DOMINATE WHILE SEEMING TO SUBMIT

THE PASSIVE-AGGRESSION STRATEGY

Any attempt to bend people to your will is a form of aggression. And in a world where political considerations are paramount, the most effective form of aggression is the best-hidden one: aggression behind a compliant, even loving exterior. To follow the passive-aggressive strategy, you must seem to go along with people, offering no resistance. But actually you dominate the situation. You are noncommittal, even a little helpless, but that only means that everything revolves around you. Some people may sense what you are up to and get angry. Don't worry--just make sure you have disguised your aggression enough that you can deny it exists. Do it right and they will feel guilty for accusing you. Passive aggression is a popular strategy; you must learn how to defend yourself against the vast legions of passive-aggressive warriors who will assail you in your daily life.

> *Gandhi and his associates repeatedly deplored the inability of their people to give organized, effective, violent resistance against injustice and tyranny. His own experience was corroborated by an unbroken series of reiterations from all the leaders of India--that India could not practice physical warfare against her enemies. Many reasons were given, including weakness, lack of arms, having been beaten into submission, and other arguments of a similar nature..... Confronted with the issue of what means he could employ against the British, we come to the other criteria previously mentioned; that the kind of means selected and how they can be used is significantly dependent upon the face of the enemy, or the character of his opposition. Gandhi's opposition not only made the effective use of passive resistance possible but practically invited it. His enemy was a British administration characterized by an old, aristocratic, liberal tradition, one which granted a good deal of freedom to its colonials and which always had operated on a pattern of using, absorbing, seducing, or destroying, through flattery or corruption, the revolutionary leaders who arose from the colonial ranks. This was the kind of opposition that would have tolerated and ultimately capitulated before the tactic of passive resistance.*

RULES FOR RADICALS, SAUL D. ALINSKY, 1971

THE GUILT WEAPON

In December 1929 the group of Englishmen who governed India were feeling a little nervous. The Indian National Congress--the country's main independence movement--had just broken off talks over the proposal that Britain would gradually return autonomous rule to the subcontinent. Instead the Congress was now calling for nothing less than immediate and total independence, and it had asked Mahatma Gandhi to lead a civil-disobedience campaign to initiate this struggle. Gandhi, who had studied law in London years before, had invented a form of passive-resistant protest in 1906, while working as a barrister in South Africa. In India in the early 1920s, he had led civil-disobedience campaigns against the British that had created quite a stir, had landed him in prison, and had made him the most revered man in the country. For the British, dealing with him was never easy; despite his frail appearance, he was uncompromising and relentless.

Although Gandhi believed in and practiced a rigorous form of nonviolence, the colonial officers of the British Raj were fearful: at a time when the English economy was weak, they imagined him organizing a boycott of British goods, not to mention mass demonstrations in the streets of India's cities, a police nightmare.

The man in charge of the Raj's strategy in combating the independence movement was the viceroy of India, Lord Edward Irwin. Although Irwin admired Gandhi personally, he had decided to respond to him rapidly and with force--he could not let the situation get out of hand. He waited anxiously to see what Gandhi would do. The weeks went by, and finally, on March 2, Irwin received a letter from Gandhi--rather touching in its honesty--that revealed the details of the civil-disobedience campaign he was about to launch. It was to be a protest against the salt tax. The British held a monopoly on India's production of salt, even though it could easily be gathered by anyone on the coast. They also levied a rather high tax on it. This was quite a burden for the poorest of the poor in India, for whom salt was their only condiment. Gandhi planned to lead a march of his followers from his ashram near Bombay (present-day Mumbai) to the coastal town of Dandi, where he would gather sea salt left on the shore by the waves and encourage Indians everywhere to do the same. All this could be prevented, he wrote to Irwin, if the viceroy would immediately repeal the salt tax.

Irwin read this letter with a sense of relief. He imagined the sixty-year-old Gandhi, rather fragile and leaning on a bamboo cane, leading his ragtag followers from his ashram--fewer than eighty people--on a two-hundred-mile march to the sea, where he would gather some salt from the sands. Compared to what Irwin and his staff had been expecting, the protest seemed almost ludicrously small in scale. What was Gandhi thinking? Had he lost touch with reality? Even some members of the Indian National Congress were deeply disappointed by his choice of protest. In any event, Irwin had to rethink his strategy. It simply would not do to harass or arrest this saintly old man and his followers (many of them women). That would look very bad. It would be better to leave him alone, avoiding the appearance of a heavy-handed response and letting the crisis play out and die down. In the end the ineffectiveness of this campaign would somewhat discredit Gandhi, breaking his spell over the Indian masses. The independence movement might fracture or at least lose some momentum, leaving England in a stronger position in the long run.

