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CHINA: THE AWAKENING DRAGON

by

GARY C. JACK
Lieutenant Colonel, USAF

A PAPER SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DISCLAIMER. ii

ABSTRACT. iii

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH iv

INTRODUCTION. 1

CENTER OF GRAVITY 2

CHINA'S ECONOMY 3

CHINA'S POLITICS. 7

CHINA'S MILITARY. 10

PRINCIPLE OF DOCTRINE 13

NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION MAKING PROCESS 14

FORMS OF WARFARE. 18

APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF DOCTRINE. 19

CONCLUSION. 21

BIBLIOGRAPHY. 22

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ABSTRACT

TITLE: China: The Awakening Dragon

AUTHOR: Gary C. Jack, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF

China is rapidly awakening from its self-imposed isolation from the rest of the world. As it continues to grow economically, politically, and militarily, US Air Force doctrine must meet the potential challenges should China seek to dominate the Far East region. By examining China's economic, political, and military instruments of power, one can determine centers of gravity which are critical for China's potential dominance. Followed by a discussion of a selected principle of Air Force doctrine and how that principle interacts with the national security decision making process, one realizes that Air Force doctrine can, indeed, meet the challenges of an "awakening dragon."

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lieutenant Colonel Gary C. Jack (M.S., Gonzaga University) has been interested in China and its military affairs since he was stationed at U Tapao Royal Thai Navy Base in 1973. He has traveled throughout the Pacific region to include Guam, the Philippine Islands, Australia, Okinawa, South Korea, and Japan. Most recently, he travelled to China as part of an Air War College regional security analysis study group. In China, he visited Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong Province to include the Shenzhen special economic zone. He has served as a KC-135 squadron commander and deputy base commander in the former Strategic Air Command and participated in Operation Just Cause and Desert Shield. Colonel Jack is a graduate of Squadron Officers School, the Armed Forces Staff College, and the Air War College, class of 1993.

China: The Awakening Dragon

Aerospace doctrine is, simply defined, what we hold true about aerospace power and the best way to do the job in the Air Force. It is based on experience, our own and that of others. Doctrine is what we have learned about aerospace power and its application since the dawn of powered flight. While history does not provide specific formulas that can be applied without modification to present and future situations, it does provide the broad conceptual basis for our understanding of war, human nature, and aerospace power. Thus, doctrine is a guide for the exercise of professional judgment rather than a set of rules to be followed blindly. It is the starting point for solving contemporary problems. (1:vii)

Since the end of World War II, the primary focus of United States (US) security efforts has been the Soviet Union. Recent fluid and dynamic factors have created a rapidly changing world environment which causes the United States to focus on regional stability. The *National Security Strategy of the United States* (January 1993) states that the foremost national security interest is "the United States must ensure its security as a free and independent nation, and the protection of its fundamental values, institutions, and people." A key objective of this interest is to seek "global and regional stability which encourages peaceful change and progress."

In an environment of rapid change and reduced resources for defense, it is imperative to determine which regions will have the greatest impact on US interests. The emergence of the Pacific Rim as the most rapidly growing economic region

in the world could provide the greatest tests to US interests if stability is not maintained. A major factor in this region is China. More specifically, has China been a sleeping dragon that has awakened and threatens to dominate this region? If so, can US Air Force doctrine be a starting point "for solving contemporary problems?" This paper will address both these questions. China's economic, political, and military centers of gravity will be discussed first, followed by an examination of a selected principle of US Air Force doctrine and its ability to meet the potential challenges of "the Awakening Dragon." The place to start is with an explanation of the term "center of gravity" and its relevance to doctrine.

If the aim of war is to defeat the enemy, what constitutes defeat? Is it territorial conquest, denying economic activities, incapacitating the enemy's political leadership, destruction of the enemy's military forces, or a combination thereof? While history shows that defeat is not necessarily the result of what Clausewitz calls general causes, "one must keep the dominant characteristics of both belligerents in mind. Out of these characteristics a certain center of gravity develops, the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends. That is the point against which all our energies should be directed." (17;595) Von Clausewitz implies that only by seeking and destroying the centers of gravity will one be able to defeat an enemy. What then constitutes a center of gravity? In the context of national in-

terests, the fundamental reasons for all our domestic and international undertakings, economics, politics, and military force are universally held to be the key centers of gravity. If, as Clausewitz states, "the hub of all power and movement" can be identified, then the energies of a nation can be directed at those points most critical to an enemy's continued functioning and where those energies will have the most decisive effect. With an understanding of center of gravity, one is ready to move on to discuss China's economic situation.

