

Art of War



Sun Tzu

Chapter 1 : Estimates

War is a matter of vital importance to the state; a matter of life or death, the road either to survival or to ruin. Hence, it is imperative that it be studied thoroughly.

Therefore, appraise it in terms of the five fundamental factors and make comparisons of the various conditions of the antagonistic sides in order to ascertain the results of a war. The first of these factors is politics; the second, weather; the third, terrain; the fourth, the commander; and the fifth, doctrine. Politics means the thing which causes the people to be in harmony with their ruler so that they will follow him in disregard of their lives and without fear of any danger. Weather signifies night and day, cold and heat, fine days and rain, and change of seasons. Terrain means distances, and refers to whether the ground is traversed with ease or difficulty and to whether it is open or constricted, and influences your chances of life or death. The commander stands for the general's qualities of wisdom, sincerity, benevolence, courage, and strictness. Doctrine is to be understood as the organization of the army, the gradations of rank among the officers, the regulations of supply routes, and the provision of military materials to the army.

These five fundamental factors are familiar to every general. Those who master them win; those who do not are defeated. Therefore, in laying plans, compare the following seven elements, appraising them with the utmost care.

1. Which ruler is wise and more able?
2. Which commander is more talented?
3. Which army obtains the advantages of nature and the terrain?
4. In which army are regulations and instructions better carried out?
5. Which troops are stronger?
6. Which army has the better-trained officers and men?
7. Which army administers rewards and punishments in a more enlightened and correct way?

By means of these seven elements, I shall be able to forecast which side will be victorious and which will be defeated.

The general who heeds my counsel is sure to win. Such a general should be retained in command. One who ignores my counsel is certain to be defeated. Such a one should be dismissed.

Having paid attention to my counsel and plans, the general must create a situation which will contribute to their accomplishment. By "situation" I mean he should take the field situation into consideration and act in accordance with what is advantageous.

All warfare is based on deception. Therefore, when capable of attacking, feign incapacity; when active in moving troops, feign inactivity. When near the enemy, make it seem that you are far away; when far away, make it seem that you are near. Hold out baits to lure the enemy. Strike the enemy when he is in disorder. Prepare against the enemy when he is secure at all points. Avoid the enemy for the time being when he is stronger. If your opponent is of choleric temper, try to irritate him. If he is arrogant, try to encourage his egotism. If the enemy troops are well prepared after reorganization, try to wear them down. If they are united, try to sow dissension among them. Attack the enemy where he is unprepared, and appear where you are not expected. These are the keys to victory for a strategist. It is not possible to formulate them in detail beforehand.

Now, if the estimates made before a battle indicate victory, it is because careful calculations show that your conditions are more favorable than those of your enemy; if they indicate defeat, it is because careful calculations show that favorable conditions for a battle are fewer. With more careful calculations, one can win; with less, one cannot. How much less chance of victory has one who makes no calculations at all! By this means, one can foresee the outcome of a battle.

Chapter 2 : Waging War

In operations of war-when one thousand fast four-horse chariots one thousand heavy chariots, and one thousand mail-clad soldiers are required; when provisions are transported for a thousand li; when there are expenditures at home and at the front, and stipends for entertainment of envoys and advisers-the cost of materials such as glue and lacquer, and of chariots and armor, will amount to one thousand pieces of gold a day. One hundred thousand troops may be dispatched only when this money is in hand.

A speedy victory is the main object in war. If this is long in coming, weapons are blunted and morale depressed. If troops are attacking cities, their strength will be exhausted. When the army engages in protracted campaigns, the resources of the state will fall short. When your weapons are dulled and ardor dampened, your strength exhausted and treasure spent, the chieftains of the neighboring states will take advantage of your crisis to act. In that case, no man, however wise, will be able to avert the disastrous consequences that ensue. Thus, while we have heard of stupid haste in war, we have not yet seen a clever operation that was prolonged. for there has never been a protracted war which benefited a country. Therefore, those unable to understand the evils inherent in employing troops are equally unable to understand the advantageous ways of doing so.

Those adept in waging war do not require a second levy of conscripts or more than two provisioning. They carry military equipment from the homeland, but rely on the enemy for provisions. Thus, the army is plentifully provided with food.

When a country is impoverished by military operations, it is due to distant transportation; carrying supplies for great distances renders the people destitute. Where troops are gathered, prices go up. When prices rise, the wealth of the people is drained away. When wealth is drained away, the people will be afflicted with urgent and heavy exactions. With this loss of wealth and exhaustion of strength, the households in the country will be extremely poor and seven-tenths of their wealth dissipated. As to government expenditures, those due to broken-down chariots, worn-out horses, armor and helmets, bows and arrows, spears and shields, protective mantlets, draft oxen, and wagons will amount to 60 percent of the total.

