

SEEM TO WORK FOR THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS WHILE FURTHERING YOUR OWN

THE ALLIANCE STRATEGY

The best way to advance your cause with the minimum of effort and bloodshed is to create a constantly shifting network of alliances, getting others to compensate for your deficiencies, do your dirty work, fight your wars, spend energy pulling you forward. The art is in choosing those allies who fit the needs of the moment and fill the gaps in your power. Give them gifts, offer them friendship, help them in time of need--all to blind them to reality and put them under subtle obligation to you. At the same time, work to sow dissension in the alliances of others, weakening your enemies by isolating them. While forming convenient coalitions, keep yourself free of negative entanglements.

THE PERFECT ALLY

In 1467, Charles, the thirty-four-year-old Count of Charlois, received the news he had secretly longed for: his father, the Duke of Burgundy--known as Philip the Good--had died, making Charles the new duke. Father and son had clashed over the years. Philip was patient and practical and during his reign had slowly managed to expand Burgundy's already impressive holdings. Charles was more ambitious and more warlike. The empire he inherited was immense, including Flanders, Holland, Zeeland, and Luxembourg to the north of present-day France, and the important duchy of Burgundy itself in northeastern France. Now, as duke, Charles had the power and resources at his command to realize his dreams of conquest into Germany and beyond.

THE DOG, THE COCK AND THE FOX

A dog and a cockerel, having made friends, were strolling along a road together. As evening fell, the cockerel flew up into a tree to sleep there, and the dog went to sleep at the foot of the tree, which was hollow. According to his habit, the cockerel crowed just before daybreak. This alerted a fox nearby, who ran up to the tree and called up to the cockerel: "Do come down, sir, for I dearly wish to embrace a creature who could have such a beautiful voice as

you!" The cockerel said: "I shall come down as soon as you awaken the doorkeeper who is asleep at the foot of the tree." Then, as the fox went to look for the "doorkeeper," the dog pounced briskly on him and tore him to pieces. This fable teaches us that sensible men, when their enemies attack them, divert them to someone better able to defend them than they are themselves.

FABLES, AESOP, SIXTH CENTURY B.C.

Two obstacles stood in his path. The first was the independent Swiss cantons to Burgundy's east. Charles would have to incorporate this territory, by force, before moving into southern Germany. The Swiss were fierce warriors who would not take kindly to any invasion. But in the end they could hardly match the size and power of the duke's army. The second obstacle was King Louis XI of France, Charles's cousin and archrival since childhood. France then was still a feudal state, composed of several duchies like Burgundy, whose dukes owed allegiance to the king. But these duchies were in fact independent powers and could form their own league if the king dared provoke them. Burgundy was the most powerful duchy of them all, and everyone knew Louis dreamed of swallowing it up and making France a united power.

Charles, however, felt confident that he could best his older cousin in both diplomacy and warfare. After all, Louis was weak, even a little soft in the head. How else to explain his strange infatuation with the Swiss cantons? Almost from the beginning of his reign, Louis had courted them assiduously, treating them almost like equals to France. There were many more powerful states he could have allied himself with to increase France's power, but he seemed obsessed with the Swiss. Perhaps he felt an affinity to their simple lifestyle; for a king, he himself had rather peasant tastes. Louis also had an aversion toward warfare, preferring to buy peace, even at a high price, than to fund an army.

It was imperative that Charles strike now, before Louis wised up and started acting more like a king. Charles formed a plan to realize his ambitions and then some: he would first move into Alsace, between France and Germany, and swallow up the weak kingdoms in the area. Then he would form an alliance with the great warrior king of England, Edward IV, whom he would persuade to land a large army at Calais. His own army would link up with the English at Reims, in central France, where Edward would be crowned the country's new king. The duke and Edward would easily dispose of Louis's weak army. The duke could then march east, across the Swiss cantons, while Edward would march south. Together they would form the dominant power in Europe.

By 1474 everything was in place. Edward had signed on to the plan. The duke began by marching on the upper Rhine, but just as he began his maneuvers, he learned that a large Swiss army had invaded his home territory of Burgundy. This army was funded by Louis XI himself. By this action Louis and the Swiss were clearly sending a warning to the duke that they would not look kindly on any future invasion of the cantons, but Charles had enough forces in Burgundy to drive the Swiss out. He was not a man to provoke in such a way; both parties would more than pay for their rash invasion.

In the summer of 1475, the English army--the largest yet assembled for an invasion of France--landed at Calais under the personal leadership of Edward IV. Charles went to meet Edward to finalize their plans and toast their imminent conquests. He then quickly returned to his own troops, which were marching south through Lorraine in preparation for the great linkup with the English forces at Reims.

Suddenly some disturbing news reached Charles in the field: his spies at the French court reported that Louis had opened up secret negotiations with Edward. Apparently Louis had persuaded the English king that Charles was using him and could not be trusted. Knowing that England's finances were weak, Louis had offered generous terms of peace, amounting to a large annual pension paid directly to the king and his court. He had entertained the English with great feasts of food and ale. And then, to the duke's utter disgust and amazement, Edward fell for it, signed the treaty, and took his forces home.

