

EDITOR'S PICKS

In “The Air Force, Grand Strategy, and National Security: Toward a Better Understanding of Airpower’s Enduring Utility,” Prof. Robert Ehlers addresses the waxing and waning for almost 70 years of the calls for an end to the independent US Air Force and the absorption of its component parts into the other military services. However, during the past 15 years, attacks on the utility of the Air Force—and thus its retention as an independent service—have become increasingly strident. This article takes an opposing view based on the continuing utility of airpower across the entire range of American grand strategic aims and supporting policy efforts. Although Ehlers discusses the importance of airpower as part of a balanced combined-arms force in conventional wars and its often-overlooked effectiveness in other kinds of armed conflicts, the article focuses on how the Air Force and the many assets it employs have proven particularly effective in helping policy makers achieve strategic aims short of armed conflict. This relatively little-discussed dimension of the service’s contributions to our country’s security and prosperity—and those of key allies and associates—takes center stage and gives the reader a different and better appreciation of the wide range of air (and space) capabilities that the independent Air Force brings to bear. By viewing these capabilities and their employment through a broader lens that includes but goes far beyond war, and in which war is properly situated as the very last policy option, we develop a deeper, more nuanced understanding of both the Air Force and airpower as enduring assets of great importance. Granted, no service—including the Air Force—has approached perfection in either wartime operations or those short of war, but the Air Force has more than proven its worth along with the other services.

Air operations are increasingly executed by coalition forces. In “The Trilateral Strategic Initiative: A Primer for Developing Future Airpower Cooperation,” Col Peter Goldfein and Wing Cdr André Adamson present the concept of the Trilateral Strategic Initiative (TSI) and its objective of furthering trilateral cooperation. The authors argue that the TSI and its steering group are a compelling model for improving the coherence of international airpower. The initiative reflects the vision of the air force chiefs of the United States, France, and United Kingdom to increase trust and integration among their services and to advocate for airpower. In the absence of a bureaucratic framework, the TSI is steered by collaboration among the strategic thinking cells of each service’s air staff, which includes officers from all three nations. Together, they identify the means to improve interoperability. They also debate airpower concepts to feed the thinking of senior leaders and to spawn cooperation at operational levels. The article considers the historical and cultural convergences among the three air forces as well as countervailing tendencies that allow the initiative to fully realize its potential as an enabler of the

trilateral development and employment of airpower. The authors also note the role of the initiative in informing debate within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Finally, they consider the applicability of this approach for broader cooperation, including its place in a joint context.

In “The European Union (EU) as a Model for its Neighbors From Dream to Nightmare?” Prof. Geoffrey Harris postulates that the EU is facing serious challenges to its legitimacy, attractiveness and normative power, just as instability and threats to its stability and security are growing in its neighborhood. The problems of the eurozone created tensions between the member states. Harris argues that Russian revisionism has not met with a durable collective response. Revolution and war in the Middle East and North Africa left Europe apparently unable to influence events or handle the consequent humanitarian crisis with any conviction. The ideal of European integration has in fact faced increasing internal challenges since the time of the Maastricht Treaty, and the attempt to establish a peaceful neighborhood has failed in the decade since the last EU enlargement. How far do the deepening problems reflect a failure of leadership, or should the EU now abandon its image as a model for others and concentrate on its internal security and avoid trying to resolve the problems of others? In the decades after 1989 the European idea was attractive, waves of enlargement followed, and a neighborhood policy based on values and common interests was tried and failed. Harris ponders if the EU should now choose consolidation and self-defense over deepening and widening of the integration process.

Although rhetorically cordial as ever, the relationship between the United States and Israel underwent key changes in recent years, according to Dr. Khalil Marrar. In “Allies in Flux: American Policy after the Arab Spring,” he argues that with the Obama administration’s “pivot to Asia,” the “Arab-Spring-turned-Winter,” and geopolitical challenges from Russia and China in their respective zones of influence, the United States’ commitments to Israel and other Middle East allies—most notably Saudi Arabia and Egypt—have necessarily evolved under scrutiny and in light of changes in the global and regional strategic terrain. Furthermore, even though American policy remains susceptible to influence from a variety of domestic lobbying and public opinion pressures, international forces have once again proven preeminent in the ultimate American approach to world affairs. Dr. Marrar examines how changes in the prevailing order have trumped America’s commitments to its Middle East allies, most notably Israel, and traces how those alterations supersede and influence domestic politics surrounding foreign-policy decision making in the United States. This approach warrants a larger study, but the author focuses on the effects of the Arab Spring and Winter

on the American policy calculus in the Middle East and the subsequent impact on political pressure groups representing Arab and Muslim-American interests.

The level of interests, level of resources, and strategic culture all factor into explaining the differences and similarities between military operations by France and the United States in Africa, contends Prof. Stephen Burgess in “Military Intervention in Africa: French and US Approaches Compared.” While both constructivist and realist perspectives are necessary for comparative analysis, the argument in this article is that strategic culture and attitudes towards risk, as well as the differences in perceived spheres of influence, are more insightful than the realist perspective in explaining the different ways that France and the United States chose to intervene in Africa. The Powell Doctrine and casualty and risk aversion explain why the United States is less willing to intervene directly militarily in Africa; however, the relatively lower level of US interests in Africa as compared with Southwest Asia must also be taken into account. In addition, the US military has an organizational culture of winning, while the French military is accustomed to messy outcomes, which also explains the differences in interventionism. The repositioning of French forces in Northwest Africa increases the likelihood that they will be used in operations. The repositioning of US forces in Djibouti has not led to direct military intervention in Somalia, even as the capital and country were on the verge of falling to violent extremists. However, the extensive use of US special forces in Somalia and Northwest Africa has begun a process of convergence with the French military posture.

In “Air Mobility Challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa,” Maj Ryan McCaughan, USAF, analyzes the challenges associated with an airlift in sub-Saharan Africa, how the United States and partners have attempted to address these issues in the past, and why those attempts have been insufficient. A qualitative research methodology has been utilized to show that the status-quo model of support has proven insufficient and expensive and only through a comprehensive, coordinated approach, which aligns the efforts of the United States, the African Union, US industry, capable African partners, and other interested Western nations, will this problem finally be resolved.

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