

Airborne Diplomacy: A Strategic Analysis of the Berlin Airlift's Air Power Perspective

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Abstract— The Berlin Airlift is one of the most significant events in the history of air power and international relations. The operation, which lasted from June 1948 to May 1949, involved the massive airlift of essential supplies to the citizens of Berlin, who were cut off from the rest of the world by Soviet forces. The airlift was a demonstration of air power and humanitarian efforts that ultimately helped in achieving the objectives of diplomacy. This paper provides a strategic analysis of the Berlin Airlift's air power perspective and its role in shaping the diplomatic outcome of the crisis. The theory used in this research is the Theory of Air Power, Air Mobility Theory, Military Strategy & Defense Diplomacy. The method used is a qualitative method. It is concluded that, First, the Berlin Airlift aerial maneuver incident occurred because the Soviet Union did not want to rebuild Germany, but instead ordered the encirclement of the Berlin area. The target of the resistance was to block access and logistics and other supplies to West Berlin. Second, infrastructure, facilities, and services, including infrastructure, maintenance, logistics in the form of facilities and construction, as well as health services are important elements in the implementation of air mobility operations. Air Force logistics air mobility operational guidelines need to be formulated with the development of science and technology & gives valuable lessons for defense diplomacy and air power humanitarian operation applied in modern-day conflicts and wars.

Keywords— WWII History, Berlin Airlift, Air Power, Diplomacy

I. INTRODUCTION

Germany's defeat in World War II led to the country's division into four occupation zones controlled by the Allies. The Soviet Union controlled the eastern zone, while the Western Allies controlled the other three. In 1948, the Soviet Union blockaded West Berlin, which was located in the western zone but surrounded by the Soviet-controlled territory, in an attempt to force the Western powers to abandon the city. The Western Allies responded with the Berlin Airlift, a massive air operation to supply the city with food, fuel, and other essentials. In June 1948 the Soviet Union suddenly closed land access to West Berlin. The land access must pass through territory located in the zone controlled by the Soviet Union. This decision was alleged to force the United States, Britain, and France to agree to the Soviet Union's demands regarding the control of these countries in Germany. Unfortunately, this action greatly affected the fate of the citizens in West Berlin. As a result of the blockade, Berliners did not have access to food, clothing, and medical aid. Several US officials want to give a strong response to this unilateral policy. But in the end, it was decided on a calmer but tiring response. The United States and its allies chose to supply the needs of West Berliners through airlifting or operations that eventually became known as the Berlin Airlift. This task is very difficult considering the United States needs to send tons of food and other necessities. This operation began on June 26, 1948, with pilots and aircraft from Uncle Sam's State delivering the needs of the people of West Berlin and recorded as one of the biggest humanitarian operation . (Sutherland, 2007)

The Berlin Airlift was a pivotal moment in the history of air power and international relations (Murray, 2015). The operation was a massive undertaking that involved the airlift of essential supplies to the citizens of Berlin, who were cut off from the rest of

the world by Soviet forces. The airlift was a demonstration of air power and humanitarian efforts that ultimately helped in achieving the objectives of diplomacy (Bickers 2014). This paper provides a strategic analysis of the Berlin Airlift's air power perspective and its role in shaping the diplomatic outcome of the crisis. The Berlin Airlift has been studied extensively in the literature. Scholars have analyzed various aspects of the operation, including its political, military, and humanitarian aspects. However, there has been limited research on the strategic role of air power in the operation. This paper aims to address this gap by providing a strategic analysis of the Berlin Airlift's air power perspective.