The duke had barely had time to get over this bitter news when Louis suddenly sent him envoys to broker a long-term truce between France and Burgundy. This was typical of the king--everything he did was inconsistent and contradictory. What was he thinking? Signing the truce would mean the duke could now confidently march against the Swiss, knowing that France would not interfere. Perhaps the king was guided by his great fear of war? Charles happily approved the truce.

The Swiss were outraged: Louis had been their friend, and now, at the moment of imminent peril, he had abandoned them. But the Swiss were used to fighting on their own; they would simply have to mobilize every man available.

Since in all her decisions, whether by chance or by choice, Rome took all steps necessary to make herself great, she did not overlook fraud. She could not at the start have been more deceitful than she was in the means she took, as we were saying just now, to acquire allies, since under this title she made them all her servants, as was the case with the Latins and other peoples round about. For she first availed herself of their arms in order to subjugate

neighbouring peoples and to build up her reputation as a state, and then, having subdued them, she increased to such an extent that she could beat anyone. Nor would the Latins ever have realised that in reality they were mere slaves, if they had not seen the Samnites twice defeated and forced to accept Rome's terms.

THE DISCOURSES, NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI, 1520

In the dead of the winter of 1477, the duke, impatient for victory, crossed the Jura Mountains heading east. The Swiss were waiting for him near the town of Grandson. This was the first time the duke had done battle with the Swiss, and he was caught off guard by what confronted him. It began with the alarming bellow of Swiss battle horns, which echoed in the mountains, creating a frightening din. Next, thousands of Swiss soldiers advanced down the slope toward the Burgundians. They marched with perfect precision, packed tight in phalanxes from which their enormous pikes stuck out like the spines of a giant hedgehog in motion. Their flanks and rear were protected by halberdiers swinging spiked battle-axes. It was a terrifying sight. The duke ordered attack after attack with his cavalry to break up the phalanxes, only to watch them being slaughtered. His artillery was hard to maneuver in the mountainous terrain. The Swiss fought with incredible fierceness, and their phalanxes were impenetrable.

A reserve Swiss force, hidden in the woods on the Burgundian right, suddenly emerged and attacked. The duke's army fell into a headlong retreat; the battle ended in a slaughter, from which the duke, however, escaped.

A few months later, it was the turn of the Swiss to go on the offensive by marching into Lorraine. In January 1478 the duke counterattacked with his now enfeebled forces; again the Burgundians were routed, and this time the duke did not escape. His body was finally identified on the field of battle, his head cloven in two by a Swiss halberd, his body pierced by pikes.

In the months after Charles's death, Louis XI swallowed up Burgundy, eliminating the last great feudal threat to a unified France. The duke had unknowingly fallen prey to Louis's elaborate plan to destroy him without wasting a single French soldier.

Six in the third place means: He finds a comrade. Now he beats the drum, now he stops. Now he sobs, now he sings. Here the source of a man's strength lies not in himself but in his relation to other people. No matter how close to them he may be, if his center of gravity depends on them, he is inevitably tossed to and fro between joy and sorrow. Rejoicing to high heaven, then sad unto death--this is the fate of those who depend upon an inner accord with

other persons whom they love....

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

Interpretation

King Louis XI would eventually become known as the Spider King, infamous for the elaborate webs he would weave to ensnare his opponents. His genius was to think far ahead and plot an indirect path to his goals--and his greatest goal was to transform France from a feudal state into a unified great power. Burgundy was his largest obstacle, and one he could not meet head-on: his army was weaker than Charles's, and he did not want to provoke a civil war. Before he became king, though, Louis had fought a short campaign against the Swiss and had seen the brutal efficiency with which their phalanxes fought and how they used their mountainous terrain to perfect advantage. He thought them unbeatable in war. Louis formed a plan to bait Charles into invading the cantons, where his military machine would be destroyed.

The strands of Louis's web were finely woven. First, he spent years courting the Swiss, forging bonds that blinded them to his ulterior purpose. This alliance also befuddled the arrogant duke, who could not imagine how Louis planned to make use of such an ally. The king also knew that by getting the Swiss to invade Burgundy in 1474, he would make the duke so enraged as to lose all patience in his desire for revenge.

When Edward landed at Calais, the king had foreseen the invasion and was ready for it. Instead of trying to fight off this mighty opponent, he worked to coax the English king away from his alliance with Burgundy by appealing to his self-interest: without risking a single battle so far from home, Edward would receive a financial payment too handsome to refuse. Again thinking far in advance, Louis knew that when he eventually swallowed up the wealthy duchy of Burgundy, he would more than recoup what he was having to pay Edward. Abandoned by the English, Charles was isolated, yet still determined to avenge the invasion of Burgundy. At this point Louis moved to sign a treaty with the duke, getting rid of the last possible obstacle in Charles's path to the Swiss cantons. This new treaty would infuriate his Swiss friends, but what did Louis care? Friendship meant little to him; the Swiss would fight to defend their land with or without him. Patient and clear about his goals, Louis used alliances as a form of bloodless warfare, crushing his opponents by getting others to do his work for him.

