Cardinal Richelieu

By Azraelyc



Note: This document draws from multiple sources, but it should not be treated as a fully verified historical source. It is intended more as an analysis. Also, please avoid using this document to compare historical figures with fictional ones; I would prefer it to remain within History SCD. If you have any questions, my Discord is: azraelyc, thanks for reading (:

EARLY LIFE:

Richelieu's life was difficult from the start. His birth was a struggle that nearly cost his mother her life (some even speculate that she may have been traveling while pregnant). From birth, it seemed fate had given him a fragile body, which was sensitive, frail, sickly, thin and weak, prone to fevers and prone to headaches. At the same time, he grew up during the French Wars of Religion, when disease, plague, and violence were simply the norm. The situation worsened further after his father's death, which left the family in financial instability, and the family lived with the pressure to restore their status. Yet Richelieu pushed through, as even though he was deeply emotional, he trained himself to cover it with discipline and reason.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 23-26.

(Adversity Capacity)

Richelieu's education began under a man named Hardy Guillot, who taught him Latin. He then studied at the Collège de Navarre, where he delved deeply into religion, grammar, the humanities, rhetoric, mathematics, philosophy, and natural science. Along the way, he also

learned Greek, Italian, and Spanish, though not as fluently as Latin, he was still fairly proficient in them. One notable trait was his strong grounding in debate. After Navarre, he studied philosophy at either the Collège de Lisieux or the Collège de Calvi, where he learned scholastic controversy, the formal art of debate involving making distinctions, defending theses, raising objections, and arguing logically. He also attended the Pluvinel Academy, where he received the education of a nobleman, learning court and military skills such as weapon handling, horseback riding, fencing, dancing, music, vaulting, wrestling, and posture training that prepared him for both military service and social circles. So beyond his intellectual education, he was also physically fit and prepared for war, making him dangerous. Hildesheimer notes that by 1602–1603, the young Richelieu seemed well-prepared to make a strong impression both at court and in the army.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 27-28.

(Crystalized Intelligence)

Interestingly, Hildesheimer notes that part of his education involved training his memory; he had to memorize lengthy texts, rules, speeches, and arguments. From this, we can infer that he possessed a remarkably keen memory.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 27.

(Memory)

Context: Despite the hardships the family faced, they retained the right to nominate the bishop of the Diocese of Luçon. This privilege was first given to Richelieu's brother Alphonse, but he abandoned the position to become a monk, leaving it vacant.

To resolve this, Richelieu stepped in to fill the role. Though he had been raised and trained for a noble, military-oriented future, he took on the position willingly and without resistance. It marked a complete reversal of the life he'd expected, yet he adjusted to it remarkably quickly. Once he accepted the role, Richelieu, still only 17, devoted himself to study. Rather than attending regular classes, he studied theology alone, bypassing the traditional path (bachelor, licentiate, and later doctor). Hildesheimer notes that despite this, he was still accepted, Henri IV nominated him as bishop, and later, when Richelieu traveled to Rome to argue his case, Rome itself accepted him as a consecrated bishop, even though the minimum age was 26 (he was still only 21 at the time). Richelieu's Fluid Intelligence is evident here, as he seems to have possessed knowledge comparable to that of a licentiate or doctor, through his means.

Richelieu was even admitted among the members of the Collège de Sorbonne. Gaining academic recognition in theology, even though, as mentioned before, he did not complete the full normal route to licentiate or doctorate.

Though this was also the product of his hard work. Burckhardt notes that people said his lamp burned continuously until morning. He quickly mastered the required knowledge and sought to demonstrate his abilities.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 37.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 33-35.

(Fluid Intelligence>Knowledge>Discipline)

Even though he was now bishop, Richelieu did not go to his diocese; he remained in Paris for a while. In that time, he would build valuable relationships and even win the king's favor and trust. Henri IV reportedly referred to him as "my bishop."

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 37.

(Influence Building>Charisma)

Context: Richelieu arrived at Luçon and found a poor, muddy, damaged diocese. The episcopal palace was ruined, the cathedral had been devastated by the Wars of Religion, and the region was still divided between Catholics and Protestants.

To fix all this Richelieu would:

- Negotiate with the canons and make a financial agreement for the cathedral's restoration.
- Impose stronger episcopal authority over the diocese, basically a strong bishop-centered control.
- Repair relations with the cathedral, negotiate over finances, and obtain cooperation from nobles and abbeys that had competing authority inside the diocese.
- He also brought in religious reformers to help him strengthen Catholic life.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 38-40.

(Leadership)

Richelieu helped a woman who was asking for advice, and in the letters we have from that discussion, we can see his strong emotional intelligence. He had recognized that the woman's problem was not simple weakness, but an inner conflict. He saw that she was torn between sacrifice and God on one side, and comfort and worldly attachment on the other. Instead of merely commanding her, he tried to redirect her toward self-control, telling her that the outcome depended on her will.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 41.

(Overall Emotional Intelligence)

Richelieu would step away from Luçon and go to Paris. During that time, he built a network of friends, domestic loyalists, clerical allies, religious reformers, and court contacts. To give some example; Sébastien Bouthillier, son of a lawyer, was someone who he would entrust with important missions. Pierre de Bérulle was a major Catholic reformer and founder of the Oratory of France, linking Richelieu to religious circles. Then there was Father Joseph, who was Provincial of Touraine, meaning he held a great deal of influence (this was the man who would see potential in Richelieu and later become his collaborator, known as the "Grey Eminence.") Richelieu also established a friendship with Duvergier de Hauranne, the future Abbé de Saint-Cyran, who was then Grand Vicar of the diocese.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 47-48.

(Influence Building)

RICHELIEU'S RISE TO POWER:



Context: After the assassination of Henry IV of France, France plunged into instability. Marie de' Medici struggled to manage the aftermath and sought an alliance with France's rival, Spain. This caused unease among the Protestants, and numerous revolts were plotted, one nearly succeeded. At this time, France was extremely unstable, with many nobles vying for power. It was in this chaotic environment that Richelieu would later rise to prominence.

Richelieu at the Estates General

During the meeting of the 3 Estates, in which Richelieu took part, a serious dispute broke out between the nobility and the representatives of the Third Estate. The conflict began when one speaker strongly criticized the nobles, accusing them of trying to protect their own wealth while seeking to reduce the resources available to the royal treasury. The nobles reacted angrily, claiming that their honor had been insulted, and even threatened to boycott the assembly. At this moment, the clergy intervened to calm the situation. Richelieu helped manage the situation by persuading the speaker to apologize to the nobles. This revealed his early ability to manage tense political conflicts, negotiate between opposing groups, and act as a mediator in moments of instability. Later, Richelieu delivered the closing speech of the assembly on behalf of the clergy. He would argue that priests should play an important role in government. His reasoning was that religious figures had often served as trusted advisors to rulers throughout history. He also believed that members of the clergy were especially suited for administrative positions because they were educated, disciplined, had no children to enrich, and were expected to place the public

good above private ambition. For Richelieu, these qualities made clergymen capable officials and, in theory, less vulnerable to corruption. Richelieu also used the speech to criticize major problems within the French state. He condemned abuses such as hereditary offices, where positions of authority could be passed down like family property, and the venality of office, a system in which government posts could be bought and sold. He argued that these practices weakened and corrupted the state. Beyond these criticisms, Richelieu suggested that, through reform, finances could improve, corruption could be reduced and the nobility could be redirected toward loyal service to the king, rather than private rivalries and internal conflict.

Hildesheimer later noted that the ideas Richelieu expressed at this meeting were consistent with the political principles he would later develop in his Political Testament. Overall, the speech was great, it captured the audience's attention, strengthened Richelieu's reputation, and, as Burckhardt emphasizes, made a powerful impression on Marie de' Medici.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 59-61.

(Communication>Persuasion>Inductive Reasoning>Relationship Management>Influence Building)

What is interesting about Richelieu during this period is that, although he was deeply ambitious and eager to enter the political arena, he carefully concealed it. While privately preparing and planning his rise, he presented a completely different public image, one of calm indifference. He immersed himself in obscure theological studies and wrote to colleagues in the tone of a contented, aging bishop satisfied with his quiet diocese, even allowing friends to urge him to pursue greater ambitions. Showing too much eagerness could make him appear desperate. By letting powerful figures seek him out instead, Richelieu increased his leverage. Also this protected him, as if political events turned against him, he could claim that he had been drawn into affairs reluctantly rather than seeking power himself.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 61-62.

(Acting Skills>Concealment>Contingency)

Richelieu sought to build influence by attaching himself to the Concini faction. Although Concini was widely hated in France, he had the favor of Marie de' Medici and had been made Marshal of France. Richelieu therefore worked to gain his trust, befriending people such as Claude Barbin, who in turn introduced him to Eleonora Galigaï, a woman who wielded some influence over the queen mother (Marie). Richelieu cultivated a close relationship with her, and she eventually helped recommend him to the queen mother-regent. All while, he wrote highly flattering letters to Marie, declaring in one of them that he would dedicate his entire life to her service, and that God should shorten his own life to lengthen hers.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 63.

(Influence Building>Charisma)

Richelieu would be assigned important roles, such as when Condé rebelled and Richelieu was sent to Bourges to negotiate his return. Hildesheimer describes his persuasion as charming, saying that he used the beautiful words he knew how to handle so well. In this way, Richelieu began to gain a reputation as a mediator and negotiator.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 64.

(Persuasion)

Context: On 25 November 1616, Richelieu received a royal patent making him Secretary of State.

Context: The Habsburgs were divided into two branches.

- ***Madrid branch: Spain, Spanish Italy, and the Spanish Netherlands.***
- ***Vienna branch: Austria and the Holy Roman Empire.***

The danger for France was that these two branches could cooperate and surround her. And even if they were allies, Spain would still encircle France, even if it were non-intentional. As Hildesheimer notes, Spain wanted a secure road connecting its Italian territories to the Spanish Netherlands because it was fighting the Dutch rebels in the Low Countries. This meant Spain needed to move soldiers and supplies from Italy toward the Netherlands.

This route was basically Milan → the Alpine passes → Tyrol / the Empire → the Spanish Netherlands.

So for France, the situation was still dangerous. Habsburg ambitions would make encirclement imminent. This was the reasoning Richelieu probably came to. As he would face this dilemma; should France return to the more aggressive anti-Habsburg policy of Henry IV by protecting its allies in Italy and resisting Spain? As we know, Richelieu would eventually pursue this anti-Spanish policy.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 73-74.

(Deductive Reasoning>Decision Making)

Then we get to Richelieu's first use of propaganda. Richelieu would later have many feats in this category, as he used propaganda for many purposes. Here, it is interesting because we see it for the first time. He wrote royal proclamations against the rebellious princes, presenting the king as merciful and the rebel princes as ungrateful and disobedient. Another interesting detail is that he did this very quickly, the Declaration of the King on the New Disturbances in the Kingdom took him only 3 days to finish.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 74.

(Propaganda>Mass Manipulation)

Why Did Richelieu Side with France's Most Hated Faction?

We then come to the question (though I already responded to it before, I did so vaguely, here I will go into detail): why did Richelieu side with France's most hated faction, especially since this faction would later end terribly? Was it a blunder? I would argue no. Richelieu knew precisely what he was doing. His ambition was to shape French foreign policy, and rather than waiting for ideal conditions, he used the existing political landscape as his entry point into power.

- **Richelieu's Contingency:**

But he did not do this blindly. While he worked with the Concini faction, Richelieu was already trying to loosen his dependence on them. That is why he acted indifferent, as if he were merely a theologian, a normal bishop, and nothing more. Even a few days before Concini was murdered, Richelieu quietly turned his attention to a figure whom most people at court dismissed entirely, Charles d'Albert, Duke of Luynes. Few recognized Luynes as someone worth watching, but Richelieu did. This is important because, when the young king (Louis XIII) eventually moved against Concini and his mother, Luynes would rise to prominence almost overnight. Richelieu wanted to place himself at the disposal of the situation. In other words, caution. Richelieu seems to have already sensed danger and may have predicted that something would go wrong. Not necessarily that Concini would be assassinated, but that the political situation could collapse, and that allying with Luynes was way more beneficial, foreseeing his future rise.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 75-76.

(Contingency>Preclusion>Prediction)

Context: Eventually, the Concini faction collapsed when Luynes and Louis XIII had Concini killed in a coup. The mob even stole Concini's body and tore it apart with a ferocity that revealed just how violently despised he had been. Even Concini's wife was not spared; she was later executed on charges of witchcraft. Eventually, nearly everyone associated with the Concini faction was arrested and treated harshly, except Richelieu. His earlier actions had made him appear only marginally involved and largely innocent. As a result, although he was humiliated and forced to resign from office, losing his influence for the time being, he avoided arrest.

Richelieu would actually later claim in his Memoirs that Luynes offered him the chance to remain in the Council with his salary, but that he refused out of honor and loyalty to the fallen queen mother.

(Trap Evasion)

There is an interesting anecdote that entails that, when Richelieu was face to face with Concini's mutilated body, Richelieu realizes the danger of his position in an instant, if the crowd

recognized him as one of Concini's allies, he could easily share the same fate. Without hesitation, he shouted "long live the king!" The crowd took up the cry with enthusiasm, and he was allowed to pass unharmed.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 84.

