



# Recapitalizing the Air Force Intellect: Essays on War, Airpower, and Military Education

*Colonel, USAF, Retired, Dennis M. Drew*

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Some readers may wonder at the title of this volume. It was inspired, in a somewhat roundabout way, by Air Force chief of staff T. Michael Moseley, who struggled mightily during his tenure to, in his words, “recapitalize the fleet” of aging USAF aircraft during a period of significant budget constraints. In a world of rapid change and confounding problems that threaten all of mankind, intellectual recapitalization of the Air Force has become critical to survival and success and is at least equal in importance to the recapitalization of the aircraft fleet. One article, “The Essence of Aerospace Power: A New Perspective from a Century of Experience,” had been heavily edited to meet the space limitations of the journal in which it was published. The essays and speeches are grouped into four broad subject areas, within which they are arranged chronologically. Part 1, Considering the Past—Contemplating the Future, examines some classical military themes and their relationship to modern military problems and the use of modern airpower. Airpower is a child of technological development, and Airmen are in love with their high-tech gadgetry. Technological fascination is not limited to Airmen, of course, but Airmen have raised that fascination to the status of a fetish, often to the exclusion of fundamental military thinking that could profitably inform them about the employment of airpower above the tactical level. The essays in part 1 address these issues. All were written and published during the 1980s. Part 2, The End of the Cold War, looks at problems that were a consequence of this historical development. Although cause for much joy and relief, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the self-liberation of the former Soviet empire, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union also caused great angst in the US military. It was almost immediately clear to those with any insight that as the new millennium (in one sense of that word) was about to begin, the old millennium (in another sense of that word) had not yet departed. Local and regional politico-military struggles long suppressed by the Cold War superpowers raised their ugly heads as the stability of the Cold War gave way to the near chaos of the post-Cold War. Faced with an enormous amount of uncertainty, the US military had to reevaluate its size, composition, and essential missions, all of which fostered spirited debate within and among the services. The essays and speeches in part 2 illustrate these concerns from an Airman’s point of view and are representative of the kinds of jockeying for position (and funding) that went on between the services. These essays and speeches were all written between 1990 and 1993. The demise of our arch adversary, the upheaval of the Cold War regime, and the uncertainty that ensued prompted fierce competition for what all assumed would be drastically reduced military budgets. To make the case for maintaining a strong air arm in the post-Cold War era, it was prudent to begin thinking about the fundamentals of airpower, its impact during the twentieth century, and its potential to make important contributions during the post-Cold War era. Thus the essays in part 3, The Nature and Impact of Airpower, reexamine these issues and attempt to identify what airpower is really all about and what makes it so fundamentally different from land and sea power. These essays, written between 1988 and 2002, examine the impact of airpower and how it influenced national and military strategy since it came of age in the middle of the twentieth century. Finally, the essays and speech selected for part 4, Educating Airmen, reflect the primary focus of the author’s career for 30 years and the fundamental reason for writing every essay in this volume as well as every other essay, monograph, and book he’s written.

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