



Air Power and the Strategy of Punishment

by Sanu Kainikara

FOREWORD

In 2012 Dr Kainikara commenced a substantial research project examining the topic of air power strategies, or perhaps more accurately, an exposition of military strategies in which air power may play a significant part. Through his research Dr Kainikara has identified a number of more or less discrete strategies that cover the spectrum of military options available to a government; ranging from the most benign approach which aims to shape and influence an environment or adversary, through to a strategy of punishment and destruction. Each of these strategies affords a measure of utility to the military forces at a government's disposal, and each advances a means of applying force or the threat of force to influence the actions and possibly the thinking of an adversary or potential adversary.

As the foregoing suggests, the range of strategies available to governments is broad and a comprehensive discussion of all of these would be far too large a work to include in one working paper. Consequently, Dr Kainikara has broken up his work into a series of essays, each covering a discrete strategy. This working paper treats the topic of air power and the strategy of punishment, and it does so in Dr Kainikara's typically methodical and meticulous manner.

The strategy of punishment, as the name suggests, is an approach that incorporates, in its most strident form, the violent application of military force 'to achieve laid down objectives'. Although not all courses of action within the strategy of punishment include the offensive use of military power, they all aim to alter the behaviour if not the cognition of an adversary. Such a strategy is quite clearly the most consequential and potentially lethal of all strategies available, and the use of air power in a strategy of punishment therefore, deserves close attention and serious consideration. Dr Kainikara treats this topic with just such attention as he lays out in detailed fashion the concept of punishment, its characteristics, indicative mechanisms and the implications for air power of all of this.

Most importantly, Dr Kainikara clearly articulates the risks and limitations of strategies of punishment when he admonishes, with characteristically measured understatement; 'Although most nations would have resorted to the strategy of punishment to ensure national security sometime during their history, there are also disadvantages to taking recourse to this strategy ... Punishment is not always effective in influencing the behaviour of the adversary in the desired manner and it can also have unpleasant consequences that may be inimical to one's own requirements.'

This working paper is an important work, connecting warfighting strategies at the conceptual level with air power doctrine. Although the material presented in this paper is quite complex and will require close reading, it provides an invaluable education in strategic thinking for airmen and women and those with a professional interest in air power matters. I commend it to you.

Group Captain Mark Hinchcliffe
Director, Air Power Development Centre

Disclaimer

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Sanu Kainikara is the Air Power Strategist at the Air Power Development Centre of the Royal Australian Air Force and also a Visiting Fellow at the University of New South Wales. He is the author of nine books: *Papers on Air Power*, *Pathways to Victory*, *Red Air: Politics in Russian Air Power*, *Australian Security in the Asian Century*, *A Fresh Look at Air Power Doctrine*, *Seven Perennial Challenges to Air Forces*, *The Art of Air Power: Sun Tzu Revisited*, *At the Critical Juncture* and *Essays on Air Power*. He has presented extensively in international forums and published numerous papers on national security, strategy and air power. He is the recipient of the RAAF Chief of Air Force's Commendation.

Dr Kainikara is a former fighter pilot of the Indian Air Force who retired as a Wing Commander after 21 years of commissioned service. During his service career, he has flown over 4,000 hours on a number of modern fighter aircraft and held various command and staff appointments. He is a Qualified Flying Instructor and a Fighter Combat Leader. He is also a graduate of the National Defence Academy, the Defence Services Staff College, and the College of Air Warfare. He is a recipient of the IAF Chief of Air Staff Commendation and the Air Force Cross.

After retirement from active service, he worked for four years as the senior analyst, specialising in air power strategy for a US Training Team in the Middle East. Prior to the current appointment he was the Deputy Director Wargaming and Doctrine in the Strategy Group of the Department of Defence. He has also taught Aerospace Engineering at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University, Melbourne.

He has two Bachelors degrees, a Masters degree in Defence and Strategic Studies from the University of Madras and his PhD in International Politics was awarded by the University of Adelaide.

INTRODUCTION

The need for security, and flowing from that the development of security strategies, has long been accepted as a fundamental necessity to ensure the prosperity of a nation. In order to be successful, security strategies must be developed with the availability of adequate and reliable information that can be analysed in sufficient detail. The centres of gravity of the nation must be identified and the security objectives listed accordingly; as many options as possible must be considered within a risk assessment before the strategy to be implemented in a particular context is ultimately chosen; and the failure of one strategy must be identified as early as possible so that another one more suited to the unfolding events can be speedily adopted.¹ The national security strategy encompasses all the strategies formulated to ensure the appropriate application of the elements of national power in a concerted manner so that the desired end-state is achieved in the most resource-optimised manner.

