

Giulio Douhet: His Impact and Relevance on American Air Power Doctrine and Education from the Air Corps Tactical School (ACTS) Through Today

Giulio Douhet : son influence et sa pertinence sur la doctrine de la puissance aérienne américaine et sur l'enseignement de celle-ci, de l'époque de l'Air Corps Tactical School (ACTS) jusqu'à nos jours

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Référence électronique

Brian D. Laslie, « Giulio Douhet: His Impact and Relevance on American Air Power Doctrine and Education from the Air Corps Tactical School (ACTS) Through Today », *Nacelles* [En ligne], 9 | 2020, mis en ligne le 10 novembre 2020, consulté le 26 mai 2023. URL : <http://interfas.univ-tlse2.fr/nacelles/1060>

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PLAN

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4. Alexander Prokofiev de Seversky
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TEXTE

- 1 Attendees at the United States Air Force's Air Command and Staff College (ACSC), a ten-month course for mid-rank field grade officers from all services, civilians, and international partners, are all required to take the school's "History of Air Power" course; a two-semester bloc that covers air power from its inception to modern incarnations. In this course, the first assigned text is Giulio Douhet's *The Command of the Air*. I myself attended the course in the Academic year 2015-2016. I distinctly remember one major when presented with Douhet's *The Command of the Air*, somewhat glibly questioning, "Giulio Dou-who?" Each student is assigned a copy of the book and, if students feel the desire to mark and make notations in their own personal copy, these are available free of charge at the Air University Press, simply walk in and pick up a copy of *The Command of the Air* and walk out.

- 2 If we accept that the reading of Douhet is considered important because he was the “first” air power theorist, it must also be conceded that there remains something to be learned from a reading of Douhet in the 21st century, beyond a passing familiarity with the first theorist. This paper intends to examine the impact of Giulio Douhet on American air power thinking and doctrine from his earliest translations to his continued relevance today. To begin with, historian and air power scholar noted that Douhet “was among the first people to think deeply and write cogently about airpower and its role in war, methodically and systematically elevating an idea to a level of abstraction that could be considered a theory”. So, beyond his moniker as the first air power theorist, he is recognized for possessing a definitive methodology and theory.¹
- 3 To a certain degree, Douhet has become the Clausewitz of the air, so often quoted, so little understood; however reading Douhet has never reached the same standing as “required reading”, or what one might call the “fashionableness” that the reading of Clausewitz enjoys. Outside of serious scholars and graduate students, few would choose to dive into the work of a long-dead theorist, some of whose ideas now seem to border on criminal and illegal. Those who are forced to converse with Douhet, graduate students and those at professional military education (PME) centers, treat Douhet much like the students of the film *Dead Poets Society* treated their initial dealings with their reading of poetry. As comedian Robin Williams stated in his role as John Keating students believe, “We should simply study our Mr. Prichard, and learn our rhyme and meter and go quietly about the business of achieving other ambitions.” The author’s own experience and impressions at the US ACSC was that Douhet was read, discussed, and just as quickly forgotten by most of the students as they moved on to their next reading.
- 4 An important question to be explored throughout this paper is: what will twenty-first century readers learn and retain from their reading of Douhet? For this paper, I have chosen to use the version first published in 1942 and republished by the Office of Air Force History in 1983 and again in 1998. The 1983 version of *The Command of the Air* seems to be the most commonly held version and the one used most often by students and scholars in America, although at the time this article is going to print a new version with changes to the original

Dino Ferrari translation is being published by the Air University Press. Before discussion of what students might find in Douhet today, it is imperative to see how other theorists in the United States approached and used Douhet.²

5 If one were to create a list of American pantheon – Americans might say a Mount Rushmore – of air power theorists this list would include, but not be limited to: Giulio Douhet, William L. Mitchell, Alexander P. de Seversky, and John Warden. A heavy influence of Hugh Trenchard and John Slessor also remains visible. Professor of International Politics and renowned strategist Colin S. Gray stated that “[...] it is commonplace to assign shared paternity of the theory of air power to Marshal of the Royal Air Force Viscount Hugh M. Trenchard, Brigadier General William Mitchell, and Giulio Douhet – with honourable mentions to F. W. Lanchester and Major Alexander P. de Seversky [...]”³ Since Douhet remains the *primus inter pares*, it is worth noting here what the other American theorists thought or wrote down about Douhet.