Hence, a wise general sees to it that his troops feed on the enemy, for one zhong of the enemy's provisions is equivalent to twenty of one's own and one shi of the enemy's fodder to twenty shi of one's own.

In order to make the soldiers courageous in overcoming the enemy, they must be roused to anger. In order to capture more booty from the enemy, soldiers must have their rewards.

Therefore, in chariot fighting when more than ten chariots are captured, reward those who take the first. Replace the enemy's flags and banners with you own, mix the captured chariots with yours, and mount them. Treat the prisoners of war well, and care for them. This is called "winning a battle and becoming stronger."

Hence, what is valued in war is victory, not prolonged operations. And the general who understands how to employ troops is the minister of the people's fate and arbiter of the nation's destiny.

Chapter 3 : Offensive Strategy

Generally, in war the best policy is to take a state intact; to ruin it is inferior to this. To capture the enemy's entire army is better than to destroy it; to take intact a regiment, a company, or a squad is better than to destroy them. For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the supreme excellence.

Thus, what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy. Next best is to disrupt his alliances by diplomacy. The next best is to attack his army. And the worst policy is to attack cities. Attack cities only when there is no alternative because to prepare big shields and wagons and make ready the necessary arms and equipment require at least three months, and to pile up earthen ramps against the walls requires an additional three months. The general, unable to control his impatience, will order his troops to swarm up the wall like ants, with the result that one-third of them will be killed without taking the city. Such is the calamity of attacking cities.

Thus, those skilled in war subdue the enemy's army without battle. They capture the enemy's cities without assaulting them and overthrow his state without protracted operations. Their aim is to take all under heaven intact by strategic considerations. Thus, their troops are not worn out and their gains will be complete. This is the art of offensive strategy.

Consequently, the art of using troops is this: When ten to the enemy's one, surround him. When five times his strength, attack him. If double his strength, divide him. If equally matched, you may engage him with some good plan. If weaker numerically, be capable of withdrawing. And if in all respects unequal, be capable of eluding him, for a small force is but booty for one more powerful if it fights recklessly.

Now, the general is the assistant to the sovereign of the state. If this assistance is all-embracing, the state will surely be strong; if defective, the state will certainly be weak.

Now, there are three ways in which a sovereign can bring misfortune upon his army:

1. When ignorant that the army should not advance, to order an advance; or when ignorant that it should not retire, to order a retirement. This is described as "hobbling the army."
2. When ignorant of military affairs, to interfere in their administration. This causes the officers to be perplexed.
3. When ignorant of command problems, to interfere with the direction of the fighting. This engenders doubts in the minds of the officers.

If the army is confused and suspicious, neighboring rulers will take advantage of this and cause trouble. This is what is meant by: "A confused army leads to another's victory."

Thus, there are five points in which victory may be predicted:

1. He who knows when he can fight and when he cannot will be victorious.
2. He who understands how to fight in accordance with the strength of antagonistic forces will be victorious.
3. He whose ranks are united in purpose will be victorious.
4. He who is well prepared and lies in wait for an enemy who is not well prepared will be victorious.
5. He whose generals are able and not interfered with by the sovereign will be victorious.

It is in these five matters that the way to victory is known.

Therefore, I say: Know your enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles, you will never be defeated. When you are ignorant of the enemy but know yourself, your chances of winning or losing are equal. If ignorant both of your enemy and of yourself, you are sure to be defeated in every battle.

Chapter 4 : Dispositions

The skillful warriors in ancient times first made themselves invincible and then awaited the enemy's moment of vulnerability. Invincibility depends on oneself, but the enemy's vulnerability on himself. It follows that those skilled in war can make themselves invincible but cannot cause an enemy to be certainly vulnerable. Therefore, it can be said that, one may know how to win, but cannot necessarily do so.

Defend yourself when you cannot defeat the enemy, and attack the enemy when you can. One defends when his strength is inadequate; he attacks when it is abundant. Those who are skilled in defense hide themselves as under the nine-fold earth; those in attack flash forth as from above the nine fold heavens. Thus, they are capable both of protecting themselves and of gaining a complete victory.

To foresee a victory which the ordinary man can foresee is not the acme of excellence. Neither is it if you triumph in battle and are universally acclaimed "expert," for to lift an autumn down requires no great strength, to distinguish between the sun and moon is no test of vision, to hear the thunderclap is no indication of acute hearing. In ancient times, those called skilled in war conquered an enemy easily conquered. And, therefore, the victories won by a master of war gain him neither reputation for wisdom nor merit for courage. For he wins his victories without erring. Without erring he establishes the certainty of his victory; he conquers an enemy already defeated. Therefore, the skillful commander takes up a position in which he cannot be defeated and misses no opportunity to overcome his enemy. Thus, a victorious army always seeks battle after his plans indicate that victory is possible under them, whereas an army destined to defeat fights in the hope of winning but without any planning. Those skilled in war cultivate their policies and strictly adhere to the laws and regulations. Thus, it is in their power to control success.

