

The NSS defines three categories of national interest that merit the use of US armed forces: vital interests that affect the survival and security of the nation (e.g., defending US borders and US economic vitality); important interests but not vital to national survival (e.g., Bosnia); and humanitarian interests.[39] Although humanitarian interests are probably more numerous, the NSS is hesitant to employ military force in these situations because "the military is not the best tool to address humanitarian concerns."[40] On the other end of the spectrum are the less numerous vital interests, which most likely would require the focused efforts of all aspects of the mili-

tary instrument of power since the stakes are too high.

This still leaves a sizable number of prospective important interests. NSS criteria for the use of military force in these situations include a high probability that forces can achieve the objectives, assurance that costs and risks of their use are commensurate with the interests at stake, and evidence that other means have been tried and have failed to achieve the objectives (e.g., Haiti and Bosnia).[41] Given the fact that these are only *important* interests, the threshold of acceptable pain is likely to be quite low. This is exacerbated by the general NSS criterion for the use of military forces any time: a reasonable likelihood of support from the American people and their elected representatives.[42] Any significant risk to American lives will probably be perceived as unacceptable.

All these factors are predictors of a market for a less costly and lower-risk air occupation option. If one accepts the premise that *peace operations* is a politically correct way of saying *occupation*, then the following NSS statement would indicate not only a market but also a "growth" market for air occupation: "In addition to preparing for major regional contingencies and overseas presence, we must prepare our forces for peace operations to support democracy or conflict resolution. From traditional peacekeeping to peace enforcement, multinational peace operations are sometimes the best way to prevent, contain or resolve conflicts that could otherwise be far more costly and deadly."[43]

Actions—Intervention Trends

The NSS allows us to project the "intent" of the US government, but this is only a recipe of foreign policy—the proof is in the pudding. Previous actions may be a better predictor to extrapolate US intervention policy into the twenty-first century. The United States has never been shy about involving itself in the internal affairs and domestic politics of other nations to satisfy its national interests. The use of gunboat diplomacy and marines was a staple of the US political-military landscape in Central America. Although US operations are usually cloaked in the guise of moral crusades, few of the early interventions were conducted "exclusively to promote the rights of individuals and groups over the rights of state sovereignty."[44] The majority of these forays were prompted not by vital interests but by important interests.

Since 1945 over 160 major conflicts have occurred, and the US military was deployed over 242 times. In January 1990 alone, 32 major armed conflicts occurred—of these, 29 were ethnic, religious, or racial.[45] The list of major US interventions over the last 15 years is, depending on one's point of view, either impressive or depressing: Beirut 1983, Grenada 1983 (Urgent Fury), Panama 1989 (Just Cause), Kuwait/Saudi Arabia 1990–91 (Desert Shield, Desert Storm), Iraq 1991 and continuing (Provide Comfort, Southern Watch), Somalia 1992 (Restore Hope), Haiti 1994 (Uphold Democracy), and the continuing saga in the former Yugoslavia (Provide Promise, Deny Flight, Sharp Guard, Able Sentry, Deliberate Force, Joint Endeavor).

In addition to the standard bogeymen (e.g., terrorism, weapons of mass destruction [WMD], religion, ethnicity), there are other reasons that this trend may continue—if not accelerate. First and foremost is the fact that we are no longer constrained by superpower competition with the Soviet Union and therefore may perceive intervention as less risky.[46] Another predictor, exemplified in the NSS, is the emphasis on democracy and human rights in US foreign policy. This may mean that the United States will increasingly justify intervention to promote American values as well as defend American interests.[47] Nonetheless, American economic interests will remain a driving factor. In fact, this may explain why intervention sentiment is still so strong even though the threat of communism and its containment are no longer paramount. Stephen Shalom labeled this underlying economic motivation theory the "Imperial Alibis."

