Strategic leadership of Sunzi in the Art of war

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Abstract

Much previous writing on Sunzi and his book, the Art of war, has focused on strategies and tactics of disguise, deception, and maneuvering for the purpose of winning. In this chapter, however, we study the Art of war from a leadership perspective, namely, how, in the view of Sunzi, military commanders exercise strategic situationalism, namely, situation-making (zhao shi) to lead an army to victory. Based on the analysis of the Art of war, we delve into Sunzi’s philosophical views of humaneness, holism, and dialecticism. We then identify the positive and negative attributes of a leader in relation to strategic leadership. Furthermore, we elaborate Sunzi’s strategic situationalism into (a) creating positional advantage in the environment, (b) creating organizational advantage within the organization, (c) building morale within the troops, and (d) leveraging and adapting to situations. Finally we discuss theoretical and practical implications of Sunzi’s strategic leadership theory in a global environment. Historical background and philosophical foundations. The exact period of Sunzi’s life is the subject of debate. Giles believed (Garvin, 2003) that Sunzi was a contemporary of Confucius in the Spring and Autumn Period in Chinese history (771–481 BCE) whereas Griffith (1971), who wrote his doctoral dissertation on the Art of war, concluded that Sunzi was born a generation after Confucius and that the Art of war was written during the chaotic and turbulent period of the Warring States (453–221 BCE) that followed the Spring and Autumn Period.
3. Strategic Attacks: Strategy = enacting the war on paper. Seek to win with minimal confrontation.

4. Tactical Dispositions: Strategy comes before...
tactics, but your strategy must also consider tactical elements. Each chapter in the book comes with a translation of Sun Tzu’s text (with more tips on the conduct of war, e.g. the ideal approaches in different types of terrain and forms of deception), as well as a short commentary for managers with reference to real-life businesses. Michaelson also included brief examples contributed by managers who have applied Sun Tzu’s ideas in their organizations. Master the Art of War for your business! 1. Sun Tzu said: The art of war is of vital importance to the State. 2. It is a matter of life and death, a road either to safety or to ruin. Hence it is a subject of inquiry which can on no account be neglected. 3. The art of war, then, is governed by five constant factors, to be taken into account in one’s deliberations, when seeking to determine the conditions obtaining in the field. 4. These are: (1) The Moral Law; (2) Heaven; (3) Earth; (4) The Commander; (5) Method and discipline. 5.6. The Moral Law causes the people to be in complete accord with their ruler, so that they will follow More quotes from Sunzi. 1. Laying plans. Summary: Art of War, 始计, initial estimations, the calculations. Detail assessment and planning explores the five fundamental factors (the Way, seasons, terrain, leadership and management) and seven elements that determine the outcomes of military engagements. Strategic attack defines the source of strength as unity, not size, and discusses the five factors that are needed to succeed in any war. In order of importance, these critical factors are: attack, strategy, alliances, army and cities. Back to top. 4. Tactical dispositions. Summary: Art of War, 兵势, strategic military power, directing. Forces explains the use of creativity and timing in building an army's momentum. Back to top. 6. Weak points & strong.