CREATE A THREATENING PRESENCE

DETERRENCE STRATEGIES

The best way to fight off aggressors is to keep them from attacking you in the first place. To accomplish this you must create the impression of being more powerful than you are. Build up a reputation: You're a little crazy. Fighting you is not worth it. You take your enemies with you when you lose. Create this reputation and make it credible with a few impressive--impressively violent--acts. Uncertainty is sometimes better than overt threat: if your opponents are never sure what messing with you will cost, they will not want to find out. Play on people's natural fears and anxieties to make them think twice.

> *If your organization is small in numbers, then do what Gideon did: conceal the members in the dark but raise a din and clamor that will make the listener believe that your organization numbers many more than it does.... Always remember the first rule of power tactics:* Power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have.
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> *RULES FOR RADICALS*, SAUL D. ALINSKY, 1972

REVERSE INTIMIDATION

Inevitably in life you will find yourself facing people who are more aggressive than you are--crafty, ruthless people who are determined to get what they want. Fighting them head-on is generally foolish; fighting is what they are good at, and they are unscrupulous to boot. You will probably lose. Trying to fend them off by giving them part of what they are after, or otherwise pleasing or appeasing them, is a recipe for disaster: you are only showing your weakness, inviting more threats and attacks. But giving in completely, surrendering without a fight, hands them the easy victory they crave and makes you resentful and bitter. It can also become a bad habit, the path of least resistance in dealing with difficult situations.

Instead of trying to avoid conflict or whining about the injustice of it all, consider an option developed over the centuries by military leaders and strategists to deal with violent and acquisitive neighbors: reverse intimidation.

This art of deterrence rests on three basic facts about war and human nature: First, people are more likely to attack you if they see you as weak or vulnerable. Second, they cannot know for sure that you're weak; they depend on the signs you give out, through your behavior both present and past. Third, they are after easy victories, quick and bloodless. That is why they prey on the vulnerable and weak.

Deterrence is simply a matter of turning this dynamic around, altering any perception of yourself as weak and naive and sending the message that battle with you will not be as easy as they had thought. This is generally done by taking some visible action that will confuse aggressors and make them think they have misread you: you may indeed be vulnerable, but they are not sure. You're disguising your weakness and distracting them. Action has much more credibility than mere threatening or fiery words; hitting back, for instance, even in some small, symbolic way, will show that you mean what you say. With so many other people around who are timid and easy prey, the aggressor will most likely back off and move on to someone else.

This form of defensive warfare is infinitely applicable to the battles of daily life. Appeasing people can be as debilitating as fighting them; deterring them, scaring them out of attacking you or getting in your way, will save you valuable energy and resources. To deter aggressors you must become adept at deception, manipulating appearances and their perceptions of you--valuable skills that can be applied to all aspects of daily warfare. And finally, by practicing the art as needed, you will build for yourself a reputation as someone tough, someone worthy of respect and a little fear. The passive-aggressive obstructionists who try to undermine you covertly will also think twice about taking you on.

The following are five basic methods of deterrence and reverse intimidation. You can use them all in offensive warfare, but they are particularly effective in defense, for moments when you find yourself vulnerable and under attack. They are culled from the experiences and writings of the greatest masters of the art.

Surprise with a bold maneuver. The best way to hide your weakness and to bluff your enemies into giving up their attack is to take some unexpected, bold, risky action. Perhaps they had thought you were vulnerable, and now you are acting as someone who is fearless and confident. This will have two positive effects: First, they will tend to think your move is backed up by something real--they will not imagine you could be foolish enough to do something audacious just for effect. Second, they will start to see strengths and threats in you that they

had not imagined.

> *A certain person said the following. There are two kinds of dispositions, inward and outward, and a person who is lacking in one or the other is worthless. It is, for example, like the blade of a sword, which one should sharpen well and then put in its scabbard, periodically taking it out and knitting one's eyebrows as in an attack, wiping off the blade, and then placing it in its scabbard again. If a person has his sword out all the time, he is habitually swinging a naked blade; people will not approach him and he will have no allies. If a sword is always sheathed, it will become rusty, the blade will dull, and people will think as much of its owner.*
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> *HAGAKURE: THE BOOK OF THE SAMURAI*, YAMAMOTO TSUNETOMO, 1659-1720

Reverse the threat. If your enemies see you as someone to be pushed around, turn the tables with a sudden move, however small, designed to scare *them*. Threaten something they value. Hit them where you sense they may be vulnerable, and make it hurt. If that infuriates them and makes them attack you, back off a moment and then hit them again when they're not expecting it. Show them you are not afraid of them and that you are capable of a ruthlessness they had not seen in you. You needn't go too far; just inflict a little pain. Send a short, threatening message to indicate that you are capable of a lot worse.