Table 1. Air power theorists, target sets, most famous work

Theor-ist	Concept/Target	Book
Douhet	Cities and population centers	<i>The Command of the Air</i>
Mitchell	Vital Centers	<i>Winged Defense</i>
Sever-sky	Global Bombardment, Interhemispheric War	<i>Victory Through Air Power</i>
Warden	Five Rings: Leadership, System Essentials, Infrastructure, Population, Fielded Forces	<i>The Air Campaign</i>

(Brian D. Laslie)

1. Brigadier General William Mitchell

6 It is obvious that Mitchell was first exposed to Douhet’s ideas through his conversations with aircraft designer and manufacturer Giovanni Battista Caproni during a tour of France and Italy in the aftermath of World War I. Although Mitchell never met Douhet, he became, at

least indirectly, a mouthpiece for his ideas in the United States, particularly gaining command of the air and a desire for an independent air force. This initial exposure occurred when Mitchell, in the process of a divorce from his wife Caroline, was spirited out of DC and across the Atlantic as much for his personal scandals as to tour the European air powers.⁴

7 Mitchell traveled to France in December of 1921 and here he, perhaps, became familiar with the writings of Douhet, but a direct connection to the Italian theorist is difficult to establish, although many an article written by Mitchell bear the marks of Douhet. Mitchell biographer and historian Alfred Hurley stated that during this trip to Europe in 1921-1922 that “It is also possible that Mitchell may have become familiar at this time with the main points of the classic work published in 1921 by Douhet [...]”⁵ From Paris, Mitchell travelled south to Italy where Hurley indicates he might have held conversations with Caproni, “While Mitchell was in Italy in January and February, 1922, he probably saw Caproni and may have met Douhet.”⁶ Hurley calls Caproni, “[...] a salesman for the views of his long-time partner [...]” Giulio Douhet.⁷

8 Unfortunately, Hurley’s work is forced to rely on Mitchell’s indirect access to the writings of Douhet and a bit of conjecture, “In March of that year, and perhaps at Mitchell’s request, the United States Military attaché in Rome sent two copies of Douhet’s basic work, *Il Dominio dell’Aria*, to the War Department General Staff.”⁸ The use of “probably” and “perhaps” strongly indicate that it is impossible to draw a direct line of influence from Douhet to Mitchell. Historian Phillip Meilinger buttresses this when he stated that “Because many people in many places were attempting to come to grips with the new air weapon, drawing clear lines among them becomes virtually impossible.”⁹

9 It seems clear that Mitchell became familiar with the concepts of Douhet with which he readily agrees, but Mitchell was not about to give credit. There is also the possibility that any readings Mitchell did of Douhet conformed to Mitchell’s preconceived notions of air power. Hurly goes on to state that “Mitchell never attributed any special influence on his thinking to Douhet” and “any Douhetan influence on

Mitchell was at best indirect”.¹⁰ Finally Hurley indicates that Mitchell specialized in amalgamating the work of others for his purposes:

He borrowed heavily from airpower theorists such as Hugh Trenchard in England and Giulio Douhet of Italy [...]. Mitchell's gift was in synthesizing and articulating the ideas he vacuumed up from around the world and in forcing his superiors to confront them.¹¹

- 10 In all likelihood, Mitchell would never have given credit where credit was due even if he had had a deep and personal contact with Douhet.
- 11 Another Mitchell biographer, James J. Cooke makes mention of a later 1927 trip to Paris and onto Italy, “It was while there that Mitchell became aware of the writings of the influential Giulio Douhet, an air-power thinker.” Cooke goes as far as to state that, “Mitchell felt a kinship between Douhet’s beliefs and his own thoughts on the face of the next war, and he left Italy with new ideas [...]” Unfortunately, Cooke’s source on this was Hurley’s biography. It seems obvious that any contact or influence Mitchell had with Douhet or Douhet’s writings was at best indirect. Alexander de Seversky biographer, James K. Libbey, was more direct in his assessment stating that “Mitchell borrowed Douhet’s argument”.¹²
- 12 It seems more likely Douhet is brought into the United States indirectly by Giovanni Battista Caproni, the Italian aeronautical engineer and founder of the eponymous aircraft corporation. David Mets tells us that when Caproni met with members of the Bolling Commission during the First World War, concurrent with Douhet’s time in prison, “Caproni was trying hard to sell his bomber to the United States, and he was closely associated with Douhet in the articulation of the Douhet theory”, but it would be years still until Douhet was read by American practitioners and then only in an incomplete form.¹³ Still, even in an imperfect form, the ideas of Douhet were present at the founding of American air power theory at the American Air Corps Tactical School (ACTS) at Langley Field, Virginia and later Maxwell Field, Alabama.

