OVERWHELM RESISTANCE WITH SPEED AND SUDDENNESS

THE BLITZKRIEG STRATEGY

In a world in which many people are indecisive and overly cautious, the use of speed will bring you untold power. Striking first, before your opponents have time to think or prepare, will make them emotional, unbalanced, and prone to error. When you follow with another swift and sudden maneuver, you will induce further panic and confusion. This strategy works best with a setup, a lull--your unexpected action catches your enemy off guard. When you strike, hit with unrelenting force. Acting with speed and decisiveness will garner you respect, awe, and irresistible momentum.

> *War is such that the supreme consideration is speed. This is to take advantage of what is beyond the reach of the enemy, to go by way of routes where he least expects you, and to attack where he has made no preparations.*

SUN-TZU, FOURTH CENTURY B.C.

SLOW-SLOW-QUICK-QUICK

In 1218, Muhammad II, the shah of Khwarizm, received a visit from three ambassadors on behalf of Genghis Khan, the leader of the Mongol Empire to the east. The visitors bore magnificent gifts and, more important, the offer of a treaty between the two powers that would allow the reopening of the lucrative Silk Road connecting China and Europe. The shah's empire was immense, incorporating present-day Iran and much of Afghanistan. His capital, Samarkand, was fabulously wealthy, a symbol of his power, and increased trade along the route would only add to these riches. Since the Mongols made it clear they considered him the superior partner in the deal, the shah decided to sign the treaty.

A few months later, a Mongol caravan arrived in the city of Otrar, in the northeastern corner of the shah's empire, with the mission to buy luxury items for the Mongol court. The governor of Otrar suspected the men in the caravan of being spies. He had them killed, and he seized the goods they had brought to

barter. Hearing of this outrage, Genghis Khan dispatched an ambassador, escorted by two soldiers, to the shah, calling for an apology. The demand--which presumed to put the two empires on equal footing--incensed the shah. He had the ambassador's head cut off and sent back to Genghis Khan. This, of course, meant war.

The shah was not afraid: his army, anchored by its well-trained Turkish cavalry, numbered over 400,000, at least twice the enemy's size. By defeating the Mongols in battle, the shah could finally take over their land. He assumed the Mongols would attack Transoxiana, the easternmost part of the shah's empire. Bordered to the east by the five-hundred-mile-long Syr Dar'ya River, to the north by the Kizil Kum Desert, and to the west by the Amu Dar'ya River, Transoxiana's interior was also home to two of the most important cities of the empire, Samarkand and Bukhara. The shah decided to establish a cordon of soldiers along the Syr Dar'ya, which the Mongols would have to cross to enter his empire. They could not cross from the north--the desert was impassable--and to go to the south would be too great a detour. Keeping the bulk of his army in the interior of Transoxiana, he would be able to place reinforcements where needed. He had an impregnable defensive position and superiority in numbers. Let the Mongols come. He would crush them.

In the summer of 1219, scouts reported that the Mongols were approaching the southern end of the Syr Dar'ya, through the Fergana Valley. The shah sent a large force, under the leadership of his son Jalal ad-Din, to destroy the enemy. After a fierce battle, the Mongols retreated. Jalal ad-Din reported back to his father that the Mongol army was not nearly as fearsome as their reputation. The men looked haggard, their horses emaciated, and they seemed none too eager to sustain a fight. The shah, believing the Mongols no match for his army, put more troops at the southern end of the cordon and waited.

A few months later, a Mongol battalion appeared without warning in the north, attacking the city of Otrar and capturing its governor--the same man responsible for the outrage against the Mongol traders. The Mongols killed him by pouring molten silver into his eyes and ears. Stunned by how quickly they had managed to reach Otrar, and from an unexpected direction, the shah decided to shift more troops to the north. These barbarians might move swiftly, he reasoned, but they could not overcome an entrenched army with such great numbers.