The Chinese economy has suffered from constantly changing priorities for nearly 50 years. Until Mao's "Great Leap Forward" in 1958, the economic emphasis was on the development of heavy industrial and military production. Initially, China received extended loans, technical assistance, and sales of military equipment from the Soviet Union. Diplomatic friction as a result of the lack of Soviet support for China in the 1958 "Straits Crisis" and the failure of the Soviets to help China develop nuclear weapons per the 1959 agreement resulted in a break in Sino-Soviet relations. Subsequently, growth in the heavy industry sector of the economy was severely hampered due to the loss of access to modern technology, qualified technicians, and financial support. During this period, Mao believed that agriculture could be rapidly developed at the same time without adversely affecting either military production or heavy industry. However, the failure of the people's commune system coupled with extensive drought resulted in the "three bad years" of

hunger from 1959 through 1961, in which millions of Chinese died, and forced another change in priorities. For these reasons, agriculture became the number one priority. (8;189)

The emphasis on agriculture over industrial and military development continued through the late 1970s when Deng Xiaoping officially established the Four-Modernization Drive with agriculture remaining the number one priority followed by science and technology, heavy industry, and the military. (14;9) Agriculture remains the number one priority and has made steady progress, but progress in the other "modernizations" has been slow. Prior to the split in Sino-Soviet relations, China received extended loans and technical assistance from the Soviet Union and bought military equipment from it. Since the split, China has relied on "reverse engineering" and "technical missions" to Europe to obtain technology. However, this resulted in inferior or outdated technology and led Deng to establish an "open door" policy in an effort to increase the growth in all four modernizations simultaneously.

The goal of Deng's open door policy was to strengthen national defense posture by promoting economic development. (14;275) To accomplish this goal, Deng focused on two areas. First, Deng sought to expand international trade, establish joint business ventures in China with foreign countries, and secure international loans to solve the shortage of capital and and the acquisition of modern technology. As a result of Deng's open door policy, international trade has increased

"from a few hundred million dollars to more than 100 billion dollars in the last decade . . . and joint business ventures have brought in several billion dollars in hard cash and modern industrial equipment investment in China." (14;275)

The second area identified was domestic rather than international. Military expenditures were to be reduced by 25 percent and part of the military industry was to be converted to civilian use, both for domestic consumption and foreign trade, to alleviate China's financial problems. As a result, military manpower dropped from 4.2 million to 3 million and a national defense budget of 17.4 percent in 1971 to 7.5 percent in 1985. (14;276) By converting part of the military industry to civilian production, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), owners of these factories, brought in 300 million dollars in 1989, alone. Some experts predict that within 20 years, the PLA could pay for China's national defense by itself. However, world reaction to China's crackdown on its pro-democracy movement created a slowdown in China's economic upsurge.

After the Tiananmen Massacre in 1989, the world community imposed economic sanctions on China which threatened the economy. In response to the sanctions, China has sought to keep the open door policy intact and elicit favorable attitudes from the international community by relaxing internal political restrictions such as martial law and releasing some of the students and intellectuals arrested after the pro-democracy demonstrations. (14;280) This has, indeed, resulted

in some nations resuming trade with China. According to US Embassy reports, US trade with China is currently at an all-time high despite the fact that the US took the lead in imposing the sanctions. However, overall levels of international trade will not be realized or exceeded until China demonstrates a more positive human rights attitude. But what allowed Deng's open door policy to be successful?

