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# The "Logic of the Air": Aviation and the Globalism of the "American Century"

**Jenifer L Van Vleck**

**Published Online:** 2007-10-31 | **DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.2202/1940-0004.1005>

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☐The ☐Logic of the Air☐: Aviation and the Globalism of the ☐American Century☐ ☐ examines the cultural history of aviation in relation to the rise of the United States as a

world power. In the context of World War II, the so-called air age entailed new conceptions of American national identity and global responsibility. Aviation inspired internationalist visions of "one world" — a globe divided only by latitudes and longitudes, as depicted by the iconic logo of Pan American Airways. However, aviation also sustained the nationalist vision of an "American Century" defined by U.S. geopolitical, economic, and ideological power. The airplane promised to extend America's frontiers "to infinity," as Pan Am President Juan T. Trippe was fond of saying. Ultimately, aviation helped define a nationalist globalism that construed America's interests as the world's interests. The cultural "logic of the air" embodied the universalizing aspirations of American foreign policy, yet also signified what was exceptional about the United States; aviation both instantiated American empire and denied that it was such. The article traces this dynamic by examining both cultural representations of aviation and U.S. international aviation policy.

**Keywords:** [aviation](#); [technology](#); [globalism](#); [globalization](#); [internationalism](#); [empire](#); [culture](#); [World War II](#)

## 📄 About the article

**Published Online:** 2007-10-31

**Citation Information:** New Global Studies, Volume 1, Issue 1, ISSN (Online) 1940-0004, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2202/1940-0004.1005>.

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