Within the broader national security strategy and policy, military strategy deals primarily with theories, hypotheses and concepts that apply to the employment of military forces rather than facts and scientific sureties. Further, military strategies cannot be developed in isolation of the broader national security paradigms and is strongly influenced by both foreign and domestic policies of the government.² It is also apparent, even from a cursory historical overview of the evolution of military strategy that no two situations were amenable to being contained by the application of the same strategy, in other words, strategy has to be dynamic and the strategists have to be agile-minded enough to recognise the changing situations to adapt to them optimally.

The spread of military strategies is very broad and there is a continuum of five overarching strategies that that military forces normally adopt—influence and shape; deter; coerce; punish; and destroy. The lethality of the employment of military forces increases incrementally with the continuum of these strategies. This extends from the use of the military forces to carry out relatively benign influence and shape activities through

1 Alexander L. George, *Bridging the Gap: Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy*, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington DC, 1993, p. 20.

2 John M. Collins, *Military Strategy: Principles, Practices, and Historical Perspectives*, Brassey's Inc, Washington D. C., 2002, p. 2.

providing humanitarian assistance as a response to man-made or natural calamities; creating the necessary posture to deter a would be adversary; coercing a recalcitrant opponent to refrain from initiating actions that are inimical to one's own security requirements, if and when necessary; and as a last resort implementing the strategy of punishment and, in extremis, destroying the adversary's capacity to oppose one's own will, both physically and in the cognitive domain. This spread is extremely broad and the employment of each strategy has its own peculiar nuances, making the employment of military forces a sophisticated undertaking at all times. They cannot be used as blunt instruments of national policy to create effects that in themselves will have repercussions contrary to the ones intended. Within the five major strategies that have been enumerated, the employment of military forces takes on an extremely refined, matured and complex character. In the politically charged contemporary scenario, understanding the subtleties of a chosen strategy has added importance.

Air power does not exist in a vacuum and is an indispensable part of military capabilities. In fact in contemporary conflict situations all matured military forces are increasingly adhering to the concept of joint operations where the three environmental capabilities—land, maritime and air—are optimally combined to create the required effect. Therefore, air strategies must be intimately aligned with the broader military strategy in order to ensure that the desired end-state is achieved with minimum expenditure of resources. Ideally, at the highest level of decision-making the spread of military strategies should be superimposed on the air strategies, so that the air power contribution to a particular strategy can be correctly evaluated. This in turn will ensure that each activity within the detailed spectrum of a chosen strategy would contribute directly to achieving the desired end-state.

Within the spread of military strategies, the strategy of punishment is placed at the high end and is overshadowed only by the strategy of destruction above it. Punishment is a strategy that is irrevocably connected to warfighting, which is the fundamental activity of applying military power to achieving laid down objectives.³ It could be argued that the application of military power in a deterrent role is also aimed at achieving objectives; however, warfighting is a term that implies the application of lethal force in the pursuit of objectives, and is therefore associated more with the strategy of punishment than any other. In developing the fundamentals of warfighting, the national ethos regarding offensive and defensive security postures, and flowing from the preferred security posture, the peacetime deployment patterns of the force are two primary factors to be considered. An offensive posture would be supported by forward deployment that in turn could be either physical presence, through surface forces, or virtual presence, through air power deployed further away.⁴ In both cases the indication is that the nation is willing to adopt the strategy of punishment through its military force if required, rather than resort to more benign strategies to achieve national security.

Although most nations would have resorted to the strategy of punishment to ensure national security sometime during their history, there are also disadvantages to taking recourse to this strategy and even adopting it as a cornerstone for national security. Punishment is not always effective in influencing the behaviour of the adversary in the desired manner and it can also have unpleasant consequences that may be inimical to one's own requirements. The need to influence behaviour is fundamental to 'winning' a conflict from a military perspective, since only changing the behaviour pattern will stop an adversary from initiating and carrying out actions that are hostile to one's own interests. Punishment could create a temporary adaptation of behaviour patterns without in any way altering the belief system, which means that the adversary will revert to their original behaviour as soon as the pressure built up through punishment is eased. The ultimate end-state in any conflict would be achieved when the belief system of the adversary is altered to be in alignment with one's own; however, this is beyond the capacity of the military forces and rests in the realm of other government agency initiatives.

This paper continues the discussion of the role of air power in military strategies that are being published as a series of working papers. It explores the concept of punishment from a military perspective and then describes the spectrum of the strategy of punishment and destruction. Further, the strategy for post-conflict restoration

3 *ibid.*, p. 85.

4 Glen W. Goodman Jr., 'Virtual Overseas Presence: Air Force Redefines the Strategic Security Landscape', *Armed Force Journal*, April 1995, p. 12.

of order to be employed after victory will also be briefly discussed. For the purposes of this paper, the strategy of punishment is considered to have an overlap with the highest levels of the spectrum of the strategy of coercion and also encompasses the concept of destruction as a continuum at the highest end of the spectrum of punishment.