Seem unpredictable and irrational. In this instance you do something suggesting a slightly suicidal streak, as if you felt you had nothing to lose. You show that you are ready to take your enemies down with you, destroying their reputations in the process. (This is particularly effective with people who have a lot to lose themselves--powerful people with sterling reputations.) To defeat you will be costly and perhaps self-destructive. This will make fighting you very unattractive. You are not acting out emotionally; that is a sign of weakness. You are simply hinting that you are a little irrational and that your next move could be almost anything. Crazy opponents are terrifying--no one likes fighting people who are unpredictable and have nothing to lose.

Play on people's natural paranoia. Instead of threatening your opponents openly, you take action that is indirect and designed to make them think. This

might mean using a go-between to send them a message--to tell some disturbing story about what you are capable of. Or maybe you "inadvertently" let them spy on you, only to hear something that should give them cause for concern. Making your enemies think they have found out you are plotting a countermove is more effective than telling them so yourself; make a threat and you may have to live up to it, but making them think you are working treacherously against them is another story. The more veiled menace and uncertainty you generate, the more their imaginations will run away with them and the more dangerous an attack on you will seem.

Establish a frightening reputation. This reputation can be for any number of things: being difficult, stubborn, violent, ruthlessly efficient. Build up that image over the years and people will back off from you, treating you with respect and a little fear. Why obstruct or pick an argument with someone who has shown he will fight to the bitter end? Someone strategic yet ruthless? To create this image, you may every now and then have to play a bit rough, but eventually it will become enough of a deterrent to make those occasions rare. It will be an offensive weapon, scaring people into submission before they even meet you. In any event, you must build your reputation carefully, allowing no inconsistencies. Any holes in this kind of image will make it worthless.

> *Brinkmanship is...the deliberate creation of a recognizable risk, a risk that one does not completely control. It is the tactic of deliberately letting the situation get somewhat out of hand, just because its being out of hand may be intolerable to the other party and force his accommodation. It means harassing and intimidating an adversary by exposing him to a shared risk, or deterring him by showing that if he makes a contrary move he may disturb us so that we slip over the brink whether we want to or not, carrying him with us.*
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> *THINKING STRATEGICALLY*, AVINASH K. DIXIT AND BARRY J. NALEBUFF, 1991

Injuring all of a man's ten fingers is not as effective as chopping off one.

--Mao Tse-tung (1893-1976)

DETERRENCE AND REVERSE INTIMIDATION IN PRACTICE

1. In March 1862, less than a year after the start of the American Civil War, the

Confederates' situation looked bleak: they had lost a series of important battles, their generals were squabbling, morale was low, and recruits were hard to find. Sensing the South's great weakness, a large Union army under Major General George B. McClellan headed toward the Virginia coast, planning to march from there west to Richmond, the capital of the South. There were enough Confederate troops in the area to hold off McClellan's army for a month or two, but Southern spies reported that Union troops stationed near Washington were about to be transferred to the march on Richmond. If these troops reached McClellan--and they were promised by Abraham Lincoln himself--Richmond would be doomed; and if Richmond fell, the South would have to surrender.

The Confederate general Stonewall Jackson was based in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley at the head of 3,600 men, a ragtag group of rebels he had recruited and trained. His job was merely to defend the fertile valley against a Union army in the area, but as he pondered the developing campaign against Richmond, he saw the possibility of something much greater. Jackson had been a classmate of McClellan's at West Point and knew that underneath his brash, talkative exterior he was basically timid, overly anxious about his career and making any mistakes. McClellan had 90,000 men ready for the march on Richmond, almost double the available Confederate forces, but Jackson knew that this cautious man would wait to fight until his army was overwhelming; he wanted the extra troops that Lincoln had promised him. Lincoln, however, would not release those forces if he saw danger elsewhere. The Shenandoah Valley was to the southwest of Washington. If Jackson could possibly create enough confusion as to what was happening there, he could disrupt the Union plans and perhaps save the South from disaster.

