MANEUVER THEM INTO WEAKNESS

THE RIPENING-FOR-THE-SICKLE STRATEGY

No matter how strong you are, fighting endless battles with people is exhausting, costly, and unimaginative. Wise strategists generally prefer the art of maneuver: before the battle even begins, they find ways to put their opponents in positions of such weakness that victory is easy and quick. Bait enemies into taking positions that may seem alluring but are actually traps and blind alleys. If their position is strong, get them to abandon it by leading them on a wild-goose chase. Create dilemmas: devise maneuvers that give them a choice of ways to respond--all of them bad. Channel chaos and disorder in their direction. Confused, frustrated, and angry opponents are like ripe fruit on the bough: the slightest breeze will make them fall.

MANEUVER WARFARE

Throughout history two distinct styles of warfare can be identified. The most ancient is the war of attrition: the enemy surrenders because you have killed so many of its men. A general fighting a war of attrition will calculate ways to overwhelm the other side with larger numbers, or with the battle formation that will do the most damage, or with superior military technology. In any event, victory depends on wearing down the other side in battle. Even with today's extraordinary technology, attrition warfare is remarkably unsophisticated, playing into humanity's most violent instincts.

> *Warfare is like hunting. Wild animals are taken by scouting, by nets, by lying in wait, by stalking, by circling around, and by other such stratagems rather than by sheer force. In waging war we should proceed in the same way, whether the enemy be many or few. To try simply to overpower the enemy in the open, hand to hand and face to face, even though you might appear to win, is an enterprise which is very risky and can result in serious harm. Apart from extreme emergency, it is ridiculous to try to gain a victory which is so costly and brings only empty glory....*
>
> BYZANTINE EMPEROR MAURIKIOS, A.D. 539-602

Over many centuries, and most notably in ancient China, a second method of waging war developed. The emphasis here was not destroying the other side in battle but weakening and unbalancing it before the battle began. The leader would maneuver to confuse and infuriate and to put the enemy in a bad position--having to fight uphill, or with the sun or wind in its face, or in a cramped space. In this kind of war, an army with mobility could be more effective than one with muscle.

The maneuver-warfare philosophy was codified by Sun-tzu in his *Art of War*, written in China's Warring States period, in the fifth to third century B.C.--over two hundred years of escalating cycles of warfare in which a state's very survival depended on its army and strategists. To Sun-tzu and his contemporaries, it was obvious that the costs of war went far beyond its body counts: it entailed a loss of resources and political goodwill and a lowering of morale among soldiers and citizens. These costs would mount over time until eventually even the greatest warrior nation would succumb to exhaustion. But through adroit maneuvering a state could spare itself such high costs and still emerge victorious. An enemy who had been maneuvered into a weak position would succumb more easily to psychological pressure; even before the battle had begun, it had imperceptibly started to collapse and would surrender with less of a fight.

Several strategists outside Asia--most notably Napoleon Bonaparte--have made brilliant use of maneuver warfare. But in general, attrition warfare is deeply engrained in the Western way of thinking--from the ancient Greeks to modern America. In an attrition culture, thoughts naturally gravitate toward how to overpower problems, obstacles, those who resist us. In the media, emphasis is placed on big battles, whether in politics or in the arts--static situations in which there are winners and losers. People are drawn to the emotional and dramatic quality in any confrontation, not the many steps that lead to such confrontation. The stories that are told in such cultures are all geared toward such battlelike moments, a moral message preached through the ending (as opposed to the more telling details). On top of it all, this way of fighting is deemed more manly, honorable, honest.

More than anything, maneuver war is a different way of thinking. What matters here is process--the steps toward battle and how to manipulate them to make the confrontation less costly and violent. In the maneuver universe, nothing is static. Battles are in fact dramatic illusions, short moments in the larger flow of events, which is fluid, dynamic, and susceptible to alteration through careful strategy. This way of thinking finds no honor or morality in wasting time, energy, and lives in battles. Instead wars of attrition are seen as lazy, reflecting the primitive human tendency to fight back reactively, without

thinking.

In a society full of attrition fighters, you will gain an instant advantage by converting to maneuver. Your thought process will become more fluid, more on the side of life, and you will be able to thrive off the rigid, battle-obsessed tendencies of the people around you. By always thinking first about the overall situation and about how to maneuver people into positions of weakness rather than fight them, you will make your battles less bloody--which, since life is long and conflict is endless, is wise if you want a fruitful and enduring career. And a war of maneuver is just as decisive as a war of attrition. Think of weakening your enemies as ripening them like grain, ready to be cut down at the right moment.

The following are the four main principles of maneuver warfare:

Craft a plan with branches. Maneuver warfare depends on planning, and the plan has to be right. Too rigid and you leave yourself no room to adjust to the inevitable chaos and friction of war; too loose and unforeseen events will confuse and overwhelm you. The perfect plan stems from a detailed analysis of the situation, which allows you to decide on the best direction to follow or the perfect position to occupy and suggests several effective options (branches) to take, depending on what the enemy throws at you. A plan with branches lets you outmaneuver your enemy because your responses to changing circumstances are faster and more rational.

Give yourself room to maneuver. You cannot be mobile, you cannot maneuver freely, if you put yourself in cramped spaces or tie yourself down to positions that do not allow you to move. Consider the ability to move and keeping open more options than your enemy has as more important than holding territories or possessions. You want open space, not dead positions. This means not burdening yourself with commitments that will limit your options. It means not taking stances that leave you nowhere to go. The need for space is psychological as well as physical: you must have an unfettered mind to create anything worthwhile.

Give your enemy dilemmas, not problems. Most of your opponents are likely

to be clever and resourceful; if your maneuvers simply present them with a problem, they will inevitably solve it. But a dilemma is different: whatever they do, however they respond--retreat, advance, stay still--they are still in trouble. Make every option bad: if you maneuver quickly to a point, for instance, you can force your enemies either to fight before they are ready or to retreat. Try constantly to put them in positions that seem alluring but are traps.

