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**AIRPOWER AS A PART OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY:
THE IMPORTANCE OF MILITARY STRATEGY**

A thesis presented

by

Domenic J. Quade

to

The Political Science Department

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for Honors in Political Science

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Thesis Advisor

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Figure 1. Midair refueling of an F-22 Raptor. Photo credit: Tech. Sgt. Russ Scalf, U.S Air Force

Chapter One: An Introduction to Airpower in American Foreign Policy

Airpower has a seductive nature to it.¹ Technology promises to be able to destroy or seriously damage an enemy military's capabilities without serious risk to American forces. Moreover, these knights of the sky have an aura of power with the ability to destroy important pieces of military equipment or infrastructure. Airpower may seem like a niche topic of international relations or American foreign policy, but it represents the opening move of war. Gaining air superiority is the first step in any American engagement as it allows the rest of American military might to be brought to bear. It is also a selective form of engagement. It allows the United States, or any nation-state, to attack only a limited part of an enemy state. It represents the option to engage in a limited war or the opening salvo of a war among major powers. Because it represents an attractive form of intervention, particularly from an American perspective, it needs thorough examination. Any use of American military force has the potential to drastically alter the international arena, so its use ought to be part of a carefully examined strategy that does not merely rely on the destructive power of bombs or cruise missiles.

Airpower has gained a heightened importance with the campaign against the self-proclaimed Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, as well as, President Trump's recent authorization of a cruise missile strike on Shayrat Airfield in Syria in response to the reported chemical attack on civilians in Khan Sheikoun. The use of airpower could further muddle an already unclear and tense geopolitical situation in Syria, or it could be

¹ Pape, Robert A. "The True Worth of Air Power." *Foreign Affairs* 83.2 (2004): 116. Web.

a footnote. Regardless, it will change America's commitments abroad and alter the landscape of international relations.

How effective has airpower been as a tool in American foreign policy and what strategy needs to accompany airpower to make it an effective tool? To address this question, I divide the paper into thematic chapters that examine unique conflicts. First I examine and debate the usefulness of drone strikes in North Waziristan against al-Qaeda. Then, I look at the opening months of the War in Afghanistan and the strategic value of the Afghan Model. In the third chapter, I compare how airpower was used against Milosevic in Serbia and Qaddafi in Libya.

For this project, I primarily utilize academic articles to compare arguments about the use of airpower. I use these academic pieces of writing to compare differing perspectives on the debate around the usefulness of airpower as a military strategy. This alone, though, cannot provide a basis for a conclusion, so I also point to first-hand accounts of events that make salient points about airpower. I also turn to official military histories or commissioned studies for history and context about each case. These official histories also frequently provided anecdotal evidence that could also further prove or disprove claims made in the academic literature. For broader theoretical work, several books that are discussed in the chapters discuss the history of airpower theory and military strategy. As this is focused on international relations, there is also a place for theoretical works on the three primary paradigms: realism, liberalism, and constructivism. Airpower can only effectively be wielded by states, so it is important to have a general understanding of the international system. After all, war is politics by other means.

Drone War in North Waziristan

Drone strikes are controversial because of the legal, moral, and humanitarian implications of using military force via remote satellite uplink. While these are important issues, they fall outside the purview of this thesis. Instead, I focus on the strategy of the use of drones to fight al-Qaeda and other terror groups in this politically isolated region. Dealing with these groups in this semi-autonomous province in the northwest of Pakistan is a politically toxic proposition. Al-Qaeda and their associates operate within and among civilians in these areas, so conventional military options are off the table. Special forces raids risk upsetting the political status quo within Pakistan. They also risk tying civilian casualties directly to American forces. Air strikes from conventional manned aircraft lack any plausible deniability, the ability to discriminate as their loiter times are limited, and their weapons are not suited for the mission. Artillery strikes are also out of the question as they are meant to destroy targets over a wide area, not discriminately attack individuals. It is a unique military problem created by a unique political situation. Pakistan believes that these groups have strategic value to them in their regional power struggle against India, yet the Pakistani military needs American support as well.

In this chapter I examine the roots of the drone program, which began as a surveillance project envisioned to give the United States military total situational awareness on the battlefield as part of the “Revolution in Military Affairs”. Initially, it appeared that the technical challenges of operating an unmanned aerial vehicle would be impossible, but advances in satellite technology and the Global Positioning System combined with the design of Avraheem Karem at General Atomics provided a working model, which comes to be the recognizable RQ-1 Predator.

The program was forever altered when a drone spotted someone who matched the profile and behavior of Osama bin-Laden in Afghanistan in 2000. The Predator, which was unarmed, could only watch as the suspected bin-Laden slipped away. This event served as a watershed moment because it marked the decision to arm the Predator, primarily with the AGM-114 Hellfire, an anti-tank missile. Designed to hit vehicles, it is well suited for use in urban settings, as it does not have a massive blast. Also, it is reasonable to point to this moment as the start of “signature strikes”. Signature strikes target the characteristics and behaviors of terror networks as opposed to acting solely on intelligence.

After the Taliban and al-Qaeda were chased from Afghanistan, they took refuge in the autonomous tribal regions of Pakistan. This represented an issue as al-Qaeda could regroup and plan attacks against American and Western targets. Obviously, this would be unacceptable given that it would render the invasion of Afghanistan an exercise in futility. To reiterate, the use of conventional airpower was out of the question, as was artillery or special forces. Drones, with advanced cameras and the ability to loiter for dozens of hours gave the intelligence and military services an opportunity to observe a target and pick the opportune time to strike. There are two schools of thought that vary greatly on the strategic value and usefulness of the drone strikes.

Proponents, such as Daniel Byman, see drone strikes as the best solution to a problem without a good solution.² Drones, according to this line of thought, are more precise and discriminating than the other options. Also, they force al-Qaeda into hiding

² Byman, Daniel. "Why Drones Work: The Case for Washington's Weapon of Choice. *Foreign Affairs* (2013): n. pag. Print.

and limit their communications ability to strategize about the war in Afghanistan and plan terror attacks. When a strike eliminates a member, it also reduces their future functionality as an organization. When a leader is eliminated, it can reduce the prestige of the group and harm future recruiting ability.

Conversely, Bergen and Tiedemann argue that strikes undermine American strategic interests because they stoke anger and recruitment to terror groups.³ Also, they argue that forcing leaders to abandon electronic communication and withdraw further makes it harder to target these leaders for kill or capture missions. These two theories on drone strikes are irreconcilable and represent the problem with the current discourse. It does not formulate a comprehensive strategy to solve a problem. It relies on technology to win on its own, which is impossible.

Drones are a novel piece of hardware and they are not well understood as tools of foreign policy. To gain broader perspective on how drones have been used and how they can be used more effectively, I examine which category of airpower the drone campaign fits into, according to Robert Pape.⁴ The categories themselves will be discussed in-depth in the chapter, but I argue that the strikes embody part of the denial and decapitation categories. Drones target leadership elements and attempt to decapitate them, but these opportunities are rare and these groups do not wither and die when a leader is eliminated. Al-Qaeda did not collapse when bin-Laden was killed. In terms of denial, it prohibits the ability to conduct a military campaign because it restricts

³ Bergen, Peter, and Katherine Tiedemann. "Washington's Phantom War: The Effects of the U.S. Drone Program in Pakistan." *Foreign Affairs* 90.4 (2011): 12-18. Web.

⁴ Pape, Robert A. *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995. Print.

movement. I propose that the drone campaign should undertake a hybrid campaign that targets leadership when the opportunity presents itself, but attacking mid-level fighters and commanders are the lynchpins of the organization because they carry out the political vision of the organization and if they are eliminated, then the group's capacity for violence is reduced.

Finally, I discuss the recently declassified document that outlines the Obama Administration's guidelines for authorizing a strike. I compare how this document fits in with my proposed strategic vision. I also discuss under what circumstances drone strikes would be effective.

Operation Enduring Freedom

The opening attacks of the War in Afghanistan have been hailed as a victory for airpower. Some have argued that the Afghan Model can completely change the way American foreign policy can be conducted because it relies on few American troops, airpower and indigenous allies. It is easy to look at how quickly the addition of American airpower and special forces were able to break the stalemate between the Northern Alliance and the Taliban and claim that this model could reshape the way foreign policy could be conducted. I argue that the Afghan Model has a certain range of adversaries it would be useful against low to middle tier conventional adversaries. The Afghan Model was much more successful against the Taliban when in conventional situations, but faced difficulties against al-Qaeda forces when they adopted insurgency tactics.

The decision to use airpower combined with special forces and indigenous allies was greatly influenced by the geostrategic circumstances that surrounded the war. This is

important to understand if one wants to evaluate the broader applicability of the Afghan Model. Afghanistan is a landlocked country, so the United States would need to secure overflight and basing rights in the region. Afghanistan has Iran to the west, former Soviet satellite states to the north, and Pakistan to the east. Each presented their own diplomatic problems. It would also mean that building up large mechanized and infantry forces would take a considerable amount of time and the desire to hit back after 9/11 made this option undesirable. These diplomatic and logistical problems set the stage to solve the problem with airpower, but given the unique circumstances that surrounded the conflict, it shows that the Afghan Model is not readily replicable.

The Taliban and al-Qaeda perspective on potential American military involvement is also important to comprehend because the Afghan Model is a counter-strategy to their plan to hold onto Afghanistan and make it the graveyard of empires. They believed that the US military would respond with overwhelming numbers of troops as the Soviets did and they could use a similar strategy as they did in that war and slowly bleed out the Americans. They did not foresee the American urgency to strike back in retaliation would give rise to the Afghan Model.

Then, I use anecdotal evidence and official accounts of the War in Afghanistan to demonstrate the different situations the use of airpower encountered in the opening months of the war. I discuss the weaknesses of the Model that were on display at the Battle of Tora Bora because it depends on allies, who often do not share the same political views and objectives as the US. Despite the full availability of the United States Air Force, bin Laden was able to slip away because of differences of opinion within the tribal groups and the dearth of American or allied troops on the ground. I also argue that

this represented a situation more akin of an insurgency, which is one reason why conventional military force was ill-suited for the situation. Consequently, I point to this as one of the reasons that the Afghan Model is better suited against low-to-middle tier conventional adversaries.

The capabilities and the usefulness of the Afghan Model in certain situations and against a limited set of adversaries were on display in the battle of Mazar e Sharif. It showed that allies who share the same strategic vision in a conventional conflict are much more likely to succeed. Moreover, it could take advantage of the synergy between ground and air forces because the political landscape was clear and the battlefield was well understood.

Then I discuss the predominant opinions about the applicability of the Afghan Model. Some, like Andres, Wills, and Griffith argue that it has wide applicability and can reshape American foreign policy. They argue this because of the tactical conundrum that airpower poses for enemy forces and how powerful the synergy between ground and air is. On the other hand, Stephen Biddle argues that the Afghan Model has limited applicability and does not represent a new version of American foreign policy because it relies on allies. While I agree with Biddle on this matter, I contribute that the Afghan Model can be extremely effective, but only in a limited range of conflict types and intensities. Taking territory was the easier part of the war, but expecting a handful of special forces soldiers to take territory and build a political consensus in a nation of fragmented ethnic groups with their own political agendas was expecting too much. Once the Taliban and al-Qaeda turned to an insurgency strategy, airpower and special forces are much less effective. It is not a paradigm altering method of fighting war.

Operation Allied Force and Operation Odyssey Dawn

One of the most contested uses of airpower was the 1999 campaign in Kosovo with the directive to protect Kosovar Albanians from the Milosevic regime. There is wide disagreement among scholars about what exactly caused Milosevic to capitulate. Some argue that the threat of a US/NATO invasion was the coercive mechanism, while others point to the collapse of Russian diplomatic support, and still other scholars claim that airpower caused Milosevic to collapse. There are reasonable arguments for each, but I argue that airpower changed the political reality for Milosevic and forced him to alter his behavior. I do not claim that these actions were taken because of humanitarian norms, but rather because it represented an opportunity for the US to reshape regional political order and ensure stability in important regions.

Airpower offers a way for the US to shape regional order and international affairs without exposing itself to the uncertainties of war. There is no consensus about how effective airpower was at coercing Milosevic, but when one compares the situations surrounding the campaigns in Kosovo and Libya, more truths about airpower become evident. I solidify this argument and discuss airpower as a strategy on a broader level by comparing Operation Allied Force to Operation Odyssey Dawn in 2011 in Libya. I do this because Milosevic and Qaddafi had similar regime types. They were both soft authoritarian regimes that used patronage systems and the military to legitimize their rule.

In each case, airpower was a counterstrategy, so it is necessary to understand the origins of the conflicts. I discuss the origins of the Kosovo conflict and examine the Serbian strategy, as it is necessary to view airpower to counter ethnic cleansing. Then I evaluate the arguments from each perspective on the effectiveness of airpower in

Kosovo. I do not argue that in Kosovo airpower alone forced Milosevic to capitulate, but rather it changed his political calculus. His military forces were dispersed and hidden because it does not require heavy forces to conduct ethnic cleansing. The campaign switched from targeting the Serbian military to mixed use economic facilities, which effected Milosevic's political base and thus destabilize his hold on power. Airpower created a situation where his hold on power was no longer tenable.

On the other side, some like Conrad Crane argue that airpower did not change Milosevic's mind, even though mixed-use facilities were hit. Instead, he and others argue that the threat of US/NATO ground invasion and the collapse of Russian diplomatic support was what hanged Milosevic's mind about continuing his actions.

It is reasonable to compare Kosovo with Libya because they were similar regime types that were targeted because of actions that can be categorized with targeted killing on political adversaries. In Kosovo, it was along ethnic lines and in Libya it was opposition political groups. Both cases though represent an effort to solidify their own political position as Milosevic would further solidify support among Serbian nationalist groups for reclaiming the province hailed as the cradle of Serbian civilization. Qaddafi, if he were successful, would have remained the sole possessor of political power in Libya. I do not claim that these actions were taken because of humanitarian norms, but rather because it was an opportunity to reshape regional order. The US targeted Qaddafi's military because that was his primary way to legitimize his authority and without the military there was a viable political alternative to his rule. This was the same mechanism of political destabilization that was used to undercut Milosevic and given that both regimes eventually fell, I argue that airpower had limited success.

In neither case did airpower “win” by itself, but it created a situation where each leader’s political reality, meaning their ability to effectively lead, control political behavior in their countries, achieve specific policy goals, or maintain sovereignty, was altered and produced the desired outcome that they were replaced. The ongoing instability in Libya and the consequences of the use of airpower go beyond this paper, but I do briefly mention it.

Chapter Two: The Drone War in Pakistan

Technology has always played a role in shaping the course of conflict; be it the advent of the muzzle loading rifle or the steam engine. War and conflict in the 21st century is dependent upon technology and the use of armed drones is a prime example. Airpower has become an integral part of strategic thinking. This shift is evident in the use of armed drones, or remotely piloted aircraft, in the Global War on Terror. In this paper, the Global War on Terror is not a term used to denote the specific Bush or Obama Administrations’ military actions, but rather to define the broader effort to combat terrorism. The policy of using drones to attack al-Qaeda targets in the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) region of Pakistan has become the primary way the United States fights this group. Drones, and airpower as a strategy, are extremely attractive because they advertise unparcelled precision without any risk to oneself, but placing faith in them to singlehandedly defeat al-Qaeda is misplaced. Airpower in general, and drones specifically, cannot coerce an adversary by themselves. They must be part of a comprehensive strategy in combination with political pressure and a force on the ground. This force does not necessarily need to be troops. I propose an intelligence network, but it could also be a political change. Drones can be used to weaken al-Qaeda,

but expecting a relatively few missiles to bring an ideological group to their knees is a folly.

In this chapter I will provide a brief history of the drone program and how it evolved from a failing battlefield surveillance concept to the cornerstone of counterterrorism strategy.

Then I will discuss the competing perspectives on the drone program. The competing claims hinge on what effect civilian casualties have on al-Qaeda. Some, like Byman⁵, argue that the drone program is the best of only bad options. Some in this camp, like Fair, question the reports and polling of anti-American sentiment.⁶ On the flip side, Tiedemann and Bergen argue that drone strikes only stoke anger and push recruits to terror organizations like al-Qaeda and they are ineffective at fundamentally undermining al-Qaeda.⁷ Technology has outpaced traditional thinking in nearly every aspect of politics, not just strategy. The key question is this, is there a way to use drone strikes that wither terror groups' strength while avoiding the creation of such anti-American hostility that more people are willing to take up arms against the United States? I examine the statistical analysis that Walsh⁸ and Jordan⁹ present and argue that drone strikes are worth the risks in clearly defined circumstances. Clearly, each side has a coherent argument

⁵ Byman, Daniel. "Why Drones Work: The Case for Washington's Weapon of Choice." *Foreign Affairs* (2013): n. pag. Print.

⁶ Fair, Christine. "The Drone Papers: Intercepting the Nonsense." *Lawfare* (n.d.): n. pag. *Brookings Institute*. Web.

⁷ Bergen, Peter, and Katherine Tiedemann. "Washington's Phantom War: The Effects of the U.S. Drone Program in Pakistan." *Foreign Affairs* 90.4 (2011): 12-18. Web.

Bergen, Peter L., and Jennifer Rowland. "Decade of the Drone." *Drone Wars*(n.d.): 12-41. Web.

⁸ Walsh, James Igoe. "The Effectiveness of Drone Strikes in Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism Campaigns." *Strategic Studies Institute* (2013): n. pag. *United States Army War College Press*. Web.

