

Principles of War

Fighting a war involves careful planning and consideration. The Principles of War have been used successfully for centuries by military commanders the world over as important tools toward achieving success in both war and peace. These same principles are now guiding coalition forces in the current war in Iraq.

Consider these:

Mass -- The principle of mass is about concentrating overwhelming combat power at the decisive place and time shocking him into submission.

Objective -- Every military operation should be directed towards a defined, decisive, and attainable objective. The war in Vietnam was a painful lesson on how NOT to fight a war. In Vietnam, no clear objective existed and the principles of war were ignored. Rules of engagement restricted the military from winning the conflict and prolonged out the misguided conflict for years on end.

Offensive-- Seize, retain, and exploit the initiative. A military force cannot expect to win a war by taking the defensive. Success comes to those who aggressively move forward, catching the enemy off-guard to force them to surrender or terminate his resistance.

Security -- Never permit the enemy to acquire an unexpected advantage. In order to win you must know more about the enemy than the enemy knows about you. This includes not letting the enemy discover your plans, strengths and plan of attack. In some cases this involves using special operations deep behind enemy lines to discover and exploit weaknesses.

Economy of Force -- Focus the right amount of force at the right time at the right location. A failure of this principle occurred during military operations in Somalia in 1993. A force of American soldiers was deployed to capture a local warlord. They underestimated the will and firepower of the Somalis, becoming overwhelmed, lost and confused by their firepower. Reinforcements were slow in coming and many lives were lost on both sides.

Maneuver -- Place the enemy in a position of disadvantage through the flexible application of combat power. Antiquated battle tactics fought during the Revolutionary War forced soldiers to march headlong into volleys of musket balls. Modern warfare involves striking the enemy by air, land and sea simultaneously. If you sit still you will become a target.

Unity of Command -- Avoid war at all costs, but once diplomacy ends, for every objective, there should be one person ultimately responsible for decisions. Commanders in the field need the authority to make important decisions, not hamstrung by politics and second-guessing.

Surprise -- Strike the enemy at a time and/or place and in a manner for which he is unprepared. The purpose of war is to destroy enemy's will to fight and do it as quickly as possible. The best war is a short war, with few lives lost, and nothing does this quicker than the principle of surprise.

Simplicity -- Prepare clear, uncomplicated plans and clear, concise orders to insure thorough understanding.

M.O.O.S.E.M.U.S.S. Worksheet

M ass	
O bjective	
O ffensive	
S urprise	
E conomy of Force	
M aneuver	
U nity of Command	
S ecurity	
S implicity	