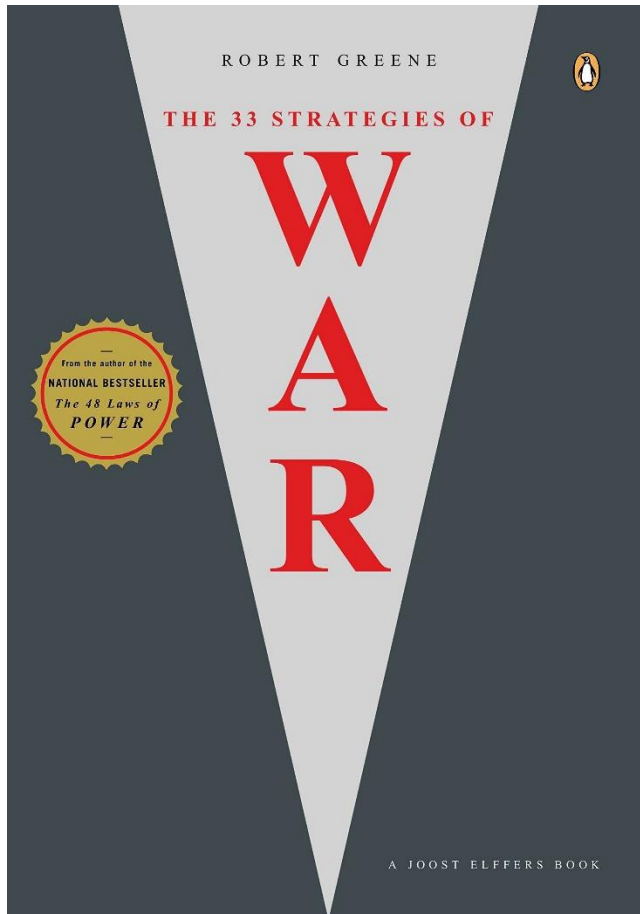


Robert Greene: The 33 Strategies of War Book Summary



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*"The art of war is to win without bloodshed or the use of force.
(Otherwise) the minimum necessary use of violence."*

Part I) Self-Directed Warfare

1) Declare War on Your Enemies

In 401 BC Xenophon led Greek mercenaries into Persian territory. When their leader died and they had nothing more to fight for, surrounded by the enemy, they had to become a concentrated force fighting their way back home.

The soldiers' spirit was crushed. They had weak morale and started fighting each other. Xenophon united them, thus defeating the inner enemy. Focusing on survival, the prospect of getting home alive to family and friends made them persevere.

You cannot swing a sword without knowing what to hit with it. It's you against the world and it's you against yourself. Fight your inner demons. Do not let your mind, your emotions and your ego control you. Know yourself and external enemies won't be able to harm you. You can stand up against anyone.

2) Do Not Fight the Last War

Miyamoto Musashi is one of history's most dangerous Samurais, because he used to switch up his fighting pattern, changing his tactics regularly to keep his opponents guessing and on the defensive. The nervousness and paranoia this inflicted on his rivals made them easy targets.

What has worked in the past, may not work again. Forget the past. Adapt to current times, ever-changing, ever-evolving.

George Bernard Shaw said *"The only man I know who behaves sensibly is my tailor; he takes my measurements anew each time he sees me. The rest go on with their old measurements and expect me to fit them."*

3) Amidst the Turmoil of Events, Do Not Lose Your Presence of Mind

Lord Nelson disobeyed his hysterical commander in the battle at Copenhagen in 1801, keeping a calm head in a most hectic situation. By disregarding his commander's authority and seeing the battlefield for what it was Lord Nelson defeated the Danish navy.

You have to stay alert, when everyone else is in uproar. Do not be intimidated by chaos. Do not panic. You seek out the conflict reacting swiftly, when the opportunity presents itself.

