EXPOSE AND ATTACK YOUR OPPONENT'S SOFT FLANK

THE TURNING STRATEGY

When you attack people directly, you stiffen their resistance and make your task that much harder. There is a better way: distract your opponents' attention to the front, then attack them from the side, where they least expect it. By hitting them where they are soft, tender, and unprotected, you create a shock, a moment of weakness for you to exploit. Bait people into going out on a limb, exposing their weakness, then rake them with fire from the side. The only way to get stubborn opponents to move is to approach them indirectly.

> *The Emperor* [*Napoleon Bonaparte*] *, while he was quite prepared "to break eggs to make omelettes," as von Clausewitz puts it, was always eager to gain total victory for a minimum expenditure of manpower and effort. Consequently he disliked having to force a full-scale, fully arrayed frontal battle--that is to say, marching directly against the enemy to fight him on ground of his (the adversary's) choosing, for such battles were inevitably expensive and rarely conclusive (Borodino in 1812 is a case in point). Instead, whenever possible, after pinning the foe frontally by a feint attack, he marched his main army by the quickest possible "safe" route, hidden by the cavalry screen and natural obstacles, to place himself on the rear or flank of his opponent. Once this move had been successfully achieved, he occupied a natural barrier or "strategical curtain" (usually a river line or mountain range), ordered the blocking of all crossings, and thus isolated his intended victim from his rear depots and reduced his chances of reinforcement. Thereafter, Napoleon advanced relentlessly toward the foe's army, offering him only two alternatives--to fight for survival on ground not of his own choosing, or to surrender. The advantages afforded by such a strategy are obvious. The enemy army would be both taken by surprise and almost certainly demoralized by the sudden apparition of the enemy army in its rear, cutting its communications.*
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> *THE CAMPAIGNS OF NAPOLEON*, DAVID G. CHANDLER, 1966

TURNING THE FLANK

In 1793, Louis XIV and his wife, Marie Antoinette, the king and queen of France, were beheaded by order of the new government put in place after the French Revolution. Marie Antoinette was the daughter of Maria Theresa, the empress of Austria, and as a result of her death the Austrians became determined enemies of France. Early in 1796 they prepared to invade the country from northern Italy, which at the time was an Austrian possession.

In April of that year, the twenty-six-year-old Napoleon Bonaparte was given command of the French army in Italy and charged with a simple mission: to prevent these Austrian armies from entering France. Under Napoleon, for the first time since the revolution not only were the French able to hold a defensive position, but they successfully went on the offensive, pushing the Austrians steadily east. Shocking as it was to lose to the revolutionary army, it was downright humiliating to be defeated by an unknown general on his first campaign. For six months the Austrians sent armies to defeat Napoleon, but he forced each one to retreat into the fortress of Mantua, until finally this stronghold was crammed with Austrian soldiers.

Leaving a force at Mantua to pin down the Austrians, Napoleon established his base to the north, in the pivotal city of Verona. If the Austrians were to win the war, they would somehow have to push him out of Verona and free up the starving soldiers trapped in Mantua. And they were running out of time.

In October 1796, Baron Joseph d'Alvintzi was given command of some 50,000 Austrian soldiers and the urgent mission of expelling the French from Verona. An experienced commander and clever strategist, d'Alvintzi studied Napoleon's Italian campaign carefully and came to respect his enemy. To defeat this brilliant young general, the Austrians would have to be more flexible, and d'Alvintzi thought he had the solution: he would divide his army into two columns, one under himself, the other under the Russian general Paul Davidovich. The columns would separately march south, converging at Verona. At the same time, d'Alvintzi would launch a campaign of deception to make Napoleon think that Davidovich's army was small (it was in fact 18,000 men strong), merely a holding force to protect the Austrian lines of communication. If Napoleon underestimated Davidovich, the Russian general would face less opposition and his way to Verona would be smooth. D'Alvintzi's plan was to trap Napoleon between the jaws of these two armies.

The Austrians entered northern Italy in early November. To d'Alvintzi's delight, Napoleon seemed to have fallen for their trick; he sent a relatively light

force against Davidovich, who promptly gave the French in Italy their first real defeat and began his advance toward Verona. Meanwhile d'Alvintzi himself advanced all the way to a point not far from Verona and was poised to fall on the city from the east. As he pored over his maps, d'Alvintzi took pleasure in his plan. If Napoleon sent more men to stop Davidovich, he would weaken Verona against d'Alvintzi. If he tried to block d'Alvintzi's entrance from the east, he would weaken Verona against Davidovich. If he sought reinforcements from his troops at Mantua, he would free up the 20,000 Austrian soldiers trapped there and they would gobble him up from the south. D'Alvintzi also knew that Napoleon's men were exhausted and hungry. Having fought for six months without rest, they were at a breaking point. Not even a young genius like Napoleon could escape this trap.