It is essential for students of national security and practitioners who develop security strategies to have a clear grasp of military strategies; they should also have a minimum knowledge of the nuances of the application of air power within the broader security equation. This paper provides a clear description of the role of air power in pursuing a strategy of punishment, as and when it becomes necessary to ensure national security.

UNDERSTANDING PUNISHMENT—A MILITARY PERSPECTIVE

National power is used in international relationships and exchanges to protect a nation's interest by employing it within a spread of strategies that have punishment and destruction at the furthest end, and involve the use of lethal force usually resident in the military forces. Since punishment rests at the highest end of the strategic spread and is implemented by military forces, military power is the most important instrument of national power available to a nation-state. Military force used as a threat, or employed lethally, underpins the political power of a nation.⁵ Punishment, in the military sense, is equated to defeating the adversary in the physical domain and altering their behaviour pattern as far as possible. Most military doctrines articulate this objective as the primary reason for the existence of a military force—to defend the nation and its interests through the defeat of the adversary; however, in the contemporary security environment the use of military force to enforce a strategy of punishment has become an initiative of last resort for most nations.

Punishment involves a series of actions that span from the defensive, gradually escalating to the offensive and finally to destruction through the use of catastrophic force. Assuming a nation has sufficient military power at its disposal, punishment can range from disarming, disabling, repelling and defeating an adversary through the direct use of force resident in the military.⁶ All these actions involve military operations at different levels of intensity and tempo, as well as levels of commitment of troops in a contextual manner. Like any other strategy, punishment also starts at a low level of intensity and increases to a higher level until the full weight of a military force's lethality is brought to bear on the adversary to defeat them, and at the extreme end of the spectrum to elicit unconditional surrender. Each level, and subsequent graded escalation to reach the next level, requires the application of force by the military, at times to the exclusion of other elements of national power.

Essentially, punishment involves attacking the adversary's vital centres of gravity in order to stop them from continuing the actions that are opposed to one's interests. A state could resort to a military strike, even without having been attacked, if it believes that there is a strong possibility of such an attack. Such attacks could either be pre-emptive or preventive. The difference between the two is a nuanced understanding of the timing of the probable attack on one's own centres of gravity by the adversary. Pre-emptive attacks are carried out when an attack is imminent, whereas preventive attacks are carried out when it is believed that an attack is inevitable.⁷ Inevitable attacks would take more time to materialise since the adversary may be in the process of building up their capabilities to shift the balance of power in their favour and imminent attacks could be initiated at any time.⁸ Inevitable attacks evolve into imminent attacks if not neutralised at the appropriate time.

There are international conventions and laws that govern the use of punishment as a security strategy and for the employment of military forces. For example, collective punishment to a group of people, an area, township or state, or reprisal killings of innocent civilians in retaliation for the actions of some people who may or may not be part of these groups, is prohibited by international law. Therefore, the employment of military forces

5 Han J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 5th Edition, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1973, pp. 28-29.

6 Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1966, pp. 1-2.

7 Robert J. Art, 'To What Ends Military Power', *International Security*, Vol. 4, No. 4, Spring 1980, pp. 6-29.

8 John F. Troxell, 'Military Power and the Use of Force', in J. Boone Bartholomees, Jr., (ed), *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues, Vol I: Theory of War and Strategy*, Strategic Studies Institute Book, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2012, p. 219.

to punish must be undertaken only after a great deal of consideration regarding the legality and morality of doing so. Further, recourse to the application of force has its own stringent operational and tactical standards of discrimination, proportionality and accuracy to meet. A nation that resorts to the strategy of punishment in pursuing its national security objectives will be required to meet exacting standards of conduct from the strategic to the tactical level. An inability to do so in every instance is one of the principal reasons for the application of force to become a contentious issue in international politics.

SPECTRUM OF THE STRATEGY OF PUNISHMENT

The strategy of punishment is primarily based on the employment of lethal force. It overlaps at the lower end of the spectrum with that of coercion in delivering punitive actions to dissuade an adversary from initiating actions that are contrary to one’s own objectives. The spectrum thereafter is fundamentally underpinned by the ability of the military to escalate the application of lethal force to the other end of the spectrum that deals with the destruction of the adversary through the use of catastrophic force. If the ability to escalate the application of force at will is lacking, the employment of this strategy is unlikely to achieve success. Unlike the other strategies, at the end of the spectrum, the strategy of punishment has to consider post-conflict actions to be undertaken by the military forces and through diplomacy in order to ensure de-escalation at the pace required. The spectrum of the strategy of punishment escalates through prevention of actions by the adversary and the enforcement of sanctions; focused targeting of military centres of gravity; lethal strikes to neutralise both dual-use as well as other critical infrastructure; and finally to proceeding to destroy the adversary’s ability to function coherently. The spectrum is given in Figure 1.

