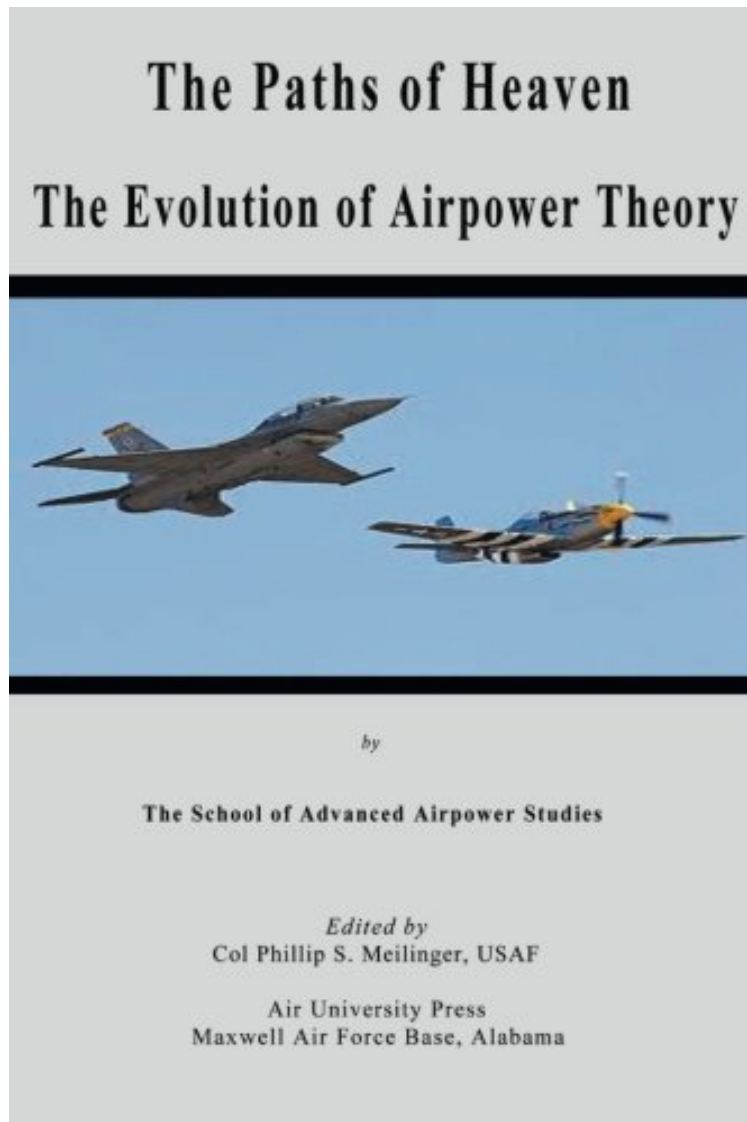


The Paths of Heaven: The Evolution of Airpower Theory

From Phillip Meilinger

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#2125322 in Books Phillip Meilinger 2012-08-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.00 x 1.54 x 6.00l, 1.98 #File Name: 1479181900682 pages The Paths of Heaven The Evolution of Airpower Theory | File size: 58.Mb

From Phillip Meilinger : The Paths of Heaven: The Evolution of Airpower Theory before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Paths of Heaven: The Evolution of Airpower Theory:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Military Theorists By MarRo "The Paths of Heaven" is a collection of essays chronicling the evolution of airpower in military application. It encompasses the thoughts of enthusiasts such as

