LOSE BATTLES BUT WIN THE WAR

GRAND STRATEGY

Everyone around you is a strategist angling for power, all trying to promote their own interests, often at your expense. Your daily battles with them make you lose sight of the only thing that really matters: victory in the end, the achievement of greater goals, lasting power. Grand strategy is the art of looking beyond the battle and calculating ahead. It requires that you focus on your ultimate goal and plot to reach it. In grand strategy you consider the political ramifications and long-term consequences of what you do. Instead of reacting emotionally to people, you take control, and make your actions more dimensional, subtle, and effective. Let others get caught up in the twists and turns of the battle, relishing their little victories. Grand strategy will bring you the ultimate reward: the last laugh.

> *Readiness is everything. Resolution is indissolubly bound up with caution. If an individual is careful and keeps his wits about him, he need not become excited or alarmed. If he is watchful at all times, even before danger is present, he is armed when danger approaches and need not be afraid. The superior man is on his guard against what is not yet in sight and on the alert for what is not yet within hearing; therefore he dwells in the midst of difficulties as though they did not exist.... If reason triumphs, the passions withdraw of themselves.*

THE I CHING, CHINA, CIRCA EIGHTH CENTURY B.C.

THE GREAT CAMPAIGN

Growing up at the Macedonian court, Alexander (356-322 B.C.) was considered a rather strange young man. He enjoyed the usual boyish pursuits, such as horses and warfare; having fought alongside his father, King Philip II, in several battles, he had proved his bravery. But he also loved philosophy and literature. His tutor was the great thinker Aristotle, under whose influence he loved to argue about

politics and science, looking at the world as dispassionately as possible. Then there was his mother, Olympias: a mystical, superstitious woman, she had had visions at Alexander's birth that he would one day rule the known world. She told him about them and filled him with stories of Achilles, from whom her family claimed descent. Alexander adored his mother (while hating his father) and took her prophecies most seriously. From early on in life, he carried himself as if he were more than the son of a king.

Alexander was raised to be Philip's successor, and the state he was to inherit had grown considerably during his father's reign. Over the years the king had managed to build up the Macedonian army into the supreme force in all Greece. He had defeated Thebes and Athens and had united all the Greek city-states (except Sparta) into a Hellenic league under his leadership. He was a crafty, intimidating ruler. Then, in 336 B.C., a disgruntled nobleman assassinated him. Suddenly seeing Macedonia as vulnerable, Athens declared its independence from the league. The other city-states followed suit. Tribes from the north now threatened to invade. Almost overnight Philip's small empire was unraveling.

When Alexander came to the throne, he was only twenty, and many considered him unready. It was a bad time for learning on the job; the Macedonian generals and political leaders would have to take him under their wing. They advised him to go slowly, to consolidate his position in both the army and Macedonia and then gradually reform the league through force and guile. That was what Philip would have done. But Alexander would not listen; he had another plan, or so it seemed. Without giving his enemies in and beyond Macedonia time to organize against him, he led the army south and reconquered Thebes in a series of lightning maneuvers. Next he marched on the Athenians, who, fearing his retribution, begged forgiveness and pleaded to be readmitted to the league. Alexander granted their wish.

The eccentric young prince had shown himself to be a bold and unpredictable king--attacking when he was not meant to, yet showing Athens unexpected mercy. He was hard to read, but his first maneuvers as king had won him many admirers. His next move, however, was still stranger and more audacious: instead of working to consolidate his gains and strengthen the fragile league, he proposed to launch a crusade against the Persian Empire, the Greeks' great enemy. Some 150 years earlier, the Persians had tried to invade Greece. They had almost succeeded, and it remained their dream to try it again and get it right. With Persia a constant threat, the Greeks could never rest easy, and their maritime trade was cramped by the power of the Persian navy.

THE FOX AND THE MONKEY ELECTED KING

The monkey, having danced in an assembly of the animals and earned their approval, was elected by them to be king. The fox was jealous. So, seeing a piece of meat one day in a snare, he led the monkey to it, saying that he had found a treasure. But rather than take it for himself, he had kept guard over it, as its possession was surely a prerogative of royalty. The fox then urged him to take it.

The monkey approached it, taking no care, and was caught in the trap. When he accused the fox of luring him into a trap, the fox replied: "Monkey, you want to reign over all the animals, but look what a fool you are!" It is thus that those who throw themselves into an enterprise without sufficient thought not only fail, but even become a laughing stock.

FABLES, AESOP, SIXTH CENTURY B.C.

In 334 B.C., Alexander led a united army of 35,000 Greeks across the Dardanelle Straits and into Asia Minor, the westernmost part of the Persian Empire. In their first encounter with the enemy, at the Battle of the Granicus, the Greeks routed the Persians. Alexander's generals could only admire his boldness: he seemed poised to conquer Persia, fulfilling his mother's prophecy in record time. He succeeded through speed and by seizing the initiative. Now soldiers and generals alike expected him to head straight east into Persia to finish off the enemy army, which seemed surprisingly weak.

Once again Alexander confounded expectations, suddenly deciding to do what he had never done before: take his time. That would have seemed wise when he first came to power, but now it seemed likely to give the Persians the one thing they needed: time to recover and replenish. Yet Alexander led his army not east but south, down the coast of Asia Minor, freeing local towns from Persian rule. Next he zigzagged east and then south again, through Phoenicia and into Egypt, quickly defeating the weak Persian garrison there. The Egyptians hated their Persian rulers and welcomed Alexander as their liberator. Now Alexander could use Egypt's vast stores of grain to feed the Greek army and help keep the Greek economy stable, while depriving Persia of valuable resources.

As the Greeks advanced farther from home, the Persian navy, which could land an army almost anywhere in the Mediterranean to attack them from the rear or flank, was a worrying threat. Before Alexander set out on his expedition, many had advised him to build up the Greek navy and take the battle to the Persians by sea as well as land. Alexander had ignored them. Instead, as he

passed through Asia Minor and then along the coast of Phoenicia, he simply captured Persia's principal ports, rendering their navy useless.