Next, however, two Mongol armies swept south from Otrar, running parallel to the Syr Dar'ya. One, under General Jochi, began to attack key towns along the river, while the other, under General Jebe, disappeared to the south. Like locusts, Jochi's army swarmed through the hills and lowlands near the river. The shah

moved a good portion of his army to the river, keeping some reserves in Samarkand. Jochi's force was relatively small, 20,000 at most; these mobile units hit one position after another, without warning, burning forts and wreaking havoc.

Reports from the front lines began to give the shah a picture of these strange warriors from the east. Their army was all cavalry. Each Mongol not only rode a horse but was trailed by several more riderless horses, all mares, and when his own horse tired, he would mount a fresh one. These horses were light and fast. The Mongols were unencumbered by supply wagons; they carried their food with them, drank the mares' milk and blood, and killed and ate the horses that had become weak. They could travel twice as fast as their enemy. Their marksmanship was extraordinary--facing forward or in retreat, they could fire arrows with remarkable dexterity, making their attacks far deadlier than anything the shah's army had ever seen. Their divisions communicated over great distances with flags and torches; their maneuvers were precisely coordinated and nearly impossible to anticipate.

Dealing with this constant harassment exhausted the shah's forces. Now, suddenly, the army under General Jebe that had disappeared to the south reappeared heading northwest into Transoxiana at remarkable speed. The shah hurriedly sent south his last reserves, an army of 50,000, to do battle with Jebe. He still was not worried--his men had proved their superiority in direct combat, at the battle in the Fergana Valley.

This time, however, it was different. The Mongols unleashed strange weapons: their arrows were dipped in burning tar, which created smoke screens behind which their lightning-quick horsemen advanced, opening breaches in the lines of the shah's army through which more heavily armed cavalry would advance. Chariots darted back and forth behind the Mongol lines, bringing up constant supplies. The Mongols filled the sky with arrows, creating relentless pressure. They wore shirts of heavy silk. An arrow that managed to pierce the shirt would rarely reach the flesh and could be extracted easily by pulling at the shirt, all of this done while moving at great speed. Jebe's army annihilated the shah's forces.

The shah had one option left: retreat to the west, retrench, and slowly rebuild his army. As he began preparations, however, something beyond belief occurred: an army under Genghis Khan himself suddenly stood outside the gates of the city of Bukhara, to the west of Samarkand. Where had they come from? They could not have crossed the Kizil Kum Desert to the north. Their appearance seemed all but impossible, as if the devil himself had conjured them up. Bukhara soon fell, and within days Samarkand followed. Soldiers deserted, generals

panicked. The shah, fearing for his life, fled with a handful of soldiers. The Mongols pursued him relentlessly. Months later, on a small island in the Caspian Sea, abandoned by one and all, wearing rags and begging for food, the former ruler of the wealthiest empire in the East finally died of hunger.

Interpretation

When Genghis Khan became the leader of the Mongol nation, he inherited perhaps the fastest army on the planet, but their swiftness had translated into limited military success. The Mongols might have perfected the art of fighting on horseback, but they were too undisciplined to exploit any advantage they gained this way or to coordinate for a large-scale attack. The genius of Genghis Khan was to transform the chaotic Mongol speed into something organized, disciplined, and strategic. He achieved this by adapting the ancient Chinese strategy of slow-slow-quick-quick.

The first step, a "slow," was to meticulously prepare before any campaign, which the Mongols always did to the highest degree. (In planning for the attack on the shah, the Mongols learned of a guide who knew of a chain of oases across the Kizil Kum Desert. This man was captured and later led Genghis Khan's army across the forbidding territory.) The second "slow" was a setup, which involved getting the enemy to lower its guard, lulling it into complacency. The Mongols, for example, deliberately lost the first battle in the Fergana Valley to feed the shah's arrogance. Then came the first "quick": fixing the enemy's attention forward with a swift frontal attack (Jebe's raids along the river). The final "quick" was a doubly swift blow from an unexpected direction. (Genghis's sudden appearance before the gates of Bukhara is considered by many the greatest military surprise in history.) A master of psychological warfare, Genghis Khan understood that men are most terrified by the unknown and unpredictable. The suddenness of his attacks made the speed of them doubly effective, leading to confusion and panic.