Create maximum disorder. Your enemy depends on being able to read you, to get some sense of your intentions. The goal of your maneuvers should be to make that impossible, to send the enemy on a wild-goose chase for meaningless information, to create ambiguity as to which way you are going to jump. The more you break down people's ability to reason about you, the more disorder you inject into their system. The disorder you create is controlled and purposeful, at least for you. The disorder the enemy suffers is debilitating and destructive.

So to win a hundred victories in a hundred battles is not the highest excellence; the highest excellence is to subdue the enemy's army without fighting at all.

--Sun-tzu (fourth century B.C.)

HISTORICAL EXAMPLES

1. On November 10, 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte completed the coup d'etat that brought him to power as first consul, giving him near-complete control of the French state. For over ten years, France had been convulsed with revolution and war. Now that Napoleon was leader, his most pressing need was peace, to give the country time to recoup and himself time to consolidate his power--but peace would not come easily.

France had a bitter enemy in Austria, which had put two large armies in the field, ready to move against Napoleon: one to the east of the Rhine and the other in northern Italy under General Michael Melas. The Austrians were clearly planning a major campaign. Waiting was too dangerous; Napoleon had to seize the initiative. He had to defeat at least one of these armies if he were to force Austria to negotiate peace on his terms. The one trump card he had was that several months earlier a French army had gained control of Switzerland. There were also French troops in northern Italy, which Napoleon had taken from the

Austrians several years earlier.

To plan for the first real campaign under his direction, Napoleon holed himself up in his office for several days. His secretary, Louis de Bourienne, would recall seeing him lying on giant maps of Germany, Switzerland, and Italy laid out wall to wall on the floor. The desks were piled high with reconnaissance reports. On hundreds of note cards organized into boxes, Napoleon had calculated the Austrians' reactions to the feints he was planning. Muttering to himself on the floor, he mulled over every permutation of attack and counterattack.

> *"Addicts of attrition," as Simpkin calls them, generally cannot think beyond the battle, and they consider that the only way--or at least the preferred way--to defeat an enemy is to destroy the physical components of his army, especially the combat portions (armored fighting vehicles, troops, guns, etc.). If the attrition addict appreciates war's intangibles at all (such as morale, initiative, and shock), he sees them only as combat multipliers with which to fight the attrition battle better. If the attrition warrior learns about maneuver, he sees it primarily as a way to get to the fight. In other words, he moves in order to fight. Maneuver theory, on the other hand, attempts to defeat the enemy through means other than simple destruction of his mass. Indeed, the highest and purest application of maneuver theory is to* preempt *the enemy, that is, to disarm or neutralize him before the fight. If such is not possible, the maneuver warrior seeks to* dislocate *the enemy forces, i.e., removing the enemy from the decisive point, or vice versa, thus rendering them useless and irrelevant to the fight. If the enemy cannot be preempted or dislocated, then the maneuver-warfare practitioner will attempt to* disrupt *the enemy, i.e., destroy or neutralize his center of gravity, preferably by attacking with friendly strengths through enemy weaknesses.*
>
> *THE ART OF MANEUVER*, ROBERT R. LEONHARD, 1991

By the end of March 1800, Napoleon had emerged from his office with a plan for a campaign in northern Italy that went far beyond anything his lieutenants had ever seen before. In the middle of April, a French army under General Jean Moreau would cross the Rhine and push the eastern Austrian army back into Bavaria. Then Napoleon would lead a 50,000-man force, already in place in Switzerland, into northern Italy through several different passes in the Alps. Moreau would then release one of his divisions to move south and follow Napoleon into Italy. Moreau's initial move into Bavaria, and the subsequent scattered dispatch of divisions into Italy, would confuse the Austrians as to

Napoleon's intentions. And if the Austrian army at the Rhine was pushed east, it would be too distant to support the Austrian army in northern Italy.

Once across the Alps, Napoleon would concentrate his forces and link up with the divisions under General Andre Massena already stationed in northern Italy. He would then move much of his army to the town of Stradella, cutting off communications between Melas in northern Italy and command headquarters in Austria. With Melas's troops now isolated and the mobile French army within reach of them, Napoleon would have many excellent options for dislocating and destroying them. At one point, as he described this plan to Bourienne, Napoleon lay down on the giant map on his floor and stuck a pin next to the town of Marengo, in the center of the Italian theater of war. "I will fight him here," he said.

A few weeks later, as Napoleon began to position his armies, he received some troubling news: Melas had beaten him to the punch by attacking Massena's army in Northern Italy. Massena was forced back to Genoa, where the Austrians quickly surrounded him. The danger here was great: if Massena surrendered, the Austrians could sweep into southern France. Also, Napoleon had been counting on Massena's army to help him beat Melas. Yet he took the news with surprising calm and simply made some adjustments: he transferred more men to Switzerland and sent word to Massena that he must do whatever he could to hold out for at least eight weeks, keeping Melas busy while Napoleon moved into Italy.

Within a week there was more irritating news. After Moreau had begun the campaign to push the Austrians back from the Rhine, he refused to transfer the division that Napoleon had counted on for Italy, claiming he could not spare it. Instead he sent a smaller, less experienced division. The French army in Switzerland had already begun the dangerous crossings through the Alps. Napoleon had no choice but to take what Moreau gave him.

By May 24, Napoleon had brought his army safely into Italy. Absorbed with the siege at Genoa, Melas ignored reports of French movements to the north. Next Napoleon advanced to Milan, close to Stradella, where he cut Austrian communications as planned. Now, like a cat stealing up on its prey, he could wait for Melas to notice the trap he was in and try to fight his way out of it near Milan.