(Fast Thinking>Trap Evasion)

Abandoning Marie de Medici Strategy

Context: After Concini's downfall, Richelieu survived politically by repositioning himself as a mediator between Marie de Medici and the new royal government. He followed Marie to Blois as the head of her council, but this placed him in a dangerous position. On one side, he had to advise, restrain, and manage the queen mother. On the other, he also had to maintain communication with Luynes and Déageant, ensuring that the royal government did not view him as an outright enemy. This made Richelieu useful to both sides, but also deeply suspicious to each.

Caught between Marie's demands and the distrust of the king's ministers, Richelieu eventually decided to leave Blois on 11 June 1617 after hearing that the king's council had supposedly resolved to disgrace him. The warning was false, but Richelieu still would use his withdrawal to his advantage, and turn it into a political maneuver. As Bergin later notes:

"he seems to have wished to force the hand of both Marie and Luynes, and to elicit firm expressions of support from them."

In other words, Richelieu hoped that by removing himself from Blois, he could compel both Marie and Luynes to clarify their positions toward him. If Marie still needed his counsel, and if Luynes still found him useful as a channel of communication with the queen mother, then both sides would be forced to acknowledge his value. By refusing to return immediately, Richelieu seems to have hoped that an official order recalling him would not only protect him, but also strengthen his authority and make his political role harder to ignore. At first, however, the maneuver failed. As Richelieu would later find himself pushed even farther away from power. As he was exiled to Avignon, and the consequences of his disgrace even affected members of his family. This period was one of the darkest moments of his career, and Richelieu himself appears to have experienced suicidal thoughts. Yet the strategy was never truly foiled, as Richelieu's strategy depended less on what Luynes could do to him, and more on Marie de Medici and the instability of her faction. Luynes could humiliate Richelieu, isolate him, and push him away from court, but Marie herself remained far more difficult to control. Her resentment, ambition, and circle of discontented allies created a political problem that the royal government could not easily solve through force alone. Eventually, this opened the door for Richelieu's return. When Marie escaped from Blois and threatened civil war in 1619, Richelieu was recalled because he was seen as the only man capable of solving the crisis.

- **Richelieu's Planning Coverage:**

During his exile, Hildesheimer notes that Richelieu had already begun preparing a defense of himself, known as the *Caput apologeticum*. He still feared that he might be implicated during Barbin's trial, even though he was not. Still, the danger was possible, and enough for him to prepare arguments in advance.

- **Note:**

Burckhardt and other historians as Bergin mentions, actually go one step further, and mention that the false warning given to Richelieu, was actually made by him, as all formal evidence such as letters on the topic disappeared throughout history, so some historians suspect that the alarm was planned, though Bergin is skeptical, as there is evidence of Louis XIII trying to persuade Marie to dismiss Richelieu. The safest conclusion is that Richelieu used the false warning strategically after receiving it, but it is not proven to a 100% that he created it himself.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 91.

Joseph Bergin, The Rise of Richelieu (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 168-178.

(Strategy Fortitude>Strategy Flexibility>Prediction>Trap Evasion>Planning Coverage>Preclusion>Preclusion>Fabrication?)

During Marie's exile at Blois, while Richelieu stood apart, Luynes was busy consolidating, filling the court with allies, building networks, entrenching his position. Richelieu may not have viewed Luynes as an outright enemy. Luynes however once his government was becoming unpopular, he recognized a threatening possibility: if opposition began to coalesce, it would naturally gravitate toward Marie de Medici as its figurehead and Richelieu as its strategist. That combination had to be broken up. Which is why Luynes began severing Richelieu's connections at court, his brother the Marquis de Richelieu and his brother-in-law Pont-de-Courlay were both removed. Then came the trap. Luynes arranged for prisoners like Claude Barbin to be released and permitted to communicate with the queen, while intercepting the letters that followed. Once sufficient material had accumulated, he laid it before Louis XIII, presenting it as proof of a dangerous conspiracy. The crackdown that followed was swift, the governor of the Bastille was arrested, pamphleteers who had backed the queen were publicly punished, and certain political writings were burned at the Place de Grève. Richelieu had no actual involvement in any of it, but he was the intended target from the beginning/

Context: As mentioned before, Marie escaped from exile with the help of Rucellai and Épernon, then launched a propaganda campaign against her son. Luynes had no choice but to seek negotiations. His attempts to push Richelieu out of power failed, as he was forced to invite him back into the political field to help manage the situation.

Once Richelieu arrived at Angoulême, he analyzed the situation and noticed that Marie's circle was divided between two factions: one around Rucellai and the other around Épernon. He then asked himself who truly held power. Richelieu concluded that it was Épernon. Rucellai may have been the mastermind behind Marie's escape and her closest confidant, but Épernon had far greater influence, and military power. Winning him over meant giving Richelieu a political base within Marie's court. Therefore, Richelieu visited Épernon first.

Joseph Bergin, The Rise of Richelieu (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 180.

(Abductive Reasoning>Analytical Thinking)

Richelieu also wrote a short strategic memorandum for Marie, in which he advised her to pursue two objectives simultaneously.

1. In the short term, she needed to secure a residence, genuine freedom, and political safety. She should not rush back to court, as doing so would be dangerous because of the mistrust surrounding her. She needed political independence. Richelieu believed returning immediately to court would simply place Marie back under Luynes' control.
2. In the long term, she should work toward reconciliation with the king.

Beyond these two aims, Richelieu also advised her not to let her emotions drive her into protecting all her followers unconditionally. He seems to have foreseen that more factions would emerge over time, so he warned her that, if reconciliation required sacrificing some political allies, she should be willing to do so.

(Strategy Building>Strategy Logistics (further explanation below)>Strategy Forecasting)

Joseph Bergin, The Rise of Richelieu (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 181.

Joseph Bergin, The Rise of Richelieu (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 185.

(Strategy Building>Strategy Foresight>Preclusion)

During the negotiations that led to the Treaty of Angoulême, Richelieu was not initially the leading figure, but he eventually became the most important and valuable one. Due to his Abandoning Marie de Medici Strategy, he had placed himself in a neutral position. The royal government was willing to cooperate with him, unlike Épernon and Rucellai, who had both helped Marie escape from Blois. Richelieu took advantage of this by becoming the bridge between Louis XIII and Marie. He also built a communication network with the Jesuits Arnoux and Suffren, who were the confessors of Louis XIII and Marie. This gave Richelieu direct access to their spiritual advisers, allowing him to gradually place himself at the center of both sides. During the negotiations, Richelieu was the one who kept them alive, even when different

advisers changed positions or argued against compromise. He stood firm and sought the most favorable settlement, though he also knew when to compromise, since he did not want to risk a civil war that could ruin his strategy. In the end, even though he had to struggle with both sides and avoid civil war, he eventually helped secure the Treaty of Angoulême.

The Treaty of Angoulême in 1619 gave Marie de' Medici a secure and politically independent residence by granting her the governorship of Anjou, along with the important towns of Angers, Chinon, and Ponts-de-Cé. It also restored control of her household, granted amnesty to her supporters, reinstated their offices and pensions, and had the Crown pay her debts. In return, she agreed to make peace with Louis XIII and suspend open conflict, though full reconciliation remained incomplete.

Joseph Bergin, The Rise of Richelieu (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 185-187.

(Strategy Logistics>Negotiation>Emotional Management>Communication>Influence Building)

Context: After the Treaty of Angoulême became public, Richelieu's reputation changed dramatically, people across France began praising him. Even the papal nuncio, who had previously noted that Richelieu had "a hot head", now concluded that Richelieu was the man to support against Rucellai. That is a remarkable change in only a few months.

(Influence Building)

Richelieu then began to build his own faction. He started promoting his supporters and surrounding himself with relatives, close friends, in-laws, and loyal servants. With loyal allies around him, he became much harder to destroy. Then in a much steady position, Richelieu began removing his enemies. Figures such as Bishop Hurault and Bishop Bonzi were quietly pushed aside, reducing their importance. More significant figures, such as Villesavin, who had opposed Richelieu during Marie's exile at Blois, also lost influence. Villesavin lost his office and was replaced by Bouthillier, a Richelieu supporter. Actually, Richelieu had begun replacing much of the administrative control with his own supporters, especially the Bouthilliers and Lecomte.

Marie's court was becoming almost a second government, and Richelieu was becoming its chief administrator.

Joseph Bergin, The Rise of Richelieu (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 188-189.

(Strategy Building>Influence Building)

The Angoulême Negotiations 1619 (Explanation)

The strategy Richelieu had detailed to Marie in his memorandum is interesting, especially when one considers its results and Richelieu's masterful control over its execution. First, it is important to note that Richelieu's strategy was not accepted at once. Marie initially became even more aggressive, but Bergin says that Richelieu's advice eventually grew on her and began to influence her. In the end, Richelieu's strategy unfolded largely as he had intended, and its execution came increasingly under his control. The short-term objective was achieved first. Marie did not return to court. Instead, the settlement gave her a safer political base: she received Anjou, along with important towns such as Angers, Chinon, and Ponts-de-Cé. Her household was also restored, her supporters were granted amnesty, and her debts were paid. Richelieu was central to the execution of this strategy, since he eventually became the mastermind behind the Treaty of Angoulême, which gave these concessions to Marie. The execution was difficult, and if Richelieu had not compromised strategically, he could have risked causing a civil war. As for the long-term aim, matters were still not fully settled, but they were moving in the right direction. Richelieu would write letters to Luynes and Marie would eventually reconcile with her son, though this had not yet been fully achieved at the time. For now, the foundations had been laid, and Richelieu would continue working toward that future reconciliation. Then there is Richelieu's advice that Marie should be willing to sacrifice certain allies if reconciliation required it. This unfolded almost exactly as he had advised and foreseen. Marie began to loosen her attachment to political allies who trapped her in difficult dilemmas, such as Rucellai, and she gradually came to trust Richelieu more. Rucellai himself was effectively sacrificed when Marie blamed a politically damaging letter on him instead of taking responsibility herself. His influence steadily declined after this. Whether or not this was directly part of the original policy, Richelieu then sought to control Marie's court by reducing the influence of his rivals and pushing them aside. In this way, he reshaped the broader political field so that it better served his larger aim of reconciliation with Louis XIII.

(Strategy Logistics)

The reason why Richelieu sought for Angers, Chinon, Ponts-de-Cé and Anjou in general, was because these towns were strategic crossings along the Loire River. Richelieu would have realized that whoever had control over these places could control movement, communication, and military operations across the river. Thus Marie and Richelieu could defend themselves and resist pressure from the royal government if conflict resumed, conflicts which will resume at the 1620 revolt (Contingency).

Joseph Bergin, The Rise of Richelieu (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 193.

(Contingency>Preclusion>Abductive Reasoning)

There was still a problem even after the Treaty though, Luynes wanted Marie back at court so he could control her, and he therefore tried to pressure her into returning. Richelieu, however, still wanted proof of genuine reconciliation and evidence that Luynes could be trusted. Marie

understood this, so she rejected these proposals. Soon, however, rumors began to spread that Richelieu was deliberately trying to delay the reconciliation and keep control over the queen. Even the papal nuncio suggested this. Richelieu was now in a dangerous position: he could lose everything.

To avoid being trapped, Richelieu acted carefully. When his uncle, Amador de La Porte, went to court to become governor of Angers, Richelieu instructed him on what to say. If anyone asked whether Marie should return to court, La Porte was to answer yes, BUT only if the queen herself freely decided to do so. In this way, Richelieu avoided openly opposing reconciliation while also avoiding direct support for a return that might place Marie under Luynes' control.

Joseph Bergin, The Rise of Richelieu (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 195.

(Trap Evasion>Logical Manipulation)

Luynes, on the other hand, would not give up. He continued trying to poison the well by taking actions that weakened Marie's position. For example, he helped release people who held resentment against her, such as Henri II, Prince of Condé. The crown also delayed Marie's payments, rewards, and promised concessions, while rejecting her demand for equal rehabilitation. While this was happening, Luynes continued accumulating offices in order to strengthen his own power. He became a duke, peer, and Marshal of France; secured duchies for his brothers; and took control of several important fortresses on the northern frontier near Richelieu's and Marie's powerbase.

The 1620 Revolt

Context: Beyond the earlier maneuvers Luynes had already carried out against Marie and Richelieu, he also seems to have recognized what Richelieu wanted most, the cardinalate. He used this ambition against him with calculated cruelty. When Richelieu pursued the red hat, Luynes offered only vague encouragement, suggesting that Richelieu's services in reconciling the king and queen mother would eventually be rewarded. Then, without warning, he withdrew his support and proposed that the honor should instead go to Louis de Nogaret de La Valette. To make the insult worse, he even asked Richelieu himself to compose the letter recommending his rival to Rome.

From that point on, Richelieu's hatred of Luynes became much deeper. He no longer saw him merely as a personal rival, but as a dangerous favorite who was using his influence over the king for private advancement. In Richelieu's eyes, Luynes was not only blocking his own rise, but also weakening France by indirectly serving the interests of the House of Austria.