The key factor to the success of Deng's open door policy was the transformation of China's southern coastal provinces into a market-oriented economy. As Edward Friedman states

. . . through the economic transformation proceeding from the south, China is undergoing a fundamental change in values through which the concept of China as a nation is increasingly defined in terms of the more open and market-oriented society in the south rather than a traditionally conservative, agrarian society of the north. (12;2)

Again, US Embassy reports indicate that international trade being conducted in the city of Shanghai and the province of Guangdong have made China the world's fastest growing economy. (6) Shanghai, China's largest port, handles over 29 percent of all import and export cargo. Additionally, Shanghai's over 20,000 businesses produced 7 percent of China's industrial output while exporting 8 percent of total export volume. This ranks Shanghai second only to Guangdong Province in total export volume. During 1992 alone, Shanghai's economy grew at 14 percent over the previous year, and there were more foreign investment projects than in the

previous 12 years combined. As previously mentioned, Guangdong Province is China's number one exporter, providing 22 percent of China's total exports. At the same time, Guangdong Province handles 13 percent of China's total imports. These two activities, imports and exports, have continued to expand at a rate that far exceeds the rest of China. In strategic terms, it then appears that China's economic center of gravity might well be defined as the southern coastal provinces where international trade is conducted. Since political and economic policies are so closely intertwined in China, a discussion of the political center of gravity is in order.

Like the changing priorities in the economy, China's political environment has a history of many changes. To identify the political center of gravity it is important to recognize the turbulent political history of China. After proclaiming the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Mao established a Leninist regime whose number one concern was the maintenance and consolidation of power.

(12;7) He remained the dominant figure from 1949 until 1976, initiating numerous "purges" of other senior leaders who disagreed with his policies. Examples include the dismissal of Peng Dehuai after the apparent failure of the "Great Leap Forward", and the humiliation and purging of Liu Shaoqi and Deng during the "Cultural Revolution." During the period 1969 to 1971, a coalition was formed between Lin Biao, Mao's assumed successor, and Zhou Enlai, a state bureaucrat, which

lasted until Lin's death in 1971. At that time, Zhou became the premier, and Deng returned to be the Vice Premier in 1973. Hua Guofeng assumed the premiership upon Zhou's death in 1973, and Deng was purged again by radical elements in the leadership. However, when Mao died in 1976, Hua had Mao's widow and the other members of the Gang of Four arrested. A year later, Deng became premier. All of the above examples illustrate the complexity and turbulence of political power in China.

While there were numerous changes in leadership positions, the overriding theme was a conflict between liberals and hardliners, the former being more progressive while the latter was more traditional. Another theme that emerges is that power has always gone to senior leaders who took part in the Civil War. Deng is the last prominent leader of these "veterans", and there is no "natural" successor to him. The outcome of this situation is unknown. Will future Chinese leaders be more outward looking and market-oriented, or will they return to the Maoist ideology of inward looking and self-reliance? In his article, "Political Stability in Post-Deng China -- Problems and Prospects," Richard Baum describes three "clusters" of leadership which will have a direct impact on post-Deng China. (3;494-495) The first of these groups is the neo-Maoist anti-reform group.

The neo-Maoist anti-reform group is a relatively small but extremely vocal group of hard-liners who cling to the Maoist ideology of strong central planning and control of

virtually the entire Chinese society. This group, led by hard-liners Vice-President Wang Zhen and Deng Liqun, would prefer to return to a less market-oriented economy patterned after Mao's philosophy of the Chinese Communist Party being the central focus of every facet of Chinese society.

The second leadership cluster can be defined as the bureaucratic-conservative group which advocates a "bigger birdcage" approach to government and the economy. This group retains the Maoist philosophy of socialist ownership and central planning (led by socialist planners vice market planners) but also supports decentralized administration of the overall structure of government and a moderately larger role for market forces within that structure. Led by elderly socialist planners, Chen Yun and Li Xiannian, the bureaucratic-conservatives form the "middle ground" of the three leadership clusters.

The third leadership cluster, led by Deng and President Yang Shangkun, wants to maintain strong central leadership but is more likely to further open China's socialist birdcage doors to market reform. This was evidenced by Deng's call for "an acceleration of China's economic reforms and a further 'opening' to the outside world." (3;497)

It is interesting to note that all three leadership clusters retain the Maoist philosophy of strong central leadership. The clusters vary only in the scope and pace of structural reform, the extent of Western marketization, and

just how much Chinese ideology will be contaminated by the openness associated by further opening of the birdcage.