These small victories, then, had a greater strategic purpose. Even so, they would have meant little had the Greeks been unable to defeat the Persians in battle--and Alexander seemed to be making that victory more difficult. The Persian king, Darius, was concentrating his forces east of the Tigris River; he had numbers and his choice of location and could wait in ease for Alexander to cross the river. Had Alexander lost his taste for battle? Had Persian and Egyptian culture softened him? It seemed so: he had begun to wear Persian clothes and to adopt Persian customs. He was even seen worshipping Persian gods.

As the Persian army retreated east of the Tigris, large areas of the Persian empire had come under Greek control. Now Alexander spent much of his time not on warfare but on politics, trying to see how best to govern these regions. He decided to build on the Persian system already in place, keeping the same titles for jobs in the governmental bureaucracy, collecting the same tribute that Darius had done. He changed only the harsh, unpopular aspects of Persian rule. Word quickly spread of his generosity and gentleness toward his new subjects. Town after town surrendered to the Greeks without a fight, only too glad to be part of Alexander's growing empire, which transcended Greece and Persia. He was the unifying factor, the benevolent overseeing god.

> *Epistemologically speaking, the source of all erroneous views on war lies in* idealist *and* mechanistic *tendencies.... People with such tendencies are subjective and one-sided in their approach to problems. They indulge in groundless and purely subjective talk, basing themselves upon a single aspect or temporary manifestation* [*and*] *magnify it with similar subjectivity into the whole of the problem.... Only by opposing idealistic and mechanistic tendencies and taking an objective all-sided view in making a study of war can we draw correct conclusions on the question of war.*
>
> *SELECTED MILITARY WRITINGS*, MAO TSE-TUNG, 1893-1976

Finally, in 331 B.C., Alexander marched on the main Persian force at Arbela. What his generals had not understood was that, deprived of the use of its navy, its rich lands in Egypt, and the support and tribute of almost all of its subjects, the Persian Empire had already crumbled. Alexander's victory at Arbela merely confirmed militarily what he had already achieved months earlier: he was now the ruler of the once mighty Persian Empire. Fulfilling his mother's prophecy, he controlled almost all of the known world.

Interpretation

Alexander the Great's maneuvers bewildered his staff: they seemed to have no logic, no consistency. Only later could the Greeks look back and really see his magnificent achievement. The reason they could not understand him was that Alexander had invented a whole new way of thinking and acting in the world: the art of grand strategy.

In grand strategy you look beyond the moment, beyond your immediate battles and concerns. You concentrate instead on what you want to achieve down the line. Controlling the temptation to react to events as they happen, you determine each of your actions according to your ultimate goals. You think in terms not of individual battles but of a campaign.

Alexander owed his novel style of strategizing to his mother and to Aristotle. His mother had given him a sense of destiny and a goal: to rule the known world. From the age of three, he could see in his mind's eye the role he would play when he was thirty. From Aristotle he learned the power of controlling his emotions, seeing things dispassionately, thinking ahead to the consequences of his actions.

Trace the zigzags of Alexander's maneuvers and you will see their grand-strategic consistency. His quick actions against first Thebes, then Persia, worked psychically on his soldiers and on his critics. Nothing quiets an army faster than battle; Alexander's sudden crusade against the hated Persians was the perfect way to unite the Greeks. Once he was in Persia, though, speed was the wrong tactic. Had Alexander advanced, he would have found himself controlling too much land too quickly; running it would have exhausted his resources, and in the ensuing power vacuum, enemies would have sprung up everywhere. Better to proceed slowly, to build on what was there, to win hearts and minds. Instead of wasting money on building a navy, better simply to make the Persian navy unusable. To pay for the kind of extended campaign that would bring long-term success, first seize the rich lands of Egypt. None of Alexander's actions were wasted. Those who saw his plans bear fruit, in ways they themselves had been entirely unable to predict, thought him a kind of god--and certainly his control over events deep in the future seemed more godlike than human.

> *There is, however, much difference between the East and the West in cultural heritages, in values, and in ways of thinking. In the Eastern way of thinking, one starts with the whole, takes everything as a whole and proceeds with a comprehensive and intuitive synthesization* [*combinaton*] *. In the Western way of thinking, however, one starts with the parts, takes* [*divides*] *a complex matter into component parts and then deals with them one by one, with an*

emphasis on logical analysis. Accordingly, Western traditional military thought advocates a direct military approach with a stress on the use of armed forces.

THE STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE: SUN ZI & WESTERN APPROACHES TO WAR, CAO SHAN, ED., 1997

To become a grand strategist in life, you must follow the path of Alexander. First, clarify your life--decipher your own personal riddle--by determining what it is you are destined to achieve, the direction in which your skills and talents seem to push you. Visualize yourself fulfilling this destiny in glorious detail. As Aristotle advised, work to master your emotions and train yourself to think ahead: "This action will advance me toward my goal, this one will lead me nowhere." Guided by these standards, you will be able to stay on course.

Ignore the conventional wisdom about what you should or should not be doing. It may make sense for some, but that does not mean it bears any relation to your own goals and destiny. You need to be patient enough to plot several steps ahead--to wage a campaign instead of fighting battles. The path to your goal may be indirect, your actions may be strange to other people, but so much the better: the less they understand you, the easier they are to deceive, manipulate, and seduce. Following this path, you will gain the calm, Olympian perspective that will separate you from other mortals, whether dreamers who get nothing done or prosaic, practical people who accomplish only small things.

What I particularly admire in Alexander is, not so much his campaigns...but his political sense. He possessed the art of winning the affection of the people.

--Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821)

TOTAL WARFARE

In 1967 the leaders of the American war effort in Vietnam thought they were finally making progress. They had launched a series of operations to search out and destroy the Vietcong--North Vietnamese soldiers who had infiltrated South Vietnam and had come to control much of its countryside. These guerrilla fighters were elusive, but the Americans had inflicted heavy losses on them in the few battles they had managed to force on them that year. The new South Vietnamese government, supported by the Americans, seemed relatively stable, which could help to win it approval among the Vietnamese people. To the north,

bombing raids had knocked out many of North Vietnam's airfields and heavily damaged its air force. Although massive antiwar demonstrations had broken out in the United States, polls showed that most Americans supported the war and believed that the end was in sight.