Almost all of us instinctively understand the importance of allies. Because we operate by feel and emotion more often than by strategy, however, we frequently make the worst kinds of alliances. A common mistake is to think that the more allies we have, the better; but quality is more important than quantity. Having numerous allies increases the chances we will become entangled in other people's wars. Going to the other extreme, we sometimes think a single powerful ally is all we need; but allies like that tend to get what they can from us and then drop us when our usefulness is exhausted, just as Louis dropped the Swiss. It is in any case a mistake to become dependent on one person. Finally, we sometimes choose those who seem the friendliest, who we think will be loyal. Our emotions lead us astray.

THE FOX AND THE BILLY-GOAT

A fox, having fallen into a well, was faced with the prospect of being stuck there. But then a billy-goat came along to that same well because he was thirsty and saw the fox. He asked him if the water was good. The fox decided to put a brave face on it and gave a tremendous speech about how wonderful the water was down there, so very excellent. So the billy-goat climbed down the well, thinking only of his thirst. When he had a good drink, he asked the fox what he thought was the best way to get back up again. The fox said: "Well, I have a very good way to do that. Of course, it will mean our working together. If you just push your front feet up against the wall and hold your horns up in the air as high as you can, I will climb up on to them, get out, and then I can pull you up behind me." The billy-goat willingly consented to this idea, and the fox briskly clambered up the legs, the shoulders, and finally the horns of his companion. He found himself at the mouth of the well, pulled himself out, and immediately scampered off. The billy-goat shouted after him, reproaching him for breaking their agreement of mutual assistance....

FABLES, AESOP, SIXTH CENTURY B.C.

Understand: the perfect allies are those who give you something you cannot get on your own. They have the resources you lack. They will do your dirty work for you or fight your battles. Like the Swiss, they are not always the most obvious or the most powerful. Be creative and look for allies to whom you in turn have something to offer as well, creating a link of self-interest. To lose such allies of convenience will not destroy you or make you feel betrayed. You must think of them as temporary tools. When you no longer need such tools, there is

no love lost in dumping them.

The forces of a powerful ally can be useful and good to those who have recourse to them...but are perilous to those who become dependent on them.

--Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince (1513)

FALSE ALLIANCES

In November 1966, Murray Bowen, a professor of clinical psychiatry at Georgetown University and one of the world's most influential family therapists, faced a brewing crisis within his own family back home in Waverly, Tennessee. Bowen was the oldest of five children. His family had operated an important business in Waverly for several generations. The third-oldest sibling, a brother nicknamed June, had been running the business for some time. Continually overworked and feeling under-appreciated, June was now asking for a controlling interest in the business. Their father supported him, their mother did not. Members of the extended family were taking sides. The situation was tense.

At the same time, a death in the family of June's wife had made her so despondent that it was beginning to affect her husband's health. A ripple effect was spreading to the rest of the family, and Bowen's sister, the second-youngest and most unstable sibling, was beginning to display all kinds of nervous symptoms. Bowen feared most, though, for his father, who had a weak heart. As a family therapist, Bowen had studied a phenomenon he called an "anxiety wave," in which a peripheral event could spark enough emotional turmoil to lead to the death of the family's oldest or most vulnerable member. Somehow Bowen had to find a way to defuse this anxiety wave in his own family.

Heracles had performed these Ten Labours in the space of eight years and one month; but Eurystheus, discounting the Second and the Fifth, set him two more. The Eleventh Labour was to fetch fruit from the golden apple-tree, Mother Earth's wedding gift to Hera, with which she had been so delighted that she planted it in her own divine garden. This garden lay on the slopes of Mount Atlas, where the panting chariot-horses of the Sun complete their journey, and where Atlas's sheep and cattle, one thousand herds of each, wander over their undisputed pastures. When Hera found, one day, that Atlas's daughters, the Hesperides, to whom she had entrusted the tree, were pilfering the apples, she set the ever-watchful dragon Ladon to coil around the tree as its guardian..... When at last Heracles came to the Po, the river-

nymphs, daughters of Zeus and Themis, showed him Nereus asleep. He seized the hoary old sea-god and, clinging to him despite his many Protean changes, forced him to prophesy how the golden apples could be won..... Nereus had advised Heracles not to pluck the apples himself, but to employ Atlas as his agent, meanwhile relieving him of his fantastic burden; therefore, on arriving at the Garden of the Hesperides, he asked Atlas to do him this favor. Atlas would have undertaken almost any task for the sake of an hour's respite, but he feared Ladon, whom Heracles thereupon killed with an arrow shot over the garden wall. Heracles now bent his back to receive the weight of the celestial globe, and Atlas walked away, returning presently with three apples plucked by his daughters. He found the sense of freedom delicious. "I will take these apples to Eurystheus myself without fail," he said, "if you hold up the heavens for a few moments longer." Heracles pretended to agree, but, having been warned by Nereus not to accept any such offer, begged Atlas to support the globe for only one moment more, while he put a pad on his head. Atlas, easily deceived, laid the apples on the ground and resumed his burden; whereupon Heracles picked them up and went away with an ironical farewell.