As Irwin watched Gandhi's preparations for the march, he became still more convinced that he had chosen the right strategy. Gandhi was framing the event as almost religious in quality, like Lord Buddha's famous march to attain divine wisdom, or Lord Rama's retreat in the Ramayana. His language became increasingly apocalyptic: "We are entering upon a life-and-death struggle, a holy war." This seemed to resonate with the poor, who began to flock to Gandhi's ashram to hear him speak. He called in film crews from all over the world to record the march, as if it were a momentous historical event. Irwin himself was a religious man and saw himself as the representative of a God-fearing, civilized nation. It would redound to England's credit to be seen to leave this saintly man untouched on his procession to the sea.

Gandhi and his followers left their ashram on March 12, 1930. As the group passed from village to village, their ranks began to swell. With each passing day, Gandhi was bolder. He called on students throughout India to leave their studies and join him in the march. Thousands responded. Large crowds gathered along the way to see him pass; his speeches to them grew more and more inflammatory. He seemed to be trying to bait the English into arresting him. On April 6 he led his followers into the sea to purify themselves, then collected some salt from the shore. Word quickly spread throughout India that Gandhi had broken the salt law.

Irwin followed these events with increasing alarm. It dawned on him that Gandhi had tricked him: instead of responding quickly and decisively to this seemingly innocent march to the sea, the viceroy had left Gandhi alone, allowing the march to gain momentum. The religious symbolism that seemed so harmless

had stirred the masses, and the salt issue had somehow become a lightning rod for disaffection with English policy. Gandhi had shrewdly chosen an issue that the English would not recognize as threatening but that would resonate with Indians. Had Irwin responded by arresting Gandhi immediately, the whole thing might have died down. Now it was too late; to arrest him at this point would only add fuel to the fire. Yet to leave him alone would show weakness and cede him the initiative. Meanwhile nonviolent demonstrations were breaking out in cities and villages all over India, and to respond to them with violence would only make the demonstrators more sympathetic to moderate Indians. Whatever Irwin did, it seemed, would make things worse. And so he fretted, held endless meetings, and did nothing.

> *It is impossible to win a contest with a helpless opponent since if you win you have won nothing. Each blow you strike is unreturned so that all you can feel is guilt for having struck while at the same time experiencing the uneasy suspicion that the helplessness is calculated.*
>
> *STRATEGIES OF PSYCHOTHERAPY,* JAY HALEY, 1 963

In the days to come, the cause rippled outward. Thousands of Indians traveled to India's coasts to collect salt as Gandhi had. Large cities saw mass demonstrations in which this illegal salt was given away or sold at a minimal price. One form of nonviolent protest cascaded into another--a Congress-led boycott of British goods, for one. Finally, on Irwin's orders, the British began to respond to the demonstrations with force. And on May 4 they arrested Gandhi and took him to prison, where he would stay for nine months without trial.

> *Huang Ti, the legendary Yellow Emperor and reputed ancestor of the Chou dynasty, the historical paradigm of concord and civilization, is said to have brought harmony from chaos, tamed the barbarians and wild beasts, cleared the forests and marshes, and invented the "five harmonious sounds," not through an act of epic bloodshed, but through his superior virtue, by adapting and yielding to "natural conditions" and to the Will of Heaven. Confucianism henceforth repudiates as unworkable the idea of military solutions to human problems. Huang Ti's most notable heir, we are told, was Ti Yao, a gentleman who "naturally and without effort," embraced reverence, courteousness, and intelligence. Nevertheless, during his reign, the Deluge, mythology's universal symbol of anomie, threatened to inundate the land. Thus it fell upon him to appoint a successor to preserve the order of his own son. Ti Yao chose the most qualified man for the job, the venerable Shun, who had in various*

tests already demonstrated a capacity to harmonize human affairs through righteousness..... Shun in turn selected Yu the Sage to engineer an end to the flood. Because Yu refused wine and always acted appropriately, moving with and not resisting nature, the Way of Heaven (T'ien Tao) *was revealed to him. He subsequently harnessed the river waters not by fighting against them with a dam, but by yielding to them and clearing for them a wider channel within which to run. Were it not for Yu, so the story goes, who herein personified the wisdom of both Confucius and Lao-tzu, the Taoist prophet, we would all be fish.*

RELIGIOUS MYTHOLOGY AND THE ART OF WAR, JAMES A. AHO, 1981

Gandhi's arrest sparked a conflagration of protest. On May 21 a group of 2,500 Indians marched peacefully on the government's Dharasana Salt Works, which was defended by armed Indian constables and British officers. When the marchers advanced on the factory, they were struck down with steel-plated clubs. Instructed in Gandhi's methods of nonviolence, the demonstrators made no attempt to defend themselves, simply submitting to the blows that rained down on them. Those who had not been hit continued to march until almost every last one had been clubbed. It was a nauseating scene that got a great deal of play in the press. Similar incidents all over India helped to destroy the last sentimental attachment any Indians still had toward England.

To end the spiraling unrest, Irwin was finally forced to negotiate with Gandhi, and, on several issues, to give ground--an unprecedented event for an English imperialist viceroy. Although the end of the Raj would take several years, the Salt March would prove to be the beginning of the end, and in 1947 the English finally left India without a fight.