Since the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese army had proved rather ineffective in head-to-head battle against the might of American firepower and technology, the strategy was to somehow lure them into a major engagement. That would be the turning point of the war. And by the end of 1967, intelligence indicated that the North Vietnamese were about to fall into just such a trap: their commander, General Vo Nguyen Giap, was planning a major offensive against the U.S. marine outpost at Khe Sanh. Apparently he wanted to repeat his greatest success, the battle at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, in which he had defeated the French army, driving the French out of Vietnam for good.

Khe Sanh was a key strategic outpost. It was located a mere fourteen miles from the demilitarized zone that separated North from South Vietnam. It was also six miles from the border of Laos, site of a stretch of the famous Ho Chi Minh Trail, the North Vietnamese supply route to the Vietcong in the South. General William C. Westmoreland, the overall U.S. commander, was using Khe Sanh to monitor enemy activity to the north and west. Dien Bien Phu had served a similar role for the French, and Giap had been able to isolate and destroy it. Westmoreland would not allow Giap to repeat that feat. He built well-protected airstrips around Khe Sanh, ensuring full use of his helicopters and control of the air. He called up substantial numbers of troops from the south to the Khe Sanh area, just in case he needed them. He also ordered 6,000 additional marines to reinforce the outpost. But a major attack on Khe Sanh was nothing he wanted to discourage: in frontal battle the enemy would finally expose itself to severe defeat.

In the first few weeks of 1968, all eyes were on Khe Sanh. The White House and the U.S. media were certain that the decisive battle of the war was about to begin. Finally, at dawn on January 21, 1968, the North Vietnamese army launched a vicious assault. As both sides dug in, the battle turned into a siege.

Soon after the engagement began, the Vietnamese were to celebrate their lunar New Year, the holiday called Tet. It was a period of revelry, and in time of war it was also a traditional moment to declare a truce. This year was no different; both sides agreed to halt the fighting during Tet. Early on the morning of January 31, however, the first day of the New Year, reports began to trickle in from all over South Vietnam: virtually every major town and city, as well as the most important American bases, had come under Vietcong attack. An army general, tracking the assault pattern on a map, said it "resembled a pinball

machine, lighting up with each raid."

Parts of Saigon itself had been overrun by enemy soldiers, some of whom had managed to blow their way through the wall of the U.S. embassy, the very symbol of the American presence in Vietnam. Marines regained control of the embassy in a bloody fight, which was widely seen on American television. The Vietcong also attacked the city's radio station, the presidential palace, and Westmoreland's own compound at the Tan Son Nhut air base. The city quickly descended into street fighting and chaos.

Outside Saigon, provincial cities, too, came under siege. Most prominent was the North Vietnamese capture of Hue, the ancient Vietnamese capital and a city revered by Buddhists. Insurgents managed to take control of virtually the whole city.

Meanwhile the attacks on Khe Sanh continued in waves. It was hard for Westmoreland to tell what the main target was: were the battles to the south merely a means of drawing forces away from Khe Sanh, or was it the other way around? Within a few weeks, in all parts of South Vietnam, the Americans regained the upper hand, retaking control of Saigon and securing their air bases. The sieges at Hue and Khe Sanh took longer, but massive artillery and air bombardments eventually doomed the insurgents, as well as leveling entire sections of Hue.

> *When dark inertia increases, obscurity and inactivity, negligence and delusion, arise. When lucidity prevails, the self whose body dies enters the untainted worlds of those who know reality. When he dies in passion, he is born among lovers of action; so when he dies in dark inertia, he is born into wombs of folly. The fruit of good conduct is pure and untainted, they say, but suffering is the fruit of passion, ignorance the fruit of dark inertia. From lucidity knowledge is born; from passion comes greed; from dark inertia come negligence, delusion, and ignorance. Men who are lucid go upward; men of passion stay in between; men of dark inertia, caught in vile ways, sink low.*

THE BHAGAVAD GITA: KRISHNA'S COUNSEL IN TIME OF WAR, CIRCA FIRST CENTURY A.D.

After what later became known as the Tet Offensive was over, Westmoreland likened it to the Battle of the Bulge, near the end of World War II. There the Germans had managed to surprise the Allies by staging a bold

incursion into eastern France. In the first few days, they had advanced rapidly, creating panic, but once the Allies recovered, they had managed to push the Germans back--and eventually it became apparent that the battle was the German military's death knell, their last shot. So it was, Westmoreland argued, with the North Vietnamese army at Khe Sanh and the Vietcong throughout the South: they had suffered terrible casualties, far more than the Americans had--in fact, the entire Vietcong infrastructure had been wiped out. They would never recover; at long last the enemy had revealed itself and had been badly mauled.

The Americans thought Tet had been a tactical disaster for the North. But another viewpoint began to trickle in from home: the drama at the U.S. embassy, the siege of Hue, and the attacks on air bases had kept millions of Americans glued to their television sets. Until then the Vietcong had operated mostly in the countryside, barely visible to the American public. Now, for the first time, they were apparent in major cities, wreaking havoc and destruction. Americans had been told the war was winding down and winnable; these images said otherwise. Suddenly the war's purpose seemed less clear. How could South Vietnam remain stable in the face of this ubiquitous enemy? How could the Americans ever claim a clear victory? There was really no end in sight.

American opinion polls tracked a sharp turn against the war. Antiwar demonstrations broke out all over the country. President Lyndon Johnson's military advisers, who had been telling him that South Vietnam was coming under control, now confessed that they were no longer so optimistic. In the New Hampshire Democratic primary that March, Johnson was stunned by his defeat by Senator Eugene McCarthy, who had galvanized the growing antiwar sentiment. Shortly thereafter Johnson announced that he would not run for reelection in the upcoming presidential race and that he would slowly disengage American forces from Vietnam.