4) Create a Sense of Urgency and Desperation

Fyodor Dostoevsky knew his days were numbered. Facing his execution he made use of his time by creating each of his works as if they were his last, because they very well could've been. Once you come face to face with death, you eliminate life's non-essentials. You overcome trivialities we foolishly care about every day taking our lives for granted.

Dostoevsky's work is exceptional, because he was restless. He did not seek comfort. You cannot wait for the right time. You are never fully prepared to start.

"Tu fui ego eris." As you are, I was. As I am, you will be. (A gravestone inscription reminding you that death is unavoidable)

Part II) Organizational (Team) Warfare

5) Avoid The Snare of Groupthink

General George Marshall taught his philosophies on leadership to a handful of protégés he'd put into authoritative positions with high risk responsibilities. One of these men was Dwight Eisenhower. The General could rely on his subordinates, as they held the same beliefs and ran their positions according to his vision.

You want a chain of command you can rely on. You are the General, but you cannot have your head everywhere. Put remote systems and loyal leaders into place that will guarantee the desired outcome. Use them to balance your weaknesses with their strengths and ensure they always keep you up to date.

In any case, be careful not to give up too much of your own authority and leverage.

6) Segment Your Forces

In 1805 Napoleon Bonaparte faced an attack by Austrian troops led by Karl Mack, upon which Napoleon divided his troops and sent them into battle with specific instructions of surrounding the enemy. The French units were free to move, flexible and quick. The Austrian troops surrendered.

This is the opposite of Concentrating Your Forces, hence it's on you to know, when to unite and when to divide your army. Slow, but strong or fast and precise.

7) Transform Your War into a Crusade

281 BC Hannibal arranged competitive war games to demonstrate how far his men would go to join the upcoming fight, to show what they were made of. This is a lesson in leadership.

Managing men well means

1. leading by example. You use the effects of emotion by emphasizing that you are
2. fighting for a noble cause and that "God is on your side."
3. It's all about the team, its spirit, the collective energy
4. And the achievement of the mission ahead.
5. You punish and reward behavior accordingly.
6. You bond together through each action
7. And get rid of the black sheep, who disrupt your leadership.

Part III) Defensive Warfare

8) Pick Your Battles

Winston Churchill said "You will never reach your destination if you stop and throw stones at every dog that barks." Now the trick is in discerning which dogs not only bark, but also bite.

You'd be surprised how few of them actually do and even fewer ever get the opportunity.

Control your ego and ignore the insignificant rest. Do not let pride worsen your situation.

Some battles you cannot win. Never start them in the first place. Know your limits.

Some battles you can win, but at too high a cost. A Pyrrhic victory will ruin you. Make your battles worth your time and resources. Why would you fight a battle with grim odds, when you don't have to? Your energy is limited. Don't waste it.

9) Turn the Tables

In the 1944 Democratic Presidential race, the Republican party slandered Franklin Roosevelt, but he did not respond until they attacked his dog. Roosevelt humiliated his opponent by defending his pet friend and exposing their desperate move for what it was.

Roosevelt was not easily irritated. He let his opponents make the first move, waiting and biding his time. This way he could analyze their strategy and attack his rivals's weaknesses.

In history defenders are more often victorious, than attackers. We humans do not like aggressors. We don't like bullies. We have a heart for the victims of such attacks, even when they lay the bait and provoke it. Stay calm and turn the situation into your favor.

10) Create a Threatening Presence

1862 Stonewall Jackson put on a dominant act intimidating George McClellan during the American Civil War by pointing to all of his opponents' flaws.

Build the reputation of being a force of nature, a force to be reckoned with. Unpredictability, madness, sudden and bold aggression is terrifying. Plant a seed of doubt in your opponent's mind and feed his paranoia.

Make them believe they cannot win and they will retreat. To scare them means to break them. But be careful. Your opponent may call your bluff, if you're unwilling to back up your words with action. Don't merely bark.

11) Trade Space for Time

In the beginning of the Chinese Civil War Mao Tse-tung's communists were forced to retreat. Had the national party fought them at that time, they would have won. But the communists

took the opportunity and gathered support by uniting the peasantry, defeating the nationalists in 1949 with a decided advantage.