⁹ Jordan, Jenna. "Attacking the Leader, Missing the Mark." *International Security* 38.4 (2014): 7-38. Web.

because there are people who have been infuriated by American drone strike, but the strikes have killed senior members like Mullah Mohammad Akhtar Manour, who was the emir of the Taliban and “commander of the faithful”.¹⁰ He replaced Mullah Omar and accepted al Qaeda’s oath of allegiance.

My contribution will attempt to describe a feasible strategy that attempts to avoid collateral damage, while maintaining an aggressive posture that keeps the lynchpins of terror groups incapable of planning major attacks. I propose the most likely strategy to succeed is one that targets leadership only. I define leadership as a person who has forces under their control, a key bureaucrat, or charismatic figures. These strikes should also be more transparent, to legitimately challenge accusations of civilian death. Only using drones to carry this out will likely fail because it does not have synergy to exploit. A developed intelligence network will be able to better identify targets, like leaders or other lawful targets. I will compare my proposal against the recently released “playbook” for drone strike authorization under the Obama Administration. Drones are impressive pieces of equipment, so what strategy aimed at defeating al-Qaeda properly utilizes their strengths?

Theoretical Overview

The use of drones in the War on Terror, specifically in the FATA region of Pakistan, has been one of the most controversial uses of airpower. Those opposed argue that it lowers the threshold of conflict and ignores international law. Proponents point to

¹⁰ Roggio, Bill. "US Strikes in Pakistan, HVTs | FDD's Long War Journal." *FDD's Long War Journal*. N.p., n.d. Web. 13 Dec. 2016.

the precision capability to deny safe havens to terror groups.¹¹ It is controversial on a moral level as society deals with automation and the increased capabilities of technology in the world, but that stems from the question if their use is an effective strategy in the fight against al-Qaeda (AQ). Remotely piloted aircraft, like the RQ-1 Predator and RQ-9 Reaper, can go places too dull, dirty or dangerous for a manned aircraft.¹² Small wars and insurgencies have replaced the great power conflicts of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Forces like Al-Qaeda do not wear uniforms or have easily discernible supply lines that can be identified and targeted through conventional means. Instead, they are a network that operates within and among a society, so it can often be impossible to differentiate civilian and militant. Remotely piloted aircraft (RPAs) are advertised as a platform that offer the endurance to loiter over a target to gather information about an area and people of interest, with the sensors to give decision makers a clear picture of what is happening without putting Americans in harm's way, and then weapons precise enough to kill only the intended target. As Cockburn puts it drones represent the "unswerving faith that the vagaries of human conflict can be overcome by technology."¹³ A comprehensive strategy for the use of drones and another element on the ground is necessary to create synergy between ground and air forces that drones can exploit.

¹¹ Fuller, Christopher J. "The Eagle Comes Home to Roost: The Historical Origins of the CIA's Lethal Drone Program." *The Eagle Comes Home to Roost: The Historical Origins of the CIA's Lethal Drone Program: Intelligence and National Security*: Vol 30, No 6. Taylor and Francis, 1 May 2014. Web. 15 Dec. 2016.

Mazzetti, Mark. *The Way of the Knife: The CIA, a Secret Army, and a War at the Ends of the Earth*. New York: Penguin, 2013. Print.

¹² Benjamin, Medea. *Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control*. London: *Verso*, 2013. Print

¹³ Cockburn, Andrew. *Kill Chain: The Rise of the High-tech Assassins*. New York: *Henry Holt*, 2015. Print. 40

Drones promise precision and a new type of bloodless war and coercive capability, but it is yet to be seen if that is the case. For most of the program's life, the coercive strategy it has pursued has been unclear. As Fuller notes, the drone program, while its scale is distinctive, is not unprecedented and marks a return to earlier thinking on counterterror strategy.¹⁴ It is advertised and its origins come from a decapitation background, but its extensive use and body count suggest something more like a punishment and denial strategy. Decapitation refers to strikes that attempt to decapitate a leader from the organization by death or the destruction of political communication apparatus. Punishment is a strategy that attempts to break the will of a society at large, causing widespread pain for supporting a political entity. A denial strategy is a concerted effort to dismantle an enemy's fighting capacity.¹⁵ These terms will be discussed and defined later in the chapter. Determining which strategy best meets the desired ends of the United States in this facet of the War on Terror is a vital question as the US seeks to avoid entering another large ground operation in the Middle East and as the military continues to look for technological solutions to strategic problems.

Drones, and airpower, are not a replacement for counterinsurgency, but rather a tool to be used within a comprehensive strategy. A new strategy is necessary that maximizes the incredible capabilities of drones and avoids civilian casualties and their negative consequences. Broadly, this strategy uses selective killing of militants that are key pieces of the organization. For comparison, the Obama administration released the

¹⁴ Fuller, Christopher J. "The Eagle Comes Home to Roost: The Historical Origins of the CIA's Lethal Drone Program." *The Eagle Comes Home to Roost: The Historical Origins of the CIA's Lethal Drone Program: Intelligence and National Security*:

¹⁵ Pape, Robert A. *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995. Print.

“playbook” of when a drone strike can be launched. Does this document provide a suitable balance between aggression and care to avoid civilian casualties? Critics of the drone program will say, that regardless of any safeguards, any use and any casualties will drive anti-American sentiment, which drives terror recruiting. A clear, transparent, and cohesive strategy would avoid these criticisms. Drones should be used to strike only at high-level leadership elements, clear militant infrastructure, or forces moving to attack across the border.

Drones are an incredible tool, but they are just that a tool and need a strategy to accompany them. Moreover, they need something to create synergy with. There are no ground forces that can provide accurate targeting information. One possible solution is an intelligence network. To exploit the technology, the drone needs to target the right people. It must only kill members of the network that would seriously impede its operational and strategic capabilities in the future. If precise killing is used in an indiscriminate manner, then the population will join the fight against American interests, policies and forces. The debate around drones and the discussion of strategy regarding their use is important because it can change the conduct of war and conflict. Computerized war is an attractive option as the threshold for using force is lowered, but it could drag the United States into an unwanted conflict. As it pertains to this chapter though, it represents the policy of conducting counterterrorism operations and poor policy will lead to more danger to the United States and its interests.

Historical

It is no secret that the United States military has fully embraced ‘net-centric warfare’, which values gathering and then sharing information with command and other

units and then quickly marshalling appropriate resources for a decisive attack as a way of leveraging American technology as a force multiplier. Admiral William Owens, former vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told Congress in 2001, “If we are able to view a strategic battlefield and prevent an enemy from doing so, we have dominant battlefield awareness and we are certain to prevail in a conflict.”¹⁶ Drones were not initially envisioned as a weapons platform, but rather as a surveillance platform that could show enemy movements in real time. From the onset, they were envisioned to bypass the friction in war. Fuller also points to the mixed results of bombing Ghaddafi’s Libya in 1986 and the Beirut hostage crisis as turning points for the need of a surgeon’s scalpel as opposed to a sledgehammer.¹⁷ Counterterrorism Center Director Clarridge realized that the United States “had to find a better way to send a message to outlaw nations that we don’t like their behavior short of sending in squadrons of F-111Bs.”¹⁸ The old methods of coercion were too blunt to solve the problem. The CIA wanted a platform that could send a clear and visible message, without massive casualties and no risk to delivery personnel.¹⁹ This idea was dubbed the Eagle Program.

Technical Barriers

Now iconic designs, like the Predator, had extremely humble beginnings. Avraheem Karem worked for Israeli Aircraft Industries, a state-owned design shop, until he immigrated to the United States in 1977 to undertake his own company that

¹⁶ Cockburn, 104

¹⁷ Fuller, Christopher J. "The Eagle Comes Home to Roost: The Historical Origins of the CIA's Lethal Drone Program." *The Eagle Comes Home to Roost: The Historical Origins of the CIA's Lethal Drone Program: Intelligence and National Security: Vol 30, No 6*. Taylor and Francis, 1 May 2014. Web. 15 Dec. 2016.

¹⁸ Clarridge with Diehl, *A Spy For All Seasons*, p.339

¹⁹ Clarridge, 339.

specifically focused on pilotless aircraft.²⁰ Initially, the only suitor for his project was the US Navy, in need of a way to guide new, accurate cruise missiles because without knowing where the enemy fleet is, the weapons are useless. The program failed, and General Atomics purchased Karem's company, Leading Systems, in 1990.²¹ The program continued to muddle along and appeared headed for the scrap bin, until the GPS revolution. Unmanned systems face two significant hurdles to overcome: navigating and communicating over the horizon.²² The satellite revolution saved the program. With the global positioning system (GPS) satellites, the Predator could be controlled via satellite uplink, which made piloting the aircraft a simpler technical task, as its precise location would always be known and geographic features could not disrupt the connection.

Drones came into their own during Operation Allied Force in Kosovo in 1999 when Pentagon staffers referred to them as "CNN in the sky".²³ The video could be streamed into generals' offices, giving them the ability to look directly at the battlefield from thousands of miles away, for better and worse. One Air Force officer described the hope that the Predator would be able to provide services that only platforms like satellites and manned spy planes like the U-2 could provide without risking a pilot or spending billions of dollars. Another attractive aspect of drones that neither of those platforms have is the ability to loiter over an area for extended periods of time. A satellite can only be above an intended area for a few minutes as it hurtles around the planet in orbit and manned planes run on limited fuel and only has as much endurance as the human

²⁰ Cockburn, 113.

²¹ Cockburn, 114.

²² Cockburn, 122.

²³ Cockburn, 140

controlling it, so a drone offers the best of both worlds. The officer involved in the program said, “The Air Force had this idea the Predator could be used for detecting patterns on the battlefield. It would send back the full motion video from a wide area, and that would be compared with previous video so they could find changes- new units moving in or whatever.”²⁴ The concept was complete awareness of the battlefield became an attractive feature in the FATA region now where the lines of soldier and civilian are blurred.

New Visions for the Program

There is nothing controversial or potentially morally dubious about the program at this point. It is an attempt to fulfill the prophecy that technology can give America an insurmountable advantage in warfighting capability. The decision to weaponize drones came in October 2000 when the CIA was tasked with finding Osama bin Laden, whose network was behind the then recent attacks on the USS Cole and the US Embassy bombing in Nairobi, Kenya. The CIA used the Predator aircraft to observe suspected Al-Qaeda and Bin-Laden compound and when they were over Kandahar, they spotted a tall man headed to a mosque surrounded with a large following.²⁵ Immediately, they sought authorization to kill him. Unfortunately, a cruise missile launched from a submarine in the Persian Gulf or Indian Ocean would take hours to arrive and seeing as they could not verify if it was in fact Bin-Laden, the potential civilian casualties would not be worth moving assets and by the time a cruise missile could arrive too much collateral damage

²⁴ Cockburn, 152.

²⁵ Bergen, Peter, and Katherine Tiedemann. "Washington's Phantom War: The Effects of the U.S. Drone Program in Pakistan." *Foreign Affairs* 90.4 (2011): 12-18. Web.

would be caused.²⁶ This also demonstrates that selective killing, as a part of foreign policy is not a recent political phenomenon, as this occurred under the Clinton Administration. There was also resistance to the Predator program, according to former CTC Director Clarke as there was the fear that it was too risky and costly,²⁷ but seeing Osama in their sights and being unable to do anything rapidly changed their calculus.²⁸ This is also the dawn of “signature strikes”, as there was no positive identification that it was in fact that it was bin-Laden, but rather behavior that fit his pattern. As will be discussed later, a more robust intelligence network will prove more useful than any piece of technology because knowing who you are targeting is more precise than what you are aiming at.

In the wake of this incident, the CIA wanted to arm the Predator to avoid such a target slipping through their fingers again. Consequently, they turned to the AGM-114 Hellfire, originally meant for Army attack helicopters as an anti-tank weapon. This original intended purpose gave the CIA the confidence that it would be accurate enough to hit a target like the suspected Bin-Laden compound. In the 9/11 Commission, George Tenet said, “The leadership of the CIA reasoned that if we could develop the capability to reliably hit a target with a Hellfire missile and could develop the enabling policy and legal framework. We would have a capability to accurately and promptly respond to future sighting of high value targets.”²⁹ It passes legal muster on the grounds of the 2001

²⁶ Cockburn, 153; Henry A. Crumpton. *The Art of Intelligence: Lessons from a Life in the CIA's Clandestine Service*.

²⁷ Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror*, 220.

²⁸ The 9/11 Commission Report. 190.

²⁹ Cockburn, 156.

Authorization of the Use of Military Force and Article 51 of the United Nations Charter that grants the right of self-defense.

This rush to build this new system has had massive strategic implications on the campaign in Pakistan. It is clear in Director Tenet's testimony that the intelligence community did not have a clear goal or strategy for pursuing Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, other than seeking to deal retribution.

The drone program is often described as an assassination program, with positive and negative connotations. Positive as in the program can kill without collateral damage, but negative as there is minimal legal framework for killing enemies of the United States outside of a declaration of war without trial, and where no troops are present. If it is an assassination program, then why do only one in seven strikes target leadership?³⁰ It is clear what the overarching thinking is that enough killing high-level members of terror groups will cripple the group, but doing so without a clear strategy may be detrimental to degrading, dismantling, and destroying Al-Qaeda. Moreover, which strategy should the United States use for hunting terrorists in politically and logistically denied areas, like the tribal regions of Pakistan and under what conditions is this use of air power effective?

Divergent Opinions on Drones

After the United States invaded Afghanistan and toppled the Taliban in October 2001, the al-Qaeda leadership was forced to flee into Pakistan where American troops could not pursue them as that would violate the sovereignty of Pakistan, a vital ally in the

³⁰ Bergen, Peter, and Katherine Tiedemann. "Washington's Phantom War: The Effects of the U.S. Drone Program in Pakistan." *Foreign Affairs* 90.4 (2011): 12-18. Web.

War in Afghanistan as it is the only land-based route for supplies to come into the country for American troops. The Pakistani army has proven unwilling to move into the areas and clear them. This leaves policymakers at a dead end. To a large extent, it is because Pakistan views the Taliban and al-Qaeda as useful proxies. Leaving the Al-Qaeda members alone and left to their own devices in an unacceptable situation as they can use the area to plot for more attacks on American or other European targets, thus rendering the invasion of Afghanistan meaningless.

The obvious options are rather unattractive given the political climate. Sending special forces across the border may offer limited civilian casualties, but any civilians killed will be at the hands of American forces and if an operation runs into trouble, it becomes difficult to support or extract a unit, especially with friendly casualties. Moreover, if the Pakistani government grew irritated or reacted to public pressure to stop it, then American forces could be in a shooting war with Pakistan, something that the invasion of Afghanistan was never meant to cause. If an American were captured, either by Al-Qaeda or Pakistani forces, then it would require a massive diplomatic or military effort to rectify, which would detract from the reason forces were sent. Air strikes from manned platforms or artillery bombardments from across the border are unattractive for the same reasons, offensive to Pakistan and risks civilians at too high of a cost if something goes awry.

The answer to this problem was the Predator. They can go to areas too dull, dangerous, or dirty for a manned aircraft to go.³¹ They can loiter over an area and with

³¹ Benjamin, Medea. *Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control*. London: *Verso*, 2013. Print. 29

advanced thermal and optical sensors they can give commanders the ability to observe and then decide once more information becomes available and let events on the ground play out.

Proponent Arguments

This capability is well suited for the situation in Pakistan as Al-Qaeda and the Taliban obviously do not wear uniforms or have standardized vehicles, so determining civilian or militant at first glance is impossible. Proponents of the drones point to these technological advantages and the limited political options and argue it is the only recourse for the United States. Furthermore, scholars, like Byman, argue that their use have been exceptionally effective at crippling the Al-Qaeda and Taliban networks because the ability to loiter prevents leaders from moving and gathering to plan attacks in the US or across the border. They prevent training new recruits as that requires large gatherings of men and equipment that is easy for a drone operator to make out.

There are also questions about the accuracy of reports of a groundswell of anti-American sentiment. As Christine Fair points out, accurate reporting in a warzone is difficult and that documents leaked to the press only portray a small sample.³² Leaked statistics from “Operation Haymaker”, an operational element of the overall program, that ran from January 2012 to February 2013. There are 35 “jackpots”, which are known al-Qaeda or Taliban operatives, but 219 “EKIA”, or enemies killed in action. Those critical of the drone program look at that statistic and argue that many of those killed are

³² Fair, Christine. "The Drone Papers: Intercepting the Nonsense." *Lawfare* (n.d.): n. pag. *Brookings Institute*. Web.

innocent. Fair, however, argues that none of those near al-Qaeda members notorious enough to end up on the intelligence community's docket is at the very least a terror sympathizer and a legitimate target. It is also possible that those killed are either bodyguards or associates and are also legitimate. She also cites a Pakistani study that found at least 194 people killed in the attacks, about 70 percent—at least 138—were militants. The remaining 56 were either civilians or tribal police, and 38 of them were killed in a single attack on March 17, 2011. Excluding one catastrophically disastrous strike which inflicted one of the worst civilian death tolls since the drone program started in Pakistan, nearly 90 percent of the people killed were militants.³³ She also makes the case that in the FATA regions, the drones are the lesser of two evils. According to Fair, al-Qaeda and the Taliban present a larger daily danger to civilians in these regions than drones do. One Pakistani newspaper editorial wrote in 2012 that, heavily armed groups using their towns as staging grounds is more of a threat to their sovereignty and safety than drone strikes. It also argues that militancy that arises out of drone strikes is a minor problem compared to other sources.³⁴

It is possible that local villagers resent the terror groups using their villages as safe havens, which makes them targets. They may also resent them for usurping their way of life and political structures, like the sentiments that spurred the Sunni Awakening in Iraq in late 2006 and early 2007. This view and posture is overall too aggressive represents a vengeful side of American foreign policy thinking. This is killing without a

³³ Abbot, Sebastian. "AP IMPACT: New Light on Drone War's Death Toll." *Yahoo! News*. Yahoo!, 26 Feb. 2012. Web. 13 Dec. 2016.

