

PATHS TO EXTINCTION

ALTERNATIVE FUTURES FOR THE US AIR FORCE

Grant T. Hammond
Air War College

Contention # 1: The Air Force Problem

- The USAF is under orchestrated attack from the other services
 - » The Army has historically coveted Air Force assets
 - » The Navy has traditionally coveted Air Force missions
 - » Since Desert Storm, both covet Air Force assets and missions
 - » The USAF is not protecting either well

Data To Support Contention #1

- The first meeting of the Army-Navy Joint Board in nearly 60 Years
 - » November, 1992
- Exercise ***Atlantic Resolve***
 - » November 1994--
- New Senate Committee Structure
 - » Navy/Marine Matters & AirLand Matters
- Denial of independent airpower

Contention #2: The USAF is Assisting in Its Own Demise

- The USAF is committing suicide by its attitude
 - » The USAF struggled for decades to become independent--yet now finds itself always supporting, never supported
 - » An unrestrained support of jointness--where the Army and the Navy **get** and the Air Force **gives**
 - » A willingness to be directed by others

Data in Support of Contention #2

- Most Air Force officers take notes from the Ground Component Commander's brief on what he requires
- There are no regional USAF CINCs and there has been only one USAF CJCS
- No sustained, effective rebuttal to NTC Modelling, Navy Global War Game, TMD TOC, or Roving Sands assertions

Air Force Failures

- Failure to articulate airpower capabilities and harvest its potential
- Failure to realize the stakes--
 - » Its identity
 - » Its existence
- Failure to conduct the most important air campaign of its existence
 - » Against others' perceptions

Difficulties of Our Own Making

- A misplaced enthusiasm for AirLand Battle
- Difficulty in ^{generating \$} supporting publicly defensible funding priorities
- Failure to capitalize on experience in the Gulf War
 - » Internally to improve the Air Force
 - » Externally to improve its image

Difficulties of Our Own Making

- A habit of promising more than we can deliver and delivering less than we promise and a failure to admit publicly that this is the case
- Exercises in self promotion which hinder more than help the Air Force cause
- A reluctance to make the case for the USAF effectively and persistently

Difficulties of Our Own Making

- Assisting in our suicide by our own actions
- Designing a mechanistic ATO generating tool (CTAPS) which requires
 - » No creative thought by the JFACC
 - » Assumes perfect guidance from the JFC
 - » Matches sorties to targets selected by someone else
 - » All with supreme technical elegance

Hypothesis: The USAF Becomes Extinct By 2025

- Can arrive at this state through reasonable assumptions and choices
- The “worst case” scenario for the USAF--it no longer exists as a service
- Need to see how this could happen--examine both ends and means
- Knowing how it can happen, can then plan to avoid this outcome

Extinction

- the act of extinguishing--"putting out the fire"
- the condition of being extinguished
- suppression, abolition, annihilation
- Biology: coming to an end, dying out
- Psychology: the reduction or loss of a conditioned response as a result of the absence or withdrawal of reinforcement

On Evolution and the Avoidance of Extinction

“We have to take command of our evolution.... The pace of change is far too great to for us to try and adapt unconsciously. We have to take our very evolution into our own hands and ...adapt to an unprecedented new world.”

Robert Ornstein,

The Evolution of Consciousness

How Could The USAF Become Extinct?

- 1) Other Service Ascendancy
- 2) Economy / Budget Constraints
- 3) Choices in Changed Environment
- 4) Nature of War Transformed
- 5) Technology as Death Knell
- 6) Jointness “*Uber Alles*”
- 7) Air Force Mismanages Programs
- 8) Air Force Chooses Wrong Path
- 9) Air Force Too Good At Strategic War

Other Service Ascendancy

- ***Army ascendant***--strategy, doctrine, budget and politics (pork)