Now, the elements of the art of war are first, the measurement of space; second, the estimation of quantities; third, calculations; fourth, comparisons; and fifth, chances of victory. Measurements of space are derived from the ground. Quantities, comparisons from figures, and victory from comparisons. Thus, a victorious army is as one yi balanced against a grain, and a defeated army is as a grain balanced against one yi.

It is because of disposition that a victorious general is able to make his soldiers fight with the effect of pent-up waters which, suddenly released, plunge into a bottomless abyss.

Chapter 5 : Posture of Army

Generally, management of a large force is the same as management of a few men. It is a matter of organization. And to direct a large force is the same as to direct a few men. This is a matter of formations and signals. That the army is certain to sustain the enemy's attack without suffering defeat is due to operations of the extraordinary and the normal forces. Troops thrown against the enemy as a grindstone against eggs is an example of a solid acting upon a void.

Generally, in battle, use the normal force to engage and use the extraordinary forces to win. Now, the resources of those skilled in the use of extraordinary forces are as infinite as the heavens and earth, as inexhaustible as the flow of the great rivers, for they end and recommence - cyclical, as are the movements of the sun and moon. They die away and are reborn - recurrent, as are the passing seasons. The musical notes are the passing seasons. The musical notes are only five in number, but their combinations are so infinite that one cannot visualize them all. The flavors are only five in number, but their blends are so various that one cannot taste them all. In battle, there are only the normal and extraordinary forces, but their combinations are limitless; none can comprehend them all. For these two forces are mutually reproductive. It is like moving in an endless circle. Who can exhaust the possibility of their combination?

When torrential water tosses boulders, it is because of its momentum; when the strike of a hawk breaks the body of its prey, it is because of timing. Thus, the momentum of one skilled in war is overwhelming, and his attack precisely timed. His potential is that of a fully drawn crossbow; his timing, that of the release of the trigger.

In tumult and uproar, the battle seems chaotic, but there must be no disorder in one's own troops. The battlefield may seem in confusion and chaos, but one's array must be in good order. That will be proof against defeat. Apparent confusion is a product of good order; apparent cowardice, of courage; apparent weakness, of strength. Order of disorder depends on organization and direction; courage or cowardice on circumstances; strength or weakness on tactical dispositions. Thus, one who is skilled at making the enemy move does so by creating a situation, according to which the enemy will act. He entices the enemy with something he is certain to want. He keeps the enemy on the move by holding out bait and then attacks him with picked troops.

Therefore, a skilled commander seeks victory from the situation and does not demand it of his subordinates. He selects suitable men and exploits the situation. He who utilizes the situation uses his men in fighting as one rolls logs or stones. Now, the nature of logs and stones is that on stable ground they are static; on a slope, they move. If square, they stop; if round, they roll. Thus, the energy of troops skillfully commanded in battle may be compared to the momentum of round boulders which roll down from a mountain thousands of feet in height.

Chapter 6 : Void and Actuality

Generally, he who occupies the field of battle first and awaits his enemy is at ease, and he who comes later to the scene and rushes into the fight is weary. And, therefore, those skilled in war bring the enemy to the field of battle and are not brought there by him. One able to make the enemy come of his own accord does so by offering him some advantage. And one able to stop him from coming does so by preventing him. Thus, when the enemy is at ease, be able to tire him, when well fed, to starve him, when at rest to make him move.

Appear at places which he is unable to rescue; move swiftly in a direction where you are least expected.

That you may march a thousand li without tiring yourself is because you travel where there is no enemy. To be certain to take what you attack is to attack a place the enemy does not or cannot protect. To be certain to hold what you defend is to defend a place the enemy dares not or is not able to attack. Therefore, against those skilled in attack, the enemy does not know where to defend, and against the experts in defense, the enemy does not know where to attack.

How subtle and insubstantial, that the expert leaves no trace. How divinely mysterious, that he is inaudible. Thus, he is master of his enemy's fate. His offensive will be irresistible if he makes for his enemy's weak positions; he cannot be overtaken when he withdraws if he moves swiftly. When I wish to give battle, my enemy, even though protected by high walls and deep moats, cannot help but engage me, for I attack a position he must relieve. When I wish to avoid battle, I may defend myself simply by drawing a line on the ground; the enemy will be unable to attack me because I divert him from going where he wishes.