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

The problem for Bowen was that he was also going through a kind of personal and professional crisis at the time. One of his most influential theories held that members of a family were healthy to the extent that they could differentiate themselves from their siblings and parents, establishing their own identity, being able to make decisions on their own, while also being integrated and actively involved with the rest of the family. He saw this as a difficult psychic task for anyone. A family has a kind of group ego and an interlocking emotional network; it requires a great deal of effort and practice to establish autonomy outside this system. Yet doing so, Bowen believed, though crucial for everyone, was also professionally necessary for family therapists, who could not properly help others if they had been unable to differentiate themselves from their own families. They would carry their personal problems into their practice.

And indeed here was Professor Bowen, a man in his early fifties who had worked for years on his relationship to his family but who found himself sucked into the group dynamic, regressing emotionally, unable to think straight, every time he went home to Tennessee. That made him feel profoundly frustrated and depressed. The time had come, he decided, to attempt a radical personal experiment on his next visit home.

In late January 1967, June Bowen received a lengthy letter from his brother Murray. The two men had not written to each other for some time; in fact, June resented his brother and had avoided personal encounters with him for several years, for he felt that their mother always took Murray's side, even though it was June who was running the business. In the letter Murray passed on many gossip stories about June that family members had told him over the years, always careful to add that Murray had better not let his "sensitive" brother hear them. Murray said he was tired of these stories and of being told how to manage his brother. It would be better, he thought, to communicate with June directly. He ended the letter by saying it would be unnecessary for the two of them to see each other on his next visit home, since he had told him everything he wanted to say. He signed the letter "Your Meddlesome Brother."

The more June thought about this letter, the angrier it made him. Murray had deliberately churned up division between June and his family. Then, a few days later, the two men's younger sister also received a letter from Murray, saying he had heard about her emotional distress and had written asking June to take care of her until he got home. He signed the letter "Your Worried Brother." This letter was as upsetting to the sister as June's letter had been to him: she was tired of people treating her as if she were sick--that only made her more anxious than she already was. After another short interval, Murray sent a third letter, this time to his mother. He mentioned the letters he had written to the others. He was trying to defuse the family crisis, he said, by attracting all attention to himself. He wrote that he had wanted to get his brother all roiled up and that he had the material to push even more buttons if necessary; but, he warned, it is never wise to share intelligence with "the enemy," so his mother should keep all this to herself. He signed the letter "Your Strategic Son." Thinking he had lost his mind, his mother burned the letter.

News of these letters passed quickly through the family, stirring up a hornet's nest of accusations, concerns, and anxieties. Everyone was in a tizzy about them, but June was the center of the storm. He showed Murray's letter to his mother, whom it greatly disturbed. June promised that on Murray's imminent visit home he would not only not avoid him but would confront him and really let him have it.

Murray arrived in Waverly in early February. On the second night of his visit, at a dinner at his sister's, June showed up with his wife; the brothers' father and mother were also present. The encounter lasted some two hours, its main participants Murray, June, and their mother. It was a bitter family confrontation. A furious June threatened a lawsuit over Murray's scurrilous stories and accused his mother of conspiring with her favorite. When Murray confirmed that he and

his mother were in cahoots, that it had all been plotted years ago between him and Mom, she was outraged, denied knowledge of any plot, and said she would never tell Murray anything again. June told his own stories about his professor brother; Murray responded that they were amusing, but he knew better ones. The entire conversation centered on personal issues, and many repressed emotions came to the surface. But Murray remained strangely detached. He made sure he took no sides; no one was quite happy with what he was saying.

The next day Murray showed up at June's house--and June, for some reason, was happy to see him. Murray told more gossipy stories, including one he had heard about how well June was handling the situation considering all the stress he was under. June, feeling quite emotional, started to open up to his brother about his problems: he was really worried about their sister, he said, even thought she might be retarded. Later that day Murray visited the sister and told her what June had said about her; she was more than able to take care of herself, she replied, and had had enough of the family's intrusive concern. More visits followed with other family members. In each case, whenever someone tried to pass along some gossip or get Murray to take his or her side in the family constellation, he would either deflect the attempt with a neutral comment or pass it along to the person involved.

The day Murray left, everyone came to say good-bye. The sister seemed more relaxed; so did the father. The family mood was noticeably altered. A week later Murray's mother sent him a letter that ended, "With all its ups and downs, your last trip home was the greatest ever." June now wrote regularly to his brother. The conflict over controlling the family business was defused and settled. Murray's visits home now became things everyone looked forward to, even though he was still up to his old tricks with stories and such.