³⁴ "A Question of Sovereignty - The Express Tribune." *The Express Tribune*. N.p., 12 Dec. 2012. Web. 13 Dec. 2016.

cause. There is no end goal for strikes under this theory other than killing terrorists is good. There must be a more reasonable and level-headed approach.

Dissent on Drone Strikes

Others, like Tiedemann and Bergen view drone strikes as overall detrimental to American efforts because the civilian casualties that accompany the strikes only stoke anti-American sentiment and any militants killed are replaced. As former head of Joint Special Operations Command and current choice for the Trump Administration's national security advisor, General Michael T Flynn said, "When you drop a bomb from a drone... you are going to cause more damage than you are going to cause good... the more bombs we drop, that just... fuels the conflict."³⁵ The detractors of the drone program argue that any "decapitation" of a leader will only spur more recruits, thus increasing the organization's size and popularity relative to before the strike.

There are two divergent opinions on the policy of drone strikes, so is one side correct? The truth lays somewhere in between. A sound strategy is one that is not as cavalier as Fair demands, but the opportunity chip away at al-Qaeda and other groups cannot be denied. Drones strikes are the only politically acceptable option in these circumstances, but they need to have a clear strategic vision and guidelines. Air power does not guarantee victory by any means. It is a tool, that if used incorrectly, can prove more harmful than doing nothing at all.

³⁵ Norton, Ben. "Not Playing Fair: How Christine Fair, Defender of U.S. Drone Program in Pakistan, Twists the Facts - and May Have Conflicts of Her Own." Salon. N.p., 04 Nov. 2015. Web. 13 Dec. 2016.

Strategic Picture

The two prevailing perspectives offer a polarized view on drone strikes, but it takes a detailed and clear strategy to succeed. Strategy is what connects means and ends, so in the efforts to defeat al-Qaeda there must be a concerted effort use drones in a way that completes the objective of destroying al-Qaeda, while not creating problems for the future. The debate about drone strikes needs more nuance. A strategy that can emphasize the incredible abilities while avoiding the civilian casualties is what is required. Both sides passionately argue for their views to be heeded, but only the pro-strike camp has a testable way to defeat al-Qaeda. Albeit, this does not mean the order to fire at will should be given, as Fair would have it. Rather, there must be a balance.

Each side makes a strong case, but there needs to be a strategy to reconcile the differences while accentuating strengths and minimizing weaknesses. The overarching question remains that while drones are an effective tactic, are these military victories translating to political success?³⁶ Because of drones' inherent qualities, they are well suited for attacking al-Qaeda leadership. The goal behind striking leadership is to take charismatic personalities that these organizations need for recruitment and legitimacy off the roster and these personalities are not easily replaced.³⁷ Although Bin-Laden was not killed in a drone strike, al-Qaeda has struggled to replace him with Ayman al-Zawahiri and have thus fallen in the terrorist hierarchy. This causes the promotion of inexperienced and unqualified leaders who stumble into errors that will then gradually deplete the

³⁶ Masters, Jonathan. "Targeted Killings." *Council on Foreign Relations*, 23 May 2013. Web. 24 Nov. 2016.

³⁷ Byman, Why Drones Work.

manpower of the organization. Eliminating high value targets is the goal, but as Byman notes, killing specialists, like forgers, bombmakers, and fundraisers, which eliminates skills that cannot be replaced overnight. Proponents, like Byman, also argue that because drones can loiter for hours and aircraft rotating in can make surveillance constant, it is impossible for leadership to meet or communicate. Drone strikes can make training and command and control apparatus a threat to their safety because the group must choose between having no leaders or dead leaders.³⁸ As America seeks to draw down its presence, drones allow for a smaller footprint and as previously mentioned, they are less destructive than conventional alternatives.

On the other hand, other scholars and analysts like Tiedemann and Bergen, argue that drone strikes in the tribal regions of Pakistan undermine the broader effort to defeat al-Qaeda because the civilian casualties that come with the strikes stokes anti-American sentiment, thus replacing the losses in the initial strike. Furthermore, what have the strikes accomplished? They have made terror leaders cease using electronic communication, making tracking them more difficult. Attempted attacks have still occurred, like the Detroit Christmas Day airplane bombing and the failed Time's Square bomber in 2010 received training in Pakistan. Walsh also points out that attempting to decapitate leadership is only effective if the organization is small and thus unable to sufficiently replace men.³⁹ Walsh also raises a unique criticism that because the United States does not know which groups are on the ground and that targeting the area without understanding the group dynamics may change and create new alliances among terror

³⁸ Byman, Why Drones Work.

³⁹ Walsh, James Igoe. "The Effectiveness of Drone Strikes in Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism Campaigns." *Strategic Studies Institute* (2013): n. pag. *United States Army War College Press*. Web.

groups, which may be more dangerous than before because of drones. That is why I propose the drone program needs to be meshed with an intelligence network to create synergy and it will be a more effective strategy.

The divergence in opinion does not provide a clear understanding for how to proceed with combating terrorism. The United States cannot cede territory and a haven to al-Qaeda and drones are the only viable option. One needs to turn to numerical analysis to formulate a strategy that can operate between the polarized opinions. Ultimately, al-Qaeda cannot be allowed to operate with impunity, so drone strikes present a useful tool, but they should not be relied on as a strategy by themselves.

Need for a Cohesive Strategy

Drones can be an effective coercive tool, but only in limited conditions and within a clearly defined strategy. Although the drone program has been labeled as an assassination program, the numbers of senior leaders killed in drone strikes do not support this. This fact demonstrates the overall lack of a cohesive strategy. At the heart of the debate on drones as a strategic coercive tool, is the question about how many civilians have they killed. Obviously, this is a difficult task given that there is no way to independently verify reports. Pakistani media outlets likely have inflated reports because they are getting information from insurgents or pushing an anti-American sentiment to grab attention.

The United States had run the program through the Central Intelligence Agency, so it would often decline comment about a strike and if it did announce that a militant was killed, the numbers of civilians killed would be significantly lower than the Pakistani

report. So, one must turn to outside data. According to the New America Foundation,⁴⁰ a non-profit, open source database that has tracked every reported drone strike. By their tally, during the height of the program in 2011, the United States had struck Pakistan 233 times. From June 2004 to April 7, 2011 drone strikes killed between 1,435 and 2,283 people and somewhere between 1,145 and 1,822 of those were described as militants in reliable press sources.⁴¹ Tiedemann and Bergen argue that even though more than 1,000 militants have been taken off the battlefield, attacks have sharply risen from the time before drones were used. According to the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center, attacks in Pakistan have risen from 150 in 2004 to 1,916 in 2009. Also, suicide attacks tripled in the first half of 2010 compared to the first half of 2009.⁴² This would seemingly confirm that drone strikes do in fact cause more harm than good because they stoke anger and force groups to morph into more cells that have more autonomy. But Walsh's use of 30-day regression analysis through 2011 reveals a different pattern and he argues that there is no proof that drone strikes are galvanizing the insurgency.⁴³

In Afghanistan and Pakistan through 2011, attacks were on the rise, which would give credence to the argument that Tiedemann and Bergen espouse, but after this date, there is a decline in terrorist activity. Furthermore, there appears to be no correlation between the number of civilians killed and terror attacks. When attacks were at their peak in 2010-2011, civilian casualties were either in decline or level. As 2011 progressed,

⁴⁰ "America's Counterterrorism Wars." *America's Counterterrorism Wars*. New America, n.d. Web. 19 Apr. 2017.

⁴¹ Bergen, Peter, and Katherine Tiedemann. "Washington's Phantom War: The Effects of the U.S. Drone Program in Pakistan." *Foreign Affairs* 90.4 (2011): 12-18. Web.

⁴² Bergen, Peter, and Katherine Tiedemann. "Washington's Phantom War: The Effects of the U.S. Drone Program in Pakistan." *Foreign Affairs* 90.4 (2011): 12-18. Web.

⁴³ Walsh, 36.

attacks decreased as did civilian casualties. For there to be a causal relationship, civilian casualties would need to rise as well as attacks for the argument to stand up. The data for Afghanistan shows that terror attacks increase before drone strikes and then decrease after. That may sound convincing that drones are a net positive, but it is plausible that the terror groups expend their energy and resources and then need to retreat. Drones may not be a part of their calculus of when to launch attacks in Afghanistan at all. In Pakistan in 2010, terror attacks were met with increased drone strikes. As the year progressed, and the number of militants killed increased, attacks decreased, which suggests that drone strikes reduced terror groups ability to launch strikes.⁴⁴ As with any data set, it is up to interpretation, so one can only extrapolate. Also, the evidence is limited insofar as it only suggests the effects and consequences of drone strikes, but these events are not occurring within a vacuum and could be attributed to other causes, like the increase in American forces in Afghanistan in 2010 or the killing of Osama bin Laden, which forced al-Qaeda to restructure. From a strategic standpoint, these strikes do not change the overall balance because they have not been integrated into a general counterterror strategy.

Drone strikes are effective at tracking, targeting, and killing militants, but it is unclear what exactly the strikes are attempting to accomplish. The fact that only one in seven strikes killed a high-level leader does not indicate a decapitation strategy. The civilian casualties indicate a desire to wither support for the terror groups. Drones are clearly not a detrimental tool because of their incredible capabilities, but they need a

⁴⁴ Walsh, 33.

strategy to maximize their positive capabilities while minimizing the civilian casualties and their negative effects.

Categorization of Drones

The four categories of air power strategy that Pape describes are punishment, risk, denial, and decapitations. The campaign in Pakistan does not fit neatly into a single category, but they all share the goal of inducing some political change. The primary criticism of drone strikes is that they cause civilian casualties, so Pape's first category of punishment is not applicable. A punishment campaign would be conducted to cause the maximum damage and shock an enemy population.⁴⁵ A punishment strategy is comparable to the carpet-bombing campaigns in the Second World War, indiscriminately targeting cities. A punishment strategy carried out to a lesser extent would target civilian infrastructure. The objective of such a strategy is to cause a popular revolt. Pursuing such a strategy runs afoul of moral norms, but it would be completely ineffective seeing as the tribal regions of Pakistan do not have major pieces of infrastructure. Punishment is intended to cause as much misery as possible to make the targets capitulate instantly. A popular revolt is also unlikely as al-Qaeda are already a fringe group and in northern Pakistan they are among their tribal counterparts, so expecting a betrayal is rather unlikely.

A risk campaign is like punishment, but instead of immediate, massive destruction, it would gradually raise the pace and intensity of strikes to force a society to reconsider the costs of continuing a conflict. This was the strategy employed in Vietnam.

⁴⁵ Pape, 157.

The third category, denial, attacks military targets, including field forces, logistics, command centers, communication nodes, and weapons plants and raw military material. A decapitation strategy attacks key leadership targets, like homes and respective offices. The objective of a decapitation strategy is to separate the leadership and elites of society from the general population and offer a society an alternative to violence. The separation can be the grave or severing any ties they have to society that could be used to apply pressure to the society. It also targets communications networks and political centers and economic hubs to cut off leadership to cause political paralysis.⁴⁶

Organizations, like al-Qaeda, may be more hardened against decapitation because they have a developed bureaucracy.⁴⁷ Al-Qaeda has existed long enough to develop institutional routines that establish norms and rules for recruitment and a chain of command, eliminating succession problems. A leader's message becomes part of the institution over time and even if a leader is eliminated, the message can be a proxy for the personality.⁴⁸ The argument against decapitation theorizes that targeting leadership is "unlikely to diminish al-Qaeda's long-term operational capacity to engage in terrorist activity."⁴⁹ Al-Qaeda's behavior as a group does not indicate a weakness to decapitation, according to Jordan. She argues that because al-Qaeda is a religious group with enough size, it has the experience to resist decapitation because older and larger groups have developed a bureaucracy to replace losses.

⁴⁶ Pape, 159

⁴⁷ Jordan, Jenna. "Attacking the Leader, Missing the Mark." *International Security* 38.4 (2014): 7-38. Web.

⁴⁸ Jordan, 15.

⁴⁹ Jordan, 29.

This perspective holds true if taking about one individual leader. Had a drone strike been used to kill Osama bin Laden in May 2011, Ayman al-Zawahiri would still have ascended to head the organization. That is not the point of the drone program as evidenced throughout its history and extensive use. The point of the drone program is to wage a war of attrition without placing any American personnel in harm's way. No organization can withstand the repeated loss of mid-level commanders, financiers, and other experts. It is like a football team losing players to injury throughout the season. A good team can withstand an injury to one key individual, but the sustained loss of role players throws the team into chaos and they lose cohesion. Price, among others, take a similar view and agree with the sentiment that terror groups are vulnerable because of the importance of leadership and the difficulties of succession.⁵⁰ Terror groups do not want to advertise their organizational hierarchy and chain of command because that would make them susceptible to attack. There are also competitions for power within groups, so the elimination of leaders, especially mid-level ones, can radically alter the group.

Outlining a More Effective Policy

The drone strikes embody parts of denial and decapitation strategies, but neither is perfectly suited for the drone campaign. As a denial strategy, drones are used to attack forces in the field and command centers, but al-Qaeda is an insurgency and does not have clear command structures. It operates within and among a society. Also, its communication network is either a public satellite network or the regular cellular data network. Completely dismantling this is not in the interest of pursuing a strategy to

⁵⁰ Price, Bryan C. "Targeting Top Terrorists: How Leadership Decapitation Contributes to Counterterrorism." *International Security* 36.4 (2012): 9-46. Web. 18

dismantle al-Qaeda because the signals intelligence gathered often provide the locations for strikes. Recently, ISIS spokesman Mohammad al-Adnani was killed in a strike in Syria because he was most likely picked up by signals intelligence, which shows how effectively drones can be in a hunter-killer role.⁵¹

The US military attacked cell towers or commercial satellites, this would not have been possible. Now ISIS faces the conundrum of how to deliver their message. Of course, any opportunity to strike training facilities or fighters moving into Afghanistan ought to be taken, but al-Qaeda does not wear uniforms and insurgencies are diffuse, so these opportunities are rare. The decapitation strategy is the goal. Ideally, one would like to target centers of political power and cordon al-Qaeda off from the rest of the world, but again al-Qaeda is an insurgency and insurgencies do not have political offices or economic infrastructure. Again, they share resources with the society they operate among. The core concept is that al-Qaeda and other terror groups offer no simple prescription because they are amorphous and not easily categorizable, but a sound drone strategy will decapitate leaders from rank and file members by death or fear of it. This new strategy should also grasp onto certain aspects of a denial strategy as it prevents fighters from training, mobilizing, or launching attacks. That is why I hypothesize that developing an intelligence network will yield the best results at finding these key role players and thus finding opportunities to target them without civilian casualties.

What is required is a hybrid campaign. A balance between aggression and patience. Drone strikes should be used to attack leadership elements. I define leadership

⁵¹ Arif, Merieme, Holly Yan, and Jim Sciutto. "US Doubts Russia's Claim It Killed ISIS Spokesman." *CNN*. Cable News Network, 31 Aug. 2016. Web. 14 Dec. 2016.

elements as not only those that are well-known to the public and media, like Zawahiri or al-Baghdadi, but the mid-level commanders that carry out the operations of groups. These are the targets most vulnerable to attack and are the most difficult to replace. Senior leadership can avoid the use of electronic communication because they focus on strategic issues of the groups, but commanders need to receive and share information, which requires some use of electronic message. Courier is simply too slow. Aggression towards the middle ranks is most likely to alter their behavior and slow terror activities.

Some may point to the mixed findings in studies like Igoe's that do not find a consistent link between drone strikes in Pakistan and increased attacks in Afghanistan. Clearly, drone strikes are not provoking the reaction that some have anticipated, but the objective of the drone program is not to slow insurgent activities in Afghanistan, it is to undercut al-Qaeda. The drone campaign has been fundamental in the disruption of al-Qaeda, as evidenced by their failure to organize a well-funded and well-coordinated attack on American or European soil. It may also force the charismatic leaders to put themselves into public view, which then puts them at risk.

Drones are only a piece of counterterrorism and they should be used to disrupt organizations, like al-Qaeda in the FATA region, but they should not be counted on to singlehandedly destroy them. There needs to be a synergy between drone strikes and some other force, be it the Pakistani military or an increased NATO presence in eastern Afghanistan and a concerted propaganda campaign. Drone strikes do not fundamentally alter the politics of these regions because the amount of violence they bring is relatively small, which is why they can, at best, be a disruptive force. That disruption should then be used to push back on other areas, like counterinsurgency and propaganda.

Also, airpower needs another element to synergize with. There are no forces on the ground to direct strikes or collect information. The program relies on intelligence from sources in cities elsewhere in the world. What could create synergy are proper spy networks in the area. Obviously, this would be difficult given the suspicion of outsiders and the family connections that define the regions, but it is worth trying. These networks could help avoid civilian casualties, thus reducing the recruitment backlash. It would also increase the opportunity to target specific leaders or groups of fighters. Airpower needs to be combined with another force on the ground to be able to take advantage of the technology and capabilities that drones provide.

