

# Strategy and tactics of Sun Tzu libertarian interpreted

Think security – act with security...

Anarchist International Security Council

2011

The AISC is inspired by among other things the works of Sun Tzu interpreted in a libertarian way, i.e., say, the term “sovereign” is interpreted as the people, seen as a class as opposed to superiors, and **not** a ruler/rulers [x-arch(s), where x can be anything but not ‘an’], etc. Remember also at the historic time of Sun Tzu there were no airforce, cruise missiles, nuclear bombs and similar. Also Sun Tzu believed too much in cadaver discipline. He had an amateurish philosophy of life that is omitted in the libertarian interpretation.

AISC is also inspired by George Orwell’s “Homage to Catalonia”. Remember an anarchy at war will elect one upper general for the armed forces, i.e. the antimilitarist corps. However also in war time the antimilitarist corps will be significantly flat organized, with relatively small rank and income differences.

Horizontal organization, a bottom up approach as opposed to a top down approach, economically and political/administrative, means organization without ruler(s) – arch(s), i. e. not without management, but 1. organization with significant small income and rank differences, 2. empowered foot-soldiers with significant influence and freedom within a framework, and 3. real democratic control one way or the other. It is **not** a system where the management takes orders from the foot-soldiers, unless the case with 100% flat organization. A horizontal organization has a degree of flatness, an anarchy degree, between 50% and 100%, the anarchist ideal. Foot-soldiers mean the frontline in an organization.

The following quotes of Sun Tzu on strategy and tactics are compatible with a libertarian interpretation. Libertarian clarification and interpretations are in [...]. The quotes are from “The art of war” and other works by Sun Tzu.

1. “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”
2. “The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.”

3. "Victorious warriors win first and then go to war, while defeated warriors go to war first and then seek to win."
4. "Keep your friends close, and your enemies closer."
5. "Opportunities multiply as they are seized."
6. "All warfare is based on deception."
7. "Let your plans be dark and impenetrable as night, and when you move, fall like a thunderbolt."
8. "When strong, avoid them. If of high morale, depress them. Seem humble to fill them with conceit. If at ease, exhaust them. If united, separate them. Attack their weaknesses. Emerge to their surprise."
9. "Appear weak when you are strong, and strong when you are weak."
10. "Supreme excellence consists of breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting."
11. "Build your opponent a golden bridge to retreat across."
12. "Know yourself and you will win all battles."
13. "A leader [not arch] leads by example, not by force."
14. "Thus we may know that there are five essentials for victory:
  - (1) He [i.e. the people/libertarians] will win who knows when to fight and when not to fight.
  - (2) He will win who knows how to handle both superior and inferior forces.
  - (3) He will win whose army is animated by the same spirit throughout all its ranks.
  - (4) He will win who, prepared himself, waits to take the enemy unprepared.
  - (5) He will win who has military capacity and is not interfered with by the sovereign [i.e. the people, may however come up with advice etc.]."
15. "Even the finest sword plunged into salt water will eventually rust."
16. "You have to believe in yourself [but not too much]."
17. "If your enemy is secure at all points, be prepared for him. If he is in superior strength, evade him. If your opponent is temperamental, seek to irritate him. Pretend to be weak, that he may grow arrogant. If he is taking his ease, give him no rest. If his forces are united, separate them. If sovereign and subject [the enemy] are in accord, put division between them. Attack him where he is unprepared, appear where you are not expected."
18. "Be extremely subtle even to the point of formlessness. Be extremely mysterious even to the point of soundlessness. Thereby you can be the director of the opponent's fate."
19. "When the enemy is relaxed, make them toil. When full, starve them. When settled, make them move."