I regarded most of the people I met solely and exclusively as creatures I could use as porters in my voyages of ambition. Almost all these porters sooner or later became exhausted. Unable to endure the long marches that I forced on them at top speed and under all climatic conditions, they died on the way. I took others. To attach them to my service, I promised to get them to where I myself was going to that end-station of glory which climbers desperately want to reach....

THE SECRET LIFE OF SALVADOR DALI, SALVADOR DALI, 1942

Murray later wrote about the incident and incorporated what it had taught him into his training of other family therapists. He considered it the turning point in his career.

Interpretation

Bowen's strategy in the experiment he conducted on his family was simple: he would make it impossible for any family member to make him take sides or hook him into any kind of alliance. He would also deliberately cause an emotional tempest to break up the stale family dynamic, particularly targeting June and his mother, that dynamic's centrifugal forces. He would make his family see things anew by getting them to talk about personal matters rather than avoiding them. He would work on himself to stay calm and rational, squelching any desire either to please or to run away from confrontation.

And in the midst of this experiment, Bowen experienced an unbelievable feeling of lightness--a near euphoria. For the first time in his life, he felt connected to the family without being submerged by its emotional pulls. He could engage, argue, and banter without either regressing into childish tantrums or striving to be falsely agreeable. The more he dealt with the family this way, the easier it became.

Bowen also noticed the effect his behavior had on others. First, they could not interact in their usual way: June could not avoid him, his weak sister could not internalize all the family's problems, the mother could not use him as a crutch. Next, they found themselves drawn to him. His refusal to take sides made it easier to open up to him. The stale family dynamic of gossip, secret communications, and irritating alliances was broken up in one visit. And, according to Bowen, it stayed that way for the rest of his life.

Bowen transferred his theory and practice beyond the family. He thought about his workplace, which had a family-like group ego and emotional system that infected him every time he was there: people would pull him into alliances, criticize absent colleagues, make it impossible for him to stay detached. Avoiding these conversations solved nothing; it meant he was still affected by the group dynamic, just unable to deal with it. Listening patiently to people's gossip while wishing they would stop was equally frustrating. Bowen had to take some kind of action to disrupt the dynamic--and he found he could apply the same tactics he had used on his family, to great success. He purposefully stirred things up while staying free of alliances. And, as with his family, he noticed the tremendous power his autonomy gave him in the group.

No one can get far in life without allies. The trick, however, is to recognize the difference between false allies and real ones. A false alliance is created out of an immediate emotional need. It requires that you give up something essential about yourself and makes it impossible for you to make your own decisions. A true alliance is formed out of mutual self-interest, each side supplying what the other cannot get alone. It does not require you to fuse your own identity with that

of a group or pay attention to everyone else's emotional needs. It allows you autonomy.

THE LION AND THE WILD ASS

A lion and a wild ass entered into an agreement to hunt wild beasts together. The lion was to use his great strength, while the ass would make use of his greater speed. When they had taken a certain number of animals, the lion divided up the spoils into three portions. "I'll take the first share because I am the king," he said. "The second share will be mine because I have been your partner in the chase," he said. "As for the third share," he said to the wild ass, "this share will be a great source of harm to you, believe me, if you do not yield it up to me. And, by the way, get lost!" It is suitable always to calculate your own strength, and not to enter into an alliance with people stronger than yourself.

FABLES, AESOP, SIXTH CENTURY B.C.

Throughout your life you will find yourself in groups that demand fusion, forcing you into all kinds of false alliances that command your emotions. You must find a way to the position of strength and power: able to interact and engage with people while staying autonomous. You deftly avoid false alliances by taking provocative actions that make it impossible for people to entrap you. You shake up the dynamic as much as possible, targeting the troublemakers and controllers. Once you are in a position where you are able to stay rational within the group, you can seem to join an alliance without worrying about your emotions running away with you. And you will find that as the person who is simultaneously autonomous and part of the group, you will become a center of gravity and attention.

Enter into action under the cover of helping another's interests, only to further your own in the end.... This is the perfect stratagem and disguise for realizing your ambitions, for the advantages you seem to offer only serve as lures to influence the other person's will. They think their interests are being advanced when in truth they are opening the way for yours.

--Baltasar Gracian (1601-1658)

KEYS TO WARFARE

To survive and advance at all in life, we find ourselves constantly having to use other people for some purpose, some need--to obtain resources we cannot get on our own, to give us protection of some sort, to compensate for a skill or talent we do not possess. As a description of human relationships, however, the word "use" has ugly connotations, and in any case we always like to make our actions seem nobler than they are. We prefer to think of these interactions as relationships of assistance, partnering, friendship.

This is not a matter of mere semantics; it is the source of a dangerous confusion that will harm you in the end. When you look for an ally, you have a need, an interest you want met. This is a practical, strategic matter upon which your success depends. If you allow emotions and appearances to infect the kinds of alliances you form, you are in danger. The art of forming alliances depends on your ability to separate friendship from need.

