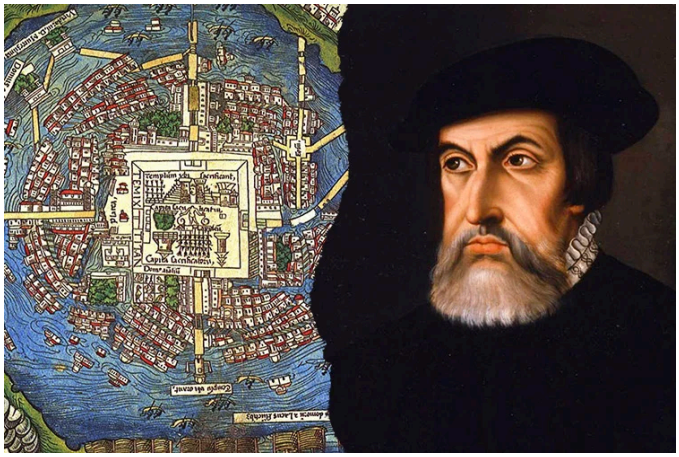
Hernán Cortés Document

Written by @Azraelyc



Black/White: General Explanation
Red: Deception
Green: SQ (Social Quotient)
Light Blue: Intelligence and Knowledge
Yellow: Manipulation, Psycho-Warfare
Orange: EQ (Emotional Quotient)
Blue: Foresight
Pink: Trap Evasión, Reasoning and Thinking
Purple: Strategy, Planning, Tactics

- **The Surprising Beginnings of Hernán Cortés' Autodidacticism**

Hernán Cortés demonstrated a remarkable autodidactic ability from an early age, a skill that stayed with him throughout his life. Despite his limited formal education, which was restricted to grammar studies at the school of Salamanca, Cortés acquired a vast amount of knowledge on his own. His mastery of Latin and familiarity with the law, for instance, were not the result of traditional academic instruction but of his tireless self-directed learning.

His mastery of these subjects is evident in:

- His writings, where he shows a clear understanding of legal and historical topics.
- Letters and testimonies from the time, some of which suggest that members of the Court believed Cortés was a jurist (expert in law).
- The fact that he served as a judge in Cuba reinforces the idea that he possessed legal knowledge.

- Pedro Mártir praised his ability to transform "from a jurist into a theologian" when instructing the indigenous people, suggesting an autodidactic legal education.
- He was fluent in Latin, as mentioned by Bartolomé de las Casas and Bernal Díaz del Castillo.

«Cortés, con estas palabras, transformándose de jurisconsulto en teólogo, les mostró para que la adorasen, la Cruz y la estampa de la Virgen que consigo traía». La frase corrobora que era jurista (o que era tenido como tal); además, en otra carta, agrega que fue juez en

Según Bernal Díaz del Castillo, dominaba el latín.[7]

Although it is not known for certain where his vast knowledge came from, it is clear that Cortés did not obtain it through formal education, as there is no concrete evidence to support this, aside from some testimonies, such as those of Bartolomé de las Casas. However, it is possible that during the year he worked with a notary in Valladolid, Cortés absorbed much of this knowledge. What is astonishing is that, despite not having received formal academic instruction in these areas, he managed to acquire a level of knowledge that led figures such as Pedro Mártir and Bernal Díaz del Castillo to recognize him as a man of great intellect and erudition.

haber pisado nunca la universidad. Autodidacta o bachiller que nunca sacó a relucir su título. Pero sus conocimientos jurídicos son algo que salta a la vista; poseía, además, una regular cultura

(Fluid Intelligence + Knowledge)

- **First Interventions in the Indies:**

There is not much information about Cortés' activities during this period, but in a memorial addressed to the Emperor, he himself recalled his first intervention in the Indies. This involved participating in a "cabalgada" (raiding expedition) against Haitian chiefs in various regions that had not yet been conquered. As a reward for his participation, Cortés received some land and was appointed as a scribe in the town of Azúa, a position granted by Nicolás de Ovando, who was the governor of Hispaniola at that time.

evoca lo que vendría a ser su primera actuación en Indias, consistente en haber participado en una cabalgada contra los caciques haitianos, en las regiones de «Higuey, Bauruco, Dayguao, Iutagna, Xuaragua, Amguayagua, que hasta ese momento no estaban conquistadas».[75] Se emplea el término cabalgada, porque

(Influence Building)

- **Catalina Suárez Marcaida:**

On one occasion, Cortés seduced Catalina Suárez Marcaida. However, this did not turn out as he expected, as Catalina forced him to marry her.

(Seduction)

- **Cortés' Ability to Manage Social Relationships:**

On one occasion, Diego Velázquez became furious upon discovering that Cortés was trying to sneak away in a canoe to head to Hispaniola. As a result, Velázquez removed him from his position as secretary and ordered that he be captured and imprisoned.

Although Cortés was captured twice, he managed to escape both times.

tramaba y lo puso preso. El caso es que duró poco tiempo en prisión; consiguió evadirse buscando refugio en la iglesia. Con el paso de los días fue confiándose, y en una ocasión en que se paseaba frente a ella, fue apresado por el alguacil Juan de Escudero ayudado por otros. Esta vez lo encerraron en la bodega de un navío, pero escapó de nueva cuenta. Intercedieron varios amigos en favor

After an extensive search, Diego Velázquez finally gave up, calmed his anger, and granted Cortés forgiveness, though he decided not to reinstate him as his secretary. Later, Cortés decided to visit the governor's house to try to resolve the situation. In front of Velázquez, Cortés asked about the complaints against him and expressed his desire to be his friend. They reconciled, and according to Gómara, they ended up sleeping together in the same bed, where a servant found them the next morning. From that moment on, they resumed their friendship.

manifestándole que sólo deseaba ser su amigo. Se reconciliaron, tumbándose a dormir en una cama, adonde al día siguiente los encontraría un sirviente. A partir de ese momento se reanudó la amistad.[79]

(Evasion of Traps + Relationship Management + Persuasion)

- **Hernán Cortés' Personality:**

Cortés is described as someone who loves violence and intense emotions, but at the same time, he is characterized by speaking softly, giving orders in a calm tone, and rarely losing his composure. This presents an image of someone who, although he may be feared for his capacity for cruelty, is also seen as a calm and controlled leader.

hombre llamado Hernán Cortés. Su personalidad resulta compleja y contradictoria. Por un lado, el individuo que ama la violencia y gusta de emociones fuertes, pero que, como contrapartida, habla en voz baja y da órdenes en tono reposado, siendo verdaderamente excepcional que, en algún momento, llegue a perder la compostura.

(EQM + Composure)

Cortés had a good sense of humor, was talkative, and displayed a friendly attitude. However, he was also capable of committing terrible and violent acts.

palabras altisonantes. Un bienhablado. Tenía vena de poeta y versificaba con facilidad.[87] Poseía un fino sentido del humor y resultaba un conversador ameno, pero esa exquisita sensibilidad no era óbice para que, llegado el caso, con la mayor frialdad cometiera crueldades espeluznantes. Aunque no tuviera un título universitario

(Charisma)

- **Hernán Cortés Had a Remarkable Talent for Business:**

In Cuba, Cortés had strategically established himself and founded an estate known as the Hacienda de Cortés, located on the banks of the Cubanacán River, where the indigenous people worked in gold extraction. Additionally, Cortés was a pioneer in cattle and horse breeding on the island.

Cortés was also actively involved in large-scale overseas trade. Of the five ships anchored in the port, three were owned by him, while he had a stake in the other two—one in partnership with Andrés de Duero and the other with Pedro de Santa Clara. One of these ships carried a cargo of wines, suggesting it had recently arrived from Spain.

