DENY THEM TARGETS

THE STRATEGY OF THE VOID

The feeling of emptiness or void--silence, isolation, nonengagement with others--is for most people intolerable. As a human weakness, that fear offers fertile ground for a powerful strategy: give your enemies no target to attack, be dangerous but elusive and invisible, then watch as they chase you into the void. This is the essence of guerrilla warfare. Instead of frontal battles, deliver irritating but damaging side attacks and pinprick bites. Frustrated at their inability to use their strength against your vaporous campaign, your opponents will grow irrational and exhausted. Make your guerrilla war part of a grand political cause--a people's war--that crests in an irresistible revolution.

THE LURE OF THE VOID

In 1807, Napoleon Bonaparte of France and Czar Alexander I of Russia signed a treaty of alliance. Now the period's two great military powers were linked. But this treaty was unpopular with the Russian court--among other things it allowed Napoleon nearly free rein in Poland, Russia's traditional "front yard." Russian aristocrats worked to influence the czar to repudiate it. Before too long, Alexander began to take actions that he knew would displease the French, and by August 1811, Napoleon had had enough: it was time to teach Russia a lesson. He began to lay plans for an invasion. The acquisition of this vast territory to the east would make him the ruler of the largest empire in history.

Some of Napoleon's ministers warned him of the dangers of invading such a vast country, but the emperor general felt supremely confident. The Russian army was undisciplined, and its officers were squabbling among themselves. Two forces in Lithuania were positioned to block an invasion from the west, but intelligence had revealed that they were unprepared. Napoleon would march into a central position between these forces and defeat them in detail. He would ensure victory by mobilizing an army three times larger than any he had previously led: 650,000 men would march into Russia, 450,000 as part of the main attack force, the rest to secure lines of communication and supply. With an army this size, he could dominate even the large spaces of Russia, overwhelming the feeble enemy not only with his usual brilliant maneuvers but with superior firepower.

Napoleon may have felt certain of victory, but he was not a reckless man. As always, he studied the situation from every angle. He knew, for instance, that Russian roads were notoriously bad, local food supplies were meager, the climate tended to extremes of heat and cold, and the vast distances made it much harder to encircle the enemy--there was always room to retreat. He read up on the failed invasion of Russia by the king of Sweden, Charles XII, in 1709, and anticipated that the Russians might revert to a scorched-earth policy. His army would have to be as self-sufficient as possible (the distances were too great to have extended supply lines from Europe), but, given its size, that would require incredible planning and organization.

To help provide for his army, Napoleon had vast storehouses close to the borders of Russia filled with wheat and rice. He knew it would be impossible to provide fodder for the 150,000 horses of his army, and so, thinking ahead, he decided they would have to wait until June for the invasion, when the grasses of the Russian plains would be rich and green. At the last minute, he learned Russia had very few mills to grind grain into flour, so he added to his growing list the need to bring materials to build mills along the way. With the logistical problems addressed and his usual well-devised strategy in hand, Napoleon told his ministers that he foresaw complete victory within three weeks. In the past, these predictions of Napoleon's had been uncannily accurate.

In June 1812, Napoleon's vast armada of men and supplies crossed into Russia. Napoleon always planned for the unexpected, but this time unmanageable difficulties began to pile up almost immediately: rain, the bad roads, the intense summer heat brought the army's movements to a crawl. Within days more than 10,000 horses ate rank grass and died. Supplies were failing to reach the forward troops fast enough, and they had to resort to foraging, but the uncooperative Russian peasants along the march not only refused to sell their food at any price but burned their hay rather than let the French have it. More French horses died when they were forced to feed off the thatch in the roofs of houses, only to find the houses collapsing on them. The two Russian armies in Lithuania retreated too fast to be caught, and as they went, they burned crops and destroyed all storehouses of food. Dysentery quickly spread through the French troops; some nine hundred men died each day.