Signature strikes should no longer be tolerated given the intense scrutiny of civilian casualties, regardless of their perceived “innocence”, as Fair would have it. The way the United States can have the drone program backfire is if it loses the propaganda war. Signature strikes, when remotely piloted aircraft target suspicious behavior, like convoys of vehicles or larger gatherings, have led to mistakes and civilians killed.⁵² Strikes should only be used when there is a relative certainty that civilians are not endangered by a strike. In small villages, like in the FATA region, this is difficult, but it means waiting for the right opportunity. If civilians are in the way, then a strike should only be undertaken once they leave the area. If they do not, then perhaps a strike should not be authorized. Of course, this depends on the importance of the target, if it were Osama bin Laden’s compound in Abbottabad, then obviously, the United States should strike. If it is a financier or low-level commander is the target, then that opportunity

⁵² Cockburn, 10.

should be passed on because they will most likely present themselves again. The United States also ought to be transparent about strikes that are contested. If a group is claiming that civilians were killed, then the Department of Defense, which now runs the drone program,⁵³ should release a commentated video detailing why authorization was given. This policy would represent a more effective use of airpower in a time when war is not between states because the boundaries of 21st century conflict are blurred at best. Winning the propaganda war is more important than a body count.

The Playbook

The Obama Administration released its so-called “playbook” for authorization of a drone strike. The Presidential Policy Guidance (PPG) that outlines “The Procedures for Approving Direct Action Against Terrorist Targets Located Outside the United States and Areas of Active Hostilities.”⁵⁴ This is an improvement over the times of CIA control, which would deny when a strike would occur, but there are still areas of ambiguity that need to be clarified before this program can be a part of a viable counterterror strategy. The document states that “The most important policy objective, particularly informing consideration of lethal action, is to protect American lives.”⁵⁵ This does not clearly define how expansive a threat is. It does not seek a balance between aggression and patience because how expansive the category is. This is partially to give the Obama Administration leeway to make decisions, but it shows that the technology has outpaced

⁵³ Woods, Chris. "Moving the Drone Program from the CIA to the Pentagon Won't Improve Transparency." *Foreign Policy*. N.p., 8 May 2015. Web. 14 Dec. 2016.

⁵⁴ ACLU. "Presidential Policy Guidance." *American Civil Liberties Union*. N.p., 5 Aug. 2016. Web. 11 Oct. 2016.

⁵⁵ ACLU. "Presidential Policy Guidance".

the understanding of how it should be applied. It also states the preference for capture, which is a good idea, given that captured targets can give intelligence, as opposed to the dead, who cannot. Although, raids are riskier and are thus less likely to be approved than a drone strike. It defines a non-combatant as someone who is not targetable under the law of armed conflict, thus eliminating some of the objections to reporting and assessment of collateral damage that Fair raises.

The document outlines that a strike is authorized when there is near certainty that an identified HVT or other lawful targets are present, near certainty that non-combatants will not be injured or killed, and capture is not feasible because of the risk to American personnel and/or the incapacity of a regional actor to deal with the problem. This would be a person placing improvised explosive devices or munitions stores. Before a strike is launched, the HVT needs to be positively identified and the relevant officials, including the President agree that a strike is necessary. It also outlines how the authorization from a strike moves from the intelligence community up to the President, which gives more transparency to the process. The requirement for positive identification also prevents a strike based on faulty intelligence. It also creates a uniform after action report that requires: a description of the operation, a summary to determine that the operation satisfied the criteria for a strike, an assessment of whether the operation achieved its objective, the number of combatants killed or wounded, and a description of collateral damage.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ ACLU. "Presidential Policy Guidance" 17.

Make no mistake about it, this represents strategic progress, but it is still too vague and seems to address the fear of casualties more than it seeks to achieve the objective of degrading al-Qaeda. Fundamentally, war is about killing and counterinsurgencies are about killing the right people. Drone strikes should look to attack the lynchpins of al-Qaeda. Obviously, civilian casualties ought to be avoided, but as Igoe points out, drone strikes have little influence, positive or negative, on the amount of insurgent violence.⁵⁷ Skeptics like Jordan are correct in their theorization that some insurgent groups are large and have enough bureaucratic resilience to overcome losses, but they cannot overcome the consistent depletion of mid-level commanders.⁵⁸ The PPG is a positive step towards transparency, but using the video to shame al-Qaeda for using human shields and should highlight the efforts that the US goes to avoid civilian casualties. The proper drone strategy is one that looks for small victories, which will keep the core of the organization on the run and incapable of planning and organizing for attacks against the United States or the war in Afghanistan. At the same time, if there is a risk of civilian casualties, authorization should not be given because drones alone will not destroy al-Qaeda. Ideally, there would be pressure on al-Qaeda on multiple fronts. That would include pressure from the drone strikes, propaganda, special forces raids, and then the Pakistani military would encircle and clear the areas. Asking drones to destroy al-Qaeda by themselves is a fallacy. An intelligence network would create synergy for drones and perhaps create an alternative to the kinetic option.

⁵⁷ Walsh, James Igoe. "The Effectiveness of Drone Strikes in Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism Campaigns." *Strategic Studies Institute* (2013): n. pag. *United States Army War College Press*. Web.

⁵⁸ Jordan, Jenna. "Attacking the Leader, Missing the Mark." *International Security* 38.4 (2014): 7-38. Web.

Conclusions About Drone Strikes

There are two prevailing perspectives on drone strikes in the FATA region in Pakistan. The first postulate is that drone strikes espouses that drone strikes spur recruiting and backlash against the United States, like Tiedemann, Bergen, and Benjamin argue. Others, like Jordan, argue that drone strikes are not effective against bureaucratic organizations, like al-Qaeda. Drone advocates, like Byman and Fair, although she is more towards the extreme, argue that drones are the best of bad options and cite evidence, like Igoe's analysis, that there is no correlation between drone strikes and terrorist activity. They also question the validity of reporting on the anger that drone strikes cause. The truth is that drones are neither dubious, morally bankrupt assassins, nor are they a panacea to destroy al-Qaeda singlehandedly. They need to be integrated into a broad counterterror strategy that presses al-Qaeda. They ought to be utilized in a decapitation role that selectively engages critical organizational infrastructure, like financiers and operational commanders. But if civilians are in the way, the strike is not worth the cost and patience is the best strategic option. Ultimately, the drone campaign ought to find the balance of aggression and patience that embodies all counterinsurgency efforts. It also needs to find synergy to exploit.

Chapter Three: Invasion of Afghanistan and an Examination of the Afghan Model

The opening blows of the War in Afghanistan are often cited and hailed as an outright victory for airpower as a military and foreign policy strategy, but the results are much less conclusive than that. I hypothesize that airpower was most effective against the conventionally organized Taliban when fighting against the relatively equally skilled Northern Alliance. Airpower was much less effective against the higher skilled al-Qaeda forces. Therefore, I conclude that the “Afghan Model” should only be replicated against low-to-middle tier conventional adversaries.

In this chapter, I analyze the unique geostrategic circumstances that created the need for this strategy. Furthermore, I discuss the differing perspectives on the applicability of the “Afghan Model”, which ranges from a unique circumstance, to a paradigm shifting strategy that would alter the conduct of war. I draw conclusions about the “Afghan Model” by charting the progress of the opening stages of the conflict and comparing the success of the strategy against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. To do this, I used first-hand accounts and official histories. Often anecdotal evidence and accounts from the war boost the credibility of the “Afghan Model” and airpower as a whole, but instead I saw a limited range of conflict type and intensity where the Model was useful. The goal of this chapter is to show that airpower cannot be used as one-size-fits-all tool of coercive political power. Rather, when used in the right situation, against the right adversary, it can have an effect that is greater than the sum of its parts. Synergy between ground and air, is more important than attempting to achieve victory merely by superior firepower.

Historical Background

9/11 called for swift, decisive action. It is no coincidence that the first CIA teams inserted into Afghanistan in early October 2001 were given the call sign, Jawbreaker.⁵⁹ The desire for revenge and justice against al-Qaeda and the Taliban was almost instantaneously damped when the realities of going to war in Afghanistan set in. As then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice notes, “You look at the map, you look at Afghanistan and you look at where it is- I think the color kind of drained from everybody’s face... I think everybody thought ‘Of all the places to fight a war, Afghanistan would not be our choice.’ But we didn’t chose Afghanistan; Afghanistan chose us”.⁶⁰

This geographic reality limited the options that military planners had, so the only realistic option was turning to airpower combined with special forces fighting alongside allied indigenous forces. Dubbed the “Afghan Model”, this use of military strength, combining special forces, airpower, and indigenous allies, has been heralded as a more efficient way of warfighting.⁶¹ “The United States took decisive action. With Special Operations Forces, CIA operatives, and US airpower in support, the Northern Alliance and friendly Pashtun tribes in the south were able to vanquish the Taliban forces and

⁵⁹ Schroen, Gary C. First In: An Insider's Account of How the CIA Spearheaded the War on Terror in Afghanistan. New York: Presidio/Ballantine, 2007. Print.

⁶⁰ Wright, Donald. "A Different Kind of War: The United States Army in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) October 2001–September 2005." *Combat Studies Institute* (2010): n. pag. Web. 37

⁶¹ Andres, Richard, Craig Willis, and Thomas Griffith. "Winning with Allies: The Strategic Value of the Afghan Model." *Project MUSE - Winning with Allies: The Strategic Value of the Afghan Model. International Security*, n.d. Web; Biddle, Stephen D. "Allies, Airpower, and Modern Warfare: The Afghan Model in Afghanistan and Iraq." *International Security* 30.3 (2006): 161-76. Web; O'Hanlon, Michael. "A Flawed Masterpiece." *Foreign Affairs* 81.3 (n.d.): n. pag. Web.; Biddle, Stephen. *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2010. Print.

chase them and their al-Qaeda allies into Iran and Pakistan.⁶² The manner and speed with which the Taliban were dispatched and the technological leaps that the 21st century offered gave the illusion that the long-proclaimed “Revolution in Military Affairs” had been realized and that the nature and conduct of war would be decided by technology and expertise. While the prediction that airpower would reign supreme and the “Afghan Model” of warfighting would alter American military posture were premature and faulty in their conclusion, it did highlight the potent synergy between ground and air forces. Many point to the fact that in under two months, the Northern Alliance, who had been stuck in a stalemate against the Taliban, could vanquish the Taliban once special forces combined with strike fighters and bombers armed with precision-guided munitions joined them. The stunning statistics that in fewer than eight weeks, six provinces, three key cities were liberated and about 10,000 Taliban forces were killed.⁶³ It also demonstrates the importance of a clearly defined political objective. Moreover, the lessons from the rapid assault of Afghanistan should be understood within the context of the engagement and not be applied to a conflict of different intensity or a more capable adversary.

The Afghan Model was more successful against the Taliban when they organized as a conventional force, but was less successful against al-Qaeda fighters who utilized tactics that are typical of an insurgency. Moreover, the Afghan Model is only useful in a specific range of conflict intensity against conventional forces that belong to a nation-state. Understanding these lessons and the context is significant to using the assets of the United States military in a way that will produce positive outcomes. This is especially

⁶² Collins, Joseph J. *Understanding the War in Afghanistan: A Guide to the Land, the People, and the Conflict*. New York: Skyhorse Pub., 2013. Print. 2

⁶³ Wright, 88

important in this time as the fight against the self-proclaimed Islamic State rages on and a similar strategy is being employed.

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the Taliban and al-Qaeda were unsure exactly how the US would react.⁶⁴ The way previous administrations responded to terror attacks at the Marine Barracks in Lebanon in 1983, the USS Cole attack in 2000, and the US Embassy bombing in Nairobi in 1998 offered only a fraction of the ferocity that the American military could bring to bear. The attacks of 9/11 were directed at American landmarks and symbols of American power.⁶⁵ Al-Qaeda and the Taliban were somewhat emboldened by the weak responses of the previous decade. No doubt they understood that there would be bombs and cruise missiles, but they were confident that they could weather that storm, as they already had. They also believed that if the US conducted a full-scale invasion, they could bleed them out in the same manner as the Soviet Union. As it often is in war, the least expected scenario is the one that came to fruition. Given the political and geographic restrictions that Afghanistan, the way the war commenced, a mix of airpower, special forces, and indigenous allies it was the only way it could have unfolded.

Logistics and Politics

General Robert H. Barrow, former Commandant of the Marine Corps, quipped in 1980 that “Amateurs think about tactics, but professionals think about logistics”.⁶⁶ The emergence of the Afghan Model also had much to do with Afghanistan’s geostrategic

⁶⁴ Collins, 45.

⁶⁵ Wright, 28.

⁶⁶ Barrow, Robert H. "Logistics Quotations." *Naval Supply Systems Command* (2016): n. pag. United States Navy. Web.

position. As the quote from former Secretary Rice indicates, fighting a war in Afghanistan would be a logistical nightmare. As a landlocked country, a naval expeditionary force was out of the question. Located in central Asia, there are neither nations in the vicinity part of NATO nor were they politically capable of lending the US full support. It would be impossible to only conduct the air campaign via long range strategic bombers. Air crews have limited stamina and the maintenance required on these vital national assets can put them out of commission for days at a time. There also must be search and rescue crews on standby in the area of operations to recover crewmembers of downed planes and the sensitive equipment they carry. Conducting missions without nearby search and rescue and assorted support staff would put the entire campaign at risk. To conduct a campaign like this, basing rights are essential. As Wright points out, negotiating these agreements is extraordinarily difficult. In the north, Afghanistan is neighbored by Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. As former Soviet satellite states, they remained in Moscow's sphere of influence and putting heavy mechanized forces there would prove politically infeasible⁶⁷.

To the south-east is Pakistan, which came with its own unique political obstacles. Pakistan had always been interested in the politics of its neighbor. Fearful of being encircled by hostile states, it had sheltered and supported the mujahedeen in the 1980s. In 2001, not only was the population sympathetic to the Taliban, the Pakistani government was threatening conflict with India at the time.⁶⁸ After 9/11, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, gave senior Pakistani officials an ultimatum of support America or

⁶⁷ Wight, 35

⁶⁸ Wright, 36

fight it.⁶⁹ Pakistan came around eventually to provide logistical support, but many including James Dobbins, the Bush administration's Special Envoy for the post-Taliban conferences questioned how committed Pakistan really was, "After 9/11 the American and Pakistani services found themselves suddenly aligned again, this time in seeking to overthrow the very regime the ISI had installed in Kabul."⁷⁰ There were legitimate questions as to how seriously Pakistan would attack a potentially useful surrogate. To the west, Iran. Given Iran's perpetual opposition to American interests, it would be of no help. To secure the necessary basing and overflight rights, careful diplomacy was necessary. Russian President Vladimir Putin was one of the leaders to offer moral support and the use of Russian air space. He also urged the central Asian states to cooperate. That support was limited as Russia would obviously not tolerate heavy mechanized forces on its southern border for an extended period.⁷¹ Even with the cooperation of these states and limited Russian cooperation, the bases were not suitable for heavy transport aircraft and such a buildup would take too long and thus allow senior leadership to flee.

The Afghan Model

The only realistic plan to respond was with small special forces teams (SOF) and with air power working alongside the Northern Alliance. For any other state, these obstacles may have proved insurmountable, but the United States military was in a unique position to launch sustained air campaign. Global basing of strategic air assets, particularly at Diego Garcia AFB, an atoll with a military grade airstrip put American

⁶⁹ Collins, 46

⁷⁰ Biddle, Stephen. "Afghanistan and the Future of Warfare." *Foreign Affairs*. N.p., n.d. Web.

⁷¹ Wright, 37.

forces in the region. The US military also has an unrivaled aerial tanker fleet that could make strike missions from farther outposts possible. The ten aircraft carriers that are the bedrock of the US Navy also provide ample opportunity to hit back, but it still requires flyover rights from Pakistan. Waging a war with airpower in the forefront is diplomatically straining and requires a vast logistical network that very few states can attempt. It is not a solution to every military contingency.

The question of the applicability of the Afghan Model looms large, especially given the rise of IS and disorder within Syria. The speed and decisiveness of the rout of the Taliban surprised all involved, including the war planners, who viewed the combination of special forces and indigenous allies mostly as stage setters for a larger force.⁷² Some, like Andres Wills and Griffith, see broad applicability and others, like Biddle see its use in a much more restricted set of scenarios. As Biddle points out, then Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld testified and argued that the rapid assault was so effective, the US military should shift its doctrine and fully commit to it by decreasing the number of infantry forces and increasing the investment in standoff weapons.⁷³ This is the allure of airpower; its power and destructive capability show a way to fight a war without friction or chaos, just ballistic calculations.⁷⁴ If one adheres to the postulation that the combination of airpower, special forces, and indigenous allies is an unstoppable force, then the need for ground forces and en masse infantry engagements is gone.

⁷² Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002),.306

⁷³ Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, testimony before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, 108th Cong., 1st sess., May 14, 2003,

⁷⁴ Biddle, Stephen. *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2010. Print.

Commitment to the Afghan Model without skepticism, let alone fundamental changes to military posture, would be a failure of policy and strategy. I concur with Biddle that the applicability of the Afghan Model is narrow, but I argue that using airpower in such a manner can, at most, provide a tactical battlefield victory and, at worst, undermine the overarching strategic objectives and reasons for using airpower and American power in the first place. Moreover, the Afghan Model ought to only be used against middle tier conventional adversaries fielded by nation-states. This avoids complex tribal politics and allows synergy between ground and air to be exploited.

Taliban Origins and Strategy

To fully comprehend and evaluate the Afghan Model, one must be somewhat familiar with the strategy and political views of the Taliban and al-Qaeda. It is also important to recognize these realities because if American forces work and operate among these people, it would be wise to be aware of more than just the American perspective. There is a common misconception that Afghanistan is a place that is stuck in the Middle Ages, but it has a long and complex history that go beyond the scope of this chapter.⁷⁵ After the Soviet Union withdrew, a period of civil war ensued against the Soviet-backed Communist regime that remained in Kabul until it collapsed in 1991.⁷⁶

The origins of the Taliban's political ideology come from the generation of young men displaced by the Soviet invasion who were exposed to fundamentalist Islam that thrived in Pashtun areas in the areas around Peshawar.

