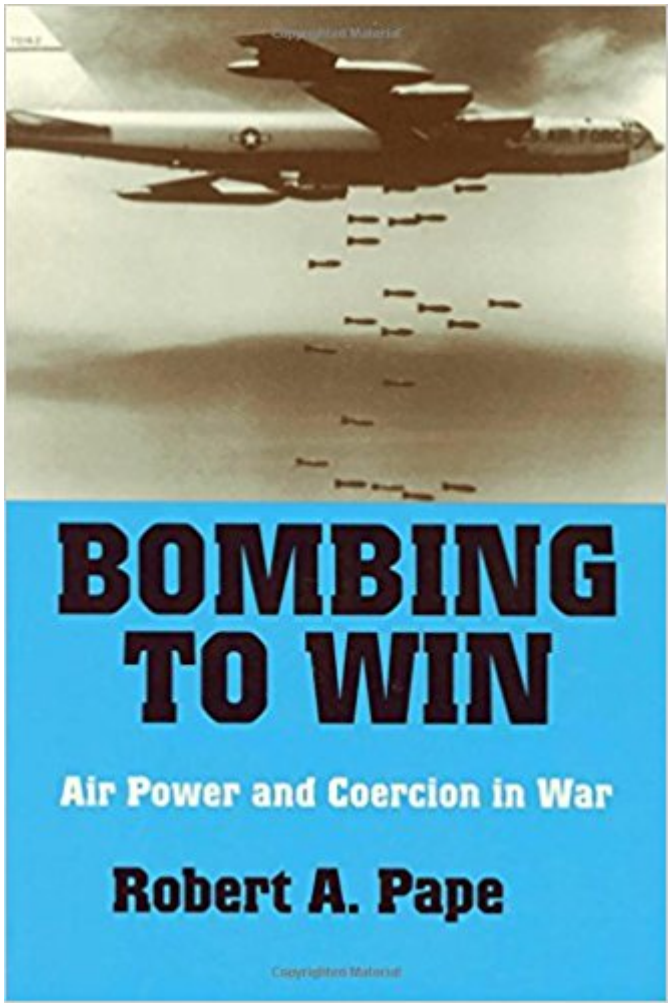
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Bombing To Win: Air Power And Coercion In War (Cornell Studies In Security Affairs)



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Synopsis

From Iraq to Bosnia to North Korea, the first question in American foreign policy debates is increasingly: Can air power alone do the job? Robert A. Pape provides a systematic answer. Analyzing the results of over thirty air campaigns, including a detailed reconstruction of the Gulf War, he argues that the key to success is attacking the enemy's military strategy, not its economy, people, or leaders. Coercive air power can succeed, but not as cheaply as air enthusiasts would like to believe.Pape examines the air raids on Germany, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq as well as those of Israel versus Egypt, providing details of bombing and governmental decision making. His detailed narratives of the strategic effectiveness of bombing range from the classical cases of World War II to an extraordinary reconstruction of airpower use in the Gulf War, based on recently declassified documents. In this now-classic work of the theory and practice of airpower and its political effects, Robert A. Pape helps military strategists and policy makers judge the purpose of various air strategies, and helps general readers understand the policy debates.

Book Information

Series: Cornell Studies in Security Affairs

Paperback: 408 pages

Publisher: Cornell University Press; 1 edition (April 18, 1996)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0801483115

ISBN-13: 978-0801483110

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.9 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars 8 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #87,631 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #35 inÃ Â Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Military Sciences #165 inÃ Â Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > International & World Politics > Security #172 inÃ Â Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Military

Customer Reviews

Can air bombardment break the morale of an enemy and force it to capitulate or does it strengthen the enemy's determination to resist? In the first major book since the Vietnam War on the theory and practice of airpower and its political effects, Robert A. Pape helps policy makers judge the purpose of various air strategies, and helps general readers understand the policy debates. Pape

examines the air raids on Germany, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq as well as those of Israel versus Egypt, providing details of bombing operations and governmental decision making. His detailed narratives of the strategic effectiveness of bombing range from the classical cases of World War II to an extraordinary reconstruction of airpower use in the Gulf War, based on recently declassified documents. Pape argues convincingly that airpower is no "magic bullet" nor a way to win inexpensively. His conclusions will provoke debate from the highest military circles to the armchair generals in academia and Congress and have ramifications for questions from defense budget cuts to international policy in Bosnia. The wealth of systematically collected evidence should be a source of scholarly debates for years to come.