A few days later, d'Alvintzi advanced to the village of Caldiero, at Verona's doorstep. There he inflicted another defeat on the French troops sent to stop him. After a string of victories, Napoleon had now lost two battles in a row; the pendulum had swung against him.

As d'Alvintzi prepared for his final pounce on Verona, he received confusing news: against all prediction Napoleon had in fact divided his army in Verona, but instead of sending parts of it against either d'Alvintzi or Davidovich, he had marched a sizable force somewhere to the southeast. The next day this army appeared outside the town of Arcola. If the French crossed the river to Arcola and advanced a few miles north, they would directly cross d'Alvintzi's line of communications and of retreat, and they would be able to seize his supply depots at Villa Nova. Having this large French army to his rear was more than alarming; d'Alvintzi was forced to forget about Verona for the moment and hastily marched east.

He had retreated in the nick of time and was able to halt the French before they could cross the river and attack Villa Nova. For several days the two armies settled into a fiercely contested battle for the bridge at Arcola. Napoleon himself led several charges and was nearly killed. A portion of the troops blocking Mantua were dispatched north to reinforce the French at Arcola, but d'Alvintzi's army hunkered down, and the battle turned into a stalemate.

On the third day of fighting, d'Alvintzi's soldiers--their lines thinned by relentless French attacks--were preparing for another battle for the bridge when they suddenly heard trumpets blaring from their southern flank. A French force had somehow crossed the river below the bridge and was marching toward the Austrian flank at Arcola. The sound of trumpets was quickly replaced by shouts and the whizzing of bullets. The sudden appearance of the French on their flank was too much for the wearied Austrians; not waiting to see the size of the French

force, they panicked and fled the scene. The French poured across the river. D'Alvintzi gathered up his men as best he could and managed to lead them east to safety. But the battle for Verona was lost, and with it the doom of Mantua was sealed.

Somehow Napoleon had managed to snatch victory from defeat. The battle of Arcola helped forge the legend of his invincibility.

> *Now came the critical problem of judging the correct moment for the enveloping force to reveal its disconcerting position on the enemy flank. For maximum effect, it was important that this should not occur before the enemy had committed all or most of his reserves to the frontal battle, and this need for accurate timing of the flank attack called for the greatest judgment on the part of Napoleon and his key subordinates. The former had to judge the moment when all the enemy troops were indeed committed to the frontal battle (and with the billowing clouds of black-powder smoke obliterating the scene this was no easy matter); the latter had the task of keeping their eager troops "on the leash" so as to avoid any premature attack disclosing their presence. Then, when the exact moment came, Napoleon would give the signal.... Then the* attaque debordante *would spring to life. A roar of cannon away on his hitherto secure flank would cause the enemy to look apprehensively over his shoulder, and before long the spyglasses of his anxious staff would be able to detect a line of dust and smoke crawling ever nearer from the flank or rear. This threat to his communications and line of retreat could not be ignored. The enemy general might now theoretically adopt one of two courses (but in practice only one). He could either order an immediate general retreat to slip out of the trap before it shut behind his army (although this was generally out of the question, as Napoleon would of course launch a general frontal attack against all sectors of the enemy line to coincide with the unmasking of his flanking force and thus pin the foe still tighter to the ground he was holding); or he would be compelled to find troops from somewhere to form a new line at right angles to his main position to face the new onslaught and protect his flank. As all reserves were (ideally) already committed to battle, this could be easily and quickly effected only by deliberately weakening those frontal sectors closest to the new threat. This thinning out of the enemy front is what Napoleon termed "the Event"--and was of course exactly what he intended to have happen. The curtain on the first act would now fall; the enemy was reacting as required; the destruction of the cohesion of his line, the final ruination of his equilibrium, could now be undertaken with practically a guarantee of ultimate success.*

Interpretation

Napoleon was no magician, and his defeat of the Austrians in Italy was deceptively simple. Facing two armies converging on him, he calculated that d'Alvintzi's was the more imminent danger. The fight for Caldiero encouraged the Austrians to think that Verona would be defended through direct, frontal confrontation. But Napoleon instead divided his army and sent the larger portion of it to threaten the Austrian supply depot and lines of communication and retreat. Had d'Alvintzi ignored the threat and advanced on Verona, he would have moved farther away from his critical base of operations and put himself in great jeopardy; had he stayed put, Napoleon would have squeezed him between two armies. In fact, Napoleon knew d'Alvintzi would have to retreat--the threat was too real--and once he had done so, he would have relinquished the initiative. At Arcola, sensing that the enemy was tiring, Napoleon sent a small contingent to cross the river to the south and march on the Austrian flank, with instructions to make as much noise as possible--trumpets, shouts, gunfire. The presence of this attacking force, small though it was, would induce panic and collapse. The ruse worked.