⁷⁵ Mamdani, Mahmood. *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: Islam, the USA, and the Global War against Terror*. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007. Print.

⁷⁶ Wright, 17.

Fundamentalism combined with the anger from unemployment that comes with refugee status developed a culture that sought, simple answers to Afghan problems and these answers often came through violent means.⁷⁷ The Taliban, as a political entity, are primarily based on tribal allegiance, despite claims of a universal ideology and often brutalized other ethnic groups.⁷⁸ Their battle against these other ethnic groups that come to be known as the Northern Alliance was mostly fought as a conventional battle for territory to solidify their political rule in the opening moves of the war.

For al-Qaeda and Osama bin-Laden, Afghanistan was the first state in a new caliphate.⁷⁹ The Taliban and al-Qaeda formed a symbiotic relationship because of Osama bin-Laden's ability, experience and funding to set up training camps that prepared fighters to do battle against the Northern Alliance. Beyond the idea that Afghanistan was the beginning of a caliphate, it gave bin-Laden the legitimacy to declare jihad against the US for the perceived occupation and plunder of Arabia.⁸⁰ To reiterate, the Taliban and al-Qaeda believed that based on the response to the attacks against the USS Cole and the Nairobi embassy, the US would launch airstrikes and send cruise missiles, but they knew that they could avoid the likely targets and survive. If the US decided to launch a full-scale invasion, then they could use that as propaganda to foster recruitment and build the narrative of a battle of the West versus Islam. The Taliban and al-Qaeda expected a large American invasion to fare as well as the Soviet invasion and occupation went.

⁷⁷ Wright, 18.

⁷⁸ Wright, 22.

⁷⁹ Collins, 42.

⁸⁰ Collins, 43.

They would have likely repeated the same tactics and strategies that would bleed out a large, cumbersome conventional force that was not capable of engaging guerrillas. The Bush Administration was cognizant of Afghanistan's reputation as the "graveyard of empires"⁸¹ and thus desired to avoid creating an insurgency. The pessimism within the Administration that the campaign would fail stemmed from history, the geography, and the sense of being unprepared for such a mission.⁸² There was also the sense that given these factors, if the US wanted to oust the Taliban and al-Qaeda, there would need to be a heavy engagement. Al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders saw the use of airpower in the 1990s and share the sentiments of many American policymakers thinking that it was an overrated strategy and that the US would need to use large numbers of troops to fight in Afghanistan and in this scenario, they felt emboldened.⁸³ This perspective attempts to legitimize the strength of airpower relative to other military strategies, but as will be discussed in depth later. It is not about the mere capability of airpower, it is using it selectively against a certain type of enemy, principally against a conventional force, not one that espouses the tactics of an insurgency.

Anecdotal Discussion about the Afghan Model

The opening maneuvers of the War in Afghanistan and Operation Enduring Freedom provide numerous stories and characters that could turn into an action movie, but reveling detracts from learning and drawing conclusions about strategy. It is

⁸¹ Andres, Wills, Griffith, 131.

⁸² Henry Crumpton, *The Art of Intelligence*.

⁸³ Andres, Wills, Griffith, 131.

important and necessary to examine and inspect some accounts so that conclusions about the applicability of the Afghan Model can be made.

Tora Bora

The Battle of Tora Bora, the engagement that is known as when bin-Laden slipped away from American forces. This happened despite the availability of the full might of the US Air Force, numerous special forces units, and being surrounded by indigenous allies. One would expect to be a rousing success given the readily available airpower and numerous Afghan allies. The explanation, as it often is when military operations come up short, is that politicians let down the soldiers. Many such as former Delta Force operator and writer, Dalton Fury, believe that had they had more American forces, the outcome would have been different.⁸⁴ To secure such rugged terrain though, would have required hundreds of troops, something that was logistically impossible. While it is true that more troops would have, the Afghan Model's goal is to use as few American forces as possible and as Crumpton notes General Franks had a vision of indigenous Afghans serving as the primary ground force for the mission with US support. It was important to integrate and coordinate with the different groups and keep the coalition together.⁸⁵ This means that politics and alliance making is crucial to the Afghan Model. Indigenous groups have their own policy visions and the relationship exists if it is mutually beneficial.

⁸⁴Gall, Sandy. *War against the Taliban*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014. Print., 37; Fury, Dalton. *Kill Bin Laden: A Delta Force Commander's Account of the Hunt for the World's Most Wanted Man*. New York: St. Martin's Paperbacks, 2011. Print.

⁸⁵ Crumpton, Henry A. *Art of Intelligence: Lessons from a Life in the CIA's Clandestine Service*. New York: Penguin, 2013. Print.

The use of indigenous allies also requires careful balancing to not favor one group over another to avoid stoking ethnic conflict. Pashtun groups that were not allied with the Taliban were included in the Battle for Tora Bora to prevent a north-south conflict from defining the post-Taliban political landscape. One of these groups was the small non-Pashtun Pashai tribe which from the Jalalabad area, which had fought with the Northern Alliance against the Taliban. Its senior commander, General Hazrat Ali, was given command of the Tora Bora operation. Despite his Northern Alliance background, however, Hazrat Ali seems to have played an equivocal and indeed obstructive role because he was given a hefty bribe of \$300,000 by bin Laden.⁸⁶ Instead of pressing the fight and completing the destruction of Taliban forces tribal and personal rivalries complicated the situation the incomplete success at Tora Bora was due to the complex relationship between American and NA US forces. Rivalries between the various militia groups created rifts in the alliance and made command and control difficult. In fact, diplomacy became the primary means of persuading the Afghan chieftains to work together and move toward a common purpose. Airpower cannot solve these types of political problems on the ground.

Furthermore, at some points in the battle, diplomatic skills were not enough to keep the alliance together and the individual leaders began acting unilaterally. Given the poor relations between the two primary commanders, Ali and Zaman, it is somewhat surprising that operations went as well as they did because of the jockeying for political position in the alliance.⁸⁷ The opportunities that al-Qaeda were given to surrender⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Gall, 37.

⁸⁷ Wright, 119.

⁸⁸ Wright, 118

demonstrates that the Afghan Model does not exist in a political vacuum, nor does it follow a linear path. It is plain that lifting this strategy and implanting it onto other campaigns will have significant issues. That is why I hypothesize that the Afghan Model is better utilized against a middle tier conventional army fielded by a nation-state because it is much less likely to be hindered by tribal allegiances.

Mazar e Sharif

The capabilities of the Afghan Model and airpower were displayed in the battle of Mazar e Sharif, but it also showed that the Afghan Model should be used in more conventional situations. Also, it demonstrates that when choosing allies, it is preferable to partner with one group at a time to avoid political complications. This allowed the synergy between a cohesive political mission, ground forces for airpower to exploit. Mazar e Sharif was viewed as a valuable strategic location as a logistical center.⁸⁹ In early November, eager to secure the city and the airfields before winter set in, special forces and Northern Alliance units had two 15,000-pound BLU-82 “Daisy Cutter” bombs dropped from a cargo plane on the Taliban position.⁹⁰ Although, an extreme example, it “epitomized the US military’s ability to make a huge impact on the battlefield with a small force.”⁹¹ Schroen also argues that, airpower proved decisive in enabling the Northern Alliance to defeat the Taliban in northern Afghanistan in 2001.⁹² This was a

Fury, 571

⁸⁹ Wright, 175.

⁹⁰ Wright, 78.

⁹¹ Gary C. Schroen, *First In* (New York, NY: Ballentine Books, 2005)

⁹² Schroen, *First In*.

more conventional situation, which created a situation where the synergy between the ground and air could be exploited without interference of tribal politics.

Many also point to a well-coordinated cavalry charge at Mazar e Sharif as another example of this phenomenon.⁹³ US and Northern Alliance forces planned to break a resilient Taliban line using air strikes on the Taliban frontline followed by a charge from Northern Alliance cavalymen. There was some misunderstanding about the exact timing of the air strikes, so the Northern Alliance began their charge right as the bombs landed, “emerged, literally, out of the smoke, riding down on the enemy through clouds of dust and flying shrapnel. A few carried RPGs, some had less than ten rounds of ammunition in their guns-but they rode boldly--Americans and Afghans--into tank, mortar, artillery and sniper fire”.⁹⁴ This dichotomy of the conduct of war gives an impression of invulnerability, but when one looks past the excitement of the story, it becomes apparent that this occurred because it was used in a particular range of conflict.

Debating the Afghan Model

The use of special forces fighting alongside indigenous forces, combined with airpower has been dubbed the “Afghan Model”.⁹⁵ There is a divergence of opinion on who deserves the credit and how revolutionary this new type of warfare is. Some like Andres, Wills, and Griffith argue that the vast technological and operational leaps within

⁹³ Chipman, Donald. "Air Power and the Battle for Mazar-e Sharif." *The Free Library*. N.p., n.d. Web

⁹⁴ Collins, 48; Rumsfeld, "21st Century Transformation," pp. 1-11

⁹⁵ Biddle, 161-76; Andres, Richard, Craig Willis, and Thomas Griffith. "Winning with Allies: The Strategic Value of the Afghan Model." *Project MUSE - Winning with Allies: The Strategic Value of the Afghan Model. International Security*, n.d. Web; Andres, Richard, Craig Willis, and Thomas Griffith. "Winning with Allies: The Strategic Value of the Afghan Model." *Project MUSE - Winning with Allies: The Strategic Value of the Afghan Model. International Security*, n.d. Web.

the US military made airpower and a handful of special operations forces just as deadly, yet more efficient than multiple divisions of ground forces.⁹⁶ They argue that this strategy should be utilized more frequently to avoid over extension and the appearance of imperialism.

Moreover, the Afghan Model could redefine US foreign policy, according to this argument. Hostile regimes could be toppled and replaced in a matter of months, rapidly reshaping world order and tipping the international balance of power even more towards the US. The perspective that believes the Afghan Model is a revolutionary leap forward suggest that airpower, special forces, and indigenous troops, even those with relatively little training, form a powerful and robust combination.⁹⁷ They believe that the Afghan Model is repeatable because airpower is so overwhelming of defending forces, like the Taliban, that they cannot mount any sustainable defense. Also, the destructive capabilities of airpower negate any potential lack of technical military skills from the allies in question. Again, the Afghan model uses “U.S. airpower to degrade enemy communications throughout the theater of war. Then, U.S. special forces use light indigenous troops as a screen against enemy infantry and force the enemy to mass before calling in precision air strikes.”⁹⁸

They also argue that airpower is so effective because the Taliban and the Northern Alliance had been deadlocked in a stalemate for so long. Once American firepower

⁹⁶ John M. Newman, *JFK and Vietnam: Deception, Intrigue, and the Struggle for Power* (New York: Warner, 1992), p. 160; and William Rosenau, *Special Operations Forces and Elusive Enemy Ground Targets: Lessons from Vietnam and the Persian Gulf War* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2001).

⁹⁷ Andres, Wills, Griffith, 126

⁹⁸ Andres, Wills, Griffith, 127

became part of the equation, the stalemate broke in favor of the American-backed Northern Alliance. It presents a conundrum of concentrating to defend the ground assault or dispersing to hide from airpower. Andres, Wills, and Griffith point to news reports and commentary from experts in late October of 2001 that cast doubt on the course of the war. The media began to use terms such as “stalemate” and “quagmire” to describe the conflict. Robert Pape, the famed airpower theorist and historian even suggested that the reliance on airpower may not be working.⁹⁹

On October 21st, 2001, special forces called in close air support as part of the Northern Alliance effort to capture Mazar-e-Sharif. The sequence of events and the rapid improvement once airpower and special forces were teamed up prove to the proponents that the Afghan Model is a paradigm altering strategy. They argue once airpower entered the equation, the Taliban’s forces were now confronted with the choice of concentrating their forces to fight or dispersing to avoid detection. If they dispersed, they would be overrun. If they concentrated, then air strikes would make quick work of them.

Proponents further point to more successes once special forces and airpower were teamed up, the Taliban quickly lost ground through November given that Bai Beche was captured on the fifth, Mazar-e-Sharif on the tenth, Kabul on the thirteenth, and Kunduz on the twenty-sixth of October. Given the lightning advance through a variety of terrains with little logistical support, it would appear as if this new military strategy could do away with an entire military tradition.

⁹⁹ Robert Pape, "The Wrong Battle Plan," *Washington Post*, October 19, 2001

An Expansive Perspective of the Afghan Model

Andres, Wills, and Griffith point to the synergy between airpower, special forces, and indigenous forces as the source of the potency of the Afghan Model. This is not problematic until proponents assign it a strategic value and argue that it can answer any strategic problem presented in military foreign policy. They argue that "... the Afghan model has proven capable of defeating both conventional and guerrilla forces. When the proxy forces' limitations are recognized and considered in planning operations, the model is replicable under substantially different conditions and has shown itself to work even when less skilled proxy forces are deployed against more skilled enemies and when proxy forces have little or no political motivation to fight for U.S. goals. Examining only the tactical issues associated with the new model, however, obscures its true value."¹⁰⁰

In fact, the Afghan Model's performance dropped significantly when Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters adopted hit and run tactics compared to the days of early October when the Taliban had established front lines and when the political situation became ambiguous. One need look no further than the Battle of Tora Bora.

The claim is that the synergy between airpower, special forces, and indigenous forces, regardless of skill or political allegiance, is too much for any adversary to overcome. Another important claim that the trio claim is that the organization of the enemy is irrelevant to the outcome. They argue this is the case because the Afghan Model allows the US military to bring the most violent physical systems at little relative cost to the nation as whole. That is not to diminish the sacrifice of US service members, but

¹⁰⁰ Andres, Wills, and Griffith, 153

rather a comparison to conflicts that utilized large numbers of ground forces, like in Vietnam and the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Moreover, it allows US forces and indigenous allies to take risks that larger conventional forces could not take.¹⁰¹ Secondly, they argue that because large numbers of American forces were not on the ground, an insurgency did not develop. This has proved not to be true for reasons entirely unrelated to the Afghan Model.

In summation, the proponents argue that “planners must consider the model as a primary option, rather than an emergency procedure”.¹⁰² This conclusion is faulty because it disregards the balance of skill between allies and enemies, but also it ignores the overall conflict intensity and type.

A Limited Perspective on the Afghan Model

The Afghan Model is not a revolution and it is not a “one size fits all” military strategy. Obviously, the Afghan Model will not succeed against a near-peer rival as Andres, Wills, and Griffith admit.¹⁰³ It is only a new operational concept in a specific range of conflict intensity and political reality.¹⁰⁴ It also requires at least somewhat skilled allies. I concur with Biddle’s conclusion that allies need skill and political motivation, but I also argue that there is a range of conflict intensity that the Afghan Model will work in. Moreover, the Afghan Model should not be relied upon if an enemy is likely to devolve into an insurgency, like the Taliban.

¹⁰¹ Andres, Wills, and Giffith, 154

¹⁰² Andres, Wills, and Griffith, 159

¹⁰³ Andres, Wills, and Griffith. 159

¹⁰⁴ Bowman, Tom. "Studying Lessons of Battle Success." *The Baltimore Sun*, 17 Dec. 2001. Web.

Merely attaching any group to a special forces unit and expecting them to take territory regardless of relative combat skill and experience is problematic. One of the primary objectives of Operation Enduring Freedom was to topple the Taliban regime. The Northern Alliance always had toeholds and there were always ethnic enclaves that the Taliban could not reach. As discussed, it was a tactical stalemate. Pushing out of these enclaves and toppling the Taliban requires advancing, taking, and holding territory and that means allied forces must have skill parity. The crucial task of the NA was to take ground from the Taliban. If taking ground were not necessary, then bombing alone would be asked to carry out the mission and therefore the Afghan Model would be a moot point.¹⁰⁵ The situation called for a synergy between forces and without capable force on the ground, the effort would have fallen flat.

Clearly, the Afghan Model has some characteristics of a barstool. If one leg is significantly weaker than the other two, the stool will fall apart. It can only thrive in a specific set of circumstances. As mentioned, the situation pre-2001 was defined by stalemate. A stalemate means that the two sides are prepared positions, and either side on the offensive would need the technical skills to solve that tactical puzzle. As Biddle points out, taking ground requires some competency. One must utilize cover, concealment, and suppression of the enemy to push forward.¹⁰⁶ Simply charging enemy positions after bombardment does not guarantee success, as some might suggest. The battlefields of the Western Front in the First World War can attest to this. Andres, Wills, and Griffith argue that air strikes targeting reserves and supplies make defense

¹⁰⁵ Biddle, 165.

¹⁰⁶ Biddle, *Military Power*. Chapter 3

impossible, but again if attacking allies lack basic skills and cannot advance, then an attack on rear elements is a waste of expensive munitions. The course of the conflict also demonstrates that the relative balance of skill between allies and foes does not show that the Afghan Model can work across the conflict intensity spectrum.

The conflict between the Northern Alliance and the Taliban and their al-Qaeda partners did not feature two standardized, professional forces, but rather a mix of well-trained and motivated and untrained and poorly motivated combatants on each side. Often, how they mixed and which groups came into contact determined outcomes, not airpower. The Taliban forces were comprised of mostly Pashtun seasonal volunteers, foreign fighters with some tactical skills, and the well-motivated foreigners who had trained in Al-Qaeda camps. These fighters were often trained basic infantry skills and used as such.¹⁰⁷

The Northern Alliance had a similar construction. They often utilized young men from their particular ethnic regions, but featured some veterans from the long civil war that understood basic fire and maneuver skills.¹⁰⁸ Obviously, their high-end forces compromised American special forces units. When the Taliban put their least skilled forces in the front, they did not pick concealed positions and thus, they were easily identified.¹⁰⁹ One example personifies this phenomenon at the fighting around Bishqab in late October 2001, when NA commanders witness positions that had checked every attack against it was vaporized by a 2,000-pound bomb.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Biddle, 167.