If I am able to determine the enemy's dispositions while, at the same time, I conceal my own, then I can concentrate my forces and his must be divided. And if I concentrate while he divides, I can use my entire strength to attack a fraction of his. Therefore, I will be numerically superior. Then, if I am able to use many to strike few at the selected point, those I deal with will fall into hopeless straits. The enemy must not know where I intend to give battle. For if he does not know where I intend to give battle, he must prepare in a great many places. And when he prepares in a great many places, those I have to fight in will be few. For if he prepares to the front, his rear will be weak, and if to the rear, his front will be fragile. If he strengthens his left, his right will be vulnerable, and if his right, there will be few troops on his left. And when he sends troops everywhere, he will be weak everywhere. Numerical weakness comes from having to guard against possible attacks; numerical strength from forcing the enemy to make these preparations against us.

If one knows where and when a battle will be fought, his troops can march a thousand li and meet on the field. But if one knows neither the battleground nor the day of battle, the left will be unable to aid the right and the right will be unable to aid the left, and the van will be unable to support the rear and the rear, the van. How much more is this so when separated by several tens of li or, indeed, be even a few! Although I estimate the troops of Yue as many, of what benefit is this superiority with respect to the outcome of war? Thus, I say that victory can be achieved. For even if the enemy is numerically stronger, I can prevent him from engaging.

Therefore, analyze the enemy's plans so that you will know his shortcomings as strong points. Agitate him in order to ascertain the pattern of his movement. Lure him out to reveal his dispositions and ascertain his position. Launch a probing attack in order to learn where his strength is abundant and where deficient. The ultimate in disposing one's troops is to conceal them without ascertainable shape. Then the most penetrating spies cannot pry nor can the wise lay plans against you. It is according to the situations that plans are laid for victory, but the multitude does not comprehend this. Although everyone can see the outward aspects, none understands how the victory is achieved. Therefore, when a victory is won, one's tactics are not repeated. One should always respond to circumstances in an infinite variety of ways.

Now, an army may be likened to water, for just as flowing water avoids the heights and hastens to the lowlands, so an army should avoid strength and strike weakness. And as water shapes its flow in accordance with the ground, so an army manages its victory in accordance with the situation of the enemy. And as water has no constant form, there are in warfare no constant conditions. Thus, one able to win the victory by modifying his tactics in accordance with the enemy situation may be said to be divine. Of the five elements [water, fire, metal, wood, and earth], none is always predominant; of the four seasons, none lasts forever; of the days, some are long and some short, and the moon waxes and wanes. That is also the law of employing troops.

Chapter 7 : Maneuvering

Normally, in war, the general receives his commands from the sovereign. During the process from assembling his troops and mobilizing the people to blending the army into a harmonious entity and encamping it, nothing is more difficult than the art of maneuvering for advantageous positions. What is difficult about it is to make the devious route the most direct route and divert the enemy by enticing him with a bait. So doing, you may set out after he does and arrive at the battlefield before him. One able to do this shows the knowledge of the artifice of diversion.

Therefore, both advantage and danger are inherent in maneuvering for an advantageous position. One who sets the entire army in motion with impediments

to pursue an advantageous position will not attain it. If he abandons the camp and all the impediments to contend for advantage, the stores will be lost. Thus, if one orders his men to make forced marches without armor, stopping neither day nor night, covering double the usual distance at a stretch, and doing a hundred li to wrest an advantage, it is probable that the commanders will be captured. The stronger men will arrive first and the feeble ones will struggle along behind; so, if this method is used, only one-tenth of the army will reach its destination. In a forced march of fifty li, the commander of the van will probably fall, but half the army will arrive. In a forced march of thirty li, just two-thirds will arrive. It follows that an army which lacks heavy equipment, fodder, food, and stores will be lost.

One who is not acquainted with the designs of his neighbors should not enter into alliances with them. Those who do not know the conditions of mountains and forests, hazardous defiles, marshes and swamps, cannot conduct the march of an army. Those who do not use local guides are unable to obtain the advantages of the ground. Now, war is based on deception. Move when it is advantageous and create changes in the situation by dispersal and concentration of forces,. When campaigning, be swift as the wind; in leisurely marching, majestic as the forest; in raiding and plundering, be fierce as fire; in standing, firm as the mountains. When hiding, be as unfathomable as things behind the clouds; when moving, fall like a thunderbolt. When you plunder the countryside, divide your forces. When you conquer territory, defend strategic points. Weigh the situation before you move. He who knows the artifice of diversion will be victorious. Such is the art of maneuvering.

Chapter 8 : Adaptations

The general rule for military operations is that the military leadership receives the order from the civilian leadership to gather armies.

Let there be no encampment on difficult terrain. Let diplomatic relations be established at borders. Do not stay in barren or isolated territory.

When on surrounded ground, plot. When on deadly ground, fight.