This maneuver--the *manoeuvre sur les derrieres*, Napoleon called it--would become a favorite strategy of his. Its success was based on two truths: First, generals like to place their armies in a strong frontal position, whether to make an attack or to meet one. Napoleon would often play on this tendency to face forward in battle by seeming to engage the enemy frontally; in the fog of battle, it was hard to tell that really only half of his army was deployed here, and meanwhile he would sneak the other half to the side or rear. Second, an army sensing attack from the flank is alarmed and vulnerable and must turn to face the threat. This moment of turning contains great weakness and confusion. Even an army in the stronger position, like d'Alvintzi's at Verona, will almost always lose cohesion and balance as it turns.

Learn from the great master himself: attacking from the front is rarely wise. The soldiers facing you will be tightly packed in, a concentration of force that will amplify their power to resist you. Go for their flank, their vulnerable side. This principle is applicable to conflicts or encounters of any scale.

Individuals often show their flank, signal their vulnerability, by its opposite, the front they show most visibly to the world. This front can be an aggressive personality, a way of dealing with people by pushing them around. Or it can be some obvious defense mechanism, a focus on keeping out intruders to maintain stability in their lives. It can be their most cherished beliefs and ideas; it can be

the way they make themselves liked. The more you get people to expose this front, to show more of themselves and the directions they tend to move in, the more their unprotected flanks will come into focus--unconscious desires, gaping insecurities, precarious alliances, uncontrollable compulsions. Once you move on their flanks, your targets will turn to face you and lose their equilibrium. All enemies are vulnerable from their sides. There is no defense against a well-designed flanking maneuver.

Opposition to the truth is inevitable, especially if it takes the form of a new idea, but the degree of resistance can be diminished--by giving thought not only to the aim but to the method of approach. Avoid a frontal attack on a long-established position; instead, seek to turn it by flank movement, so that a more penetrable side is exposed to the thrust of truth.

--B. H. Liddell Hart (1895-1970)

OCCUPYING THE FLANK

As a young man, Julius Caesar (100-44 B.C.) was once captured by pirates. They asked for a ransom of twenty talents; laughing, he replied that a man of his nobility was worth fifty talents, and he volunteered to pay that sum. His attendants were sent for the money, and Caesar was left alone with these bloodthirsty pirates. For the weeks he remained among them, he participated in their games and revelry, even playing a little rough with them, joking that he would have them crucified someday.

Amused by this spirited yet affectionate young man, the pirates practically adopted him as their own. But once the ransom was paid and Caesar was freed, he proceeded to the nearest port, manned some ships at his own expense, then went after the pirates and surprised them in their lair. At first they welcomed him back--but Caesar had them arrested, took back the money he had given them, and, as promised, had them crucified. In the years to come, many would learn--whether to their delight or to their horror--that this was how Caesar did battle.

Caesar, however, did not always exact retribution. In 62 B.C., during a religious ceremony in Caesar's home, a young man named Publius Clodius was caught among the female celebrants, dressed as a woman and cavorting with Caesar's wife, Pompeia. This was considered an outrage, and Caesar immediately divorced Pompeia, saying, "My wife must be above suspicion." Yet when Clodius was arrested and tried for sacrilege, Caesar used his money and influence to get the youth acquitted. He was more than repaid a few years later,

when he was preparing to leave Rome for wars in Gaul and needed someone to protect his interests while he was away. He used his clout to get Clodius named to the political office of tribune, and in that position Clodius doggedly supported Caesar's interests, stirring up so much trouble in the Senate with his obnoxious maneuvers that no one had the time or inclination to intrigue against the absent general.