In his effort to catch and destroy at least a part of his elusive enemy, Napoleon was compelled to march ever farther east. At points he came tantalizingly close to the more northern of the two Russian armies, but his exhausted men and horses could not move fast enough to meet or encircle it, and it easily escaped his traps each time. June bled into July. Now it became clear that the Russians would be able to join their two armies at Smolensk, over 200

miles east of where Napoleon had intended to fight them and a mere 280 miles from Moscow. Napoleon had to call a halt and rethink his plan.

> *In addition to wasting an ever-increasing proportion of French manpower, the elusive Russian tactics also contributed to the mental as well as physical exhaustion of Napolean's forces. Tip and run raids by small bands of Cossacks were continuous and exercised a baleful influence far in excess of the military danger they represented. The French army became increasingly subject to fits of the jitters. Captain Roeder noted one typical example in his diary. The Hessian troops were mustering for parade before the Emperor's quarters at Vitebsk on August 17, when "everything was suddenly thrown into ridiculous uproar because a few Cossacks had been sighted, who were said to have carried off a forager. The entire garrison sprang to arms, and when they had ridden out it was discovered that we were really surrounded by only a few dozen Cossacks who were dodging about hither and thither. In this way they will be able to bring the whole garrison to hospital in about fourteen days without losing a single man."*
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> *THE CAMPAIGNS OF NAPOLEON,* DAVID G. CHANDLER, 1966

Thousands of French soldiers had succumbed to disease and hunger without a single battle's being fought. The army was strung out along a 500-mile line, parts of which were constantly harassed by small troops of Cossacks on horseback, sowing terror with their bloodthirsty raids. Napoleon could not allow the chase to go on any longer--he would march his men to Smolensk and fight the decisive battle there. Smolensk was a holy city, with great emotional significance to the Russian people. Surely the Russians would fight to defend it rather than let it be destroyed. He knew that if he could only meet the Russians in battle, he would win.

And so the French moved on Smolensk, arriving there in mid-August, their 450,000-man attack force reduced to 150,000 and worn down by the intense heat. Finally, as Napoleon had predicted, the Russians made a stand here--but only briefly; after several days of fighting, they retreated yet again, leaving behind a burned and ruined city with nothing in it to feed on or plunder. Napoleon could not understand the Russian people, who seemed to him suicidal--they would destroy their country rather than surrender it.

Now he had to decide whether to march on Moscow itself. It might have seemed wise to wait through the winter at Smolensk, but that would give the czar time to raise a larger army that would prove too hard for Napoleon to handle with his own depleted forces. The French emperor felt certain the czar would

defend Moscow, the very heart and soul of Russia. Once Moscow fell, Alexander would have to sue for peace. So Napoleon marched his haggard troops still farther east.

Now, at last, the Russians turned to face the French in battle, and on September 7 the two armies clashed near the village of Borodino, a mere seventy-five miles from Moscow. Napoleon no longer had enough forces or cavalry to attempt his usual flanking maneuver, so he was forced to attack the enemy head-on. The Russians fought bitterly, harder than any army Napoleon had ever faced. Even so, after hours of brutal fighting, the Russians retreated yet again. The road to Moscow lay open. But the Russian army was still intact, and Napoleon's forces had suffered horrific casualties.

Seven days later Napoleon's army, now reduced to 100,000 men, straggled into an undefended Moscow. A French marshal wrote to his wife that the emperor's "joy was overflowing. 'The Russians,' he thinks, 'will sue for peace, and I shall change the face of the world.'" In earlier years, when he had marched into Vienna and Berlin, he had been met as a conquering hero, with dignitaries turning over to him the keys to their cities. But Moscow was empty: no citizens, no food. A terrible fire broke out almost immediately and lasted five days; all of the city's water pumps had been removed--an elaborate sabotage to make Moscow still more inhospitable.

Napoleon sent letters to the czar, offering generous terms of peace. At first the Russians seemed willing to negotiate, but the weeks went by, and it finally became clear that they were dragging out the talks to buy time to build up their army--and to let winter grow closer.