At the same time, opposition to Luynes was already gathering around Marie de' Medici because of his previous maneuvers. Several great nobles and political figures moved into her orbit, including:

- Soissons
- Mayenne
- The Vendômes
- D'Epernon
- Lesdiguières
- The Protestant leader Henri de Rohan.

These were among the most powerful men in the kingdom, and their support gave Marie's movement real political weight. However, they were still no match for the royal army.

Richelieu did not create this coalition, and at first he did not necessarily see it as useful. His position was extremely dangerous: he was opposed by the king's favorite while remaining dependent on the queen mother. Yet he quickly understood the opportunity before him. Thus his Strategy for the situation was to instead of resisting the movement, he would work inside it, impose order on it, organize it, and eventually guide it toward an outcome that ended on his terms.

- **Organizing the Revolt**

Richelieu helped plan and organize the revolt because the coalition had almost no unity.

- He relied on trusted agents, including men such as Sébastien Bouthillier and Michel de Marillac, who constantly carried information, instructions, and negotiations between Paris and Angers. Richelieu wanted to understand the entire political situation for himself. For that reason, he built his own network instead of depending on others. This network allowed him both to gather intelligence and to negotiate with different members of the coalition in an effort to hold them together.

Even then, this was extremely difficult, since many of the participants were ambitious, selfish, and interested mainly in their own advantage.

- Richelieu also helped finance the rebellion. He seized royal revenues, collected taxes, raised loans, and worked to fund the army. By July 1620, these efforts had produced more than 2.3 million livres and, at least on paper, an army of over 50,000 men. This was a remarkable feat of Strategy logistics.

- **Did Richelieu Want the Revolt to Succeed?**

The answer is no, at least not in the sense of Marie decisively defeating the king. This may seem strange, but there is strong evidence for it, and it helps explain what is meant by saying that Richelieu tried to shape the direction of the revolt. Blanchard gives a good example, with Richelieu's response to Henri de Rohan on a military topic. At one point, Rohan suggested that Marie withdraw south of the Loire, where she would be safer militarily. Richelieu opposed this idea. Such a move might have strengthened Marie's defensive position, but it also risked turning

the conflict into something far more dangerous: a rival government, a wider rebellion, or even a broader Protestant war. That was not Richelieu's goal. He preferred to keep Marie at Angers. His aim was not for Marie to overthrow or defeat her son, nor for the king to crush her completely. Instead, he wanted to keep the conflict limited. Marie had to remain strong enough to force negotiations, but not so strong that the revolt became uncontrollable. In other words, Richelieu wanted the crisis to end through negotiation, not destruction.

Burckhardt later explains that remaining at Angers also had strategic value because it helped make the king appear to be the aggressor.

- **Richelieu's "Alibi"**

While taking part in these efforts, Richelieu also made sure to protect himself in case the revolt failed. Publicly, he presented himself as a man of peace who favored reconciliation and cooperated with mediators. His letters and official behavior reinforced this image, and even at the start of the revolt, Richelieu argued that he warned Marie, and he did not push her into rebellion. Privately, however, he encouraged resistance and helped keep Marie's cause alive. This created a kind of political alibi. No matter what happened, Richelieu could claim that he had been working for peace.

This duplicity became especially clear when the king sent Blainville as an envoy to Angers. Richelieu received him with every sign of goodwill and gave the impression that an agreement was close. Negotiations appeared to move forward, but they were repeatedly slowed down by carefully constructed difficulties and excuses. In reality, Richelieu was buying time.

- **Turning the Conflict to His Advantage**

As the crisis developed, the royal army advanced first into Normandy and then toward the Loire. This made the crown appear increasingly aggressive, while the queen mother's party, despite its disorganization, continued to hold its position. When the revolt began to weaken and Marie's situation became more fragile, Richelieu did not panic. A total victory for either side would have been dangerous. Instead, he seems to have calculated that Luynes, facing growing hostility and instability, would eventually look for a negotiated settlement.

He was correct, and the result would follow with the Treaty of Angers.

Richelieu guided Marie toward accepting a settlement while allowing the clergy to take the visible lead in negotiations. He remained active behind the scenes, shaping the outcome without making himself too exposed. The final agreement was favorable to Marie de' Medici. She received amnesty, her followers were pardoned, and the treaty presented her less as a rebel than as a wronged political figure whose grievances had to be addressed.

Carl J. Burckhardt, Richelieu: His Rise to Power, pp. 136-142.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 101-103.

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 2, note 34-48.

(Strategy Flexbility> Strategy Forecasting>Strategy Logistics>Adaptability>Indirect Manipulation>Contingency>Planning Versatility>Mass Manipulation>Abductive Reasoning> Sophistry> Improsiving>Concealment>Acting skills>Psychological Warfare: Demoralization)

Personal Insights on Richelieu's 1620 revolt Strategy

Let me give my personal insights on this, because I think I've finally understood the situation more clearly after revisiting several sources on this episode. Why would he support a revolt while seeming indifferent to its success, and why conceal himself while still participating in it? The answer lies in his broader objective: the political weakening of Charles d'Albert, duc de Luynes. Richelieu did not create the opposition gathering around Marie de' Medici, but he recognized its potential and chose to operate within it, working among powerful nobles already hostile to the favorite. Rather than attempting to stop the movement, he adapted to it and helped give it direction, turning what could have been a chaotic revolt into, in effect, a political instrument. At the same time, he maintained a careful distance: publicly presenting himself as a mediator committed to reconciliation, while privately sustaining the queen's resistance. This dual posture allowed him to preserve his position regardless of the outcome, revealing a high degree of strategic flexibility. What makes this particularly striking is that Richelieu did not commit himself to a single result; he positioned himself so that whether the revolt advanced, collapsed, or led to negotiation, he would remain indispensable. By separating appearance from action and working with the momentum of events rather than attempting to fully control them, he transformed instability into leverage. In this sense, his strategy was not to win the conflict outright, but to ensure that its very existence reshaped the political balance in his favor, weakening Luynes while strengthening his own position.

(Strategy Flexibility, Adaptability, Improvising)

After this moment Richelieu gained huge influence. He now had support from:

- The clergy
- Enemies of Luynes
- Political opponents of Condé
- Many people who wanted stability

Many people began to see him as the only man capable of stabilizing France.

Carl J. Burckhardt, Richelieu: His Rise to Power, p. 143.

(Leadership, Influence Building)

Context: Germany and the Holy Roman Empire are falling into religious and political chaos. The empire is divided between Catholic and Protestant princes. The emperor Matthias dies in 1619. His successor is Ferdinand of Styria, a very militant Catholic trained by Jesuits, determined to crush Protestantism. The Protestants in Bohemia rebel. This begins with the famous Defenestration of Prague in 1618, when imperial officials are thrown from a window. This event marks the opening of the conflict that becomes the Thirty Years' War.

Context: Then Luynes had gained such a poor reputation. In an effort to restore his standing with the king, Luynes launched a campaign against several Protestant strongholds. However, during the campaign he fell ill and died from the disease. Richelieu's main rival until now had died.

One might assume that Richelieu would immediately take advantage of Luynes' death and maneuver aggressively to obtain the cardinalate. But by this point, Richelieu had already been rejected several times, and he understood that powerful figures could still block his rise. The king himself, Brûlart, Puysieux, and other older royal ministers remained suspicious of him.

Richelieu also seems to have understood why so many people feared his promotion. He had already gained a reputation for cunning because of his earlier political maneuvers. If he became a cardinal, he would no longer be politically dependent on Marie de' Medici, and that made him even more threatening. So, as Hildesheimer explains, Richelieu changed strategy. Instead of openly pushing his career forward, he acted quieter and indifferent.

But this did not mean he stopped maneuvering.

He simply did so in a more concealed way. While presenting himself as merely managing Marie's finances, he strengthened his political position by taking control of her financial administration, placing loyal men in key posts, and expanding his network of agents across the kingdom.

In the end, the strategy worked. Richelieu became the only official French candidate for the cardinalate. Opposition faded both in Paris and in Rome. Then, on 5 September 1622, the news finally arrived: Richelieu had been made cardinal.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 107-108.

(Influence Building>Emotional Understanding>Concealment>Acting Skills>Info Gathering)

THE CARDINAL RICHELIEU:



After finally winning the cardinal's hat in 1622, the cardinalate gives him prestige, protection, money, social rank, and a path toward power. Richelieu tells Marie de Medici that the cardinal's red hat will always remind him of his solemn vow to shed his blood in her service. And he would seek to let everyone know that he owed his rise to the queen mother. After all, at this stage, he may be a Cardinal, but he is still officially Marie's man.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 109.

(Propaganda)

Richelieu is portrayed with a red aura, sacred yet dangerous, powerful, and intimidating. His identity is bound up with the image of "the Red Man." Nicolas Goulas, a supporter of Gaston d'Orléans, and therefore someone who would be expected to be hostile toward Richelieu, concedes that Richelieu possessed remarkable qualities, the presence of a great nobleman, agreeable and appealing speech, extraordinary eloquence, a sharp and subtle mind, refined aristocratic manners, and a charm that won people over.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 110.

(Charisma>Aura)

Hildesheimer notes that Richelieu could shift his facial expressions with ease and cry readily, and that he was able to turn these apparent vulnerabilities into tools of influence. His enemies accused him of violent outbursts, even of striking servants, yet he could quickly pivot to charm, humor, and seduction. Far from being emotionless, cold, and silent, Richelieu was, in fact, the opposite, remarkably skilled at displaying emotion. The key difference is that he learned to control and weaponize those emotional displays rather than simply being ruled by them. Marie de Medici captured this when she remarked that he could cry whenever he chose to. This suggests that Richelieu's emotional nature was genuine, but he also understood how to deploy it for political advantage

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 111-112.

(Acting Skills>Emotional Management)

Now that Richelieu had become powerful, his political enemies like La Vieuville tried to trap him with prestigious positions that appeared honorable, but were actually meant to remove him from power. Richelieu noticed this and rejected them each time. He rejected the direction of a council of dispatches, which could have trapped him in bureaucracy and separated him from direct access to the king. He also rejected the ambassadorships to Spain and Rome, since those posts would have removed him from France entirely. In this case, Richelieu used the excuse of poor health,

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 114-115.

(Trap Evasion)

Richelieu began organizing opposition against the French government and his enemies in it. Richelieu would use the media. He partnered with a pamphleteer named François Fancan, a canon of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois in Paris, who wrote pamphlets that attacked the government directly, branding the Brûlart family as corrupt and incompetent, and pushing nationalist ideas. And Richelieu would also encourage Fancan against La Vieuville. Pamphlets such as Le Mot à l’oreille and La Voix publique au roi attacked La Vieuville’s incompetence and implied that Richelieu was the obvious replacement.

Joseph Bergin, The Rise of Richelieu (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 245-246.

(Propaganda>Tactics>Mass Manipulation>Influence Building)

Destroying the Influence of La Vieuville

Richelieu then would move against La Vieuville aggressively. And he would do so on two fronts simultaneously.

1. **Undermining him with the king:** With the collaboration of La Ville-aux-Clercs, the secretary of state responsible for English affairs, Richelieu struck at the most sensitive nerve of the monarchy, he persuaded Louis that his own leading minister was operating independently of him, effectively conducting a foreign policy of his own devising in the matter of softening the terms of Henriette-Marie's marriage to the future Charles I. For a king as jealous of his prerogative as Louis, the insinuation that a minister might be substituting his own judgment for royal authority touched on precisely the anxiety that no monarch of the period could tolerate, and Richelieu knew that.
2. **Undermining him with the public:** Meanwhile, Fancan and other allies went after La Vieuville's handling of finances, claiming he had enriched himself and his circle at the state's expense. Whether or not the charges were fair, they landed, anyone in charge of the treasury was an easy target, since money matters bred suspicion almost automatically.

So Richelieu came at La Vieuville from both directions: painting him as a minister overstepping the king's authority, and as someone using his financial post for personal gain.

Context: By July and into early August 1624, La Vieuville's footing had clearly begun to slip. He and Richelieu clashed directly, likely because La Vieuville suspected Richelieu was orchestrating the campaign against him. Then, on 13 August 1624, he was arrested and imprisoned, following rumours, speculation, silence from the king, and then abrupt downfall.

Joseph Bergin, The Rise of Richelieu (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 257-258.

(Indirect Manipulation>Strategy Fortitude>Fabrication>Mass Manipulation>Emotional Understanding>Abusing Insecurities>Propaganda)

Richelieu reasoned Valtellina was dangerous, since it connected Spanish and other Austrian Habsburg territories. Sillery and Puysieux did not want to intervene, but Richelieu saw this as a weakness. He therefore began building a campaign that established two ideas.

1. That a change of policy was necessary, France could not sustain a passive policy.
2. That he was the man capable of carrying it out. Though, of course, he portrayed this as being able "to restore the glory of the king in Europe" phrased this way, it didn't appear that he wanted glory for himself, but rather presented himself as the instrument of Louis XIII's glory.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 115.

