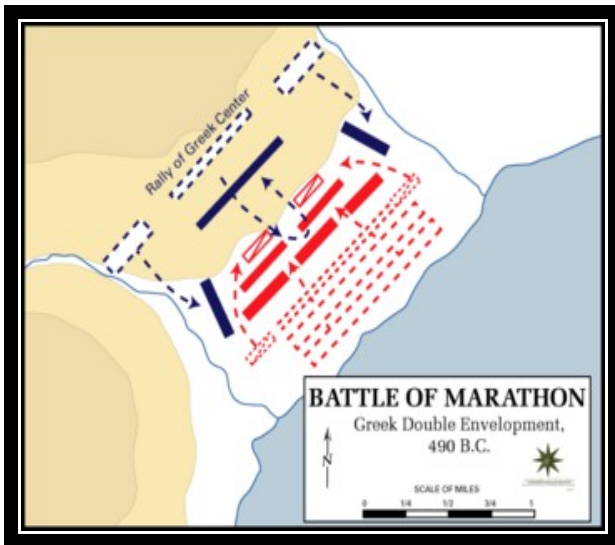


The Flanking Manoeuvre

In military tactics, a flank attack, is an attack on the sides of an opposing force.



If a flanking manoeuvre succeeds, the opposing force would be surrounded from two or more directions, which significantly reduces the manoeuvrability of the outflanked force and its ability to defend itself. A psychological advantage may also be present, as flank forces usually do not expect to be attacked.

Flanking in history

Flanking manoeuvres played an important role in nearly every major battle in history, and have been used effectively by famous military leaders like Hannibal, Julius Caesar, Khalid ibn al-Walid, Napoleon, Saladin and Stonewall Jackson throughout history. Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* strongly emphasizes the use of flanking, although it does not advocate completely surrounding the enemy force as this may induce it to fight with greater ferocity if it cannot escape.



A flanking manoeuvre is not always effective, as the flanking force may itself be ambushed while manoeuvring, or the main force is unable to pin the defenders in place, allowing them to turn and face the flanking attack.

Manoeuvring

Flanking on land in the pre-modern era was usually achieved with cavalry (and rarely, chariots) due to their speed and manoeuvrability, while heavily armoured infantry was commonly used to fix the enemy, as in the Battle of Pharsalus. Armoured vehicles such as tanks replaced cavalry as the main force of flanking manoeuvres in the 20th century, as seen in the Battle of France in World War II.

Defence against

The dangers of being flanked have been realised by commanders since the dawn of warfare, and for two millennia and more, part of the art of being a commander was in the choice of terrain to allow flanking attacks or prevent them.

BATTLE OF HONGFIELD

Liverpool Football Club Double Envelopment,
A.D 1990's-Present Day