> The Soviet Union did indeed behave in an imperial manner and did have armed forces far larger than needed for its legitimate self-defense. But U.S. officials have always

> exaggerated the Bolshevik bogey in order to justify their own inflated military machine, which has primed the U.S. economy and been deployed against the forces of social change in the Third World that challenge U.S. hegemony and economic interests.[48]

This poignant statement suggests that US policy will likely continue to be driven by economic interests—that is, capitalism. Even if we accept this premise, there will still be "calls for intervention anywhere there is disaster, disorder, or other large scale suffering that exceeds the capacity or inclination of a regional government."[49] British air vice marshal R. A. Mason highlighted an interesting paradox that may also expand US involvement in regional conflicts:

> If regional conflict or instability derives from ethnic, racial, national or territorial disputes, those neighboring countries with the greatest interests at stake may also be those whose intervention is likely to be regarded with the greatest suspicion by one or more of the contestants. Conversely, if disinterest is to be a criterion of military intervention to resolve a conflict, sustain peace or even protect humanitarian activities, what motivation will compel a state to allocate resources and perhaps incur casualties for a cause in which by definition it has little, if any, interest?[50]

The United States will likely feel compelled to intervene in these regional conflicts for moral reasons, regardless of the NSS. Thus, although the recipe may call for limited and focused use of military forces, credibility as a benevolent superpower may demand more. Regardless of "why" the United States chooses to intervene, risk aversion will be a paramount component. Many times this has led to the selection of airpower to minimize the risk of casualties. "Air warfare remains distinctly American—high tech, cheap on lives, and quick; to America's enemies—past, current, and potential—it is the distinctly American form of military intimidation."[51] In fact, a Brookings Institution study that examined 215 international incidents short of war between 1946 and 1975 involving the United States concluded that land-based airpower was the most effective form of military power.

> 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 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.[52]

Implications

The US Navy has a long tradition of using sea power—or gunboat diplomacy—for coercive diplomacy. Some analysts contend that "airpower may replace naval power as the United States' weapon of choice in international conflicts short of war."[53] In fact, it probably already has. If we are able to intervene successfully without risking a significant number of lives or incurring high logistics costs, we may find it easier to consolidate domestic and international will. The big payoff for air occupation could be the ability to intervene sooner, when the risks are lower and the chances of success greater.[54] A telling example is Bosnia. How much easier would the conflict resolution be in this now war-torn region if we had intervened before the atrocities and ethnic cleansing of the 1990s had occurred? The underlying economic problems that ultimately rekindled the ethnic embers would have been far easier to deal with in an atmo-sphere of only "historic" tension. Nonetheless, we must be wary of mistaking air occupation as a quick fix to problems that require a long-term commitment to achieve lasting conflict resolution. Looking back at the British air control experience in Iraq, "the most serious long-term consequences of ready availability of air control was that it developed into a substitute for administration. The speed and simplicity of air attack was preferred to the more time-consuming and painstaking investigation of grievances and disputes."[55]

A primary concern should be the fear of making intervention too easy by substituting air power for logic. We may find in feasible interventions being executed because we have significantly reduced the cost of being wrong. "The availability of low-cost, low-risk options borne from new techniques and new technologies may tempt us to make the mistake of intervening in unwarranted cases, intervening because we *can*, rather than because we *should*" (emphasis added).[56] In fact, many of the early US interventions were characterized by unclear goals that made the definition of success (i.e., a better state of peace) nearly impossible to determine.[57] The dilemma of deciding if we should become involved is only going to get more difficult as we face a growing constellation of ethnic, religious, and nationalistic conflicts. In addition, if the scenario is uncertain, the decision to extricate ourselves may be equally difficult. The current operations designed to "protect" the Kurds and Shiites in Iraq are perfect examples of this dilemma: what is the *achievable* end state that will signal success and allow total redeployment of US airpower? US foreign policy and intervention trends indicate a growing need for a less costly and lower-risk alternative to "troops on the ground." Airpower could fill this need, but there are dangerous implications that the USAF must be prepared to cope with—in this case, ignorance is not bliss.