This is similar to the Surrender Tactic. Napoleon Bonaparte said "Space we can recover, time never." You grant your opponent a small win in order to take up more space, grow your leverage and weaken the enemy before battle. Frustrate them by fighting on your terms. This is classic Sun Tzu's Art of War material. The enemy gives you chase you retreat. The enemy retreats you pursue. It's all about the advantage that determines the end result.

Part IV) Offensive Warfare

12) Lose The Battles But Win The War

Alexander the Great planned his campaign far into the future, which distinguished him from other leaders. One example of his purposeful goals was the capturing of all greater Persian Mediterranean ports, effectively leaving the enemy without a navy and taking the sea component out of future equations.

It wasn't obvious until it was too late. Even though it has become a cliché; think several moves ahead. Determine the bullseye, plan to the end and confuse your opponent leaving him unable to read your actions, since they don't seem to have a connection.

In other words, make them focus on the trees so that they can't see the forest.

13) Know Your Enemy

Prince Metternich met Napoleon Bonaparte hoping he could find his weak spots. A few years later he had helped arrange Napoleon's marriage to Marie Louise, who wasn't the most pleasant wife. Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo had also been the work of Metternich's spying in broad daylight.

Know thyself and know thy rival. One of the greatest skills in war, as in seduction as in business is the ability to read people. Master non-verbal communication, hide your observations and devise the most effective tactics based on your insights.

14) Overwhelm Resistance With Speed and Suddenness

In 1218 Genghis Khan overcame his opponent, the one who shall not be named, with The Blitzkrieg Strategie. He segmented his forces for mobility, lost small battles on purpose, then shifted to serious and fast attacks, which the enemy had not anticipated.

You start by making slow moves to set the pace to which your rival adjusts, then exploit the Überraschungsmoment to win the war quickly.

15) Control the Dynamic

In 1942 during the 2nd World War, Erwin Rommel fought the British on the North African deserts, using smaller units, keeping them on the move and out of the opponent's reach. In order to reduce the gap between events and status updates he'd often join the front line.

You're in control. Be assertive. Zugzwang, navigate your opponent by forcing him to move, directly into your area of defense. The only downside to control might be not admitting that you have it.

16) Hit Them Where it Hurts

In 209 BC Publius Scipio conquered Nova Carthago, which was the Carthaginian capital in Spain. Scipio destroyed Hannibal's armies' vital supply lines. Within 5 years Scipio captured Carthage and ended Hannibal's saga.

Everything has a center of gravity. Take a hold of it and unbalance the remaining structure, cutting supply lines, belief systems and chains of command.

17) Defeat Them in Detail

Divide et Impera -- the Divide and Conquer Strategy

In 490 BC the Persians landed on the plains of Marathon 24 miles near Athens, splitting their army at night, planning to attack Athens by sea. The Greeks attacked the remaining Persians, then ran all they way back to Athens to safeguard the city. This is the origin of "running a marathon."

Divide large units and they're easier targets. When your enemies are on the defensive, they will try to unite and face you with their full force. You do not allow them such strength.

18) Expose and Attack Your Enemy's Soft Flank

In 1796 Napoleon Bonaparte baited Baron Joseph Alvinczy into charging forward, hence exposing his armies flank. This was the opportunity Napoleon had hoped for, surrounding and defeating his opponent once more.

Disorient your rival, make him drop his guard through indirection, then deliver a powerful blow to his exposed and vulnerable side.

19) Envelop The Enemy

In 1778 the Zulu warriors fought the British in Natal pressuring them with surprise attacks out of nowhere by knowing their home territory by heart. Enclosing the opponent does a number on his mental well-being. Feeling trapped they will retreat, if they can.