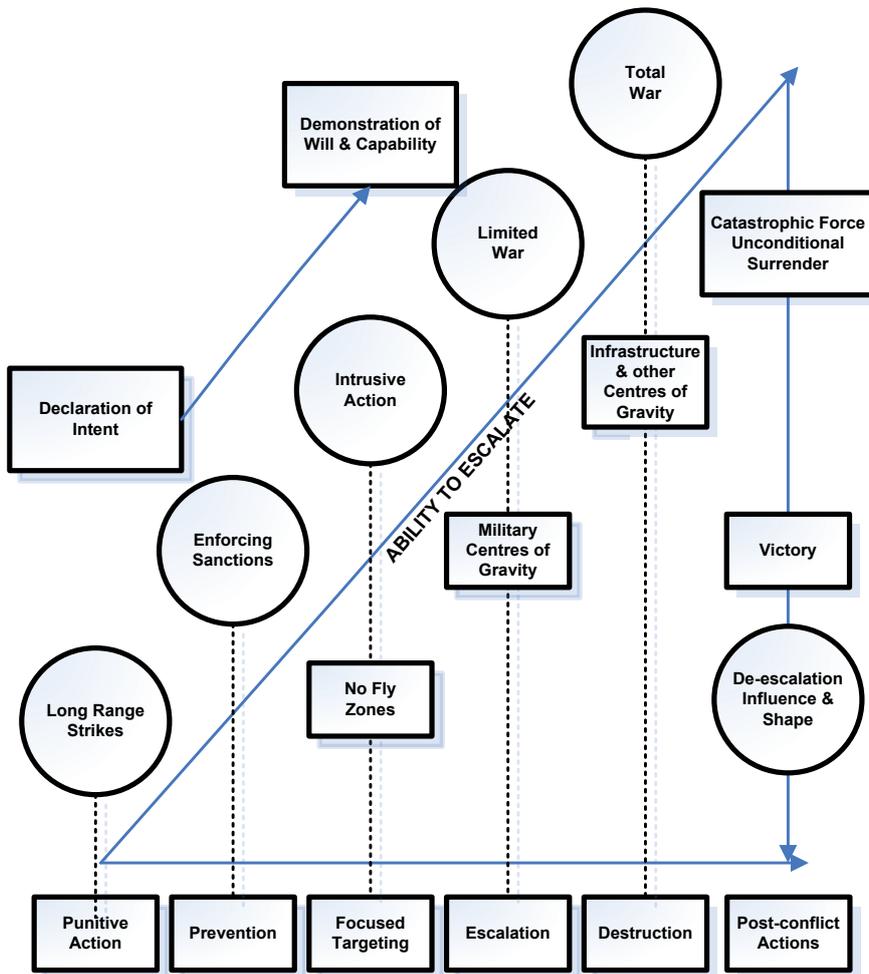


Figure 1: Spectrum of the Strategy of Punishment

Punitive action is initiated as the last resort in applying the strategy of coercion and also as the first action to be initiated in pursuing punishment. Although there is no difference in the actions initiated to conduct punitive actions, the intent and ability to escalate must be clearly conveyed to the adversary through the positioning of forces in a manner that cannot be misunderstood. This may not be the case when a strategy of coercion is being followed. Further, the punitive actions initiated as the first step in punishment could be more concentrated and longer lasting than otherwise. Military actions that prevent an adversary from carrying out any action that disrupts, or in any manner is hostile to the pursuit of one's objectives and the enforcement of sanctions, is the next step that requires greater resources and the increased employment of forces. The escalation to this level could be termed punitive action at the strategic level and a very clear declaration of intent.

The next level is the focused targeting of military centres of gravity with the objective of reducing the adversary's ability to employ military forces at their convenience. These are intrusive actions, and when necessary, involve the threat of ground invasion, even though such an action is politically unsavoury. If the adversary continues to employ their military forces and pursue activities that they have been required to stop, then the next level of escalation is to target the infrastructure that makes the adversary state function smoothly, with minimal collateral damage. The escalation to this level would bring the conflict into a Limited War status with all the attendant legal, international and domestic repercussions. At this level, strategic objectives will need to be clearly defined and military forces aligned to achieving them. This is not to suggest that actions at the lower levels are devoid of strategic objectives, but that military action was only one of the methods through which they were being pursued. As the quantum of military contribution increases with the escalation of the strategy, the role played by diplomacy gradually decreases, till it comes to a minimal level when the military force commences the last level in the spectrum—that of destruction. It is essential to ensure that the adversary understands that after the declaration of intent to employ military forces through punitive action, steps can be initiated to intensify the application of force. Entering a Limited War is a clear demonstration of the will of a nation and its capability to apply lethal force to achieve national objectives.

