



# Principles of War

## Guidance for the Application of Military Power

The 2014 edition of UK Defence Doctrine (JDP 0-01 5th edition) explains that the role of the **Principles of War** is to “inform and guide” the way in which military power is applied. “Underpinned by understanding, mission command and the manoeuvrist approach, they represent enduring principles, whose expression and emphasis change in relation to context.” Their application requires judgement, common sense and intelligent interpretation.

The **Principles of War** represent the refinement and sum of military “corporate memory, experience and knowledge” that ultimately dates back to Sun Tzu around 500BC. They provide a powerful and relevant lens through which to examine the commercial power of your organisation.



### SELECTION & MAINTENANCE OF AIM

**Selection and maintenance of the aim** is regarded as the master principle of war. A single, unambiguous aim is key to successful military operations.



### MAINTENANCE OF MORALE

**Maintenance of morale** enables a positive state of mind derived from inspired political and military leadership, a shared sense of purpose and values, well-being, feeling of worth and group cohesion.



### OFFENSIVE ACTION

**Offensive action** is the practical way in which a commander seeks to gain advantage, sustain momentum and seize the initiative.



### SECURITY

**Security** is providing and maintaining an operating environment that gives freedom of action, when and where required, to achieve objectives.



### SURPRISE

**Surprise** is the consequence of confusion induced by deliberately or incidentally introducing the unexpected.



### CONCENTRATION OF FORCE

**Concentration of force** involves decisively synchronising applying superior fighting power (physical, intellectual and moral) to realise intended effects, when and where required.



### ECONOMY OF EFFORT

**Economy of effort** is judiciously exploiting manpower, materiel and time in relation to the achievement of objectives.



### FLEXIBILITY

**Flexibility** is the ability to change readily to meet new circumstances – it comprises agility, responsiveness, resilience and adaptability.



### COOPERATION

**Cooperation** incorporates teamwork and a sharing of dangers, burdens, risks and opportunities in every aspect of warfare.



### SUSTAINABILITY

**Sustainability** requires generating the means by which fighting power and freedom of action are maintained.

### Mission Command.

This doctrine combines centralised intent with decentralised execution subsidiarity and promotes freedom and speed of action, and initiative, within defined constraints.

Subordinates, understanding the commander's intentions, their own missions and the context of those missions, are told what effect they are to achieve and the reason why it needs to be achieved. They then decide within their delegated freedom of action how best to achieve their missions. Orders provide only enough detail to establish intent and objectives, allowing freedom of action. In elite sport, coaches talk of the individual “Playing the game in front of them”.

### Manoeuvrist Approach.

The “manoeuvrist approach to operations applies strength against identified vulnerabilities, including predominately indirect ways and means of targeting the intellectual and moral component of an opponent's fighting power. Significant features are momentum, tempo, and agility which, in combination, aim to achieve shock and surprise.”