On June 8, however, once again more bad news reached Napoleon: two weeks before he had hoped, Massena had surrendered. Napoleon now had fewer men to work with, and Melas had won a strong base in Genoa. Since its inception the campaign had been plagued with mistakes and unforeseen events--the Austrians attacking early, Massena retreating into a trap at Genoa, Moreau

disobeying orders, and now Massena's surrender. Yet while Napoleon's lieutenants feared the worst, Napoleon himself not only stayed cool, he seemed oddly excited by these sudden twists of fortune. Somehow he could discern opportunities in them that were invisible to everyone else--and with the loss of Genoa, he sensed the greatest opportunity of all. He quickly altered his plan; instead of waiting at Milan for Melas to come to him, he suddenly cast his divisions in a wide net to the west.

Watching his prey closely, Napoleon sensed that Melas was mesmerized by the movements of the French divisions--a fatal hesitation. Napoleon moved one division west to Marengo, close to the Austrians at Genoa, almost baiting them to attack. Suddenly, on the morning of June 14, they took the bait, and in surprising force. This time it was Napoleon who had erred; he had not expected the Austrian attack for several days, and his divisions were scattered too widely to support him. The Austrians at Marengo outnumbered him two to one. He dispatched urgent messages in all directions for reinforcements, then settled into battle, hoping to make his small forces hold ground until they came.

The hours went by with no sign of aid. Napoleon's lines grew weaker, and at three in the afternoon the Austrians finally broke through, forcing the French to retreat. This was the ultimate downturn in the campaign, and it was yet again Napoleon's moment to shine. He seemed encouraged by the way the retreat was going, the French scattering and the Austrians pursuing them, without discipline or cohesion. Riding among the men who had retreated the farthest, he rallied them and prepared them to counterattack, promising them that reinforcements would arrive within minutes--and he was right. Now French divisions were coming in from all directions. The Austrians, meanwhile, had let their ranks fall into disorder, and, stunned to find themselves facing new forces in this condition, they halted and then gave ground to a quickly organized French counterattack. By 9:00 P.M. the French had routed them.

Just as Napoleon had predicted with his pin on the map, he met and defeated the enemy at Marengo. A few months later, a treaty was signed that gave France the peace it so desperately needed, a peace that was to last nearly four years.

> *Aptitude for maneuver is the supreme skill in a general; it is the most useful and rarest of gifts by which genius is estimated.*
>
> NAPOLEON BONAPARTE, 1769-1821

Interpretation

Napoleon's victory at Marengo might seem to have depended on a fair amount of luck and intuition. But that is not at all the case. Napoleon believed that a

superior strategist could create his own luck--through calculation, careful planning, and staying open to change in a dynamic situation. Instead of letting bad fortune face him down, Napoleon incorporated it into his plans. When he learned that Massena had been forced back to Genoa, he saw that the fight for the city would lock Melas into a static position, giving Napoleon time to move his men into place. When Moreau sent him a smaller division, Napoleon sent it through the Alps by a narrower, more obscure route, throwing more sand in the eyes of the Austrians trying to figure out how many men he had available. When Massena unexpectedly surrendered, Napoleon realized that it would be easier now to bait Melas into attacking his divisions, particularly if he moved them closer. At Marengo itself he knew all along that his first reinforcements would arrive sometime after three in the afternoon. The more disorderly the Austrian pursuit of the French, the more devastating the counterattack would be.

Napoleon's power to adjust and maneuver on the run was based in his novel way of planning. First, he spent days studying maps and using them to make a detailed analysis. This was what told him, for example, that putting his army at Stradella would pose a dilemma for the Austrians and give him many choices of ways to destroy them. Then he calculated contingencies: if the enemy did *x*, how would he respond? If part *y* of his plan misfired, how would he recover? The plan was so fluid, and gave him so many options, that he could adapt it infinitely to whatever situation developed. He had anticipated so many possible problems that he could come up with a rapid answer to any of them. His plan was a mix of detail and fluidity, and even when he made a mistake, as he did in the early part of the encounter at Marengo, his quick adjustments kept the Austrians from taking advantage of it--before they'd figured out what to do, he was already somewhere else. His devastating freedom of maneuver cannot be separated from his methodical planning.

Understand: in life as in war, nothing ever happens just as you expect it to. People's responses are odd or surprising, your staff commits outrageous acts of stupidity, on and on. If you meet the dynamic situations of life with plans that are rigid, if you think of only holding static positions, if you rely on technology to control any friction that comes your way, you are doomed: events will change faster than you can adjust to them, and chaos will enter your system.

In an increasingly complex world, Napoleon's way of planning and maneuvering is the only rational solution. You absorb as much information and as many details as possible; you analyze situations in depth, trying to imagine the enemy's responses and the accidents that might happen. You do not get lost in this maze of analysis but rather use it to formulate a free-flowing plan with branches, one that puts you in positions with the possibility of maneuver. You

keep things loose and adjustable. Any chaos that comes your way is channeled toward the enemy. In practicing this policy, you will come to understand Napoleon's dictum that luck is something you create.

> *Now the army's disposition of force* (hsing) *is like water. Water's configuration* (hsing) *avoids heights and races downward.... Water configures* (hsing) *its flow in accord with the terrain; the army controls its victory in accord with the enemy. Thus the army does not maintain any constant strategic configuration of power* (shih)*, water has no constant shape* (hsing)*. One who is able to change and transform in accord with the enemy and wrest victory is termed spiritual.*
>
> *THE ART OF WAR*, SUN-TZU, FOURTH CENTURY B.C.

THE REED AND THE OLIVE

> *The reed and the olive tree were arguing over their steadfastness, strength and ease. The olive taunted the reed for his powerlessness and pliancy in the face of all the winds. The reed kept quiet and didn't say a word. Then, not long after this, the wind blew violently. The reed, shaken and bent, escaped easily from it, but the olive tree, resisting the wind, was snapped by its force.* The story shows that people who yield to circumstances and to superior power have the advantage over their stronger rivals.
>
> *FABLES*, AESOP, SIXTH CENTURY B.C.