On March 22, Jackson's spies reported that two-thirds of the Union army stationed in the Shenandoah Valley, under General Nathaniel Banks, was heading east to join McClellan. Soon an army near Washington, led by General Irvin McDowell, would move toward Richmond as well. Jackson wasted no time: he marched his men fast to the north to attack the Union soldiers still in the valley, near Kernstown. The battle was fierce, and at the end of the day Jackson's soldiers were forced to retreat. To them the engagement seemed to have been a defeat, even a disaster: outnumbered nearly two to one, they had suffered terrible casualties. But Jackson, always a hard man to figure out, seemed oddly satisfied.

One classic response to a particularly vicious beanball was exemplified by a play Jackie Robinson made in the summer of 1953. Sal Maglie of the New York Giants was "Sal the Barber," mostly because his high inside fast balls "shaved" hitters' chins. Maglie was candid and friendly when he wasn't

pitching. "You have to make the batter afraid of the ball or, anyway, aware that he can get hurt," Maglie told me matter-of-factly one afternoon over drinks at his apartment in Riverdale. "A lot of pitchers think they do that by throwing at a hitter when the count is two strikes and no balls. The trouble there is that the knockdown is expected. You don't scare a guy by knocking him down when he knows he's going to be knocked down." "Then when, Sal?" I asked. "A good time is when the count is two and two. He's looking to swing. You knock him down then and he gets up shaking. Now curve him and you have your out. Of course, to do that you have to be able to get your curve over the plate on a three-and-two count. Not every pitcher can." Maglie could break three different curves over the plate, three and two. He had particular success against such free-swinging sluggers as Roy Campanella and Gil Hodges. But it is simplistic to say Maglie intimidated Campanella and Hodges. Rather, his unpredictable patterns disrupted their timing and concentration. He had less success with Pee Wee Reese and Jackie Robinson, and one day in Ebbets Field, by throwing a shoulder-high fast ball behind Robinson, Maglie brought matters to detonation. The knockdowns thrown at [*Cookie*] *Lavagetto, the fatal pitch thrown at Ray Chapman, roared toward the temple. A batter gets away from that pitch by ducking backward. (Chapman's freeze reaction, though not unknown, is rare.) Angered or frustrated by Robinson that afternoon in Brooklyn, Maglie threw his best fast ball behind the hitter, shoulder high. That was and is dangerous and inexcusable. As a batter strides forward, he loses height. Reflex makes him duck backward. A batter's head moves directly into the path of the fast ball thrown behind him shoulder high. Robinson started to duck into Maglie's pitch and then his phenomenal reflexes enabled him to stop, as it were, in mid-duck. The ball sailed just behind the back of Robinson's neck. Robinson glared but did not lose his poise. Maglie threw an outside curve, and Robinson bunted toward Whitey Lockman, the Giant's first baseman. By making Lockman field the bunt, Robinson was forcing Maglie to leave the pitcher's mound and cover first. There he would be in Robinson's path, and Jack, going at full and full-muscled tilt, intended to run over Maglie, signing his name in spikes on the pitcher's spine. Saturnine, Faustian, brooding Sal Maglie refused to leave the mound. At a critical moment, the Barber lost his nerve. Davey Williams, the Giants' second baseman, rushed over, and as he was reaching for Lockman's throw, Robinson crashed into him, a knee catching Williams in the lower back. Robinson's knee was so swollen a day later that he could not play. Williams never really recovered. He dropped out of the major leagues two seasons later, at twenty-eight.... "Actually,"*

Robinson himself said a few days later, "I'm sorry that Williams got hurt. But when Maglie threw behind me, he was starting a really dangerous business, and I was going to put a stop to it before he hit Gil or Campy or Pee Wee in the head...." After that I saw Maglie start eight games against the Dodgers, but I never saw him throw another fast ball behind a hitter. The grim, intimidating beanballer had been intimidated himself, and by a bunt.

THE HEAD GAME, ROGER KAHN, 2000

A few days later, Jackson received the news he had been waiting for: Lincoln had ordered Banks's army to return to the valley and McDowell's army to stay where it was. The battle at Kernstown had gotten his attention and made him worry--only a little, but enough. Lincoln did not know what Jackson was up to or how large his army was, but he wanted the Shenandoah Valley pacified no matter what. Only then would he release Banks and McDowell. McClellan was forced to agree with that logic, and although he had the men to march on Richmond right away, he wanted to wait for the reinforcements who would make the attack a sure thing.