2. Douhet at ACTS

- 13 The first time the writings of Douhet appear at the ACTS library (later the Air University Library) were the French versions of the book that were then translated to English by Captain George C. Kenney. Sometime during his years at ACTS, Kenney translated Dorothy Benedict's version of *The Command of the Air* from the French version to English.¹⁴ ACTS members would have read the Douhet translation simply because there was a paucity of other air power authors writing on the subject at the time. Kenney was at Langley Field and either a student (1925-1926) or serving on the ACTS staff between years of 1927 to 1931. Kenney's translation moved with the school from Langley to Maxwell Field. Other works being read by the students and staff at ACTS included William Sherman's *Air Warfare*, published in 1926, and William Mitchell's *Winged Defense* which was published shortly after his courts martial in 1925.

- 14 According to Chief of the US Air Corps Major General Benjamin D. Foulois, Douhet

theorized that air power could influence all these factors because it could be brought to bear against armies, navies, cities, and industrial complexes. He recognized that the principle of surprise was applicable to technical advances.

- 15 Writing in his 1968 biography *From the Wright Brothers to the Astronauts* Foulois noted that "The Douhet theories [...] were studied at great length by the students at the Air Corps tactical School and a guiding air doctrine slowly emerged." While that may be true, historian Richard Overly called these writings were little more than a "vulgarized form". The important aspect to note here is that copies of *The Command of the Air* were available early in the life of the Air Corps Tactical School and that students and instructors alike were exposed to Douhet's ideas and integrated aspects of them into the American curriculum.¹⁵

3. Douhet and WWII

- 16 The students and instructors at the ACTS took what they needed to from Douhet – as they did with other texts and scholars – that which aligned with their own developing doctrines. They then relegated the unneeded portions, those that did not fit with American concepts of strategic bombardment theory, and rejected them. Many of the American “bomber barons” at ACTS went on to author the American plan for the United States Army Forces during the Second World War: Air War Planning Document-1 (AWPD-1). Its principle authors included Harold George, Haywood Hansell, Kenneth Walker, and Laurence Kuter each one either a student, instructor, or both at ACTS. Laurence S. Kuter stated:

At the outset we summarily discarded Douhet’s concept of destroying the will to resist by the bombing of cities. We were revolted by the idea of the indiscriminate bombing of women and children.¹⁶

- 17 Another ACTS instructor, Haywood Hansell noted that portions of Douhet were integrated into the American system:

Another contributor of the 1920s, toward the concept of major results or even decisive results through air attack alone, was the Italian General Giulio Douhet. The idea of the air offensive obviously sprang from many dissociated sources. However, it is one thing to produce a concept, a brilliant idea, and it is quite another thing to develop practical doctrines for the accomplishment of that idea.

- 18 Clearly, this shows American creating American bombing doctrine borrowed from numerous theories in order to create unique, if imperfect, aerial way of war for the members of the United States Army Air Force.¹⁷

4. Alexander Prokofiev de Seversky

- 19 Alexander Prokofiev De Seversky was a Russian pilot who served, and lost a leg, in the First World War. Seversky emigrated to the United