Napoleon could not risk staying in Moscow another day; the Russians would soon be able to encircle his now meager force. On October 19 he marched the remains of his army out of the Russian capital. His goal was to get to Smolensk as fast as possible. Now those undisciplined bands of Cossacks that had harassed him on the road east had formed into larger divisions--guerrilla forces of 500 men--and every day they killed off more and more French soldiers. Marching in constant fear, Napoleon's men rarely slept. Thousands succumbed to fatigue and hunger. Napoleon was forced to lead them past the nightmarish fields of Borodino, still crowded with French corpses, many half eaten by wolves. The snow began to fall--the Russian winter set in. The French horses died from the cold, and every last soldier had to trudge through the snow on foot. Barely 40,000 made it to Smolensk.

The cold was worsening. There was no time to tarry in Smolensk. Through some deft maneuvering, Napoleon managed to get his troops across the Berezina River, allowing them a clear line of retreat to the west. Then, in early December,

hearing of a failed coup d'etat at home in France, he left his troops behind and headed for Paris. Of the 450,000 men in his main attack force, some 25,000 made it back. Few among the rest of the army survived as well. Napoleon had miraculously escaped to fight more wars, but he would never recoup his losses in manpower and horses. Russia was indeed his grave.

Interpretation

By the time Napoleon invaded Russia, Czar Alexander I had met him a number of times in previous years and had come to know him quite well. The emperor, Alexander saw, was an aggressive man who loved any kind of fight, even if the odds were stacked against him. He needed battles as a chance to put his genius in play. By refusing to meet him in battle, Alexander could frustrate him and lure him into a void: vast but empty lands without food or forage, empty cities with nothing to plunder, empty negotiations, empty time in which nothing happened, and finally the dead of winter. Russia's harsh climate would make a shambles of Napoleon's organizational genius. And as it played out, Alexander's strategy worked to perfection. Napoleon's inability to engage his enemy got under his skin: a few more miles east, one solid battle, and he could teach this cowardly foe a lesson. His emotions--irritation, anger, confusion--overwhelmed his ability to strategize. How could he have come to believe, for instance, that the fall of Moscow would force the czar to surrender? Alexander's army was still intact, the French had grown frighteningly weak, and winter was coming. Napoleon's mind had succumbed to the powerful pull of the void that he had entered, and that led him far astray.

Alexander's strategy wreaked havoc on the French soldiers as well, who were renowned for their superior discipline and fighting spirit. A soldier can endure almost anything except the expectation of a battle that never comes and a tension that is never relieved. Instead of battle, the French got endless raids and pinprick attacks that came out of nowhere, a continuous threat that gradually built into panic. While thousands of soldiers fell to disease, many more simply lost the will to fight.

It is human nature to not be able to endure any kind of void. We hate silence, long stretches of inactivity, loneliness. (Perhaps this is related to our fear of that final void, our own death.) We have to fill and occupy empty space. By giving people nothing to hit, being as vaporous as possible, you play upon this human weakness. Infuriated at the absence not just of a fight but of any kind of interaction at all, people will tend to chase madly after you, losing all power of strategic thought. It is the elusive side, no matter how weak or small its force, that controls the dynamic.

The bigger the enemy, the better this strategy works: struggling to reach you, the oversize opponent presents juicy targets for you to hit. To create the maximum psychological disturbance, you must make your attacks small but relentless, keeping your enemy's anger and frustration at a constant boil. Make your void complete: empty negotiations, talks leading nowhere, time passing without either victory or defeat. In a world of accelerated pace and activity, this strategy will have a powerfully debilitating effect on people's nerves. The less they can hit, the harder they will fall.

Most wars are wars of contact, both forces striving to keep in touch.... The Arab war should be a war of detachment: to contain the enemy by the silent threat of a vast unknown desert, not disclosing themselves till the moment of attack.... From this theory came to be developed ultimately an unconscious habit of never engaging the enemy at all. This chimed with the numerical plea of never giving the enemy's soldier a target.