His diversification in business, which spanned mining, livestock farming, agriculture, trade, and navigation, was crucial in financing much of his later expedition.

(Financial Knowledge + Strategic Positioning)

- **The Strategy to Execute the Expedition to Yucatán:**

Context: When Yucatán was discovered, Diego Velázquez offered Hernán Cortés the opportunity to participate in the expedition and lead it, which Cortés accepted. However, this mission was solely intended for exploration, as specified by the instructions given by the Crown. This is further confirmed by considering that no one would send a man like Cortés, with no military experience, to carry out a conquest. If he was chosen, it was because he could finance the expedition, but it would be unthinkable to send him with the intent to conquer.

However, Hernán Cortés had other plans in mind…

poder. En el párrafo consignando la petición, el notario hace constar que Cortés «iba por el dicho señor Adelantado en nombre de Sus Altezas a poblar las dichas islas e tierras, e a descubrir otras».[99] Aquí queda al descubierto el verdadero propósito de la expedición.

His True Plans:

Hernán Cortés had plans that went beyond simple exploration, as evidenced by the notary's content, where it was mentioned that he would act: "In the name of Their Majesties, to populate the said islands and lands, and to discover others." This revealed that Cortés' true intention was to establish a more permanent and extensive occupation than what had been officially declared.

Therefore, without anyone noticing, Cortés began preparing for a permanent expedition. He started spending extravagantly, investing everything he had, even hiring veteran soldiers from Italy. However, no one suspected Cortés' true intentions, as everyone thought it was just an exploration mission.

Nevertheless, Cortés reflected and realized that, given the amount of resources he was accumulating and the large investments he was making, it would be inevitable that someone would discover his true plans. This came to pass when Diego Velázquez began to suspect, fearing Cortés' ambition. In response, Cortés anticipated this and devised a strategy that, although it couldn't completely prevent the cancellation of his expedition, would allow him to buy time to organize and make it more difficult for Velázquez to stop him, thus enabling him to escape before his expedition could be canceled.

The Expedition Shielding Strategy:

Cortés' protection strategy was based on leveraging the trust that merchants had in him due to his reputation as a businessman. Cortés knew that people would be willing to invest in his expedition with the hope of doubling their profits. So, he went into debt with various individuals, including Andrés de Duero, Pedro de Jerez, Antonio de Santa Clara, and the merchants Jaime and Jerónimo Tría.

Why did he do this? Going into debt had two key purposes, one of which was aimed at protecting himself from the possible cancellation of his expedition.

1. The first and most obvious reason was that by getting others to invest in his project, Cortés would obtain more financial resources for his expedition.
2. The second reason was more strategic: by involving so many people with investments in his venture, he exerted pressure on Diego Velázquez not to cancel the expedition, as many people were already financially committed to it. This strategy worked to some extent, as Velázquez did not dare to cancel the expedition until his family intervened, even going so far as to hire astrologers who predicted that Cortés would be a rebel.

los suyos. Velázquez se dio cuenta de que eso no era lo pactado. Y su desconfianza fue todavía en aumento al enterarse de que, encima de gastar lo suyo, se había endeudado con Andrés de Duero, Pedro de Jerez, Antonio de Santa Clara, Jaime y Jerónimo Tría y demás mercaderes, por un monto de cuatro mil castellanos de oro. Suma cuantiosa. Cortés era buen sujeto de crédito, pues tenía con qué responder. Su hacienda garantizaba sobradamente el pago. En un

However, when Velázquez attempted to stop Cortés, it was already too late. Cortés was surrounded by a crowd of adventurers who had joined his cause, who were being fed, housed, and paid by him.

This situation demonstrated the growing influence and power of Cortés, who had already escaped Velázquez's control.

Cortés desplegó una intensa actividad para preparar la expedición, invirtiendo en la empresa toda su fortuna y la de algunos amigos, adoptando aires de gran señor que comenzaron a molestar a su mentor Velázquez. A pesar de la desconfianza de éste, no se atrevía a arrebatar el mando a Cortés hasta que fue demasiado tarde: el de Medellín partió de Santiago el 18 de noviembre de 1518, teniendo previstas escalas en

Velázquez, not knowing what to do, tried everything possible to hinder Cortés, but his actions only created more problems due to the influence Cortés had accumulated. In fact, by trying to stop him, Velázquez indirectly caused the incident leading to the death of Juan de Pila, which gave Cortés the perfect excuse to disembark.

incurrido. Las versiones de los distintos cronistas presentan leves variantes, pero coinciden en lo fundamental. Velázquez intenta detenerlo, pero Cortés sigue adelante. En una de esas comilonas, en que corrió vino en exceso, se suscitó una riña y hubo un muerto. Un tal Juan de Pila. Aquello precipitó las cosas; Cortés, seguido de un pequeño grupo, se dirigió a la iglesia, y allí, fray Bartolomé de Olmedo bendijo la bandera. Andrés de Tapia dice de ella que era de

The last words Cortés said to Diego Velázquez before departing were:

"Sir, may God be with you, for I am going to serve God and my King, and to seek my fortune with these my companions."

vuestra [...] llegó el batel de la capitana, y entrando en él con los soldados, quitando el sombrero a Diego Velázquez le dijo: Señor, Dios quede con vuestra merced, que yo voy a servir a Dios y a mi Rey, y a buscar con estos mis compañeros mi ventura». A Diego

(Anticipation + Protection Strategy + Negotiation + Psychological Warfare: Reinforcements)

Before concluding with the strategy for the Yucatán expedition, it's important to highlight its resilience. On one occasion, Diego Velázquez literally tried to set a trap for Cortés, surrounding him with his loyal followers with the intention of subduing him. However, the plan backfired for Velázquez, as Cortés had already reached a position of considerable advantage. Cortés' influence was so superior to Velázquez's that this stealthy attack proved practically ineffective.

abierta, la intención de Velázquez sería la de ir rodeando a Cortés con gente suya, para poder someterlo. Proceder de otra manera habría sido una torpeza, y Velázquez estaba muy lejos de ser un tonto; lo que ocurre es que Cortés le ganó la mano. Al momento de producirse la salida de Santiago, en torno a Cortés apenas se consigue identificar a unos contados amigos suyos, como es el caso de Villarroel, quien venía como alférez, de Juan de Escalante, Pedro González de Trujillo, y también el padre Olmedo. Los

In fact, as Cortés advanced, other important captains joined him, many of them veterans who were loyal because he paid them, further complicating Velázquez's followers' attempts to stop him.

Even when Velázquez tried to infiltrate people into the expedition, he failed to derail it due to the resilience of Hernán Cortés' strategy.

(Evasion of Traps + Resilience Strategy + Building Influence)

- **Cortés' Persuasion of Velázquez's Men:**

On several occasions, after Cortés had begun his expedition, Diego Velázquez sent messengers with the intention of stopping him, and some even with orders to arrest him. However, Cortés' influence was so powerful that Velázquez's envoys, instead of carrying out their orders, were persuaded by Cortés to join his expedition. A notable example of this is Pedro Laso de la Vega.

fuerte y existía el riesgo de que sus hombres saqueasen la villa. Se dio, inclusive, el caso de que Pedro Laso de la Vega, uno de los mensajeros que trajeron las cartas, también se unió a la expedición.