There are routes not to be followed, armies not to be attacked, citadels not to be besieged, territory not to be fought over, orders of civilian governments not to be obeyed.

Therefore generals who know all possible adaptations to take advantage of the ground know how to use military forces. If generals do not know how to adapt advantageously, even if they know the lay of the land they cannot take advantage of it.

If they rule armies without knowing the arts of complete adaptively, even if they

Therefore the considerations of the intelligent always include both benefit and harm. As they consider benefit, their work can expand; as they consider harm, their troubles can be resolved.

Therefore what restrains competitors is harm, what keeps competitors busy is work, what motivates competitors is profit.

So the rule of military operations is not to count on opponents not coming, but to rely on having ways of dealing with them; not to count on opponents not attacking, but to rely on having what cannot be attacked.

Therefore, there are five traits that are dangerous in generals. Those who are ready to die can be killed; those who are intent on living can be captured; those who are quick to anger can be shamed; those who are puritanical can be disgraced; those who love people can be troubled.

These five things are faults in generals, disasters for military operations.

Chapter 9 : Maneuvering Armies

Whenever you station an army to observe an opponent, cut off the mountains and stay by the valleys.

Watch the light, stay on the heights. When fighting on a hill, do not climb. This applies to an army in the mountains.

When cut off by water, always stay away from the water. Do not meet them in the water; it is advantageous to let half of them cross and then attack them.

When you want to fight, do not face an enemy near water. Watch the light, stay in high places, do not face the current of the water. This applies to an army on water.

Go right through salt marshes, just go quickly and do not tarry. If you run into an army in the middle of a salt marsh, stay by the water plants, with your back to the trees. This applies to an army in a salt marsh.

On a level plateau, take up positions where it is easy to maneuver, keeping higher land to your right rear, with low ground in front and high ground behind. This applies to an army on a plateau.

It was by taking advantage of the situation in these four basic ways that the Yellow Emperor overcame four lords.

Ordinarily, an army likes high places and dislikes low ground, values light and

despises darkness.

Take care of physical health and stay where there are plenty of resources. When there is no sickness in the army, it is said to be invincible.

Where there are hills or embankments keep on their sunny side, with them to your right rear. This is an advantage to a military force, the help of the land.

When it rains upstream and froth is coming down on the current, if you want to cross, wait until it settles.

Whenever the terrain has impassable ravines, natural enclosures, natural prisons, natural traps, natural pitfalls, and natural clefts, you should leave quickly and not get near them. For myself, I keep away from these, so that opponents are nearer to them; I keep my face to these so that opponents have their backs to them.

When an army is traveling, if there is hilly territory with many streams and ponds or depressions overgrown with reeds, or wild forests with a luxuriant growth of plants and trees, it is imperative to search them carefully and thoroughly. For these afford stations for bushwhackers and spoilers.

When the enemy is near but still, he is resting on a natural stronghold. When he is far away but tries to provoke hostilities, he wants you to move forward. If his position is accessible, it is because that is advantageous to him.

When the trees move, the enemy is coming; when there are many blinds in the undergrowth, it is misdirection.

If birds start up, there are ambushers there. If the animals are frightened, there are attackers there. If dust rises high and sharp, vehicles are coming; if it is low and wide, foot soldiers are coming. Scattered wisps of smoke indicate woodcutters. Relatively small amounts of dust coming and going indicate setting up camp.

Those whose words are humble while they increase war preparations are going to advance. Those whose words are strong and who advance aggressively are going to retreat.

When light vehicles come out first and stay to the sides, they are going to set up a battle line.

Those who come seeking peace without a treaty are plotting.

Those who busily set out arrays of armed vehicles are expecting reinforcements.

If half their force advances and half retreats, they are trying to lure you.

If they brace themselves as they stand, they are starving. When those sent to draw water first drink themselves, they are thirsty.

When they see an advantage but do not advance on it, they are weary.

If birds are gathered there, the place has been vacated.

If there are calls in the night, they are afraid.

If the army is unsettled, it means the general is not taken seriously.

If signals move, that means they are in confusion.

If their emissaries are irritable, it means they are tired.

When they kill their horses for meat, it means that the soldiers have no food; when they have no pots and do not go back to their quarters, they are desperate adversaries.

When there are murmurings, lapses in duties, and extended conversations, the loyalty of the group has been lost.

When they give out numerous rewards, it means they are at an impasse; when they give out numerous punishments, it means they are worn out.

To be violent at first and wind up fearing one's people is the epitome of ineptitude.

Those who come in a conciliatory manner want to rest.

When forces angrily confront you but delay engagement, yet do not leave, it is imperative to watch them carefully.

In military matters it is not necessarily beneficial to have more strength, only to avoid acting aggressively; it is enough to consolidate your power, assess opponents, and get people, that is all.