--*T. E. Lawrence,* The Seven Pillars of Wisdom *(1926)*

KEYS TO WARFARE

Over the centuries organized war--in all its infinite variations, from primitive to modern, Asian to Western--has always tended to follow a certain logic, which is so universal as almost to seem inherent to the process. The logic is as follows: A leader decides to take his country to war and raises an army for that purpose. That army's goal is to meet and defeat the enemy in a decisive battle that will force a surrender and favorable peace terms. The strategist guiding the campaign must deal with a specific area, the theater of war. This area is most often relatively limited; maneuvering in vast open spaces complicates the possibility of bringing the war to closure. Working within the theater of war, then, the strategist contrives to bring his army to the decisive battle in a way that will surprise the enemy or put it at a disadvantage--it is cornered, or attacked from both front and rear, or must fight uphill. To keep his forces strong enough to deliver a mortal blow, he concentrates them rather than dispersing them. Once battle begins, the army will naturally form a flank and rear that it must protect against encirclement, as well as lines of communication and supply. It may take several battles to end the war, as each side works to dominate the key positions that will give it control of the theater, but military leaders must try to end it as quickly as possible. The longer it drags on, the more the army's resources are stretched to a breaking point where the ability to fight collapses. Soldiers' morale declines with time as well.

As with any human activity, however, this positive, orderly side generates a

negative, shadow side that contains its own form of power and reverse logic. The shadow side is guerrilla warfare. The rudiments of guerrilla warfare originated thousands of years ago, when smaller nations found themselves invaded by more powerful neighbors; to survive, their armies were forced to flee the invader, for any direct engagement would have destroyed them. It soon became clear that the longer they fled and eluded battle, the more they ruined the enemy's strategies and confused it by not conforming to the usual logic of engagement.

> *Such was the system Spain used against us. One hundred and fifty to two hundred guerrilla bands scattered all over Spain had sworn to kill thirty or forty Frenchmen a month each: that made six to eight thousand men a month for all guerrilla bands together. The order was never to attack soldiers traveling as a body, unless the guerrillas outnumbered them. But they fired on all stragglers, attacked small escorts, and sought to lay hands on the enemy's funds, couriers, and especially convoys. As all the inhabitants acted as spies for their fellow citizens, the guerrillas knew when the convoys would leave and how strong their escorts would be, and the bands would make sure they were twice the size. They knew the country very well, and they would attack furiously in the most favorable spot. Success often crowned the undertaking; but they always killed a lot of men, and the goal was achieved. As there are twelve months in the year, we were losing about eighty thousand men a year, without any pitched battles. The war in Spain lasted seven years, so over five hundred men were killed.... But that includes only those killed by the guerrillas. Add the battles of Salamanca, Talavera, and Vitoria, and several others that our troops lost; the sieges,...the fruitless attack on Cadiz; add too the invasion and evacuation of Portugal, the fevers and various illnesses that the temperature caused our soldiers to suffer, and you will see that we could add a further three hundred thousand men to that number during those seven years..... From what has been said, it will be apparent that the prime aim of this sort of war is to bring about the destruction of the enemy almost without him noticing it, and as a drop of water dripping on a stone will eventually dig a hole in the stone, patience and perseverance are needed, always following the same system. In the long run, the enemy will suffer more from this than he would from losing pitched battles.*
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> *ON PARTISANS AND IRREGULAR FORCES,* J.F.A. LE MIERE DE CORVEY, 1823

The next step was to take this further: these early guerrilla warriors learned the value of operating in small, dispersed bands as opposed to a concentrated

army, keeping in constant motion, never forming a front, flank, or rear for the other side to hit. The enemy would want to keep the war confined to a particular space; better, then, to extend it over as much territory as possible, melting into the countryside, forcing the enemy to disperse itself in the chase, opening itself up to raids and pinprick attacks. The enemy would naturally want a quick end to the war, so it was desirable to drag it out as long as possible, making time an offensive weapon that consumed the enemy with friction and sagging morale.

In this way, over thousands of years and through trial and error, the art of guerrilla warfare developed and was refined into its present-day form. Conventional military training and thought revolve around concentrating for battle, maneuvering within limited areas, and straining for the quick kill. Guerrilla warfare's reversal of this natural order of war makes it impossible for a conventional army to counter--hence its power. In the shadow land of reverse warfare, where none of the normal rules apply, the conventional army flounders. Done right, guerrilla warfare is virtually unbeatable.