Giulio Douhet, 'Billy' Mitchell, and Alexander de Seversky, to the modernist views of John Boyd and John Warden. The book is a 'must-have' for every military historian's collection.⁵ 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Very comprehensive By Fernando Discerning readers will derive well-grounded observations from this exhaustive collection of essays which traces the "evolution of airpower theory from its earliest days...to the present," (xii). It will not escape the reader's notice that the early theorists operated from theoretically and experientially-derived assumptions formed by the crucible of the First World War. Framed against this background, Colonel Philip Meilinger discusses proponents in the conceptual continuity of strategic destructive potential of British airpower. Eventually airpower widened its theoretical base, and we find Meilinger's second article examining Alexander de Seversky's contributions to incipient aerial refueling, long range escort aircraft, as well as his in-person evaluations of the efficacy of strategic bombing. Meanwhile, David Mets contextualizes the rise of naval aviation, as it evolved from an adjunct to established doctrine, to giving credence to strategic bombing, and the carrier as the eminent instrument of sea power. In James Corum's essay, he describes inter-war France's airpower failure when its technology was not wed to doctrine. He also notes that the poor performance of the Italian air force resulted not from doctrinal but industrial insufficiency. The Soviet Union, meanwhile, adhered to the primacy of the offensive while developing the world's first airborne forces, and maturing ground attack theory. Finally, Germany failed to translate airpower theory into doctrine for an effective air force, especially with the move away from the emphasis on strategic bombing. Concurrently in America, it was the task of the Air Corps Tactical School to get national leadership to advance their strategic and operational thinking toward striking an enemy's core vulnerabilities. Several essays prove thematically tied. Harold Winton provides "a critical, comparative analysis" (400) of Army and Air Force air-ground operations from 1973 to 1990, elaborating upon the key doctrinal cooperation arduously worked out between the two services, explaining how such collaboration resulted in "relative cohesion and strength" in Army-Air Force doctrine (430). Meanwhile, Dennis Drew probes Air Force thinking on the application of airpower to low intensity conflict, concluding that airpower can be successful in a counterinsurgent role only if it is totally integrated into the military campaign. In addition to these essays, Maris McCrabb's engaging article on NATO airpower shows how conceptual differences between US and NATO command and control and weapons employment were eventually modified for alliance needs. Relatedly, Edward Felker reviews how major changes to Russian Federation airpower doctrine led to an emergent perception of security interests which forced them back to "earlier ideas about the preeminence of the offense." (515) Yet, as Felker warns, "Russian airpower will remain fragmented" amidst a doctrinal unreality. In examining more modern concepts, David Fadok elaborates Boyd's theory of conflict with its military objective of breaking the enemy's spirit and will. In addition, Fadok explores John Warden's theories of how airpower achieves strategic ends with maximum effectiveness and minimum cost. What about airpower and nuclear warfare? Karl Mueller's thesis is that deterrent theories of the past continue to be relevant, despite the fading of East-West confrontation. Regarding the potentials of space, Bruce DeBlois provides a masterful analysis of the vast capabilities of aerospace power, and discusses the potential of a separate Space Force. He underscores the vital fact that space power reduces US casualties through the remoteness of its operating realm. Finally, IB Holley provides the volume with a needful redaction, classifying the ideas of the theorists according to the way they can be authenticated. Finally, there is little to criticize here. Though perhaps true on a proverbial level, this reviewer cannot agree with Winton that all airmen disbelieve that "the ultimate result comes from soldiers on the ground." (401) The results are situationally dependent. DeBlois's use of the pejorative "emotional" to characterize all who dissent from military use of space, is puzzling. Finally, the title of the book is more suited to a history of sport flying than that of airpower theory. Notwithstanding, as the gangrenous wound of the Great War's trenches still haunt us, Meilinger's compilation amply illustrates the primacy of striking an enemy's will before his killing machines are fielded. This is the historiographical undergirding of one of the most comprehensive surveys in print on the evolution of airpower theory (NOTE: This review originally written in 1999).

Airpower is not widely understood. Even though it has come to play an increasingly important role in both peace and war, the basic concepts that define and govern airpower remain obscure to many people, even to professional military officers. This fact is largely due to fundamental differences of opinion as to whether or not the aircraft has altered the strategies of war or merely its tactics. If the former, then one can see airpower as a revolutionary leap along the continuum of war; but if the latter, then airpower is simply another weapon that joins the arsenal along with the rifle, machine gun, tank, submarine, and radio. This book implicitly assumes that airpower has brought about a revolution in war. It has altered virtually all aspects of war: how it is fought, by whom, against whom, and with what weapons. Flowing from those factors have been changes in training, organization, administration, command and control (C 2), and doctrine. War has been fundamentally transformed by the advent of the airplane. Billy Mitchell defined airpower as "the ability to do something in the air. It consists of transporting all sorts of things by aircraft from one place to another."¹ Two British air marshals, Michael Armitage and Tony Mason, more recently wrote that airpower is "the ability to project military force by or from a platform in the third dimension above the surface of the earth."² In truth, both definitions, though separated in time by almost six decades, say much the same thing. Interestingly, however, most observers go on to note that airpower includes far more than air vehicles; it encompasses the personnel,

organization, and infrastructure that are essential for the air vehicles to function. On a broader scale, it includes not only military forces but also the aviation industry, including airline companies and aircraft/engine manufacturers. On an even broader plane, airpower includes ideas—ideas on how it should be employed. Even before the aeroplane was invented, people speculated—theorized—on how it could be used in war. The purpose of this book is to trace the evolution of airpower theory from the earliest days of powered flight to the present, concluding with a chapter that speculates on the future of military space applications.³ Attempting to find the origins of airpower theory, trace it, expose it, and then examine and explain it, is no easy task. Perhaps because airpower's history is short—all of it can be contained in a single lifetime—it lacks first-rate narrative and analytical treatments in many areas. As a result, library shelves are crammed with books about the aerodynamics of flight, technical eulogies to specific aircraft, and boys' adventure stories. Less copious are good books on airpower history or biography. For example, after nearly five decades, we still do not have an adequate account of American airpower in the Southwest Pacific theater during World War II, or the role of George Kenney, perhaps the best operational-level air commander of the war. Similarly, we need a biography of one of the most brilliant thinkers and planners in US Air Force history; the only airman ever to serve as Supreme Allied Commander Europe, and the third youngest general in American history—Lauris Norstad. Nor do we have a complete, official history of airpower's employment in the war in Southeast Asia. Much needs to be done to fill such gaps.