The individualist without strategy who take opponents lightly will inevitably become the captive of others.

If soldiers are punished before a personal attachment to the leadership is formed, they will not submit, and if they do not submit they are hard to employ.

If punishments are not executed after personal attachment has been established

with the soldiers, then they cannot be employed.

Therefore direct them through cultural arts, unify them through martial arts; this means certain victory.

When directives are consistently carried out to edify the populace, the populace accepts. When directives are not consistently carried out to edify the populace, the populace does not accept. When directives are consistently carried out, there is mutual satisfaction between the leadership and the group.

Chapter 10: Terrain

Some terrain is easily passable, in some you get hung up, some makes for a standoff, some is narrow, some is steep, some is wide open.

When both sides can come and go, the terrain is said to be easily passable. When the terrain is easily passable, take up your position first, choosing the high and sunny side, convenient to supply routes, for advantage in battle.

When you can go but have a hard time getting back, you are said to be hung up. On this type of terrain, if the opponent is unprepared, you will prevail if you go forth, but if the enemy is prepared, if you go forth and do not prevail you will have a hard time getting back, to your disadvantage.

When it is disadvantageous for either side to go forth, it is called standoff terrain. On standoff terrain, even though the opponent offers you an advantage, you do not go for it -- you withdraw, inducing the enemy half out, and then you attack, to your advantage.

On narrow terrain, if you are there first, you should fill it up to await the opponent. If the opponent is there first, do not pursue if the opponent fills the narrows. Pursue if the opponent does not fill the narrows.

On steep terrain, if you are there first, you should occupy the high and sunny side to await the opponent. If the opponent is there first, withdraw from there and do not pursue.

On wide-open terrain, the force of momentum is equalized, and it is hard to make a challenge, disadvantageous to fight.

Understanding these six kinds of terrain is the highest responsibility of the general, and it is imperative to examine them.

So among military forces there are those who rush, those who tarry, those who fall, those who crumble, those who riot, and those who get beaten. These are not natural disasters, but faults of the generals.

Those who have equal momentum but strike ten with one are in a rush. Those whose soldiers are strong but whose officers are weak tarry. Those whose officers are strong but whose soldiers are weak fall. When colonels are angry and obstreperous, and fight on their own out of spite when they meet opponents, and the generals do not know their abilities, they crumble.

When the generals are weak and lack authority, instructions are not clear, officers and soldiers lack consistency, and they form battle lines every which way, this is riot. When the generals cannot assess opponents, clash with much greater numbers or more powerful forces, and do not sort out the levels of skill among their own troops, these are the ones who get beaten.

These six are ways to defeat. Understanding this is the ultimate responsibility of the generals; they must be examined.

The contour of the land is an aid to an army; sizing up opponents to determine victory, assessing dangers and distances, is the proper course of action for military leaders. Those who do battle knowing these will win, those who do battle without knowing these will lose.

Therefore, when the laws of war indicate certain victory it is surely appropriate to do battle, even if the government says there is to be no battle. If the laws of war do not indicate victory, it is appropriate not to do battle, even if the government orders war. Thus one advances without seeking glory, retreats without avoiding blame, only protecting people, to the benefit of the government as well, thus rendering valuable service to the nation.

Look upon your soldiers as you do infants, and they willingly go into deep valleys with you; look upon your soldiers as beloved children, and they willingly die with you.

If you are so nice to them that you cannot employ them, so kind to them that you cannot command them, so casual with them that you cannot establish order, they are like spoiled children, useless.

If you know your soldiers are capable of striking, but do not know whether the enemy is invulnerable to a strike, you have half a chance of winning. If you know the enemy is vulnerable to a strike, but do not know if your soldiers are incapable of making such a strike, you have half a chance of winning. If you know the enemy is vulnerable to a strike, and know your soldiers can make the strike, but do not know if the lay of the land makes it unsuitable for battle, you have half a chance of winning.

Therefore those who know martial arts do not wander when they move, and do not become exhausted when they rise up. So it is said that when you know

yourself and others, victory is not in danger; when you know sky and earth, victory is inexhaustible.

Chapter 11: Nine Grounds

According to the rule of military operations, there are nine kinds of grounds. Where local interests fight among themselves on their own territory, this is called a ground of dissolution.

When you enter others' land but not deeply this is called light ground.

Land that would be advantageous to you if you got it and to opponents if they got it is called ground of contention.

Land where you and others can come and go is called a trafficked ground.

Land that is surrounded on three sides by competitors and would give the first to get it access to all the people on the continent is called intersecting ground.

When you enter deeply into others' land, past many cities and towns, this is called heavy ground.