After Kernstown, Jackson retreated south, away from Banks, and lay low for a few weeks. In early May, thinking that the Shenandoah Valley had been secured, Lincoln sent McDowell toward Richmond, and Banks prepared to join him. Again Jackson was ready: he marched his army in a completely bizarre fashion, first to the east, toward McDowell, then back west into the Valley. Not even his own soldiers knew what he was doing. Mystified by these strange maneuvers, Lincoln imagined--but wasn't sure--that Jackson was marching to fight McDowell. Once again he halted McDowell's march south, kept half of Banks's army in the valley, and sent the other half to help McDowell defend himself against Jackson.

Suddenly the Union's plans, which had seemed so perfect, were in disarray, its troops too scattered to support each other. Now Jackson went in for the kill: he linked up with other Confederate divisions in the area and, on May 24, marched on the Union army--now divided and dangerously diminished--that remained in the valley. Jackson maneuvered onto its flank and sent it in headlong retreat north to the Potomac River. His pursuit of this army sent a wave of panic through Washington: this now dreaded general, commanding forces that seemed to have doubled in size overnight, was heading straight for the capital.

Secretary of War Edwin Stanton telegraphed Northern governors to alert them to the threat and to muster troops for the city's defense. Reinforcements quickly arrived to halt the Confederate advance. Meanwhile Lincoln, determined to eliminate Jackson once and for all, ordered half of McDowell's army west to

join in the fight to destroy this pest and the other half to return to Washington to secure the capital. McClellan could only agree.

Once again Jackson retreated, but by now his plan had worked to perfection. In three months, with only 3,600 men, he had diverted well over 60,000 Northern troops, bought the South enough time to coordinate the defense of Richmond, and completely altered the course of the war.

Interpretation

The story of Stonewall Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley illustrates a simple truth: what matters in war, as in life generally, is not necessarily how many men you have or how well supplied you are but how your enemies see you. If they think you are weak and vulnerable, they act aggressively, which in and of itself can put you in trouble. If they suddenly think you are strong, or unpredictable, or have hidden resources, they back off and reassess. Getting them to change their plans and treat you more carefully can by itself alter the war. In any struggle, some things will be outside your control; you may not be able to put together a large army or defend all your weak points, but you can always affect people's perceptions of you.

Jackson altered Union perceptions first by his bold attack on Kernstown, which made Lincoln and McClellan think he had more troops than he did--they could not imagine that anyone would be so stupid as to send only 3,600 men against a Union stronghold. If Jackson was stronger than they had imagined, that meant they needed more men in the Shenandoah Valley, which cut into the troops available for the march on Richmond. Next Jackson began behaving unpredictably, creating the impression of having not only a large army but also some strange and worrying plan. Lincoln's and McClellan's inability to figure out this plan stopped them in their tracks, making them divide their forces to take care of the possible dangers. Finally Jackson attacked boldly one more time. He did not have nearly enough men to threaten Washington, but Lincoln could not be sure of that. Like a conjuror, Jackson created a bogeyman out of an army that in essence was laughably small.

You must take control over people's perceptions of you by playing with appearances, mystifying and misleading them. Like Jackson, it is best to mix audacity with unpredictability and unorthodoxy and act boldly in moments of weakness or danger. That will distract people from any holes in your armor, and they'll be afraid there may be more to you than meets the eye. Then, if you make your behavior hard to read, you'll only seem more powerful, since actions that elude interpretation attract attention, worry, and a bit of awe. In this way you will throw people off balance and onto their heels. Kept at a distance, they will be

unable to tell how far you are bluffing them. Aggressors will back off. Appearance and perception--you are not someone to mess with--will become reality.

2. King Edward I of England was a fierce thirteenth-century warrior-king who was determined to conquer all of the British Isles. First he battered the Welsh into submission; then he set his sights on Scotland, laying siege to towns and castles and razing to the ground the communities that dared to resist him. He was even more brutal with the Scots who fought back, including the famous Sir William Wallace: he hunted them down and had them publicly tortured and executed.

Only one Scottish lord eluded Edward: Robert the Bruce, Earl of Carrick (1274-1329), who had somehow escaped to the remote fastness of northern Scotland. So Edward captured the rebel's family and friends, killing the men and imprisoning the women in cages. Bruce remained defiant. In 1306 he had himself crowned Scotland's king; whatever it took, he vowed to revenge himself on Edward and throw the English out of Scotland. Hearing this, Edward became even more determined to capture this final piece in his Scottish wars, but in 1307 he died, before the job was done.