"Bombing to Win is a critically important book."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Navel War College Review "Robert Pape argues comprehensively and convincingly that in 75 years, strategic bombing of civilians has had no effect on the war aims of their governments. . . . His contribution is well-grounded in massive scholarship, but its value lies more in the demolishing persistent misconceptions than in the provision of new insights for the future of air-power."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Survival "This excellent work is highly recommended as an antidote to the air power hyperbole so often encountered after the Gulf War."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Non-Offensive Defence and Conversion Newsletter

I found this book both stimulating in itself and relevant to many current and near-future issues. I believe that anyone who is interested in defense policy is likely to find much in it which is at once novel, provocative, and convincing. In particular, Pape explicates many of the concepts involved in warlike coercion with admirable clarity, formulates hypotheses of considerable power and precision, and then proceeds to test these against historical evidence. In doing so he reinterprets many historical data in ways which I always found informed and stimulating, and usually quite convincing. Indeed, readers whose primary interest is in military history per se, rather than policy, are likely to find the historical analyses well worth the price of the book, I would judge.Fundamentally, the book is a critical examination of the proposition that it is cheaper to coerce opponents in war to concede defeat or some important element of it by indirect means rather than to compel compliance through frank conquest. For most of this century, many political and military leaders have subscribed ardently to strategic bombing as just such an indirect means, and it is the base of experience which this has generated to which Pape turns to test and refine his hypotheses. In so doing, he makes his book also a critique of strategic bombing.Pape acknowledges that the threat of total nuclear devastation of its society can be used to coerce a state whose armies are intact. Short of this,

however, he concludes that coercion without conquest is extremely difficult, and that when it works it does so by convincingly depriving the enemy of the military means to resist conquest:"The evidence shows that it is the threat of military failure, which I call denial, and not threats to civilians, which we may call punishment, which provides the critical leverage in conventional coercion. Although nuclear weapons can make punishment the critical factor, in conventional conflicts even highly capable assailants often cannot th! reaten or inflict enough pain to coerce successfully, Conventional munitions have limited destructive power, and the modern nation-state is not a delicate mechanism that can easily be brought to the point of collapse."Pape considers other coercive strategies as well: "Punishment strategies attempt to raise the costs of continued resistance; risk strategies, to raise the probability of suffering costs; denial strategies, to reduce the probability that resistance will yield benefits," and, "The use of air power for decapitation--a strategy spawned by precision-guided munitions and used against Iraq--strikes against key leadership and telecommunications facilities." (He does not address embargo and blockade very directly, although his arguments are certainly relevant to assessing their probable effectiveness as methods of coercion: Pape argues that escalation and decapitation are, along with punishment, relatively ineffective, and would surely assign no higher value to embargo and blockade.)More formally, Pape advances a two-part theory, dealing with the conventional and nuclear cases. (He acknowledges that, "It is possible that modern chemical and biological weapons have, or soon will have, nearly equivalent capability" to nuclear weapons as instruments of punishment, but does not pursue the issue further, perhaps for lack of relevant historical evidence.) With respect to conventional coercion, he introduces what he calls the conventional denial theory:"Conventional success is a function of the interactions among the coursers strategy, the target state’s military strategy, and the target state’s domestic politics. The denial theory of coercion incorporates six propositions about conventional coercion:"1. Punishment strategies will rarely succeed...."2. Risk strategies will fail...."3. Denial strategies work best...."4. Surrender of homeland territory is especially unlikely...."5. Surrender terms that incorporate heavy ad! ditional punishment will not be accepted...."6. Coercive success almost always takes longer than the logic of either punishment or denial alone would suggest."On nuclear coercion, Pape concludes:"In contrast to conventional coercion, the accepted wisdom on nuclear coercion is mostly right. It succeeds by manipulating civilian vulnerability, according to four propositions:"1. Nuclear coercion requires superiority...."2. Denial strategies are not useful in nuclear conflicts...."3. Risk strategies can be useful in nuclear disputes...."4. Nuclear punishment should be effective but rare."Having stated his theses, Pape proceeds to the historical analyses which he adduces in their support. Before doing so, however, he makes some broader arguments, one of which struck me as