(Social Intuition>Influence Building>Risk Calculations)

On 28 April 1624, Richelieu had a nighttime conversation with Louis XIII on the terrace of the Château de Compiègne. No one knows exactly what he said, but he managed to convince the king to let him enter the council "to give his opinion". as a minister without portfolio (ministerial

consultant). This seemed like a minor position, but it was better than the previous offices he had been offered, which were traps. As a consultant, he managed to get close to the king and his circle, entering power modestly and cautiously. Yet he made remarkably shrewd moves to gradually build his position without anyone noticing, for example, he secured for the cardinalate precedence over the other council members. This looked merely ceremonial, but it allowed Richelieu to elevate his political standing under the cover of an ecclesiastical justification.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 116-117.

(Influence Building)

Richelieu possessed the art of guiding the king without offending his sensitivity. He took advantage of the fact that Louis already knew what policy he wanted, but had a problem that often prevented him from finishing sentences, which caused him shame and even rage. Therefore Richelieu would be there to speak for him. However, he did so carefully, because he did not want to appear dominant, as Concini and Luynes had done, thereby humiliating the king. Richelieu wanted to build a deep attachment with Louis, one in which Louis would depend on him. He understood Louis's psychology better than Luynes, Concini, and even the king's mother, which explains why he approached him in this manner.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 126.

(Emotional Manipulation>Emotional Understanding)

Richelieu establishes a method for handling requests made to the king. When people ask the king for things that must be REFUSED, Richelieu will warn the king and take responsibility for the refusal himself. When the king CAN grant something, Richelieu will pretend not to be involved and will advise the petitioners to ask the king directly, so the favor appears to come purely from the king. That protects Louis' self esteem, popularity and authority while making Richelieu a shield.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 127.

(Emotional Management>Indirect Manipulation)

Richelieu's Political Program for France

In Richelieu's *Political Testament*, he recalls a moment in which he spoke directly to Louis XIII about the condition of France. This must have been around the time Richelieu entered the king's council. Hildesheimer notes this, although she does not fully determine the exact moment it refers to. Still, it seems reasonable to place it somewhere around this time.

In this conversation, Richelieu had presented Louis XIII with his analysis of the kingdom's problems.

1. First, he argues that the Huguenots were not merely a religious minority. In his view, they had become almost a state within the state. They possessed fortified towns, political assemblies, military structures, and special privileges. Because of this, Richelieu concluded that they were dangerously close to independence from royal authority.
2. Second, he observes a similar problem among the nobles. Many nobles had accumulated too much power and behaved as if they ruled their own private kingdoms. Royal authority had become decentralized, and powerful governors and aristocrats acted less like subjects of the king than semi-independent rulers.

Richelieu therefore links the Huguenot problem with the noble problem: if one group could challenge the king successfully, others might imitate it. Disorder could become contagious, spreading through the kingdom until every powerful faction claimed the right to resist authority.

3. Third, Richelieu observes a deeper moral and political corruption. People no longer measured their worth by loyalty, but by boldness. The more daring, aggressive, and rebellious someone was, the more important he imagined himself to be. Thus instead of valuing the favors, subjects constantly demanded more. And so the people who plotted the most appeared to prosper the most.
4. Fourth, Richelieu turns from domestic disorder to foreign policy. He argues that France's foreign alliances had been neglected because ministers preferred their own interests. Richelieu believed France needed an active foreign policy, especially to resist Habsburg power in Spain and Austria. In his view, France's reputation abroad had declined, and the dignity of the monarchy had been so degraded.

From this, Richelieu moves to the need for reform. Even if cautious or intelligent men claimed that reform was too dangerous, he argues that action was necessary. He also implies that he was willing to accept the risks personally. If his policies failed, Louis XIII could always blame him, since princes often placed responsibility on their ministers when events went badly.

Finally, despite the dangers, Richelieu promises that the state can be restored. But he does not present himself as saying, "I alone will save France." Instead, he attributes success to the king's prudence, courage, strength, and to God's blessing. Richelieu presents himself as the king's instrument, carefully avoiding the appearance that he is overshadowing or controlling the monarch.

He then lays out his famous program.

1. First, he wants to destroy the Huguenot political party. This does not necessarily mean destroying Protestant belief itself, but eliminating the Huguenots as an armed political body capable of challenging the monarchy.
2. Second, he wants to lower the pride of the nobles. This means forcing the aristocracy to obey the king and ending their habits of rebellion.
3. Third, he wants to bring all subjects back to their duty.

4. Fourth, he wants to restore France's reputation abroad. France must once again become respected and feared internationally through active diplomacy, stronger alliances, and a foreign policy worthy of a great monarchy.

Therefore, Richelieu's program is both domestic and foreign.

Note: However, we must be careful when reading this passage. It should not automatically be treated as proof that Richelieu possessed a fully developed master plan from the beginning. What we can say with more certainty is that Richelieu presents a set of major aims and thus his later maneuvers can then be understood as attempts to pursue these aims.

Richelieu, Cardinal. The Political Testament of Cardinal Richelieu: The Significant Chapters and Supporting Selections. Translated by Henry Bertram Hill. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961.

(Analytical Thinking>Emotional Understanding & Perception>Critical Thinking>Abductive Reasoning>Observation>Strategy Building>Planning Formulation)

The Anglo-French Marriage Alliance

Context: Since La Vieuville was gone, Richelieu was left to handle the question of the Anglo-French marriage, an alliance he strongly wished to secure. The marriage had originally been proposed by Henry IV before his death. And he actually intended to arrange it for his son, Louis, as a means of creating an alliance with England and establishing a counterweight to the Habsburg powers.

Richelieu now pursued this older objective and took an active role in the negotiations.

The alliance had two principal objectives for him:

1. Creating a counterweight to Spain

The first objective, which Henry IV had also pursued, was to create a counterweight to Spain and prevent the formation of an Anglo-Spanish alliance.

What is particularly interesting, however, is that Richelieu understood precisely why an alliance with England would benefit Spain. Spain was still locked in war with the Dutch Republic, whose military strength depended partly on English and Scottish soldiers. An Anglo-Spanish alliance might therefore allow Spain to pressure England into withdrawing those troops or preventing further recruitment, thereby weakening the Dutch war effort.

2. Weakening the French Huguenots

The second objective was closely associated with his own ambitions. He recognized that the marriage could weaken the French Huguenots by making England less willing to support them once it had entered into an alliance with France.

- **The Planning:**

Richelieu nevertheless had to plan the marriage carefully. He had to prevent two major problems.

1. First, he could not allow Henrietta Maria to convert to Protestantism, which would have appeared to France as both a religious and political betrayal.
2. Second, he had to arrange the marriage in a way that did not appear scandalous. The marriage of a Catholic princess to a Protestant prince was deeply controversial and potentially unacceptable to many Catholics.

Richelieu therefore sought to resolve the problem by demanding guarantees for Henrietta Maria's Catholic faith and, if possible, some relief for English Catholics. Burckhardt would thus mention that in England, Henrietta Maria would be permitted to maintain Catholic ladies-in-waiting, a bishop or confessor, theologians, and a private Catholic chapel. These conditions allowed the marriage to be presented not as a betrayal of Catholicism, but as a diplomatic opening through which Catholic influence might be preserved or even expanded in England.

Note: It is also important to emphasize Richelieu's ability to make the alliance politically acceptable to several different factions. To the king and his ministers, the marriage could be presented as an anti-Spanish security measure. To those concerned about the Huguenots, it could be presented as a means of separating England from French Protestant rebellion. To Catholic skeptics, it could be defended as a way to protect a Catholic princess and perhaps improve the condition of English Catholics. To the papacy, it could be presented as a marriage surrounded by extensive Catholic safeguards.

Carl J. Burckhardt, Richelieu: His Rise to Power, pp. 177-179.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 129-130.

(Strategy Forecasting>Planning Formulation>Planning Coverage>Deductive Reasoning>Indirect Manipulation>Critical Thinking)

However, something Richelieu could not have predicted then occurred. Buckingham, the English king's favourite, caused trouble when he attempted to seduce Louis XIII's wife, Anne of Austria, during the marriage celebrations. Anne naturally rejected him, but the incident created a scandal. It offended Louis and left Buckingham feeling personally humiliated. As a result, the Anglo-French alliance was formed under considerable tension. Buckingham became resentful and would later attempt to undermine and eventually break the alliance.

To defend Richelieu's policy, however, the alliance was still successfully concluded. Although England under Buckingham would later create serious problems for France, the alliance temporarily served Richelieu's immediate objectives at that moment.

(Planning Versatility)

For Richelieu, cooperation between the Spanish and the Austrian Habsburgs which could surround France, was the most dangerous scenario to him. This made northern Italy strategically important, since Spanish Milan and the Alpine passes connected the two Habsburg branches. Therefore propaganda was carefully made. Propaganda which claimed it wanted to "liberate" Italy from Habsburg rule, although this language mainly concealed its own strategic interests.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 133.

(Propaganda)

First Instance of Indirect Warfare Against Spain

Context: We now turn to the Thirty Years' War. Maximilian of Bavaria had seized the Protestant Palatinate, while Tilly and Wallenstein strengthened the Catholic-Habsburg position in Germany. At the same time, France and Spain competed over northern Italy and the Alpine passes, where Spain sought to connect Milan with Austria. Richelieu therefore saw Germany and Italy as two linked fronts in the struggle against Habsburg power.

Since France still faced internal problems, such as powerful nobles who could rebel, the Huguenots, and financial and military weaknesses, it was not yet prepared to begin an open war. However, Richelieu still believed that France had to do something. Thus he pursued an indirect war against Spain. And this would be the first instance of an indirect war policy, which Richelieu would repeatedly use in the future.

In this case, he employed a series of tactics aimed at weakening Spain by isolating it from the Holy Roman Empire, while simultaneously weakening the latter:

1. **Richelieu supported Mansfeld,** a Protestant commander in the Thirty Years' War who fought against the Catholic forces. Mansfeld was useful to Richelieu because he could keep the emperor occupied in Germany. France therefore promised him money and troops.
2. **Richelieu also sent diplomats to Denmark.** He knew that the Danish king was worried because Tilly, the Catholic general serving Bavaria and the emperor, was becoming increasingly powerful in northern Germany. If Tilly advanced too far north, Denmark itself could be threatened. Richelieu saw an opportunity. By encouraging Denmark to intervene, France could help open another front against the imperial Catholic forces.
3. **The Anglo-French marriage alliance,** which I have discussed earlier, was also connected to this wider strategy. Its purpose within this policy was to keep England away from an alliance with Spain, thereby isolating Spain and weakening Habsburg influence.
4. **Richelieu also sought closer relations with Bavaria.** Although Bavaria was firmly Catholic, it was also determined to preserve its independence from Emperor Ferdinand II. Richelieu did not hesitate to take advantage of this rivalry, since it helped prevent the

emperor from consolidating his power within the Holy Roman Empire. He therefore explored the possibility of separating Bavaria from the emperor.

5. **Later one Richelieu would renew the old alliance France used to have with the Dutch Republic,** after Spain had begun making gains in the Low Countries (Ambrogio Spinola, was besieging Breda), thus Richelieu responded by renewing. Many ministers objected because the Dutch were Protestant. Louis nevertheless approved it because Richelieu would remind him that it was the foreign policy of his admired father, Henry IV.

By this stage, Richelieu had nearly assembled a large anti-Habsburg coalition. Which included: France, England, Venice, Savoy, The Dutch Republic and Denmark.

- **Strategy Logistics & Flexibility:**

As Richelieu executed his strategy, several problems arose in the future, many of which were beyond his control. The dévots pressed for war against the Huguenots at the worst possible moment, while Rohan and Soubise renewed the Protestant rebellion. France had to make use of English and Dutch ships against fellow Protestants (since they had no fleet), and Buckingham eventually threatened France with war. Richelieu therefore had to negotiate simultaneously with the Huguenots, England, and France's increasingly dissatisfied allies. Richelieu partially succeeded in preserving peace and preventing France from becoming trapped in several wars at once. The crisis concluded with the Peace of 1626 and the Treaty of Monzón. Although Richelieu did not decisively defeat Spain, his strategy did pressure Spain across several fronts, the Dutch continued fighting, Mansfeld remained active, and Denmark would eventually enter the German war. The Habsburgs were therefore forced to respond in the Netherlands, northern Germany, and Italy rather than concentrating their resources in a single theater. The Treaty of Monzón was not bad, The sovereignty of the Grisons over Valtellina was recognized, while France received an exclusive right of passage through the region. Catholic worship was guaranteed in the valley, and the forts were to be returned to the pope and then demolished. France therefore prevented Spain from obtaining control of this Alpine corridor. This only really demonstrates Richelieu's amazing strategy logistics & flexibility. As he was able to control damage, and preserve his objectives despite big setbacks.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 132-134.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 138-140.

(Strategy Fortitude>Strategy Flexibility>Strategy Building>Indirect Manipulation>Emotional Understanding>Strategy Logistics>Emotional Manipulation)

Richelieu would realize he had to do something to not lose the public opinion, thus he would work with his publicists to justify his new foreign policy. In which it would be argued that France acted in defense, Spain the aggressor. Therefore, if alliances with Protestant powers were

necessary to resist Spanish expansion, they could be accepted. They also defended this policy by referring to Henry IV, who had followed a similarly anti-Habsburg strategy. This allowed Richelieu to present himself not as creating a dangerous new policy, but as continuing the work of Louis' father. And Richelieu with his propagandist went even further by claiming that opposing Spain was necessary to preserve the peace of Christendom. Spanish domination, they argued, threatened the independence of European states.