When you traverse mountain forests, steep defiles, marshes, or any route difficult to travel, this is called bad ground.

When the way in is narrow and the way out is circuitous, so a small enemy force can strike you, even though your ground.

When you will survive if you fight quickly and perish if you do not, this is called dying ground.

So let there be not battle on a ground of dissolution, let there be no stopping on light ground, let there be no attack on a ground of contention, let there be no cutting off of trafficked ground. On intersecting ground form communications, on heavy ground plunder, on bad ground keep going, on surrounded ground make plans, on dying ground fight.

Those who are called the good militarists of old could make opponents lose contact between front and back lines, lose reliability between large and small groups, lose mutual concern for the welfare of the different social classes among them, lose mutual accommodation between the rulers and the ruled, lose enlistments among the soldiers, lose coherence within the armies. They went into action when it was advantageous, stopped when it was not.

It may be asked, when a large, well-organized opponent is about to come to you, how do you deal with it? The answer is that you first take away what they like, and then they will listen to you.

The condition of a military force is that its essential factor is speed, taking advantage of others' failure to catch up, going by routes they do not expect, attacking where they are not on guard.

In general, the pattern of invasion is that invaders become more intense the farther they enter alien territory, to the point where the native rulership cannot overcome them.

Glean from rich fields, and the armies will have enough to eat. Take care of your health and avoid stress, consolidate your energy and build up your strength. maneuver your troops and assess strategies so as to be unfathomable.

Put them in a spot where they have no place to go, and they will die before fleeing. If they are to die there, what can they not do? Warriors exert their full strength. When warriors are in great danger, then they have no fear. When there is nowhere to go they are firm, when they are deeply involved they stick to it. If they have no choice, they will fight.

For this reason the soldiers are alert without being drilled, enlist without being drafted, are friendly without treaties, are trustworthy without commands.

Prohibit omens to get rid of doubt, and soldiers will never leave you. If your soldiers have no extra goods, it is not that they dislike material goods. If they have no more life, it is not that they do not want to live long. On the day the order to march goes out, the soldiers weep.

So a skillful military operation should be like a swift snake that counters with its tail when someone strikes at its head, counters with its head when someone strikes at its tail, and counters with both head and tail when someone strikes at its middle.

The question may be asked, can a military force be made to be like this swift snake? The answer is that I can. Even people who dislike each other, if in the same boat, will help each other out in trouble.

Therefore, tethered horses and buried wheels are not sufficiently reliable.

To even out bravery and make it uniform is the Tao of organization. To be successful with both the hard and soft is based on the pattern of the ground.

Therefore those skilled in military operations achieve cooperation in a group so that directing the group is like directing a single individual with no other choice.

The business of the general is quiet and secret, fair and orderly.

He can keep the soldiers unaware, make them ignorant.

He changes his actions and revises his plans, so that people will not recognize them. He changes his abode and goes by a circuitous route, so that people cannot anticipate him.

When a leader establishes a goal with the troops, he is like one who climbs up to a high place and then tosses away the ladder. When a leader enters deeply into enemy territory with the troops, he brings out their potential. He has them burn the boats and destroy the pots, drives them like sheep, none knowing where they are going.

To assemble armies and put them into dangerous situations is the business of generals. Adaptations to different grounds, advantages of contraction and expansion, patterns of human feelings and conditions -- these must be examined.

Generally, the way it is with invaders is that they unite when deep in enemy territory but are prone to dissolve while on the fringes. When you leave your country and cross the border on a military operation, that is isolated ground. When it is accessible from all directions, it is trafficked ground. When penetration is deep, that is heavy ground. When penetration is shallow, that is light ground. When your back is to an impassable fastness and before you are narrow straits, that is surrounded ground. When there is nowhere to go, that is deadly ground.

So on a ground of dissolution, I would unify the minds of the troops. On light ground, I would have them keep in touch. On a ground of contention, I would have them follow up quickly. On an intersecting ground, I would be careful about defense. On a trafficked ground, I would make alliances firm. On heavy ground, I would ensure continuous supplies. On bad ground, I would urge them onward. On surrounded ground, I would close up the gaps. On deadly ground, I would indicate to them there is no surviving.

So the psychology of soldiers is to resist when surrounded, fight when it cannot be avoided, and obey in extremes.

Therefore those who do not know the plans of competitors cannot prepare alliances. Those who do not know the lay of the land cannot maneuver their forces. Those who do not use local guides cannot take advantage of the ground. The military of an effective rulership must know all these things.

When the military of an effective rulership attacks a large country, the people cannot unite. When its power overwhelms opponents, alliances cannot come together.

Therefore if you do not compete for alliances anywhere, do not foster authority anywhere, but just extend your personal influence, threatening opponents, this makes town and country vulnerable.