Interpretation

Gandhi was a deceptively clever strategist whose frail, even saintly appearance constantly misled his adversaries into underestimating him. The key to any successful strategy is to know both one's enemy and oneself, and Gandhi, educated in London, understood the English well. He judged them to be essentially liberal people who saw themselves as upholding traditions of political freedom and civilized behavior. This self-image--though riddled with contradictions, as indicated by their sometimes brutal behavior in their colonies--was deeply important to the English. The Indians, on the other hand, had been humiliated by many years of subservience to their English overlords. They were largely unarmed and in no position to engage in an insurrection or guerrilla war.

If they rebelled violently, as other colonies had done, the English would crush them and claim to be acting out of self-defense; their civilized self-image would suffer no damage. The use of nonviolence, on the other hand--an ideal and philosophy that Gandhi deeply valued and one that had a rich tradition in India--would exploit to perfection the English reluctance to respond with force unless absolutely necessary. To attack people who were protesting peacefully would not jibe with the Englishman's sense of his own moral purity. Made to feel confused and guilty, the English would be paralyzed with ambivalence and would relinquish the strategic initiative.

The Salt March is perhaps the quintessential example of Gandhi's strategic brilliance. First, he deliberately chose an issue that the British would consider harmless, even laughable. To respond with force to a march about salt would have given an Englishman trouble. Then, by identifying his apparently trivial issue in his letter to Irwin, Gandhi made space for himself in which to develop the march without fear of repression. He used that space to frame the march in an Indian context that would give it wide appeal. The religious symbolism he found for it had another function as well: it heightened the paralysis of the British, who were quite religious themselves in their own way and could not countenance repressing a spiritual event. Finally, like any good showman, Gandhi made the march dramatically visual and used the press to give it maximum exposure.

Once the march gained momentum, it was too late to stop it. Gandhi had sparked a fire, and the masses were now deeply engaged in the struggle. Whatever Irwin did at this point would make the situation worse. Not only did the Salt March become the model for future protests, but it was clearly the turning point in India's struggle for independence.

Many people today are as ambivalent as the English were about having power and authority. They need power to survive, yet at the same time they have an equally great need to believe in their own goodness. In this context to fight people with any kind of violence makes you look aggressive and ugly. And if they are stronger than you are, in effect you are playing into their hands, justifying a heavy-handed response from them. Instead it is the height of strategic wisdom to prey upon people's latent guilt and liberal ambivalence by making yourself look benign, gentle, even passive. That will disarm them and get past their defenses. If you take action to challenge and resist them, you must do it morally, righteously, peacefully. If they cannot help themselves and respond with force, they will look and feel bad; if they hesitate, you have the upper hand and an opening to determine the whole dynamic of the war. It is almost impossible to fight people who throw up their hands and do not resist in the

usual aggressive way. It is completely confusing and disabling. Operating in this way, you inflict guilt as if it were a kind of weapon. In a political world, your passive, moralistic resistance will paralyze the enemy.

I was a believer in the politics of petitions, deputations and friendly negotiations. But all these have gone to dogs. I know that these are not the ways to bring this Government round. Sedition has become my religion. Ours is a nonviolent war.

--Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1947)

PASSIVE POWER

Early in 1820 a revolution broke out in Spain, followed a few months later by one in Naples, which at that time was a city-state incorporated within the Austrian Empire. Forced to accept liberal constitutions modeled on that of revolutionary France some thirty years earlier, the kings of both countries had reason to fear that they also faced the same fate as the French king of that period, Louis XVI, beheaded in 1793. Meanwhile the leaders of Europe's great powers--England, Austria, and Prussia--quaked at the thought of unrest and radicalism spreading across their borders, which had only recently been stabilized by the defeat of Napoleon. They all wanted to protect themselves and halt the tide of revolution.

The devotion of his soldiers to him, affirmed in many stories, must be a fact. [*Julius Caesar*] *could not have done what he did without it. The speech in which it is always said he quelled a mutiny with a single word, calling his men not fellow-soldiers as was his custom, but citizens, civilians, shows a great deal more about his methods than the mere clever use of a term. It was a most critical moment for him. He was in Rome after Pompey's defeat, on the point of sailing for Africa, to put down the powerful senatorial army there. In the city he was surrounded by bitter enemies. His whole dependence was his army, and the best and most trusted legion in it mutinied. They nearly killed their officer; they marched to Rome and claimed their discharge; they would serve Caesar no longer. He sent for them, telling them to bring their swords with them, a direction perfectly characteristic of him. Everything told of him shows his unconcern about danger to himself. Face to face with them, he asked them to state their case and listened while they told him all they had done and suffered and been poorly rewarded for, and demanded to be*

discharged. His speech in answer was also characteristic, very gentle, very brief, exactly to the point: "You say well, citizens. You have worked hard--you have suffered much. You desire your discharge. You have it. I discharge you all. You shall have your recompense. It shall never be said of me that I made use of you when I was in danger, and was ungrateful to you when danger was past." That was all, yet the legionaries listening were completely broken to his will. They cried out that they would never leave him; they implored him to forgive them, to receive them again as his soldiers. Back of the words was his personality, and although that can never be recaptured, something of it yet comes through the brief, bald sentences: the strength that faced tranquilly desertion at a moment of great need; the pride that would not utter a word of appeal or reproach; the mild tolerance of one who knew men and counted upon nothing from them.