> *During this survey one impression became increasingly strong--that, throughout the ages, effective results in war have rarely been attained unless the approach has had such indirectness as to ensure the opponent's unreadiness to meet it. The indirectness has usually been physical, and always psychological. In strategy, the longest way round is often the shortest way home. More and more clearly has the lesson emerged that a direct approach to one's mental object, or physical objective, along the "line of natural expectation" for the opponent, tends to produce negative results. The reason has been expressed vividly in Napoleon's dictum that "the moral is to the physical as three to one." It may be expressed scientifically by saying that, while the strength of an opposing force or country lies outwardly in its numbers and resources, these are fundamentally dependent upon stability of control, morale, and supply. To move along the line of natural expectation consolidates the opponent's balance and thus increases his resisting power. In war, as in wrestling, the attempt to throw the opponent without loosening his foothold and upsetting his balance results in self-exhaustion, increasing in disproportionate ratio to the effective strain put upon him. Success by such a method only becomes possible through an immense margin of superior strength in some form--and, even so, tends to lose decisiveness. In most campaigns the dislocation of the enemy's psychological and physical balance has been the vital prelude to a successful attempt at his overthrow.*
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> *STRATEGY,* B. H. LIDDELL HART, 1954

The three most powerful men in Rome at the time were Caesar, Crassus, and Pompey. Fearing Pompey, a popular and famously successful general, Crassus tried to form a secret alliance with Caesar, but Caesar balked; instead, a few years later, he approached the wary Pompey (who was suspicious of and hostile toward Caesar as a possible future rival) and suggested they form their own alliance. In return he promised to support some of Pompey's political proposals, which had been stalled in the Senate. Surprised, Pompey agreed, and Crassus, not wanting to be left out, agreed to join the group to form the First Triumvirate, which was to rule Rome for the next several years.

In 53 B.C., Crassus was killed in battle in Syria, and a power struggle quickly emerged between Pompey and Caesar. Civil war seemed inevitable, and Pompey had more support in the Senate. In 50 B.C., the Senate ordered that both Caesar (who was fighting in Gaul at the time) and Pompey should send one of their legions to Syria to support the Roman army fighting there. But since Pompey had already lent Caesar a legion for the war in Gaul, he proposed to send that one to Syria--so that Caesar would have lost two legions instead of one, weakening him for the impending war.

Caesar did not complain. He sent off the two legions, one of which, however--as he had expected--did not go to Syria but was conveniently quartered near Rome, at Pompey's disposal. Before the two legions left, Caesar paid each soldier handsomely. He also instructed their officers to spread the rumor in Rome that his troops still in Gaul were exhausted and that, should he dare to send them against Pompey, they would switch sides as soon as they had crossed the Alps. Coming to believe these false reports, and expecting massive defections, Pompey did not trouble to recruit more soldiers for the imminent war, which he would later regret.

In January of 49 B.C., Caesar crossed the Rubicon, the river between Gaul and Italy, a dramatic, unexpected move that initiated the Civil War. Caught by surprise, Pompey fled with his legions to Greece, where he began to prepare a major operation. As Caesar marched south, many of Pompey's supporters, left behind in Rome, were terrified. Caesar had established a reputation in Gaul for brutal treatment of the enemy, leveling whole towns and killing their inhabitants. Yet when Caesar took the key town of Corfinium, capturing important senators and army officers who had fought there alongside troops loyal to Pompey, he did not punish these men; in fact, he returned to them the monies his soldiers had looted in taking the town. This remarkable act of clemency became the model for his treatment of Pompey's supporters. Instead of Caesar's men switching allegiance to Pompey, it was Pompey's who now became the most ardent followers of Caesar. As a result, Caesar's march on Rome was quick and bloodless.

Next, although Pompey had established his base in Greece, Caesar decided to first attack his flank: the large army he had quartered in Spain. Over several months of campaigning, he completely outmaneuvered this force, led by Pompey's generals Afranius and Petreius, and finally cornered them. They were surrounded, the situation was hopeless, and Afranius and many of the soldiers, knowing of Caesar's gentle treatment of his enemies, sent word that they were ready to surrender; but Petreius, horrified at this betrayal, ordered that any soldier who supported Caesar be slaughtered. Then, determined to go down

fighting, he led his remaining men out of the camp for battle--but Caesar refused to engage. The soldiers were unable to fight.

Finally, desperately low in supplies, Pompey's men surrendered. This time they could expect the worst, for Caesar knew about the massacre in the camp--yet once again he pardoned Petreius and Afranius and simply disbanded their army, giving the soldiers supplies and money for their return to Rome. Hearing of this, the Spanish cities still loyal to Pompey quickly changed sides. In a matter of three months, Roman Spain had been conquered through a combination of maneuver and diplomacy, and with barely a drop of blood spilled.

In the following months, Pompey's political support in Rome evaporated. All he had left was his army. His defeat by Caesar at the Battle of Pharsalus, in northern Greece, a year later merely put the seal on his inevitable destruction.

Interpretation

Caesar discovered early on in his political life that there are many ways to conquer. Most people advance more or less directly, attempting to overpower their opponents. But unless they kill the foes they beat this way, they are merely creating long-term enemies who harbor deep resentment and will eventually make trouble. Enough such enemies and life becomes dangerous.