States in 1918, choosing to remain in the United States rather than return to revolutionary and war-torn Russia. In the US Seversky founded the Seversky Aircraft Corporation, but after losing control of his own company he turned author and air power advocate. Seversky arguably remains the least familiar of these early air power theorists, although he debatably had the biggest impact on the American public's conception of air power during the Second World War. This was due in large part to his work *Victory Through Air Power*. The book was a success and was a *New York Times* bestseller upon its release in 1942. However, it was when Filmmaker and cartoonist Walt Disney bought the rights to the book and turned it into a feature-length film, that the majority of Americans became more familiar with the theorist's concepts. Seversky was also on friendly terms with senior USAAF staff officers during World War II, including Hal George and Laurence Kuter. De Seversky mentions Douhet in two of his books, the aforementioned *Victory Through Air Power* and *Air Power: Key to Survival*. With regard to Douhet, De Seversky said:

The Italian General Douhet, pioneer air theorist, had an unclouded view of the need to command the air as a prerequisite for *winning* [emphasis in the original] through the air. But this has been distorted in later books interpreting Douhet. Washington was not following Douhet but a misreading of Douhet when it failed to put sufficient armor and armament on the bomber with which we entered the war, and even more so when it refused stubbornly to develop effective fighter escorts.¹⁸

- 20 This is as much, if not more, an attack on Hap Arnold, as it was on the US Army Air Forces. Seversky and Arnold had a long held simmering feud dating back to Arnold's aiding in having Seversky removed as the head of his own corporation. It is also interesting to note that Seversky mentions Douhet for the first time in *Victory Through Air Power*, published in 1942, indicating that Seversky had clearly already studied Douhet's writings and was integrating Douhet's theories with his own. De Seversky goes on:

The main weakness of the Italian General's statement of his case derived from the technical limitations of his time, as well as the fact that he was not an engineer. Writing before World War I, in the very first years of modern aeronautics, he can hardly be blamed if he did

not clearly foresee the character of future aircraft. His strategic concept was correct. But when he came to implementing it, he talked of a hypothetical all-purpose airplane combining combat and bombing functions, adequate firepower, and adequate bombing power. It did not prove feasible.¹⁹

- 21 Whether or not one wants to take side as to who was “right” in the combat versus bomber plane debate, the important observance here is that Seversky, who would go on to have influence over America’s conception of air power thanks to his partnership with Walt Disney, was familiar with and interacting with Douhet’s ideas, thus showing that Douhet indeed was influencing American perceptions of air power in the 1940s. Seversky also noted in a fitting epigraph to the importance of Douhet that “Douhet and Mitchell might not always find common language with Clausewitz, but they speak the same idiom as Mahan. The military problems and laws of action of air and sea power are almost identical – merely transported to the third dimension.”²⁰

5. Colonel John A. Warden III

- 22 Mitchell and Seversky have garnered more attention here as Warden’s writing in *The Air Campaign* make only the two briefest of mentions of Douhet’s impact, so while Warden was clearly familiar with Douhet, he made no mention of him in his theory. That being said, much of what Warden became famous for, namely his “five rings” borrows directly from Douhet’s concept of “vital centers” mentioned repeatedly throughout *The Command of the Air*.
- 23 Douhet stated that “ [...] since any country has a great many vital centers to be defended [...]” and “A nation which once loses the command of the air and finds itself subjected to incessant aerial attacks aimed directly at its most vital centers” and later in quoting a German General Staff report, “To reach the decision in the shortest possible time, we must direct our warlike actions with the utmost intensity and violence against the most vulnerable and vital centers in the enemy’s territory.” Warden broke these vital centers down into five concentric rings: fielded military forces, population, infrastructure, system essentials, and leadership at the center. The correlation between Douhet and Warden is undeniable.²¹

6. The continuing importance of Douhet

24 Douhet remains not only relevant, but enormously important to the study of air power in American universities and professional military education centers. Still the debate as to Douhet's direct influence remains. Phil Haun, author of the book *Lectures of the Air Corps Tactical School and American Strategic Bombing in World War II*, said that "The degree to which Douhet directly influenced the thinking of American airmen at the time is debatable."²² Historian Robert T. Finney said in his book *History of the Air Corps Tactical School 1920-1940* that, "[...] it is doubtful that he had any profound influence on the thought at the school". With regard to *The Command of the Air*, Finney states "At ACTS only an imperfect translation was available and this not until about 1933."²³