particularly resonant:"The citizenry of the target state is not likely to turn against its government because of civilian punishment. The supposed causal chain--civilian hardship produces public anger which forms political opposition against the government--does not stand up. One reason it does not is that a key assumption behind this argument--that economic deprivation causes popular unrest--is false. As social scientists have shown, economic deprivation often does produce personal frustration, but collective violence against governments requires populations to doubt the moral worth of the political system as a whole, as opposed to specific policies, leaders, or results. Political alienation is more important than economic deprivation as a cause of revolutions."I would observe in this connection that it is always difficult to understand the attachment that foreigners feel for their peculiar institutions, so different from those we regard as normal and proper--the more different, the more difficult. Our way of life is of course greatly superior to all others: we all know this in our hearts and cannot understand why those people are not eager to overthrow their syste! m in favor of an imitation of our own. This is a major trap which leaders no less than the man in the street fall into time and again.As stated, Pape's fundamental theses are not restricted as to instruments of coercion, beyond the distinction between conventional and nuclear. Natheless, as his title indicates, his primary focus is on air power--bombing--as a coercive instrument, arguing that, "Of the major components of modern military power--land, sea, and air power--each of which can be used for coercive purposes, air power, particularly strategic bombing, most cogently reveals the relative effectiveness of different coercive strategies." Thus his historical analyses all center around air campaigns.

Worked like a charm. Thick enough to be effective

Awsome

Excellent book on US bombing strategy throughout the years (from second world war to the cold war and beyond). Good narrative and thoughtful opinions.

This is an excellent review of all the alternative theories on the efficacy of aerial bombing, all the way from the beginning of WWI to the first Gulf War. My only complaint is that, like many books, this one could have used a good editor. The author could have developed and supported his thesis in perhaps 50 less pages. That said, I recommend this book to any student of strategic bombing.

While now a bit dated (published in 1996), Bombing to Win is a thorough study of the limits of strategic air power that provides key insights backed up by hard data. Most civilians, politicians and the press assume that America can compel other countries by aerial bombardment alone. Robert Pape demolishes this assumption with clear logic backed up with detailed case studies. This should be required reading for any occupant of the White House, Congress, and the Pentagon.Pape's writing is approachable and concise; his case studies on Vietnam and Korea are particularly interesting, and applicable to negotiation theory beyond pure military applications. Highly recommended.I'd also put in an appeal to Mr. Pape to do an update for the last 15 years' experience, particularly in the context of the post 9/11 conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the current stalemate with Iran.

This is an excellent study of what conventional "strategic" bombing has and hasn't accomplished in war.Pape covers the ground very thoroughly, and shows how bombing has really worked in war. He concludes that bombing enemy homelands has seldom been effective, and in this I must agree.The book has one real flaw though. The author is in love with the phrases "strategic" vs. "tactical" bombing. Because of this, he deprecates the effects of the late stage "strategic" bombing of Germany, because "tactical" bombing of some of the same targets was taking place simultaneously. But so what? The important thing is what effects bombs have on a target, not whether they fall out of a B-17 or a P-47!Aside from this caveat, I can't think of a better introduction to the whole issue of "strategic air war." Just be sure and check out Alfred C. Mierzejewski's COLLAPSE OF THE GERMAN WAR ECONOMY to understand what strategic bombing does when done right.

It uses a method that I like of taking previous examples and attempting to prove his theory form that. His theory is that coercion on your enemy will only work if directed against their military.I found it very good. I would have liked a clearer description of this theory at the front as I found it a bit difficult to understand exactly what he was getting at.

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