Richelieu nevertheless continued to present his policy as Catholic.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 136.

(Propaganda>Logical Manipulation)

Context: Soon the Chalais conspiracy would arise, with Gaston's refusal to marry Mademoiselle de Montpensier, a marriage supported by Louis, Marie de' Medici, and Richelieu.

This dispute allowed the cardinal's many enemies, including Anne of Austria's circle, the duchess of Chevreuse, Gaston's favourites, and discontented nobles, to unite around a common cause. Some feared that the marriage would strengthen the monarchy and secure the Bourbon succession, while others hoped to preserve their influence over Gaston or remove Richelieu's increasingly restrictive control over the court and nobility. Their initial aim was to separate Gaston from the court and use his position as heir presumptive to force the king to dismiss Richelieu. However, when Louis XIII arrested Marshal d'Ornano, the conspirators realized that political pressure alone would not break the king's support for his minister. Richelieu therefore became the principal obstacle to all their ambitions, and their anger transformed the opposition into a plan to assassinate him.

Foiling the Chalais Conspiracy

Gaston and several nobles, especially the Duchess of Chevreuse, would plan to visit Richelieu at Fleury-en-Bière, near Fontainebleau, supposedly for dinner, with Chalais set to assassinate him in a staged quarrel. Though before they could do so, Chalais committed the error of telling his uncle, who in turn would convince Chalais to reveal everything.

So eventually Richelieu knew the intended location, participants, method, and he would move intelligently.

The first thing he does is promise Chalais the command of the light cavalry; Richelieu wants him to tell him more of the co-conspirers (important later).

- **The Gaston Trap**

Then, instead of hiding, he goes early in the morning to Fontainebleau, where the conspirators are to set the trap. Richelieu goes directly to Gaston, who is still unaware Richelieu knows

anything. At the lever, courtiers assisted the prince while he dressed. Richelieu there personally dresses Gaston. He behaves like a servant, but the gesture feels more like an act of domination, because as he dresses him, he tells Gaston that he wished he had told him about the plot in advance, revealing he knew everything to him.

Richelieu wanted Gaston to know that he knew his intentions, that he was not afraid, and that he could enter his space whenever he pleased. Gaston is left speechless and terrified.

As for Gaston's servants: meanwhile, the night before the planned breakfast meeting, Burckhardt tells us King Louis XIII had quietly surrounded the château with thirty gendarmes and thirty cavalrymen. When the rest of Gaston's servants and fellow conspirators arrived, the soldiers were already in position.

- **But why did Richelieu do all this?**

Richelieu could have simply told someone to arrest them, and it would have ended there. But the thing is, Hildesheimer tells us that Richelieu knows he cannot arrest Gaston, he can arrest the rest, but Gaston is the king's brother. This is why he uses psychological warfare and this whole trap, putting himself at risk by entering Gaston's room. Giving him a spook and a lesson was the best he could do, since he obviously couldn't harm him by arresting or executing him.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 150-151.

Carl J. Burckhardt, Richelieu: His Rise to Power, pp. 199-200.

(Demoralization>Direct Manipulation>Emotional Manipulation>Trap Setting>Planning Coverage?)

Richelieu's Plan to Dismantle the Chalais Conspiracy

Once the conspiracy was foiled, Richelieu had to plan out on how to deal with the conspirators.

1. **Gaston**

As noted earlier, Gaston could not be eliminated. Richelieu understood this, so instead of moving against him directly, he maneuvered to bring Gaston over to his side, compelling him to sign a formal apology and accept peace terms. After that, he was forced to marry Marie de Bourbon, Duchess of Montpensier as planned,

Note: On 15 August, Richelieu even delivered a sermon before the court, where he drew on the fourth Commandment. honouring one's father and mother, to define Gaston's duty toward Louis XIII. Gaston was to love, respect, and fear Louis XIII not merely as his king, but as his true father (even if they were just brothers).

2. **Condé**

Like Gaston, Condé was too important and too useful to punish outright, so he too was pardoned. As part of the arrangement, the king and queen mother agreed to stand as godfather and godmother to Condé's son, the future Duke of Enghien. In exchange, Condé had to submit to Richelieu, and he was not to use his influence to oppose the arrest of the conspirators.

3. **The Vendôme brothers**

César and Alexandre de Vendôme were lured to Blois, where the king was staying, and arrested there on 13 June 1626.

4. **Chalais, Ornano, and Chevreuse**

These three didn't hold the same political weight as Gaston or Condé, so Richelieu's would simply isolate them; Ornano was arrested and the Duchess of Chevreuse exiled. Interestingly, Richelieu had Chalais (who had been forgiven at first) placed under surveillance, with every move reported back to the king, almost as if Richelieu were waiting for him to slip up. Which was what exactly happened, as even after the plot collapsed, Chalais kept trying to reach Gaston and push him toward rebellion again. This led to his arrest and, later, his execution.

- **Plan explained**

Richelieu's plan here was great, so let's analyze it. His goal was to divide the conspirators by isolating the key members (either drawing them onto his side or forcing them there) so that everyone else would be left exposed and alone. That's why he had Gaston sign a pardon, Gaston was, quite literally, the head of the plot, so winning him over meant striking at the root of the conspiracy. It also was kinda Richelieu's only real option, since killing Gaston was never on the table. Condé received the same approach. As a prince with real influence, bringing him onside meant that the conspiracy's next most powerful figure was now working against his former allies rather than for them. Richelieu masterfully sealed this bond permanently by having King Louis and the queen become godparents to Condé's son, a family tie that left Condé thoroughly compromised. As for the rest; the Vendôme brothers were lured in and arrested by Louis himself. Ornano was cut off from Condé and arrested. The Duchess of Chevreuse, as Burckhardt adds, was eventually exiled (though she managed to escape to Lorraine). And Chalais, who initially pardoned for his honesty, was kept under constant watch, as though Richelieu anticipated, or was simply waiting for, a misstep. That misstep came when Chalais tried to stir Gaston back into rebellion, which led to his capture and execution. This ongoing surveillance shows just how versatile Richelieu's planning was, even when Gaston reunited with his former co-conspirators, Richelieu was able to monitor the situation and later turn it to his advantage. Richelieu also rewarded Gaston every time he spoke out against the conspirators, like granting him the duchies of Orléans and Chartres, the county of Blois, and a substantial annual pension for his household, along with elevating him from Duke of Anjou to Duke of Orléans. One could argue that

Richelieu was planning Chalais's downfall from the start, or at least ensuring that the conspirators in general who weren't Gaston or Condé would suffer severe consequences.

Note: Hildesheimer compares Richelieu's actions here to a genuine coup d'État. This does not mean Richelieu formally overthrows the monarchy. But he forcibly restructures the political situation through a rapid combination of arrests, coerced reconciliation, bribery, judicial action, and dynastic marriage. By officiating at the marriage, Richelieu has prevailed over the conspiracy and has fully shown that he has control over the government.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 151-153.

Carl J. Burckhardt, Richelieu: His Rise to Power, pp. 200-201.

(Planning Versatility>Planning Coverage>Info Gathering>Indirect Manipulation>Anticipation?>Abusing Insecurities>Planning Formulation>Direct Manipulation)

Chalais's interrogation and execution was cruel. As in the lead-up to the execution, Richelieu manipulates Chalais to squeeze out as much information as possible to finally condemn him to death. He does this by bluffing him with reassurance, letting him hold onto hope, before suddenly hitting him with a wave of accusations. Hildesheimer also alludes, somewhat vaguely, to Richelieu's use of emotional manipulation tied to "love and jealousy", Burckhardt adds a similar story, which is highly likely what Hildesheimer is gesturing at. Richelieu apparently had found out Chalais was in love with Chevreuse, so Chalais was informed that Chevreuse, the woman behind the conspiracy and the object of Chalais's deep love, had taken up with another lover. Overcome by jealousy and rage, Chalais responded by giving even more damning testimony against her, testimony that ended up indirectly implicating himself as well.

But why did Richelieu support Chalais's execution? Richelieu had initially forgiven Chalais, and was in fact the very man who had saved his life. So why would he turn around and pursue his death so relentlessly, going as far as interrogating and manipulating him to get there? Hildesheimer's answer is that this wasn't really about Chalais at all, it was a way of striking at Gaston indirectly, to demoralize him. Gaston might be forgiven, but his agents would not be; his royal blood shielded him, but it wouldn't extend to shield his accomplices. The point was to weaken Gaston's ability to draw future conspirators to his cause.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 153.

Carl J. Burckhardt, Richelieu: His Rise to Power, pp. 202-205.

(Demoralization>Bluffing>Emotional Inducement>Abusing Insecurities>Emotional Manipulation>Indirect Manipulation>Fabrication>Info Gathering)

Hildesheimer describes Gaston as inconsistent, timid, vain, treacherous toward his followers, and confident in his immunity; Richelieu probably perceived so as well, thus why he had nicknamed

him as “His Too-Easily-Influenced Highness” and knew how easily he would betray his co-conspirators.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 148.

(Emotional Perception)

Richelieu was very close to becoming the most powerful man in France during this period, he probably knew this, which is why he started building his influence aggressively, take for example his acquisition and embellishment of estates, the construction of the Palais-Cardinal, and his creation of grand galleries and gardens projected wealth, permanence, and proximity to royal authority. He then strengthened this image by securing the rank of duke and peer, receiving exceptional royal honors, and commissioning a genealogy that presented his family as ancient and even connected to royal blood. These tactics elevated into a figure who appeared naturally entitled to command.

Note: By presenting himself as magnificent, aristocratic, favored by the king, and publicly loyal to the monarchy, Richelieu made others more likely to admire him, fear him, seek his favor, and accept his growing dominance.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 157-158.

(Influence Building)

Richelieu had a unique aura, his presence alone could intimidate, for example at the 1635 Assembly of the Clergy, delegates who'd resolved to confront him over his financial demands were, in the abbé of Saint-Josse's words, struck down by "one look from his eyes." But he also paired this with charm, irony, courtesy, seduction, wrapped in formal and respectful language. He could close an unwanted conversation with a polite "serviteur très humble" courteous, but final, or win over rivals through sheer graciousness. For example, Nicolas Goulas, tied to Richelieu's rival Gaston d'Orléans, admitted he still saw Richelieu as "the marvel of the century" despite the cardinal's harsh treatment of Gaston's men. When Goulas came to collect a letter for Gaston, Richelieu took his hand, drew him close, asked about Gaston's affairs, and offered personal assurances, and it worked, Goulas was left, as he puts it, "completely perfumed by his kindness and in love with his merit".

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 159-160.

(Charisma>Aura>Communication)

Richelieu's policy of allying with Protestants was highly controversial. He exploited the theological debate over whether the pope had authority over monarchies (the pope could, in theory, depose or even sanction the killing of a king, a topic much debated at the time), positioning himself on the side that benefited him, that of the anti-Roman, Gallican Catholics. He further added and argued that his Protestant alliances could be defended as not a religious

betrayal, but rather an expression of the French king's independent right to conduct foreign policy. Thus he could ideologically shield himself under Gallican Ideology.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 161.

(Logical Manipulation>Deductive Reasoning>Sophistry)

Richelieu built an organized propaganda network, as Hildesheimer would call it, his "académie gazétique", and organization of lawyers, theologians, and writers (some believers, some paid) who continuously produced arguments for his policies rather than leaving him to answer critics alone. Fancan was obviously key to this, he worked to prepare public opinion for Richelieu's Protestant alliances, reframing them as consistent with French tradition, necessary for security, aimed at Spain rather than Catholicism, and an expression of the crown's independence. The network worked through rapid counterattack, pamphlets and rebuttals cascading back and forth.

For example Fancan's Miroir du temps passé, Ferrier's Catholique d'État, possibly guided by Richelieu himself.

The effect was to reframe the whole controversy, not "Richelieu is helping heretics," but "Spain is using the Catholic language to dominate Europe."

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 162-163.

(Propaganda>Tactical Response>Logical Manipulation)

THE HUGENOT REBELION:



During his conversation with Louis, on the topic of his Political Program, Richelieu would mention that as long as the Huguenots in France are a State within the State, the King cannot be master within his realm, or achieve great things outside it. The Edict of Nantes had granted them far more than freedom of worship; they commanded fortified cities like La Rochelle, fielded their own armies, and maintained independent political assemblies, functioning in practice as a separate power embedded within France. Richelieu found this arrangement unacceptable. A minority holding its own military and governing structures could resist the crown, court foreign powers, permanently obstruct his grand strategies and the construction of a unified state. Each fortress they occupied was land beyond royal reach. Each assembly they held was a competing centre of authority. Each foreign contact they cultivated was a conflict waiting to be lit from the inside. Thus it was "A State within a State." Richelieu's aim therefore was not to destroy the Huguenots, it was to destroy the independence that made them ungovernable, and make them dependent.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 187.

Richelieu, Cardinal. The Political Testament of Cardinal Richelieu: The Significant Chapters and Supporting Selections. Translated by Henry Bertram Hill. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961.