25 However, and while this is certainly true, it is undeniable that Douhet did have influence. One of the principle proponents of bombardment theory, Laurence S. Kuter stated, "We never heard the name of Douhet until I was a student at the Air Corps Tactical School."²⁴ Simply because Douhet's theories were not taken at face value did not diminish their importance nor did it obfuscate the theories of others. Kuter noted that during his time as a student at the Air Corps Tactical School:

Neither Colonel Dargue nor Mal George presented Billy Mitchell's, Clausewitz or Douhet's ideas as dogma or even theories to be followed. Both apparently believed that their ideas should be presented and discussed, but that the American air concept should be generated as the convictions of current American Air Corps officers.²⁵

26 Certainly, no theorist in the American pantheon was proscriptive although, according to David R. Jones, the same was not true in courses conducted in the Soviet Union at the same time "Additional proof of Stalin's interest in strategic airpower was his order making Douhet required reading for VVS officers when a translation of *The Command of the Air* became available in 1935 [...]."²⁶

7. Conclusion: Douhet Today

- 27 The lesson of *The Command of the Air*, at least the traditional American interpretation, is easy enough: controlling the air domain is not only a prerequisite for victory, it is only way to ensure victory. A study guide for the USAF's School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS), the "US Air Force graduate school for strategists" states:

Without it, military and naval operations are doomed, along with the nation. Command of the air lets you target the most important COG of the enemy – the will of the people. Don't waste resources on defense – go offensive big time [...]. Writings can be considered basis for deterrent theory and served as foundation for Billy Mitchell and airpower's "cult of the offensive".²⁷

- 28 What are we to make of Giulio Douhet in 2020? Phillip Meilinger responding to Bernard Brodie's conclusion that nuclear weapons had proved Douhet correct commented in 2001 that, "If the only thing that makes Douhet relevant is nuclear weapons, then he is completely irrelevant."²⁸ This is a criticism too harsh to be leveled against the Italian theorist. Douhet remains worth of study not because of what he got wrong (attacks on population centers/the use of chemical and biological weapons), but because of what he got right. Haun notes that:

While he may not have predicted the degree to which air defenses would neutralize offensive forces and he underestimated the difficulty of collapsing the enemy's will by bombing its civilians, his advocacy for an independent air force "in being" prior to the onset of hostilities, capable of immediately gaining command of the air and striking vital targets, endures.²⁹

- 29 Although it is easy to critique Douhet for what he missed, it is also as easy to see where his theories proved correct to wit: Gaining and maintaining air superiority is the *Sine qua non* of air forces, "Conquering the command of the air implies positive action – that is, offensive and not defensive action, the very action best suited to air power." Air power must be capable of independent actions, "They [air and land forces] must act accordingly, but independently of each

other. To make one dependent on the other would restrict the freedom of action of the one or the other, and thus diminish total effectiveness.”³⁰

- 30 Although Douhet is often viewed as the first of the aerial zealots, he recognized that the air was but one domain and that air power works best when it is used in effective coordination in the joint fight with other services:

The use of military, naval, and aerial forces in war should be directed toward a single end: to win. To attain maximum effectiveness these forces must be thoroughly coordinated and in harmony with one another. The three forces should function as ingredients – or factors – of a single product in which the best results can be obtained only by a proper apportioning of the ingredients used.³¹

- 31 A final question to be asked is where does one find the influence of Douhet present today? The answer seems to be just about everywhere one finds a discussion of airpower itself. Like fine wine and food, Douhet is best read when he is paired with other theorists to include Mahan, Clausewitz and Jomini.³² Air power scholar John Andres Olsen noted about the quartet of air power theorists:

Douhet, Mitchell, de Seversky, and Warden believed that command of the air was a prerequisite for all other military operations [...] and this stemmed directly from their interactions with hundreds of other air power theorists, proponents, and practitioners, but the roots of this tree lead inevitably back to the first among equals Giulio Douhet.³³

- 32 *Command of the Air* today remains an incredibly important text for two reasons. Reason number one, and the most obvious, is that it is still considered the “first” book on air power theory. The second, and more ephemeral reason, is that Douhet’s influence can be found in Mitchell, Seversky, Warden and every other American scholar of air power theory, history, and doctrine and thus, his influence can still be felt and seen in every new generation of US Air Force officers. Giulio Douhet became unequalled and unpatrolled in importance to the study of air power history. *The Command of the Air* became the Genesis of the air power bible. In the end it seems Douhet has had a pro-

found effect – if often in an indirect manner – on the study of air power theory in the United States. His transcendent status makes for an important read to anyone who studies the profession. True some of his theories proved to be outdated, outmoded, and downright questionable in their tactical applications, but a focus on his failings does not obfuscate the need to study his successful ideas.

