

Institution: University of Exeter
Unit of Assessment: History
Title of case study: Air Power Theory and History
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Professor Richard Overy's research on key issues of air power history and theory has influenced how both UK and International air forces consider key areas of air power history and their application to current issues of air power doctrine and development. This has been achieved by contributing to the air forces continuing professional development through seminars and lectures to service audiences, participation in RAF history teaching evaluation, publication of key texts on air power issues used in service academies and regular engagement with academic and non-academic audiences on air power history.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Military academies all over the world train cadets in modern day warfare strategies and tactics, yet equally important for them is to be able to use the experiences of historical air power in a modern day context. Professor Overy's research covers many key areas of air power history, in particular the two world wars. His expert advice has meant that he plays a vital role in the Continuing Professional Development of military staff as well as advising military bodies and governments.</p> <p>Professor Overy joined Exeter University as Professor of History in 2004 and his research focuses on the history of bombing and on explanations for the outcome of the Battle of Britain, both of these topics are key areas of research in air power history and both used as key markers in RAF historical teaching. His research since 2007 has centred on a major project to explore the European bombing war from 1939 to 1945, both in terms of its material effects and impact on the military outcome, and in terms of the actual effects on the bombed societies, published as <i>The Bombing War: Europe 1939-1945</i> (2013). The book is the fruit of research in 33 archives across Europe and the United States and represents a major re-assessment of the bombing war. It explains the failure of all the major air offensives, and provides important answers to the question of how and why European societies coped with bombing without experiencing social collapse. Research was conducted in German, French, Italian and Soviet archives in order to provide as full a narrative as possible of the bombing war and to enable international comparisons to be made. Professor Overy's research conclusions have important implications for the wider assessment of air force capability by current air services. The key findings focus on two main areas:</p> <p>The first is the clear research-led conclusion that the bombing of Germany during the Second World War had more substantial impact on Germany's capacity to wage war than conventional, critical assessments of the bombing have asserted, and that much of that impact was related to the diversion of military resources (guns, manpower, ammunition, electronic equipment) from the fighting fronts rather than physical damage or dislocation of war industry. The second has been to provide more historically plausible explanations for the outcome of the first true air-to-air battle in 1940, by showing that the RAF owed its success not only to effective tactical awareness and good intelligence, but to effectively organised production, logistics and training.</p>
<p>3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <p>Evidence of the quality of the research: this research was the result of external grant funding by the AHRC (final report graded 'outstanding') and the main output (book) has been widely reviewed as 'important' and 'a masterpiece'.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. R. Overy (2010) <i>The Battle of Britain</i> (RAF Museum/Carlton Books) [sales so far of 35,000] 2. R. Overy (2007) <i>The Air War 1939-1945 (Third Edition)</i> (Potomac Books). This was

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originally published in 1980 but was republished in 2007 in a new edition with a new introduction. Potomac Books released it in a series called 'Classics of Military History'. It was selected by OUP Oxford Bibliographies Online (2013) as a 'must-read resource' (www.oxfordbibliographiesonline.com). [sales since publication of c. 70,000]

3. R. Overy (2010) *Why the Allies Won* (Revised edition, Random House), which includes a chapter on the bombing war which is widely cited. [sales since publication of c. 65,000]
4. R. Overy (2010) *The Battle of Britain: Myth and Reality* (Revised edition, Penguin), with a new introduction to take account of other revisionist views on the Battle. [sales in all formats c. 100,000]
5. AHRC grant 'Bombing, States and Peoples in Western Europe 1940-1945', 2007-2010 £490,000. Final AHRC grade awarded for the project was 'Outstanding'. Leverhulme Trust research fellowship to allow Professor Overy to complete research on the book from the project, 2010-2011 £39,000. Book from the project published as R. Overy (2013) *The Bombing War: Europe 1939-1945* (Allen Lane) [reviewed in Guardian as 'the standard work' and 'probably the most important book published on the Second World War this century..'; reviewed in THES as 'this masterpiece..'; review in The Times, 'a masterpiece of the historian's art'; review in Financial Times, 'he has set a new standard in the study of the air war'.]
6. Awarded the Doolittle Award from MIT in 2010 for contributions to aviation history (and presented the annual Doolittle Lecture).

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

As the 'UK's leading air power scholar' (section 5 reference 5) Professor Overy's research has been used since 2008 on an international scale by armed services to influence their methods and ideas about air power strategy and contribute to their professional development. His research has been used in modern air campaigns by the Royal Air Force, most recently in Libya in 2011 (section 5 reference 5). He has sat on military advisory boards. Professor Overy has also engaged non-academic audiences through seminars, meetings and lectures in which his research has been used to inform discussions.

Internationally, Overy's research has been used in military publications by service academies discussing historical air power and bombing warfare. The Royal Australian Air Force in its doctrine publication 'Strategy, Air Strike and Small Nations' cited Overy on pp. 43-44 as the source of the argument about the diversion of German resources in the Second World War. Overy also contributed directly to a book edited by a senior Royal Norwegian Air Force officer on *A History of Air Warfare*, with a chapter on air power in World War II and provided the introduction to the US Air Force Academy Military History Symposium (vol 6) on *Air Power: promise and reality* with an introduction on 'Air Power and Warfare'. The History Department Head in the Academy describes his 'extraordinary contribution to scholarship' which is 'lasting and important' (section 5 reference 1).