The state of Jin, located in modern Shaanhsi, grew steadily in strength by swallowing small neighbors. There were two small states, Hu and Yu, to its south. In the spring of the nineteenth year under King Hui of Zhou (658 B.C.), Duke Xian of Jin sent for a trusted minister, Xun Xi, and declared his intention to attack Hu. "We have little chance to gain advantage," observed Xun Xi after a pause. "Hu and Yu have always been very close. When we attack one of them, the other will surely come to its rescue. Pitched one to one, neither of them is our match, but the result is far from certain if we fight both of them at the same time." "Surely you are not saying we have no way to cope with these two small states?" asked the duke. Xun Xi thought for a while before replying.... "I have thought up a plan by which we will be able to subdue both Hu and Yu. For the first step we should present the Duke of Yu with handsome gifts and ask him to lend us a path by which we can attack Hu." The duke asked, "But we have just offered gifts to Hu and signed a friendly agreement with it. We can hardly make Yu believe that we want to attack Hu instead of Yu itself." "That is not so difficult to work out," replied Xun Xi. "We may secretly order our men on the border to make raids on Hu. When the men of Hu come to protest, we may use that as a pretext to attack them. In this way Yu will be convinced of our professed intention." The duke considered it a good plan. Before long, armed conflicts broke out along the Jin-Hu border to the south. Thereupon the duke asked, "Now we have good reason to convince Yu of our intention to attack Hu. But it will not lend the path to us unless it receives a good profit in return. So what shall we use to bribe the Duke of Yu?" Xun Xi replied, "Though the Duke of Yu is known to be very greedy, he will not be moved unless our gifts are extremely precious. So

why not offer him fine horses from Qu and jade from Chuiji?" The duke looked reluctant. "But these are the best treasures I have. I can hardly bring myself to part with them." "I am not surprised by your doubts," said Xun Xi. "Nevertheless, we are bound to subdue Hu now that it has lost the shield of Yu. After Hu is conquered, Yu will not be able to survive on its own. Therefore, when you send these gifts to the Duke of Yu, you are simply consigning the jade to your external mansion and the horses to your external stable...." ...When Xun Xi was ushered into the court of Yu and presented the gifts, the Duke of Yu's eyes bulged.... "The men of Hu have repeatedly worked up disturbances along our border," [said Xun Xi] . "To protect our people from the calamity of war, we have exerted the highest restraint and concluded a peace treaty with Hu. Nevertheless, the impudent Hu takes our restraint for weakness and is now creating new troubles by making invidious charges against us. Therefore my lord was compelled to order a punitive expedition against Hu, and he dispatched me to ask your permission to let our troops pass through your land. This way, we can get around our border with Hu, where its defense is strong, and launch a surprise attack at its weak point. When we have defeated the men of Hu, we shall present you with splendid trophies to testify to our mutual alliance and friendship." ...That summer the Jin troops attacked Hu by way of Yu. The Duke of Yu led a band of force in person to join in the expedition. They defeated the Hu army and captured Xiayang, one of Hu's two major cities. The Duke of Yu received his share of the booty and believed he had nothing to regret for..... In autumn of the twenty-second year under King Hui of Zhou (655 B.C.), the Duke of Jin again sent an envoy to borrow a path from Yu [to Hu], and again the Duke of Yu gave his consent..... In the eighth month, the Duke of Jin led six hundred war chariots and proceeded by way of Yu to attack Hu. They laid siege to Shangyang, the capital of Hu.... The city, after holding out for nearly four months, finally yielded. The Duke of Hu fled...and Hu as a feudal state was destroyed. On their way back, the Jin troops halted at Yu. The Duke of Yu came to welcome them, receiving the Duke of Jin into the capital. The Jin troops seized the chance to storm into the city. Taken totally off guard, the Yu army submitted with little resistance, and the Duke of Yu was taken prisoner. Duke Xian of Jin was extremely pleased when Xun Xi returned to present him with the horses and jade as well as the captured Duke of Yu.

THE WILES OF WAR: 36 MILITARY STRATEGIES FROM ANCIENT
CHINA, TRANSLATED BY SUN HAICHEN, 1991

The first step is to understand that all of us constantly use other people to

help and advance ourselves. (Bowen went so far as to use his own family in an experiment to solve a professional dilemma.) There is no shame in this, no need to ever feel guilty. Nor should we take it personally when we realize that someone else is using us; using people is a human and social necessity. Next, with this understanding in mind, you must learn to make these necessary alliances strategic ones, aligning yourself with people who can give you something you cannot get on your own. This requires that you resist the temptation to let your decisions about alliances be governed by your emotions; your emotional needs are what your personal life is for, and you must leave them behind when you enter the arena of social battle. The alliances that will help you most are those involving mutual self-interest. Alliances infected with emotions, or with ties of loyalty and friendship, are nothing but trouble. Being strategic with your alliances will also keep you from the bad entanglements that are the undoing of so many.

Think of your alliances as stepping-stones toward a goal. Over the course of your life, you will be constantly jumping from one stone to the next to suit your needs. When this particular river is crossed, you will leave them behind you. We will call this constant shifting yet advancing use of allies the "Alliance Game."