Numerous China scholars and experts have conjectured about what China's post-Deng political scene will look like. Baum believes a "post-Leninist 'neoauthoritarianism'" scenario will develop. This scenario sees a "strong, nonideological leader presiding over a dynamic marketized economy." (3;503) The trends of provincial and local assertiveness in economic matters and administrative and fiscal authority moving away from Beijing support Baum's scenario. The emergence of one of these leadership clusters will definitely affect China's economic future, however, the fact that all three clusters and Baum's scenario retain the focus on strong central leadership points to the actual leader being the political center of gravity. With strong historical ties to the political leadership, a look at China's military is in order.

The PLA, China's military force, has long been associated with the political leaders. Its primary mission, as seen by the political leaders, has been to institutionalize the power of the ruling group, but that may change. Historically, the traditional military officers of the PLA, as opposed to the political officers, have sought to distance themselves from politics and focus on purely military matters, i.e., weapons development and doctrine. Two major drives for modernization have occurred since the PLA was established in 1949, and may well allow the separation of the

military from politics along the lines similar to that of the major western powers.

The first occurred after the Korean War in which the battlefield losses made China realize the importance of modern technology. This modernization effort continued until veterans of the war and many of the young officers rejected the supremacy of Party leadership and the political work system forced on the PLA as opposed to focusing on military matters. The Party responded with a slowdown in the modernization efforts to demonstrate its control over the PLA.

The second drive began after normalization of relations between the US and China. Deng's open door policy allowed the entry of Western technology and modern weapon systems, and the peaceful political climate led to improvement in both the economy and the military. The key to the peaceful climate "at home" was that while seeking separation from the Party, the PLA would not publicly deny the supremacy of the Party leadership in the PLA. (14;9-10)

Another aspect of the modernization drives was the "regularization" of the PLA. This was designed to instill professionalism by improving training, especially with the new technology and by focusing on values such as order, hierarchy, division of labor, public safety, and a strong civil authority separate from the military. (8;255) One might say that "regularization" was a means to allow the PLA to further distance itself from politics in an effort to overcome the military shortcomings identified during the Sino-Soviet bor-

der clashes and the action against Vietnam in 1979. Doctrine also played a key role in the modernization and regularization efforts.

PLA doctrine has evolved from a People's War to a People's War Under Modern Conditions to the current doctrine of Local Wars. The People's War doctrine focused on a defensive strategy of mass mobilization of the militia, a long defensive withdrawal to lure the enemy deep into China, and guerrilla actions. This doctrine offered a quick fix to China's technological backwardness but was also flawed -- "modern" tactics precluded "rational" military adversaries from being "lured deep" into Chinese territory. (6;259) The People's War Under Modern Conditions doctrine was developed to include "modern" tactics against "rational" adversaries. It was designed to defend against a Soviet invasion and was characterized by mobile defensive operations by PLA regular forces, positional defense by regional forces, and guerrilla warfare by its People's Militia in the enemy's rear. In late 1985, the strategic doctrine of Local Wars was introduced.

The Local Wars doctrine emphasizes quick, decisive results and was a major break from the two previous doctrines. It emphasized well-equipped, well-trained, fast-moving professional forces operating on China's periphery instead of defensive mass mobilization and protracted resistance in the interior. (12;24) Chinese military leaders believe the Local Wars doctrine was validated as a result of Desert Storm. Initially, the Gulf War was thought to be a People's War

Under Modern Conditions, but success of the high technology equipment and munitions rendered the People's War Under Modern Conditions obsolete and elevated the Local Wars doctrine to preeminence. Because the Local Wars doctrine focuses on rapid reaction and mobility, command and control and mobility assets appear to be the current military centers of gravity.

Now that the economic, political, and military centers of gravity have been identified, the question becomes whether or not China has, indeed, been a "sleeping dragon" which is on the verge of awakening and exerting its growing power, economically, politically, and militarily, in a way that will destabilize the region. All indications are that China is indeed awakening from its self-imposed isolation from the rest of the world and making advances in the three key areas --economics, politics, and the military -- that would enable it to dominate the Far East. The question then becomes whether or not Air Force doctrine can meet the challenges imposed by this "awakening dragon."

To sum up the opening quote, doctrine can be said to be the fundamental principles by which military forces guide their actions in support of national objectives. One such principle is that "the strategic level of war incorporates the broadest concerns of national policy." (1;2) This particular principle of doctrine focuses on defining and supporting national policy. But who or what defines our "broadest concerns" and establishes our "national policy?"