Destruction by itself is a strategy that does not lend itself to having a separate spectrum. This is the ultimate use of the military forces and is considered Total War where the objective is the complete surrender of the adversary. The term Total War also indicates that the nation is now utilising all elements of its national power to achieve its objectives, and if necessary, will also resort to the use of catastrophic force. Unconditional surrender of the adversary automatically translates to victory that could lead to a gradual de-escalation and return to the more benign strategy of influence and shape in a cyclical manner. Needless to state, along with this, the role of diplomacy will once again become predominant and the employment of the military forces will reduce proportionately.

PUNISHING WITH AIR POWER

The efficacy of the strategy of punishment is almost completely underpinned by the capability and capacity of a nation's military forces to achieve the desired objectives and end-states with minimal and optimised expenditure of national resources. In the contemporary global security environment there are three factors that inhibit the unfettered use of military forces to achieve national objectives. These same factors also act as a restraining influence in the use of land forces in an expeditionary manner wherein the army would have to be stationed and operate in a foreign country. First, the employment of one's military forces in another sovereign state has now become contentious in terms of international law, and more importantly, international opinion. This is exacerbated if prolonged physical presence of the external military forces is required to successfully complete the campaign. Second, domestic opinion and support for expeditionary operations are becoming more difficult to obtain than even a few decades ago. There is increasing debate within a democracy regarding the need to employ military forces, especially when the conflict in question is more one of choice than of necessity. Most nations now believe that involvement in a ground campaign should be the ultimate last resort, and only if the conflict is critical to ensuring national security. Third, collateral damage, even in a limited manner, has become unacceptable and goes against contemporary human sensitivities. This is further intensified by the globally interlinked communications network that spreads the news of collateral damage, however minor, in almost real time across the world.

Even though there are major inhibiting factors to the employment of military forces, especially ground forces that give an impression of ‘occupation’, lethal military force continues to be sought as an element of national power and is applied routinely. It is in this sphere of the strategy of punishment, employed within very stringent rules and international laws, that air power becomes an element of national power in an independent manner outside the ambit of the broader military force. However, this does not mean that air power and air forces are independent war-winning institutions, but that under certain circumstances, the employment of air power would be more conducive to creating the effects required to stop an adversary from commencing and continuing hostile activities that are opposed to one’s national security. Other than in specific contexts, in all kinds of conflicts air power will form one part of the joint force, operating within the joint task force and contributing to the achievement of joint objectives.

Punitive Actions

The term punitive is derived from Medieval Latin *punitivus* meaning ‘concerning punishment’ and punitive action in contemporary usage indicates actions relating to, involving, or with the intention of inflicting punishment.⁹ Punitive actions are undertaken when a potential adversary has initiated, or is contemplating some act of commission against one’s interests to give a clear indication of the intent to apply further lethal force if the actions being opposed are continued. Punitive action is therefore a declaration of intent. Air power is ideally suited for this purpose with its ability to strike a pre-selected target precisely at will, while the platform conducting the strike, or the base from which it has originated, can be at a great distance from the target. Cruise missiles and other stand-off weaponry can be air-launched without the airborne platform being detected, even by radar and other electro-optical devices. In case the first attack does not produce the desired effect, follow-up strikes can be carried out without endangering friendly forces, even though the element of surprise would have been lost. In the past few decades, punitive actions have almost always been initiated through the application of air power.

Punitive actions can also be initiated through Special Force (SF) missions, but this may also involve the employment of the airlift capability of air power for the insertion, sustainment and retrieval of the SF team(s). Such missions might also need additional firepower that can only be provided by air power without escalating the situation into a conflict. Further, while such missions are theoretically possible, the political fallout of any sort of failure would be far too great for the incumbent government to deal with and therefore, these missions are normally only attempted as a last resort. Since punitive action is at the lowest level of the spectrum of the strategy of punishment and overlaps with the strategy of coercion in the continuum of strategies, SF missions tend to lose their impact as a punitive measure. Long-range, stand-off, air-launched precision strikes are the best punitive actions available to a government.