20) Maneuver Them Into Weakness

Bokuden, a master samurai who was practicing the art of "winning without hands" was challenged by a young swordsman. Bokuden decided they should have the duel on an island. As soon as the swordsman left the boat, the grandmaster pushed it away from the shore, leaving the young warrior stranded.

Outsmart the opponent, avoiding an advantageless direct attack, through calculated moves, which grant you greater control over the situation at hand.

21) Negotiate While Advancing

In 359 BC Alexander the Great's father Philip II of Macedonia came to power, Athens refusing to recognize him. He spoke of peace and prosperity as he continued to expand his empire uniting other Greek city-states to lead an attack on the Persians.

Negotiate, willing to come to a win-win arrangement, but keep moving focusing on your organization's progress. You avoid immediate conflict, while furthering your interests. Your demands are bold, yet ever-more reasonable, as your shadow grows.

22) Know How To End Things

In 1937 Lyndon Johnson won the election for a Texas Congressional seat with the help of his friends in the party, defeating the older and experienced politicians. Not wasting a second he humbly took to them, thanked them and expressed his hopes for future collaboration, successfully.

Show humility in victory and let fresh wounds heal. It's in your best interest that everyone accepts the outcome, comes to terms with it and moves on. The exit strategy -- Ende gut, alles gut.

Part V) Unconventional (Dirty) War

23) Weave a Seamless Blend of Fact and Fiction

In the 2nd World War, the allies made use of key tactics that would cloud and slow down Adolf Hitler's decision-making before the invasion at Normandy. They sat a Doppelgänger of General Montgomery in a theatre far away. In England they set up what looked like an army but wasn't.

Misinform your opponent, make him see upside down, while you see what is at all times. Make a weak spot look strong, make a strong spot look weak. Do the opposite of what your opponent is really wishing for.

However, don't fully rely on deception. A skilled opponent might see through the illusion, play along and beat you at your own game.

24) Take The Line of Least Expectation

In 219 BC Hannibal attacked the Roman army baiting them through erratic behavior. As the Romans crossed the Trebia, they found themselves facing gigantic war elephants. Other times the Romans tried to bait Hannibal, but to no avail.

Great advantage comes from not meeting your opponent's expectations. Others have a mental model of you based on past experiences, stories and conflict. By going against this image they've created you surprise them in your favor.

25) Occupy the Moral High Ground

Martin Luther, a German priest, argued against Pope Leo X that only god can forgive one's sins, as the pope was trying to earn money by selling privileges. Luther revealed the hypocrisy, justifying his arguments as moral, attacking the reputation of the pope and refuting him based solely on the bible.

You're good, your opponent is evil. You create an us versus them dynamic, demonize the other and present your side as the virtuous one.

However, you may lose support seeming righteous and condescending.

26) Deny Them Targets

In 1812 Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Russia. His French forces of 450'000 men were decimated to a mere 100'000 losing even more men on their retreat. The Russians were playing for time, drawing the French forward with little conflict, destroying any resources they could not carry.

Guerrilla (Geh-Rrih-Ya) warfare works best on the minds of large armies, tiring and starving the enemy, using nature to your advantage by letting them freeze in the cold or dry up in the sun. When your rival is ready to fight, frustrate him through your absence.

27) Seem to Work for the Interests of Others While Furthering Your Own

In 1467 the Duke of Burgundy allied with England in the hopes of attacking Louis of France in unison. Louis, however, was informed of the Duke's intentions and allied with England in the same breath, crossing his adversary's plans.

Make strategic alliances that benefit you. Do not hesitate to do favors for those who will be of help in the future. As you treat others kindly and generously, you put them in your debt.

Keep in mind, rarely does anyone help you without an agenda.

28) Give Your Rivals Enough Rope To Hang Themselves

In 1635 the French founded L'Académie Française to protect their language from deteriorating. When the Bishop of Noyons was given the position of counsel his arrogant and repelling demeanor proved to be a threat to the cause. He was given a speech to perform, with which he would make a total fool of himself. His blindspots didn't allow him to recognize what humiliation he would bring over himself. At last the Bishop left the academy on his own.