20. "To secure ourselves against defeat lies in our own hands, but the opportunity of defeating the enemy is provided by the enemy himself."
21. "When you surround an army, leave an outlet free. Do not press a desperate foe too hard."
22. "The general who advances without coveting fame and retreats without fearing disgrace, whose only thought is to protect his country and do good service for his sovereign [i.e. the people], is the jewel of the kingdom [i.e. country and libertarian society]."
23. "One may know how to conquer without being able to do it."
24. "Energy may be likened to the bending of a crossbow; decision, to the releasing of a trigger."
25. "When one treats people with benevolence, justice, and righteousness, and reposes confidence in them, the army will be united in mind and all will be happy to serve their leaders [not archs]."
26. "If the mind is willing, the flesh could go on and on without many things."
27. "If quick, I survive. If not quick, I am lost. This is 'death'."
28. "In battle, there are not more than two methods of attack — the direct and the indirect; yet these two in combination give rise to an endless series of maneuvers."
29. "There is no instance of a country having benefited from prolonged warfare."
30. "No ruler [or libertarians] should put troops into the field merely to gratify his own spleen; no general should fight a battle simply out of pique. If it is to your advantage, make a forward move; if not, stay where you are. Anger may in time change to gladness; vexation may be succeeded by content. But a kingdom [i.e. country and libertarian society] that has once been destroyed can never come again into being; nor can the dead ever be brought back to life."
31. "Ultimate excellence lies not in winning every battle, but in defeating the enemy without ever fighting."
32. "To fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting."
33. "Wheels of justice grind slow but grind fine."
34. "All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near."
35. "The control of a large force is the same principle as the control of a few men: it is merely a question of dividing up their numbers."
36. "It is only one who is thoroughly acquainted with the evils of war that can thoroughly understand the profitable [beneficial] way of carrying it on."

37. "He who is prudent and lies in wait for an enemy who is not, will be victorious."
38. "Water shapes its course according to the nature of the ground over which it flows; the soldier works out his victory in relation to the foe whom he is facing."
39. "If you know the enemy and know yourself, your victory will not stand in doubt; if you know Heaven [anarchist society of very high degree] and know Earth, you may make your victory complete."
40. "Can you imagine what I would do if I could do all I can?"
41. "It is the rule in war, if our forces are ten to the enemy's one, to surround him; if five to one, to attack him; if twice as numerous, to divide our army into two."
42. "If ignorant both of your enemy and yourself, you are certain to be in peril."
43. "In war, then, let your great object be victory, not lengthy campaigns."
44. "He will win who knows when to fight and when not to fight."
45. "If you wait by the river long enough, the bodies of your enemies will float by."
46. "One hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the most skillful. Seizing the enemy without fighting is the most skillful."
47. "Move swift as the Wind and closely-formed as the Wood. Attack like the Fire and be still as the Mountain."
48. "What the ancients called a clever fighter is one who not only wins, but excels in winning with ease."
49. "If you are strong, appear weak. But if you are weak, appear strong."
50. "To win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill."
51. "Thus the expert in battle moves the enemy, and is not moved by him."
52. "If you use the enemy to defeat the enemy, you will be strong anywhere you go."
53. "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."
54. "In the practical art of war, the best thing of all is to take the enemy's country whole and intact; to shatter and destroy it is not so good. So, too, it is better to recapture an army entire than to destroy it, to capture a regiment, a detachment or a company entire than to destroy them."
55. "Invincibility lies in the defense; the possibility of victory in the attack."
56. "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."

57. "The end and aim of spying in all its five varieties is knowledge of the enemy; and this knowledge can only be derived, in the first instance, from the converted spy. Hence it is essential that the converted spy be treated with the utmost liberality."
58. "Hence a commander who advances without any thought of winning personal fame and withdraws in spite of certain punishment, whose only concern is to protect his people and promote the interests of his ruler [the people], is the nation's treasure. Because he fusses over his men [and women] as if they were infants [as grown up sons and daughters], they will accompany him into the deepest valleys; because he fusses over his men as if they were his own beloved sons, they will die by his side. If he is generous with them and yet they do not do as he tells them, if he loves them and yet they do not obey his commands, if he is so undisciplined with them that he cannot bring them into proper order, they will be like spoiled children who can be put to no good use at all."
59. "For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill."
60. "If I determine the enemy's disposition of forces while I have no perceptible form, I can concentrate my forces while the enemy is fragmented. The pinnacle of military deployment approaches the formless: if it is formless, then even the deepest spy cannot discern it nor the wise make plans against it."
61. "It is only the enlightened ruler [i.e. the people and libertarians] and the wise general who will use the highest intelligence of the army for the purposes of spying, and thereby they achieve great results."
62. "If words of command are not clear and distinct, if orders are not thoroughly understood, then the general is to blame. But, if orders are clear and the soldiers nevertheless disobey, then it is the fault of their officers."

The Anarchist Library  
Anti-Copyright



Anarchist International Security Council  
Strategy and tactics of Sun Tzu libertarian interpreted  
Think security — act with security...  
2011

Retrieved on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2020 from <http://www.anarchy.no/strategy1.html>  
ISSN 0800-0220 — ISSN 1890-9485

**[theanarchistlibrary.org](http://theanarchistlibrary.org)**