Information Age Airpower in Afghanistan. Development of the Air Campaign in Afghanistan and how it supported Strategic and Operational Goals of Civil and Military Policy Makers between 2001 and 2016
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This study examines the effects of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) on the effectiveness of airpower in irregular environments, focusing on the Afghan campaign (between 2001 and 2016) as a case study.

During regular conflicts, which are typically fought between state-led armies, the RMA has greatly enhanced airpower’s ability to pursue desired effects. Although the extent of airpower’s effectiveness is still subject of debate, the positive influence of the RMA is relatively undisputed. This is, however, not the case in irregular conflicts, which are characterized by the fight against elusive enemies that do not operate as regular, state-led armies. Pundits with various backgrounds have differing opinions about the way the RMA has influenced airpower’s effectiveness in such conflicts. Consequently, there is an ongoing debate on the preferred role of airpower in irregular war.

This study concludes that in Afghanistan, airpower’s effectiveness increased across the board as a result of the RMA. However, the extent of this increase and the extent to which air warfare contributed to disruption of irregular actors differed strongly between the various phases of the conflict. Whereas spectacular results could be discerned in the “counterterrorist” phase, the “counterinsurgency” and “air advising” phases yielded less increase in air power effectiveness. Therefore, the conclusion emphasizes an approach that acknowledges different airpower roles in different phases of irregular conflict.