2. As the Republicans prepared their convention to pick a presidential candidate in 1936, they had reason to hope. The sitting president, the Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt, was certainly popular, but America was still in the Depression, unemployment was high, the budget deficit was growing, and many of Roosevelt's New Deal programs were mired in inefficiency. Most promising of all, many Americans had become disenchanted with Roosevelt as a person--in fact, they had even come to hate him, thinking him dictatorial, untrustworthy, a socialist at heart, perhaps even un-American.

Roosevelt was vulnerable, and the Republicans were desperate to win the election. They decided to tone down their rhetoric and appeal to traditional

American values. Claiming to support the spirit of the New Deal but not the man behind it, they pledged to deliver the needed reforms more efficiently and fairly than Roosevelt had. Stressing party unity, they nominated Alf M. Landon, the governor of Kansas, as their presidential candidate. Landon was the perfect moderate. His speeches tended to be a little dull, but he seemed so solid, so middle class, a comfortable choice, and this was no time to be promoting a radical. He had supported much of the New Deal, but that was fine--the New Deal was popular. The Republicans nominated Landon because they thought he had the best chance to defeat Roosevelt, and that was all that mattered to them.

During the nominating ceremony, the Republicans staged a western pageant with cowboys, cowgirls, and covered wagons. In his acceptance speech, Landon did not talk about specific plans or policy but about himself and his American values. Where Roosevelt was associated with unpleasant dramas, he would bring stability. It was a feel-good convention.

The Republicans waited for Roosevelt to make his move. As expected, he played the part of the man above the fray, keeping his public appearances to a minimum and projecting a presidential image. He talked in vague generalities and struck an optimistic note. After the Democratic convention, he departed for a long vacation, leaving the field open to the Republicans, who were only too happy to fill the void: they sent Landon out on the campaign trail, where he made stump speeches about how he was the one to enact reforms in a measured, rational way. The contrast between Landon and Roosevelt was one of temperament and character, and it seemed to resonate: in the polls, Landon pulled into the lead.

Sensing that the election would be close and feeling that this was their great chance, the Republicans escalated their attacks, accusing Roosevelt of class warfare and painting a bleak picture of his next term. The anti-Roosevelt newspapers published a slew of editorials attacking him in personal terms. The chorus of criticism grew, and the Republicans watched gleefully as many in Roosevelt's camp seemed to panic. One poll had Landon building a substantial lead.

Not until late September, a mere six weeks before the election, did Roosevelt finally start his campaign--and then, to everyone's shock, he dropped the nonpartisan, presidential air that he had worn so naturally. Positioning himself clearly to Landon's left, he drew a sharp contrast between the two candidates. He quoted with great sarcasm Landon's speeches supporting the New Deal but claiming to be able to do it better: why vote for a man with basically the same ideas and approach but with no experience in making them work? As the days went by, Roosevelt's voice grew louder and clearer, his gestures more animated,

his oratory even biblical in tone: he was David facing the Goliath of the big-business interests that wanted to return the country to the era of monopolies and robber barons.

The Republicans watched in horror as Roosevelt's crowds swelled. All those whom the New Deal had helped in any way showed up in the tens of thousands, and their response to Roosevelt was almost religious in its fervor. In one particularly rousing speech, Roosevelt catalogued the moneyed interests arrayed against him: "Never before in our history," he concluded, "have these forces been so united against one candidate as they stand today. They are unanimous in their hate for me--and I welcome their hatred.... I should like to have it said of my second administration that in it these forces met their master."

Landon, sensing the great change in the tide of the election, came out with sharper attacks and tried to distance himself from the New Deal, which he had earlier claimed to support--but all of this only seemed to dig him a deeper hole. He had changed too late, and clearly in reaction to his waning fortunes.

On Election Day, Roosevelt won by what at the time was the greatest popular margin in U.S. electoral history; he won all but two states, and the Republicans were reduced to sixteen seats in the Senate. More amazing than the size of his unprecedented victory was the speed with which he had turned the tide.

Interpretation

As Roosevelt followed the Republican convention, he clearly saw the line they would take in the months to come--a centrist line, emphasizing values and character over policy. Now he could lay the perfect trap by abandoning the field. Over the weeks to come, Landon would pound his moderate position into the public's mind, committing himself to it further and further. Meanwhile the more right-wing Republicans would attack the president in bitter, personal terms. Roosevelt knew that a time would come when Landon's poll numbers would peak. The public would have had its fill of his bland message and the right's vitriolic attacks.

Sensing that moment in late September, he returned to the stage and positioned himself clearly to Landon's left. The choice was strategic, not ideological; it let him draw a sharp distinction between Landon and himself. In a time of crisis like the Depression, it was best to look resolute and strong, to stand for something firm, to oppose a clear enemy. The attacks from the right gave him that clear enemy, while Landon's milquetoast posturing made him look strong by contrast. Either way he won.

Of course this beautiful simplicity of strategic movement, with its infinite flexibility, is extremely deceptive. The task of correlating and coordinating the daily movements of a dozen or more major formations, all moving along separate routes, of ensuring that every component is within one or, at most, two days' marching distance of its immediate neighbors, and yet at the same time preserving the appearance of an arbitrary and ill-coordinated "scatter" of large units in order to deceive the foe concerning the true gravity of his situation--this is the work of a mathematical mind of no common caliber. It is in fact the hallmark of genius--that "infinite capacity for taking pains."...The ultimate aim of all this carefully considered activity was to produce the greatest possible number of men on the battlefield, which on occasion had been chosen months in advance of the actual event. Bourienne gives his celebrated...eyewitness account of the First Consul, in the early days of the Italian Campaign of 1800, lying full-length on the floor, pushing colored pins into his maps, and saying, "I shall fight him here--on the plain of the Scrivia," with that uncanny prescience which was in reality the product of mental calculations of computer-like complexity. After considering every possible course of action open to the Austrian Melas, Bonaparte eliminated them one by one, made allowance for the effect of chance on events, and came up with the answer--subsequently borne out by the events of June 14 on the field of Marengo, which lies, surely enough, on the plain bounded by the rivers Bormida and Scrivia.