Edward's son, now Edward II, did not share his father's lust for war. Edward I had left the island secure. The new king did not have to worry about Scotland; England was far wealthier, and its armies were well equipped, well fed, well paid, and experienced. In fact, their recent wars had made them the most-feared fighters in Europe. At any moment Edward II could field a great army against the Scots, whose weapons and armor were primitive. He felt confident that he could handle Robert the Bruce.

A few months into the reign of Edward II, Bruce managed to take some Scottish castles held by the English and burn them to the ground. When Edward sent forces against him, Bruce refused to fight and fled with his small army into the forest. Edward sent more men to secure his remaining strongholds in Scotland and exact revenge on Bruce, but now Scots soldiers suddenly began to raid England. Highly mobile, these pirates on horseback devastated the northern English countryside, destroying crops and livestock. The English campaign in Scotland had become too costly, so it was called off--but a few years later Edward tried again.

This time an English army penetrated farther into Scotland, but again, in response, Scottish raiders rode south into England, wreaking still more havoc on

farms and property. And in Scotland itself Bruce's army burned their own countrymen's crops, leaving the English invaders nothing to eat. As before, the English wore themselves out chasing Bruce, but to no avail--the Scots refused battle. Bivouacked in their camps, the English soldiers would hear bagpipes and horns out in the dark at night, making it impossible to sleep. Hungry, tired, and irritated to no end, they soon retreated back to northern England, only to find their own land barren of crops and cattle. Morale sank. No one wanted to fight in Scotland anymore. Slowly one castle after another fell back into Scottish hands.

In 1314 the Scots finally engaged in direct combat with the English, at the Battle of Bannockburn, and defeated them. It was a most humiliating loss for Edward II, who swore to avenge it. In 1322 he decided to finish Bruce off once and for good with a vigorous campaign worthy of his father. Organizing and personally leading the largest army yet to fight the rebellious Scots, Edward got as far as Edinburgh Castle. At one point he sent foragers out to look for food in the countryside; they returned with a single decrepit bull and an empty wagon. Dysentery swept the English troops. Edward was forced to retreat, and when he reached northern England, he saw that the Scots had once again razed the fields there, and more thoroughly than ever. Hunger and disease finished off the remnants of his army. The campaign was such a disaster that a rebellion broke out among Edward's lords: he fled but in 1327 was captured and killed.

Another anecdote explaining iwao-no-mi *concerns an accomplished warrior who had reached the highest stage of the art of sword fighting. Having been enlightened as to the true meaning of the art of sword fighting, which should be based on the promotion of well-being of people rather than the destruction or killing of others, this great master was not interested in fighting any longer. His ability in the art of sword fighting was absolutely unquestionable; he was respected and feared by everyone. He walked the streets with a cane like a bored old man and yet wherever he went people looked at him with intense fear and respect. People were careful not to anger him and the old man was nonchalant. This is akin to having a huge rock hanging above a mountain path. People are afraid of the rock, which they believe may come down at any moment, and so they walk quietly and carefully under the rock. But the rock is actually very stable, being planted in the ground so deeply that it will never fall down. But people do not know it, and they continue to fear that it will fall down if they make any kind of loud noise as they walk under it. The rock just sits there completely indifferent to its surroundings and people's fear and awe.*

A WAY TO VICTORY: THE ANNOTATED BOOK OF FIVE RINGS,

The following year Edward's son, Edward III, negotiated a peace with the Scots, granting Scotland its independence and recognizing Robert the Bruce as its rightful king.

Interpretation

The English thought they could move on Scotland with impunity anytime they wanted. The Scots were poorly equipped, and their leadership was bitterly divided: seeing such weakness, what could prevent English conquest? Trying to stop what seemed inevitable, Robert the Bruce evolved a novel strategy. When the English attacked, he did not take them on directly; he would have lost. Instead he hit them indirectly but where it hurt, doing exactly to the English what they were doing to him: ruining his country. He continued to play tit for tat until the English understood that every time they attacked Scotland, they would get a bloody nose in exchange: they would lose valuable farmland, be harassed, fight in abysmal conditions. They slowly lost their hunger for the fight, then finally gave up.

The essence of this deterrence strategy is the following: when someone attacks you or threatens you, you make it clear that he will suffer in return. He--or she--may be stronger, he may be able to win battles, but you will make him pay for each victory. Instead of taking him on directly, you hurt something he values, something close to home. You make him understand that every time he bothers you he can expect damage, even if on a smaller scale. The only way to make you stop attacking him in your irritating fashion is for him to stop attacking you. You are like a wasp on his skin: most people leave wasps alone.