- 33 As previously mentioned, even now an updated and revised edition of *The Command of the Air* is being published by the Air University Press. This version will be available to and used by students at the Air Command and Staff College, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, and the Air War College for generations to come. In the new introduction, Melvin G. Deaile states that:

Douhet wrote one of the most comprehensive military theories in history. He provided a rationale for the use of force, a mechanism for achieving effects, an organizational construct, and a force structure. Readers will not only see his insights into airpower, they will also see a complete theory unfold before their eyes. Although written nearly a century ago, *The Command of the Air* remains a relevant part of today's airpower theory discussions.³⁴

- 34 His direct applicability to studying air power in the 21st century remains completely necessary and reading *The Command of the Air* in the United States today represents a young scholar's first steps into a larger world.

NOTES

1 Colonel P. S. Meilinger, *The Paths of Heaven: The Evolution of Airpower Theory* (Maxwell AFB, AL: The Air University Press, 1997), 1.

2 G. Douhet, *The Command of the Air*, translated by Dino Ferrari (Washington DC: Office of Air Force History, 1998 [1983]); the new printing is from Air University Press dated September 2019. This newly published 2019 Air University Press edition is based on the Air Force Museum's 1998 edition and includes: a new forward by Melvin G. Deaile, PhD, Introduction to the 1983 edition by Joseph Patrick Harahan and Richard H. Kohn, 1983, Preface to the second edition of *The Command of the Air* by Giulio Douhet, 1927 *The Command of the Air* by Giulio Douhet, 1921; translated by Dino Ferrari "The Prob-

able Aspects of the War of the Future” by Giulio Douhet, 1928 “Recapitulation” by Giulio Douhet, 1929 and the “War of 19–” by Giulio Douhet, 1930.

3 C. S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 230.

4 A. F. Hurley, *Billy Mitchell: Crusader for Air Power* (Bloomington, IA: Indiana University Press, 1975), 71-73.

5 *Ibid.*, 75.

6 *Ibid.*, 146.

7 *Ibid.*, 31.

8 *Ibid.*, 146.

9 P. S. Meilinger, *The Paths of Heaven*, *op. cit.*, 33.

10 A. F. Hurley, *Billy Mitchell: Crusader for Air Power*, *op. cit.*, 75-76.

11 D. Waller, *A Question of Loyalty: General Billy Mitchell and the Court-Martial That Gripped the Nation* (New York, NY: Harper), 251.

12 J. J. Cooke, *Billy Mitchell* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner Publishers, Inc., 2002), 244; J. K. Libbey, *Alexander P. de Seversky and the Quest for Air Power* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2013), 179.

13 D. R. Mets, *The Air Campaign: John Warden and the Classical Airpower Theorists* (Maxwell AFB: AL, 1998), 17.

14 J. L. Frisbee, *Makers of the United States Air Force* (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1987), 130.

15 B. D. Foulois, *From the Wright Brothers to the Astronauts* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1968), 225; R. J. Overy, *The Air War, 1939-1945* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005), 12.

16 L. S. Kuter, *Growth of Air Power*, unpublished manuscript, AFHRA, K 168.7012-28, 156.

17 USAAF, Special Collections, Haywood Hansell Papers, MS 6, Series Three, “Lecture – Air War College – Maxwell Field, Alabama February 16, 1951”, 3.

18 A. P. de Seversky, *Air Power: Key to Survival* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1950), 207.

19 A. P. de Seversky, *Air Power: Key to Survival*, *op. cit.*, 207-208, also mentioned in *Victory Through Air Power*, 312.