THE ROMAN WAY, EDITH HAMILTON, 1932

In the midst of this general unease, Czar Alexander I of Russia (1777-1825) suddenly proposed a plan that to many seemed a cure more dangerous than the disease. The Russian army was the largest and most feared in Europe; Alexander wanted to send it to both Spain and Naples, crushing the two rebellions. In exchange he would insist that the kings of both realms enact liberal reforms that would grant their citizens greater freedoms, making them more content and diluting their desire for revolution.

Alexander saw his proposal as more than a practical program to safeguard Europe's monarchies; it was part of a great crusade, a dream he had nurtured since the earliest days of his reign. A deeply religious man who saw everything in terms of good and evil, he wanted the monarchies of Europe to reform themselves and create a kind of Christian brotherhood of wise, gentle rulers with himself, the czar, at their helm. Although the powerful considered Alexander a kind of Russian madman, many liberals and even revolutionaries throughout Europe saw him as their friend and protector, the rare leader sympathetic to their cause. It was even rumored that he had made contacts with various men of the left and had intrigued with them.

The czar went further with his idea: now he wanted a conference of the major powers to discuss the future of Spain, Naples, and Europe itself. The English foreign minister, Lord Castlereagh, wrote letter after letter trying to dissuade him of the need for the meeting. It was never wise to meddle in the affairs of other countries, Castlereagh said; Alexander should leave England to help stop the unrest in Spain, its close ally, while Austria did the same for Naples. Other ministers and rulers wrote to Alexander as well, using similar

arguments. It was critical to show a united front against his plan. Yet one man--the Austrian foreign minister, Prince Klemens von Metternich--responded to the czar in a much different fashion, and it was shocking to say the least.

Metternich was the most powerful and respected minister in Europe. The quintessential realist, he was always slow to take bold action or to involve Austria in any kind of adventure; security and order were his primary concerns. He was a conservative, a man who believed in the virtues of the status quo. If change had to come, it should come slowly. But Metternich was also something of an enigma--an elegant courtier, he spoke little yet always seemed to get his way. Now not only was he supporting Alexander's call for a conference, but he also seemed open to the czar's other ideas. Perhaps he had undergone a change of heart and was moving to the left in his later years? In any event, he personally organized the conference for October of that year in the Austrian-held city of Troppau, in the modern-day Czech Republic.

Alexander was delighted: with Metternich on his side, he could realize his ambitions and then some. When he arrived in Troppau for the conference, however, the representatives of the other powers in attendance were less than friendly. The French and the Prussians were cool; Castlereagh had refused to come altogether. Feeling somewhat isolated, Alexander was delighted again when Metternich proposed they hold private meetings to discuss the czar's ideas. For several days, and for hours on end, they holed themselves up together in a room. The czar did most of the talking; Metternich listened with his usual attentive air, agreeing and nodding. The czar, whose thinking was somewhat vague, strained to explain his vision of Europe as best he could, and the need for the leaders at the conference to display their moral unity. He could not help but feel frustrated at his inability to make his ideas more specific.

Several days into these discussions, Metternich finally confessed to the czar that he, too, saw a moral danger brewing in Europe. Godless revolution was the scourge of the time; giving in to the radical spirit, showing any sign of compromise, would eventually lead to destruction at the hands of these satanic forces. During the Troppau conference, a mutiny had broken out in a regiment of Russian guards; Metternich warned Alexander that this was the first symptom of a revolutionary infection attacking Russia itself. Thank God the czar, a pillar of moral strength, would not give in. Alexander would have to serve as the leader of this counterrevolutionary crusade. This was why Metternich had become so excited by the czar's ideas about Naples and Spain and how he had interpreted them.

The czar was swept up in Metternich's enthusiasm: together they would stand firm against the radicals. Somehow, though, the result of their conversation

was not a plan for Russia to invade Naples and Spain; indeed, Alexander speculated instead that it might not be the time to press the kings of those countries to reform their governments--that would just weaken both monarchs. For the time being, the leaders' energy should go into halting the revolutionary tide. In fact, the czar began to repent of some of his more liberal ideas, and he confessed as much to Metternich. The conference ended with a statement of grand common purpose among the powers--much of its language the czar's--and an agreement that Austrian troops, not Russian ones, would return the king of Naples to full power, then leave him to pursue the policies of his choice.

After Alexander returned to Russia, Metternich wrote to praise him for leading the way. The czar wrote back in fervor: "We are engaged in a combat with the realm of Satan. Ambassadors do not suffice for this task. Only those whom the Lord has placed at the head of their peoples may, if He gives His blessings, survive the contest...with this diabolic force." In fact, the czar wanted to go further; he had returned to the idea of marching his army into Spain to put down the revolution there. Metternich responded that that would not be necessary--the British were handling the situation--but a conference next year could readdress the issue.