(Abstract Reasoning)

Richelieu understood that Huguenot power rested heavily on their coastal strongholds, particularly La Rochelle, a formidable wealthy Protestant port through which they received support from. To top it all off, it was protected by islands like Île de Ré, Île d'Aix and Île d'Oléron.



Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 187.

(Critical Thinking>Analytical Thinking)

Context: Before Richelieu could move, events overtook him. In 1625, Benjamin de Rohan, Duke of Soubise and brother of the Huguenot leader Henri de Rohan, took matters into his own hands and rose in open rebellion. He sought out George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham, a man with a longstanding personal hatred of Richelieu and his rival, who required no persuasion to throw English weight behind the Huguenot cause, leading a naval attack from the east. With that backing in place, Soubise seized vessels and stormed the islands. The long-standing tension had finally broken into outright war. Seeing his brother's early momentum, Henri de Rohan began working to transform the unrest into a full-scale uprising across Huguenot, France.

Richelieu's Strategy Against the Huguenots

Richelieu's Strategy to this would be to build France's first real overseas empire while he protected his flanks.

- First he consolidated control over every port at his disposal, Brouage, Le Havre, Honfleur among them, fortifying each one systematically.

- Cartographers were set to work producing updated maps, quartermasters stockpiled provisions and gunpowder, and orders went out to acquire and construct new ships.
- He then abolished two of the kingdom's oldest and most prestigious military offices, the Connétable de France and the Grand Amiral. The savings were considerable, as both positions carried enormous salaries and privileges, but the deeper purpose was control: with those offices gone, Richelieu stood as the sole authority over the entire French navy, answerable to no one.

His gaze then turned toward La Rochelle.

Planning Coverage:

1. Aware that foreign interference remained a real threat, he also moved diplomatically, creating an alliance with Spain on March 20, 1627, despite his previous hostility toward it. But securing his flank mattered more.

Securing the alliance in the first place was a bit difficult, since it required a bit of manipulation. He approached Spain using religion, framing French support as a matter of Catholic duty. His argument was: helping France crush La Rochelle would deal a blow to Protestantism that would reverberate beyond French borders, weakening it in the Netherlands and across Germany as well. The cynicism behind this argument, however, was considerable, because while Richelieu was appealing to Spain's religious convictions, he was simultaneously pursuing quiet arrangements with Protestant powers behind the scenes before.

2. In addition to dealing with Spain, Richelieu secured the Treaty of Compiègne with the Dutch on 10 June 1624, ensuring they would not intervene.

Later, when the siege began, Buckingham attempted to sway the Dutch to his side, arguing they needed to defend their fellow Protestants. However, Richelieu had already arranged Dutch neutrality by negotiating a nine-year extension of the Compiègne alliance, under which France agreed to pay the Dutch a million livres annually in exchange for their neutrality and a firm commitment not to support France’s enemies

3. At the same time, he was careful not to show his hand too openly. To the Huguenots, the message was: remain loyal to the king, and no harm would come to them. Which of course would not stop them, but it would delay, make them hesitate and ultimately discoordinate with the English.

Also there was the question with Henri de Rohan. Richelieu later in his campaign would order the Prince of Condé to go south and destroy Henri de Rohan.

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 5, notes 3-6.

(Strategy Fortitude>Strategy Building>Planning Coverage>Logical Manipulation>Sophistry>Strategy Logistics>Planning Versatility)

When the English invasion came, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, appeared off the coast of Île de Ré. The choice of landing was because the island offered an ideal base from which to dominate the entire French Atlantic coastline, and sat just a narrow stretch of water away from La Rochelle, making it perfectly positioned to funnel supplies to the Huguenot rebels.

Richelieu had anticipated the invasion months before it arrived (since February). He had already moved to reinforce the defenses of both Île de Ré and Île d'Oléron, warned coastal commanders, and monitored English preparations.

Note: When reports revealed that the fleet was carrying grain, he correctly inferred that it was intended to supply La Rochelle.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 190-192.

(Anticipation>Associative Thinking)

When Buckingham landed, a battle broke out along the shoreline against the forces Richelieu had positioned there. The French commander, the Comte de Toiras, eventually fell back to Saint-Martin, and a siege began. Richelieu, aware that Buckingham might actually prevail, prepared for that possibility.

On August 13, 1627, he ordered the Duc d'Angoulême, a senior royal prince and seasoned commander, to seize the strategic promontory of Coreille, positioned directly on the bay of La Rochelle. The location was critical on every level: it commanded the sea approach to the city, blocked the English from setting foot on the mainland, and gave the royal forces the ability to strangle the port if La Rochelle chose to side with the enemy. If diplomacy became necessary, holding Coreille meant holding leverage.

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 5, note 7.

(Strategy Flexibility, Contingency)

Context: The citizens (Rochelois) were now trapped, royal troops were slowly building siege lines all around them. Any open act of hostility could trigger an immediate assault, so they began frantically strengthening their medieval walls and bastions. A few hundred English soldiers crossed from Ré to help with the work. In exchange, La Rochelle sent food and supplies to Buckingham's army. The breaking point came on 10 September 1627: soldiers inside La Rochelle fired cannon shots at royal engineers who were building siege fortifications right outside the walls. This was the decisive act of rebellion. The "citadel of French Protestantism" had officially chosen the English side against its own king.

The siege began in earnest on 12 September 1627.

Timeline: English invasion, July 1627 → Royal army begins surrounding La Rochelle → August 1627 → La Rochelle openly joins the English – September 1627

By late September, Richelieu met the Prince de Condé. He gave Condé one clear order: go south and destroy Henri de Rohan (the main Huguenot military leader still active in Languedoc). Condé immediately launched a brutal scorched-earth campaign in the Cévennes mountains, burning villages, crops, and Protestant strongholds to stop Rohan's guerrilla raids. This kept the southern Huguenots from sending help to La Rochelle.

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 5, note 8.

(Strategy Fortitude, Tactic)

While this was happening, Cardinal Richelieu's secret police uncovered a conspiracy. They arrested Walter Montagu, who carried documents proving the Duchess of Chevreuse was secretly cooperating with Buckingham. And actually it was her with Buckingham who were trying to get the Duke of Lorraine and Savoy involved against France.

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 5, note 10.

(Info Gathering)

Buckingham's position grew increasingly desperate. His siege of Saint-Martin was going nowhere, and as time dragged on through the winter, he twice attempted to open negotiations, calling on the French to surrender. Richelieu, however, saw straight through the bluff. When Louis XIII asked what these overtures meant, Richelieu gave a one-word verdict: weakness. His response was accordingly unforgiving, France would not talk peace while a single English boot remained on French soil.

In the end, Richelieu's contingency hardly mattered, sure it was activated, but once the fortress at Saint-Martin was resupplied through Gaston's intervention, the siege collapsed entirely. Buckingham retreated to England, leaving Richelieu to deal with what remained: the Huguenots, now standing alone.

Carl J. Burckhardt, Richelieu: His Rise to Power, p. 227.

(Abductive Reasoning>Emotional Understanding>Trap Evasion)

Yet finishing them off proved harder than expected. La Rochelle was no ordinary city. Its towering walls, surrounding salt marshes, and a bay still accessible to English ships made it extraordinarily difficult to take. Richelieu's strategy was simple and brutal, seal it off completely and let starvation do the work. A Parisian architect, Clément Métezeau, offered an audacious solution: build a massive physical barrier straight across the bay, blocking any vessel from reaching the city. The proposal was accepted and construction began.

What followed was a merciless siege. Nobody was allowed out. Food prices inside the walls reached catastrophic levels, and even when Marguerite de Rohan pleaded for the women to be allowed to leave, Richelieu refused without hesitation.

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 5, notes 12-15.

(Demoralization>Abusing Insecurities>Strategy Fortitude)

Conclusion of the Siege: England sent three relief fleets. The first two were feeble efforts that achieved nothing, and in response the French reinforced the barrier with iron spikes to make passage even more treacherous. The third fleet arrived with real strength, some 120 ships, but by then it was too late. The defenses had been made so formidable that penetrating them was impossible, and the fleet turned back. Inside the city, people were reduced to eating leather. Disease spread through the starving population. When surrender finally came, the survivors threw themselves on Richelieu's mercy.

- **Surrender:**

Two representatives from La Rochelle arrived first, Philippe Vincent, a pastor, and Jean Gobert, a financier, followed shortly by six additional delegates. Richelieu made the terms of the meeting immediately clear: there would be no negotiation. The city was there to beg for mercy, nothing more. He also ensured the room remained in complete silence, a deliberate choice designed to heighten the psychological tension of the moment. When the delegates caught sight of one another, men who had endured months of starvation and suffering together, they broke down weeping, their tears speaking to a defeat that was as much emotional as it was military.

La Rochelle surrendered unconditionally on October 28th, in accordance with Richelieu's terms.

The settlement that followed was carefully calibrated. Protestants retained their freedom of conscience, as the Edict of Nantes remained in force. But the city was stripped of everything that had made it a power unto itself, its municipal privileges were revoked, its fortifications dismantled, and its political independence extinguished. The Rohan family and certain other prominent figures were pointedly excluded from any pardon.

After a siege lasting 1 year and 2 months, Richelieu had won completely. And with La Rochelle gone, the Huguenots lost far more than a city. They lost their last great stronghold, the foundation upon which whatever remained of their political and military resistance had rested. Without it, they had nothing left to hold them together.

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 5, notes 35-37.

(Abusing Insecurities>Demoralization>Direct Manipulation)

Why Did No Foreign Power Strike France During the Huguenot Rebellion (Besides England)?

It's worth stepping back and asking why no other major power moved against France while it was preoccupied with the Huguenot rebellion. The answer, when examined carefully, is actually

quite straightforward, every country in Europe simply calculated that weakening France was against their own interests. France was, after all, one of the very few powers capable of standing up to Spanish dominance on the continent. Allowing it to collapse would simply hand Spain an even greater advantage, and that was a prospect most European states found deeply unappealing. This explains why, when Buckingham attempted to assemble an anti-French coalition, he found almost no takers. The Venetians, for instance, not only refused to join but openly celebrated when the siege succeeded. Countries like Savoy and Lorraine did participate to a degree, but when Richelieu began turning the tide, he made clear enough of a threat toward them that they quietly backed down. Spain's involvement was interesting though, despite having some concealed role in Buckingham's coalition, financing the Huguenots and dragging its feet on aid to France, it never moved openly against Richelieu, largely because he had manipulated Spanish pride well enough to keep them publicly aligned with France. And the Dutch had been bribed by Richelieu with the Treaty of Compiègne (1624), before the siege began. Was all this just luck? Not really. It all lies in the contrast between Buckingham and Richelieu as strategic thinkers. Buckingham simply failed to grasp how Europe as a whole was reading the situation. Richelieu, on the other hand, understood it completely, and was very cautious at first, he knew about the risk of the conflict going international, and he actually held back at the start, pursuing negotiation even when the Huguenots were at their most vulnerable. But once the siege began, Richelieu spread the message across European courts, that any intervention against France would ultimately serve Spain. Since fear of Spanish was the defining anxiety of the era, the argument landed. It kept potential enemies on the sidelines, isolated England, and left Richelieu free.

Carl J. Burckhardt, Richelieu: His Rise to Power, pp. 218-219.

Carl J. Burckhardt, Richelieu: His Rise to Power, p. 292.

Carl J. Burckhardt, Richelieu: His Rise to Power, p. 300.

(Critical Thinking>Analytical Thinking>Risk Calculations>Mass Manipulation)

Fun or not so fun fact: in the end Buckingham never got the chance to redeem himself. As he would be surrounded by his own officers, servants, and petitioners, then Felton, a lieutenant in the English army who had deep resentment over the disastrous naval expeditions Buckingham had led against Richelieu, stepped close and drove a dagger once into his chest. The blade found his heart, and Buckingham died almost instantly. One could argue, in a roundabout way, that Richelieu had his revenge, not by any direct hand, but by having outmaneuvered and humiliated Buckingham so thoroughly that the failures piled up, the resentments festered, and the conditions for his death were quietly set in motion. Then France signed peace with Charles I of England. "Charles delivered [the death-blow to French Protestantism] into his hands."

(Demoralization)

Subduing the Last Remnants of the Huguenot Rebellion

After the first phase of the War of the Mantuan Succession, Richelieu redirected his efforts toward suppressing the last traces of the Huguenot rebellions. By this point most Protestant resistance had already been broken, but Henri de Rohan continued to oppose the crown. He started guerilla warfare in the Cévennes mountains. Since Rohan's forces were elusive and difficult to capture directly, Richelieu planned a way to force his surrender; he sought to force his submission through psychological warfare.

Instead of chasing the rebel leader through the mountains, Richelieu targeted the Protestant cities that supported him.

To accomplish this, Richelieu devised a coordinated military plan. The Huguenot strongholds stretched across southern France in a chain of fortified cities that supported and communicated with one another. Rather than attempting to defeat them all simultaneously, Richelieu aimed to destroy their unity. Working together with the king, Louis XIII, and Prince de Condé, Richelieu planned to cut the communications linking the principal Protestant centers, especially Nîmes, Montauban, and Castres. Once these cities were isolated from one another, none could come to the aid of the others. Each town could then be attacked and subdued individually.