Caesar found another way to do battle, taking the fight out of his enemies through strategic and cunning generosity. Disarmed like this, enemy becomes ally, negative becomes positive. Later on, if necessary, when the former foe's guard is down, you can exact retribution, as Caesar did with the pirates. Behave more gently, though, and your enemy may become your best follower. So it was with Publius Clodius, who, after disgracing Caesar's home, became the devoted agent of the general's dirty work.

When the Civil War broke out, Caesar understood that it was a political phenomenon as much as a military one--in fact, what mattered most was the support of the Senate and the Romans. His acts of mercy were part of a calculated campaign to disarm his enemies and isolate Pompey. In essence, what Caesar was doing here was occupying his enemies' flank. Instead of attacking them frontally and engaging them directly in battle, he would take their side, support their causes, give them gifts, charm them with words and favors. With Caesar apparently on their side, both politically and psychologically they had no front to fight against, nothing to oppose. In contact with Caesar, all hostility toward him melted away. This way of waging war allowed him to defeat the militarily superior Pompey.

THE TENTH LABOUR: THE CATTLE OF GERYON

Heracles' Tenth Labour was to fetch the famous cattle of Geryon from Erytheia, an island near the Ocean stream, without either demand or payment. Geryon, a son of Chrysaor and Callirrhoe, a daughter of the Titan Oceanus, was the King of Tartessus in Spain, and reputedly the strongest man alive. He had been born with three heads, six hands, and three bodies joined together at the waist. Geryon's shambling red cattle, beasts of marvellous beauty, were guarded by the herdsman Eurytion, son of Ares, and by the two-headed watchdog Orthrus--formerly Atlas' property--born of Typhoon and Echidne.... On his arrival, [*Hercules*] *ascended Mount Abas. The dog Orthrus rushed at him, barking, but Heracles' club struck him lifeless; and Eurytion, Geryon's herdsman, hurrying to Orthrus' aid, died in the same manner. Heracles then proceeded to drive away the cattle. Menoetes, who was pasturing the cattle of Hades near by--but Heracles had left these untouched--took the news to Geryon. Challenged to battle, Heracles ran to Geryon's flank and shot him sideways through all three bodies with a single arrow.... As Hera hastened to Geryon's assistance, Heracles wounded her with an arrow in the right breast, and she fled. Thus he won the cattle, without either demand or payment.*

THE GREEK MYTHS, VOL. 2, ROBERT GRAVES, 1955

Life is full of hostility--some of it overt, some clever and under-handed. Conflict is inevitable; you will never have total peace. Instead of imagining you can avoid these clashes of will, accept them and know that the way you deal with them will decide your success in life. What good is it to win little battles, to succeed in pushing people around here and there, if in the long run you create silent enemies who will sabotage you later? At all cost you must gain control of the impulse to fight your opponents directly. Instead occupy their flank. Disarm them and make them your ally; you can decide later whether to keep them on your side or to exact revenge. Taking the fight out of people through strategic acts of kindness, generosity, and charm will clear your path, helping you to save energy for the fights you cannot avoid. Find their flank--the support people crave, the kindness they will respond to, the favor that will disarm them. In the political world we live in, the flank is the path to power.

Your gentleness shall force More than your force move us to gentleness.

AS YOU LIKE IT, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, 1564-1616

Let us see if by moderation we can win all hearts and secure a lasting victory, since by cruelty others have been unable to escape from hatred and maintain

their victory for any length of time.... This is a new way of conquering, to strengthen one's position by kindness and generosity.

--Julius Caesar (100-44 B.C.)

KEYS TO WARFARE

The conflict and struggle we go through today are astounding--far greater than those faced by our ancestors. In war the passages of armies are marked with arrows on maps. If we had to map the battles of our own daily lives, we would draw thousands of those arrows, a constant traffic of moves and maneuvers--not to speak of the arrows actually hitting us, the people trying to persuade us of one thing or another, to move us in a particular direction, to bend us to their will, their product, their cause.

Because so many people are constantly shifting for power, our social world becomes blanketed in barely disguised aggression. In this situation it requires time and patience to be indirect; in the daily rush to move and influence people, the subtle approach is too difficult and time-consuming, so people tend to take the direct route to what they want. To convince us of the correctness of their ideas, they use argument and rhetoric, growing ever louder and more emotional. They push and pull with words, actions, and orders. Even those more passive players who use the tools of manipulation and guilt are quite direct, not in the least subtle, in the paths they choose; witness a few of their maneuvers and they are rather easy to figure out.