"Broadest concerns" can also be called national interests and are identified by our political leaders, more specifically by the President. National interests can be defined as those conditions or circumstances which contribute to the national well-being. These interests are broad, value-driven statements of national will and purpose which are enduring and widely accepted as given within a nation. National interest is "why" a nation acts as it does. US national interests include the survival of the US as a free nation, a healthy and growing economy, a stable and secure world, and vigorous relations with allies and friends. (15;5) Before moving to the discussion on national objectives, it is important to look at the intensity levels of interests which can be broken down into one of four categories: survival; vital; major; and peripheral. Survival refers to those interests which are deemed critical to the well-being of the nation and are time sensitive. Vital refers to those interests which are considered dangerous to the nation but are not as time-sensitive. Major interests are those which are considered serious but more on a long-term basis. Finally, the peripheral interests are those which do not fit immediately into any of the above levels and are considered "bothersome." It is important to identify these levels of intensity because in today's global environment, hard choices must be made in defining the national interests so that national objectives can be identified. China's awakening would be considered a major interest at this point in time.

National security objectives are defined in Joint Publication O-1 as, "the aims or purposes toward which national policy is directed and national efforts and resources are applied." National objectives are derived from national interests and represent the desired end-state of affairs or "what" a nation seeks. This desired end-state specifically guides the policy formulation and application. As mentioned earlier, "The National Military Strategy of the United States" is one source that outlines specific national security objectives. (15;5) Stated as an objective, the global interest of a stable and secure world reads, ensure "that no hostile power is able to dominate or control a region critical to our interests." Having discussed the "why" and "what" of the national security strategy process, the "how" will now be examined.

National security policy is a statement of "how" a nation plans to achieve a given national security objective. This policy guides the selection and preparation of resources, and the actions to be taken in applying them. Stated as a policy should China threaten to dominate the region, the interest and objective cited above could read "support the use of sanctions against China and encourage increased US trade with other countries in the region." It is important to note that policies are either political, economic, and/or military in their orientation of power. Political power is the capability to use ideas and strength of argument to attain an objective. Economic power is the

ability to attain an objective by either providing or denying money, goods, raw materials, and/or services. Military power seeks to attain objectives by using, or threatening to use, armed force. The above example clearly shows an economic orientation. A political orientation in the same scenario might be to "condemn China's apparent intention to dominate the region in international forums." A military orientation in the same scenario might be to "provide increased military assistance to friendly Asian countries in the Far East to deter potential Chinese dominance." Once formulated, policies must be applied. This leads to a discussion of national security strategy.

National security strategy, or policy application, is the use of power to implement the policies. The key word in this definition is power. A nation must assess its actual and/or perceived power and evaluate its will, the threat, and opportunities before taking action to implement policies. Again, the dimensions of political, economic, and military power are involved. In the application phase of the process, political power might mean using alliances or negotiations to make views known, economic power might mean supporting multilateral aid programs, and military power might mean modernizing the strategic force to militarily deter nuclear war. Once applied, the national security strategy must be evaluated to determine whether or not the national objectives have been attained. A discussion of some additional factors which impact the national security strategy follows.

When put in the context of a model, national security strategy is the bridge between national interests and national resources. The national interests are derived from the international and domestic environments. The international environment includes things such as the interaction of nation-states, non-state actors such as trade associations, terrorists, and movements such as the one for global ecology. On the other hand, the domestic environment might include areas such national will, national character, and political cohesion. The national resources would include such factors as, economic power, political power and alliances, military power, geography, technological development, population, and industrial capacity. Each of these factors impacts national security strategy and must be examined throughout the process. Even the miscalculation of one of these factors can have a far-reaching impact on a strategy's success or failure. Vietnam is a classic example of where one factor -- national will -- led to the failure of the strategy. Once the national interests, objectives, and policies are determined, how does this relate to the principle of incorporating "the broadest concerns of national policy?"