3. One morning in 1474, King Louis XI (1423-83)--France's infamous "Spider King," so named because he always wove the most intricate and well-conceived plots against his enemies--went into a vehement rant against the Duke of Milan. The courtiers present that January day listened in amazement as the normally composed and careful king spun out his suspicions: although the duke's father had been a friend, the son could not be trusted; he was working against France, breaking the treaty between the two countries. On and on the king went: perhaps he would have to take action against the duke. Suddenly, to the courtiers' dismay, a man slipped quietly out of the room. It was Christopher da Bollate, the Milanese ambassador to France. Bollate had been received graciously by the king earlier that morning but then had retreated into the background; Louis must

have forgotten he was there. The king's diatribe could cause quite a diplomatic mess.

> *Once, when a group of five or six pages were traveling to the capital together in the same boat, it happened that their boat struck a regular ship late at night. Five or six seamen from the ship leapt aboard and loudly demanded that the pages give up their boat's anchor, in accord with the seaman's code. Hearing this, the pages ran forward yelling, "The seaman's code is something for people like you! Do you think that we samurai are going to let you take equipment from a boat carrying warriors? We will cut you down and throw you into the sea to the last man!" With that, all the seamen fled back to their own ship. At such a time, one must act like a samurai. For trifling occasions it is better to accomplish things simply by yelling. By making something more significant than it really is and missing one's chance, an affair will not be brought to a close and there will be no accomplishment at all.*
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> *HAGAKURE: THE BOOK OF THE SAMURAI*, YAMAMOTO TSUNETOMO, 1659-1720

Later that day Louis invited Bollate to his private rooms and, lounging on his bed, began an apparently casual conversation. Drifting into politics, he described himself as a supporter of the Duke of Milan's: he would do anything, he said, to help the duke expand his power. Then he asked, "Tell me, Christopher, has it been reported to you what I said this morning in council? Tell me the truth--was it not some courtier who told you?" Bollate confessed that he had actually been in the room during the king's tirade and had heard the king's words himself. He also protested that the Duke of Milan was a loyal friend of France. Louis replied that he had his doubts about the duke and had cause to be angry--but then he immediately changed the subject to something pleasant, and Bollate eventually left.

The next day the king sent three councilors to visit Bollate. Was he comfortable in his lodgings? Was he happy with his treatment from the king? Was there anything they could do to improve his stay at the French court? They also wanted to know if he was going to pass on the king's words to the duke. The king, they said, considered Bollate a friend, a confidant; he had merely been venting his emotions. It meant nothing. Bollate should forget the whole thing.

Of course, none of these men--the councilors, the courtiers, Bollate--knew that the king had done all this deliberately. Louis was certain that the perfidious ambassador--whom he hardly considered a friend, let alone a confidant--would report what he had said in detail to the duke. He knew that the duke was

treacherous, and this was precisely how Louis wanted to send him a warning. And it seemed the message got through: for the next several years, the duke was an obedient ally.

Interpretation

The Spider King was a man who always plotted several moves in advance. In this case he knew that if he spoke politely and diplomatically to the ambassador of his worries about the duke, his words would carry no weight--they would seem like whining. If he vented his anger directly to the ambassador, on the other hand, he would look out of control. A direct thrust is also easily parried: the duke would just mouth reassurances, and the treachery would go on. By transmitting his threat indirectly, however, Louis made it stick. That the duke was not meant to know he was angry made his anger truly ominous: it meant he was planning something and wanted to keep the duke from suspecting it and knowing his true feelings. He delivered his threat insidiously to make the duke ponder his intentions and to instill an uneasy fear.

> *It was thus that, during the 1930s, the diplomacy of Mussolini's Italy was greatly enhanced by a stance of restless bellicosity and by a mirage of great military strength: an army of "eight million bayonets," whose parades were dashing affairs of* bersaglieri *on the run and roaring motorized columns; and an air force greatly respected, not least for its spectacular long-range flights to the North Pole and South America; and a navy that could acquire many impressive ships because so little of its funding was wasted on gunnery trials and navigation. By a military policy in which stage management dominated over the sordid needs of war preparation, Mussolini sacrificed real strength for the sake of hugely magnified images of what little strength there was--but the results of suasion that those images evoked were very real: Britain and France were both successfully dissuaded from interfering with Italy's conquest of Ethiopia, its intervention in Spain, and the subjection of Albania; and none dared oppose Italy's claim to be accepted as a Great Power, whose interests had to be accommodated sometimes in tangible ways such as the licenses obtained by Italian banks in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia). Only Mussolini's last-minute decision to enter the war in June 1940--when his own considerable prudence was overcome by the irresistible temptation of sharing in the spoils of the French collapse--brought years of successful deception (and self-deception) to an end.*
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> *STRATEGY: THE LOGIC OF WAR AND PEACE*, EDWARD N. LUTTWAK, 1987

