



THE AIRMAN'S PERSPECTIVE

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The practical application of “airmindedness” results in the Airman's unique perspective, which can be summarized as follows.

- ✦ **Control of the vertical dimension is generally a necessary precondition for control of the surface.** The first mission of an air force is to defeat or neutralize the enemy air forces so friendly operations on land, sea, in the air, and in space can proceed unhindered, while at the same time one's own military forces and critical vulnerabilities remain safe from air attack.
- ✦ **Airpower is an inherently strategic force.** War and peace are decided, organized, planned, supplied, and commanded at the strategic level of war. Air Force forces can hold an enemy's strategic centers of gravity and critical vulnerabilities directly at risk immediately and continuously. Airpower also has great strategic capability for non-lethal strategic influence, as in humanitarian relief and building partnership activities.
- ✦ **Airpower can exploit the principles of mass and maneuver simultaneously to a far greater extent than surface forces.** There are no natural lateral boundaries to prevent air, space, and cyberspace capabilities from quickly concentrating their power (physically or in terms of delivered effects) at any point, even when starting from widely dispersed locations. Airpower dominates the fourth dimension—time—and compresses the tempo of events to produce physical and psychological shock.
- ✦ **Airpower can apply force against many facets of enemy power.** Air Force-provided capabilities can be brought to bear against any lawful target within an enemy's diplomatic, informational, military, economic, and social structures simultaneously or separately. They can be employed in support of national, combined/joint, or other component objectives. They can be integrated with surface power or employed independently.
- ✦ **Air Force forces are less culturally intrusive in many scenarios.** Surface forces are composed of many people and vehicles which, when arrayed for operations, cover a significant area. Thus, their presence may be very visible to local populations and may create resentment during certain types of stability operations and in counterinsurgency operations. Air Force forces, operating from bases over the horizon or from just a few bases in-country, have a smaller footprint for the effects they provide. Space and cyberspace forces have a negligible in-theater footprint relative to the capabilities they provide.

- ★ **Airpower's inherent speed, range, and flexibility combine to make it one of the most versatile components of military power.** Its versatility allows it to be rapidly employed against strategic, operational, and tactical objectives simultaneously. The versatility of airpower derives not only from the inherent characteristics of air forces themselves, but also from the manner in which they are organized and controlled.
 - ★ **Airpower results from the effective integration of capabilities, people, weapons, bases, logistics, and all supporting infrastructure.** No one aspect of air, space, and cyberspace capabilities should be treated in isolation since each element is essential and interdependent. Ultimately, the Air Force depends on the performance of the people who operate, command, and sustain air, space, and cyberspace forces.
 - ★ **The choice of appropriate capabilities is a key aspect in the realization of airpower.** Weapons should be selected based on their ability to create desired effects on an adversary's capability and will. Achieving the full potential of airpower requires timely, actionable [intelligence](#) and sufficient [command and control](#) capabilities to permit commanders to exploit precision, speed, range, flexibility, and versatility.
 - ★ **Supporting bases with their people, systems, and facilities are essential to launch, recovery, and sustainment of Air Force forces.** One of the most important aspects of the Air Force has proved to be its ability to move anywhere in the world quickly and then rapidly begin operations. However, the need for mobility should be balanced against the need to operate at the deployment site. The availability and operability of suitable bases can be the dominant factor in employment planning and execution.
 - ★ **Airpower's unique characteristics necessitate that it be centrally controlled by Airmen.** Airpower can quickly intervene anywhere, regardless of whether it is used for strategic or tactical purposes. Thus, Airmen tend to take a broader view of war, because the capabilities they command have effects at broader levels of war. Airmen apply airpower through the tenet of [centralized control and decentralized execution](#).
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