THE CAMPAIGNS OF NAPOLEON, DAVID G. CHANDLER, 1966

Now Landon was presented with a dilemma. If he kept going with his centrist appeal, he would bore the public and seem weak. If he moved to the right--the choice he actually took--he would be inconsistent and look desperate. This was pure maneuver warfare: Begin by taking a position of strength--in Roosevelt's case his initial, presidential, bipartisan pose--that leaves you with open options and room to maneuver. Then let your enemies show their direction. Once they commit to a position, let them hold it--in fact, let them trumpet it. Now that they are fixed in place, maneuver to the side that will crowd them, leaving them only bad options. By waiting to make this maneuver until the last six weeks of the presidential race, Roosevelt both denied the Republicans any time to adjust and kept his own strident appeal from wearing thin.

Everything is political in the world today, and politics is all about positioning. In any political battle, the best way to stake out a position is to draw a sharp contrast with the other side. If you have to resort to speeches to make this contrast, you are on shaky ground: people distrust words. Insisting that you

are strong or well qualified rings as self-promotion. Instead make the opposing side talk and take the first move. Once they have committed to a position and fixed it in other people's minds, they are ripe for the sickle. Now you can create a contrast by quoting their words back at them, showing how different you are--in tone, in attitude, in action. Make the contrast deep. If they commit to some radical position, do not respond by being moderate (moderation is generally weak); attack them for promoting instability, for being power-hungry revolutionaries. If they respond by toning down their appeal, nail them for being inconsistent. If they stay the course, their message will wear thin. If they become more strident in self-defense, you make your point about their instability.

Use this strategy in the battles of daily life, letting people commit themselves to a position you can turn into a dead end. Never *say* you are strong, *show* you are, by making a contrast between yourself and your inconsistent or moderate opponents.

3. The Turks entered World War I on the side of Germany. Their main enemies in the Middle Eastern theater were the British, who were based in Egypt, but by 1917 they had arrived at a comfortable stalemate: the Turks controlled a strategic eight-hundred-mile stretch of railway that ran from Syria in the north to the Hejaz (the southwestern part of Arabia) in the south. Due west of the central part of this railway line was the town of Aqaba, on the Red Sea, a key Turkish position from which they could quickly move armies north and south to protect the railway.

The Turks had already beaten back the British at Gallipoli (see chapter 5), a huge boost to their morale. Their commanders in the Middle East felt secure. The English had tried to stir up a revolt against the Turks among the Arabs of the Hejaz, hoping the revolt would spread north; the Arabs had managed a few raids here and there but had fought more among themselves than against the Turks. The British clearly coveted Aqaba and plotted to take it from the sea with their powerful navy, but behind Aqaba was a mountain wall marked by deep gorges. The Turks had converted the mountain into a fortress. The British knew that even if their navy took Aqaba, they would be unable to advance inland, rendering the city's capture useless. Both the British and the Turks saw the situation the same way, and the stalemate endured.

In June 1917 the Turkish commanders of the forts guarding Aqaba received reports of strange enemy movements in the Syrian deserts to the northeast. It seemed that a twenty-nine-year-old British liaison officer to the Arabs named T.

E. Lawrence had trekked across hundreds of miles of desolate terrain to recruit an army among the Howeitat, a Syrian tribe renowned for fighting on camels. The Turks dispatched scouts to find out more. They already knew a little about Lawrence: unusually for British officers of the time, he spoke Arabic, mixed well with the local people, and even dressed in their style. He had also befriended Sherif Feisal, a leader of the Arab revolt. Could he be raising an army to attack Aqaba? To the extent that this was possible, he was worth watching carefully. Then word came that Lawrence had imprudently told an Arab chief, secretly in Turkish pay, that he was heading for Damascus to spread the Arab revolt. This was the Turks' great fear, for a revolt in the more populated areas of the north would be unmanageable.

The army Lawrence had recruited could not have numbered more than 500, but the Howeitat were great fighters on camel, fierce and mobile. The Turks alerted their colleagues in Damascus and dispatched troops to hunt Lawrence down, a difficult task given the mobility of the Arabs and the vastness of the desert.

In the next few weeks, the Englishman's movements were baffling, to say the least: his troops moved not north toward Damascus but south toward the railway town of Ma'an, site of a storage depot used to supply Aqaba, forty miles away. No sooner had Lawrence appeared in the area of Ma'an, however, than he disappeared, reemerging over a hundred miles north to lead a series of raids on the railway line between Amman and Damascus. Now the Turks were doubly alarmed and sent 400 cavalry from Amman to find him.

For a few days, there was no sign of Lawrence. In the meantime an uprising several miles to the south of Ma'an surprised the Turks. An Arab tribe called the Dhumaniyeh had seized control of the town of Abu el Lissal, directly along the route from Ma'an to Aqaba. A Turkish battalion dispatched to take the town back found the blockhouse guarding it destroyed and the Arabs gone. Then, suddenly, something unexpected and quite disturbing occurred: out of nowhere Lawrence's Howeitat army emerged on the hill above Abu el Lissal.

> *The warrior and the statesman, like the skillful gambler, do not make their luck but prepare for it, attract it, and seem almost to determine their luck. Not only are they, unlike the fool and the coward, adept at making use of opportunities when these occur; they know furthermore how to take advantage, by means of precautions and wise measures, of such and such an opportunity, or of several at once. If one thing happens, they win; if another, they are still the winners; the same circumstance often makes them win in a variety of ways. These prudent men may be praised for their good fortune as*

well as their good management, and rewarded for their luck as well as for their merits.