¹⁰⁸ Biddle, 168.

¹⁰⁹ Biddle, 168.

¹¹⁰ Biddle, 168.

Clearly, the Afghan Model works well against amateurs, but things changed once the war progressed and the Taliban put the well-trained Al-Qaeda volunteers into forward positions. Infantry forces that stand against the horizon on hilltops are easy to spot without advanced imaging devices, but the Taliban adopted cover and concealment techniques and dispersal strategies by November 2001. The devastating effects of American air strikes were minimized and this became apparent during the attack on Tora Bora and Operation Anaconda.¹¹¹

This demonstrates that there is a military skill ceiling for the Afghan Model and given that more experienced fighters that had received basic training could hold their ground even facing heavy bombardment.¹¹² Also, when the Taliban behaved as a conventional force would, holding a specific line, they were vulnerable to air strikes. When they behaved as an insurgency, airpower was less effective. Some, like Wright attribute this to technical limitations, claiming that technological improvements in surveillance with the onset of UAVs, which provided quicker reaction times and longer loiter times than manned platforms. The Taliban could be under nearly continuous surveillance and thus faster tasking for airstrikes.¹¹³ This still does not mean that American forces had total control because certain effective Taliban elements held ground in multiple instances.

Moreover, the hope that the final technical revolution is just around the corner has always been the claim, yet systems fail, radios break, or something is caught up in the fog

¹¹¹ Wright, 87.

¹¹² Wright, 87.

¹¹³ Wright, 87.

of war. During Operation Anaconda in March 2002, the battlefield was a ten-by-ten-kilometer area focused on with every available surveillance asset, yet fewer than half of al-Qaeda positions were identified prior to ground engagement. Most fire that US forces encountered came from unseen positions that Western ground forces had to deal with in close quarters engagements.¹¹⁴ Operation Enduring Freedom also failed to achieve one of the primary objectives, the capture or death of Osama bin-Laden. It is impossible to ask special forces to call in air support and maintain a perimeter around rugged, mountainous terrain is an impossible task and relying on Afghan militias, who may not share the same political objectives as the US.¹¹⁵ Understanding the effectiveness of the Afghan Model goes far beyond technological capabilities. It involves the balance of forces and a range of conflict intensity.

Conclusions About the Invasion of Afghanistan

The Afghan Model is not a one-off, but it most certainly is not a paradigm altering strategy. As the successes of the early days of the campaign and certain failures at Tora Bora and Operation Anaconda reveal truths beyond the standard debate about the preconditions that the Afghan Model requires. Yes, the political allegiance and relative skill of allies is important, but the Afghan Model can only work in a certain range of conflict intensity and against certain enemies. At the far right of the intensity range is a nuclear exchange and at the far left are limited guerrilla activities on a local scale. To

¹¹⁴ Biddle, 170.

¹¹⁵ O'Hanlon, Michael. "A Flawed Masterpiece." *Foreign Affairs* 81.3 (n.d.): n. pag. Web.

reiterate, the Afghan Model will not work against a near-peer rival in a high intensity conflict.

The War in Afghanistan is an interesting case because it had elements of conventional and unconventional conflict, which is why occasionally, the synergy between airpower, special forces, and indigenous allies proved to be an unstoppable force against previously impenetrable Taliban lines. When the more experienced Taliban and al-Qaeda members adopted more tactics one would associate with an insurgency, the Afghan Model proved less effective, like the fighting on Highway 4 in December of 2011 and at Tora Bora.¹¹⁶ Andres, Wills, and Griffith and other proponents of the Afghan Model are correct in stating that conventional forces are vulnerable because they have exposed reserves and supply lines. They are incorrect in the assertion that the mere addition of precision airpower into the equation changes the outcome of the conflict. As demonstrated, when trained forces utilized cover and concealment, airpower was much less effective. The forces that used cover and concealment were veteran Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters were the ones that fled into Pakistan and formed the seeds of the insurgency that persists today. Using airpower without a major ground effort against a side that is likely to disperse and transform into an insurgency, which airpower is not suited to fight against. The Taliban and al-Qaeda wanted to draw the US into a larger conflict and use the same strategies that they did against the Soviets, which explains their use of cover and concealment beyond a mere tactical advantage. They are primarily a

¹¹⁶ Biddle, 169.

guerrilla group and airpower cannot effectively target such a strategy. The Model works well against conventional forces and that is the way it should be utilized.

Using the Afghan Model on low-to-middle range conventional adversaries makes the most strategic sense for the United States. Conventional forces, created by a nation-state, are easier to target and special forces are more adept at direct action and other mission types against set objectives and pieces of military infrastructure. It is also easier to organize a united front of indigenous allies against a conventional force. Conventional forces fielded by a nation-state are likely to not create the conflicting ethnic interests that caused problems at Tora Bora and during Operation Anaconda.

The Afghan Model demonstrated that in the right situation and against the right adversary, the synergy between airpower and ground forces “demonstrated a level of flexibility, accuracy, and power exceeding any previous war.”¹¹⁷ Yet, overemphasizing technology and targeting, will distract from the real lessons of the conflict.¹¹⁸ When the Taliban and al-Qaeda adopted insurgency-like tactics, airpower became much less effective. Yet, earlier in the conflict, when the Taliban used conventional tactics, the Northern Alliance could take advantage of the tactical conundrum of concentrating to fight or dispersing to avoid air strikes. The fight went better when the complex tribal politics were left out of the equation when it was one group fighting against another instead of putting different groups in situations that would test their allegiances. I

¹¹⁷ Crane, Conrad. "Final Report: THE U.S. ARMY'S INITIAL IMPRESSIONS OF OPERATIONS ENDURING FREEDOM AND NOBLE EAGLE." *US Army War College* (n.d.): n. pag. United States Army. Web.

¹¹⁸ Vego, Milan. "What Can We Learn from Enduring Freedom?" *Proceedings Magazine*. N.p., n.d. Web. 27 Feb. 2017

hypothesize that the Afghan Model should only be used against middle tier, conventional foes. This would also alleviate the political conundrum. In part because the US would not need to work as hard to get basing or flyover rights and because it is easier to choose allies against a state as opposed to an ethnic group. Moreover, this should not be considered a transformative event for defense politics because it is geared to small nation-states, which do not pose a major threat to American interests. If American defense posture is geared to a major power conflict, then conducting a war in the image of the Afghan Model will be less complicated.

Chapter Four: Comparing Kosovo and Libya

In the absence of another great power to challenge the United States since the fall of the Soviet Union, the US has been free to use its military muscle to maintain international order. Airpower has been the preferred tool for multiple administrations as it is more politically palatable than putting American soldiers on the ground. The Kosovo and Libya air campaigns bear much in similar, despite being twelve years apart. They were both joint US/European operations that targeted authoritarian regimes under the auspice of humanitarian intervention to prevent ethnic cleansing.

There are claims that Kosovo was a unanimous victory for airpower, but there are numerous skeptics. Skeptics argue that airpower did not change Milosevic's mind, but harmed civilians, which was against the objective of the mission. Libya is often denounced for uncorking civil strife and disorder within Libya. I disagree with these sentiments because the use of airpower was about shaping the regional order to fit into the Western vision, led by the United States. The realist perspective of international

relations advises that one examine conflict as a state versus state affair. Intervention and the use of airpower did not necessarily change the political calculus of either Ghaddafi or Milosevic, but it changed their political realities. Expecting authoritarian leaders to bend at the first sight of American intervention would be a foolish assumption. Airpower was not the exacting tool it was advertised to be. Political control comes from the people and airpower does not gain hegemony over a population.

The use of airpower in both situations was to facilitate a regime change and from this perspective, each was a limited success, because ultimately the regime fell. The overarching question, which goes beyond the scope of this paper, is does America want this to be its primary strategy of coercive foreign policy? What could have changed the outcomes of both campaigns was picking a different moment to intervene. Perhaps if a more established and unified opposition to Ghaddafi rose quickly, then the outcome would be radically different. Airpower should not be viewed as a solution in statecraft, but a mechanism. Airpower was used to create political instability, so future campaigns against such regimes ought to target what legitimizes their power and existence. Anarchy is what one makes of it.

In this chapter, I first examine the origins of the Kosovo conflict. It is necessary to understand the circumstances around Operation Allied Force (OAF). Understanding these circumstances is necessary to evaluating the outcome in Kosovo. Then, I will examine the arguments surrounding the Kosovo intervention. Subsequently, I will discuss the historical similarities between the Kosovo and Libya campaigns and interpret their significance. Finally, I will determine how successful the Libya campaign was in comparison to Kosovo.

Origins of Kosovo Conflict

Kosovo is a landlocked country with no strategic resources, which begs the question, why was Serbia bent on keeping it? Kosovo is considered to be cradle of the Serbian nation and identity, but changing demographics put the Serbian claim of ownership at risk.¹¹⁹ The Kosovar Albanian population was steadily increasing, while the Serbian population was decreasing, especially in the Kosovo province. Politics cannot change demographics and the shifting balance in favor of the Albanians would threaten the established political order for Milosevic. To this end, he limited the rights of Albanians to encourage migration as an artificial balance against the changing demographics.¹²⁰

Consequently, Kosovar Albanians organized to move towards referendum through peaceful means. Dr. Ibrahim Rugova organized a referendum that showed an overwhelming majority desired Kosovar independence and adopted a strategy of non-violence in the spirit of Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. They believed this would gain international attention and pressure Milosevic into change.¹²¹ In response, Milosevic cracked down harder on Kosovo and consequently, the peace movement lost sway to a more militant wing.

¹¹⁹ Freedman, Lawrence. "Victims and Victors: Reflections on the Kosovo War." *Review of International Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2000, pp. 335–358., www.jstor.org/stable/20097683.

¹²⁰ Freedman, 346

¹²¹ Nagl, John, and Octavian Manea. "The Uncomfortable Wars of the 1990s." *War, Strategy and History: Essays in Honour of Professor Robert O'Neill*, edited by DANIEL MARSTON and TAMARA LEAHY, ANU Press, Acton, Australia, 2016, pp. 127–154, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1dgn5sf.15.

The Milosevic regime in Belgrade can be described as “soft authoritarian”.¹²² Post-Soviet Yugoslavia had some elements of democracy, but without the veto points of a well-developed democracy.¹²³ The elections that legitimized his rule were competitive, but not fair.¹²⁴ He utilized constitutional rules that allowed him to bypass a popular election in favor of a legislative vote to extend his presidency to a third term and this adherence to constitutionalism, although minimal, made the regime fragile.¹²⁵

Many point to the Dayton Accords as the birth of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) because these accords affirmed Milosevic’s authority, which therefore denied Rugova’s pacifist strategy.¹²⁶ The KLA instead adopted violence. Formed in 1991, it only gained serious traction in 1996 after the Dayton Accords. As a separatist group, its means of waging war against another state was minimal, but the theft of light weaponry made a small insurgency possible.¹²⁷ The KLA captured a third of the province by attacking lightly defended police stations. The US government considered the KLA to be a terror group and a disruptor to order in the region, as Milosevic was viewed as the “guarantor of peace” in the region.¹²⁸ Already it is apparent that the US viewed Balkan instability as a threat to order that needed a solution. Moreover, the KLA was a weak group that could not alter the political realities on their own. Even at the end of the conflict, when Serbian forces were weaker than at the beginning, the KLA still posed no real threat to the

¹²² Lake, Daniel R. “The Limits of Coercive Airpower: NATO’s ‘Victory’ in Kosovo Revisited.” *International Security*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2009, pp. 83–112., www.jstor.org/stable/40389186. . Sell, Slobodan Milosevic and the Destruction of Yugoslavia, 193

¹²³ Lake, 100, Gordy, *The Culture of Power in Serbia*, 24-25

¹²⁴ Lake, 100, 261; Hosmer, *The Conflict over Kosovo*, 10

¹²⁵ Lake, 101

¹²⁶ Tim Judah, ‘Kosovo’s Road to War’, *Survival*, 41:2 (Summer 2009) p 5-18, 12

¹²⁷ Freedman, 347

¹²⁸ Freedman, 347

Serbian military. The KLA did not have one recorded offensive military success.¹²⁹ So, to garner international attention, they would need to draw in the Serbian military. They accomplished this and achieved international recognition when Serbian forces committed atrocities in Racak, where the bodies of 45 farmers, including children were uncovered.¹³⁰

It is necessary to understand Milosevic's strategy if one wants to evaluate the coercive nature of the air campaign. The demographic realities meant that if Milosevic wanted to keep control of the province, demographics would need to change. The way a state can do this is through ethnic cleansing. From a military perspective, ethnic cleansing is not a taxing operation. It only requires lightly armed soldiers or militiamen to evict people from their homes and herd them away. The KLA attacks gave Milosevic the reason to go into Kosovo and conduct ethnic cleansing and do it under the international principle of sovereignty because he would argue that he was putting down a rebellion in his own territory. Also, Milosevic was putting down a rebellion, not trying to win the political favor of the Kosovars. It was not possible to repress a majority ethnic group, so instead of attempting to separate the population from the guerillas, as basic counter-insurgency doctrine dictates, Milosevic wanted to remove the Kosovars and regain the demographic advantage.¹³¹ In short, the Serbian objective was to retain Kosovo. The strategy to achieve this was to eliminate the KLA as a force that could harm Serbian

¹²⁹ Pape, Robert A. "The True Worth of Air Power." *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 83, no. 2, 2004, pp. 116–130., www.jstor.org/stable/20033906. 124

¹³⁰ Freedman, 347

¹³¹ Freedman, 351

interests and to remake the ethnic balance in Kosovo.¹³² The Serbian strategy was to deny the KLA any local sources of support because if the insurgency were left to fester, a potential Kosovar Albanian state could arise and present perpetual conflict.¹³³ It is widely known that conflict begets the exodus of people, so the Serbs hoped a US/NATO intervention would help accelerate the exodus. The objective was to create a situation in Kosovo would not pose a reasonable threat to Serb interest and Kosovo to remain docile.¹³⁴

NATO's Perspective

At its core, NATO is a defensive alliance designed to deter major conflict between the Soviets and allied Europe. But on the 50th anniversary of the alliance's formation, the Soviet Union no longer existed and the new Russian Federation did not pose a threat to Europe. If NATO proved inept at preventing the same actions such as packing women and children into trains to be shipped away that denoted the Holocaust, then what was the point of the organization existing anyways? In the post-Soviet world, NATO would also need to prove that it could still be a credible actor against aggression as it was formed as a defensive alliance against the Soviets. The alliance also needed to prove they could still credibly wield their collective saber. NATO hoped to use airpower to coerce Milosevic that achieving his goal was impossible and that continuing the ethnic

¹³² Lake, 88; Leonard J. Cohen, *Serpent in the Bosom: The Rise and Fall of Slobodan Milosevic*, rev. ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 2002), 320, pp. 12-13; Stephen T. Hosmer, *The Conflict over Kosovo: Why Milosevic Decided to Settle When He Did* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2002), 16

¹³³ Freedman, 351

¹³⁴ Freedman, 352

cleansing would be counterproductive for his regime. The track to conflict was set into place.

Operation Allied Force

The Clinton Administration's stated objectives for the use of airpower in Kosovo were: "demonstrate the seriousness of NATO's opposition to aggression, deter Milosevic's continuing and escalating attacks in Kosovo, and to damage Serbia's capacity to wage war in the future".¹³⁵ NATO needed to maintain its credibility as an alliance and as the main force of stabilization in the region. This clearly shows that the mission was not about humanitarian intervention, but rather regional order. The stated objectives are all framed in a way that pertains to state conflict. This influences how one should consider the success of the use of airpower. Airpower, as a strategy, serves this end well because it does not entail decisive military action.¹³⁶ It changes the political realities of other regimes and actors. The end goal of the use of force was, without doubt, to weaken the Milosevic regime because undercutting the capacity to wage war also hinders the capacity for the monopoly on violence, the Weberian definition of statehood.

Attacks on the elements of stability in a developing state can be coercive because internal security is often the primary concern of these regimes.¹³⁷ NATO ultimately accomplished this, not through attacks on the military, but on Milosevic's supporters. The goal of the use of airpower was to make Belgrade end their aggressive actions at the

¹³⁵ R.W. Apple, Jr., "A Fresh Set of U.S. Goals," *New York Times*, March 25, 1999, p. A1

¹³⁶ Daalder, Ivo H., and Michael E. O'Hanlon. *Winning Ugly NATO's War to save Kosovo*. Washington: *Brookings Inst.*, 2001. Print, 65

¹³⁷ Mohammed Ayoob, "The Security Problematic of the Third World," *World Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (January 1991), pp. 257-283;

negotiating table.¹³⁸ As history has shown, the Kosovars returned to their homes, Milosevic came to the bargaining table, and his regime ultimately collapsed. Milosevic proved himself to be a serious barrier to regional stability and a threat to NATO unity in terms of Greco-Turkish competition, so the campaign was successful.

Gen. Klaus Naumann, who chaired the NATO alliance's military committee, declared NATO's intention "to loosen his grip on power and break his will to continue."¹³⁹ Stating that the objective was to "loosen his grip on power" clearly indicates that human rights were in the background and that this was a mission to facilitate regime change. From this perspective, the operation was successful.