The Tet Offensive was indeed the turning point in the Vietnam War, but not in the direction that Westmoreland and his staff had foreseen.

> *At this the grey-eyed goddess Athena smiled, and gave him a caress, her looks being changed now, so she seemed a woman, tall and beautiful and no doubt skilled at weaving splendid things. She answered briskly: "Whoever gets around you* [*Odysseus*] *must be sharp and guileful as a snake; even a god might bow to you in ways of dissimulation. You! You chameleon! Bottomless bag of tricks! Here in your own country would you not give your stratagems a rest or stop spellbinding for an instant?...Two of a kind, we are, contrivers, both. Of all men now alive you are the best in plots and story telling. My own fame is for wisdom among the gods--deceptions, too.*

Interpretation

For the American strategists, the success of the war depended mostly on the military. By using their army and superior weaponry to kill as many Vietcong as possible and gain control of the countryside, they would ensure the stability of the South Vietnamese government. Once the South was strong enough, North Vietnam would give up the fight.

The North Vietnamese saw the war very differently. By nature and practice, they viewed conflict in much broader terms. They looked at the political situation in the South, where American search-and-destroy missions were alienating South Vietnamese peasants. The North Vietnamese, meanwhile, did everything they could to win the peasants over and earned for themselves an army of millions of silent sympathizers. How could the South be secure when the Americans had failed to capture the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese farmers? The North Vietnamese also looked to the American political scene, where, in 1968, there was to be a presidential election. And they looked at American culture, where support for the war was wide but not deep. The Vietnam War was the first televised war in history; the military was trying to control information about the war, but the images on television spoke for themselves.

On and on the North Vietnamese went, continually broadening their outlook and analyzing the war's global context. And out of this study they crafted their most brilliant strategy: the Tet Offensive. Using their army of peasant sympathizers in the South, they were able to infiltrate every part of the country, smuggling in arms and supplies under the cover of the Tet holiday. The targets they hit were not only military but televisual: their attacks in Saigon, base of most of the American media (including the CBS newsman Walter Cronkite, visiting at the time) were spectacular; Hue and Khe Sanh were also places heavily covered by American reporters. They also struck symbolic locations--embassies, palaces, air bases--that would suck in media attention. On television all this would create the dramatic (and deceptive) impression that the Vietcong were everywhere while American bombing raids and pacification programs had gotten nowhere. In effect, the goal of the Tet Offensive was not a military target but the American public in front of its televisions. Once Americans lost faith--and in an election year--the war was doomed. The North Vietnamese did not have to win a single pitched battle on the field, and in fact they never did. But by

extending their vision beyond the battlefield to politics and culture, they won the war.

We always tend to look at what is most immediate to us, taking the most direct route toward our goals and trying to win the war by winning as many battles as we can. We think in small, microlevel terms and react to present events--but this is petty strategy. Nothing in life happens in isolation; everything is related to everything else and has a broader context. That context includes people outside your immediate circle whom your actions affect, the public at large, the whole world; it includes politics, for every choice in modern life has political ramifications; it includes culture, the media, the way the public sees you. Your task as a grand strategist is to extend your vision in all directions--not only looking further into the future but also seeing more of the world around you, more than your enemy does. Your strategies will become insidious and impossible to thwart. You will be able to harness the relationships between events, one battle setting up the next, a cultural coup setting up a political coup. You will bring the war to arenas your enemies have ignored, catching them by surprise. Only grand strategy can yield grand results.

War is the continuation of politics by other means.

--Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831)

KEYS TO WARFARE

Thousands of years ago, we humans elevated ourselves above the animal world and never looked back. Figuratively speaking, the key to this evolutionary advance was our powers of vision: language, and the ability to reason that it gave us, let us see more of the world around us. To protect itself from a predator, an animal depended on its senses and instincts; it could not see around the corner or to the other end of the forest. We humans, on the other hand, could map the entire forest, study the habits of dangerous animals and even nature itself, gaining deeper, wider knowledge of our environment. We could see dangers coming before they were here. This expanded vision was abstract: where an animal is locked in the present, we could see into the past and glimpse as far as our reason would take us into the future. Our sight expanded further and further into time and space, and we came to dominate the world.

Somewhere along the line, however, we stopped evolving as rational creatures. Despite our progress there is always a part of us that remains animal, and that animal part can respond only to what is most immediate in our

environment--it is incapable of thinking beyond the moment. The dilemma affects us still: the two sides of our character, rational and animal, are constantly at war, making almost all of our actions awkward. We reason and plan to achieve a goal, but in the heat of action we become emotional and lose perspective. We use cleverness and strategy to grab for what we want, but we do not stop to think about whether what we want is necessary, or what the consequences of getting it will be. The extended vision that rationality brings us is often eclipsed by the reactive, emotional animal within--the stronger side of our nature.

More than we are today, the ancient Greeks were close to the passage of the human race from animal to rational. To them our dual nature made us tragic, and the source of tragedy was limited vision. In classical Greek tragedies such as *Oedipus Rex,* the protagonist may think he knows the truth and knows enough about the world to act in it, but his vision is limited by his emotions and desires. He has only a partial perspective on life and on his own actions and identity, so he acts imprudently and causes suffering. When Oedipus finally understands his own role in all his misfortunes, he tears out his eyes--symbols of his tragic limitation. He can see out into the world but not inward into himself.