(Persuasion)

- **Cortés, despite his friendly personality, was a mistrustful man:**

Who carefully managed the information he had, revealing it only when he deemed it advantageous. This is evident when he arrived on the mainland in Cozumel, where people were surprised to find Spanish shipwreck survivors. However, Cortés was already aware of their existence but pretended it was a new discovery, attributing it to his intuition. Although this was clearly a lie, it allows us to deduce that few, if any, knew the contents of the instructions Cortés had, demonstrating how astutely he controlled information.

Hernández de Córdoba.[137] De acuerdo con ello, Cortés habría intuido que en la región estarían algunos españoles prisioneros de los caciques. Estamos aquí frente a uno de los múltiples actos

manifiesto que ninguno de ambos llegó a enterarse de lo que decía el pliego. La distancia que Cortés guardaba con sus hombres era tan grande, que la mayoría desconocía sus planes. Fueron contadísimos aquellos en quienes confiaba; fray Bartolomé de Olmedo, Escalante y Puerto Carrero, fueron unos de los pocos en esa primera etapa. Y no son sólo Bernal y Tapia quienes se

(Information Control)

Troop Control:

The text suggests that Hernán Cortés effectively controlled his undisciplined troops by placing them in increasingly compromised situations.

In this way, Cortés became an indispensable factor, the only one capable of getting them out of these troubles.

Parecería que una manera de controlar a esa masa de indisciplinados, sería el irlos metiendo en situaciones cada vez más comprometidas, de manera que apareciese como factor indispensable: el único que podría sacarlos del apuro. En reiteradas ocasiones será él quien mediante una acción individual, decida la batalla. En los momentos que preceden al combate, lo planea todo cuidadosamente, y cuando el dispositivo está a punto, deja el puesto de mando, para incorporarse como un soldado más de primera fila. No dejaba pasar la oportunidad de participar en la lucha. A todo lo largo de la Conquista, veremos que no se da una

(Emotional Manipulation + White Knight + EQM)

Upon Arriving in Cozumel:

Upon arriving in Cozumel, Cortés encountered the shipwreck survivor Aguilar, whom he incorporated into his expedition as his translator. Despite having the opportunity to explore more of the region where he had landed, Cortés chose not to, which shows that he already had a clear plan to head toward the center of Aztec power in Chalchicuecan.

(Planning Aim)

- **The Requerimiento:**

Upon arriving in Centla, Cortés attempted to disembark but faced hostile resistance from the indigenous people, who fired arrows at them. Faced with this situation, Cortés understood that he had no choice but to engage in combat. However, before doing so, he recognized the need to prevent potential legal issues. To address this, Cortés decided to use a shrewd strategy: reading the "Requerimiento" to the indigenous people.

This document, drafted by Dr. Palacios Rubios, had the sole purpose of justifying the conquests and easing the conscience of King Ferdinand the Catholic.

ese alegato jurídico redactado por el doctor Palacios Rubios, para justificar conquistas y tranquilizar la conciencia de Fernando el Católico: «Uno de los pontífices... como señor del mundo hizo

By reading it, Cortés was applying the same justification and logic that the king had used, ensuring that he stayed within the legal framework and thus legitimizing the violence he was about to unleash.

He then instructed his interpreter, Aguilar, to read the document to the indigenous people.

The "Requerimiento" demanded that the indigenous people accept the authority of the Catholic Church, the Pope, and the Spanish kings over their lands. They were offered the option to submit peacefully, in which case they would be treated benevolently, keeping their families and

possessions without being forced to convert to Christianity, unless they wished to. However, if they refused, the Spanish warned that they would come with force, make war, and any deaths or damage would be the responsibility of the indigenous people, not of the Spaniards or their kings.

partes y maneras que pudiéremos y os sujetaremos al yugo y obediencia de la Iglesia y de sus Majestades, y tomaremos vuestras personas y las de vuestras mujeres e hijos y les haremos esclavos y como tales los venderemos... y os tomaremos vuestros bienes y os haremos todos los males y daños que pudiéremos...». De resistirse, suya será la culpa; por tanto: «... protestamos que las muertes y daños que de ello se recrecieren, sean a vuestra culpa y no de sus majestades ni nuestra, ni de estos caballeros que con nosotros vienen y de cómo lo decimos y requerimos pedimos al presente

This maneuver illustrates how Cortés was able to manipulate logic and norms to his advantage, protecting himself from legal troubles. After this procedure, his notary, Diego de Godoy, recorded that the indigenous people did not respond to the call for peace, which gave the Spaniards justification to advance and attack. Following an intense battle on the coast of Centla, the Spaniards succeeded in defeating the indigenous people, although they stopped when the indigenous fled.

rogamos que de ello sean testigos».[149] Poco importaría si Aguilar era escuchado o no en medio de esa algarabía; aquello se hacía para ser oído en España, por si acaso el día de mañana hubiera que deslindar responsabilidades. De manera que, cuando el notario Diego de Godoy hubo asentado por escrito que desoían el llamado de paz, ya todo estuvo en orden, dándose la orden de avanzar.

In this battle, the indigenous people suffered some casualties, while the Spaniards only had wounded.

(Logic Manipulation, Risk Assessment)

- **The Battle of Centla**

After a minor skirmish, two indigenous people approach Cortés and offer him jewelry, hoping that the Spaniards will leave with these small gifts. However, Cortés reiterates his demand: that they submit to the Spanish Crown and become their allies, or otherwise, there will be war. The indigenous people pretend to accept the proposal and, as a show of loyalty, Cortés orders them to bring food.

What Cortés does not know is that the indigenous people have deceived him and have no intention of submitting; in reality, they are preparing a trap for him. However, before they can execute it, Cortés will have already learned of their plans.

Noticing that the indigenous people do not bring the food, Cortés begins to suspect that something is wrong. He does not remain doubtful and immediately orders the horses to be lowered from the ships. He then sends Pedro de Alvarado, leading a hundred men, to venture into indigenous territory, advancing about two leagues to gather information and explore the area. Cortés' suspicions are confirmed when Alvarado's men are attacked by a large number of indigenous people prepared to ambush them. Thus, Cortés manages to evade the trap thanks to his cunning and anticipation.

recién contraída amistad, les pidió que trajesen de comer, a lo que respondieron que así lo harían. Pero como pasara un día y luego otro, y no cumplieran lo ofrecido, Cortés sospechó que serían

[151] Fernández de Oviedo, Gonzalo, *ob. cit.*, t. III, cap. VII, p. 230

atacados, por lo que ordenó que se desembarcasen los caballos.

(Counter: Field Affinity + Trap Evasion + Adaptability)

After evading the trap, Cortés takes the initiative and launches an offensive, using the horses he had previously ordered to be disembarked.

This tactic proves to be extremely effective, as horses are a powerful tool in combat, especially since the indigenous people are not accustomed to facing cavalry and can be easily intimidated by it.

La batalla fue de grandes proporciones; por todas partes aparecían escuadrones de indios que cargaban, poniendo a los españoles en situación cada vez más difícil. Fue entonces cuando apareció Cortés al frente de un pelotón de diez jinetes y cambió el curso de la contienda. Ante la vista de esos monstruos, pues los indios tomaban como un solo ser a caballo y jinete, el pánico cundió en sus filas y huyeron en desorden. Esa misma tarde llegaron dos emisarios de

Thus, at a critical moment in the battle, when it seemed that the Spaniards were about to be defeated, Cortés intervenes by leading a small group of ten cavalrymen. His action changes the course of the engagement. For the indigenous people, who were unfamiliar with horses, the appearance of these "monsters" — perceived as a single entity composed of rider and horse — unleashed panic in their ranks. This irrational fear of the unknown created disorder and led to the eventual flight of the indigenous people.