When we are under attack, the temptation is to get emotional, to tell the aggressors to stop, to make threats as to what we'll do if they keep going. That puts us in a weak position: we've revealed both our fears and our plans, and words rarely deter aggressors. Sending them a message through a third party or revealing it indirectly through action is much more effective. That way you signal that you are already maneuvering against them. Keep the threat veiled: if they can only glimpse what you are up to, they will have to imagine the rest. Making them see you as calculating and strategic will have a chilling effect on their desires to harm or attack you. It is not worth the risk to find out what you may be up to.

4. In the early 1950s, John Boyd (1927-97) served with distinction as a fighter pilot in the Korean War. By the middle of that decade, he was the most respected flight instructor at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada; he was virtually unbeatable in practice dogfights, so good that he was asked to rewrite the manual on fighter-pilot tactics. He had developed a style that would demoralize and terrorize, get inside the opponent's head, disrupt his ability to react. Boyd was clever and fearless. But none of his training and skill, none of his brushes with death as a pilot, prepared him for the bloodless backstabbing, political maneuvering, and indirect warfare of the Pentagon, where he was assigned in 1966 to help design lightweight jet fighters.

As Major Boyd quickly discovered, Pentagon bureaucrats were more concerned with their careers than with national defense. They were less interested in developing the best new fighter than in satisfying contractors, often buying their new technological gear regardless of its suitability. Boyd, as a pilot, had trained himself to see every situation as a kind of strategic combat, and in this instance he decided to transfer his skills and style of warfare to the jungles of the Pentagon. He would intimidate, discourage, and outsmart his opponents.

Boyd believed that a streamlined jet fighter of the kind he was designing could outperform any plane in the world. But contractors hated his design, because it was inexpensive--it did not highlight the technology they were trying to peddle. Meanwhile Boyd's colleagues in the Pentagon had their own pet projects. Competing for the same pot of money, they did everything they could to sabotage or transform his design.

Boyd developed a defense: Outwardly he looked a little dumb. He wore shabby suits, smoked a nasty cigar, kept a wild look in his eye. He seemed to be just another emotional fighter pilot, promoted too fast and too soon. But behind

the scenes he mastered every detail. He made sure he knew more than his opponents: he could quote statistics, studies, and engineering theories to support his own project and poke holes through theirs. Contractors would show up in meetings with glossy presentations delivered by their top engineers; they would make fantastic claims to dazzle the generals. Boyd would listen politely, seem impressed, and then suddenly, without warning, he would go on the offensive--deflating their optimistic claims, showing in detail that the numbers did not add up, revealing the hype and the fakery. The more they protested, the more vicious Boyd got, bit by bit tearing their project to shreds.

Blindsided by a man they had grossly underestimated, time and again the contractors would leave these meetings vowing revenge. But what could they do? He had already shot down their numbers and turned their proposals to mush. Caught in the act of oversell, they had lost all credibility. They would have to accept their defeat. Soon they learned to avoid Boyd: instead of trying to sabotage him, they hoped he would fail on his own.

In 1974, Boyd and his team had finished the design of a jet they had been working on, and it seemed certain to be approved. But part of Boyd's strategy had been to build up a network of allies in different parts of the Pentagon, and these men told him that there was a group of three-star generals who hated the project and were planning his defeat. They would let him brief the various officials in the chain of command, all of whom would give him their go-ahead; then there would be a final meeting with the generals, who would scuttle the project as they had planned to all along. Having gotten that far, though, the project would look as if it had been given a fair hearing.

In addition to his network of allies, Boyd always tried to make sure he had at least one powerful supporter. This was usually easy to find: in a political environment like the Pentagon, there was always some general or other powerful official who was disgusted with the system and was happy to be Boyd's secret protector. Now Boyd called on his most powerful ally, Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, and won Schlesinger's personal approval for the project. Then, at the meeting with the generals, whom he could tell were inwardly gloating that they finally had him, Boyd announced, "Gentlemen, I am authorized by the secretary of defense to inform you that this is not a decision brief. This briefing is for information purposes only." The project, he said, had already been approved. He went on to deliver his presentation, making it as long as possible--twisting the knife in their backs. He wanted them to feel humiliated and wary of messing with him again.