As the campaign progressed, city after city fell to the royal armies. In some cases the repression was severe. Certain commanders, particularly Condé, carried out brutal reprisals, including executions of sections of the population. The steady destruction of these Protestant strongholds gradually eroded the foundations of Rohan's resistance.

Eventually the mounting devastation left Rohan with little choice but to surrender.

Planning Coverage:

When negotiations began, Richelieu insisted on an important political condition. The peace agreement could not be signed solely with Rohan. Instead, it had to be concluded with an assembly representing all the Huguenot towns. This was a deliberate move: it prevented Rohan from appearing as an independent political ruler negotiating with the crown. The settlement would therefore be presented as a royal decree imposed by the king rather than a treaty between equals. When the final terms were agreed upon, the Protestants were allowed to continue practicing their religion. However, they lost several sources of power:

- Fortified towns (A measure that actually formed part of his grand strategy, which will be explained in detail later in the section "Richelieu's External and Internal Strategies for France" in this document.)
- Armies (they were no longer allowed to maintain independent military forces.)
- Political autonomy (as Richelieu had reasoned from the beginning of the campaign, his goal was to destroy their independence, not their religion.)

Once The Peace of Alais (1629) was signed, Richelieu would supervise the Huguenots personally. He wanted no loopholes and no symbolic resistance.

Carl J. Burckhardt, Richelieu: His Rise to Power, pp. 327-329.

(Abusing Insecurities>Demoralization>Indirect Manipulation>Emotional Manipulation>Planning Coverage>Planning Formulation>Preclusion>Strategy Fortitude)

BREAKING THE DOMINANCE OF THE HASBURG EMPIRE:



The Mantuan Succession Crisis (First Phase)

Context: While Richelieu was besieging La Rochelle, Vincenzo II Gonzaga suddenly died, leaving the Duchy of Mantua and the Marquisate of Montferrat. fortresses that controlled routes through the Alpine passes and the Po Valley. Whoever controlled this could control northern Italy. Charles Gonzaga had left the inheritance to the Duke of Nevers, a French prince, so naturally the Spanish saw this as dangerous, and sent a general named Gonzalo to besiege Casale while allying with the Duke of Savoy at the same time. This was dangerous, a dispute in Italy while besieging La Rochelle

In the French court, people did not want to intervene. The country was drained, exhausted from the Huguenot conflict, weakened, and with the Protestant question still not fully resolved. The appetite for opening another front was simply not there. Richelieu argued the opposite. France's prestige was directly on the line, and if it allowed Spain to install its preferred candidate in Mantua, French influence across Europe would crumble. Inaction, in his view, carried a higher long-term cost. He made his strategic vision plain when he famously declared that Italy was "the heart of the world", a recognition that whoever shaped events there shaped the continent.

Context: Richelieu initially searched for a middle course. He proposed combining a brief, limited intervention in Italy, with continued operations against the remaining southern Huguenots.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 207.

(Critical thinking>Associative Thinking)

Richelieu's Grand Strategy Plan for France

Context: On 13 January 1629, two days before the royal departure for Italy, Richelieu asks Louis XIII for a private political meeting. Marie de Médicis and the king's confessor, Father Suffren, are present. Richelieu reads and explains a memorandum of more than twenty pages.

What will be explained now is Richelieu's Grand Strategy which was talked about in this memorandum. This Grand Strategy is a long and detailed plan which is divided into two parts: internal policies and external policies. An interesting characteristic of this grand strategy is the strong connection and link between internal and foreign tactics.

- **Internal Policies:**

Can be summarized as the systematic destruction of division and the creation of absolute unity under the monarchy. Only once this unity was achieved could France act effectively abroad.

1. The first major problem was the Huguenots. During the Huguenot rebellion, Richelieu had already developed the idea of removing their independence and forcing full submission, without requiring them to convert back to Catholicism. However, simply taking away their independence was not enough, as Richelieu later stated, they "must be broken once and for all."

To achieve this we can later he had planned:

- Calling for the occupation of key strongholds such as "Castres, Nîmes, Montauban." These were not random targets, as they were centers of political and military resistance. By capturing them, Richelieu aimed to eliminate the Huguenots as an independent force.
- And "razing to the ground all Huguenot strongholds". so he does not only want to occupy them, but also completely destroy their defenses, leaving them vulnerable, constantly watched, and unable to resist.

2. Second, there was the need to increase the overall authority of the monarchy, as Richelieu also sought to weaken the political power of traditional institutions that limited the king's authority. This meant reducing the influence of the parliament and diminishing the independence of the nobility; the nobles must be forced into obedience. Both groups represented remnants of the older feudal order that could challenge royal control.

3. And finally third, Richelieu wanted to strengthen France's borders and key positions, showing that internal control and external defense were closely linked.

- **Foreign Policies:**

This part is the most important, and if we had to summarize it, it essentially centers around one main goal: stopping Spain. Richelieu even declares that "the Spanish advances were to be halted."

At the time, Spain was the dominant power in Europe, and Richelieu understood that France could not rise unless Spain was weakened. However, confronting Spain required many things. France first needed to strengthen itself both internally and externally, and to establish "assault bases on all her borders." These bases would allow French forces to move quickly into neighboring territories, and France also needed a stronger Navy to control the seas.

To do so Richelieu plans some aims:

- **Strengthening Metz and extending French influence toward Strasbourg:** Strengthening Metz would protect the kingdom against attacks coming from the Holy Roman Empire and would give France a secure base near the Rhine. Strasbourg was even more important because of its position on the Rhine. Control there would allow France to intervene more easily in German affairs, monitor Imperial movements, and prevent the Habsburgs from controlling the entire eastern side against France.
- **Securing Versoix and making Geneva an outer defensive position:** These positions would protect southeastern France by controlling important routes between Savoy, Switzerland, and the Empire before an enemy could reach French territory.
- **Acquiring Neuchâtel:** Neuchâtel would give France easier access to Switzerland and help secure the recruitment of Swiss mercenaries, whom Richelieu considered essential to French military power.
- **Recovering Saluzzo from Savoy:** Saluzzo controlled an important Alpine route into northern Italy. Recovering it would make French military intervention against Spanish influence in Italy much easier.
- **Maintaining thirty Mediterranean galleys and developing naval power:** A stronger fleet would defend France's southern coast, transport troops, support operations in Italy, and challenge Spanish control of Mediterranean communications.
- **Considering the acquisition of Navarre and Franche-Comté:** Navarre would strengthen France's position against Spain along the Pyrenees, while Franche-Comté would secure the eastern frontier and weaken Spanish communications between Italy and the Low Countries.
- **Protecting neighboring states from Spanish domination:** Richelieu wanted France to present itself not merely as a conqueror but as the protector of smaller states threatened by Spain. By defending such states, France could gain allies, military access, and political influence without necessarily annexing them. These neighboring territories could then serve as buffers between France and the Habsburg powers.
- **Proceeding cautiously in Lorraine:** Because Lorraine occupied a crucial position between France and the Empire, Richelieu recommended concealing French intentions and acting only when opponents were least prepared to resist.

Hildesheimer notes that Richelieu did really see it as obligatory to annex every territory listed, thus he was flexible with his Strategic goals, if his plan would only partially succeed. Overall,

the grand strategy sought to transform France from an encircled kingdom into Europe's dominant power.

- **The naval aim is worth analyzing more in detail.**

A stronger navy wasn't simply about projecting military power at sea, it served several distinct purposes simultaneously.

1. By controlling the coastline and sea lanes, France could cut off any foreign support reaching the Huguenots, strangling their lifeline from outside the kingdom, fortifying his **Internal Policy Strategy.**
2. Second, it allowed France to be a meaningful ally to its partners abroad, backing diplomatic relationships with real military weight (which would help fortify his **Indirect Warfare Strategies** against Spain.)
3. England was a threat, sure it was not necessarily the most powerful, but one of the most unpredictable. And its proximity made it dangerous. Richelieu couldn't afford to leave France exposed to a neighbor that could shift positions or act against French interests with little warning, even if they supposedly were "allies".
4. And third, and obviously, it protected and expanded French commerce.

We can notice how this aim was simultaneously solving and fortifying already existing policies and strategies. Thus proving that nothing in his Strategy operated in isolation. Every piece served multiple functions, and every function fed back into the central goal.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 208-210.

Carl J. Burckhardt, Richelieu and His Age, pp. 24-30.

(Strategy Forecasting>Planning Coverage>Planning Formulation>Strategy Fortitude>Strategy Complexity>Planning Applicability>Risk Calculations>Indirect Manipulation)

After Richelieu concludes his reading of his Grand Strategy, he flatters Louis by suggesting he could achieve a glorious future, but then turns to describing the king as impulsive, jealous, emotionally unstable, and inefficient, traits that could jeopardize the entire plan. What Richelieu sought here is manipulation, he dangles with the vision of a great European monarch in front of Louis while subtly implying that the king himself must change. He even starts criticizing Marie de Medici, describing her as someone easily offended and impossible to predict. In doing so, Richelieu gets Louis to recognize that his mother, not just his own personality, is part of the problem. Following this critique, Richelieu offers to step down from government, a bluff, since Louis predictably refuses to accept his resignation and insists he stay. This offer to resign serves various aims if read carefully. First, it lets Richelieu claim he isn't attacking the royal family out of self-interest, since he's supposedly willing to give up his position entirely. Second, it tests the king's loyalty, forcing Louis to either let him go or publicly affirm how much he needs him.

Third, it forces Louis into a choice between Richelieu and his mother. Fourth, and most significantly, it places Louis in a psychological bind; if the king accepts Richelieu's strategy but still lets him leave, he would lose the one minister capable of carrying out the whole strategy. In this way, Richelieu engineers Louis's dependence on him.

The bluff succeeds. Louis accepts the criticism and retains him.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 209-210.

(Emotional Manipulation>Direct Manipulation>Abusing Insecurities>Bluffing)

One of the obstacles Richelieu faced in building a navy was at home. The nobility, most notably the House of Guise, held hereditary control over France's galleys and exercised independent authority over its naval forces. The crown didn't command the fleet; powerful aristocratic families did. Worse, these families were locked in rivalry with one another, meaning the navy was not only outside royal control but internally fragmented. Centralization was unavoidable.

The difficulty was that Richelieu couldn't simply strip Guise of his authority through legal ways; any formal challenge would invite resistance from the Parlements. So he took a different approach entirely. In 1629, he persuaded Louis XIII to issue an edict extending royal authority over the Mediterranean. Then when riots erupted in Provence, Richelieu seized the moment, framing Guise to the unrest and dispatching royal troops to pacify the region. This placed Guise in an acutely vulnerable position politically.

At this point, Guise realized the Trap Richelieu was setting. Remembering earlier purges, he chooses to leave France.

Carl J. Burckhardt, Richelieu and His Age, pp. 29-30.

(Logical Manipulation>Trap Setting>Fabrication)'

Hildesheimer suggests that Louis admired Richelieu's ability to identify one principal objective amid many interconnected problems. Richelieu could find and distinguish the central threat from a web of problems, subordinate secondary concerns, and remain focused without being distracted by hesitation or sentiment.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 210.

(Associative Thinking)

Context: Coming back to the Mantua Succession Crisis.

Richelieu would create a battle strategy on how to deal with it. The first thing we have to remember is that during this time, La Rochelle would still not be defeated while the Mantuan Succession Crisis was unfolding, as both crises happened at exactly the same time. Thus, Richelieu's war plan was:

1. Defeat La Rochelle.
2. Intervene rapidly in Italy and relieve Casale.

Planning Coverage: To do this, he had to neutralize England diplomatically, which he would actually accomplish. *As on 24 April 1629, France reached peace with England. Charles I had abandoned the French Huguenots, so France could therefore attack the remaining Protestant resistance without fearing major English intervention.*

3. Return to France and destroy the remaining Huguenot military organization.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 211-212.

(Planning Formulation>Planning Coverage)

Context: Richelieu and Louis XIII would eventually plan to march across the Alps, relieve the siege of Casale Monferrato, and then loop back through Languedoc.

As Casale was being besieged and blocked by Savoy, Richelieu devised a plan to counter the Spanish Strategy. His main objective was to resupply the fortress before it fell.

1. **Main Plan:** Negotiate passage through Savoy. If Savoy agreed to open the route, Richelieu could reach Casale and resupply the fortress. This gave Savoy an opportunity to cooperate peacefully.
2. **Contingency Plan:** If Savoy delayed or obstructed the negotiations (which Richelieu anticipated), Richelieu would use force. He would break through the Alpine barrier and threaten further advances until Savoy was compelled to negotiate (Richelieu did not necessarily seek to defeat Savoy completely. His entire plan was centered on forcing a negotiated settlement).

Once negotiations succeeded, either through Plan 1 or Plan 2, Richelieu would open the road to Casale and resupply the fortress before it fell. And so on 11 March, Richelieu and Victor Amadeus signed an agreement opening access to Casale and allowing the fortress to be supplied.

Louis XIII then supplied Casale, reinforced its garrison, appointed Toiras as governor and left three regiments there.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 211.