The Spanish cavalry, under Cortés' leadership, was the decisive element that demoralized and defeated the indigenous people. The combination of fear of the unknown and the skillful organization of the cavalry allowed the Spaniards to turn around an adverse situation and achieve victory.

(Psychological Warfare: Exploitation of Insecurities, Tactics)

After the Battle

After the battle, a group of 30 caciques approaches Cortés with gifts. Before they arrive, Cortés plans a staged performance to impress and intimidate the indigenous leaders, demonstrating Spanish power.

He places the caciques in front of a horse and tells them that the animal is angry with them for treating the Spaniards as enemies instead of friends. To increase the impact, a mare is brought in, knowing that it will agitate the horse. When the mare appears, the horse becomes agitated, neighs, and raises its front legs, creating a terrifying scene for the caciques, who believe the horse is furious with them.

indios. Antes de que éstos llegaran preparó el escenario. Hizo traer el caballo de Ortíz *el Músico*, que era muy fogoso, y lo amarraron a un poste; luego, a la llegada de los caciques, situó a éstos frente al animal, diciéndoles que éste se encontraba muy enojado con ellos porque viniendo él en paz y en busca de su amistad, lo habían recibido como enemigo. En ese momento, tal como estaba planeado,

Once the mare is removed, the horse gradually calms down. Following his plan, Cortés tells the caciques that he has spoken with the horse and assured it that they will no longer take up arms against the Spaniards, so the animal has forgiven them. This statement, filled with mockery and manipulation, aims to strengthen the caciques' submission.

recibido como enemigo. En ese momento, tal como estaba planeado, trajeron la yegua de Núñez Sedeño; sintió el garañón el calor de la yegua y, al momento, quiso abalanzarse sobre ella. Sujeto por las ataduras, se revolvía relinchando y, con los belfos levantados, agitaba las manos en el aire frente a los rostros de los caciques, que contemplaban aquello aterrorizados. Retiraron la yegua, y poco a poco se serenó el caballo. Cortés explicó a los caciques que había dicho a éste que ya no volverían a tomar las armas en su contra y que, por lo tanto, el animal los había perdonado. Se escuchó

Finally, as part of the performance, a lombard is fired, startling the caciques even more. Cortés tells them that he has also spoken with the cannon, assuring it that the indigenous people will be friends with the Spaniards from now on. This final act reinforces the idea that the Spaniards

control powerful and dangerous forces, both animals and weapons, which they can employ against the indigenous people if necessary.

(Deception: Fabrication, Direct Manipulation, Psychological Manipulation, EQU)

- **Cortés' Plan to Eliminate the Residual Influence of the Velasquistas in His Expedition:**

The Problem:

Although Cortés was the leader of the expedition, achieving acceptance of his authority without resistance was a considerable challenge. There was the Velasquista faction, composed of those who feared the consequences of breaking with the established order, as they were still loyal to Velázquez and knew their actions were completely illegal, which could bring them trouble. To counter this situation, Cortés took the following measures:

To avoid any possible rebellion from the Velasquistas, Cortés implemented a series of carefully planned maneuvers.

1. First, he identified and neutralized Velasquista leaders, such as Montejo, by assigning them missions that distracted them and kept them away from the core decision-making process, thereby weakening the cohesion of the opposing group.

reducido, internarse en el país. Ante esa oleada de rumores, la primera medida adoptada por Cortés fue alejar a Montejo, quien era figura prominente en el ejército y se inclinaba hacia el bando velazquista. Para conseguirlo, le confió una misión importante. Los

2. At the same time, his loyal followers worked to gain the support of the soldiers, touring the camp and convincing them that continuing with the expedition was the most sensible option. The main argument used was that returning to Cuba would mean betraying the original mission of establishing colonies and conquering rich lands.
3. With the majority's support secured, Cortés took a decisive step: founding Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz. This was not a mere act of establishing a new settlement but a strategic maneuver with profound political implications. By founding the villa, Cortés created a cabildo, or local government, composed of authorities loyal to him. This cabildo had the capacity to make autonomous decisions, which allowed Cortés to maneuver politically. Once the cabildo was established, Cortés took a step that might seem contradictory at first glance: he formally resigned from his positions before this new local government. However, this resignation was not an act of weakness or a real abdication of his power. It was a calculated move. By resigning, he formally disconnected himself from his role as a delegate of Diego Velázquez, the governor of Cuba who had sent him to Mexico. But the key to his plan was what happened next: the cabildo, composed of people loyal to Cortés,

immediately re-elected him. This re-election was a fundamental move because it allowed Cortés to legitimize his authority in a completely new way. He was no longer simply Velázquez's representative but had become a leader elected by an autonomous city. This new legitimacy gave him indisputable power that did not depend on Velázquez's authority but on a community he had created and controlled. In this way, Cortés secured his position and strengthened his power.

These moves, executed with speed and precision, surprised the Velasquista faction, which could not react in time. When they finally tried to oppose him, it was already too late: Cortés had legally and effectively consolidated his power.

vecinos. Luego se pasó a designar autoridades y, como era de esperarse, los nombramientos importantes recayeron en incondicionales suyos. Una vez que estuvo constituido el cabildo, Cortés procedió a renunciar ante él los cargos de capitán y justicia mayor, encerrándose en su choza. Como se encontraban sin jefe, los miembros del cabildo deliberaron, acordando nombrarlo para los cargos que antes ostentaba. Pero existía una diferencia: ahora su nombramiento no provenía de un teniente de gobernador, sino que era libremente elegido por las autoridades de una ciudad, conforme a la costumbre y usos de España. La batalla jurídica estaba ganada.

(Misdirection, Coverage Planning, Logical Manipulation, Counter: Interpersonal Affinity, Influence Creation)

- **Meeting with the Cacique Gordo:**

After attending a meeting organized by the Totonacs, Hernán Cortés understood the complex social dynamics between the indigenous tribes. The cacique Quauhtlaebana, known as the Cacique Gordo, recounted how, twenty years prior, the Totonacs had been a free people, but their freedom ended when the Mexicas imposed their gods on them. Over time, the demands of the Mexicas became increasingly oppressive, including the payment of tributes and the delivery of young people to be sacrificed in Tenochtitlán. This account revealed to Cortés the oppression suffered by many peoples under Mexica rule.

The information provided by Quauhtlaebana was crucial for Cortés, as it allowed him to discover that the region was divided into factions, with many towns resentful of Mexica dominance.

This internal division suggested to Cortés that he could exploit these rivalries to facilitate his own conquest, **a strategy that would become one of the most effective and decisive in his campaign, as would be seen in the future.**

puso a Cortés al tanto de cuál era la situación en el interior del país. Motecuhzoma era un déspota que tenía subyugados a muchos pueblos. Para Cortés fue una gran revelación enterarse de que la tierra se encontraba dividida en bandos. Ello facilitaría su tarea.

(Social Intuition, Critical Thinking, Psychological Warfare: Reinforcements)

- **The Stratagem of the False Retreat:**

On one occasion, Cortés took advantage of the complaints from some of his men, who recalled his promise to allow them to leave once there were no enemies. Cleverly, Cortés pretended to honor this promise and responded to their demands, creating the illusion that he would indeed let them depart. However, in reality, he had no intention of letting them go; it was all part of a strategy to achieve two objectives:

1. Identify who was truly loyal and who was not.

iniciales mencionados por Bernal. Se impidió el retorno a Cuba de los descontentos, pero éstos ya se habían puesto en evidencia, y así Cortés pudo conocer quiénes eran y a cuántos ascendía su número.