Proponent Arguments

As stated in the introduction, I do not argue that airpower alone forced Milosevic and the Serbians to stand down. This too was the case for Qaddafi in Libya in 2011. Instead, I offer that this campaign was a limited success because it created an untenable situation for Milosevic to survive politically if he chose to continue, which does fall in line with statements made by US and NATO officials. Classical understanding of airpower, which theorizes that airpower alone can determine the political outcome, categorizes airpower into three categories: punishment, denial, and decapitation. Lake, among others, argues that these categories do not conceptualize airpower properly. I concur that the classical categorization of airpower into punishment, denial, and decapitation do not sufficiently comprehend the political realities surrounding the use of

¹³⁸Byman, Daniel L., and Matthew C. Waxman. "Kosovo and the Great Air Power Debate." *International Security* 24.4 (2000): 5-38. *JSTOR [JSTOR]*. Web, 16

¹³⁹ Michael R. Gordon, "NATO Plans Weeks of Bombing to Break Grip of Serb Leader," *New York Times*, April 1, 1999, p. A1

airpower¹⁴⁰. Punishment is the attempt to bomb civilian areas with the objective of inciting a revolt or collapse of the will to fight. Denial targets the military of an enemy state, rendering them incapable of defense and therefore susceptible to an enemy state's will. Decapitation refers to attacking leadership elements¹⁴¹. I also argue that the new categories are only useful when understood as part of a comprehensive strategy

The proponents of the Kosovo campaign argue that the air campaign was undermining his political support among the elites that supported the regime.¹⁴² Although Lake is a skeptic of airpower in Kosovo, he demonstrates its limited success. He argues that the denial strategy, targeting Milosevic's was a failure. Instead, he argues that the direct pressure, which threatens constituents and their property, combined with weakening, the threats to prosperity of the state¹⁴³, were what caused Milosevic to capitulate. Targeting these specific nodes of his power structure changed his political reality and forced him to end the attacks on Kosovo.

It is necessary to understand what parts of the Milosevic regime were attacked to hypothesize about the overall effectiveness of airpower as a tool of foreign policy. One needs to categorize the different uses of airpower on a strategic level to evaluate it. The new typology Lake introduces carries great significance for understanding the consequences of the conflict and airpower. The typology that Lake uses¹⁴⁴ includes denial, direct pressure, weakening, and political destabilization. Denial utilizes threats to

¹⁴⁰ Lake, 84

¹⁴¹ Lake, 85

¹⁴² Byman and Maxwell, 19

¹⁴³ Lake, 85

¹⁴⁴ Lake, 85

“make it difficult, if not impossible, for the target to achieve its objectives”.¹⁴⁵ The objective is to make the target reconsider its political objectives.¹⁴⁶ Denial seeks to degrade the military capabilities of an enemy state’s military capabilities to make achieving an objective impossible, thus altering the political reality.¹⁴⁷ Some argue that Milosevic capitulated because of a threat of a US/NATO ground action, but there was little real political momentum from the US or other NATO partners.¹⁴⁸ The Clinton Administration routinely came out against ground action and Congress required its authorization before ground forces could be used.¹⁴⁹ The US military was also weary of getting bogged down into the Yugoslav mountains, which stymied the Germans for years.¹⁵⁰ Also, an assault on Belgrade would put civilian at risk, when airpower would not put US ground forces at risk. The use of a denial strategy would include the reasonable threat of ground forces, for which there is no credible evidence, according to Lake.

Direct pressure threatens to place costs on the enemy state’s leadership as a way to change the calculus of its policy.¹⁵¹ NATO did not seriously pursue attacks on Milosevic. The only instance of attacking his person was an early April airstrike on a residence he used, but other command, control, communications, and intelligence

¹⁴⁵ Lake, 87

¹⁴⁶Byman, Daniel, and Matthew Waxman. "The Dynamics of Coercion." *RAND Corporation*. N.p., 01 Jan. 2002. Web. 02 Apr. 2017., pp. 78-82; Pape, Bombing to Win, pp. 10, 15-19;

¹⁴⁷ Lake, 88. Pape, Bombing to Win, p. 19; Mueller, Karl. "Strategies of Coercion: Denial, Punishment, and the Future of Air Power." *Security Studies* 7.3 (1998): 182-228. Web.

¹⁴⁸ Stigler, Andrew L. "A Clear Victory for Air Power: NATO's Empty Threat to Invade Kosovo." *International Security*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2002, pp. 124–157., www.jstor.org/stable/3092116. 125

¹⁴⁹ Daalder and O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, 156-157

¹⁵⁰ Nagl and Manea, 138, Interview with Samuel R. Berger (2005) Miller Center, University of Virginia. Available at: millercenter.org/oralhistory/interview/samuel-r-berger.

¹⁵¹ Lake, 93

outposts were part of the sortie.¹⁵² This target list further demonstrates that the objective was to weaken Milosevic's capacity for control and the consequence would be his ouster. Also, avoiding targeting Milosevic directly also shows a confidence that targeting his other sources of power would facilitate his capitulation and political demise.

Lake proposes that weakening "relies on the threats if aggregate damage to a state's national prosperity and power to convince the target leadership to change policy"¹⁵³. Attacking a state's economic means of function does more than chip away at the means of building a war machine. When people are put out of work and daily lives are disrupted, then support for the leadership can be eroded. Then, the regime may lose the confidence of the people and collapse. When NATO and US attacks on Serbian infrastructure after the initial attacks on pure military infrastructure did not produce the desired result, the target list expanded to mixed civilian infrastructure.

The Serbian military was conducting ethnic cleansing, which does not require the use of heavy, easily identifiable forces. Rather it requires just light infantry. The US and NATO made quick work of the significant military infrastructure like command and control elements and airfields.¹⁵⁴ In fact, final estimates conclude that only 7-10% of the heavy Serbian forces in Kosovo were destroyed.¹⁵⁵ When this occurred, it put over 100,000 civilians out of work when their places of employment were destroyed and

¹⁵² Lake 93

¹⁵³ Lake, 95, Byman and Waxman, *The Dynamics of Coercion*, pp. 76-78.

¹⁵⁴ Lake, 96, 1. Daalder and O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, p. 144; Wesley K. Clark, "When Force Is Necessary: NATO's Military Response to the Kosovo Crisis/7 *NATO Review*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (Summer 1999), pp. 16-17; and Arkin, "Operation Allied Force", 22-23

¹⁵⁵ Posen, Barry R. "The War for Kosovo: Serbia's Political-Military Strategy." *International Security* 24.4 (2000): 39-84. Web" pp. 63-65

500,000 more lost their jobs because they were subcontracted.¹⁵⁶ Clearly, Milosevic was more susceptible to the collapse of popular support rather than a military defeat. Kosovo was the poorest province in Yugoslavia and the general population's suffering for a province that did not serve a strategic benefit or economic one would quickly change public opinion about Milosevic.

Sanctions had already done significant harm to the Serbian economy, but what changed was who the bombing affected. As Lake notes, Milosevic was not concerned about the damage to the military because Serbia faced no external threats, but economic damage did concern him.¹⁵⁷ The Serbian economy was an oligarchy and the elites of society had control of most of the economy and therefore they supported his regime and the threats to their prosperity did threaten him.¹⁵⁸ One such example of this was in May of 1999, NATO attacked the Serbian electrical grid with CBU-102 bombs designed to destroy the grid systems and then later attacked the generation stations.¹⁵⁹ This lowered Serbia's economic output 50% after the war.¹⁶⁰ This would directly affect his backers and make them question supporting him. The use of airpower did not directly bend Milosevic, but it clearly created a situation where his regime was no longer tenable.

The fourth and final category, destabilization is what Lake credits with the undoing of the Milosevic regime. Destabilization "threatens a leader's ability to retain

¹⁵⁶ Lake, 95

¹⁵⁷ Lake, 99

¹⁵⁸ Lake, 99

¹⁵⁹ Lake, 97, Arkin, William M. "Smart Bombs, Dumb Targeting?" *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 56.3 (2000): 46-53. Web, 51-52

¹⁶⁰ Hosmer, Stephen T. "The Conflict Over Kosovo." *RAND Corporation*. N.p., 01 Jan. 2001. Web. 02 Apr. 2017.

power”.¹⁶¹ The older airpower doctrine would classify it as punishment and NATO’s targeting of the non-military economic pieces of Milosevic’s regime fits this category well. Milosevic relied on Serbian economic elites of about 100 families for support in the legislatures and when the NATO bombing began to destroy their wealth for a cause they did not fervently believe in, the Milosevic regime began to unravel. After the initial bombing on the Serbian military did not force him to change strategy, the target list was opened up to include the Serbian economy.¹⁶² After a month, through May of 1999, “elite discontent became visible”.¹⁶³

The economic elites had no stake in Kosovo, yet were suffering greatly from Milosevic’s actions there. Concurrently, NATO tightened ranks about the need for Milosevic to go and Russia punted on Milosevic having any further backing.¹⁶⁴ This weakening fed into political destabilization.

Although OAF did not intentionally seek to undermine Milosevic through attacking his political support, it did. The use of airpower created a situation where Milosevic could no longer maintain his legitimacy not because he was weakened militarily, but because his political support fell out. It helped that Russia obfuscated on his diplomatic support, but the key mechanism that buckled under airpower was his economic support. Airpower was not successful in Kosovo because it simply shocked Milosevic into capitulation. He remarked to US diplomats that “you will bomb us”.

¹⁶¹ Lake, 99. Byman and Waxman; *The Dynamics of Coercion*, pp. 65-76.

¹⁶² Lake, 108

¹⁶³ Lake, 108

¹⁶⁴ Lake, 110

Ultimately, airpower created an untenable situation for his rule to continue and a similar pattern occurs in Libya.

Kosovo Dissent

Dynamic and exciting technology often fails to live up to its promises and some argue that Milosevic's capitulation had nothing to do with US/NATO bombing, but rather it was the. Some, like Conrad Crane, argue that the bombing of dual-use facilities did not pressure Milosevic and failed to coerce as intended.¹⁶⁵ At the onset of OAF, the Clinton Administration expected airpower to destroy Milosevic's forces, thus curtailing the ability to conduct ethnic cleansing.

Given that the target list had to be expanded to include dual-use facilities, airpower could not fulfill its promises. This postulation mistakes the nature of Milosevic's strategy and the desired outcome. Again, ethnic cleansing does not require a massive military effort, so it is difficult to pick apart from the air. Given that there were only 26 tanks were to have been confirmed destroyed, many point to this as a failure of airpower.¹⁶⁶ The decision to use force and the continued use of force represents an attempt to undercut the Milosevic regime. Given that he threatened Greco-Turkish stability within NATO and the overall stability of the region, it was an assault on the overall stability of Belgrade.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Crane, Conrad C. "Sky High: Illusions of Air Power." *The National Interest*, no. 65, 2001, pp. 116–122., www.jstor.org/stable/42897362

¹⁶⁶ Crane, 118. Steven Lee Myers, *New York Times*, June 28, 1999; Richard J. Newman, "The bombs that failed in Kosovo", *U.S. News & World Report*, September 20, 1999

¹⁶⁷ Nagl and Manea, 356

Crane argues that “The Kosovo campaign thus featured anew many of the persistent shortcomings of American airpower. Gauging the decision-making process, vulnerabilities and will of targeted leaders again proved difficult”.¹⁶⁸ Given that NATO went after the economic base, it is clear that removing Milosevic was the ultimate objective. A state does not attack another’s base of power unless it means to facilitate political collapse. There is also the persisting claim about the Clinton Doctrine and that the war was about humanitarian norms.¹⁶⁹

Dissenters, like Crane, also point to the threat of a US/NATO invasion and diplomatic efforts that ultimately pushed Milosevic to end his operations in Kosovo. They also argue that the strategy of imposed costs and destruction of dual use facilities were not the deciding factors, as others, including then Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon and other academics claim.¹⁷⁰ Perhaps dissidents are too distracted by the claims of bloodless war and even as Crane readily admits, “bombs destroy bridges, not build them”.¹⁷¹ The intent of stopping ethnic cleansing was noble, but as the realist paradigm directs observers to look past these explanations and understand conflict as the affair of nation-states.

The most frequently cited alternative explanation to airpower is the threat of a US/NATO invasion.¹⁷² Serbian GNP had been cut in half through the decade preceding

¹⁶⁸ Crane, 119

¹⁶⁹ Dunn, David Hastings. “Innovation and Precedent in the Kosovo War: The Impact of Operation Allied Force on US Foreign Policy.” *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, vol. 85, no. 3, 2009, pp. 531–546., www.jstor.org/stable/27695029

¹⁷⁰ Crane, 120, 9Michael Dobbs, "Post-Mortem on NATO's Bombing Campaign", *Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, July 19-26, 1999

¹⁷¹ Crane, 120

¹⁷² Pape, 125

OAF, so they could not be further damaged. This does not take into account that the economy was geared towards elites and once their sources of income were damaged or destroyed, then their political support of Milosevic would crumble. At the time, the US and UK deployed 35,000 troops to Albania and began work on widening supply roads there. The UK also called up 30,000 reservists.¹⁷³ Pape points to the evidence that Russia attempted to put Russian soldiers in Serbia as a deterrent to NATO action, but the fact that it never occurred is argued as proof that the Russians took the NATO threat seriously. This runs counter to statements that then Secretary of State Madeline Albright made to the Republican members of Congress that “I can assure you that the United States would not support ground options”.¹⁷⁴ Also, before the bombing began at the Rambouillet Conference, there was no mention of a US/NATO ground action.¹⁷⁵

Russia’s decision to withdraw diplomatic support for Milosevic is also an oft cited reason for Milosevic to capitulate. As Hosmer points out, Russia had been Serbia’s principle ally, but abandoned it and sided with the NATO position. When this occurred, on June 2, Russian envoy Victor Chernomyrdin, made this clear and Milosevic ceased operations within several hours.¹⁷⁶ Some argue that this is additional proof to the credibility of the US/NATO invasion because Yeltsin would be sacrificing a staunch ally in an important region, thus signaling Russian impotence in the new world order.¹⁷⁷ This is despite statements from US elected officials and General Wesley Clark that the air war

¹⁷³ Pape, 125

¹⁷⁴ Stigler, 127.

¹⁷⁵ Stigler, 133

¹⁷⁶ Biddle, Stephen. “The New Way of War? Debating the Kosovo Model.” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 81, no. 3, 2002, pp. 138–144., www.jstor.org/stable/20033168., 142,

¹⁷⁷ Biddle, 143

"was an effort to coerce, not to seize"¹⁷⁸. Moreover, it was never mentioned during negotiations in private back-channel communications with State Department officials.¹⁷⁹ Finally, it is more likely that the Russians merely viewed Milosevic as no longer worth the effort or diplomatic risk. Milosevic endorsed a coup against Gorbachev in 1991, which reportedly soured his relationship with Yeltsin.¹⁸⁰ Milosevic was getting in the way of moving past the Cold War and into a new era between the US and Russia. Milosevic ran out of allies as he reneged on promises too many times.¹⁸¹ The decision was made to use airpower to unseat Milosevic because he threatened order in the region.

Libya and Operation Odyssey Dawn

When the Arab Spring kicked off with revolution in Tunisia in December 2010, the desire for political change swept across the region. The calls for change and expressions of discontent spread to and metastasized within Libya. These calls for freedom and reform posed a threat to Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi. The ensuing protest turned to revolt, which threatened his regime. Qaddafi threatened to cleanse those who opposed him. The air campaigns against Milosevic and Serbia and Qaddafi and Libya bear much in common. They were both soft authoritarian regimes seeking to quash a threat to their rule and legitimacy that were undone by a US/NATO air campaign. The situations surrounding the respective campaigns and the similar final outcomes have implications for the use of airpower as a military-political strategy. Without airpower in either situation, Qaddafi and Milosevic, would have conducted an ethnic cleansing and

¹⁷⁸ Pape, 8

¹⁷⁹ Stigler, 138

¹⁸⁰ Stigler, 141

¹⁸¹ Judah, Kosovo, 272, Stigler, 141

would probably have remained in power for the foreseeable future. The humanitarian aspects of the campaigns were not the primary motivators for intervention given the outcomes of Milosevic losing an election and Qaddafi's death.

Qaddafi had long drawn the ire of the US and NATO given the Lockerbie bombing and the Berlin nightclub bombing that killed several American service members that was tied Qaddafi and precipitated airstrikes on Tripoli and Benghazi.¹⁸² By 2011, Qaddafi was the last standing threat to American and European interests in the region and the longstanding desire to remove him appeared and was given urgency because of his promise to massacre civilians. In both cases, the air campaigns represented an opportunity to reshape regional order. Without the Soviet Union backing Egypt and other regimes in the region, the US and NATO had an opportunity to solidify their presence in North Africa.