Conclusion

> *My message . . . is that the pioneering days of aviation are not over. Fully developing and exploiting airpower is an enduring challenge. In particular, the Air Force has specific responsibilities for ensuring airpower serves the nation which we must discharge ever more effectively in the future.*
>
> —Maj Gen Charles D. Link

Air occupation is an intellectually interesting yet contentious concept. This is familiar territory for airpower advocates who have faced skepticism for decades—in many cases, a by-product of promising too much. Of course, if we allowed our vision and theories to be defined only by what the "masses" thought was possible, we would probably still be relegated to mail delivery and observation duties. As the only full-time airpower service, the USAF has a singular responsibility to explore and validate new applications of airpower and space power. We must not allow ourselves to get stuck in the rut of "mainstream" doctrine. In the words of Carl Builder, "we are accustomed to seeing doctrine grow, evolve, and mature, particularly where doctrine applies to what we care most about—our traditional roles and missions in the mainstream of the Air Force. We seem to have more difficulty, however, with nurturing doctrine off the mainstream roles and missions—what I call the doctrinal frontiers."[58]

Although Builder makes a valid point, evolving doctrine should also be flexible and honest enough to exclude new airpower roles that are unnecessary or frivolous, even if they are technologically possible. There must be more to airpower theory than "we can, therefore we should." In a world of dwindling budgets, the USAF must be honest brokers with the nation's limited resources. Consequently, it must be wary of accepting roles and missions that will have little impact on the vital interests of the nation but consume tremendous resources, either because of their singular cost or uncontrolled frequency. The only way to bring clarity to what Builder labels the "doctrinal frontier" is to ask and answer the right questions early in the process.

What Do We Mean by Air Occupation?

The term *air occupation* can be very perplexing. Unfortunately, neither *air occupation* nor *occupation* is defined in joint or USAF doctrine—only the legal implications of the term *occupation* can explain this void. Of the many historic occupation objectives, air occupation most likely applies to less intrusive scenarios that attempt to coerce, enforce sanctions, or create buffer zones. Probable air occupation

tasks to achieve these objectives would include a combination of presence, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, psychological operations, humanitarian airdrops and airlift, and punitive strikes. The USAF may reduce some of the intellectual resistance to air occupation by using the term *air intervention* instead. This would unload the parochial and legal baggage associated with *occupation* and link it to the extensive discourse on intervention theory.

US Foreign Policy Implications of Air Occupation

General Fogleman equates the problems of today's complex, multipolar world to the heads of the mythical serpent Hydra—when one is cut off, two grow in its place.[59] Although the USAF can not solve all our nation's military problems alone, it may be able to solve some of them. The concept and practice of exclusive reliance on airpower to achieve national objectives is not new—historic precedents exist. The USAF must define those situations in which exclusive use of airpower may be the most desirable and effective course of action. The warning from Dr. Larry Cable should be heeded to ensure that "jointness" does not become dogma: "Correctly employed joint oriented doctrine allows the orchestration of complementary capacities for the several forces under a unitary chain of command. Improperly employed it allows for the policy equivalent of the Special Olympics in which everyone gets to play and everyone is rewarded from mere participation regardless of the effectiveness or success of their having taken part."[60]

The current NSS criterion for costs and risks that are commensurate with the interest at stake, coupled with US intervention trends, indicates the likelihood of a growing market for an air occupation option. The big payoff for air occupation could be early consensus to intervene sooner, when the risks are lower and the chances of success greater. Nonetheless, we must be wary of mistaking air occupation as a quick fix to problems that require long-term commitment to achieve lasting conflict resolution. Our task is to ensure that US leaders understand the allure of "low cost" intervention and guard against its misuse. A primary concern should be the fear of making intervention too easy and substituting airpower for logic—intervening because we *can* rather than because we *should*.

Bottom Line

Even if one disagrees with the broad answers provided in this article, the questions are still valid and must be answered before embarking on a serious campaign to "win" the air occupation debate. Air occupation— alternatively, air intervention—is a viable concept as long as we understand that it is not appropriate for all scenarios. As the only full-time airpower ser-vice, the USAF must develop and publish air occupation doctrine to provide guidance on what it believes to be true about applicability, objectives, tasks, techniques, and procedures. This doctrinal development and assessment process should include the "battle labs" recently created by the USAF to provide "a place where new ideas will be taken seriously."[61] Although the USAF should focus on key strategic, rather than supporting, roles and missions to preserve its autonomy, it must also ensure that the concept of air occupation is not oversold to the point of creating a market that dominates its existence. Every sortie and dollar committed to unnecessary roles and missions is a resource lost to preparing for the military's primary task, as defined in *Joint Vision 2010:* to fight and win our nation's wars.[62]

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