Targeting the Leadership

The strategy of punishment in its normal form is developed to be implemented by one state against another, or against an entity that has an acceptable and recognisable structure, as opposed to amorphous non-state entities. It has also been seen that the traditional escalation inherent in the application of different strategies do not normally create the desired effects when applied against autocratic and dictatorial governments. In these cases, instead of resorting to punitive actions against the state, these actions could be aimed directly towards targeting the leadership in a manner akin to ‘chopping the head off’. While such actions may not be strictly within the accepted norms of international conduct, the chances of avoiding unnecessary hardship for the common people of the nation involved makes this an attractive option. In the case of democracies, targeting the leadership will not bear any salutary effect, since it is the will of the people that keeps the leaders in power. The targeting of leadership as a punitive action against autocratic regimes has merit when the alternatives are considered. However, such actions cannot be placed as an open option in the general articulation of a strategy and must be considered only in a contextual manner.

⁹ Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Punitive?fromAsk=true&o=100074>, accessed on 5 December 2012.

Prevention

If punitive actions have not created the desired effects—that of stopping the adversary from continuing hostile acts—or if the hostile acts have been of a magnitude that defies containment through punitive actions, escalation to prevention will become necessary. It is not necessary that the strategy of prevention must be employed in a graded manner starting at the lowest point in the spectrum; depending on the context, the first point of application can be at any point in the spectrum. Prevention is essentially aimed at creating two primary effects: one, to stop the adversary continuing antagonistic and aggressive actions; and two, to isolate the adversary from their allies and friends as well as to bring economic and diplomatic pressure on the regime to curtail and stop the activities that are considered unfriendly. Prevention, therefore, involves a combination of more concentrated punitive actions for a longer period of time and the enforcement of blockades and sanctions. While physical enforcement of sanctions can be achieved by a capable, balanced military force, it requires the consensus of a majority of nations, which can only be achieved through the United Nations in the contemporary global security environment. In certain cases this may be difficult to achieve and the lead nation will be left with a stark option of having to take unilateral action.

Both the effects required for prevention to be effective can be achieved through the diligent application of air power in a calculated and concerted manner. Punitive actions can be extended with comparative ease and the implementation of sanctions, in the physical domain, would amount to enforcing ‘no-fly zones’ so that the state involved cannot receive aid from outside or continue normal trading and commercial activities to sustain their economy. Only air power can ensure the complete isolation of the rogue nation and its regime, since it is capable of monitoring physical movements both on the surface and the air, and taking offensive remedial action to enforce the sanctions. Such actions could involve combat operations if the attempt to breach the blockade is supported by the adversary’s own air power. In this situation, further escalation cannot be ruled out and is a distinct possibility; however, in all cases, air power remains the optimal option to apply the concept of prevention through strikes and enforcing ‘no-fly zones’.

Focused Targeting

Further escalation in the application of the strategy of punishment will involve intrusive actions to target military centres of gravity of the adversary to degrade their capacity to continue hostile activities. This is based on the premise that the adversary would be employing military capabilities to initiate actions to disrupt peaceful co-existence either regionally or on a bilateral basis. Targeting military centres of gravity, not in terms of punitive actions on a one-time basis, will go beyond the declaration of intent and is the lowest level of the demonstration of the capability of the nation to undertake necessary actions to secure its sovereignty and interests. Although these actions are inherently intrusive in nature—the military targets will be both the fielded forces as well as lines of communications and support bases that could be deep within adversary territory—the ability to rapidly draw down military activities is a fundamental advantage of this point of the spectrum. In other words, the opportunity to contain the conflagration is still well within the grasp of both the parties concerned.

One of the fundamental requirements in carrying out focused targeting is the need to be precise and discriminate in the application of lethal force and to be seen as being proactive to diplomatic initiatives that may be continuing even as military actions are on-going. Air power is perhaps the ideal way to deal with this rather hamstrung situation wherein military centres of gravity have to be neutralised, but within a range of stringent guidelines. It is also apparent that a ground offensive to achieve the same effects may be counter-productive since it could be prone to mission-creep—that normally involves becoming embroiled in domestic issues—and could also imply higher risk of casualties to one’s own forces. Further, if the operations are of an expeditionary nature, the support elements required for the conduct of efficient ground operations—the tail of the force—will become an inhibiting factor, both in terms of political push-back from host nations and resource implications.

Technological innovations in refining the ability of air power to strike a designated target with minimum risk of collateral damage makes it a politically acceptable tool, from within the array of military capabilities, to be employed when focused targeting is required to pursue the strategy of punishment. From the end of World

War II, political tolerance to collateral damage has continually reduced to an extent where in a contemporary conflict it has become almost completely unacceptable. Collateral damage from a single mission—which at best would be a tactical mistake—can have such strategic repercussions that in most nations the political leadership does not grant any leeway to the military leaders and operators to continue operations in the face of collateral damage. When this situation is combined with the political unacceptability of having ‘boots on the ground’, even if resources are available to undertake a ground operation, it becomes clear that the only recourse available to carryout focused targeting is air power. The enemy centres of gravity can be identified, fixed and neutralised by air power both from a stand-off distance as well as through intrusive action. Intrusive action will require obtaining and maintaining the desired level and duration of control of the air for other operations to be successful. Continued attacks on the adversary’s military centres of gravity is likely to produce the desired effects at least partially, which can then be leveraged to culminate the possible escalation of combat operations. This is a function of the efficacy of the strikes, however, as well as the perception created in the mind of the adversary regarding the advisability of continuing hostilities to the next level of escalation.