In early 1821 another revolution broke out, this time in Piedmont, the one Italian state outside Austrian control. The king was forced to abdicate. In this instance Metternich welcomed Russian intervention, and 90,000 Russian troops became reserves in an Austrian army heading for Piedmont. A Russian military presence so close to their borders greatly dampened the spirits of the rebels and of their sympathizers throughout Italy--all those leftists who had seen the czar as their friend and protector. They thought that no more.

The Austrian army crushed the revolution within a few weeks. At Metternich's request, the Russians politely withdrew their forces. The czar was proud of his growing influence in Europe, but somehow he had embarked on the very opposite of his original plans for a crusade: instead of being in the forefront of the fight for progress and reform, he had become a guardian of the status quo, a conservative in the mold of Metternich himself. Those around him could not understand how this had happened.

Interpretation

Prince Metternich may have been history's most effective public practitioner of passive aggression. Other diplomats sometimes thought him cautious, even weak, but in the end, as if by magic, he always got what he wanted. The key to his success was his ability to hide his aggression to the point where it was invisible.

Metternich was always careful to take the measure of his opponent. In the case of Czar Alexander, he was dealing with a man governed by emotion and subject to wild mood swings. Yet the czar, behind his moralistic Christian facade, was also aggressive in his own way, and ambitious; he itched to lead a crusade. In Metternich's eyes he was as dangerous as Napoleon had been: in the name of doing good for Europe, such a man might march his troops from one end of the continent to the other, creating untold chaos.

To stand in the way of Alexander's powerful army would be destructive in itself. But the canny Metternich knew that to try to persuade the czar that he was wrong would have the unintended effect of feeding his insecurities and pushing him to the left, making him more prone to take dangerous action on his own. Instead the prince would have to handle him like a child, diverting his energies to the right through a passive-aggressive campaign.

> *At times one has to deal with hidden enemies, intangible influences that slink into dark corners and from this hiding affect people by suggestion. In instances like this, it is necessary to trace these things back to the most secret recesses, in order to determine the nature of the influences to be dealt with.... The very anonymity of such plotting requires an especially vigorous and indefatigable effort, but this is well worth while. For when such elusive influences are brought into the light and branded, they lose their power over people.*

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

The passive part was simple: Metternich presented himself as compliant, going along with ideas that he actually disagreed with to the extreme. He accepted Alexander's request for a congress, for example, although he personally opposed it. Then, in his private discussions with the czar at Troppau, he at first just listened, then enthusiastically agreed. The czar believed in demonstrating moral unity? Then so did Metternich--although his own policies had always been more practical than moral; he was the master of realpolitik. He flattered personal qualities in the czar--moral fervor, for example--that he actually thought dangerous. He also encouraged the czar to go further with his ideas.

Having disarmed Alexander's suspicions and resistance this way, Metternich at the same time operated aggressively. At Troppau he worked behind the scenes to isolate the czar from the other powers, so that the Russian leader became dependent on him. Next he cleverly arranged those long hours of private

meetings, in which he subtly infected the czar with the idea that revolution was far more dangerous than the status quo and diverted the Russian's radical Christian crusade into an attack on liberalism itself. Finally, having mirrored Alexander's energy, his moods, his fervor, and his language, Metternich managed to lure him into sending troops against the rebellion in Piedmont. That action both committed Alexander in deed to the conservative cause and alienated him from the liberals of Europe. No longer could he spout vague, ambiguous pronouncements on the left; he had finally taken action, and it was in the opposite direction. Metternich's triumph was complete.

In those days force and arms did prevail; but now the wit of the fox is everywhere on foot, so hardly a faithful or virtuous man may be found.

QUEEN ELIZABETH I, 1533-1603

Although the phrase "passive aggression" has negative connotations for most of us, as conscious strategy passive-aggressive behavior offers an insidiously powerful way of manipulating people and waging personal war. Like Metternich, you must operate on two fronts. You are outwardly agreeable, apparently bending to people's ideas, energy, and will, changing shape like Proteus himself. Remember: people are willful and perverse. Opposing them directly or trying to change their ideas will often have the contrary effect. A passive, compliant front, on the other hand, gives them nothing to fight against or resist. Going along with their energy gives you the power to divert it in the direction you want, as if you were channeling a river rather than trying to dam it. Meanwhile the aggressive part of your strategy takes the form of infecting people with subtle changes in their ideas and with an energy that will make them act on your behalf. Their inability to get what you are doing in focus gives you room to work behind the scenes, checking their progress, isolating them from other people, luring them into dangerous moves that make them dependent on your support. They think you are their ally. Behind a pleasant, compliant, even weak front, you are pulling the strings.

This was the real achievement of Metternich's policy, that it had killed Russian liberalism and achieved a measure of domination over Austria's most dangerous rival in the guise of submitting to him.