The word "guerrilla"--"small war" in Spanish--was coined in reference to the Peninsular War of 1808-14, which began when Napoleon invaded Spain. Melting into their country's mountains and inhospitable terrain, the Spaniards tortured the French, making it impossible for them to profit from their superior numbers and weaponry. Napoleon was bedeviled by an enemy that attacked without forming a front or rear. The Cossack fighters who undid him in Russia in 1812 had learned a lot from the Spanish and perfected the use of guerrilla warfare; their harassment caused far more damage than anything the rather incompetent Russian army could inflict.

This strategy has become a more powerful and prevalent tool in modern warfare for several reasons: First, by exploiting technological advances in weaponry and explosives, a small guerrilla band can cause disproportionate damage. Second, Napoleonic warfare greatly expanded the size of conventional armies, making them much more vulnerable to hit-and-run tactics from light and mobile forces. Finally, guerrilla war has been adopted for political purposes, to great effect. By infusing local people with the fervor of a cause, a revolutionary leader can covertly multiply his strength: his civilian supporters can sabotage the enemy's invading force, provide valuable intelligence, and turn the countryside into an armed camp.

The power of guerrilla warfare is essentially psychological. In conventional warfare everything converges on the engagement of two armies in battle. That is what all strategy is devised for and what the martial instinct requires as a kind of release from tension. By postponing this natural convergence indefinitely, the guerrilla strategist creates intense frustration. The longer this mental corrosion

continues, the more debilitating it gets. Napoleon lost to the Russians because his strategic bearings were pushed off course; his mind fell before his army did.

Because it is so psychological, guerrilla strategy is infinitely applicable to social conflict. In life as in war, our thoughts and emotions naturally converge on moments of contact and engagement with others. We find people who are deliberately elusive, who evade contact, extremely disconcerting. Whether because we want to grab them and pin them down or because we are so annoyed with them that we want to hit them, they pull us toward them, so that either way the elusive one controls the dynamic. Some people take this further, attacking us in ways that are evasive and unpredictable. These opponents can gain a disturbing power over our minds, and the longer they keep it up, the more we are sucked into fighting on their terms. With advances in technology that make it easier to maintain a vaporous presence, and the use of the media as both a screen and a kind of guerrilla adjunct, the power and effectiveness of this warfare in political or social battle are greatly enhanced. In heated political times, a guerrilla-style campaign--allied with some cause--can be used to wage a people's war against large entities, corporations, entrenched powers. In this kind of public combat, everyone loves to fight on the guerrillas' side because the participants are more deeply involved in the struggle, not mere cogs in a giant machine.

Franklin Roosevelt was a kind of political guerrilla warrior. He liked to fight evasively and strategized to deny the Republicans any targets to hit. He used the media to make himself seem to be everywhere and to be waging a kind of people's war against moneyed interests. In classic guerrilla manner, he also reorganized the Democratic Party to make it less centralized, more mobile and fluid for local battles. For Roosevelt, though, the guerrilla approach was not so much a coherent strategy as a style. As many do, he unconsciously sensed the power in being evasive and fought that way to great effect--but to make this strategy really work, it is better to use it consciously and rationally. Guerrilla strategy may be the reverse side of war, but it has its own logic, backward yet rigorous. You cannot just improvise it anarchically; you must think and plan in a new way--mobile, dimensional, and abstract.

The primary consideration should always be whether a guerrilla-style campaign is appropriate for the circumstances you are facing. It is especially effective, for instance, against an opponent who is aggressive yet clever--a man like Napoleon. These types cannot stand lack of contact with an enemy. They live to maneuver, outwit, and outhit. Having nothing to strike at neutralizes their cleverness, and their aggression becomes their downfall. It is interesting to note that this strategy works in love as well as in war and that here, too, Napoleon was its victim: it was by a guerrilla-style seduction--by enticing him to chase her,

giving tantalizing lures but offering him nothing solid to grasp--that Empress Josephine made him her slave.