20 A. P. de Seversky, *Air Power: Key to Survival*, *op. cit.*, 104; Alfred Thayer Mahan was an American Naval theorist whose influential work *The Influence*

of *Sea Power Upon History* is still widely read and cited in academic and military circles today.

21 G. Douhet, *The Command of the Air*, 54, 308.

22 P. Haun (ed.), *Lectures of the Air Corps Tactical School and American Strategic Bombing in World War II* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2019), 11.

23 R. T. Finney, *History of the Air Corps Tactical School 1920-1940* (Washington, DC: Air Force History and Museum Program, 1998), 57.

24 AFHRA, OHI, Kuter, L.S., K239.0512-810 V.1 C.1, 118.

25 L. S Kuter, *Growth of Air Power*, unpublished manuscript, AFHRA, K 168.7012-28, 114.

26 D. R. Jones, "The Emperor and the Despot: Statesmen, Patronage, and the Strategic Bomber in Imperial and Soviet Russia, 1909-1959" in R. Higham and M. Parillo (eds.), *The Influence of Airpower Upon History: Statesmanship, Diplomacy, and Foreign Policy Since 1903* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2013), 130.

27 School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/SAASS/>, retrieved on 13 November 2019; SAASS Comps Prep, https://saass.fandom.com/wiki/SAASS_Comps_Prep_Wiki, retrieved on 13 November, 2019.

28 P. S. Meilinger, *Airmen and Air Theory: A Review of the Sources* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2001), 105.

29 P. Haun, *Lectures of the Air Corps Tactical School*, op. cit., 11.

30 G. Douhet, *The Command of the Air*, op. cit., 5, 19.

31 G. Douhet, *The Command of the Air*, op. cit., 70.

32 By no means a comprehensive list but Douhet's name appears in almost every single publication having to do with air power history, theory, and thought. This includes P. S. Meilinger, *Airmen and Air Theory*; D. Metz, *The Air Campaign: John Warden and the Classical Airpower Theorists*; R. Higham, *Air Power: A Concise History*.

33 J. A. Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2007), 75.

34 M. G. Deaile, Introduction to Giulio Douhet, *The Command of the Air* (Maxwell, AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2019), VI.

RÉSUMÉS

English

This paper intends to examine the impact of Giulio Douhet on American air power thinking and doctrine from his earliest translations to his continued relevance today. By using three other “American” air power thinkers, it demonstrates how Douhet did or did not influence their work and what credit each of them gave to the air power theorist. This paper argues that *The Command of the Air* today remains an important text for two reasons. One, is that it is still considered the “first” book on air power theory. The second, and more ephemeral reason, is that Douhet’s influence can be found in Mitchell, Seversky, Warden and every other American scholar of air power theory, history, and doctrine and thus, his influence can still be felt and seen in every new generation of US Air Force officers. His direct applicability to studying air power in the 21st century remains completely necessary.

Français

Cet article se propose d’examiner l’influence de Giulio Douhet sur la pensée et la doctrine de la puissance aérienne américaine depuis ses premières traductions jusqu’à aujourd’hui. En s’appuyant sur trois autres penseurs « américains » de la puissance aérienne, il démontre comment Douhet a influencé (ou non) leur travail et quel crédit chacun a accordé au théoricien de la puissance aérienne. Cet article soutient que *Il dominio dell'aria* reste aujourd’hui un texte important pour deux raisons. Premièrement, il est toujours considéré comme le « premier » livre sur la théorie de la puissance aérienne. La deuxième raison, plus éphémère, est que l’on peut trouver l’influence de Douhet chez Mitchell, Seversky, Warden et tous les autres spécialistes américains de la théorie, de l’histoire et de la doctrine de la puissance aérienne, et donc que son influence peut toujours être ressentie et observée dans chaque nouvelle génération des officiers de l’US Air Force. Son applicabilité directe à l’étude de la puissance aérienne au XXI^e siècle reste tout à fait nécessaire.

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Mots-clés

Air power, Douhet, Warden, Seversky, Billy Mitchell, Air Corps Tactical School (ACTS), éducation militaire professionnelle

Keywords

Air power, airpower, Douhet, Warden, Seversky, Billy Mitchell, Air Corps Tactical School, ACTS, professional military education

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