> *Then he saw Odysseus and asked: "Now tell me about this one, dear child, Shorter than Agamemnon by a head But broader in the shoulders and chest. His armor is lying on the ground And he's roaming the ranks like a ram, That's it, just like a thick-fleeced ram Striding through a flock of silvery sheep." And Helen, Zeus' child: "That is Laertes' son, The master strategist Odysseus, born and bred In the rocky hills of Ithaca. He knows Every trick there is, and his mind runs deep." Antenor turned to her and observed astutely: "Your words are not off the mark there, madam. Odysseus came here once before, on an embassy For your sake along with Menelaus. I entertained them courteously in the great hall And learned each man's character and depth of mind. Standing in a crowd of Trojans, Menelaus, With his wide shoulders, was more prominent, But when both were seated Odysseus was lordlier. When it came time for each to speak in public And weave a spell of wisdom with their words, Menelaus spoke fluently enough, to the point And very clearly, but briefly, since he is not A man of many words. Being older, he spoke first. Then Odysseus, the master strategist, rose quickly, But just stood there, his eyes fixed on the ground. He did not move his staff forward or backward But held it steady. You would have thought him A dull, surly lout without any wit. But when he Opened his mouth and projected his voice The words fell down like snowflakes in a blizzard. No mortal could have vied with Odysseus then, And we no longer held his looks against him."*

The Greeks, however, also recognized the potential for a higher human possibility. Far above the sphere of mortals were the gods on Mount Olympus, who had perfect vision of the world and of both the past and the future; and the human race shared something with them as well as with animals--we were not only part animal but part divine. Furthermore, those able to see further than others, to control their animal nature and think before they acted, were humans of the most deeply human kind--the ones best able to use the reasoning powers that separate us from animals. As opposed to human stupidity (limited vision), the Greeks imagined an ideal human prudence. Its symbol was Odysseus, who always thought before he acted. Having visited Hades, the land of the dead, he was in touch with ancestral history and the past; and he was also always curious, eager for knowledge, and able to view human actions, his own and other people's, with a dispassionate eye, considering their long-term consequences. In other words, like the gods, if to a lesser extent, he had the skill of looking into the future. The consummate realist, the man of vision, Odysseus was a character in the epic poetry of Homer, but there were also historical versions of the ideal: the political figure and military leader Themistocles, for example, and Alexander the Great, raised to heights of combined intellect and action by Aristotle.

The prudent man might seem cold, his rationality sucking pleasure out of life. Not so. Like the pleasure-loving gods on Mount Olympus, he has the perspective, the calm detachment, the ability to laugh, that come with true vision, which gives everything he does a quality of lightness--these traits comprising what Nietzsche calls the "Apollonian ideal." (Only people who can't see past their noses make things heavy.) Alexander, the great strategist and man of action, was also famous for revelry and festivity. Odysseus loved adventure; no one was better at the experience of pleasure. He was simply more reasonable, more balanced, less vulnerable to his own emotions and moods, and he left less tragedy and turmoil in his wake.

This calm, detached, rational, far-seeing creature, called "prudent" by the Greeks, is what we shall call the "grand strategist."

We are all of us to some extent strategists: we naturally want control over our lives, and we plot for power, consciously or unconsciously angling to get what we want. We use strategies, in other words, but they tend to be linear and reactive and are often fractured and struck off course by emotional responses. Clever strategists can go far, but all but a few make mistakes. If they are

successful, they get carried away and overreach; if they face setbacks--and setbacks are inevitable over a lifetime--they are easily overwhelmed. What sets grand strategists apart is the ability to look more deeply into both themselves and others, to understand and learn from the past and to have a clear sense of the future, to the extent that it can be predicted. Simply, they see more, and their extended vision lets them carry out plans over sometimes-long periods of time--so long that those around them may not even realize that they have a plan in mind. They strike at the roots of a problem, not at its symptoms, and hit their mark cleanly. In moving toward becoming a grand strategist, you follow in the path of Odysseus and rise toward the condition of the gods. It is not so much that your strategies are more clever or manipulative as that they exist on a higher plane. You have made a qualitative leap.

In a world where people are increasingly incapable of thinking consequentially, more animal than ever, the practice of grand strategy will instantly elevate you above others.

To become a grand strategist does not involve years of study or a total transformation of your personality. It simply means more effective use of what you have--your mind, your rationality, your vision. Having evolved as a solution to the problems of warfare, grand strategy is a military concept. And an examination of its historical development will reveal the key to making it work for you in daily life.

In the early history of warfare, a ruler or general who understood strategy and maneuver could exercise power. He could win battles, carve out an empire, or at the very least defend his own city or state. But problems came with strategy on this level. More than any other human activity, war plays havoc with emotion, stirs the animal within. In plotting war a king would depend on things like his knowledge of the terrain and his understanding of both the enemy's forces and his own; his success would depend on his ability to see these things clearly. But this vision was likely to be clouded. He had emotions to respond to, desires to realize; he could not think his goals through. Wanting to win, he would underestimate the enemy's strength or overestimate his own. When Xerxes of Persia invaded Greece in 480 B.C., he thought he had a perfectly rational plan. There was much he had not taken into account, and disaster followed.

Other rulers actually won their battles only to grow drunk on victory and not know when to stop, stirring up implacable hatred, distrust, and the desire for revenge all around them, culminating in war on several fronts and total defeat--as in the destruction of the warlike Assyrian Empire, its capital of Nineveh eternally buried in the sand. In cases like that, victory in battle brought only danger, exposing the conqueror to ruinous cycles of attack and counterattack.

In ancient times, strategists and historians from Sun-tzu to Thucydides became conscious of this recurring self-destructive pattern in warfare and began to work out more rational ways to fight. The first step was to think beyond the immediate battle. Supposing you won victory, where would it leave you--better off or worse? To answer that question, the logical step was to think ahead, to the third and fourth battles on, which connected like links in a chain. The result was the concept of the campaign, in which the strategist sets a realistic goal and plots several steps ahead to get there. Individual battles matter only in the way they set up the next ones down the line; an army can even deliberately lose a battle as part of a long-term plan. The victory that matters is that of the overall campaign, and everything is subordinated to that goal.

> Forgetting our objectives. --*During the journey we commonly forget its goal. Almost every profession is chosen and commenced as a means to an end but continued as an end in itself. Forgetting our objectives is the most frequent of all acts of stupidity.*
>
> FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, 1844-1900

This kind of strategy represented a qualitative advance. Think of chess, where the grand master, instead of focusing only on the move at hand and making it solely in reaction to what the other player has just done, must visualize the entire chessboard deep into the future, crafting an overall strategy, using the moves of the pawns now to set up those of the more powerful pieces later on. Thinking in terms of the campaign gave strategy a new depth. The strategist used more and more of the map.

