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When Truth Becomes a Tactic and a Message Becomes a Means

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Sun Tzu in the *The Art of War* (roughly 771 to 476 BC) gives us many tactical suggestions but I would like to consider just two:

- *The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting*
- *Mystify, mislead, and surprise the enemy*

Let us look at the current situation facing the Democrats in their fight to derail Judge Brett M. Kavanaugh's appointment off to the United States Supreme Court. Some days ago many believed that it was little that could be done to stop the Republican juggernaut from placing what to some, was a swing vote on the highest court in our land.

Moreover, the implication that his appointment might have on the direction and destiny of America for decades to come is of paramount consideration. Needless to say, something had to be done to stop the appointment that to some seemed inevitable!

About a year ago, October 16, 2017, Sophie Gilbert wrote an article that appeared in *The Atlantic* entitled, *How a hashtag got its power*. She made

this observation that has now become the third rail for many in all walks of public life.

“For a long time, most women defined their own sexual harassment and assault in this way: as something unspoken, something private, something to be ashamed of acknowledging. Silence, although understandable, has its cost. A decade ago, I couldn’t have conceived of the fact that so many women had experienced sexual coercion or intimidation; now, I’d be surprised if I could find a single one who hadn’t.”

As a psychotherapist who has practiced on numerous continents for many decades I do not doubt for a moment the accuracy of Gilbert’s observation. I must say however, that when *a truth becomes a tactic and a message becomes a means* to achieving an objective some things needs to be considered.

It is not the danger of the third rail but the greater danger of *derailing a noble cause for partisan objective*. Let us take for example the current situation playing out in Washington and across the nation between Judge Brett Kavanaugh and his accuser Dr. Christine Blasey Ford.

Her allegation brings into question the character of a 17 year old boy in an intoxicated state, who allegedly mishandled and fondled a 15-year-old girl at a party 36 years ago. That was a long time ago 36.5 years ago was just about the time most all of us were born according to the, American Community survey. Now it’s a litter older 37.4 - an increase of about a year .

Suffice it to say, few of us have detailed memory let alone accurate recall of events so far back in our past. I must say however, as a clinician, when that past includes a serious basic trauma event and remains an unresolved issue in a person’s life, those memories can have a life of their own and impact a person throughout their life.

In no way I am discounting the alleged traumatic event experience by Dr. Ford. As a practicing psychotherapist I know that context determines meaning and perception determines reality. I don’t have the feeling that anybody regardless of party is discounting Dr. Ford’s assertions.

To the extent that Dr. Ford’s perceptions raise questions about an individual’s lifetime appointment to the highest court in the land — those allegations must be given obvious attention and appropriate scrutiny as to their validity. The Senate Judicial Committee has reached out to Dr. Ford

offering many solutions to protect her privacy and provide her an opportunity to present her testimony for all to fairly evaluate.

I must reiterate my thought however, about *a truth becoming a tactic and a message to achieve a means*. For many Republicans there is the assumption that Democrats are trying to , “mystify, mislead, and surprise the enemy” as Sun Tzu counsels.

Here’s the question, does the alleged behavior reveals a character flaw that might surfaced and cloud his judgment in an important situation?

Few people who observed the entirety of the Judicial Committee of the United States Senate proceedings, myself included, were left with no doubt regarding the character and veracity of Judge Brett Kavanaugh. His judicial background and skills as a jurist are basically beyond question and reflect the kind of judgment one would want for someone on the Supreme Court.

What originally appeared to be a slam dunk for “Mr. K”, the name girls on the basketball team gave him, had changed since the hearings.

If as a Democrat, it is believed that it is essential that his appointment be disrupted and ultimately blocked, somehow some tool and tactic must be found and employed. The only thing left to consider when his skills are unquestioned and his judicial history are outstanding there’s only one thing left — his character.

If six FBI background searches are unable to turn up wrong doing then the obvious thing that is left are character flaws to provide the necessary tools and tactics to block his appointment. Simple follow Sun Tzu’s strategic advice, “mystify, mislead, and surprise.” You must however, not refer to your colleagues as the enemy it is simply not done in the Senate - most of the time.

Here again Sun Tzu offers sage advice, “The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.” Here is where malevolence masquerades as magnanimity. Who, as honest brokers and truth seekers, would argue against exploring a revelation brought forward that strikes at the very foundation of character and honest intentions?

After all, isn’t it said that the true character of a person is shown when (s)he is drunk? In fact it is in our teenage years that we often show our fundamental proclivities regarding our deeper inner self. Perhaps it is some sort of a deep below the level of awareness demon lurking in our unconscious mind? Some people might believe this therefore, justifies a full vetting of Kavanaugh’s deeper character even more.

Let me reiterate, these allegations must be addressed, clarified and put to rest prior to voting before confirmation. Am I questioning the veracity and motivations on the part of the Democrats on the committee? Absolutely! Moreover, as a person who has worked in international crises throughout the world on behalf of various groups I must simply say, what the Democrats are doing is as good as any hat trick* you could find in soccer.

Again, this is in no way meant to malign or cast aspersions on the issue being brought forward by Dr. Ford regarding her perceived experience with her 17-year-old predator 36 years ago.

The 12 steps program to derail the Kavanaugh's nomination

Here's how it works:

1. Assess your situation clearly
2. Determine your strengths and weaknesses
3. Make a plan to exploit what appears to be one of your opponent's greatest strength
4. Raise doubt by questioning your opponent's greatest strength his image and character
5. Make a plan to "mystify, mislead, and surprise" your adversary
6. Generating doubt by remembering another Sun Tzu principal, "The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting"
7. Maintain the image of honest inquiry into disputed actions regardless of how old they are
8. Create doubt in others regarding the motivations of fellow Republican Judicial members
9. Find a current cause that few will publicly argue against the #MeToo movement is a perfect fit
10. Present "the get rid of Kavanaugh message" as a patriotic quest to saving America
11. Spread this message on all media platforms
12. It is not necessary to have Dr. Ford testify as her allegation serves the derailing purpose

Let nobody deny the fact that if the situation was reversed this could be a Republican plan in the same circumstances. It seems that Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, is alive and well and practiced in the halls of Congress and in the big White House on the hill.

I must say the art seems more like children finger painting and fighting in the sandbox, then adults striving for justice in the greatest country in the world! After all this is important stuff and failure is not an option regardless of who, Dr. Ford or Judge Kavanaugh is tossed under the bus. And some people don't care.

With all of the wrangling and divisiveness between Democrats and Republicans one could wonder are we out for victory or justice? More importantly what are we teaching our children about values, honor and integrity?



*Hat trick - in soccer, a "natural" or "flawless" hat trick occurs when a player scores three consecutive goals in the same game without being interrupted by any other goals

Reference:

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Goodfield Barry A., Ph.D. - *Justice or Victory?* 5 minute video <https://youtu.be/zImfTGdKG7Y>

Goodfield Barry A., Ph.D. - *Clinical analysis of Judge Kavanaugh character* a 10 minute video
<https://youtu.be/Y5NVJZYNiTc>

Goodfield Barry A., Ph.D. - *Clinical profile of Judge Kavanaugh* <https://bit.ly/2zn50aQ>

Sun Tzu - *The Art of War* (roughly 771 to 476 BC)

Sophie Gilbert - The Atlantic October 16, 2017, *How a hashtag got its power*

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