The recurring theme throughout the discussion on what constitutes "broadest concerns" and "national policy" was that a strong economy, a solid political structure, and a strong, capable military are instruments of power essential for any country to possess if it seeks to become powerful enough to dominate a region and thereby threaten regional se-

curity. If this is true, it appears that if these three areas can be controlled, reduced, or eliminated, then regional stability can be maintained. This is where the principle "that the strategic level of war incorporates the broadest concerns of national policy" can effectively meet the challenges of the "awakening dragon" throughout the spectrum of conflict.

The strategic level of war applies to all forms of war, "from military activities short of war through insurgent, conventional, and nuclear warfare." (2;44) Most people are familiar with the latter three forms of warfare, but may not be familiar with the former. Military activities short of war, or deterrent activities, include such activities as exercises with foreign nations (TEAM SPIRIT exercises with South Korea), deployments (strike packages sent to Saudi Arabia after Saddam Huessin threatened the Kurds), military-to-military contacts (the Air War College visit to China), and security assistance (the use of US equipment, training, and professional military education). Newer activities include combatting illegal drugs and humanitarian assistance (Operation Restore Hope in Somalia). It is important to be familiar with these forms of warfare because this principle of doctrine focuses on the entire war effort, not just the military effort, to include the integration of all instruments of power -- economic, political, and military.

Economically, there are many options available to deter a nation from acting against US national interests. (5;246)

Trade sanctions, the embargo of goods and services, cancellation of US-funded programs, reduction of elimination of corporate transactions, and an increase in security assistance to other nations in the region are only some of the options available. Some of these options can, indeed, be executed by the Air Force, but the important aspect is to integrate economic initiatives into the effort.

Politically, there are also many options available to influence a situation. (5;245) Probably the most important option is to gain popular support. As alluded to earlier, the Vietnam war was lost when public support waned. Other options include gaining Congressional support, taking measures to increase popular support, and promoting US policy objectives through public policy statements. Again, the important aspect is to integrate all three instruments of national power. Should the integration of the deterrent options of the three instruments of power fail, the most likely form of warfare that China would pursue would be the conventional form.

It is critical in conventional warfare that all three instruments of power be fully integrated. Once hostilities commenced, each of China's instruments of power could be attacked. First, the economic center of gravity will be discussed.

If China's economic center of gravity is the southern coastal provinces where international trade is conducted, what is the best way, or ways, to deny China access to inter-

national trade? There are many options available. The elimination of the ability to use transportation networks, such as railroads, bridges, rivers, and airways is one way. Attacking electrical power grids or other infrastructure industry would diminish or eliminate China's ability to maintain current production levels and conduct electronic business so necessary in today's international market. Mining harbors where international shipments take place would have a devastating effect on China's economy. What about the political center of gravity?

As defined earlier, the political center of gravity is whoever is in power at any given time, regardless of personal ideology. The key to tilting this center of gravity in our favor is to somehow eliminate the leader. Again, there are many options available. One option is to eliminate command and control capabilities and any other methods for the leader to communicate with the people and the military. These could include television and radio stations as well as electrical generation facilities. What about the military center of gravity?

With China's current doctrine of Local Wars, the military center of gravity was defined as its command and control capabilities and mobility assets. Military headquarters facilities, early warning and radar sites, and electrical generation facilities provide likely targets to impact China's command and control capabilities. Airfields, highways, rail-

roads, airways, river ports, and bridges are definite target possibilities to minimize China's ability to move its forces.

In each of the three instruments of power, the principle of Air Force doctrine that "the strategic level of war incorporates the broadest concerns of national policy" can, indeed, be effective and meet the challenge of this awakening dragon. The success of this principle was thoroughly demonstrated during the Persian Gulf crisis where targets such as those described above were struck with devastating effects.

In conclusion, this article has looked at whether or not US Air Force doctrine could effectively meet the potential regional challenge imposed by China. To do this, China's economic, political, and military instruments were discussed in order to identify centers of gravity in each area. Subsequently, the principle of doctrine relating to the strategic levels of war was discussed to include the players and process used to define "broadest concerns" and "national policy." Finally, the application of the principle was discussed with selected levels of the spectrum of conflict, military activities short of war and conventional warfare. This article was not intended to be all-inclusive in discussing the relationship between US Air Force doctrine and its ability to meet a regional challenge in the Far East. On the contrary, it was intended to stimulate thought about doctrine because, "Doctrine should be alive -- growing, evolving, and maturing." (1;vii)

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