The United States and the United Kingdom have agreed to allow large-scale airlift operations. On June 1948, the first airplanes took off from London and West Germany. The air operation transported a lot of supplies such as; fuel, medicines, food, water, and clothing (Launius, 1989). Over 15 months, the operation was a success with 277,264 aircraft landing in West Berlin carrying more than 2 million tons of various types of goods. On September 30, 1949, the last aircraft to land on the Berlin Airlift operation was a C-54 aircraft belonging to Uncle Sam's Country which was carrying over two tons of coal and with this, the airlift ended. Officially, the blockade finally ended in May 1949, but it took months for West Berlin to get better with adequate stocks of various necessities. This operation was seen as a heavy blow to the Soviet Union by the United States. The reason is that Uncle Sam's country was able to calmly go through the beginning of the Cold War era without taking aggressive actions against the Soviet Union even though at that time West Berlin was in a condition like being held hostage (Miller, 2008).

In that war, for nearly a year, American and British planes landed around the clock. More than 300,000 aircraft carried more than 1.7 million tonnes of supplies. An average of 2,700 tons of supplies were mobilized into the city each day. This air mobilization operation is carried out on a large scale and sometimes carries great risks (Rath, 1999). Die Luftbrücke's air mobility or otherwise known as the "air bridge" continued until September 1949. The total shipment was about one and a half million tons at a total cost of more than 226 million dollars (Miller, 1989). The blockade was officially implemented on 24 June 1948, leaving some two million Germans, mainly in Berlin, without food. Several politicians in the administration of US President Harry S. Truman called for an immediate military response to Soviet aggression. However, Truman was smart enough to want to do things differently (Miller, 1999).

From the Berlin Airlift's air operations above, several valuable lessons can be drawn that air power is a way out to solving problems when land routes are closed or blocked. Indonesia is world's largest archipelagic country which has some 17,000 islands that requires air transportation. The Indonesian National Army has the main task of overcoming air mobilization in times of war (Prattama, 2019). The Indonesian Air Force as an integral part of the TNI carries out its duties to support the main tasks of the TNI. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze salient matters related to the Berlin Airlift operation (Cleveland, 2008). The Berlin Airlift also could be a model of humanitarian intervention through military operation in current modern day wars and conflicts.

II. METHODOLOGY

This research is qualitative research that uses a historical approach or historical research. According to Borg and Gall (Berg, 2001), Historical research is a systematic investigation of documents and other sources that contain facts about historians' questions in the past. Meanwhile, according to Wiersman (Berg, 2001) in the same book, it is revealed that historical research is a process of critically investigating past events to produce descriptions and secure accurate and correct information about these events. Historical research seeks to reconstruct past facts about what, who, when, where, and how in an objective, systematic and accurate manner that is carried out at the present time. The settlement process was carried out based on the results of field notes, artifacts, and verbal reports of historical actors or witnesses. Historical research can be defined as the process of investigating past events systematically to provide an account of happenings in the past (Historical Research, n.d.). It is not simply the accumulation of dates and facts or even just a description of past happenings but is a flowing and dynamic explanation or description of past events which includes an interpretation of these events in an effort to recapture implications, personalities, and ideas that have influenced these events. This study collects sources on how diplomacy is in the Berlin airlift process to then be used as lessons learned in the aspect of air power in the present.

III. THEORITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Air Power Theory

Guilio Douhet explained that the Air Force everywhere is an offensive force because of its ability to attack with extraordinary speed and destructive power, destroying targets on land and at sea. The advantage of attacking with air power is that it can be

attacked anywhere behind the front lines, and can be attacked from multiple directions. Therefore, there is no other reason why the air dimension must be independent (Guilio, 1983). More specifically, he said air strategy is all about selecting targets to destroy by setting priorities. Without an air strategy, air capability will not be the strength it is meant to be.

Military Strategy Theory

According to Koesnadi Kardi, the military strategy consists of four basic strategic elements that are interrelated, namely: (1) a strategy for building strength, (2) a strategy for deploying forces, (3) a strategy for deploying forces, and (4) three basic elements of strategy. coordination to help achieve national goals. To implement a strategy, we must know who and where the enemy is, and where the threat is coming from. The strategy of using force involves planning the use of force to achieve the best results. (Koesnadi, 2002)

Air Mobility Theory

Air Mobility as a core air power role is the ability to move personnel, material or troops using air vehicles (TNI Headquarters, 2019). Air mobility provides the ability to quickly deploy, sustain and redeploy personnel, materials or forces to, from or within a theater by air. This air power role enables the conduct of other air force operations and is useful across the spectrum of conflict. In particular, air mobility is often the transport of choice when speed, range, and avoidance of obstacles and surface threats are required. In some cases, air mobility may be the only means to achieve the desired effect (Salmi, 2020).