Overy has contributed to the continuing professional development (CPD) of both UK and US air force cadets since 2008 particularly through his books *The Air War* and *Why the Allies Won*. These are core textbooks for the US Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs (over 1,000 trainees a year), the US Navy War College, Newport Rhode Island (approximately 200-300 trainees a year), and the UK Defence Academy, Shrivenham (approximately 700 trainees a year). The head of the history department at USMA writes that 'his work contributes immeasurably to education' for around 1,000 cadets a year (section 5 reference 4). His work features on courses at the USAF Research Institute, the US Air War College, and the School of Advanced Air Power Studies, involving around 3,000 mid-career officers per year (section 5 reference 5).

Professor Overy's books are also used in A Level History courses (Edexcel GCE History Unit 4,

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CW37: the Changing Nature of Warfare 1845-1991). Overy's research features in three of the recommended texts. The unit uses quotations from Overy's books as sources and recommends discussion around the sources with questions to be answered.

The Air War (section 3 reference 2) has been cited in The RAF Manual of Doctrine, now in its fourth edition (2008) as one of its reference works. The RAF Air Power Review, a quarterly journal, has also carried articles which refer directly to Overy's research (eg 'Reappraising RAF Bomber Command's Role in World War II', no 14 (2011), pp. 5-18). His research has 'been one of the most important influences on Royal Air Force policy and doctrine since the end of the Cold War, with his books being cited frequently in both policy and doctrine papers' (section 5 reference 5).

Due to Overy's research expertise and knowledge, he is a regular contributor to the Royal Air Force's CPD opportunities in both a teaching and an advisory role. Overy has been appointed as a member of the Advisory Board of the RAF Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS) based at Shrivenham which discusses issues of air power education and meets twice a year. He is also invited, and has attended, every year since 2008 by the Chief of the Air Staff to the annual RAF Air Power Conference in London, a professional development opportunity for Royal Air Force Staff. Most recently, Overy has taken part in a symposium on the direction of education and academic outreach for the RAF. His involvement in these activities has 'unquestionably added to the richness of air power education offered to...servicemen and has touched hundreds if not thousands of officers and airmen' (section 5 reference 2).

Overy lectured on bombing at the US Military Academy (West Point) summer seminar in June 2009 and was appointed the Thomas Johnson Visiting Professor at West Point in March 2010, where he had the opportunity to present his research findings to the entire cadet corps and also in small staff seminars to raise awareness of the history of air power strategy. During this time Professor Overy gave a keynote lecture to 1,000 US army officer cadets and several classes with c. 30-50 cadets on the bombing war and the outcome of World War II.

Overy attended and gave the opening talk on 'Lessons from the Strategic Bomber Offensive' at 'Strategic Attack: From Bomber Command through to the Present Day', a Westminster think tank event organised by the Policy Exchange organisation on 14 May 2012. The purpose was to present senior airmen with ideas about the development of offensive airpower since the Second World War and to draw lessons for today's RAF. Attendees included the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff and around 30 senior airmen from Britain, the USA and Europe.

Overy organised a joint workshop with the RAF Museum in March 2013 and gave a paper on 'Archives and Airpower' to a mixed military/civilian audience. The Director of the RAF Museum commented that the workshop 'encouraged new contacts with researchers and students, as well as helping highlight the scale and richness of the Museum's archive holdings' (see section 5 number 3). In continuing involvement with the Museum, Professor Overy has been appointed Chair of a new Research Board at the Museum, which will meet two or three times a year to ensure that academic research is being used effectively to enhance the way the Museum engages with informing the wider public. The museum believes that Professor Overy's appointment will add 'credibility and authority' to the initiative. Professor Overy's research knowledge 'has proved invaluable in creating the basis for a comprehensive and productive research programme' and that he has 'facilitated an important bridge between the Museum and Academia' (section 5 reference 3).

Overy has also taken part in many public engagement events, including an Intelligence Squared debate 'The Allied Bombing of German Cities in World War II was Unjustifiable' on 25 October 2012 in London, where he spoke about his research into air power and the strategic bombing options that the Royal Air Force used in the Second World War (section 5 reference 6) and a symposium on the bombing war at the Imperial War Museum on 12 October 2013.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

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1. Letter from the head of the Department of History, United States Air Force Academy
2. Letter from the Director of Defence Studies, Defence Academy, Shrivenham
3. Email from the Director of the RAF Museum, Hendon
4. Letter from the Head of History Department, United States Military Academy, West Point.
5. Email from Department of History, Air Power Studies Division, King's College, London/ Defence Academy, Shrivenham
6. Intelligence Squared debate 'The Allied Bombing of German Cities in World War II was Unjustifiable' <http://www.intelligencesquared.com/events/bomber-command/>
7. http://ww2history.com/experts/Richard_Overy/Professor_Richard_Overy