> *When, in the course of studying a long series of military campaigns, I first came to perceive the superiority of the indirect over the direct approach, I was looking merely for light upon strategy. With deepened reflection, however, I began to realize that the indirect approach had a much wider application--that it was a law of life in all spheres: a truth of philosophy. Its fulfillment was seen to be the key to practical achievement in dealing with any problem where the human factor predominates, and a conflict of wills tends to spring from an underlying concern for all interests. In all such cases, the direct assault of new ideas provokes a stubborn resistance, thus intensifying the difficulty of producing a change of outlook. Conversion is achieved more easily and rapidly by unsuspected infiltration of a different idea or by an argument that turns the flank of instinctive opposition. The indirect approach is as fundamental to the realm of politics as to the realm of sex. In commerce, the suggestion that there is a bargain to be secured is far*

more important than any direct appeal to buy. And in any sphere, it is proverbial that the surest way of gaining a superior's acceptance of a new idea is to weaken resistance before attempting to overcome it; and the effect is best attained by drawing the other party out of his defences.

STRATEGY, B. H. LIDDELL HART, 1954

The result of all of this is twofold: we have all become more defensive, resistant to change. To maintain some peace and stability in our lives, we build our castle walls ever higher and thicker. Even so, the increasingly direct brutality of daily life is impossible to avoid. All those arrows hitting us infect us with their energy; we cannot help but try to give back what we get. Reacting to direct maneuvers, we find ourselves dragged into head-to-head arguments and battles. It takes effort to step away from this vicious arena and consider another approach.

You must ask yourself this question: what is the point of being direct and frontal if it only increases people's resistance, and makes them more certain of their own ideas? Directness and honesty may give you a feeling of relief, but they also stir up antagonism. As tactics they are ineffective. In war itself--blood war, not the interpersonal wars of everyday life--frontal battles have become rare. Military officers have come to realize that direct attack increases resistance, while indirection lowers it.

The people who win true power in the difficult modern world are those who have learned indirection. They know the value of approaching at an angle, disguising their intentions, lowering the enemy's resistance, hitting the soft, exposed flank instead of butting horns. Rather than try to push or pull people, they coax them to turn in the direction they desire. This takes effort but pays dividends down the road in reduced conflict and greater results.

The key to any flanking maneuver is to proceed in steps. Your initial move cannot reveal your intentions or true line of attack. Make Napoleon's *manoeuvre sur les derrieres* your model: First hit them directly, as Napoleon did the Austrians at Caldiero, to hold their attention to the front. Let them come at you mano a mano. An attack from the side now will be unexpected and hard to combat.

At a palace reception in Paris in 1856, all eyes were on a new arrival on the scene: an eighteen-year-old Italian aristocrat called the Countess de Castiglione. She was stunningly beautiful and more: she carried herself like a Greek statue come to life. Emperor Napoleon II, a notorious womanizer, could not help but take notice and be fascinated, but for the moment that was all--he tended to prefer more hot-blooded women. Yet as he saw her again over the months that

followed, he became intrigued despite himself.

In events at court, Napoleon and the countess would exchange glances and occasional remarks. She always left before he could engage her in conversation. She wore stunning dresses, and long after the evening was over, her image would return to his mind.

What drove the emperor crazy was that he apparently didn't excite her--she seemed only modestly interested in him. He began to court her assiduously, and after weeks of assault, she finally succumbed. Yet even now that she was his mistress, he still sensed her coldness, still had to pursue her, was never sure of her feelings. At parties, too, she would draw men's attention like a magnet, making him furiously jealous. The affair went on, but before too long the emperor naturally tired of the countess and moved on to another woman. Even so, while it lasted, he could think of no one else.

Six in the fifth place means: The tusk of a gelded boar. Good fortune. Here the restraining of the impetuous forward drive is achieved in an indirect way. A boar's tusk is in itself dangerous, but if the boar's nature is altered, the tusk is no longer a menace. Thus also where men are concerned, wild force should not be combated directly.

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

In Paris at the time was Victor-Emmanuel, the king of Piedmont, the countess's home. Italy was divided into small states like this one at the time, but with France's support it would soon become a unified nation, and Victor-Emmanuel harbored the secret desire to become its first king. In her conversations with Napoleon, the countess would occasionally talk of the king of Piedmont, praising his character and describing his love of France and his strength as a leader. The emperor could only agree: Victor-Emmanuel would make the perfect king of Italy. Soon Napoleon was broaching this idea with his advisers, then actively promoting Victor-Emmanuel for the throne as if it were his own idea--and eventually he made this happen. Little did he know: his affair with the countess had been set up by Victor-Emmanuel and his clever adviser, the Count di Cavour. They had planted her in Paris to seduce Napoleon and slowly insinuate the idea of Victor-Emmanuel's promotion.