Escalation

From focused targeting of military centres of gravity, the next step is to escalate the conflict into a Limited War—a war whose objective is of a lesser scope than total surrender of the enemy. Further, in Limited War the adversaries do not expend all the resources available to them to obtain victory in the conflict. Therefore, a Limited War is one in which both the objectives and resource expenditure is ‘limited’ and as a corollary one that is normally conducted over a restricted period of time. The relatively short duration of Limited Wars is one of its distinguishing features from counter-insurgencies campaigns, otherwise called ‘small wars’, which by their character are typically long-drawn conflicts. There are two factors that limit the conduct of a war—political objectives and military imperatives. Since the employment of military forces must always serve a political purpose, this is a critical and over-riding factor and is affected by territorial objectives, economic factors and international reaction to the military initiatives.¹⁰ Military imperatives are also defined by a number of factors such as comparative levels of military capabilities, resource availability, technological factors within the nation and the military, and in some cases, the availability or otherwise of nuclear weapons to either of the contestants. Essentially, Limited War does not culminate in the political or material annihilation of the opponent and ideally seeks a change in political behaviour.

Until a few decades back, Limited Wars could only be brought to a successful culmination with the employment of ground forces in conjunction with maritime and air power. In other words, it was a mandatory requirement to ‘occupy’ territory, which only ground forces can achieve, in order to achieve even limited objectives. However, in the contemporary security environment, occupation of territory or even the use of expeditionary ground forces for limited periods in another state’s sovereign territory has become politically unacceptable. However, improvements in technology in the past decades have enhanced the ability of air power to prosecute a Limited War successfully. Combining the two developments almost naturally points towards the employment of air power to escalate a conflict from one of focused targeting of military centres of gravity, to a Limited War, where the objectives to be achieved, at the fundamental level, are changes in political behaviour. The 2011 NATO intervention in Libya is a classic example of air power achieving the desired political objectives in Limited War.

Limited War involves the widening of targeting from purely military targets to other infrastructure—like, dual-use facilities, defence industries and even the seat of power. The selection of the centres of gravity to be targeted in this situation will be contextual to ensure that optimum effects are created to achieve the desired objectives. In this regard the selection would have to take into account the culture of the people, the type of government, the relationship between the people and the ruling elite, and also the historical precedence of the people’s ethos to external actions. The need to rebuild the same facilities when the relationship is normalised must also be considered as part of the cost-benefit analysis when selecting the targets. The employment of air power in Limited Wars will include the entire spectrum of air power capabilities from benign intelligence, surveillance

¹⁰ Jasjit Singh, *Dynamics of Limited War*, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, New Delhi, <http://www.idsa-india.org/an-oct-00-1.html> accessed on 10 December 2012.

and reconnaissance (ISR), to lethal precision strikes on selected targets. It will also involve obtaining and maintaining the desired level of control of the air for the duration necessary.¹¹ Limited Wars could also involve restricted Special Forces operations, which would usually be heavily dependent on air power for efficacy. Airlift capabilities will be critical to the successful ingress, sustainment and egress of these missions. In bringing a Limited War to a successful completion, all core roles of air power—control of the air, strike, airlift, and ISR—will be employed in varying intensity and combinations that create the desired effects at the desired time and place for the duration necessary. This requirement, to be able to bring to bear the entire spectrum of air power capabilities, will in turn require the air force to be balanced with inherent flexibility and the ability to carry out operations across the entire spectrum of conflict. It is in applying the strategy of punishment that the high-end capabilities of an air force actually gets to be demonstrated, although they are necessary as a foundation for enforcing the strategies of deterrence and coercion.

Progressing to Limited War from the targeting of military centres of gravity obviously has political, diplomatic and economic consequences; however, the biggest impact will be on the armed forces and in the prevailing circumstances on the air force. Although Limited Wars are by definition of short duration, sufficient assurance can never be given that it will always be so. Therefore, the air force needs to have adequate ‘staying power’ to ensure the successful completion of the war with the achievement of the desired objectives. The requirement is not only to have a balanced air force but also to guarantee that the air force is capable of delivering the necessary quantum of air power for the required duration, while retaining the ability to scale the tempo of operations up or down at will. Without meeting these three pre-conditions, there can be no assurance of success in prosecuting a Limited War.