We live in a world in which speed is prized above almost all else, and acting faster than the other side has itself become the primary goal. But most often people are merely in a hurry, acting and reacting frantically to events, all of which makes them prone to error and wasting time in the long run. In order to separate yourself from the pack, to harness a speed that has devastating force, you must be organized and strategic. First, you prepare yourself before any action, scanning your enemy for weaknesses. Then you find a way to get your opponents to underestimate you, to lower their guard. When you strike unexpectedly, they will freeze up. When you hit again, it is from the side and out of nowhere. It is the unanticipated blow that makes the biggest impact.

The less a thing is foreseen, the more...fright does it cause. This is nowhere seen better than in war, where every surprise strikes terror even to those who are much the stronger.

--Xenophon (430?-355? B.C.)

CHEN/THE AROUSING (SHOCK, THUNDER)
The hexagram Chen represents the eldest son, who seizes rule with energy and power. A yang line develops below two yin lines and presses upward forcibly. This movement is so violent that it arouses terror. It is symbolized by thunder, which bursts forth from the earth and by its shock causes fear and trembling.

THE JUDGEMENT SHOCK brings success. Shock comes--oh, oh! Laughing words--ha, ha! The shock terrifies for a hundred miles....

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

KEYS TO WARFARE

In May 1940 the German army invaded France and the Low Countries using a new form of warfare: the blitzkrieg. Advancing with incredible speed, the Germans coordinated tanks and airplanes in an attack that culminated in one of the quickest and most devastating victories in military history. The success of the blitzkrieg was largely due to the Allies' static, rigid defense--similar to the shah's defense against the Mongols. When the Germans breached this defense, the Allies could not adjust or react in time. The Germans advanced faster than their enemy could process what was happening. By the time the Allies decided upon a counterstrategy it was too late--conditions had changed. They were always a step behind.

Now more than ever, we find ourselves dealing with people who are defensive and cautious, who begin any action from a static position. The reason is simple: the pace of modern life is increasingly growing faster, full of distractions, annoyances, and interruptions. The natural response for many is to retreat inward, to erect psychological walls against the harsh realities of modern life. People hate the feeling of being rushed and are terrified of making a mistake. They unconsciously try to slow things down--by taking longer to make decisions, being noncommittal, defensive, and cautious.

Blitzkrieg warfare, adapted for daily combat, is the perfect strategy for these times. While those around you remain defensive and immobile, you surprise

them with sudden and decisive action, forcing them to act before they are ready. They cannot respond, as they usually do, by being elusive or cautious. They will most likely become emotional and react imprudently. You have breached their defenses, and if you keep up the pressure and hit them again with something unexpected, you will send them into a kind of downward psychological spiral--pushing them into mistakes, which further deepens their confusion, and so the cycle goes on.

Many of those who practiced a form of blitzkrieg warfare on the battlefield used it to great effect in daily life. Julius Caesar--master of speed and surprise--was a great example of this. From out of the blue, he might form an alliance with a senator's bitterest enemy, forcing the senator either to change his opposition to Caesar or to risk a dangerous confrontation. Equally, he might unexpectedly pardon a man who had fought against him. Caught off guard, the man would become a loyal ally. Caesar's reputation for doing the unpredictable made people all the more cautious in his presence, further enhancing his ability to catch those around him unawares.

> *But the genius in Ali takes his limitations and makes them virtues. Let us go step by step. I can't think of a past heavyweight champion whose punching power wasn't superior to Ali's. Yet in his first twenty fights, Ali, then Cassius Clay, won every one of them, scoring seventeen knockouts.... So what is Ali's mystery? Why does a man who every expert agrees has no punching power knock most of his opponents out, including a one-punch K.O. over Sonny Liston on Ali's first defense of his title? The answer is in speed and timing. Clay then, and Ali now, has the ability to let punches go with extreme quickness, but most important, at the right moment, just before the man in front of him is able to put his boxer's sense of anticipation to work. When that happens, the man getting hit doesn't see the punch. As a result, this man's brain can't prepare him to receive the impact of the blow. The eyes couldn't send the message back to the part of the body which would take the shock. So we arrive at one knockout of a conclusion: the punch that puts you to sleep is not so much the hard punch as the punch that you don't see coming.*
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> *STING LIKE A BEE*, JOSE TORRES AND BERT RANDOLPH SUGAR, 1971