- » “America’s Army” = Basis of democratic self-defense

- » Smaller but more technologically adept

- » Rotary Wing and UAVs are wave of future

Army Ascendancy

» Wins roles and missions debate to shape
DEEP BATTLE

- Deep Battle with ATACMs
- Control FSCL
- Prevent Friendly Fire

» TBM point defense and counter battery fire
means are cheap, effective and retaliatory,
not offensive

Other Service Ascendancy

- ***Navy/Marines ascendant***--becomes the omnicompetent force--
 - » Has strategic mission--offensively with SLBMs
 - » and Aegis/ERINT, ASAT and TMD defensively
 - » Naval Expeditionary Task Force (NETF) becomes force of choice

Navy Ascendancy

- » Has global operational capability--CVBGs
- » Has tactical applications--TLAMS, SAGs, Carrier Air, Marines
- » Has tactical applications--TLAMS, SAGs, Carrier Air, Marines
- » Has better placed flag officers in the Joint hierarchy
- » Marines have the best bumper sticker: "A certain force for an uncertain future"

Other Services Ascendancy

- US creates a ***separate Space Force***
 - » Precedence of AF and Army Air Corps split
 - » Technology, budget, politics suggest this may well be the way to go
 - » Space as a separate domain--protected by treaty and international agreements--appeals to common sense

Space Force Ascendancy

- » Dual use with commercial applications and NASA activities
 - Can't afford two systems
 - Commercial sector has the R&D
 - Dual use a necessity
- » Allocate air missions to other services
 - Space Force won't do air missions
 - Other services get the assets and missions they have been seeking

US Creates Information Command and Force

- All Info War roles and missions combined to create a new Force/Command
 - » Multispectral sensing and intelligence collection combined and not AF assets
 - » Data distribution centralized
 - » Deception operations run from here
 - » Verification assets critical
 - » Decision filter on other service operations

Economic and Budgetary Constraints

- The Economy falters badly--
 - » ECUs and Yen supplant dollar
 - » Oil shock induced global recession or depression
 - » Banking system and/or currency collapse
 - » Counterfeiting and financial transfer data corruption
 - » Withdrawal of foreign funds from US
 - » Extreme speculation the result of internet
 - » US debt or debt guarantees cripple it as major actor

Economic and Budgetary Considerations

- Defense budget becomes major target
 - » Only fungible \$ in given fiscal year-- a raidable asset
 - » Re-engineering military means AF loses as the “supporting” (not supported) service
 - » Simultaneous block obsolescence of Reagan defense build-up weaponry
 - » F-22 overruns and space investment swamp AF Budget (B-2 the norm)

Policy Choices in a Changed Environment

- Current trends become even stronger
 - » Social security more important than national security--Welfare is more important than warfare as political issue
- 1990s = 1920s
 - » Where's the threat? None = Isolationism
 - » International organizations and agreements supplant military capability
 - » Trade and finance more important than military capability

Policy Choices in a Changed Environment

- Who, or what, is an adversary?
 - » International crime cartels
 - » Domestic terrorists
 - » Multinational non-state “business” communities
- Why should they leave calling cards as infrastructure is impaired or destroyed?
 - » How and against whom does one retaliate?
- One bad OOTW = withdrawal (Somalia)

Technology as Death Knell, Not Savior

- Any of these could render conventional warfare irrelevant or distasteful:
 - » Nuclear weapons in large #s in missiles, torpedoes, containers, satellites, etc.
 - » Chemical warfare
 - » Biological Warfare
 - » Civilianized urban conflict with high casualties

Technology as Death Knell, Not Savior

- Network organizations, diffuse comm, SOF and space reliance mean traditional air campaign outmoded
- Cost of assets and training of pilots not worth the individual targets
- Air superiority neither necessary nor sufficient to win
- Pilots become modern equivalent of knights in the Middle Ages

Nature of War and Warfare Change

- Alternate types of war--
 - » High tech info war among non-state actors with non-lethal weapons & little collateral damage
 - » Primitive, “Camp of the Saints,” migration of millions of human beings--bodies not bullets the weapon of choice
 - » How employ an F-22 against these types of threats?