CHARACTERS, JEAN DE LA BRUYERE, 1645-1696

Distracted by the local uprising, the Turks had lost track of Lawrence. Now, linking up with the Dhumaniyeh, he had trapped a Turkish army at Abu el Lissal. The Arabs rode along the hill with enormous speed and dexterity, goading the Turks into wasting ammunition by firing on them. Meanwhile the midday heat took its toll on the Turkish riflemen, and, having waited until the Turks were sufficiently tired, the Arabs, Lawrence among them, charged down the hill. The Turks closed their ranks, but the swift-moving camel cavalry took them from the flank and rear. It was a massacre: 300 Turkish soldiers were killed and the rest taken prisoner.

Now the Turkish commanders at Aqaba finally saw Lawrence's game: he had cut them off from the railway line on which they depended for supplies. Also, seeing the Howeitat's success, other Arab tribes around Aqaba joined up with Lawrence, creating a powerful army that began to wend its way through the narrow gorges toward Aqaba. The Turks had never imagined an army coming from this direction; their fortifications faced the other way, toward the sea and the British. The Arabs had a reputation for ruthlessness with enemies who resisted, and the commanders of the forts in back of Aqaba began to surrender. The Turks sent out their 300-man garrison from Aqaba to put a stop to this advance, but they were quickly surrounded by the swelling number of Arabs.

On July 6 the Turks finally surrendered, and their commanders watched in shock as Lawrence's ragtag army rushed to the sea to take what had been thought to be an impregnable position. With this one blow, Lawrence had completely altered the balance of power in the Middle East.

Interpretation

The fight between Britain and Turkey during World War I superbly demonstrates the difference between a war of attrition and a war of maneuver. Before Lawrence's brilliant move, the British, fighting by the rules of attrition warfare, had been directing the Arabs to capture key points along the railway line. This strategy had played into Turkish hands: the Turks had too few men to patrol the entire line, but once they saw the Arabs attacking at any one place, they could quickly move the men they had and use their superior firepower to either defend it or take it back. Lawrence--a man with no military background, but blessed with common sense--saw the stupidity in this right away. Around the railway line were thousands of square miles of desert unoccupied by the Turks. The

Arabs had been masters at a mobile form of warfare on camelback since the days of the prophet Mohammed; vast space at their disposal gave them infinite possibilities for maneuvers that would create threats everywhere, forcing the Turks to bunker themselves in their forts. Frozen in place, the Turks would wither from lack of supplies and would be unable to defend the surrounding region. The key to the overall war was to spread the revolt north, toward Damascus, allowing the Arabs to threaten the entire railway line. But to spread the revolt north, they needed a base in the center. That base was Aqaba.

The British were as hidebound as the Turks and simply could not picture a campaign of a group of Arabs led by a liaison officer. Lawrence would have to do it on his own. Tracing a series of great loops in the vast spaces of the desert, he left the Turks bewildered as to his purpose. Knowing that the Turks feared an attack on Damascus, he deliberately spread the lie that he was aiming for it, making the Turks send troops on a wild-goose chase to the north. Then, exploiting their inability to imagine an Arab attack on Aqaba from the landward side (a failing they shared with his British countrymen), he caught them off guard. Lawrence's subsequent capture of Aqaba was a masterpiece of economy: only two men died, on his side. (Compare this to the unsuccessful British attempt to take Gaza from the Turks that same year in head-on battle, in which over three thousand British soldiers were killed.) The capture of Aqaba was the turning point in Britain's eventual defeat of the Turks in the Middle East.

The greatest power you can have in any conflict is the ability to confuse your opponent about your intentions. Confused opponents do not know how or where to defend themselves; hit them with a surprise attack and they are pushed off balance and fall. To accomplish this you must maneuver with just one purpose: to keep them guessing. You get them to chase you in circles; you say the opposite of what you mean to do; you threaten one area while shooting for another. You create maximum disorder. But to pull this off, you need room to maneuver. If you crowd yourself with alliances that force your hand, if you take positions that box you into corners, if you commit yourself to defending one fixed position, you lose the power of maneuver. You become predictable. You are like the British and the Turks, moving in straight lines in defined areas, ignoring the vast desert around you. People who fight this way deserve the bloody battles they face.

4. Early in 1937, Harry Cohn, longtime chief of Columbia Pictures, faced a crisis. His most successful director, Frank Capra, had just left the studio, and

profits were down. Cohn needed a hit and a replacement for Capra. And he believed he had found the right formula with a comedy called *The Awful Truth* and a thirty-nine-year-old director named Leo McCarey. McCarey had directed *Duck Soup,* with the Marx Brothers, and *Ruggles of Red Gap,* with Charles Laughton, two different but successful comedies. Cohn offered McCarey *The Awful Truth*.

McCarey said he did not like the script, but he would do the picture anyway for a hundred thousand dollars--a huge sum in 1937 dollars. Cohn, who ran Columbia like Mussolini (in fact, he kept a picture of Il Duce in his office), exploded at the price. McCarey got up to go, but as he was leaving, he noticed the producer's office piano. McCarey was a frustrated songwriter. He sat down and began to play a show tune. Cohn had a weakness for such music, and he was entranced: "Anybody who likes music like that has got to be a talented man," he said. "I'll pay that exorbitant fee. Report to work tomorrow."

Expanding on the issue of directive control, Lind introduces the reader to a decision-making model known as the Boyd cycle. Named for Col. John Boyd, the term refers to the understanding that war consists of the repeated cycle of observation, orientation, decision, and action. Colonel Boyd constructed his model as a result of his observations of fighter combat in the Korean War. He had been investigating why American fighter pilots had been consistently able to best enemy pilots in dogfights. His analysis of opposing aircraft led to some startling discoveries. Enemy fighters typically outperformed their American counterparts in speed, climb, and turning ability. But the Americans had the advantage in two subtly critical aspects. First, the hydraulic controls allowed for faster transition from one maneuver to another. Second, the cockpit allowed for a wide field of view for the pilot. The result was that the American pilots could more rapidly observe and orient to the tactical situation moment by moment. Then, having decided what to do next, they could quickly change maneuvers. In battle, this ability to rapidly pass through the observation-orientation-decision-action loop (the Boyd cycle) gave the American pilots a slight time advantage. If one views a dogfight as a series of Boyd cycles, one sees that the Americans would repeatedly gain a time advantage each cycle, until the enemy's actions become totally inappropriate to the changing situations. Hence, the American pilots were able to "out-Boyd cycle" the enemy, thus outmaneuvering him and finally shooting him down. Colonel Boyd and others then began to question whether this pattern might be applicable to other forms of warfare as well.