Many key principles of the Alliance Game originated in ancient China, which was composed of numerous states in continual flux--now weak, now powerful, now weak again. War was a dangerous affair, for a state that invaded another would stir up a lot of mistrust among the others and would often find itself losing ground in the long run. Meanwhile, a state that remained too loyal to an ally might find itself pulled into a war from which it could not break free and would go down in the process. The formation of proper alliances was in some ways a more important art than that of warfare itself, and the statesmen adept at this art were more powerful than military leaders.

It was through the Alliance Game that the state of Chin was able to slowly expand during the dangerous Warring States period of 403-221 B.C. Chin would make alliances with distant states and attack nearby ones; the nearby state that Chin had invaded could not get help from its outlying neighbor because that neighbor was now allied to Chin. If Chin faced an enemy that had a key ally, it would work first to disrupt the alliance--sowing dissension, spreading rumors, courting one of the two sides with money--until the alliance fell apart. Then Chin would invade first one of the two states, then the other. Gradually, bit by bit, it gobbled up neighboring states until, in the late third century B.C., it was able to unify China--a remarkable feat.

To play the Alliance Game right, today as in ancient China, you must be realistic to the core, thinking far ahead and keeping the situation as fluid as

possible. The ally of today may be the enemy of tomorrow. Sentiment has no place in the picture. If you are weak but clever, you can slowly leapfrog into a position of strength by bouncing from one alliance to another. The opposite approach is to make a key alliance and stick with it, valuing trust and an established relationship. This can work well in stable times, but in periods of flux, which are more common, it can prove to be your undoing: differences in interest will inevitably emerge, and at the same time it will become hard to disentangle yourself from a relationship in which so much emotion has been invested. It is safer to bank on change, to keep your options open and your alliances based on need, not loyalty or shared values.

In the golden age of Hollywood, actresses had almost the least amount of power of anyone. Careers were short; even a great star would be replaced in a few years by someone younger. An actress would stay loyal to her studio, then watch helplessly as the roles dried up. The actress who best bucked the trend was Joan Crawford, who played her own version of the Alliance Game. In 1933, for instance, she met the screenwriter Joseph Mankiewicz, then a timid young man just starting out on what would be an illustrious career. Crawford recognized his talent immediately and went out of her way to befriend him, much to his amazement. He went on to write nine screenplays for her, greatly lengthening her career.

Crawford would also court cameramen and photographers, who would then work overtime to light her well and make her look good. She might do the same with a producer who controlled a screenplay with a role in it she coveted. Crawford would often make alliances with up-and-coming young talent who valued a relationship with the star. Then she would gracefully break or forget the connection when it no longer served her needs. Nor would she stay loyal to the studio, or indeed to anyone--only to herself. Her unsentimental approach to her own shifting network of alliances allowed her to avoid the trap that most actresses found embedded in the system.

The key to playing the game is to recognize who can best advance your interests at that moment. This need not be the most obviously powerful person on the scene, the person who *seems* to be able to do most for you; alliances that meet specific needs or answer particular deficiencies are often more useful. (Grand alliances between two great powers are generally the least effective.) Because Louis XI had a weak army, the Swiss, though minor players on the European scene, were the allies he needed. Recognizing this years in advance, he cultivated an alliance that bewildered his enemies. As an ambitious young congressional assistant in Washington, Lyndon Johnson realized he lacked all kinds of powers and talents to get him to the top. He became a clever user of

other people's talents. Realizing the importance of information in Congress, he made a point of befriending and allying himself with those at key positions--whether high or low--in the information chain. He was particularly good with older men who enjoyed the company of a lively young man and the role of the father figure giving advice. Slowly, from being a poor kid from Texas with no connections, Johnson raised himself to the top, through his network of convenient alliances.

It is a common strategy in bicycle races not to go out in front but to stay right behind the leader, a position that cuts down wind resistance--the leader faces the wind for you and saves you energy. At the last minute, you sprint ahead. Letting other people cut resistance for you and waste their energy on your behalf is the height of economy and strategy.

One of the best stratagems in the Alliance Game is to begin by seeming to help another person in some cause or fight, only for the purpose of furthering your own interests in the end. It is easy to find such people: they have a glaring need, a temporary weakness that you can help them to overcome. Now you have put them under a subtle obligation to you, to use as you will--to dominate their affairs, to divert their energies in the direction you desire. The emotions you create with your offer of help will blind the other person to your ulterior purpose.

The artist Salvador Dali was particularly adept at this version of the game: if someone needed to raise money, say, Dali would come to the rescue, organizing a charity ball or other fund-raising event. The person in need could hardly resist: Dali was friendly with royalty, Hollywood stars, socialites. Soon he would be ordering all kinds of elaborate props for the ball. For his infamous "Night in a Surrealist Forest" in Pebble Beach, California, in 1941, which was intended to benefit starving artists in war-torn Europe, Dali requested a live giraffe, enough pine trees to create a fake forest, the largest bed in the world, a wrecked automobile, and thousands of pairs of shoes from which to serve the first course. In the end the party was a smash and got all kinds of publicity, but, as so often with Dali, the bills far exceeded the receipts; no money was left over for the starving artists of Europe. And strangely enough, all of the publicity was focused on Dali, increasing his fame and winning him more powerful allies.