This strategy of the void works wonders on those who are used to conventional warfare. Lack of contact is so outside their experience that it warps any strategic powers they have. Large bureaucracies are often perfect targets for a guerrilla strategy for the same reason: they are capable of responding only in the most orthodox manner. In any event, guerrilla warriors generally need an opponent that is large, slow-footed, and with bullying tendencies.

Once you have determined that a guerrilla war is appropriate, take a look at the army you will use. A large, conventional army is never suitable; fluidity and the ability to strike from many angles are what counts. The organizational model is the cell--a relatively small group of men and women, tight-knit, dedicated, self-motivated, and spread out. These cells should penetrate the enemy camp itself. This was how Mao Tse-tung organized his army in the Chinese Revolution, infiltrating the Nationalist side, causing sabotage in the cities, leaving the deceptive and terrifying impression that his men were everywhere.

When U.S. Air Force Colonel John Boyd joined the Pentagon in the late 1960s to help develop jet fighters, he faced a reactionary bureaucracy dominated by commercial interests rather than military ones. The Pentagon was in dire need of reform, but a traditional bureaucratic war--an attempt to convince key staff directly and frontally of the importance of his cause--would have been a hopeless venture: Boyd would simply have been isolated and funneled out of the system. He decided to wage a guerrilla war instead. His first and most important step was to organize cells within the Pentagon. These cells were small and hard to detect, giving the reactionaries nothing to hit at when they realized they were in a war. Boyd recruited his guerrillas from among those dissatisfied with the status quo, especially the young--young people are always more receptive to change, and they love this style of fighting.

With his cells in place, Boyd had constant intelligence as to what was going on in the Pentagon and could anticipate the timing and content of the attacks on him. He could also use these cells to spread his influence through word of mouth, infiltrating ever deeper into the bureaucracy. The main point is to avoid an organization's formal channels and tendency for bigness and concentration. Opt for mobility instead; make your army light and clandestine. You can also attach your guerrilla cells to a regular army, much as the Russian Cossacks supported the armies of Alexander. This mix of conventional and unconventional can prove highly effective.

Once you have organized your cells, you must find a way to lure the enemy into attacking you. In war this is generally accomplished by retreating, then

turning to strike at the enemy with constant small raids and ambushes that cannot be ignored. This was the classic strategy pursued by T. E. Lawrence in Arabia during World War I. The nineteenth-century American financial wizard Jay Gould, a man who fought many guerrilla wars in his business life, did something similar in his daily battles. His goal was to create maximum disorder in the markets--disorder he could anticipate and exploit. One of his main adversaries was the highly aggressive mogul Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, whom he engaged in a war for control of the Erie Railroad in the late 1860s. Gould maintained an incredibly elusive presence; he would work back channels to gain influence in, for example, the New York State legislature, which then enacted laws undermining Vanderbilt's interests. The furious Vanderbilt would go after Gould and counterattack, but Gould would by then have moved on to some other unexpected target. To deprive Vanderbilt of the strategic initiative, Gould upset him, fed his competitive and aggressive instincts, then goaded him further by giving him no target to counterattack.

Gould also made skillful use of the media. He might plant a newspaper article that would suddenly sideswipe Vanderbilt, portraying him as an evil monopolist; Vanderbilt would have to respond, but that would only publicize the charge--and meanwhile Gould's name would be nowhere in evidence. The media in this instance are perfect as both the smoke screen concealing guerrilla tactics and the vehicle conveying them. Use the media to goad your enemies, getting them to disperse their energies in defending themselves while you watch, or find a new target to raid and ambush. Lacking a real battle to deal with, their frustration will mount and lead them to costly mistakes.

In conventional warfare the way you supply your army is a critical issue. In guerrilla warfare, on the other hand, you live off your enemies as much as possible, using their resources, their energy, and their power as a kind of supply base. Mao supplied his army mostly with captured equipment and food. Gould actually started out by infiltrating Vanderbilt's inner circle as a financial partner, then using Vanderbilt's immense resources to fund his mayhem. Using the enemy's materiel will help you to endure the longer length of any successful guerrilla campaign. In any event, you must plan to live cheaply, marshaling what you have for the long run.

