

# FROM THE EDITOR

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Dear Reader,

In March, the administration released the Department of Defense's fiscal year (FY) 2025 budget proposal, which reflects the short-term belt-tightening implemented by the FY 2023 Fiscal Responsibility Act. The implications of this, coupled with the tendency for Congress to default to appropriation by continuing resolution, portends another year of overall programmatic development and execution uncertainty for the Department. Ongoing global geopolitical unrest, compounded most recently by active wars in Ukraine and the Gaza Strip and aided and abetted by nonstate actors, is occurring simultaneously with the advent of what looks to be the most contentious US presidential campaign in recent history.

In sum, there is no shortage of urgent national and international security topics relevant to the Department of the Air Force worth exploring. Accordingly, our spring issue of *Æther: A Journal of Strategic Airpower & Spacepower* considers subjects ranging from defense spending and space strategy to strategic narratives and ethics in war. In **Funding National Defense**, Travis Sharp and Casey Nicastro analyze congressional changes to budget requests from FY 2016 through FY 2023 and find the legislative branch has preferenced programmatic spending over personnel and operation and maintenance expenditures, requiring DoD leaders to convey priorities clearly and Congress to sustain critical levels of nonhardware defense spending.

Our **Spacepower and Strategy** forum leads with an article calling attention to Ukraine's novel use of space. Robin Dickey and Michael Gleason discuss how Ukraine, a nonspacefaring nation, has made far better use of the domain than its spacefaring adversary, Russia—particularly in the areas of ground infrastructure, software, and information-sharing practices. These findings yield significant policy, strategy, and doctrine lessons for the US armed forces. In the second article in the forum, Jake Suss offers five proposals for space strategy based on historic Chinese strategic thought. These proposals center on exploiting asymmetric advantages that will limit adversaries' use of the domain and help the United States win conflicts in and through space.

The third article considers resiliency in space. Gary Davenport argues the newly created Commercial Augmentation Space Reserve—modeled on the Civil Reserve Air

Fleet (CRAF)—should build on lessons learned from CRAF structure and implementation in order to ensure commercial interest in the program and overall success when implemented. Lastly, Brian Goodman analyzes the US Space Force’s notion of competitive endurance through international relations theory, proposing a new theory of offense dominance in space and offering recommendations to mitigate the possibility of conflict in and through space.

Our third forum, **Narratives in Conflict**, features an in-depth analysis of the notion of strategic empathy. Robert Hinck and Sean Cullen explain the function strategic narratives serve in the development and practice of strategic empathy and the role such empathy plays in military planning and strategy.

In the first article of our final forum, **Ethics and Warfare**, Douglas Lumpkin, Philip Stewart, and Joel Kornegay examine the occurrence of moral injury in US service members. They find that while it can result in highly negative outcomes, it can build readiness and resilience in military teams and organizations if leaders approach it correctly. The forum and our issue conclude with a discussion on lethal targeting/targeted killing, viewed through the lens of the ethics theory of consequentialism. David Kritz and Shane Smith propose a four-element, ethics-based model that military planners can employ in situations involving the potential for lethal targeting/targeted killing.

Thank you for your continued support of the journal. As always, we encourage thoughtful, well-reasoned responses to our articles, with the potential for publishing in a future issue. Æ

~The Editor

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