Destruction

Further escalation of operations from Limited War can only be achieved by going into a state of Total War, in which the belligerent states engage in the complete mobilisation of all available resources and personnel. Total or Unlimited War has only the destruction of the adversary as a political entity as its single and focused objective. Such destruction however need not always be accompanied by total devastation of material resources but can also be achieved by the overthrow of the incumbent regime with an assured change in the political behaviour of the state.¹² The final outcome will have to be ‘surrender’ of the adversary and their acceptance to adhere to the changes—political and military—demanded by the winning state. Total war could also involve the use of catastrophic force if necessary.

From an air power perspective, the application of catastrophic force and achievement of surrender through such an action can be accomplished by the employment of its lethal strike capability. In pursuing a strategy of destruction, air power has distinctive characteristics that can be employed—its ability to strike precisely at great range, thereby being able to destroy targets that could not otherwise be neutralised and the ability to repeat such strikes from safe bases makes it relatively invulnerable.¹³ The precision, discrimination and proportionality of air strikes offers the prospect of extremely high destructive performance and reduced human risk, making it an attractive option. However, the capacity to carry out lethal strikes will need to be enhanced beyond the requirements to fight and win a Limited War. It is also necessary to calculate the capacity necessary in a contextual manner so that the application of force does not suffer from being diluted at some critical point, thereby increasing the timeframe necessary to achieve the objective of surrender. The conduct of Total War, as the name implies, is not merely the precinct of air power, but is a whole-of-nation enterprise, with the air force playing a contributory albeit important role in achieving the desired end-state. In these circumstances air

11 The full spectrum of air power capabilities and the details of all air roles are not being elaborated in this paper, since it is primarily concerned with the strategy of punishment.

12 Adam Elkus, ‘The Strategic and Operational Dynamics of Limited War’, *Small Wars Journal*, April 2012, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/print/12517>, accessed on 10 December 2012.

13 Professor Michael Clarke, ‘Air Power, Force and Coercion’, in Group Captain Andrew Lambert & Arthur C. Williamson (eds), *The Dynamics of Air Power*, Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, UK, 1996, pp. 75-76.

power will have to bring to bear all its core competencies fully and in a concerted manner, at the time and place of choice in alignment with the other elements of national power.

Post-Conflict Actions

The primary aim of escalating a conflict to the level of destruction is to achieve the surrender of the adversary and ultimate victory, leading to 'normalised' diplomatic relations. However, there is a critical requirement to have a strategy for the de-escalation of the conflict, after achieving victory and subsequent stabilisation operations. This aspect is often not thought through completely in the planning stages or is ill-conceived based on erroneous calculations. An ill-judged stabilisation strategy has the potential to create a situation that rapidly deteriorates into insurgency, like in Iraq in 2003, which has the potential to neutralise all the gains brought about through the achievement of a military victory at very high cost. The ideal situation would be for the winning side to deescalate at the earliest possible timeframe and immediately set in place a strategy to influence and shape the environment so that the stabilisation efforts can gain sufficient traction to gradually take hold and improve incrementally. In other words, the strategy of destruction being at the highest end of the spectrum from a military perspective will be the end immediately before the beginning of the spread of strategies that support national security.

CONCLUSION

The strategy of punishment is almost completely dependent on the ability of the nation concerned to escalate the application of force as required. The ability to escalate has two aspects to it—first, the military force must have the capability and the capacity to physically escalate the application of force, and second, the nation must possess the political will to permit such escalations as are required to achieve the desired end-state. Here the appropriate relationship between the political aspects of a conflict and the employment of armed forces becomes critical to national success. A nation must not enter into conflict situations unless it is willing to employ all elements of its national power in the pursuit of victory, which when achieved in turn should bring about a stabilised situation.

Air power is one of the key elements in implementing a strategy of punishment to achieve the desired end-state. The need to escalate the threshold of punishment as required to create the effects makes air power a sought after capability, especially in the contemporary geo-political environment when ground invasion is neither an optimum option nor a politically correct initiative. The use of air power however, has to adhere to the principles of proportionality and discrimination even when used in the fully destructive mode to achieve the political surrender of the adversary. Massive and indiscriminate use of force through any mode—air, maritime or land—will have far reaching political implications and can diminish the impact of the victory so achieved.¹⁴ The often used analogy is apt in this circumstances—air power must be used as a rapier in the implementation of the strategy of punishment, because if it is used as a sledgehammer its ability to escalate at will becomes diminished and the potential for failure will increase proportionately.

14 Pavel K. Baev, 'Russia's Air Power in the Chechen War: Denial, Punishment and Defeat', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol 10, No 2, June 1997, Frank Cass, London, pp. 1-18.