North Korean Sony Hack

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Abstract: - Cole

In this essay we will talk about the North Korea Sony hack and the implications of the event. As well we will be referencing classical thinkers such as Sun-Tzu; where we talk about espionage and relate it to the modern, cyberwarfare field. Machiavelli; where we talk about the control of the state and how North Korea controls its citizens and attempts to control other nations. And Clausewitz; where we discuss his ideas about friction and center of gravity and how the attackers understood those ideas in this event. We offer a detailed description of the attack and the events afterward, and we will be discussing how strategically sound the actions that the attackers took were.

*Key Words:* North Korea, Sony, Cyber, Attack, Hack, Sun-Tzu, Machiavelli, Clausewitz,

Outline of the Event: - Jonny

Sony released a movie that talks about a North Korean leader being assassinated (provoke?). Hacker group is 'Guardians of Peace’, they did a ransomware attack on Sony holding data hostage, threatened movie theatres with 9/11 like attacks if they played movies. Hackers spread misinformation & fear (Clausewitz, Machiavelli). Pointed to 09.11 - Thucydides can be used to justify actions or political warfare

Sony gets hit with cyber-attacks when publicizing the planned date of release of the movie “The Interview”. The movie depicts a satire where the current North Korean dictator gets assassinated in a humiliating way and that causes North Korea to retaliate with mass data clearing, terroristic threats, and extortionate threats. Many major movie theaters chains were also threatened with terroristic threats relating to 9/11 if they were to view the movie. These threats were effective and caused Sony and major movie theater chains to not release the movie, but later on after witnessing U.S retaliation Sony did release the movie but on a smaller scale on blu-ray, online viewing, and select movie theaters. The hack raised many questions on free speech and the first amendment, how foreign parties can influence free speech, and should the U.S protect corporations from foreign attacks.

Sun-Tzu and Espionage: - Jonny

Hence the [saying](https://suntzusaid.com/index/saying): If you know the [enemy](https://suntzusaid.com/index/enemy) and know [yourself](https://suntzusaid.com/index/yourself), you need not fear the [result](https://suntzusaid.com/index/result) of a [hundred](https://suntzusaid.com/index/hundred) battles. If you know [yourself](https://suntzusaid.com/index/yourself) but not the [enemy](https://suntzusaid.com/index/enemy), for every [victory](https://suntzusaid.com/index/victory) gained you will also suffer a [defeat](https://suntzusaid.com/index/defeat).

Hence the use of spies, of whom there are five classes: (1) Local spies; (2) inward spies; (3) converted spies; (4) doomed spies; (5) surviving spies.

Therefore, one who is good at martial arts overcomes others' forces without battle, conquers others' cities without siege, destroys others' nations without taking a long time

The way North Korea hacked into Sony reflects many of Sun Tzu’s way of thinking. The goal of the hack was to stop the release of the movie and they did so, even if it was temporary “When a warlike prince attacks a powerful state, his generalship shows itself in preventing the concentration of the enemy's forces.” This attack not only allowed North Korea to demonstrate their power but achieve their goal of halting the spread of the offensive satire. Espionage was a key component of the attack as it allowed North Korea to secretly infiltrate and attack Sony, Though many had already suspected North Korea, they threw diversion by dropping the names of other infamous hack groups such as the Guardians of Peace which Sun Tzu would reinforce by stating that “Warfare is the art of deceit” and by using these tactics it allows a wider range of options and actions for the infiltrator to commit while being under the radar. Their use of espionage also allowed them to place their demands and threats without being noticed and allowed them to strip, wipe and capture the hard drives that held data regarding the movie and information of the employees that were employed at Sony.

Machiavelli and the State/Fear: - Cole

Machiavelli - "every prince must desire to be considered merciful and not cruel" - page 57

Machiavelli - "It is better to be feared than loved, if you cannot be both" - page 58

Machiavelli - "A man who wishes to profess goodness at all times will come to ruin among so many who are not good" - page 53

Machiavelli - "I say it would be good to be considered generous. Nevertheless, generosity employed in such a way as to give you a reputation for it will injure you, because if it is employed virtuously and as one should employ it, it will not be recognized, and you will not avoid the infamy as its opposite" page 54

The way that North Korea’s leaders control their state is very reminiscent of how Machiavelli advised one to do so. As he said: “It is better to be feared than loved” (page 58) that when in the business of running a nation one’s goals can be accomplished more easily if the population has fear for the leader as opposed to love. He makes an example of Cesare Borgia, who’s cruelty brought peace and prosperity to Romagna (page 57), this illustrates how Machiavelli thinks about mercy and cruelty, and relates on how the leaders of North Korea run their nation. That is what this attack is attempting to accomplish, to prove to their citizens and the world at large that they are a force to be feared, and they hope that this would further their control over their populace, and the international community. They very clearly wanted to instill fear in the American based company and movie theaters with threats of terrorism and specifially 9/11, a terrorist attack that many people in America consider the most severe terror attack on American soil ever. However, while this may have been effective at first, in the end the opposite goal was achieved; Sony still released the movie (albeit in a limited way), some movie theaters still played it and people still went to go see it. If North Korea’s goal really was trying to use cruelty to cause fear to increase their control, then they failed. All this attack managed to accomplish from this perspective is draw more attention to the possibility of a cyber threat.

Another point that Machiavelli displayed was that while being cruel and employing fear were effective, it was better to appear to be merciful and generous. “Let me say that every prince must desire to be considered merciful and not cruel” (page 57). North Korean leaders are infamous for being cruel, and in no way are considered loved or generous, and so this leads to other nations regarding them poorly and their power in international affairs is lessened as a result. Even though they are widely regarded as cruel and fear inducing this worked against them as the American people were so ideologically driven against them, they supported this movie out of hatred for North Korea.

Clausewitz and Friction: - Jun

Clausewitz - “Everything is simple in War, but the simplest thing is difficult” - chapter 7 Friction in War, pg.84

Clausewitz - “Friction is the only conception which in a general way corresponds to that which distinguishes real War from War on paper.”

“Everything is simple in War, but the simplest thing is difficult” - chapter 7 Friction in War, pg.84. The sony hack seems simple enough on the surface level and the decision that they have to make seems too simple to even put enough deep consideration on North Korea’s hack on their company. When people look closely and observe the whole situation, it is really complicated where they have to consider their stance rather than display the movie or cancel it. If they ignore the hackers’ demands and give up their data, it will create a bigger situation where they will receive bigger threats from North Korea and more harms on the company because they already have proven they are capable on their ability to hack into the system and completely lock the computers down holding the data as a hostage. If they yield and decide not to display the movies, then other nations or companies will think they are weak and listen to the demands where it translates to the government. It will show their government is weak and it will make North Korea think of them as a vulnerable company where they can perform another strategy to create another conflict if they wish to do so.

Another point that North Korea is making is that they are capable of hacking any giant companies or government system and remind them they will execute their plan if there is harm on North Korea’s leader and the country. It tells other nations to be prepared for a plan when North Korea hacks their system and take serious measures to protect their data so it does not come to Sony’s situation.

Conclusion:

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