



USES OF DOCTRINE

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One way to explore good [doctrine](#) is to use a “compare and contrast” model to walk through some key issues. This technique also amplifies the point that doctrine should be written broadly, allowing decision makers latitude in interpretation and flexibility in application, yet be specific enough to provide informed guidance. This technique also illustrates the use of doctrine in explaining contentious issues and how doctrine can be used to think more effectively about the best means to integrate various aspects of military power and organization. In the following discussion, there may be overlap among some of the principles expressed; this is desirable in that often there are different aspects or nuances to a particular issue. In doctrine, language is important. Finally, the following discussion presents an Air Force perspective; not all Services may entirely agree with these points.

Doctrine is about **warfighting**, not **physics**. This principle specifically addresses the perceived differences between operations in air, space, and [cyberspace](#). Air, space, and cyberspace are separate domains requiring exploitation of different sets of physical laws to operate in, but are linked by the effects they can produce together. To achieve a common purpose, air, space, and cyberspace capabilities need to be integrated. Therefore, Air Force doctrine focuses on the best means to obtain warfighting effects regardless of the medium in which a platform operates. As an example, Airmen should be concerned with the best means of employing [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance](#) (ISR) capabilities, not whether a particular ISR platform is airborne or in orbit. This is requisite to achieving true integration across any given collection of forces.

Doctrine is about **effects**, not **platforms**. This focuses on the desired outcome of a particular action, not on the system or weapon itself that provides the [effect](#). For example, doctrine states that Airmen should seek to achieve [air superiority](#), but doctrine does not focus on which platforms should be used to achieve that effect. A parallel example of this is seen in the recognition that bombers are not “strategic,” nor are fighters “tactical.” Similarly, it does not matter if an F-16 or a B-52 accomplishes a given task, or whether a particular platform is manned or unmanned, or whether a C-17 or a C-130 delivers a certain load; the outcome of the mission, the effect achieved, is what’s important. Thus, Air Force doctrine does not explicitly tie specific weapon systems to specific tasks or effects.

Doctrine is about **using mediums**, not **owning mediums**. This illustrates the importance of properly using a medium to obtain the best warfighting effects, not of carving up the battlespace based on Service or functional parochialism. Focusing on

using a medium is a vital first step to integration of efforts. “Ownership” arguments eventually lead to suboptimal (and usually at best tactical) application of efforts at the expense of the larger, total effort.

Doctrine is about **organization**, not **organizations**. Modern warfare demands that disparate parts of different Services, different nations, and even differing functions within a single Service be brought together intelligently to achieve [unity of command](#) and [unity of effort](#). However, merely placing different organizations together in an area of operations is insufficient to meet these demands. A single, cohesive organization is required with clearly defined lines of command and commanders with requisite authorities at appropriate levels. Doctrine explains why certain organizational structures are preferred over others and describes effective command relationships and command authorities; this facilitates the rapid standup of joint and Service organizations during rapidly evolving situations. Ultimately, doctrine is not about whether one particular element of a joint force is more decisive than another, nor about positing that element as the centerpiece of joint operations; it’s the total, tailored joint force that’s decisive. Getting to that effective joint force requires smart organization and a thorough understanding of Service and joint doctrine.

Doctrine is about **synergy**, not **segregation**. True integration of effort cannot be achieved by merely carving up the operational environment. While segregation may have some benefit and may appear the simplest way, from a command and control viewpoint, to manage elements of a diverse joint force, it may actually suboptimize the overall effort. It guarantees that the whole will never be greater than the sum of its parts. For example, Airmen should have access to the entire theater of operations to maximize their ability to achieve [joint force commander](#) objectives; they should not be restricted from any area due to unnecessarily restrictive fire control measures. Also, segregating the battlespace into smaller [areas of operation](#) may create competition for scarce, high-demand, low-density capabilities and reduce combat effectiveness.

Doctrine is about **integration**, not just **synchronization**. [Synchronization](#) is defined as “the arrangement of military actions in time, space, and purpose to produce maximum relative combat power at a decisive place and time” (JP 1-02). [Integration](#), by comparison, is defined as “the arrangement of military forces and their actions to create a force that operates by engaging as a whole” (JP 1-02). Synchronization is, in essence, deconfliction in time and space between different units. It is a useful means to plan and execute operations and to prevent fratricide. However, it doesn’t scale up to the [operational level](#) and hence is not the best means for achieving the maximum potential of a joint force. Synchronization emphasizes timing, while integration considers priority and effect to be both efficient and effective with scarce resources. Synchronization is bottom-up; integration, on the other hand, starts at the top with a single cohesive plan and works downward. Synchronization is an additive “sum of the parts” model, while integration may produce geometric results.

Doctrine is about **the right force**, not just **equal shares of the force**. This addresses the proper mix of Service [components](#) within a joint force. Some believe that a joint

force requires equal parts of all the Services. This is an incorrect view. As one senior Air Force officer said, “joint warfighting is not like Little League baseball, where everybody gets a chance to play.” Any given joint force should be tailored appropriately for the task at hand. Some operations will be land-centric, others air-centric, others maritime-, cyberspace-, or information-centric. The composition of the joint force and the tasks assigned its various elements should reflect the needs of the situation.