2. Cortés deduced that those eager to leave would begin preparing by selling or getting rid of the goods they wouldn't need for the journey.

iniciales mencionados por Bernal. Se impidió el retorno a Cuba de los descontentos, pero éstos ya se habían puesto en evidencia, y así Cortés pudo conocer quiénes eran y a cuántos ascendía su número.

In this way, the cowards would end up selling their resources to the more loyal and brave men who genuinely needed them. Just when the preparations for departure were nearly complete, Cortés canceled the permission to leave, arguing that allowing them to depart would be equivalent to deserting in the face of the enemy, even if there was no visible enemy at that moment.

In this manner, the cowards had sold their belongings, while those whom Cortés identified as willing to give their all were strengthened with more resources. Thus, he not only kept all his men in the army but also reinforced the most committed members.

An example of this is Ruano, a brave and loyal man to Cortés, who had bought a horse from Morón before Morón prepared to leave. However, when the departure was canceled, Morón was left without a horse, and although he tried to recover it, Ruano did not relent.

solicitaban, revocó la autorización. Morón pidió su caballo de regreso, mas Ruano se negó a devolvérselo, pues la compra la había hecho en toda forma.[164]

(Deductive Reasoning, Misdirection, Deception: Bluffing, Trap Setting, Strategy Efficiency, EQ)

- **Sinking of the Ships:**

Hernán Cortés discovered traitors among his troops, specifically followers of Velázquez. In response, he carried out a series of actions designed to demoralize the enemy: some had their toes cut off as punishment, others were sentenced to the gallows, while some were allowed to live. These actions served not only as a severe warning but also demonstrated his skill in psychological warfare, imposing discipline and preventing future betrayals.

él personajes de fuste; ante ello, Cortés disimuló e hizo proceso sólo a unos pocos: Juan Escudero (Bernal lo llama Pedro) y Diego Cermeño fueron condenados a muerte; Gonzalo de Umbría a serle amputados los dedos de un pie; y a unos marineros llamados los

(Psychological Warfare: Demoralization)

Hernán Cortés did not stop there. He decided to sink the ships to prevent any future attempts at desertion, putting an end to the influence of the Velazquistas. After several maneuvers, most of them had already been neutralized, but by destroying the ships, he removed the possibility of escape and alerting Velázquez to Cortés' conspiracy.

This act of sinking the ships was Cortés' final step to ensure absolute control over his army, eliminating all possible alternatives. The only option left was to follow his orders and venture into the unknown. From the beginning, this expedition was extremely dangerous, so the only choices were to face death or challenge it with the hope of surviving one more day.

§. Hundimiento de las naves

El paso siguiente de Cortés para evitar futuras deserciones, fue cortar la retirada, hundiendo las naves. Un hecho tan osado que, autores posteriores, se encargaron de adornar diciendo que las había quemado. La frase hizo fortuna, incorporándose al idioma

(Strategy: Protection, Emotional Manipulation)

- **The Totonac Allies:**

Before meeting with Moctezuma, Hernán Cortés secured the complete alliance of the Totonacs. To achieve this, he took advantage of an existing conflict between the Totonacs and Moctezuma's ambassadors, who had demanded human sacrifices. Cortés captured and arrested the ambassadors and then urged the Totonacs to free themselves permanently from Moctezuma's yoke. After these events, Cortés managed to consolidate the alliance with the Totonacs, distancing them from their idols and beginning their evangelization.

entrega de veinte jóvenes destinados al sacrificio. Cortés, que presenciaba la escena, una vez que se enteró de qué se trataba, instó a Quauhtlaebana a sacudirse de una vez por todas el yugo de Motecuhzoma. Éste vaciló un momento, pero al fin, sopesando el ofrecimiento de ayuda que se le hacía, dio la orden y al momento sus hombres se abalanzaron sobre los *calpixques*, atándolos de pies

Once he felt well-organized, he decided it was time to march inland and summoned all the chieftains with whom he had allied.

(Psychological Warfare: Reinforcements)

- **The Trap for Francisco Álvarez Pineda:**

Francisco Álvarez Pineda sent a ship that unexpectedly arrived on the coast, alerting Hernán Cortés, who saw it as a potential threat. This ship, which ignored the signals to stop at Villa Rica, belonged to an expedition authorized by the Spanish Crown with the goal of colonizing the region, led by Álvarez Pineda.

For Cortés, the arrival of this ship represented two challenges:

1. First, it demonstrated that other Europeans were also interested in the lands he intended to conquer.
2. Second, it indicated a possible direct competition for claiming these lands, complicating his efforts and putting his authority and plans at risk.

Cortés decided to act quickly to eliminate the threat. Upon reaching the location where the ship had anchored, he and his group hid near the landing point. When four men disembarked from the ship, they were immediately captured by Cortés' men.

This initial capture was crucial, as it allowed Cortés to use the prisoners as part of his trap.

He then ordered four of his men to disguise themselves in the captured men's clothing. These disguised men began signaling the ship, calling the crew to pick them up. When the ship's boat arrived onshore to collect the supposed crew members, Cortés and his men emerged from their hiding place. Although some managed to escape, six men were captured.

In this way, Cortés not only eliminated the threat but also incorporated these men into his army.

(Trap Setting, Misdirection)

- **The Tlaxcalans**

On his way to meet Moctezuma, Cortés encounters the Tlaxcalans. Although only minor skirmishes occur at this stage, what truly stands out is Cortés' remarkable psychological warfare.

This can be seen when Xicoténcatl, one of the Tlaxcalan leaders, sends four elderly women with offerings to the Spaniards. Meanwhile, some Tlaxcalans infiltrate the Spanish camp with the aim of spying and conversing. However, the Totonac chief, Teuch, begins to suspect the questions being asked by the Tlaxcalans. Upon sharing his suspicions with Cortés, Cortés quickly uncovers the espionage.

In response, Cortés orders the hands of all the spies to be cut off, with two purposes:

1. To eliminate the immediate threat.
2. To send a strong message to the Tlaxcalans about the consequences of spying or betraying the Spaniards.

This psychological warfare tactic proved effective, as, although skirmishes continued sporadically, peace began to slowly gain ground. More Tlaxcalans started bringing offerings instead of fighting, until hostilities ceased completely.

una busca la paz, y la otra quiere proseguir la guerra. Finalmente, llega el día en que Xicoténcatl ya no puede sostenerse solo y, muy a su pesar, se presenta en el campo español para buscar el cese de hostilidades. Pasamos al bando español. El proceder de Diego de

It turned out that Xicoténcatl's attack on Cortés was not due to loyalty to Moctezuma, but because of the people from Ixtacamaxtitlán, allies of Cortés and tributaries of Moctezuma, which made them enemies of Tlaxcala. In the end, it was all a misunderstanding that spiraled out of control.

en términos especialmente duros. Había venido de muy lejos para buscar su amistad y enviado emisarios para anunciar su visita, y ellos, no obstante sus buenas intenciones, lo habían combatido. Xicoténcatl esgrimió la disculpa de que los había engañado aquello de que en su compañía venían los de Ixtacamaxtitlan, que como tributarios de Motecuhzoma, eran enemigos suyos. Se hicieron las paces, y se ofició una solemne misa de acción de gracias. Pero

After some time, peace was established, and a thanksgiving mass was celebrated.

(Psychological Warfare: Demoralization & Reinforcements)

- **The Cholula Massacre:**

Context: When Cortés and his allies arrived in Cholula, a city closely allied with Tenochtitlán, they were greeted with kindness. The inhabitants of Cholula invited Cortés and his men to dine, feigning hospitality. However, this was actually a trap meticulously planned by Moctezuma, aimed at attacking the Spaniards and their allies when they were off guard.