War on this level required that the strategist think deeply in all directions before launching the campaign. He had to know the world. The enemy was just one part of the picture; the strategist also had to anticipate the reactions of allies and neighboring states--any missteps with them and the entire plan could unravel. He had to imagine the peace after the war. He had to know what his army was capable of over time and ask no more of it than that. He had to be realistic. His mind had to expand to meet the complexities of the task--and all this before a single blow was exchanged.

Yet strategic thinking on this level yielded limitless benefits. A victory on the battlefield would not seduce the leader into an unconsidered move that might ultimately set the campaign back, nor would a defeat unnerve him. When something unexpected happened--and the unexpected is to be expected in war--the solution he improvised to meet it would have to suit goals far on the horizon. His subordination of his emotions to strategic thought would give him more

control during the course of the campaign. He would keep his perspective in the heat of battle. He would not get caught up in the reactive and self-destructive pattern that had destroyed so many armies and states.

This principle of campaigning was only relatively recently christened "grand strategy," but it has existed in various forms since ancient times. It is clearly visible in Alexander's conquest of Persia, in the Roman and Byzantine empires' control of vast territories with small armies, in the disciplined campaigns of the Mongols, in Queen Elizabeth I's defeat of the Spanish Armada, in the Duke of Marlborough's brilliantly conceived campaigns against the Hapsburgs. In modern times North Vietnam's defeat first of the French, then of the United States--in the latter case without winning a single major battle--must be considered a consummate use of the art.

Military history shows that the key to grand strategy--the thing that separates it from simple, garden-variety strategy--is its particular quality of forethought. Grand strategists think and plan further into the future before taking action. Nor is their planning simply a matter of accumulating knowledge and information; it involves looking at the world with a dispassionate eye, thinking in terms of the campaign, planning indirect, subtle steps along the way whose purpose may only gradually become visible to others. Not only does this kind of planning fool and disorient the enemy; for the strategist it has the psychological effects of calm, a sense of perspective, flexibility to change in the moment while keeping the ultimate goal in mind. Emotions are easier to control; vision is far-seeing and clear. Grand strategy is the apex of rationality.

> *Plot against the difficult while it remains easy, Act against the great while it is still minute. Difficult affairs throughout the realm invariably commence with the easy, Great affairs throughout the realm inevitably commence with the small. For this reason the Sage never acts against the great and is thus able to complete greatness. What is tranquil remains easily grasped, What has not yet betrayed signs is easy to plot against. The brittle is easily split, The minute is easily scattered. Act upon them before they attain being, Control them before they become chaotic. Trees that require both arms to embrace Are born from insignificant saplings. A nine-story tower commences with a little accumulated earth, A journey of a thousand kilometers begins beneath one's feet.*
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> *TAO TE CHING*, LAO-TZU, CIRCA 551-479 B.C.

Grand strategy has four main principles, distilled below from case histories of the most successful practitioners of the art. The more you can incorporate these principles into your plans, the better the results.

Focus on your greater goal, your destiny. The first step toward becoming a grand strategist--the step that will make everything else fall into place--is to begin with a clear, detailed, purposeful goal in mind, one rooted in reality. We often imagine that we generally operate by some kind of plan, that we have goals we are trying to reach. But we're usually fooling ourselves; what we have are not goals but wishes. Our emotions infect us with hazy desire: we want fame, success, security--something large and abstract. This haziness unbalances our plans from the beginning and sets them on a chaotic course. What have distinguished all history's grand strategists and can distinguish you, too, are specific, detailed, focused goals. Contemplate them day in and day out, and imagine how it will feel to reach them and what reaching them will look like. By a psychological law peculiar to humans, clearly visualizing them this way will turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Having clear objectives was crucial to Napoleon. He visualized his goals in intense detail--at the beginning of a campaign, he could see its last battle clearly in his mind. Examining a map with his aides, he would point to the exact spot where it would end--a ridiculous prediction, it might seem, since not only is war in any period subject to chance and to whatever the enemy comes up with to surprise you, but the maps of Napoleon's era were notoriously unreliable. Yet time and again his predictions would prove uncannily correct. He would also visualize the campaign's aftermath: the signing of the treaty, its conditions, how the defeated Russian czar or Austrian emperor would look, and exactly how the achievement of this particular goal would position Napoleon for his next campaign.

As a young man, Lyndon B. Johnson, despite his limited education, was determined to become president one day. Dream turned into obsession: he could picture himself as president, strutting the world's stage. As he advanced in his career, he never did anything without one eye on this ultimate objective. In 1957, Johnson, by that time a Texas senator, supported a civil rights bill. That damaged him in Texas but elevated him nationally: apparently a senator from the South had stuck his neck out, risking his job. Johnson's vote caught the attention of John F. Kennedy, who, in the campaign of 1960, nominated him for vice president--the job that was ultimately Johnson's stepping-stone to the presidency.

Clear long-term objectives give direction to all of your actions, large and small. Important decisions become easier to make. If some glittering prospect threatens to seduce you from your goal, you will know to resist it. You can tell when to sacrifice a pawn, even lose a battle, if it serves your eventual purpose. Your eyes are focused on winning the campaign and nothing else.

Your goals must be rooted in reality. If they are simply beyond your means, essentially impossible for you to realize, you will grow discouraged, and discouragement can quickly escalate into a defeatist attitude. On the other hand, if your goals lack a certain dimension and grandeur, it can be hard to stay motivated. Do not be afraid to be bold. In the large sense, you are working out for yourself what Alexander experienced as his destiny and what Friedrich Nietzsche called your "life's task"--the thing toward which your natural leanings and aptitudes, talents and desires, seem to point you. Assigning yourself a life task will inspire and guide you.