In most conflicts time is a danger, bringing Murphy's Law into play: if anything can go wrong, it will. If your army is small and relatively self-sufficient, though, there is less to go wrong, and meanwhile you are working to make sure that for the enemy the passage of time is a nightmare. Morale is sinking, resources are stretched, and even great planners like Napoleon are finding themselves with problems they could never have foreseen. The effect is

exponential: as unexpected problems crop up, the enemy starts making mistakes, which lead to more problems--and so it goes.

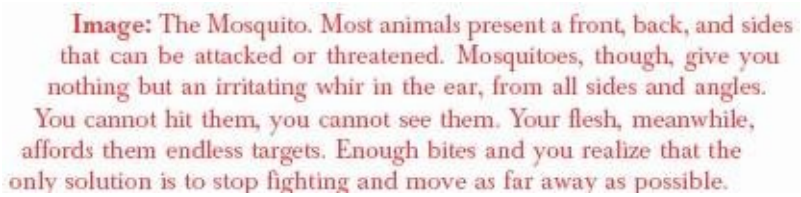
Make time an offensive weapon in your strategizing. Design your maneuvers to keep your enemies just barely going, always thinking that one more battle will do the trick. You want them to deteriorate slowly; a sudden sharp setback, a clear view of the trap you are laying for them, and they will pull out before the damage is done. Let them take key positions that give them the illusion of success. They will hold on to them tenaciously as your raids and pinprick attacks grow in number. Then, as they weaken, increase the pace of these attacks. Let them hope, let them think it is all still worth it, until the trap is set. Then break their illusion.

Just as you are extending time, contrary to convention, you are also extending space. You want to bring the fight to areas outside the theater of war, to include public and international opinion, turning the war into a political and global issue and giving the enemy too large a space to defend. Political support is invaluable to an underdog guerrilla campaign; the longer the fight is drawn out, the more the enemy seems morally unjustified and politically isolated. Always try to ally your guerrilla campaign with a cause you can defend as just and worthy.

You will win your guerrilla war in one of two ways. The first route is to increase the level of your attacks as your enemies deteriorate, then finish them off, as the Russians finished off Napoleon. The other method is by turning sheer exhaustion to your advantage: you just let the enemy give up, for the fight is no longer worth the aggravation. The latter way is the better one. It costs you less in resources, and it looks better: the enemy has fallen on his own sword. But even a guerrilla campaign cannot go on forever; at a certain point time starts to work against you as well. If the ending is taking too long, you must go on the offensive and finish the enemy off. In the Vietnam War, the North Vietnamese drew out the war to a point where it was also costing them too much. That was why they launched the Tet Offensive in 1968--to greatly accelerate the deterioration of the U.S. war effort.

The essence of guerrilla warfare is fluidity. The enemy will always try to adjust to what you are doing, attempting to find its feet in this unfamiliar terrain. You must be prepared to change and adopt whatever is contrary to expectation: this might mean occasionally fighting in a conventional manner, concentrating your army to attack here or there, then dispersing again. Your goal is maximum disorder and unfamiliarity. Remember: this war is psychological. It is more on the level of strategy than anything else that you give the enemy nothing to hold on to, nothing tangible to counter. It is the enemies' minds that are grasping at air

and their minds that fall first.



Authority: Anything that has form can be overcome; anything that takes shape can be countered. This is why sages conceal their forms in nothingness and let their minds soar in the void.

--Huainanzi *(second century B.C.*)

REVERSAL

A guerrilla strategy is extremely hard to counter, which is what makes it so effective. If you find yourself in a fight with guerrillas and you use conventional methods to fight them, you play into their hands; winning battles and taking territory means nothing in this kind of war. The only effective counterstrategy is to reverse the guerrillas' reversal, neutralizing their advantages. You must refuse them the freedom of time and space they need for their mayhem. You must work to isolate them--physically, politically, and morally. Above all, you must never respond in a graduated manner, by stepping up your forces bit by bit, as the United States did in the Vietnam War. You need a quick, decisive victory over such an opponent. If this seems impossible, it is better to pull out while you can than to sink into the protracted war the guerrilla fighter is trying to lure you into.