--*Henry Kissinger,* A World Restored *(1957)*

In this postscript on the solution of Caesar's problem, it is not our intention to trace Octavian's rise to power from the time he arrived in Rome to claim his

inheritance until, in 31 B.C., with the aid of Vipsanius Agrippa, he defeated Antony and Cleopatra at Actium and became master of the Roman world. Instead, it is to describe in brief how as such he solved Caesar's problem and established a peace which was to last for over 200 years. When he contemplated the empire he had won and its heterogeneous local governments and peoples, he realized that it was far too large and complex to be ruled by the council of a city state; that instead it demanded some form of one-man rule, and that his problem was how to disguise it. From the outset he decided not to tamper with the constitution of the Republic, or contemplate monarchy..... Firstly, in 28 B.C. he declined all honours calculated to remind the Romans of the kingly power; adopted the title of princeps ("first citizen"), and called his system the Principate. Secondly, he accepted all the old conventions--consuls, tribunes, magistrates, elections, etc. Thirdly, instead of ignoring the Senate and insulting its members as Caesar had done, he went out of his way to consult it and placate them. Lastly, on January 13, 27 B.C., at a session of the Senate, he renounced all his extraordinary powers and placed them at the disposal of the Senate and the people. And when the senators begged him to resume them and not to abandon the Commonwealth he had saved, he yielded to their request and consented to assume proconsular authority over an enlarged province, which included Spain, Gaul, Syria, Cilicia, and Cyprus, while the Senate was left with the remaining provinces. Thus in semblance the sovereignty of the Senate and the people was restored; but in fact, because his enlarged province comprised the majority of the legions, and Egypt, over which he ruled as king...the basis of political power passed into his hands. Three days later the Senate decreed that the title "Augustus" (the Revered) should be conferred upon him.

JULIUS CAESAR, J.F.C. FULLER, 1965

KEYS TO WARFARE

We humans have a particular limitation to our reasoning powers that causes us endless problems: when we are thinking about someone or about something that has happened to us, we generally opt for the simplest, most easily digestible interpretation. An acquaintance is good or bad, nice or mean, his or her intentions noble or nefarious; an event is positive or negative, beneficial or harmful; we are happy or sad. The truth is that nothing in life is ever so simple. People are invariably a mix of good and bad qualities, strengths and weaknesses. Their intentions in doing something can be helpful and harmful to us at the same

time, a result of their ambivalent feelings toward us. Even the most positive event has a downside. And we often feel happy and sad at the same time. Reducing things to simpler terms makes them easier for us to handle, but because it is not related to reality, it also means we are constantly misunderstanding and misreading. It would be of infinite benefit for us to allow more nuances and ambiguity into our judgments of people and events.

This tendency of ours to judge things in simple terms explains why passive aggression is so devilishly effective as a strategy and why so many people use it--consciously and unconsciously. By definition, people who are acting passive-aggressively are being passive and aggressive simultaneously. They are outwardly compliant, friendly, obedient, even loving. At the same time, they inwardly plot and take hostile action. Their aggression is often quite subtle--little acts of sabotage, remarks designed to get under your skin. It can also be blatantly harmful.

When we are the victims of this behavior, we find it hard to imagine that both things are happening at the same time. We can manage the idea that someone can be nice one day and nasty the next; that is just called being moody. But to be nasty and nice simultaneously--that confuses us. We tend to take these people's passive exterior for reality, becoming emotionally engaged with their pleasant, nonthreatening appearance. If we notice that something is not quite right, that while seeming friendly they might be doing something hostile, we are genuinely bewildered. Our confusion gives the passive-aggressive warrior great manipulative power over us.

There are two kinds of passive aggression. The first is conscious strategy as practiced by Metternich. The second is a semiconscious or even unconscious behavior that people use all the time in the petty and not-so-petty matters of daily life. You may be tempted to forgive this second passive-aggressive type, who seems unaware of the effects of his or her actions or helpless to stop, but people often understand what they are doing far better than you imagine, and you are more than likely being taken in by their friendly and helpless exterior. We are generally too lenient with this second variety.

The key to using passive aggression as a conscious, positive strategy is the front you present to your enemies. They must never be able to detect the sullen, defiant thoughts that are going on inside of you.

In 1802 what today is Haiti was a French possession riven by a revolt of the country's black slaves under the leadership of Toussaint-L'ouverture. That year an army sent by Napoleon to crush the rebellion managed to seize Toussaint through treachery and ship him off to France, where he would eventually die in prison. Among Toussaint's most-decorated generals was a man named Jean-

Jacques Dessalines, who now surrendered to the French and even served in their army, helping them to put down isolated pockets of revolt and winning from them much appreciation. But it was all a ploy: as Dessalines squashed these remnants of the rebellion, he would hand over the weapons he captured to the French, but secretly he always kept some of them back, stashing them away until he had quite a large armory. Meanwhile he built up and trained a new rebel army in the remote areas where his assignment led him. Then, choosing a moment when an outbreak of yellow fever had decimated the French army, he resumed hostilities. Within a few years, he had defeated the French and liberated Haiti for good from colonial control.