A variation on the Alliance Game is to play the mediator, the center around which other powers pivot. While remaining covertly autonomous, you make those around you fight for your allegiance. This was essentially how Prince Klemens von Metternich, the Austrian foreign minister during the Napoleonic era and afterward, restored Austria as Europe's principal power. It helped that Austria is located in the center of Europe and so is strategically vital to the nations around it. Even during the reign of Napoleon, when Austria was at its

weakest and Metternich had to cozy up to the French, he kept his country free of lasting entanglements. Without bonding Austria to France by any legal alliance, for example, he tied Napoleon to him emotionally by arranging for the emperor to marry into the Austrian royal family. Keeping all of the great powers--England, France, Russia--at arm's length, he made everything revolve around Austria, even though Austria itself was no longer a great military power.

The brilliance of this variation is that merely by assuming a central position, you can wield tremendous power. For instance, you place yourself at a critical point in the information chain, giving you access to and control over it. Or you produce something other people depend on, giving you incredible leverage. Or you play the mediator everyone needs to resolve a dispute. Whatever it is, you can maintain power in this central position only by keeping yourself unentangled and courted by all. The moment you enter into any kind of lasting alliance, your power is greatly reduced.

A key component of the Alliance Game is the ability to manipulate other people's alliances and even destroy them, sowing dissension among your opponents so that they fight among themselves. Breaking your enemy's alliances is as good as making alliances yourself. When Hernan Cortes landed in Mexico in 1519, he faced hundreds of thousands of Aztecs with 500 men. Knowing that many smaller Mexican tribes resented the powerful Aztec Empire, he slowly worked to peel them away from their alliances with the Aztecs. By filling a tribal leader's ears with horrible stories about the Aztec emperor's plans, for example, he might bait the man into arresting the Aztec envoys on their next visit. That of course would infuriate the emperor, and now the tribe would be isolated and in danger--and would appeal to Cortes for protection. On and on Cortes went with this negative version of the Alliance Game, until the Aztecs' allies had become his.

Your focus here is on stirring up mistrust. Make one partner suspicious of the other, spread rumors, cast doubts on people's motives, be friendly to one ally to make the other jealous. Divide and conquer. In this way you will create a tide of emotions, hitting first this side, then that, until the alliance totters. Now former members of the alliance will feel vulnerable. Through manipulation or outright invitation, make them turn to you for protection.

In facing an enemy that is composed of allies, no matter how large or formidable, do not be afraid. As Napoleon said, "Give me allies to fight." In war, allies generally have problems of command and control. The worst kind of leadership is divided leadership; compelled to debate and agree before they act, allied generals usually move like snails. When fighting large groups of allies, as he often did, Napoleon always attacked first the weak link, the junior partner.

Collapse here could make the whole fabric of the alliance fall apart. He would also seek quick victory in battle, even a small one, for no force is more easily discouraged by a defeat than an allied one.

Finally, you will of course be attacked for playing the Alliance Game. People will accuse you of being feckless, amoral, treacherous. Remember: these charges are strategic themselves. They are part of a moral offensive (see chapter 25). To advance their own interests, your accusers are trying to make you feel guilty or look bad. Do not let them get to you. The only real danger is that your reputation will eventually keep people from making alliances with you--but self-interest rules the world. If you are seen to have benefited others in the past and as capable of doing the same in the present, you will have suitors and playing partners. Besides, you are loyal and generous, as long as there is mutual need. And when you show that you cannot be had by the false lure of permanent loyalty and friendship, you will actually find yourself treated with greater respect. Many will be drawn to your realistic and spirited way of playing the game.

Image: Stepping-stones. The stream runs fast and dangerous, but you must cross it at some point. There lie some stones in

a haphazard line that can get you to the other side. If you linger too long on one stone, you will lose your balance. If

you go too fast or skip one, you will slip. Instead you must jump lightly from one stone to the next and never look back.

Authority: Beware of sentimental alliances where the consciousness of good deeds is the only compensation for noble sacrifices.

--Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898)

REVERSAL

If you play the Alliance Game, so will those around you, and you cannot take their behavior personally--you must keep dealing with them. But there are some types with whom any kind of alliance will harm you. You can often recognize them by their overeagerness to pursue you: they will make the first move, trying to blind you with alluring offers and glittering promises. To protect yourself from being used in a negative way, always look at the tangible benefits you will gain from this alliance. If the benefits seem vague or hard to realize, think twice about joining forces. Look at your prospective allies' past for signs of greed or of

using people without giving in return. Be wary of people who speak well, have apparently charming personalities, and talk about friendship, loyalty, and selflessness: they are most often con artists trying to prey on your emotions. Keep your eye on the interests involved on both sides, and never let yourself be distracted from them.