As a fighter pilot, Boyd had trained himself to think several moves ahead of his opponents, always aiming to surprise them with some terrifying maneuver.

He incorporated this strategy into his bureaucratic battles. When a general gave him some order that was clearly designed to ruin the plans for his lightweight jet, he would smile, nod, and say, "Sir, I'll be happy to follow that order. But I want you to put it in writing." Generals liked to issue commands verbally rather than putting them on paper as a way to cover themselves in case things went bad. Caught off guard, the general would either have to drop the order or deny the request to put it in writing--which, if publicized, would make him look terrible. Either way he was trapped.

After several years of dealing with Boyd, generals and their minions learned to avoid him--and his foul cigars, his verbal abuse, his knife-twisting tactics--like the plague. Given this wide berth, he was able to push his designs for the F-15 and F-16 through the Pentagon's almost impossible process, leaving an enduring imprint on the air force by creating two of its most famous and effective jet fighters.

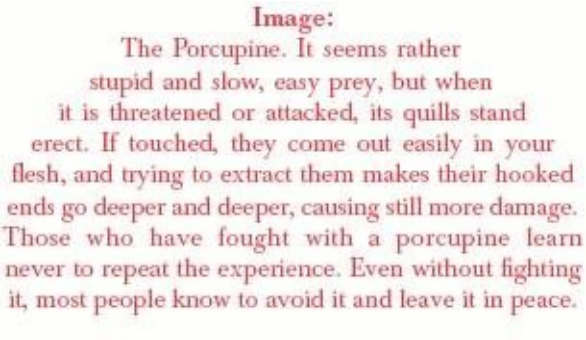
Interpretation

Boyd realized early on that his project was unpopular at the Pentagon and that he would meet opposition and obstruction up and down the line. If he tried to fight everyone, to take on every contractor and general, he would exhaust himself and go down in flames. Boyd was a strategist of the highest order--his thinking would later have a major influence on Operation Desert Storm--and a strategist never hits strength against strength; instead he probes the enemy's weaknesses. And a bureaucracy like the Pentagon inevitably has weaknesses, which Boyd knew how to locate.

The people in Boyd's Pentagon wanted to fit in and be liked. They were political people, careful about their reputations; they were also very busy and had little time to waste. Boyd's strategy was simple: over the years he would establish a reputation for being difficult, even nasty. To get involved with Boyd could mean an ugly public fight that would sully your reputation, waste your time, and hurt you politically. In essence Boyd transformed himself into a kind of porcupine. No animal wants to take on a creature that can do so much damage, no matter how small it is; even tigers will leave it alone. And being left alone gave Boyd staying power, allowing him to survive long enough to shepherd the F-15 and F-16 through.

Reputation, Boyd knew, is key. Your own reputation may not be intimidating; after all, we all have to fit in, play politics, seem nice and accommodating. Most often this works fine, but in moments of danger and difficulty being seen as so nice will work against you: it says that you can be pushed around, discouraged, and obstructed. If you have never been willing to

fight back before, no threatening gesture you make will be credible. Understand: there is great value in letting people know that when necessary you can let go of your niceness and be downright difficult and nasty. A few clear, violent demonstrations will suffice. Once people see you as a fighter, they will approach you with a little fear in their hearts. And as Machiavelli said, it is more useful to be feared than to be loved.



Authority: When opponents are unwilling to fight with you, it is because they think it is contrary to their interests, or because you have misled them into thinking so.

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

REVERSAL

The purpose of strategies of deterrence is to discourage attack, and a threatening presence or action will usually do the job. In some situations, though, you can more safely achieve the same thing by doing the opposite: play dumb and unassuming. Seem inoffensive, or already defeated, and people may leave you alone. A harmless front can buy you time: that is how Claudius survived the violent, treacherous world of Roman politics on his way to becoming emperor--he seemed too innocuous to bother with. This strategy needs patience, though, and is not without risk: you are deliberately making yourself the lamb among the wolves.

In general, you have to keep your attempts at intimidation under control. Be careful not to become intoxicated by the power fear brings: use it as a defense in times of danger, not as your offense of choice. In the long run, frightening people creates enemies, and if you fail to back up your tough reputation with victories, you will lose credibility. If your opponent gets angry enough to decide to play the same game back at you, you may also escalate a squabble into a

retaliatory war. Use this strategy with caution.