After this meeting a story about Mao's methods went the rounds of Shanghai's remaining executive suites. Mao called in Liu [*Shaoqi*] *and Zhou* [*Enlai*] *. He*

had a question for them: "How would you make a cat eat pepper?" Liu spoke up first. "That's easy," said the number-two man. "You get somebody to hold the cat, stuff the pepper in its mouth, and push it down with a chopstick." Mao raised his hands in horror at such a made-in-Moscow solution. "Never use force.... Everything must be voluntary." Zhou had been listening. Mao inquired what the premier would do with the cat. "I would starve the cat," replied the man who had often walked the tightrope of opportunity. "Then I would wrap the pepper with a slice of meat. If the cat is sufficiently hungry it will swallow it whole." Mao did not agree with Zhou any more than with Liu. "One must not use deceit either--never fool the people." What, then would the Chairman himself do? "Easy," he said--concurring with Liu at least on that. "You rub the pepper thoroughly into the cat's backside. When it burns, the cat will lick it off--and be happy that it is permitted to do so."

MAO: A BIOGRAPHY, ROSS TERRILL, 1999

The countess's seduction of the emperor had been planned like an elaborate military campaign, right down to the dresses she would wear, the words she would say, the glances she would throw. Her discreet way of roping him in was a classic flanking attack, a seductive *manoeuvre sur les derrieres*. The countess's cold beauty and fascinating manner drew the emperor on until he had advanced so far that he was convinced it was he who was the aggressor. Holding his attention to the front, the countess worked to the side, subtly conjuring the idea of crowning Victor-Emmanuel. Had she pursued the emperor directly or suggested the crowning of the king in so many words, not only would she have failed, but she would have pushed the emperor in the opposite direction. Drawn forward frontally by his weakness for a beautiful woman, he was vulnerable to gentle persuasion on his flank.

Maneuvers like this one should be the model for your attempts at persuasion. Never reveal your intentions or goals; instead use charm, pleasant conversation, humor, flattery--whatever works--to hold people's attention to the front. Their focus elsewhere, their flank is exposed, and now when you drop hints or suggest subtle changes in direction, the gates are open and the walls are down. They are disarmed and maneuverable.

Think of people's ego and vanity as a kind of front. When they are attacking you and you don't know why, it is often because you have inadvertently threatened their ego, their sense of importance in the world. Whenever possible, you must work to make people feel secure about themselves. Again, use whatever works: subtle flattery, a gift, an unexpected promotion, an offer of alliance, a presentation of you and they as equals, a mirroring of their ideas and

values. All these things will make them feel anchored in their frontal position relative to the world, lowering their defenses and making them like you. Secure and comfortable, they are now set up for a flanking maneuver. This is particularly devastating with a target whose ego is delicate.

A common way of using the flanking maneuver in war is to get your enemies to expose themselves on a weak salient. This means maneuvering them onto ground or luring them to advance in such a way that their front is narrow and their flanks are long--a delicious target for a side attack.

In 1519, Hernan Cortes landed with a small army in eastern Mexico, planning to realize his dream of conquering the Aztec Empire. But first he had to conquer his own men, particularly a small yet vocal group of supporters of Diego de Velazquez, the governor of Cuba, who had sent Cortes on no more than a scouting mission and who coveted the conquest of Mexico himself. Velazquez's supporters caused trouble for Cortes at every step, constantly conspiring against him. One bone of contention was gold, which the Spanish were to collect for delivery to the king of Spain. Cortes had been letting his soldiers barter for gold but then had been using that gold to buy food. This practice, Velazquez's men argued, must end.

Appearing to concede, Cortes suggested the Velazquez men appoint a treasurer. They quickly named one of their own, and with their help this man began to collect everyone's gold. This policy, naturally, proved extremely unpopular with the soldiers, who were braving enormous dangers for little benefit. They complained bitterly--but Cortes just pointed to the men who had insisted on this policy in the name of the governor of Cuba. He personally, of course, had never been in favor of it. Soon the Velazquez men were universally hated, and Cortes, at the urgent request of the other soldiers, gladly rescinded the policy. From then on, the conspirators could get nowhere with the men. They were exposed and despised.

Cortes used this strategy often to deal with dissenters and troublemakers. At first he would seem to go along with their ideas, would even encourage them to take things further. In essence, he would get his enemies to expose themselves on a weak salient, where their selfish or unpopular ideas could be revealed. Now he had a target to hit.