The goal's nature is critical: some objectives, if realized, will hurt you in the long run. The objectives of grand strategy in the true sense are to build a solid foundation for future expansion, to make you more secure, to increase your power. When Israel seized the Sinai Desert during the Six-Day War in 1967, what seemed to make sense was creating a kind of buffer zone between itself and Egypt. In fact, this just meant more territory to patrol and control, and it created a cause to motivate enduring hostility in the Egyptian populace. The Sinai was also vulnerable to surprise attack, which is what ended up happening in the Yom Kippur War of 1973. Since holding on to the desert, though seductive, ultimately disserved the needs of security, in the terms of grand strategy it was probably a mistake. It is sometimes hard to know what the long-term effects of achieving a goal will be, but the more seriously and realistically you examine the possibilities downwind, the less likely you are to miscalculate.

Widen your perspective. Grand strategy is a function of vision, of seeing further in time and space than the enemy does. The process of foresight is unnatural: we can only ever live in the present, which is the ground for our consciousness, and our subjective experiences and desires narrow the scope of our vision--they are like a prison we inhabit. Your task as a grand strategist is to force yourself to widen your view, to take in more of the world around you, to see things for what they are and for how they may play out in the future, not for how you wish them to be. Every event has a reason, a causal chain of relationships that made it happen; you have to dig deep into that reality, instead

of seeing only the surfaces of things. The closer you get to objectivity, the better your strategies and the easier the path to your goals.

THE WILD BOAR AND THE FOX

A wild boar was sharpening his tusks on a tree trunk one day. A fox asked him why he did this when there was neither huntsman nor danger threatening him. "I do so for a good reason," he replied. "For if I am suddenly surprised by danger I wouldn't have the time to sharpen my tusks. But now I will find them ready to do their duty."

The fable shows that it is no good waiting until danger comes to be ready.

FABLES, AESOP, SIXTH CENTURY B.C.

You can take a step in this direction by always trying to look at the world through the eyes of other people--including, most definitely, your enemy--before engaging in war. Your own cultural preconceptions are a major hindrance to seeing the world objectively. Looking through other people's eyes is not a question of political correctness or of some soft, hazy sensitivity; it makes your strategies more effective. During the Vietnam War, the North Vietnamese intensely studied the American cultural scene. They looked for shifts in public opinion and strained to understand the U.S. political system and the social effects of television. American strategists, on the other hand, revealed an absolutely minimal understanding of the alien cultures of Vietnam--whether the South Vietnamese culture they were supporting or the North Vietnamese culture they were trying to fight. Blinded by their obsession with stopping the spread of communism, they failed to note the far deeper influences of culture and religion on the North Vietnamese way of fighting. Theirs was a grand-strategic blunder of the highest order.

Grand strategists keep sensitive antennae attuned to the politics of any situation. Politics is the art of promoting and protecting your own interests. You might think it was largely a question of parties and factions, but every individual is, among other things, a political creature seeking to secure his or her own position. Your behavior in the world always has political consequences, in that the people around you will analyze it in terms of whether it helps or harms them. To win the battle at the cost of alienating potential allies or creating intractable enemies is never wise.

Taking politics into account, you must figure out your grand strategy with a

mind to gaining support from other people--to creating and strengthening a base. In the Roman Civil War in 49 B.C., Julius Caesar faced off against Pompey, who was then the more experienced military man. Caesar gained the edge by planning his maneuvers with an eye to their effect on public opinion in Rome. Lacking support in the Senate, he built support among the general public. Caesar was a brilliant political animal, and what made him so was his grasp of the public psyche: he understood their self-interest and shaped his strategies accordingly. Being political means understanding people--seeing through their eyes.

Sever the roots. In a society dominated by appearances, the real source of a problem is sometimes hard to grasp. To work out a grand strategy against an enemy, you have to know what motivates him or is the source of his power. Too many wars and battles drag on because neither side knows how to strike at the other's roots. As a grand strategist, you must expand your vision not only far and wide but under. Think hard, dig deep, do not take appearances for reality. Uncover the roots of the trouble and you can strategize to sever them, ending the war or problem with finality.

When the Carthaginian general Hannibal invaded Italy in 218 B.C., various Roman generals strained to defeat him, but none was effective. The Roman general later called Scipio Africanus looked at the situation differently: the problem wasn't Hannibal himself, or his base in Spain, or his ability to restock his supplies by sea from Carthage; the problem was Carthage itself. This was a country with an intractable hatred of Rome, and a long power struggle had endured between the two. Instead of taking on Hannibal, a brilliant military man, in Italy, then, Scipio invaded Carthage, forcing Hannibal to leave Italy to defend his homeland. The attack on Carthage was more than a mere feint to draw Hannibal away; it was a sizable invasion. Scipio's grand strategy worked to perfection: not only did he defeat Hannibal in battle, he destroyed Carthage as a rival power, permanently ending its ability to stand up to Rome.

> *This is as it should be. No major proposal required for war can be worked out in ignorance of political factors; and when people talk, as they often do, about harmful political influence on the management of war, they are not really saying what they mean. Their quarrel should be with the policy itself, not with its influence. If the policy is right--that is, successful--any intentional effect it has on the conduct of war can only be to the good. If it has the*

opposite effect the policy itself is wrong. Only if statesmen look to certain military moves and actions to produce effects that are foreign to their nature do political decisions influence operations for the worse. In the same way as a man who has not fully mastered a foreign language sometimes fails to express himself correctly, so statesmen often issue orders that defeat the purpose they are meant to serve. Time and again that has happened, which demonstrates that a certain grasp of military affairs is vital for those in charge of general policy. Before continuing, we must guard against a likely misinterpretation. We are far from believing that a minister of war immersed in his files, an erudite engineer or even an experienced soldier would, simply on the basis of their particular experience, make the best director of policy--always assuming that the prince himself is not in control. Far from it. What is needed in the post is distinguished intellect and strength of character. He can always get the necessary military information somehow or other. The military and political affairs of France were never in worse hands than when the brothers Belle-Isle and the Duc de Choiseul were responsible--good soldiers though they all were.