THE ART OF MANEUVER, ROBERT R. LEONHARD, 1991

In the days to come, Cohn was going to regret his decision.

Three stars were cast for *The Awful Truth*--Cary Grant, Irene Dunne, and Ralph Bellamy. All had problems with their roles as written in the script, none of them wanted to do the picture, and, as time went by, their unhappiness only grew. Revisions to the script began to come in: McCarey had apparently junked the original and was starting over, but his creative process was peculiar--he would sit in a parked car on Hollywood Boulevard with the screenwriter Vina Delmar and verbally improvise scenes with her. Later, when shooting began, he would walk on the beach and scribble the next day's setups on torn pieces of brown paper. His style of directing was equally upsetting to the actors. One day, for instance, he asked Dunne whether she played the piano and Bellamy whether he could sing. Both answered, "Not very well," but McCarey's next step was to have Dunne play "Home on the Range" as best she could while Bellamy sang off key. The actors did not enjoy this rather humiliating exercise, but McCarey was delighted and filmed the entire song. None of this was in the script, but all of it ended up in the film.

Sometimes the actors would wait on set while McCarey would mess around on the piano, then suddenly come up with an idea for what to shoot that day. One morning Cohn visited the set and witnessed this odd process. "I hired you to make a great comedy so I could show up Frank Capra. The only one who's going to laugh at this picture is Capra!" he exclaimed. Cohn was disgusted and basically wrote the whole thing off. His irritation grew daily, but he was contractually bound to pay Dunne forty thousand dollars for the film, whether it was shot or not. He could not fire McCarey at this point without creating greater problems, nor could he have him go back to the original script, since McCarey had already begun shooting and only he seemed to know where the film was going.

Yet as the days went on, the actors began to see some method in McCarey's madness. He would shoot them in long takes in which much of their work was only loosely guided; the scenes had spontaneity and liveliness. Casual as he seemed, he knew what he wanted and would reshoot the simplest shot if the look on the actors' faces was not loving enough. His shoot days were short and to the point.

One day, after many days' absence, Cohn showed up on set to find McCarey serving drinks to the cast. Cohn was about to explode when the director told him they were drinking to celebrate--they had just finished shooting. Cohn was shocked and delighted; McCarey had finished ahead of schedule and two hundred thousand dollars under budget. Then, to his surprise as well, the picture came together in the editing room like a strange puzzle. It was good, very good.

Test audiences roared with laughter. Premiering in 1937, *The Awful Truth* was a complete success and won McCarey the best director Oscar. Cohn had found his new Frank Capra.

Unfortunately, McCarey had seen his boss's dictatorial tendencies all too clearly, and though Cohn made lucrative offers, McCarey never worked for Columbia again.

Interpretation

Leo McCarey, one of the great directors of Hollywood's golden era, was essentially a frustrated composer and songwriter. He had gone to work directing slapstick comedies--McCarey was the man who paired Laurel with Hardy--only because he was unable to make a living in music. *The Awful Truth* is considered one of the greatest screwball comedies ever made, and both its style and the way McCarey worked on it stemmed from his musical instincts: he composed the film in his head in just the same loose yet logical way that he would tinker with a tune on the piano. To create a film this way required two things: room to maneuver and the ability to channel chaos and confusion into the creative process.

McCarey kept his distance from Cohn, the actors, the screenwriters--in fact, everyone--as best he could. He would not let himself be boxed in by anyone's idea of how to shoot a film. Given room to maneuver, he could improvise, experiment, move fluidly in different directions in any scene, yet keep everything perfectly controlled--he always seemed to know what he wanted and what worked. And because filmmaking this way made every day a fresh challenge, the actors had to respond with their own energy, rather than simply regurgitating words from a script. McCarey allowed room for chance and the random events of life to enter his creative scheme without being overwhelmed by chaos. The scene he was inspired to create when he learned of Dunne's and Bellamy's lack of musical skill, for example, seems unrehearsed and lifelike because it really was. Had it been scripted, it would have been far less funny.

Directing a film--or any project, artistic or professional or scientific--is like fighting a war. There is a certain strategic logic to the way you attack a problem, shape your work, deal with friction and the discrepancy between what you want and what you get. Directors or artists often start out with great ideas but in the planning create such a straitjacket for themselves, such a rigid script to follow and form to fit in, that the process loses all joy; there's nothing left to explore in the creation itself, and the end result seems lifeless and disappointing. On the other side, artists may start with a loose idea that seems promising, but they are too lazy or undisciplined to give it shape and form. They create so much space

and confusion that in the end nothing coheres.

The solution is to plan, to have a clear idea what you want, then put yourself in open space and give yourself options to work with. You direct the situation but leave room for unexpected opportunities and random events. Both generals and artists can be judged by the way they handle chaos and confusion, embracing it yet guiding it for their own purposes.

5. One day in the Japan of the 1540s, in a ferryboat crowded with farmers, merchants, and craftsmen, a young samurai regaled all who would listen with tales of his great victories as a swordsman, wielding his three-foot-long sword as he spoke to demonstrate his prowess. The other passengers were a little afraid of this athletic young man, so they feigned interest in his stories to avoid trouble. But one older man sat to the side, ignoring the young boaster. The older man was obviously a samurai himself--he carried two swords--but no one knew that this was in fact Tsukahara Bokuden, perhaps the greatest swordsman of his time. He was in his fifties by then and liked to travel alone and incognito.

