



Limits of Air Power

Mark Clodfelter

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The Limits of Air Power analyzes the American bombing campaigns in Vietnam and shows why the use of air power, so effective in previous wars, proved unsuccessful in a limited war.

Major Mark Clodfelter, a military historian, assesses the American use of air power from World War II through the Vietnam War, and shows how its effectiveness declined in Vietnam when air commanders and political leaders were faced with a very different kind of conflict than they had previously experienced. During World War II there was a very clear military objective – destruction of the Axis powers, in which the critical role of air power culminated in the detonation of two atomic bombs over Japan. During the Korean War, the threat of aerial attacks against North Korean dams hastened that war's conclusion. But in Vietnam – where the enemy fought a guerrilla war and was not dependent on supply lines, and where no industrial economy existed – the threat of air power had less effect. The lessons learned from Vietnam, says the author, must become a part of Air Force doctrine going forward, and we ignore the lessons at our own peril. *The New York Times* praised *The Limits of Air Power* as “a courageous book. . . . It will enlighten any citizen interested in knowing whether the Air Force is prepared to do its job.”

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