Airpower was an effective strategy because it sought a limited objective of delegitimizing and undercutting the respective regimes, Kosovo and Libya, showing that an alternative path was preferable. Airpower is a limited tool and it presented a way to engage in a limited political objective. The same categories of coercion can be used to examine both cases. They had limited success because they both sought to achieve limited objectives, deposing a regime. The criticism of unsettled and ongoing political chaos, particularly in Libya fall outside the objectives of the missions. It was a limited

¹⁸² Malinarich, Nathalie. "Europe | Flashback: The Berlin Disco Bombing." *BBC News*. BBC, 13 Nov. 2001. Web. 02 Apr. 2017

objective without foresight about the political future in part because of the calls for democracy.¹⁸³

Qaddafi Regime

Qaddafi headed a single party regime. Libya was a republic ruled in a dictatorial fashion by a president. The leadership often comes from the military and Qaddafi often used his colonel title as a source of legitimacy. Some attributes that define a single party regime was the growth of state power, the capacity to repress, quasi-socialist economics, and the power of populism. In both states, the power of the state was vastly stronger than that of civil society. Also, both states had the capacity to quash any uprising given the pervasive paramilitary and secret police units. State control also extended into the economies of both countries and cases In Libya, it was the oil revenues and in Milosevic it came to be in the awarding of contracts to a handful of families to buy support. Finally, both relied on populism to gain and hold power. Qaddafi claimed that he worked for the people's power and Milosevic railed against bureaucracy in earlier stages of his political career.¹⁸⁴ Although they went about their politics in different ways, they ended up at similar places on the spectrum. The regimes bear important similarities, which means they could be coerced similarly

¹⁸³Mueller, Karl, Gregory Alegi, Christian F. Anrig, Christopher S. Chivvis, Robert Egnell, Christina Goulter, Camille Grand, Deborah C. Kidwell, Richard O. Mayne, Bruce R. Nardulli, Robert C. Owen, Frederic Wehrey, Leila Mahnad and Stephen M. Worman. Precision and Purpose: Airpower in the Libyan Civil War. Santa Monica, CA: *RAND Corporation*, 2015.

http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR676.html. Also, available in print form., 15.

The National Transitional Council was the primary organization against Qaddafi, but it formed in early March and expecting it to be able to step in and govern would be a fallacy. Perhaps, the US should have waited until there was well organized political opposition, not just military elements.

¹⁸⁴ Lust, Ellen. *The Middle East*. Thousand Oaks, CA: *Sage/CQ*, 2017. Print.

Move to War

Qaddafi lost all regional support when the Arab League endorsed the proposed no-fly zone on March 12.¹⁸⁵ This is the primary difference between Milosevic and Qaddafi because Qaddafi was isolated from the beginning, whereas Milosevic had Russia. In the end, they both ended without allies. Early in March, Qaddafi controlled every city except Benghazi and was being reinforced by mercenaries.¹⁸⁶ His speeches about indiscriminate slaughter also stirred the desire for the US to intervene. He threatened to put down the rebellion without mercy or pity.¹⁸⁷ Mueller argues that it was an opportunity to atone for previous missed opportunities to stop other genocides.¹⁸⁸

This does not mesh into the history of the conflict. The US Ambassador to the UN, Susan Rice proposed the language in UNSCR 1973, that called for “all necessary measures to protect civilians”,¹⁸⁹ but this was the legal justification for military action, not the *casus belli*. The opportunity to knock over a weak Qaddafi regime and gain stability in North Africa presented itself and the Administration wanted to take it. Russia argued this point, but did not exercise its veto power.¹⁹⁰ Beyond this, the US now had legal backing to use airpower under the auspice of preventing ethnic cleansing. As Owen puts it, “the US had a moral imperative and an opportunity to close a festering sore”.¹⁹¹ It was significantly more important to remove Qaddafi, the festering sore, and thus remove

¹⁸⁵ Mueller, 17, Richard Leiby and Muhammad Mansour, “Arab League Asks U.N. for No-Fly Zone over Libya,” *Washington Post*, March 12, 2011.

¹⁸⁶ Mueller, 18

¹⁸⁷ Mueller and Owen, 88

¹⁸⁸ Mueller, 19

¹⁸⁹ Mueller, 20; Hastings, “Inside Obama’s War Room.”

¹⁹⁰ Mueller, 20

¹⁹¹ Mueller, Owen, 88

the future threat of instability from the perspective of a having a hostile state in an important region.

American Strategy for Qaddafi

Qaddafi's political strength and legitimacy came from the ability of his military and security services to keep order in Libya. What differentiates the Libya and Kosovo interventions were the centers of gravity targeted, but they had the same effect of political destabilization. The Libyan rebels were completely outclassed and would be annihilated in any conflict against Qaddafi's forces, so to remove Qaddafi, his military needed to be attacked. Whereas Milosevic's base of support was attacked. Undercutting Qaddafi's military created a situation where his hold on power was no longer tenable and he became vulnerable. Milosevic's government collapsed because of airpower, but Qaddafi was killed. That facet of the outcome is not relevant when understanding the role airpower plays because the ultimate objective was to facilitate regime change.

The attacks on Qaddafi's military represent a denial strategy. The opening salvos that targeted his radar and anti-aircraft installations would for the foreseeable future, leave his regime at the mercy of any other power. Furthermore, denial targets the capacity of a target to achieve military objectives.¹⁹² The US/NATO campaign required "planning direct action against regime troops advancing on Libyan cities, as well as degrading the regime's ability to continue such attacks by damaging or destroying military facilities, equipment, and communications capabilities."¹⁹³ A humanitarian operation cannot exist

¹⁹² Lake, 88

¹⁹³ Mueller, 115

without crippling the capabilities of the adversary state because humanitarian forces are soft targets like transport aircraft and helicopters. That is why I discount the humanitarian element of the mission. The first missions of the conflict were to cripple Qaddafi's military regime, not support refugees. B-2s launched the opening salvo against military assets.¹⁹⁴ Moreover, President Obama's stated objective of protecting civilians meant the destruction of Qaddafi's regime to follow through on protecting civilians.¹⁹⁵ The Kosovo campaign attempted this by targeting Milosevic's military, but ethnic cleansing does not require heavy forces. The terrain also played a role in this because Milosevic's forces had terrain features to use for cover, but the Libyan coastline has no such features. Also, Qaddafi was attempting to put down an insurrection, so he had to use heavier forces to overcome the defensive advantage the rebels had.

There was never any attempt to authorize a ground invasion. It was politically unpopular in the United States and would have required Senate authorization. In the same way, a ground option was never really on the table for attacking Milosevic either. From the onset of both campaigns, it was to be conducted purely through airpower.

Kosovo and Libya diverge when considering the category of direct pressure because as mentioned, there was never a significant push to personally attack Milosevic, but Qaddafi represented a threat if he were permitted to persist. Qaddafi's demise began as his convoy was leaving Sirte, when his satellite phone call was intercepted, but was intercepted by an RAF Tornado equipped for electronic surveillance. His convoy was then hit with a Hellfire from a Predator and strafed by a French Rafale fighter jet. His

¹⁹⁴ Mueller, 137

¹⁹⁵ Mueller, 123

loyalists scattered as rebels attacked and they ultimately captured and killed Qaddafi. This represents a significant departure in tactics from the Kosovo campaign. This can be partly ascribed to differences in regime type as Qaddafi's Libya was built around his personality and philosophy, whereas Serbia had institutions that persisted through the collapse of the Soviet Union. This did not represent a decapitation strategy because Qaddafi was a target of opportunity and does not represent a concerted effort to target his person. Also, this further discredits the notion that Libya was conducted purely as a humanitarian operation. The objective was, in Libya and Kosovo, to create a situation where it would be untenable for Qaddafi and Milosevic to continue ruling. In both cases, airpower did that more efficiently than a ground invasion could have been reasonable expected to do.

The categories of weakening and political destabilization that I attribute to Milosevic's capitulation also apply to Qaddafi, but in different ways. Milosevic's power came through cronyism and the support of key families. Qaddafi was legitimized by the monopoly on violence and his patronage system as well. But because Qaddafi was using the full weight of his military to put down a revolt, weakening the Qaddafi regime, thus politically destabilizing it means attacking its military. In both cases, ethnic cleansing was the way the states wanted to maintain political control, but Qaddafi was more outright about it, which is why his military was the vulnerable target. Also, creating areas where the rebellion could use as a springboard for kinetic operations, like Benghazi created a political alternative to Qaddafi. The only way to create this alternative was to attack Qaddafi's strength, his military.

The first task at hand was destroying Qaddafi's anti-aircraft capabilities because once this happened, then combat air patrols against ground forces could be conducted with impunity.¹⁹⁶ Protecting Benghazi and these strike missions, although military in nature, served to destabilize Qaddafi because he no longer had the sole claim of legitimacy. Targets of priority included attacking Qaddafi's aircraft to prevent them from striking against the rebel cities and hitting any forces maneuvering on Benghazi.¹⁹⁷ The political parameters were in flux amongst the other NATO members, so the primary target was the military, especially "mechanized forces, artillery, mobile surface-to-air missile sites, interdicting their lines of communications their command and control and any opportunities for sustainment of that activity."¹⁹⁸ For NATO, it was easy politically to for a battle plan around targeting his military.

Civilian infrastructure was left off the target list because it would not affect Qaddafi in any way. He had his own infrastructure and he controlled the state. There was also no need to further stir dissent amongst the population at large, unlike the Milosevic regime. In this way, targeting the military, which would be categorized as denial, really represents political destabilization.

Mueller concludes that the US/NATO air campaign enabled the rebels to survive Qaddafi's initial assault and then airpower allowed the rebels to go on the offensive. It also encouraged them to unite against Qaddafi. The mission had a mandate to protect civilians, but the fact that US/NATO forces first target military assets revealed that the

¹⁹⁶ Mueller, 123

¹⁹⁷ Mueller, 125

¹⁹⁸ Mueller, 129

mission was viewed as an opportunity to take out Qaddafi and change the political order of the region. Mueller is wrong that the mission is about humanitarianism because the events surrounding Qaddafi's death demonstrate otherwise. Some may try and create a "Libyan Model" and equate it with the Afghan Model. Yes, there was synergy between indigenous ground forces and airpower, but no American or allied personnel were involved on the ground. Most of the targeting was done on an ad-hoc basis at the Air Force Targeting Center or US airbases around the continental US.¹⁹⁹

Conclusions about the Operations

Although Operation Odyssey Dawn featured 100% use of precision guided munitions whereas Operation Allied Force in Kosovo featured only 29%, this does not mean that Libya was more effective, but rather those are the only munitions in Western military stockpiles now and when the political mandate is to protect civilians, using unguided bombs clearly runs counter to that and could have opened the operation to criticism. Airpower in both cases was not about humanitarian principles, but about regional order. Because both campaigns forced the leaders out of power, they ought to be categorized as limited successes, not victories. A victory implies that the politics of the situation changed so rapidly and that the result was formed a new political reality that satisfies the victor in every measure. I categorize each operation as a success because they set out to change the political realities of the situation on the ground because anything would be preferable to their retention of power.

¹⁹⁹ Mueller, 126

The merits of intervening in Libya can be debated given the continuing civil strife, but that precludes the possibility it also could reflect the situation in Syria. Nation-states have far greater capacity to organize and wage war than non-state actors do, which is why the Obama Administration took the risk of going after Qaddafi.

In neither case did airpower “win” on its own. Rather it was used to alter the political realities of the adversaries, which then opened them to challenges from political rivals. The cases are similar because they both coerced their targets by targeting their reasons for having power. For Milosevic, it was that he made important families wealthy and once he endangered them, this endangered his rule. Qaddafi always had the military and coercive state to repress any political challenger, but once that was gone he became vulnerable. I argue that when airpower is being used against an established nation-state, it should be targeting whatever will politically destabilize the adversarial regime.

For example, if a regime claims it holds a revolutionary group at bay, then the military should be target. This does not fit under the category of denial because it is not about reshaping another state’s military objectives, but rather stripping away that political claim. If a state needs to export a product to remain economically viable, then the means of distribution should be attacked, like airstrips and ports. This can be done without civilian casualties and within the laws of war. Furthermore, the categories of coercion that Lake proposes ought to be reorganized under political destabilization with all other categories flowing from it, because as demonstrated in Kosovo and Libya, the only way politics change is if the political underpinning of the regime is attacked. This also achieves the important synergy of airpower because it is not bombing just to bomb, but it

effects the strategy of the adversary. Once again, the Clausewitzian adage that war is politics by other means rings true.

Chapter Five: Conclusions About Airpower in American Foreign Policy and International Relations

As a political and military strategy, particularly in the American context, airpower has a place in the toolkit of American foreign policy. Airpower works, but it needs some synergy with some ground force to exploit, be it a political force or a military one. Merely dispatching cruise missiles or bombers does not create political change on its own.

The recent cruise missile strike against Shayrat Airfield in Syria demonstrates this well. Merely bombing Assad's airfields will not end the conflict because there are larger political forces in play, but if airstrikes were part of a comprehensive strategy, then results will be more impressive. Also, the recent use of the GBU-43 Massive Ordnance Air Blast Bomb, or MOAB in Afghanistan may have killed dozens of self-proclaimed Islamic State fighters, but it does not address the core political issues that fester in Afghan/ISAF politics. Moreover, it deals a limited blow to a terror network known for resiliency.

Drones could benefit from a clear strategic outline and an espionage network that gives operators a better picture of who to target. In conventional situations in Afghanistan, airpower created an impossible choice when it was combined with special forces and indigenous allies. In Kosovo and Libya, it changed Milosevic and Qaddafi's regimes because it undermined particular pieces of their political base of support. Each case also had a clear political imperative to act. The objective of drone strike is to chip away at terror networks, like al-Qaeda. The War in Afghanistan was about striking back

at the perpetrators and abettors of 9/11. The campaigns in Kosovo and Libya were legitimized under the auspices of humanitarian principles, but were really opportunities to alter regional order.

To a certain extent, the theory about airpower as a political and military strategy is trapped in the past. International relations is focused on conflict, as it should be because war it is the most deadly and transformative force known to mankind. Too often history and its lessons are taken as scripture and the lessons of the past are strictly applied to the present when they may not apply at all. Theorists like Billy Mitchell and Giulio Douchet are the modern origins that airpower can render ground forces secondary and bring an enemy, particularly an enemy nation-state, to its knees in relatively short order. It is attractive to American policy makers because it makes war more sanitary and humane, but as demonstrated in the drone campaign in North Waziristan, it can be anything but.

Alone, airpower cannot win wars or deliver positive outcomes. As Clausewitz has written, “war is the contest of wills”. For every strategy, there is a counter-strategy and Kosovo demonstrates this point well because not every adversary or political opponent of the United States wants to fight on our terms. The United States is the lone superpower in the world with the most experienced and advanced military in human history. No rational state or non-state group would want to engage the US in a conventional struggle. Airpower theory comes from a time when conflict was viewed only through the perspective of nation-states in a struggle for power, but the overarching geopolitical landscape has drastically changed. First, the US remains the predominant global power and the nature and conduct of war has changed as a result. War and conflict have moved

away from the affairs of states because international order is, overall, relatively stable, but there are certain states and groups that do not have any political interest in the current structure. At least part of the reason some have pointed to airpower as a strategy as an ineffective because terror cells or defiant regimes lack the infrastructure or large military apparatus to target. This is especially true for terror networks as their centers of gravity are relationships between people. These new states and actors do not neatly fit into the categories that exist. That is why I argue airpower alone cannot succeed, but when it has synergy to exploit, it can work.

Furthermore, there is a widely-held belief that the next technological advancement is always a few years away that will force the enemy to change. It is not admitting failure or defeat by trying a new strategy. In fact, thinking outside of accepted norms can create controlled chaos and when one side is in front of the chaos, he can harness it to shape the outcome according to a particular vision.

Political power is inherently decided by people. During the Blitz, one of the most fearsome aerial bombardments in human history, merely attacking civilians did not bend the will of the British because it was a political struggle and the British people had a clear political imperative to act. They were fighting for survival and a future, but the German bombardment was more detached from a grand strategy. Yes, it was part of the plan for world domination and the potential invasion of Britain, but it was bombing with the hope of changing the mind of the average Englishman. The Blitz did not have a clear objective to accomplish. In the 21st century, when the boundary between civilian and soldier, war and peace, is even more blurred, airpower and military objectives need clear parameters and objectives.

The subject of airpower has gained an increased salience given the rise of the self-proclaimed Islamic State's rapid advance across parts of Iraq and Syria. Airpower has captured the attention of Americans even more recently with President Trump's authorization to strike Shayrat Airfield in Syria. The use of airpower, has the potential to drastically alter the US-Russian relationship and perhaps change the nature of American military involvement in the conflict. A miscalculation or accident has the potential to set off the geopolitical powder keg that is the Syrian civil war. The discussion about airpower matters, it cannot be viewed as a solution to any political problem because, as demonstrated in Syria, a mistake can start a war.

There is no clear path that the cases I discuss lay out for guidance on dealing with IS, but they do have valuable lessons to heed. First, airpower alone cannot win this battle. Airpower can change political realities, like the ability of a regime to assuage supporters and accomplish certain objectives like crushing political dissent, but there needs to be another force to synergize with to take advantage of the battlefield conundrum of concentrating to fight or spreading out to avoid aerial bombardment. Also, allies do not always share the same political vision as the US. Therefore, relying only on allies to defeat IS will not bear fruit and the region will continue to be unsettled. The introduction of special forces and other American troops on the ground may invoke thoughts about recycling the Afghan Model, but that would not produce a similar result. The political situation on the ground is much less clear-cut than it was in early 2001. Also, IS and other groups have been pushed back and are beginning to use insurgency tactics as they lose territory. Broadly, airpower should be used to continue to whittle away at their combat power because they cannot replace their losses in men, materiel or expertise.

Airpower is a valuable tool in American foreign policy, as it allows the US to make a statement around the globe in a matter of hours, but it should not be wielded without a comprehensive strategic vision and a plan to accompany its use. The use of airpower should not be treated lightly or as a bloodless war because it can be the opening stages of a larger military commitment that may not be advisable. Also, technology itself cannot be expected to solve the strategic puzzle. In conclusion, airpower has changed an important aspect of international relations, how conflict is conducted. War is the most destructive and transformative human activity and airpower is an important aspect of conflict in the 21st century, so it is crucial to understand airpower.