> *Mobility, defined as the ability to project power over distance, is another characteristic of good chess. It is the goal of a good chess player to ensure that each of his pieces can exert pressure upon a maximum number of squares, rather than being bottled up in a corner, surrounded by other pieces. Hence, the chess master looks forward to pawn exchanges (infantry battles, if you will), not because he is trying to wear down the enemy, but because he knows that he can project the power of his rooks (mechanized forces) down the resulting open files. In this manner, the chess master fights in order to move. This idea is central to maneuver-warfare theory.*
>
> *THE ART OF MANEUVER,* ROBERT R. LEONHARD, 1991

Bokuden sat with his eyes closed, seemingly deep in meditation. His stillness and silence began to annoy the young samurai, who finally called out, "Don't you like this kind of talk? You don't even know how to wield a sword, old man, do you?" "I most certainly do," answered Bokuden. "My way, however, is not to wield my sword in such inconsequential circumstances as these." "A way of using a sword that doesn't use a sword," said the young samurai. "Don't talk gibberish. What is your school of fighting called?" "It is called Mutekatsu-ryu [style that wins without swords or fighting]," replied Bokuden. "What? Mutekatsu-ryu? Don't be ridiculous. How can you defeat an opponent without

fighting?"

By now the young samurai was angry and irritated, and he demanded that Bokuden demonstrate his style, challenging him to a fight then and there. Bokuden refused to duel in the crowded boat but said he would show the samurai Mutekatsu-ryu at the nearest shore, and he asked the ferryman to guide the boat to a tiny nearby island. The young man began to swing his sword to loosen up. Bokuden continued to sit with his eyes closed. As they approached the island, the impatient challenger shouted, "Come! You are as good as dead. I will show you how sharp my sword is!" He then leaped onto the shore.

Bokuden took his time, further infuriating the young samurai, who began to hurl insults. Bokuden finally handed the ferryman his swords, saying, "My style is Mutekatsu-ryu. I have no need for a sword"--and with those words he took the ferryman's long oar and pushed it hard against the shore, sending the boat quickly out into the water and away from the island. The samurai screamed, demanding the boat's return. Bokuden shouted back to him, "This is what is called victory without fighting. I dare you to jump into the water and swim here!"

Now the passengers on the boat could look back at the young samurai receding into the distance, stranded on the island, jumping up and down, flailing his arms as his cries became fainter and fainter. They began to laugh: Bokuden had clearly demonstrated Mutekatsu-ryu.

Interpretation

The minute Bokuden heard the arrogant young samurai's voice, he knew there would be trouble. A duel on a crowded boat would be a disaster, and a totally unnecessary one; he had to get the young man off the boat without a fight, and to make the defeat humiliating. He would do this through maneuver. First, he remained still and quiet, drawing the man's attention away from the innocent passengers and drawing him toward Bokuden like a magnet. Then he confused the man with a rather irrational name for a school of fighting, overheating the samurai's rather simple mind with a perplexing concept. The flustered samurai tried to cover up with bluster. He was now so angry and mentally off balance that he leaped to the shore alone, failing to consider the rather obvious meaning of Mutekatsu-ryu even once he got there. Bokuden was a samurai who always depended on setting up his opponents first and winning the victory easily, by maneuver rather than brute force. This was the ultimate demonstration of his art.

The goal of maneuver is to give you easy victories, which you do by luring opponents into leaving their fortified positions of strength for unfamiliar terrain where they must fight off balance. Since your opponents' strength is inseparable

from their ability to think straight, your maneuvers must be designed to make them emotional and befuddled. If you are too direct in this maneuvering, you run the risk of revealing your game; you must be subtle, drawing opponents toward you with enigmatic behavior, slowly getting under their skin with provocative comments and actions, then suddenly stepping back. When you feel that their emotions are engaged, that their frustration and anger are mounting, you can speed up the tempo of your maneuvers. Properly set up, your opponents will leap onto the island and strand themselves, giving you the easy victory.

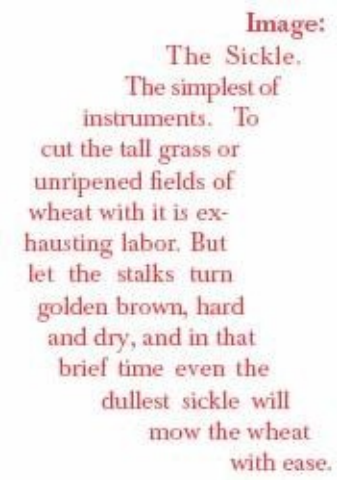
NO. 71. THE VICTORY IN THE MIDST OF A HUNDRED ENEMIES

To priest Yozan, the 28th teacher at Enkakuji, came for an interview a samurai named Ryozan, who practised Zen. The teacher said: "You are going into the bath-tub, stark naked without a stitch on. Now a hundred enemies in armour, with bows and swords, appear all around you. How will you meet them? Will you crawl before them and beg for mercy? Will you show your warrior birth by dying in combat against them? Or does a man of the Way get some special holy grace?" Ryozan said, "Let me win without surrendering and without fighting."

Test

Caught in the midst of the hundred enemies, how will you manage to win without surrendering and without fighting?

AMURAI ZEN: THE WARRIOR KOANS, TREVOR LEGGETT, 1985



Authority: Battles are won by slaughter and maneuver. The greater the general, the more he contributes in maneuver, the less he demands in slaughter.... Nearly all the battle swhich are regarded as masterpieces of

the military art...have been battles of maneuver in which very often the enemy has found himself defeated by some novel expedient or device, some queer, swift, unexpected thrust or stratagem. In such battles the losses of the victors have been small.

--Winston Churchill (1874-1965)

REVERSAL

There is neither point nor honor in seeking direct battle for its own sake. That kind of fighting, however, may have value as part of a maneuver or strategy. A sudden envelopment or powerful frontal blow when the enemy is least expecting it can be crushing.

The only danger in maneuver is that you give yourself so many options that you yourself get confused. Keep it simple--limit yourself to the options you can control.