Cortés, however, did not fall for this trap. From the beginning, he maintained a distrustful attitude towards the Cholultecas, viewing them as potential enemies.

The discovery of the trap was largely due to information gathered by Tlaxcaltec spies. They noticed alarming signs:

- Traps hidden among the branches.
- The gradual evacuation of women and children from the city.
- The performance of a sacrifice in which several children were killed, a ritual that the Tlaxcaltecs interpreted as an omen of victory in battle.

When this information reached Cortés, he immediately understood that they were in the midst of a trap.

In response, Cortés summoned all the Cholula leaders for questioning, but he was already convinced of their guilt and had instructed several of his men, both Spanish and allied, to attack at the sound of a gunshot.

Sonó un disparo. Era la señal. Todos a una, españoles y aliados indígenas, se lanzaron sobre los cholultecas tomándolos por sorpresa. Fue una masacre. Como carecían de jefes que dirigieran la

During the interrogation, the Cholula leaders, fearing for their lives, confessed that they were indeed preparing an ambush, but under the orders of the Mexica ambassadors from Moctezuma. Cortés, showing no compassion or remorse, gave the order for an attack that unleashed the Cholula massacre, one of the most controversial episodes of the conquest of the Americas, where numerous inhabitants, including innocent civilians, were killed. It is likely that Cortés intended to resolve the situation quickly and brutally, sending a clear message of demoralization to Moctezuma's other allies.

As a result, nearby cities like Huejotzingo and Tepeaca rushed to ally with Cortés, fearing the same fate.

de Quetzalcóatl se plantó la Cruz. La matanza fue como una gran caja de resonancia, no tardando en presentarse emisarios de Huejotzingo (a quienes ya antes había reconciliado con los tlaxcaltecas), que ahora lo invitaban a que fuese a su territorio. Los

Note: Cortés's trap, by capturing and interrogating the Cholulteca leaders, left the city directionless, further facilitating the massacre as the citizens were left without leadership to guide their defense. (Coverage)

sorpresa. Fue una masacre. Como carecían de jefes que dirigieran la defensa, casi no opusieron resistencia. Los de Tlaxcala extremaron la crueldad, movidos por resentimientos antiguos. Cuando cesó la

(Info Gathering + Analytical Thinking + Trap Evasion + Planning Coverage)

- **Mediator:**

Cortés acted as a mediator between the Tlaxcaltecas and the Cholultecas, achieving their reconciliation and the forgetting of old enmities, as now both were vassals of the same king (the King of Spain).

(EQM + Relationship Management)

- **Evangelization:**

Each time he allied with indigenous peoples, he destroyed their idols, converted them to Christianity, and some were given new names after being baptized. This strategy was based on the belief that dismantling their beliefs weakened their resistance, thus facilitating their subjugation.

(Mass Manipulation + Psychological Manipulation)

- **The Strategy of Capturing Moctezuma**

After Cortés finally arrived in Tenochtitlán, Moctezuma welcomed him with hospitality. However, Cortés had other plans in mind; his true objective was to capture Moctezuma and hold him as a hostage. This action, however, was not impulsive but carefully planned and strategic.

To understand the strategy behind this capture, it is necessary to analyze the two main problems that Cortés faced, which he solved precisely through Moctezuma's capture.

1. The first problem Cortés needed to solve was security. By keeping Moctezuma, the leader of the empire, as a hostage, Cortés ensured that Moctezuma would think twice before risking his life. Although Cortés appeared kind and courteous to Moctezuma, he

remained vigilant and aware that he was in a dangerous and isolated situation. By capturing Moctezuma, Cortés could exert greater control over events, especially within Tenochtitlán.

encontraban. En cualquier momento les podrían hacer la guerra; bastaría con interrumpirles el suministro de agua y víveres. Con cortar los pasos de algunos puentes quedarían aislados, y sin esperanza de recibir refuerzos. Según eso, Cortés habría respondido: «No creáis, caballeros que duermo ni estoy sin el mismo cuidado, que bien me lo habréis sentido; mas, ¿qué poder tenemos

2. The second problem was more complex. To understand it, we need to go back a bit in time, before Cortés entered Tenochtitlán. At that time, Cuauhpopoca, an Aztec commander, had sent a false message claiming he wanted to submit but needed an escort to traverse hostile territory. When the Spanish sent as an escort arrived, they were ambushed and attacked; although some managed to survive and return. This incident demoralized Cortés's men, causing anger and a desire for revenge.

   Thus, another reason Cortés decided to capture Moctezuma was to prevent being overwhelmed by the discontent of his own men and to satisfy their desire for revenge.

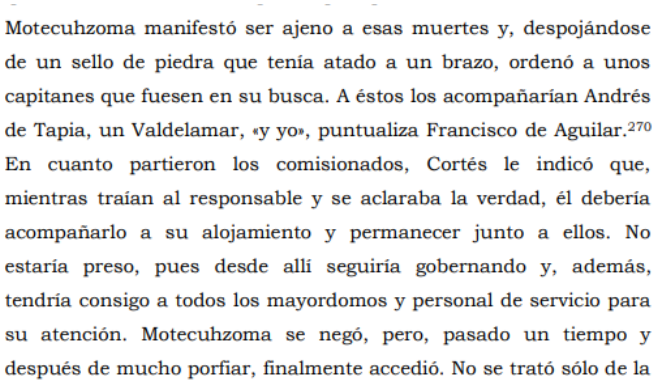
otra versión de los hechos.[267] Según este antiguo soldado metido a fraile, serían los capitanes quienes, al ver lo precario de la situación en que se encontraban, comenzaron a requerir a Cortés para que lo aprehendiese. Pasamos a Cervantes de Salazar, y vemos que éste,

segundo día cuando se apoderaron de Motecuhzoma. Sostiene que, antes de entrar en Tenochtitlán, Cortés ya estaba informado de la muerte de Juan de Escalante, pero que la razón que lo movió a actuar fue el tener conocimiento de que «quitando una o dos puentes de las por donde habiemos entrado no pudiésemos escapar las vidas». La acción respondería a una decisión personal de él,

The Capture Plan:

1. Approach to Moctezuma: Cortés and his group of men approached Moctezuma under the pretense of a normal visit, without raising suspicion.
2. Playing the Victim and Blaming Moctezuma: Cortés, with great cunning, confronted Moctezuma about the incident with Cuauhpopoca, using this issue to justify the action he was about to take.
3. Pressuring and Blackmailing Moctezuma: Although Moctezuma denied ordering the attack, Cortés informed him that his safety was at risk and that, to prevent war and save the city from destruction, it was necessary for him to accompany Cortés to the palace of Axayácatl, where he would be confined but treated with respect. Furthermore, he made it clear that if Moctezuma resisted or tried to call for help, the Spanish captains were prepared to kill him on the spot.

4. Outcome: Despite his initial refusal, the pressure exerted by the Spanish captains led Moctezuma to yield, leave his palace, and accompany Cortés. The news of his capture spread quickly through Tenochtitlán, leaving the population in shock but not provoking an immediate reaction.