Dessalines's use of passive aggression has deep roots in military strategy, in what can be called the "false surrender." In war your enemies can never read your thoughts. They must make your appearance their guide, reading the signs you give off to decipher what you are thinking and planning. Meanwhile the surrender of an army tends to be followed by a great flood of emotion and a lowering of everyone's guard. The victor will keep an eye on the beaten troops but, exhausted by the effort it took to win, will be hugely tempted to be less wary than before. A clever strategist, then, may falsely surrender--announce that he is defeated in body and spirit. Seeing no indication otherwise, and unable to read his mind, the enemy is likely to take his submission at face value. Now the false surrenderer has time and space to plot new hostilities.

In war as in life, the false surrender depends on the seamless appearance of submission. Dessalines did not just give in, he actively served his former enemies. To make this work, you must do likewise: play up your weakness, your crushed spirit, your desire to be friends--an emotional ploy with great power to distract. You must also be something of an actor. Any sign of ambivalence will ruin the effect.

In 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt faced a dilemma. He was nearing the end of his second term in office, and it was an unwritten tradition in American politics that no president would run for a third term. But Roosevelt had much unfinished business. Abroad, Europe was deep in a war that would almost certainly end up involving the United States; at home, the country had been going through difficult times, and Roosevelt wanted to bring his programs to remedy them to completion. If he revealed his desire for a third term, though, he would stir up opposition even within his own party. Many had already accused him of dictatorial tendencies. So Roosevelt decided to get what he wanted through a form of passive aggression.

In the months leading up to the Democratic Convention, which was to choose which candidate the party would run in the race, Roosevelt repeatedly

stated his lack of interest in a third term. He also actively encouraged others in the party to seek the nomination to replace him. At the same time, he carefully crafted his language so that he never completely closed the door on running himself, and he pushed enough candidates into the nomination race that no single one of them could come to the convention as the favorite. Then, as the convention opened, Roosevelt withdrew from the scene, making his large presence known by his absence: without him the proceedings were incomparably dull. Reports came back to him that people on the floor were beginning to clamor for him to appear. Letting that desire reach its peak, the president then had his friend Senator Alben Barkley insert into his own convention speech a message from Roosevelt: "The president has never had, and has not today, any desire or purpose to continue in the office of president, to be a candidate for that office, or to be nominated by the convention for that office." After a moment of silence, the convention floor began to ring with the delegates' cry: "WE WANT ROOSEVELT!" The appeal went on for an hour. The next day the delegates were to vote, and chants of "ROOSEVELT!" again filled the hall. The president's name was entered for the nomination, and he won by a landslide on the first ballot.

> *It is not an enemy who taunts me--then I could bear it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me--then I could hide from him. But it is you, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend..... My companion stretched out his hand against his friends, he violated his covenant. His speech was smoother than butter, yet war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords.*
>
> PSALMS, 55:12-15, 20-21

Remember: it is never wise to seem too eager for power, wealth, or fame. Your ambition may carry you to the top, but you will not be liked and will find your unpopularity a problem. Better to disguise your maneuvers for power: you do not want it but have found it forced upon you. Being passive and making others come to you is a brilliant form of aggression.

Subtle acts of sabotage can work wonders in the passive-aggressive strategy because you can camouflage them under your friendly, compliant front. That was how the film director Alfred Hitchcock would outmaneuver the meddlesome producer David O. Selznick, who used to alter the script to his liking, then show up on set to make sure it was shot the way he wanted it. On these occasions Hitchcock might arrange for the camera to malfunction or let it run without any film in it--by the time Selznick saw the edit, reshooting would be expensive and

impossible. Meanwhile the director would make a show of being happy to see Selznick on set and bewildered if the camera didn't roll or rolled but recorded no film.

Passive aggression is so common in daily life that you have to know how to play defense as well as offense. By all means use the strategy yourself; it is too effective to drop from your armory. But you must also know how to deal with those semiconscious passive-aggressive types so prevalent in the modern world, recognizing what they are up to before they get under your skin and being able to defend yourself against this strange form of attack.

First, you must understand why passive aggression has become so omnipresent. In the world today, the expression of overt criticism or negative feelings toward others has become increasingly discouraged. People tend to take criticism far too personally. Furthermore, conflict is something to be avoided at all costs. There is great societal pressure to please and be liked by as many people as possible. Yet it is human nature to have aggressive impulses, negative feelings, and critical thoughts about people. Unable to express these feelings openly, without fear of being disliked, more and more people resort to a kind of constant, just-below-the-surface passive aggression.

> *The idiom represents an archetype in world literature: a person with a smiling face and a cruel heart, dubbed a "smiling tiger" in Chinese folklore.*
>
> *THE WILES OF WAR*, TRANSLATED BY SUN HAICHEN, 1991

Most often their behavior is relatively harmless: perhaps they are chronically late, or make flattering comments that hide a sarcastic sting, or offer help but never follow through. These common tactics are best ignored; just let them wash over you as part of the current of modern life, and never take them personally. You have more important battles to fight.

