

Assessing the Effectiveness of Future Concepts in the U.S. Air Force

Application to Future Logistics Concepts

DON SNYDER, KRISTIN F. LYNCH, ALEXIS A. BLANC, JONATHAN L. BROSNER, JOHN G. DREW, KYLE HAAK, MYRON HURA, DANIEL ISH, KELLY KLIMA, FABIAN VILLALOBOS

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ISSUE

The National Defense Strategy (NDS) describes a stressing set of future challenges for U.S. Air Force logistics. To meet these challenges, the U.S. Air Force will entertain novel ideas—what we call future logistics concepts—to adapt the way that it organizes, trains, and equips for logistics to support the NDS. Future logistics concepts might be materiel or nonmateriel solutions, and they will need to be assessed for overall utility and be put through an analytical gauntlet to expose any weaknesses so that the U.S. Air Force is well prepared to defend a concept to the Office of the Secretary of Defense and Congress.

Rather than recommending a specific future logistics concept, we present a Future Logistics Concept Assessment Framework, which is a disciplined, systematic way to assess proposed future logistics concepts. The framework asks the questions that decisionmakers need to answer to know whether to pursue a proposed option. It is designed to be easily executable by an action officer without extensive expertise. Results should inform decisions by revealing benefits and downsides and should not advocate for or against a future logistics concept.

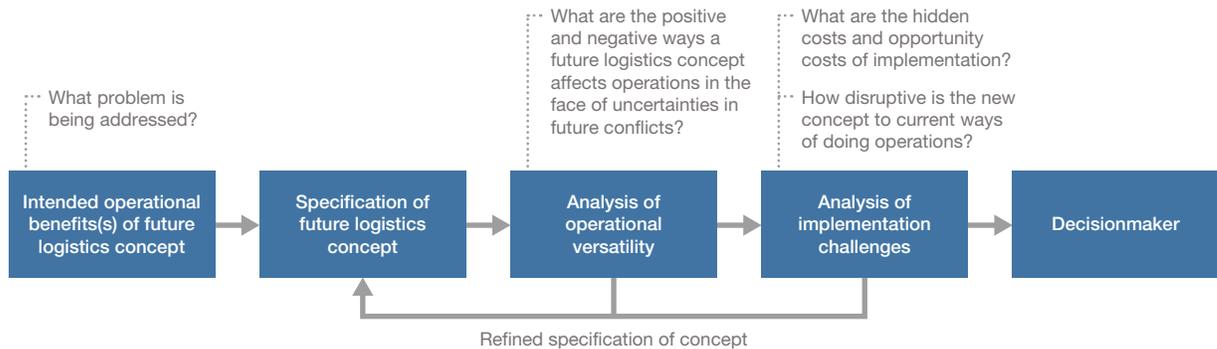


APPROACH

This assessment presents the following five steps, which are shown in the figure on the next page:

- Identify the operational benefits sought by the future logistics concept.
- Define the future logistics concept.
- Assess: How versatile is the future logistics concept for meeting future operational needs?
- Assess: What are the implementation challenges for transitioning from the status quo to the future logistics concept?
- Present well-reasoned assessments—not recommendations—to senior decisionmakers.

RESEARCH APPROACH



CONCLUSIONS

- Future logistics concepts need to be assessed against a range of circumstances representing the spectrum of possible future environments that might stress logistics. The dimensions that form a basis for these possible future environments will need to be defined. These dimensions are not predictions of the future and are not scenarios in the usual sense of the word. They are key ways in which the future might vary and, therefore, are the variables against which versatility is assessed. Three overall dimensions of the future—the changing geopolitical setting, the threat environment, and evolving Blue concepts of employment—drive the challenges outlined in the National Defense Strategy. Delineating these dimensions and how they bear on versatility is central to the assessment framework.
- Not all future logistics concepts will simplify, consolidate, and reduce requirements. Higher operational versatility might reduce efficiencies during peacetime. Moreover, the entire life cycle of a future logistics concept must be accounted for, including procurement, sustainment, and disposal costs. Some future concepts might induce a need to change organizational structure, culture, training, or other aspects of the U.S. Air Force institution, or perhaps those of entities outside the U.S. Air Force. These implementation challenges must be factored into decisions about a future logistics concept.
- The framework reveals the operational versatility and implementation challenges of a future logistics concept. It does not help make value judgments about whether any benefits are worth the costs. Military and political decisionmakers need to make those judgments, informed by the assessments of the framework.



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