Motecuhzoma manifestó ser ajeno a esas muertes y, despojándose de un sello de piedra que tenía atado a un brazo, ordenó a unos capitanes que fuesen en su busca. A éstos los acompañarían Andrés de Tapia, un Valdelamar, «y yo», puntualiza Francisco de Aguilar.[270] En cuanto partieron los comisionados, Cortés le indicó que, mientras traían al responsable y se aclaraba la verdad, él debería acompañarlo a su alojamiento y permanecer junto a ellos. No estaría preso, pues desde allí seguiría gobernando y, además, tendría consigo a todos los mayordomos y personal de servicio para su atención. Motecuhzoma se negó, pero, pasado un tiempo y después de mucho porfiar, finalmente accedió. No se trató sólo de la

(Strategy Efficiency + Emotional Manipulation + Planning Coverage + Bluffing)

- **Care of Moctezuma:**

Despite everything, Hernán Cortés took very good care of Moctezuma. He allowed him to continue ruling as king but also made him swear allegiance to Charles V and evangelized him. At all times, Cortés ensured that his army treated Moctezuma with respect. It is said that Cortés spent a lot of time conversing and playing with him. Some historians suggest that Moctezuma might have developed Stockholm syndrome, but in my opinion, this was more due to Cortés's charisma and skill in managing relationships. As a skilled diplomat, this was evident.

(Charisma + Relationship Management + Psychological Manipulation?)

- **Pánfilo de Narváez vs Hernán Cortés:**

Although Cortés seemed to have everything under control, he soon faced a new challenge, but this time it did not come from the natives. Pánfilo de Narváez had arrived with orders from Diego Velázquez to arrest him. Although Cortés tried to persuade Narváez to join his cause, Narváez categorically refused and even managed to get some of his men to conspire against Cortés. Realizing there was no other option, Cortés decided to take the initiative and attack.

On a cold night, Cortés marched toward Narváez's camp. Along the way, he intercepted two spies; they managed to capture one, but the other escaped. When this spy reached the camp and informed Narváez that Cortés was nearby, Narváez prepared for battle. However, finding no trace of Cortés and with heavy rain falling, Narváez assumed the attack would occur the next day. This

was precisely what Cortés wanted him to think, as he would not let the rain stop him and continued his advance.

Upon reaching Narváez's camp, Cortés implemented precise tactics to weaken his enemies before the battle began:

1. He ordered the cinches of the enemy horses' saddles to be cut, causing the men to fall when they tried to mount them, creating chaos and disorganization.

> antes, unos soldados de Cortés se habían introducido en el campo y habían cortado las cinchas de algunas sillas.[355] La noche se llenó

2. He also had the enemy cannons' touchholes filled with wax, preventing them from firing properly; only one cannon managed to function during the battle.

> par que se arrojaba al suelo. No se produjo la explosión, y cuando entre varios lo examinaron, encontraron que, en lugar de pólvora, contenía alpargatas. Mientras Tapia agujereaba con la espada otro

3. Furthermore, Cortés ordered the drummer Canillas to begin a drumroll, initiating the attack with the shout of "¡Espíritu Santo, Espíritu Santo!". These shouts and noises sowed even more confusion among Narváez's troops, who fell into panic.

The result of these tactics was devastating. Narváez's forces were caught off guard and fell into Cortés's traps. Men fell from their horses, and the cannons were rendered useless.

In the ensuing combat, the fighting was fierce, but Cortés had the advantage, dismantling Narváez's defenses. In a desperate attempt, Narváez took refuge in a pyramid to defend himself, but Cortés's men set fire to the structure and continued the assault.

The battle ended with Narváez being captured, severely wounded, and with one eye lost. When brought before Cortés, Narváez remarked:

> Narváez y comenzaron a defenderse. Martín López arrojó una tea al techo que era de palma y, cuando comenzó a arder, Diego de Rojas, el alférez, apareció con la bandera en una mano y la espada en otra. En la refriega salió malherido, y Cortés, que andaba cerca, evitó que lo remataran para que tuviera oportunidad de confesarse (el oidor Zorita lo llama Juan de Rojas, y dice que quedó muerto en medio del patio a causa de las numerosas heridas recibidas).[357] Narváez, blandiendo un montante, combatía valerosamente, hasta que de un golpe de pica le vaciaron un ojo. Fue apresado, y cuando estuvo

"You should consider yourself lucky to have captured me today." To which Cortés replied, "Capturing you is the least I have done in this land," humiliating him.

(Planning Coverage + Tactics + Unpredictability)

La Noche Triste: La Batalla de Otumba

During the Night of Sorrows, Hernán Cortés did not display the cunning often attributed to him but rather made a series of grave mistakes, marking one of the worst moments of his campaign, where hundreds of Spaniards lost their lives. A key error was his failure to perceive the resentment of Cuitláhuac, who was filled with rage after the massacre at the Templo Mayor, allowing the Aztecs to organize a devastating counterattack.

However, there is a noteworthy episode: the Battle of Otumba, where Cortés managed to partially turn the situation in his favor.

The Battle of Otumba:

In this battle, while fleeing, Cortés arrived at the valley of Otumba only to find himself facing a massive Aztec army, so vast it was described as a "human tide." He had no option but to fight. He quickly organized his Tlaxcaltec forces and Spanish allies and began the battle. It was a fiercely contested struggle, with victory hanging in the balance for either side.

Although Cortés was not renowned for his ability to perceive others' emotions, this did not mean his general perception was poor. In fact, it was his keen observation that allowed him to win this battle.

In the midst of a battle that seemed lost, Cortés observed something crucial:

Among the crowd dressed in white, he noticed a richly adorned figure carried on a litter, directing the attack with a standard. Using his experience and knowledge of Mexica society, Cortés immediately inferred that this must be the leader.

> brida, arremetiendo a coces contra los atacantes. De entre aquella multitud vestida de blanco, destacaba por su colorido un personaje ricamente ataviado, llevado en andas, el cual con un estandarte hacía señales dirigiendo el ataque. Cortés, seguido de Juan de

He understood that in Mexica society, the death of the leader could completely demoralize the troops and sow chaos, especially since indigenous armies heavily relied on their leaders' direction. Without this leadership, the command structure would collapse.

hacía señales dirigiendo el ataque. Cortés, seguido de Juan de

Salamanca, se dirigió a él abriéndose paso entre las filas, y en cuanto lo alcanzó lo derribó de una lanzada. Al caer al suelo, Salamanca lo remató y entregó a Cortés el estandarte. Aguilar, quien presenció de cerca la escena, recuerda: «Diego de Ordaz con la

The decisive moment:

Came when, alongside Juan de Salamanca, Cortés fought his way through the enemy ranks and struck down the Mexica leader with a spear thrust. Salamanca finished off the leader and handed the standard to Cortés. The leader's death and the capture of the standard caused chaos and a rout among the Aztecs. Without a clear leader, the Mexicas were unsure how to respond and fled in disorder. The victory at Otumba was crucial, not only for the psychological blow it dealt to the Aztecs but also because it transformed the Spaniards from fugitives into victors, revitalizing their morale and the confidence of their allies.

(Observation, Deductive Reasoning, Exploitation of Insecurities, Tactics)

- **The Fall of Tenochtitlán:**

During the first months of his offensive, Cortés focused on either subjugating or forging alliances with the peoples under Aztec rule. This tactic was crucial in weakening the Aztec support network.

Siege Preparations for Tenochtitlán:

The first thing he did was build thirteen cannon-laden brigantines, which would allow him to control the lakes surrounding Tenochtitlán, giving him a significant advantage to besiege the city from the water. Once the ships were ready, his next step was to strategically position his army and fleet in Texcoco.

