



OBJECTIVE

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“Objective” is one of the principles of war.

The principle of objective is to direct military operations toward a defined and attainable objective that contributes to strategic, operational, and tactical aims. In application, this principle refers to [unity of effort](#) in purpose, space, and time. In a broad sense, this principle holds that political and military goals should be complementary and clearly articulated. A clear National Military Strategy provides focus for defining [campaign](#) or theater objectives. At the operational level, campaign or theater objectives determine military priorities.

The objective is important due to the [flexibility and versatility](#) of [airpower](#). From the outset, airpower can pursue tactical, operational, or strategic objectives, in any combination, or all three simultaneously. By integrating the potential offered by air, space, and cyberspace capabilities, Airmen can overcome the challenges imposed by distance and time. From an Airman’s perspective, then, the principle of objective shapes priorities to allow airpower to concentrate on theater or campaign priorities and seeks to avoid the siphoning of force elements to fragmented objectives.

Air operations, like any other military operations, are governed by the same fundamental principles that have governed warfare in the past. The selection of the objectives against which air operations are to be directed is thus of vital importance. Air operations must be pushed with energy and dispatch. Every opportunity must be seized to take full advantage of the element of surprise. Since the replacement of the personnel and equipment of air forces is both slow and costly, economy of force is specially important. Whereas it is always unwise to fritter away military forces, it is dangerous in the case of air forces. Air forces should accordingly be concentrated against the primary objective, the one most advantageous in the situation, and not dispersed or dissipated in minor or secondary operations.

— Training Regulation 440-15,
“Employment of the
Air Forces of the Army,” 1935