There are, however, stronger, more harmful versions of passive aggression, acts of sabotage that do real damage. A colleague is warm to your face but says things behind your back that cause you problems. You let someone into your life who proceeds to steal something valuable of yours. An employee takes on an important job for you but does it slowly and badly. These types do harm but are excellent at avoiding any kind of blame. Their modus operandi is to create enough doubt that they were the ones who did the aggressive act; it is never their fault. Somehow they are innocent bystanders, helpless, the real victims in the whole dynamic. Their denials of responsibility are confusing: you suspect they have done something, but you cannot prove it, or, worse, if they are *really* skillful, you feel guilty for even thinking them at fault. And if in your frustration

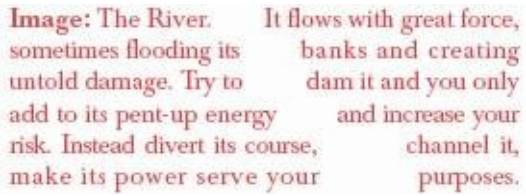
you lash out at them, you pay a high price: they will focus attention on your angry, aggressive response, your overreaction, distracting your thoughts from the passive-aggressive maneuvers that got you so irritated in the first place. The guilt you feel is a sign of the power they have over you. Indeed, you can virtually recognize the harmful variety of passive aggression by the strength of emotions it churns up in you: not superficial annoyance but confusion, paranoia, insecurity, and anger.

To defeat the passive-aggressive warrior, you must first work on yourself. This means being acutely aware of the blame-shifting tactic as it happens. Squash any feelings of guilt it might begin to make you feel. These types can be very ingratiating, using flattery to draw you into their web, preying on your insecurities. It is often your own weakness that sucks you into the passive-aggressive dynamic. Be alert to this.

Second, once you realize you are dealing with the dangerous variety, the smartest move is to disengage, at best to get the person out of your life, or at the least to not flare up and cause a scene, all of which plays into his hands. You need to stay calm. If it happens to be a partner in a relationship in which you cannot disengage, the only solution is to find a way to make the person feel comfortable in expressing any negative feelings toward you and encouraging it. This may be hard to take initially, but it may defuse his or her need to be underhanded; and open criticisms are easier to deal with than covert sabotage.

The Spaniard Hernan Cortes had many passive-aggressive soldiers in the army with which he conquered Mexico, men who outwardly accepted his leadership but were inwardly treacherous. Cortes never confronted or accused these people, never lashed out at them at all; instead he quietly figured out who they were and what they were up to, then fought fire with fire, maintaining a friendly front but working behind the scenes to isolate them and bait them into attacks in which they revealed themselves. The most effective counterstrategy with the passive-aggressive is often to be subtle and underhanded right back at them, neutralizing their powers. You can also try this with the less harmful types--the ones who are chronically late, for instance: giving them a taste of their own medicine may open their eyes to the irritating effects of their behavior.

In any event, you must never leave the passive-aggressive time and space in which to operate. Let them take root and they will find all kinds of sly ways to pull you here and there. Your best defense is to be sensitive to any passive-aggressive manifestations in those around you and to keep your mind as free as possible from their insidious influence.



Authority: As dripping water wears through rock, so the weak and yielding can subdue the firm and strong.

--*Sun Haichen,* Wiles of War *(1991)*

It is not pathological to attempt to gain control of a relationship, we all do this, but when one attempts to gain that control while denying it, then such a person is exhibiting symptomatic behavior. In any relationship that stabilizes, such as that between a husband and wife, the two people work out agreements about who is to control what area of the relationship.... A relationship becomes psychopathological when one of the two people will maneuver to circumscribe the other's behavior while indicating he is not. The wife in such a relationship will force her husband to take care of the house in such a way that she denies she is doing so. She may, for example, have obscure dizzy spells, an allergy to soap, or various types of attacks which require her to lie down regularly. Such a wife is circumscribing her husband's behavior while denying that she *is doing this; after all, she cannot help her dizzy spells. When one person circumscribes the behavior of another while denying that he is doing so, the relationship begins to be rather peculiar. For example, when a wife requires her husband to be home every night because she has anxiety attacks when she is left alone, he cannot acknowledge that she is controlling his behavior because* she *is not requiring him to be home--the anxiety is and her behavior is involuntary. Neither can he refuse to let her control his behavior for the same reason.*

STRATEGIES OF PSYCHOTHERAPY, JAY HALEY, 1963

REVERSAL

The reversal of passive aggression is aggressive passivity, presenting an apparently hostile face while inwardly staying calm and taking no unfriendly action. The purpose here is intimidation: perhaps you know you are the weaker of the two sides and hope to discourage your enemies from attacking you by presenting a blustery front. Taken in by your appearance, they will find it hard to

believe that you do not intend to do anything. In general, presenting yourself as the opposite of what you really are and intend can be a useful way of disguising your strategies.