Diplomacy Theory

Diplomacy is the principal substitute for the use of force or underhanded means in statecraft; it is how comprehensive national power is applied to the peaceful adjustment of differences between states; it may be coercive, but is overtly nonviolent. Defense diplomacy, as one of the diplomacy types, is also known as military diplomacy, is the non-violent use of military forces, adapting public diplomacy, through activities like officer exchanges, combined training programs, cultural exchanges, and ship visits, etc., to further a country's diplomatic ties and promoting its international agenda (Berridge, 2022).

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Berlin Blockade

With the decision of the Potsdam Conference to determine the fate of Germany after the Second World War, it was decided to divide Germany into two parts, namely West Germany and East Germany. East Germany under the Soviet Union and West Germany under the rule of the United States, Great Britain, and France. Not only that, the German economy collapsed and even then the German currency, the Reichsmark, could no longer be valued. The Allied Control Council, also known as the Four Power Council, was founded by the United States, France, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union as the Allied Powers occupying Germany (Perry, 1989).

Ironically, the Soviet Union had a different view of Germany's future than the United States, France, and Great Britain. The United States, France, and Great Britain decided to implement economic reforms to help Germany recover from a recession, but the Soviet Union, which was attacked by Germany twice in World War I and World War II, had other plans. Then the Soviet government, under the leadership of Joseph Stalin, planned to destroy Germany as it was seen as biggest threats to Soviet Union with the remnants of Nazi's Hitler influence and atrocities. Stalin's strategy was also to secretly expel the United States, France, and Great Britain from Germany and make Germany a satellite state of the Soviet Union.

On June 20, 1948, the three allies led by the United States, France, and Great Britain announced economic reform policies for West Germany, and the Deutsche Mark was introduced as the new currency. On the other hand, they also secretly planned to form the West German Confederation, which would be under the control of the Western Allies, ie. United States, France, and the United Kingdom. This formation was created to support the West German economy with the help of the Western allies to improve it so that the West German economy was more prosperous than East Germany controlled by the Soviet Union. The US-led western allies agenda to alienate Soviet Union triggered Soviet's blockade that led to Berlin's Airlift (Munzinger, 2018).

Stalin was furious when he learned of this and felt betrayed by his allies. Stalin threatened to take action if the United States, France, and Great Britain did not withdraw from the plan and asked to cancel the issuance of the new currency, the Deutsche Mark. The Soviet Union ceded up to four powers to the Soviets. But the United States, France, and Great Britain ignored kept on

pressing their agenda and continued to implement the West German economic development program as planned. Stalin's anger reached its peak on June 24, 1948, when Stalin ordered the Berlin Blockade, closing all access to Berlin, be it roads, rails, or canals. This blockade prevented food supplies and power plants sent from West Germany from reaching Berlin. This closure prevented supplies to the city of Berlin and caused Berlin to almost become a ghost city. (Rearden, 2012)

As a response to Soviet's blockade, the Western Allies planned an operation to re-access the city of Berlin and became one of the largest logistics operations in history. The operation was known as the Berlin Airlift, in which the Western Allies used the air route to return access to the city of Berlin and were able to deliver logistics and supplies to people of Berlin. In May 1949, Stalin ended the blockade of Berlin after negotiating with the United States, Great Britain, and France. The end of the blockade by Soviet Union is part of defense diplomacy effort that saved Berlin citizens. It also marked the beginning of the Cold War until the end of the Cold War in 1989 (Leffler, 1996).