Some individuals are inherently self-destructive. You let your adversaries end themselves as active agents in their own demise. As they overreact, hurting their own reputation, show your innocence. "Don't interrupt your enemy when he is making a mistake."

29) Take Small Bites

In the 2nd World War Charles de Gaulle visited Winston Churchill to ask for permission for a small broadcast to his fellow countrymen in France. It was a small favor and Churchill didn't want to offend a fresh ally. De Gaulle spoke to his people who had been suffering under the Blitzkrieg invasion of the Germans. De Gaulle promised to talk to them again the following day, which hadn't been part of the bargain, but Churchill played along. What harm could it do?

De Gaulle became more aggressive, calling the French people to arms, gathering ever-more support, eventually leading his newly-recruited forces in Africa, creating the French Resistance and becoming all too powerful, step by step. When Churchill, regretting his

decisions and Franklin Roosevelt wanted to replace de Gaulle with a passive alternative, de Gaulle's supporters stood by him.

In order to avoid confrontation, people will give you more leeway and give in to small demands. With short attention spans they repeat mistakes, allowing your power to grow, as you play for time.

30) Penetrate Their Minds

In renaissance Florence the Medici discharged Niccolò Machiavelli from his post. Aiming to regain favor he then wrote a titleless letter to the Florentine government, on how to take over and keep power as a ruler. He didn't receive the thanks he was hoping for, but he kept writing, which improved his remaining life and immortalized him as one of the most influential writers on the art of governance and modern politics. After his death the letter was published as "The Prince", another manuscript as "Discourses on Livy."

Words are weapons. Articulate and profound communication, the precise expression of valuable ideas, can lift you out of poverty, end wars before they begin, make powerful friends and with a bit of luck withstand the fall of time.

31) Destroy From Within

Wilhelm Canaris infiltrated the German Defence Ministry. Adolf Hitler himself assigned Canaris in 1933 trusting his counsel, being impressed by his skill. It would take the German SS a full decade until they realized he had been working against them, successfully.

Troy's walls were unbreakable, their archers well-seasoned and devastatingly accurate, but it was the Trojan horse that they willingly let inside the city, mistaking it for a gift, that crushed them. Do not attack a fortification with full force, use deception and destroy from within.

32) Dominate While Seeming to Submit

Mahatma Gandhi arranged a 200 mile march as a peaceful protest against an imposed Salt Tax and deeming it harmless the authorities stood idle, permitting it. The march turned out to

be a big success, thousands walking the streets in support of Indians, but in disapproval of the British. The government was too late to sabotage the passive-aggressive move.

Peaceful non-aggression can be more effective, than any act of violence. Your animosity is subtle. While your opponent feels in control, since you don't appear to be eager for power, you covertly fight for your cause.

33) The Chain Reaction Strategy

The Nizari were an organization pursuing its own interests by using assassins who hid in plain sight becoming one with large crowds in the streets only to emerge and assassinate their targets with a dagger creating chaos and spreading uncertainty in what was once a familiar and peaceful surrounding, while increasing their power by recruiting anyone who felt betrayed by the state and its violent attempts to squash the rebellion.

Unlike some would lead you to believe, throughout history the templars had improved the lives of the common folk by building safe roads, the assassins on the other hand murdered to further their own selfish cause.

However, not only evil can spread far and quickly through the chain reaction ... you can be the change you want to see in the world and in popularizing this sentiment with your help good may triumph over evil.

"When I was a young man, I wanted to change the world.

When I found I could not change the world, I tried to change my nation.

When I found I could not change the nation, I tried to change my town.

When I found I could not change the town, I tried to change my family.

Now, as an old man, I realize the only thing I can change is myself.

And suddenly I realize that if long ago I had changed myself,

I could have made an impact on my family.

My family and I could have made an impact on our town.

Their impact could have changed the nation.

And I could indeed have changed the world."

-- Unknown Monk 1100AD

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