Preparativos [editar]

Cortés invirtió los primeros meses de su ofensiva en someter o aliarse con pueblos tributarios de los aztecas, como Tepeyac, Yauhtepec y Cuauhnahuac. Sabedor ahora de que los puentes de Tenochtitlan le suponían un terreno densamente desventajoso, Cortés ordenó la construcción de trece bergantines cañoneros que le servirían para controlar los lagos circundantes. Los navíos se ensamblaron en la base aliada de Tlaxcala, a cargo del maestro

Then, in March 1521, Cortés consolidated his control over Chalco, Tlamanalco, and Huaxtepec, reinforcing his position and sending a message to Cuauhtémoc.

In this message, he informed that the Aztec domains were now under his control and that Tenochtitlán was surrounded, a psychological tactic intended to demoralize the Mexica and show that Cortés had the situation under control.

> Huaxtepec, Cortés envió prisioneros a Cuauhtémoc con el mensaje de que los dominios aztecas ahora le pertenecían y que Tenochtitlan estaba acorralada. En abril, reuniéndose con los caciques locales para aglutinar sus fuerzas, Cortés

Initiation of the Attack:

Cortés divided his forces into several units to attack from different fronts:

- Pedro de Alvarado: Sent to Tacuba with part of the Tlaxcalans, accompanied by his brother Jorge, Gutiérrez de Badajoz, and Andrés de Monjaraz.
- Cristóbal de Olid: Took charge of Coyohuacan with another group of Tlaxcalans, accompanied by Andrés de Tapia, Francisco Verdugo, and Francisco de Lugo.
- Gonzalo de Sandoval: Assigned to Ixtlapalapan, another strategic location, supported by warriors from Chalco and Huexotzinco, along with Luis Marín and Pedro de Ircio.
- Hernán Cortés: Took command of the brigantine fleet, leading the attack from the water.



Following his plan, Cortés executed two simultaneous maneuvers:

1. He sent Pedro de Alvarado to Chapultepec (Tlacopan) to cut off the supply of drinking water to the Aztecs. This move was crucial since most of the water reaching Tenochtitlán came through aqueducts from Chapultepec.

> Una vez apaciguados, Alvarado y Olid marcharon a Chapultepec para destruir el acueducto que abastecía la ciudad. Encontraron resistencia, pues se trataba de un movimiento anticipado por los defensores; no obstante, la operación se realizó sin demasiadas dificultades. Ese acto marca el inicio del asedio a la ciudad.

2. At the same time, Cortés' fleet advanced towards Tenochtitlán, facing a large number of Aztec canoes. Although the battle on the water was complicated, Cortés managed to prevail.

After the success of both actions, Cortés met with Olid's forces to reorganize and continue the siege. The next step in his plan involved a coordinated advance over the bridges connecting Tenochtitlán to the mainland, using the brigantines to neutralize the Mexican naval forces and move reinforcements quickly.

However, the Aztec leader Cuauhtémoc had anticipated this maneuver and set numerous traps along the bridge and in the water to hinder the advance.

> Cortés comenzó un avance conjunto por los puentes, utilizando los bergantines para invalidar el empuje naval mexica y mover refuerzos a donde fuera necesario. Sin embargo, este plan fue deducido por Cuauhtémoc, que mandó construir trampas y estacadas en tierra y agua para tratar de detener a la flota y la caballería españolas.[14] Cortés comprobó que era inútil emplear ataques relámpago para degradar estas defensas, ya que los aztecas aprovechaban sus retiradas nocturnas para recuperar valerosamente los puentes y barricadas que perdían por el día. Por ello, cambió de planes, ordenando a las tropas que acamparan en los propios puentes sin retirarse y que los jinetes durmieran con los caballos ensillados y preparados.[14] Mediante paciencia y tenacidad, las huestes españolas y tlaxcaltecas comenzaron a ganar terreno de manera consistente hacia la ciudad.[3]

Tactical Response:

Realizing that a rapid attack was no longer feasible, Cortés decided to change tactics. Instead of a lightning attack, he opted for a prolonged siege and ordered his men to continue advancing on the bridge, even if they had to sleep there, until they had complete control of the bridge.

Once the bridge was secured, the situation seemed to improve, but the Aztecs continued with fierce ambushes. These ambushes were so effective that they resulted in the death of captains Juan de la Portilla and Pedro Barba, along with a large number of Tlaxcalans.

Anticipating future ambush attempts, Cortés captured two Aztec captains and, after interrogating them, discovered an ambush plan. In response, he organized a counter-ambush that resulted in numerous casualties and captures among the Aztecs.

ciudad, empleando botes pequeños para combatir a los convoyes de canoas. Sin embargo, la defensa mexica no cejaba, y en un determinado momento tendieron una emboscada a los guerrilleros, abatiendo a los capitanes Juan de la Portilla y Pedro Barba junto con gran cantidad de tlaxcaltecas.[14] Precaviéndose de intentos posteriores, Cortés se enteró de otra emboscada tras interrogar a dos capitanes aztecas capturados, por lo que tendió una contraemboscada que se saldó con numerosas muertes y prisioneros. Tras este revés, los aztecas dejaron de emprender celadas, y algunas poblaciones de la costa, como Iztapalapa, Churubusco, Culiacán y Mixquic se rindieron.[14]

Cuauhtémoc's Psychological Warfare:

Cuauhtémoc, the Aztec leader, launched a simultaneous attack on the three Spanish camps, achieving a devastating offensive that caused the loss of several soldiers. Not content with this, Cuauhtémoc executed prisoners of war in front of everyone, demoralizing Cortés and his army.

Tactical Response:

However, Cortés was not intimidated and adapted his strategy. Instead of continuing with direct attacks, he opted for a prolonged blockade, relying on the lack of provisions to weaken the defenders of Tenochtitlán. He ordered the demolition of nearby cities and used the debris to fill in canals and block roads and bridges, creating defensive positions from which to harass the Mexicans. With this new strategy, the Spaniards began to tilt the balance in their favor. The siege and the increasing blockades led to a famine in Tenochtitlán. Desperate, Cuauhtémoc organized a massive attack on Alvarado's camp in Tlacopan but was repelled.

La estrategia de Cortés para el asedio de Tenochtitlán, consistiría en un bloqueo riguroso, para rendir la plaza por hambre, si es que antes Cuauhtémoc no se avenía a parlamentar. Se cortarían las calzadas de acceso y, para impedir que a través de la laguna, ésta continuase recibiendo víveres, la solución serían bergantines, cuya construcción quedó encomendada a Martín López. Acerca de éste,

The few lordships still supporting the Mexicans began to switch sides to the besiegers.

Since Cortés' troops were harassing them and offering negotiations, crushing those who refused to set an example for others.

To accelerate the fall of Tenochtitlán, the Spaniards and their allies attacked anyone attempting to fish in the lake, further aggravating the situation in the city, where famine and plague were decimating the population.

Final Attack:

Taking advantage of the opportune moment, Cortés ordered the final assault on Tenochtitlán's defenses. The forces from the three camps converged on the Lordship of Tlatelolco, a strategic point that had to be taken before entering the city. Once inside, the Aztecs offered fierce resistance in a series of urban battles.

Cuando Cortés divisó el momento propicio, ordenó el ataque fina contra las posiciones de la ciudad, mandando a las tropas de los tres campamentos que tomaran el Señorío de Tlatelolco, como paso previo para asegurarse la entrada a Tenochtitlan. La

Nevertheless, their weakening after prolonged resistance and deprivations during the siege led to their final defeat.

(Planning Versatility + Planning Coverage + Tactical Response + Tactics + Trap Setting+ Psychological Warfare: Demoralization + Psychological Warfare: Exploiting Insecurities + Adaptability)