Nature of War and Warfare Change

- War occurs essentially as “tele-commuting” among highly specialized technological elites (not in uniform)
- Bulk of society’s resources go to crime & punishment, law & order problems within, not enemies from without
- Rich, educated, satiated, haves, over 30 fight poor, uneducated but angry have-nots, in their teens, world-wide

Jointness “*Uber Alles*”

- Service competency is sacrificed on the altar of jointness
- Those who are most politically astute, rather than militarily most capable, run the show
- The triumph of Goldwater-Nichols is the emasculation of the services as well as their civilian secretaries

Jointness “*Uber Alles*”

- JROC / JWCA organizes, trains, equips
- The Chairman oversees all with CINCs doing the planning, Congress doing the funding, industry doing the lobbying, Majcoms responsible for T,O & E and no correlation among them
- We do more and more with less and less until we seek to do everything with nothing

Air Force Mismanages its Programs

- The tradition of cost overruns continues--at about a factor of pi (3.14)
- The Service budgets are capped and the USAF has an all or nothing proposition facing it
- Norm Augustine's prediction a reality--one all-weather, all-purpose, multi-role tactical aircraft is all we can afford

The Air Force Mismanages Its Programs

- The appearance, if not the reality, of fraud waste and abuse drives the public to demand extraordinary measures
- So much time and talent are invested in keeping the books, nobody is minding the store
- Quantity and quality of recruitment and retention become major problems

Air Force Chooses the Wrong Path for Future Threats

- Forced to continue to acquire the C-17 and F-22 because of initial approval, the USAF winds up with the wrong forces for the required missions
- Still disdain missiles, UAVs and have not fully integrated space
- Cannot come to grips with the fact that the era of manned air-breathing aircraft may be over as decisive weapon of war

Air Forces Chooses the Wrong Path for Future Threats

- Can't answer with any real authority society's question: "What have you done for us lately?"
- Disinvests in critical resources--physical, financial and human--for the future
- Makes wrong choice by not being institutionally able to choose intelligently--and makes no choice

Air Force Too Good At Strategic War

- Once deterrence fails, **we** are deterred from using winning weapons
- Air Force prosecutes & wins grossly unpleasant war of mass destruction
 - » Nuclear, Chemical, Biological
 - » Fuel Air Explosions
 - » Massive conventional bombing
- Utter destruction caused is morally unacceptable at home and abroad

Air Force Too Good At Strategic War

- Still carry the burden of the atomic bombs of over 50 years ago
- No question but what we could destroy any known adversary many times over
- This may not be an acceptable way of winning future wars
- Must become more sophisticated--need brain force not brute force

In Conclusion

- There are at least 9 paths to extinction:
 - » 1) Other Service Ascendancy
 - » 2) Economy / Budget Constraints
 - » 3) A Changed Environment
 - » 4) Transformed Nature of War
 - » 5) Technology as Problem

In Conclusion

- Paths to extinction, cont.
 - » 6) Jointness “*Uber Alles*”
 - » 7) AF Mismanagement of Programs
 - » 8) AF Chooses Wrong Path
 - » 9) AF Too Good at Strategic War
- These are not chimerical future threats
- They all exist **NOW!**

The Bottom Line

- Any one of these 9 alternative futures is possible, perhaps probable
- The odds that some aspects of nearly all will come to pass are very great
- The likelihood that the USAF can escape any one is not too good
- The likelihood that the USAF can escape all is virtually impossible

The Bottom Line

- Hence, the combination of one or more of these scenarios is likely
- That combination could lead to end game--

THE EXTINCTION OF THE US AIR FORCE BY THE YEAR 2025

- For the good of the nation, we cannot permit this to happen.

The Last Word

- You must take immediate, efficeint, effective action to prevent the extinction of the Air Force
- ***If you do not, extinction is not only likely, it is inevitable.***