Berlin Airlift Operations

The Allies through the United States Air Force (USAF), planned to carry out the Berlin Airlift Operation which was led by Brigadier General Yoseph Smith of the United State Air Force in Europe (USAFE), the officer who became the commander in Wiesbaden, was appointed Commander of the Berlin Airlift Operation. On June 26, the European American Air Force (USAFE) made 32 sorties flights carrying 80 tonnes of food on a C-47 Skytrain from Wiesbaden in West Germany to Tempelhof Airport in Berlin. Because it is estimated that the problem will not be easily resolved, the United State Air Force (USAF) on June 28 sent 35 four-engined C-54 Skymaster transport aircraft to Germany. This aircraft comes from troop carrier squadrons in Alaska, Hawaii, and the Caribbean islands, while the British Air Force, namely the Royal Air Force (RAF) has started by transporting goods to the city of Berlin by air.

As air transport continues, USAFE orders more C-54 Skymaster aircraft to Germany, including its crew, for Operation Berlin Airlift. Most of the aircraft and their personnel came from the Troop Carrier Squadron, and the rest of the personnel came from MATS and the Air Transport Group of the US Navy. While in Europe the airlift squadrons were assigned to one of five troop carrier groups, namely groups 60, 61, 313, 317, and 513. MATS (Military Air Transport Service) had established routes to fly C-54 Skymasters to and from Europe originating from Maintenance Depots in the US.

Although air transportation began with the C-47 Skytrain aircraft, known as Dakota in Indonesia, the C-54 Skymaster aircraft, which has a larger payload and higher speed, influences the route determination of these aircraft when used specifically to transport goods in different sectors. controlled by the US. On September 14, a detachment of C-82 "Flying Boxcars" from troop carrier bases in the US, joined the Berlin Airlift to transport loads that were too large for the C-54 Skymaster. (Saleh, 1998)

Air Power Review at Berlin Airlift

Operation Berlin Airlift is a planned activity or action by utilizing air power and integrated capabilities to mobilize air to deliver logistics during the German war. Operation Berlin Airlift aimed to mobilize logistics through the air traffic jams on the ground due to the blockade. Meanwhile, the goal of the Berlin Airlift is to carry out logistics delivery operations without getting significant interference from the enemy. Force projection through the air mobility role is realized by the following air power missions: (1) Air Logistics Support (2) Airborne Operations (3) Air Refueling and (4) Aeromedical Evacuation. The rapid development of the strategic environment greatly impacts strategic air operations and the air force. The doctrine is expected to be able to answer the challenges posed by today's advances in aerospace science and technology.

The principles related to the Berlin Airlift operation include the principle of purpose, the principle of attack, the principle of surprise, the principle of security, the principle of concentration of attack, the principle of economy, the principle of unity of command, the principle of simplicity, the principle of resilience, the principle of cohesion, the principle of business unity, the principle of information utilization. , the Principle of Benefit, and the Principle of Moral Excellence. In the field of operations, air logistics support operations are used to win wars by destroying or eliminating enemy or opposing forces. Air mobilization operations can help deploy large numbers of troops and can also mobilize several defense equipments. Through air operations, personnel can move more quickly and be able to know the situation and conditions of the opposing party.

Operation Berlin Airlift is a planned activity or action by utilizing air power and integrated capabilities to mobilize air to deliver logistics during the German occupation. Operation Berlin Airlift aimed to mobilize logistics through the air traffic jams on the ground due to the blockade. The results of the study from the operational side are:

- a. An air logistics support mission is an air activity, other than airborne operations, airborne refueling, or aeromedical evacuation, undertaken to deploy, distribute or recover personnel, material, or forces. Air logistics support missions can be conducted between operating theaters or within operating theaters and can use a traditional "Hub and Spoke" logistics delivery model as well as providing direct access to small airfields with simple facilities.
- b. The advantages of the Berlin Airlift operation are that air logistics support is an effective and efficient alternative when there are many obstacles on the ground, besides that, mobilization is faster and has a large enough volume.
- c. The benefit that can be taken by the Indonesian Air Force is that with the Berlin Airlift operation, it is hoped that Indonesian Air Force personnel will know how useful it is in understanding the importance of air mobilization operations, and it is hoped that this will increase their ability regarding air logistics support operations, as well as the transfer of knowledge from system development or suppliers. technology to Indonesian Air Force personnel so that they can anticipate any changes in the rapid development of technology as it is today. The ability of water power to be presented in all directions simultaneously can be utilized to support the lives of people affected by disasters in remote areas and difficult to reach by other means. Because of this kind of operation, the Indonesian Air Force can implement it by maximizing the existing transport aircraft to support the continuity of operations. The principle that can be taken is that even though the number of aircraft is limited, it can be overcome by sending fast and continuous transportation.

Airborne Diplomacy

The air power strategic point of the Berlin Airlift that made it a success was the demonstration of air power capabilities and its ability to provide critical supplies to the citizens of Berlin, who were cut off from the rest of the world by Soviet forces. The airlift was a massive logistical undertaking that required the coordinated efforts of the US Air Force and other allied air forces to transport food, fuel, and other essential supplies to West Berlin. By using air power to provide essential goods to the citizens of Berlin, the Western powers were able to avoid a humanitarian crisis and demonstrate their commitment to the people of Berlin. The use of air power also helped to de-escalate tensions between the Western powers and the Soviet Union by showing the Soviets that the West was willing and able to support their allies in times of crisis. Furthermore, the airlift demonstrated the strategic value of air power in supporting diplomatic efforts. The use of air power in the Berlin Airlift helped to achieve the objectives of diplomacy by preventing a humanitarian crisis, showcasing the capabilities of air power, and ultimately de-escalating tensions between the Western powers and the Soviet Union. In summary, the strategic point of the Berlin Airlift's air power perspective that made it a success was the demonstration of air power capabilities, the provision of critical supplies, and the strategic use of air power to achieve diplomatic objectives, which was Soviet Union's willingness to end the blockade and spare the lives of Berliners.

During the Berlin Airlift, which lasted from June 1948 to May 1949, a total of 276,926 flights were made by Western allies, including the United States, Great Britain, France, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. These flights delivered a total of 2.3 million tons of supplies, including food, fuel, and other essential goods, to the citizens of West Berlin who were cut off from the rest of the world by Soviet forces (Provan, 2010). The United States Air Force played a significant role in the airlift, with over 200,000 flights made by American planes. At the peak of the airlift, American planes were landing in Berlin every 45 seconds, delivering over 4,500 tons of supplies per day. In total, the United States Air Force flew over 1.7 million tons of supplies to Berlin during the airlift. Other allied air forces also played a crucial role in the airlift. The Royal Air Force (RAF) made over 70,000 flights, delivering over half a million tons of supplies, while the French Air Force made over 30,000 flights, delivering over 200,000 tons of supplies (Provan, 2010).

The Berlin Airlift's air power perspective was a critical component of the operation's success. The use of air power to provide essential goods to the citizens of Berlin showcased the capabilities of air power and its strategic value in supporting diplomatic efforts. By using air power to transport supplies, the Western powers were able to avoid a humanitarian crisis and demonstrate their commitment to the people of Berlin. The use of air power also helped to de-escalate tensions between the Western powers and the Soviet Union by showing the Soviets that the West was willing and able to support their allies in times of crisis.

One of the key factors in the success of the Berlin Airlift was the coordination between the US Air Force and other allied air forces. The airlift required a massive logistical effort, with over 276,000 flights made by Western allies, including the United States, Great Britain, France, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. These flights delivered a total of 2.3 million tons of supplies, including food, fuel, and other essential goods. The United States Air Force played a significant role in the airlift,

with over 200,000 flights made by American planes. Other allied air forces also played a crucial role in the airlift, with the Royal Air Force and the French Air Force making tens of thousands of flights each (Provan, 2010). The Berlin Airlift showed the importance of diplomatic efforts in resolving conflicts.