When people present their ideas and arguments, they often censor themselves, trying to appear more conciliatory and flexible than is actually the case. If you attack them directly from the front, you end up not getting very far, because there isn't much there to aim at. Instead try to make them go further with their ideas, giving you a bigger target. Do this by standing back, seeming to go along, and baiting them into moving rashly ahead. (You can also make them

emotional, pushing their buttons, getting them to say more than they had wanted to.) They will expose themselves on a weak salient, advancing an indefensible argument or position that will make them look ridiculous. The key is never to strike too early. Give your opponents time to hang themselves.

> *Inner truth. Pigs and fishes. Good fortune. It furthers one to cross the great water. Perseverance furthers. Pigs and fishes are the least intelligent of all animals and therefore the most difficult to influence. The force of inner truth must grow great indeed before its influence can extend to such creatures. In dealing with persons as intractable and as difficult to influence as a pig or a fish, the whole secret of success depends on finding the right way of approach. One must first rid oneself of all prejudice and, so to speak, let the psyche of the other person act on one without restraint. Then one will establish contact with him, understand and gain power over him. When a door has been thus opened, the force of one's personality will influence him. If in this way one finds no obstacles insurmountable, one can undertake even the most dangerous things, such as crossing the great water, and succeed.*

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

In a political world, people are dependent on their social position. They need support from as many sources as possible. That support, the base of most people's power, presents a rich flank to expose and attack. Franklin D. Roosevelt knew that a politician's vulnerable flank was the electorate, the people who might or might not vote for him in his next race. Roosevelt could get a politician to sign off on a bill or support a nomination, whatever his real thoughts about the issues, by threatening a maneuver that would injure the other man's popularity with his constituents. A flanking attack on someone's social status and reputation will make him or her turn to face this menace, giving you ample room to maneuver the opponent in other directions.

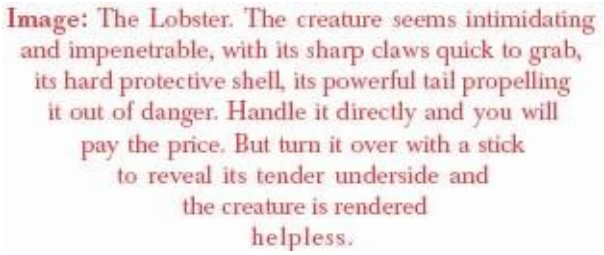
> *The* Book of Changes (I Ching) *is often considered the Oriental apotheosis of adaptation, of flexibility. In this book the recurring theme is one of observing life and blending with its flow in order to survive and develop. In effect, the theme of this work is that everything in existence can be a source of conflict, of danger, and, ultimately, of violence if opposed from the wrong angle or in the wrong manner--that is, if confronted directly at the point of its maximum strength, since this approach renders the encounter potentially devastating.*

By the same token, any and every occurrence can be dealt with by approaching it from the right angle and in the proper manner--that is, at its source, before it can develop full power, or from the sides (the vulnerable "flanks of a tiger").

SECRETS OF THE SAMURAI, OSCAR RATTI AND ADELE WESTBROOK, 1973

The more subtle and indirect your maneuvers in life, the better. In 1801, Napoleon suddenly offered Russia the chance to become the protector of the island of Malta, then under French control. That would give the Russians an important base in the Mediterranean. The offer seemed generous, but Napoleon knew that the English would soon take control of the island, for they coveted it and had the forces in place to take it, and the French navy was too weak to hold it. The English and the Russians were allies, but their alliance would be endangered by a squabble over Malta. That discord was Napoleon's goal all along.

The ultimate evolution of strategy is toward more and more indirection. An opponent who cannot see where you are heading is at a severe disadvantage. The more angles you use--like a cue ball in billiards caroming off several sides of the table--the harder it will be for your opponents to defend themselves. Whenever possible, calculate your moves to produce this caroming effect. It is the perfect disguise for your aggression.



Authority: It is by turning the enemy, by attacking his flank, that battles are won.

--Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821)

REVERSAL

In politics, occupying the flank by taking a similar position to the other side, co-opting its ideas for your own purposes, is a powerful ploy, one that President

Clinton used to great effect in his triangulations with the Republicans. This gives the opponent nothing to strike at, no room to maneuver. But staying too long on the opponent's flank can bring a price: the public--the real soft flank for any politician--loses its sense of what the triangulator stands for, what sets him and his party apart from the other side. Over time this can prove dangerous; polarity (see chapter 1)--creating the appearance of sharp differences--is more effective in the long run. Beware of occupying the opponent's flank at the expense of exposing your own.