Give out rewards that are not in the rules, give out directives that are not in the code.

Employ the entire armed forces like employing a single person. Employ them with actual tasks, do not talk to them. Motivate them with benefits, do not tell them about harm.

Confront them with annihilation, and they will then survive; plunge them into a deadly situation, and they will then live. When people fall into danger, they are then able to strive for victory.

So the task of a military operation is to accord deceptively with the intentions of the enemy. If you concentrate totally on the enemy, you can kill its military leadership a thousand miles away. This is skillful accomplishment of the task.

So on the day war is declared, borders are closed, passports are torn up, and emissaries are not let through.

Matters are dealt with strictly at headquarters.

When opponents present openings, you should penetrate them immediately. Get to what they want first, subtly anticipate them. Maintain discipline and adapt to the enemy in order to determine the outcome of the war. Thus, at first you are like a maiden, so the enemy opens his door; then you are like a rabbit on the loose, so the enemy cannot keep you out.

Chapter 12: Fire Attack

There are five kinds of fire attack: burning people, burning supplies, burning equipment, burning storehouses, and burning weapons.

The use of fire must have a basis, and requires certain tools. There are appropriate times for setting fires, namely when the weather is dry and windy.

Generally, in fire attack it is imperative to follow up on the crises caused by the fires. When fire is set inside an enemy camp, then respond quickly from outside. If the soldiers are calm when fire breaks out, wait -- do not attack. When the fire reaches the height of its power, follow up if possible, hold back if not.

When fire can be set out in the open, do not wait until it can be set inside a camp -- set it when the time is right.

When fire is set upwind, do not attack downwind.

If it is windy during the day, the wind will stop at night.

Armies must know there are adaptations of the five kinds of fire attack, and adhere to them scientifically.

So the use of fire to help an attack means clarity, the use of water to help at attack means strength. Water can cut off, but cannot plunder.

To win in battle or make a successful siege without rewarding the meritorious is unlucky and earns the name of stinginess. Therefore it is said that an enlightened government considers this, a good military leadership rewards merit. They do not mobilize when there is no advantage, do not act when there is nothing to gain, do not fight when there is no danger.

A government should not mobilize an army out of anger, military leaders should not provoke war out of wrath. Act when it is beneficial, desist if it is not. Anger can revert to joy, wrath can revert to delight, but a nation destroyed cannot be restored to existence, and the dead cannot be restored to life. Therefore an enlightened government is careful about this, a good military leadership is alert to this. This is the way to secure a nation and keep the armed forces whole.

Chapter 13: On The Use Of Spies

A major military operation is a severe drain on the nation, and may be kept up for years in the struggle for one day's victory. So to fail to know the conditions of opponents because of reluctance to give rewards for intelligence is extremely inhumane, uncharacteristic of a true military leader, uncharacteristic of an assistant of the government, uncharacteristic of a victorious chief. So what enables an intelligent government and a wise military leadership to overcome others and achieve extraordinary accomplishments is foreknowledge.

Foreknowledge cannot be gotten from ghosts and spirits, cannot be had by analogy, cannot be found out by calculation. It must be obtained from people, people who know the conditions of the enemy.

There are five kinds of spy: The local spy, the inside spy, the reverse spy, the dead spy, and the living spy. When the five kinds of spies are all active, no one knows their routes - this is called organizational genius, and is valuable to the leadership.

Local spies are hired from among the people of a locality. Inside spies are hired from among enemy officials. Reverse spies are hired from among enemy spies. Dead spies transmit false intelligence to enemy spies. Living spies come back to report.

Therefore no one in the armed forces is treated as familiarly as are spies, no one is given rewards as rich as those given to spies, and no matter is more secret than espionage.

One cannot use spies without sagacity and knowledge, one cannot use spies without humanity and justice, one cannot get the truth from spies without subtlety. This is a very delicate matter indeed. Spies are useful everywhere.

If an item of intelligence is heard before a spy reports it, then both the spy and the one who told about it die.

Whenever you want to attack an army, besiege a city, or kill a person, first you must know the identities of their defending generals, their associates, their visitors, their gatekeepers, and their chamberlains, so you have your spies find out.

You must seek out enemy agents who have come to spy on you, bribe them and induce them to stay with you, so you can use them as reverse spies. By intelligence thus obtained, you can find local spies and inside spies to employ. By intelligence thus obtained, you can cause the misinformation of dead spies to be conveyed to the enemy. By intelligence thus obtained, you can get living spies to work as planned.

It is essential for a leader to know about the five kinds of espionage, and this knowledge depends on reverse spies, so reverse spies must be treated well.

So only a brilliant ruler or a wise general who can use the highly intelligent for espionage is sure of great success. This is essential for military operations, and the armies depend on this in their actions.