The strategic diplomatic features of the Berlin Airlift operation were multifaceted. One of the key features was that the airlift demonstrated the resolve of the Western powers to support their allies and prevent a humanitarian crisis in West Berlin. The use of air power to deliver essential supplies, such as food, fuel, and medicine, to the people of West Berlin also showed the world that the US and its allies were willing and able to provide for their citizens even in the face of adversity.

Another strategic diplomatic feature of the Berlin Airlift was the impact it had on the perception of the Soviet Union and the Western powers. The airlift helped to de-escalate tensions between the two sides by preventing a military confrontation and demonstrating the resolve of the Western powers. The Soviet Union, which had previously believed that the Western powers would abandon West Berlin, was forced to reconsider its position.

The Berlin Airlift also showcased the capabilities of air power in supporting diplomatic efforts. The use of air power to transport essential supplies to West Berlin was a significant achievement that demonstrated the logistical capabilities of the US Air Force and other allied air forces. The success of the airlift also highlighted the importance of air power in supporting diplomatic objectives and resolving conflicts.

Overall, the strategic diplomatic features of the Berlin Airlift operation helped to prevent a humanitarian crisis, de-escalate tensions between the Western powers and the Soviet Union, and demonstrate the capabilities of air power in supporting diplomatic efforts. The airlift remains a significant event in the history of air power and international relations.

V. CONCLUSION

The Berlin Airlift provides several lessons for modern-day airlift operations. One lesson is the importance of logistics and planning in airlift operations. The success of the Berlin Airlift was due in large part to the careful planning and execution of the airlift by the US Air Force and other allied air forces. Airlift operations require careful coordination and planning to ensure that critical supplies are delivered on time and to the right locations.

Another lesson learned from the Berlin Airlift is the importance of diplomacy in resolving conflicts. The use of air power in the Berlin Airlift helped to achieve diplomatic objectives by preventing a humanitarian crisis and de-escalating tensions between the Western powers and the Soviet Union. Diplomatic efforts would be crucial in any modern-day airlift operation to resolve conflicts and avoid further escalation.

Finally, the Berlin Airlift provides a lesson on the importance of public relations and propaganda in modern-day airlift operations. The use of propaganda and public relations played a significant role in shaping the perception of the Berlin Airlift both domestically and internationally. Airlift operations today need to consider the potential impact of public relations and propaganda on the success of the operation.

From the perspective of the use of air power, the Berlin Airlift air mobility or airlifting operation occurred after the Soviet Union ordered to close all access to Berlin, be it roads, rails, or canals. The aim is to prevent logistics and other supplies from entering Berlin. The blockade was officially implemented on June 24, 1948, leaving behind about two million German residents trapped without supplies. The ability of air transport mobility is the priority and plays a role in relief operations and other support activities that require air transport in a short time and over long distances.

Air mobility provides the ability to quickly deploy, sustain and redeploy personnel, materials or forces to, from, or within a theater by air. The Berlin Airlift operation illustrates defense diplomacy efforts by Western allies and Soviet Union to finally resort to peace with Soviet Union ending the blockade and saving the people of West Berlin. Ultimately, it was also demonstrating the power of an air mobility operation in winning the war without the need to carry out aerial firing.

Berlin Airlift provides valuable lessons and proves that air mobility can be carried out optimally with continuous movement of cargo transport all the time by air accompanied by a mature operation management concept. Berlin Airlift provides lessons for flight crews and ground personnel in the form of invaluable experience where in bad weather conditions, air traffic control, aircraft maintenance, repair methods, and aircraft operational techniques can be optimally implemented.

Air mobility is carried out to facilitate transportation by air quickly in a war zone. This allows a relatively small force to dominate large geographic areas thanks to airlift operations.

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