This strategy works wonders on those who are particularly hesitant and afraid of making any kind of mistake. In similar fashion, if you are facing an enemy that has divided leadership or internal cracks, a sudden and swift attack will make the cracks larger and cause internal collapse. Half of the success of

Napoleon Bonaparte's form of blitzkrieg warfare was that he used it against armies of allies in which several bickering generals were in charge of strategy. Once his army broke through these armies' defenses, dissension would break out and they would fall apart from within.

The blitzkrieg strategy can be effective in diplomacy, too, as Henry Kissinger demonstrated. The former U.S. secretary of state would often take his time when beginning diplomatic negotiations, lulling the other side with bland banter. Then, with the deadline for the end of the talks approaching, he would suddenly hit them with a list of demands. Without enough time to process what was happening, they became prone to giving in or to becoming emotional and making mistakes. This was Kissinger's version of slow-slow-quick-quick.

For their initial thrust into France during World War II, the Germans chose to attack through the Ardennes Forest in southern Belgium. The forest, considered impenetrable by tank, was lightly guarded. Pushing through this weak point, the Germans were able to build up speed and momentum. In launching a blitzkrieg, you must begin by finding your enemy's weak point. Initiating the action where there will be less resistance will allow you to develop crucial momentum.

The success of this strategy depends on three things: a group that is mobile (often, the smaller the better), superior coordination between the parts, and the ability to send orders quickly up and down the chain of command. Do not depend on technology to accomplish this. During the Vietnam War, the U.S. military might in fact have been hindered by its superior communications--too much information to be processed made for slower response times. The North Vietnamese, who depended on a well-coordinated network of spies and informers, not gadgetry, made decisions more quickly and as a result were more nimble on the ground.

Shortly after being elected president in 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt seemed to disappear from the public stage. The Depression was at its height, and for many Americans this was not very reassuring. Then, with his inauguration, Roosevelt changed tempo, giving a rousing speech that showed he had in fact been meditating deeply on the issues facing the country. In the weeks that followed, he came at Congress fast and furiously, with a series of bold legislative proposals. The intensity of this new direction was felt all the more because of the slow setup. More than mere drama, the momentum built by this strategy helped Roosevelt to convince the public that he meant business and was leading the country in the right direction. This momentum translated into support for his policies, which in turn helped spur confidence and turn the economy around.

Veni, vidi, vici (I came, I saw, I conquered).

JULIUS CAESAR, 100-44 B.C.

Speed, then, is not only a powerful tool to use against an enemy, but it can also have a bracing, positive influence on those on your side. Frederick the Great noted that an army that moves quickly has higher morale. Velocity creates a sense of vitality. Moving with speed means there is less time for you and your army to make mistakes. It also creates a bandwagon effect: more and more people admiring your boldness, will decide to join forces with you. Like Roosevelt, make such decisive action as dramatic as possible: a moment of quiet and suspense on the stage before you make your startling entrance.

Image: The Storm. The sky becomes still and calm, and a lull sets in, peaceful and soothing. Then, out of nowhere, lightning strikes, the wind picks up...and the sky explodes. It is the suddenness of the storm that is so terrifying.

Authority: You must be slow in deliberation and swift in execution.

--Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821)

REVERSAL

Slowness can have great value, particularly as a setup. To appear slow and deliberate, even a little foolish, will lull your enemies, infecting them with a sleepy attitude. Once their guard is down, an unexpected blow from the side will knock them out. Your use of slowness and speed, then, should be deliberate and controlled, never a natural tempo that you fall into.

In general, when facing a fast enemy, the only true defense is to be as fast or faster. Only speed can neutralize speed. Setting up a rigid defense, as the shah did against the Mongols, only plays into the hands of the swift and mobile.