ON WAR, CARL VON CLAUSEWITZ, 1780-1831

A part of grand strategy related to severing the roots is seeing dangers as they start to sprout, then cutting them down before they get too big to handle. A grand strategist knows the value of preemptive action.

Take the indirect route to your goal. The greatest danger you face in strategy is losing the initiative and finding yourself constantly reacting to what the other side does. The solution, of course, is to plan ahead but also to plan subtly--to take the indirect route. Preventing your opponent from seeing the purpose of your actions gives you an enormous advantage.

So make your first move merely a setup, designed to extract a response from your opponent that opens him up to what comes next. Hit him directly and he reacts, taking a defensive pose that may allow him to parry your next blow; but if he can't see the point of your strike, or if it misleads him as to where the next one will come from, he is defenseless and blind. The key is to maintain control of your emotions and plot your moves in advance, seeing the entire chessboard.

The film director Alfred Hitchcock made this strategy a life principle. His every action a setup designed to yield results down the road, he calmly thought ahead and moved step by step. His goal was to make a film that matched his

original vision, uncorrupted by the influence of the actors, producers, and other staff who necessarily came along later. By controlling every detail of the film's screenplay, he made it almost impossible for the producer to interfere. Should the producer try to meddle during the actual shooting, Hitchcock would have a camera ready on set with no film in it. He could pretend to take the extra shots that the producer wanted, letting the producer feel powerful without risk to the end result. Hitchcock did the same with actors: instead of telling them directly what to do, he would infect them with the emotion he wanted--fear, anger, desire--by the way he treated them on set. Every step on the campaign trail fit perfectly into the next one.

In working on the level not of the battle but of the campaign, your first step is crucial. It should usually be deceptively soft and indirect, making it harder to read. The Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor during World War II was a devastating surprise, but as the first move of a campaign it was a disaster. The Japanese showed their hand too quickly; rallying American public opinion to an intense level of anger, they ensured that the Americans would prosecute the war to the bitter end--and it was the Americans who had the greater military resources. Always pay attention to the first step of the campaign. It sets the tempo, determines the enemy's mind-set, and launches you in a direction that had better be the right one.

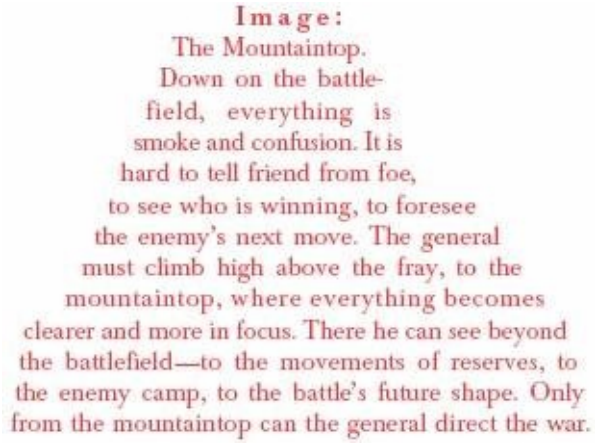
The Prussian military theoretician Carl von Clausewitz famously argued that war is the continuation of politics by other means. He meant that every nation has goals--security, well-being, prosperity--that it ordinarily pursues through politics, but when another nation or internal force thwarts their achievement through politics, war is the natural result. War is never merely about victory on the battlefield or the simple conquest of land; it is about the pursuit of a policy that cannot be realized in any other way than through force.

When a war is lost, however, all fingers usually point at the military. We may sometimes go over the generals' heads, to the politicians who declared war in the first place; during and after the Vietnam War, for example, some blamed the loss on the government's failure to commit to the war with full effort. More often, though, the postgame analysis is military--we pore over the war's battles, critiquing the officers' moves. And of course it is the military that has planned and fought the war, but even so, the real problem is a problem of grand strategy. According to von Clausewitz, failure in war is a failure of policy. The goals of the war, and the policies that drove it, were unrealistic, inappropriate, blind to

other factors.

This idea is the philosophy of the grand strategist. Whenever anything goes wrong, it is human nature to blame this person or that. Let other people engage in such stupidity, led around by their noses, seeing only what is immediately visible to the eye. You see things differently. When an action goes wrong--in business, in politics, in life--trace it back to the policy that inspired it in the first place. The goal was misguided.

This means that you yourself are largely the agent of anything bad that happens to you. With more prudence, wiser policies, and greater vision, you could have avoided the danger. So when something goes wrong, look deep into yourself--not in an emotional way, to blame yourself or indulge your feelings of guilt, but to make sure that you start your next campaign with a firmer step and greater vision.



Authority: It is a common mistake in going to war to begin at the wrong end, to act first and to wait for disaster to discuss the matter.

--Thucydides (between 460 and 455 B.C.-circa 400 B.C.)

REVERSAL

Grand strategy involves two dangers that you must consider and combat. First, the successes it brings you in your first campaigns may have the same effect on you that easy victory on the battlefield gives a general: drunk on triumph, you may lose the sense of realism and proportion on which your future moves depend. Even such supreme grand strategists as Julius Caesar and Napoleon eventually fell victim to this dynamic: losing their sense of reality, they began to believe that their instincts were infallible. The greater the victory, the greater the

danger. As you get older, as you move to your next campaign, you must retrench, strain doubly hard to rein in your emotions, and maintain a sense of realism.

Second, the detachment necessary to grand strategy can bring you to a point where you find it hard to act. Understanding the world too well, you see too many options and become as indecisive as Hamlet. No matter how far we progress, we remain part animal, and it is the animal in us that fires our strategies, gives them life, animates us to fight. Without the desire to fight, without a capacity for the violence war churns up, we cannot deal with danger.

The prudent Odysseus types are comfortable with both sides of their nature. They plan ahead as best they can, see far and wide, but when it comes time to move ahead, they move. Knowing how to control your emotions means not repressing them completely but using them to their best effect.