(Contingency>Anticipation>Negotiations>Planning Formulation>Demoralization)

Richelieu understood very well how to manage the king's arrogance and ego. He described in his memoirs that all glory belonged to God and the king, that the king was like the sun while he himself was merely a star, meaning whatever honor he received was really a reflection of royal glory. He avoided trouble by redirecting glory toward the king rather than himself. For example, when he entered Montauban, the inhabitants offered him a dais (a ceremonial canopy), but he rejected it, and Louis was pleased with this gesture afterward. Another example which

Burckhardt gives, is when Richelieu after the successful Huguenot campaign, traveled through France, he was welcomed with great enthusiasm by the population. Members of the nobility and government officials also paid him public honors. Despite this, Richelieu was careful not to appear too powerful. Instead, he consistently emphasized the authority of Louis. Richelieu understood very well that he should not outshine the king, since the king had a fragile ego. And his repeated self-effacement should not necessarily be taken as simple personal modesty. It was a strategy which protected him against accusations that he had usurped royal authority, that he was seeking personal sovereignty, that he wanted public glory equal to the king's, or that France was being ruled by a cardinal rather than its monarch. By directing all praise toward Louis, Richelieu strengthened the king while simultaneously protecting his own position. In fact, the more successful Richelieu became, rather than becoming more dangerous, he became more and more necessary to Louis.

Carl J. Burckhardt, Richelieu: His Rise to Power, p. 331-332.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 214-115.

(Emotional Understanding>Risk Calculations>Propaganda>Misdirection)

When Marie de Medici sends Richelieu compliments, he doesn't trust them, inferring that she believes he has betrayed her. He lays out reasons to suspect her resentment, he has grown closer to Louis than she is, he has rejected her pro-Spanish policy, his influence over the king provokes her jealousy, and he is dismantling the political course she had set during her regency. Richelieu clearly recognizes these compliments as insincere and begins to tread lightly, a suspicion that would prove justified, since Marie would later conspire against him on the Day of the Dupes.

And even Mathieu de Morgues' account says that when Richelieu returned to court, Marie de Medici received and politely asked about his health, but Richelieu saw through this and answered angrily “I am in better health than many people here would wish.”

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 216-217.

(Emotional Understanding>Abductive Reasoning>Emotional Perception)

Richelieu secured northern Italy and indirectly lifted the siege of Casale, they turned their attention to eliminating the remaining Huguenot strongholds, which has been explained in the section “Subduing the Last Remnants of the Huguenot Rebellion” of this document. Once that was accomplished, Habsburg imperial forces began advancing toward northern Italy again, posing a threat to Mantua and the Monferrato. This development forced Richelieu to intervene again, marking the beginning of the second phase of the Mantua succession crisis.

Richelieu organizes a 22,000-strong army, dividing it into two forces for simultaneous advances through Savoy and the Dauphiné.

During the campaign, the Duke of Savoy made things difficult for Richelieu, stalling negotiations, but when Richelieu crossed the Doria River, the Savoyard forces fell back toward Turin. Richelieu assured the Duke that the river crossing was purely defensive, not a hostile act, but the Duke refused to talk to Richelieu. Using this to his advantage on March 20th, and knowing the Duke of Savoy was only trying to delay his advances, Richelieu abruptly ordered the entire army to move. The following day, he materialized outside Turin's massive walls with a force far larger than anyone had anticipated, a city so enormous it took nearly an hour and a half just to ride around its perimeter. The Duke of Savoy was caught off guard. Expecting Richelieu to move in a different direction entirely, he panicked and recalled the Spanish relief army that had been waiting near Pignerolo, ordering it back to defend Turin. This was precisely the blunder Richelieu had been counting on. He left only a small force outside Turin to keep up the bluff, then drove his main army at full speed toward Pignerolo. He reached it, stormed it, and took it.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 219-220.

(Misdirection>Bluffing)

Hildesheimer describes the capture of Pinerolo as very important, Richelieu would have reasoned so as well, with it France now held a gateway giving it access to the Po Valley. Pinerolo served as an Alpine gateway into northern Italy, and by controlling it, France gained a permanent route through the Alps, access to the Po Valley, a base for future intervention in Italy, leverage over Savoy, and a means of protecting friendly Italian states. This marked a shift in French strategy. In earlier crises, France had mostly struggled just to keep Spain from controlling Alpine routes. At Pinerolo, though, Richelieu aimed to secure a route for France itself rather than merely deny one to Spain. The goal was no longer simply to close off a passage to the Spaniards, but to open one for France. And Hildesheimer calls this a new and more ambitious strategy. Rather than simply reacting to a Spanish siege, Richelieu secured a strategic position France could draw on in future crises. Pinerolo served three related purposes: an immediate military purpose, giving France a fortified foothold on the Italian side of the Alps; a diplomatic bargaining purpose, since even if Mantua were lost, France could use Pinerolo as sufficient leverage to negotiate its return. essentially a bargaining chip to be traded for concessions elsewhere; and a long-term geopolitical purpose, allowing France to intervene more easily in Italy and position itself as protector of the Italian princes against Spanish domination.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 220.

(Strategy Forecasting>Strategy Building>Field Envisioning>Deductive Reasoning>Contingency)

Context: While Richelieu was gaining ground on the battlefield, trouble was brewing at home. Marie de Medici and Gaston had begun plotting against him, turning French public opinion against the war and blaming Richelieu for it in hopes of driving him from power. Once King

Louis XIII recovered from his illness and arrived to take command at the front, Richelieu handed off the campaign and returned to France to face a far more personal fight.

Once Richelieu arrived, he said nothing about the conspiracies. He tried to convince Marie de Medici and everyone at court, and even Marie de Medici later responded with cool, measured formality, acknowledging the situation he had described and even agreeing to continue the war. Richelieu had seen through Marie, and through her facade, she was acting while plotting behind him. He would later put down in writing what he perceived her true motivations actually were; her attachment to her daughter, the Duchess of Savoy (princess of Piedmont), who he believed she wanted to see come away with more territory; a personal hostility toward the House of Mantua and the Gonzaga family, who held the French claim; and above all, a wish to escape the burdens of the campaign and be left alone to enjoy her comfortable life in the Luxembourg Palace undisturbed.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 221.

(Abductive Reasoning>Emotional Perception>Emotional Understanding)

Context: Just as Richelieu was trying to steady things at home, the situation collapsed all at once. Plague tore through the army, public support for the war evaporated, and France fell into chaos. Louis, never particularly hardy, fell ill again, giving Marie de' Medici the opening she needed to turn opinion against Richelieu. When the king finally abandoned the campaign and returned, he was a broken man, feverish and near death. The cruelest part was that the war was actually going well. But a perfect storm of unlucky struck simultaneously: plague, Marie's relentless campaign against him, and Louis's inability to hold the home front together. With the king hovering near death, Richelieu's position had gone from shaky to potentially fatal, because if Louis died, Richelieu likely wouldn't survive it either. Even Anne of Austria twisted the knife publicly, telling him: "This is what comes of the journey you forced on the King."

Second Instance of Indirect Warfare (Richelieu's Plans for Germany)

Context: By 1629–1630, the balance of power in Germany had shifted dangerously in Ferdinand II's favor. The Protestant opposition had been weakened, Denmark had withdrawn from the war, and Wallenstein's armies had brought imperial power close to its height.

Richelieu therefore turned once again to indirect warfare, seeking to construct a new system of resistance before the Habsburgs could consolidate their dominance.

- Scandinavian Protestant powers
- German Protestant princes
- Catholic Bavaria

Although these groups differed sharply in religion, Richelieu did not care.

1. **Catholic Bavaria:**

In Northern Germany, for example, Bavaria was firmly Catholic, yet it was also determined to preserve its independence from the emperor, Ferdinand II, Holy Roman Emperor. Richelieu did not hesitate to take advantage of that rivalry, since it helped prevent the emperor from consolidating power inside the Holy Roman Empire.

2. **Scandinavian Protestants:**

Richelieu also worked with **Scandinavian Protestants**, however it was a bit difficult. Sweden was willing to oppose the Habsburgs, but it could not intervene in Germany while it remained at war with Sigismund III Vasa, the king of Poland. Richelieu therefore planned to have France mediate peace between Sweden and Poland so that Sweden could redirect its military strength toward Germany. To carry out this plan he sent Hercule Girard, Baron de Charnacé as ambassador. The mediation succeeded in 1629. Sweden and Poland agreed to a six-year truce, and Sweden retained important Baltic territories such as Livonia. With its eastern front secure, Gustavus Adolphus was now free to turn his attention to the German theater of the Thirty Years' War.

Planning Coverage:

But Sweden was a Protestant power, and there was a risk that its intervention might escalate the religious conflict by attacking Catholic states such as Bavaria. Richelieu would later prevent this by ensuring that Sweden acted under French diplomatic influence with the January 23, 1631 Treaty of Berwäld. France offered financial subsidies and political backing. In return, Sweden agreed to several objectives that aligned with French interests: it would defend German protestant princes against the emperor, and avoid attacking Catholic territories such as Bavaria. In this way Richelieu managed to balance Protestant and Catholic forces against the Habsburgs without allowing the conflict to spiral into a purely religious war.

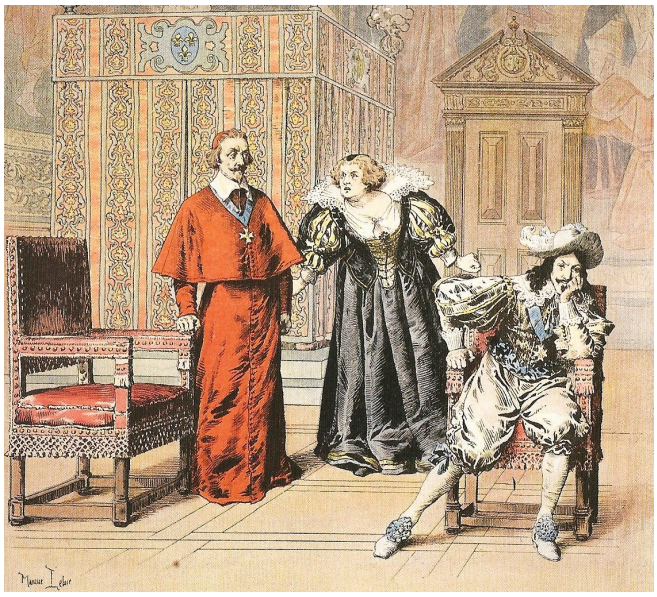
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_B%C3%A4rwalde

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), pp. 246-250.

(Strategy Fortitude>Strategy Building>Planning Coverage>Indirect Manipulation)

Context: After the first phase of the Mantua succession crisis, during which Louis and

CONSPIRACIES, CONSPIRACIES AND MORE CONSPIRACIES:



The Day of the Dupes

A word of warning: the Day of the Dupes is confusing, and some of what follows will be my own interpretation of the events. I'll do my best to support it with evidence, and to piece together a coherent, consistent account of what Richelieu was doing.

Context: When Louis lay gravely ill in bed, most people believed he would not survive. Richelieu shared that same conviction. And since several rival factions, the House of Guise, François de Bassompierre, the Marillac faction, Marie de Médicis's supporters, and Gaston, had already begun plotting to eliminate him the moment the king died, Richelieu felt he had no choice but to act. He therefore prepared an escape route to Avignon. Yet in the end he found the courage and honor to stay at his sovereign's bedside until the very last, a decision that proved correct even if, in that instant, Richelieu was guided purely by impulse. Suddenly the king recovered and immediately stood up for Richelieu. But then a serious problem remained. Marie de Médici had built a massive narrative portraying Richelieu as the root of every misfortune in France, conveniently overlooking all the good he had accomplished for the kingdom. As a result, many turned against him, even Queen Anne, and the public, stirred by Marie's relentless propaganda, began to echo the claim: "The dark Cardinal has prevented peace." All Marie now needed was to pressure the king into arresting Richelieu. Louis advised his minister to find a way to reconcile with his mother. Marie, aware of this suggestion, received Richelieu with apparent friendliness whenever they met, yet she continued to conspire with Marillac, the king, and others while intensifying her campaign against him.

But in the end, the king chose Richelieu. Not only that, he formally appointed him chief minister, from which point onward Richelieu became the most powerful man in France.

It is a bit hard to understand why Louis made this choice, as when pressed by his mother and many others, it did appear as if he would arrest Richelieu in the end. In my opinion, Richelieu had observed that Marie de Médici was behaving recklessly in her efforts to force her son to arrest him. Whenever Richelieu attempted reconciliation in their meetings, she would feign warmth only to continue deceiving him. Richelieu saw through it completely.

So it seems Richelieu kept two paths open for this scenario:

A) Flee.

B) Appear humble, weak, and utterly loyal, trusting that the king would decide in his favor once Marie's conduct became too blatant. After all, she had tried to trick Richelieu outright and had spread rumors about him that were false. And in the end, only the king could decide.

Richelieu walked through path B. And in one decisive meeting between the king and his mother, Richelieu entered uninvited and remained completely silent, knelt, and whispered that *"He did not know, he said in a low voice, in what he had offended, but he begged for mercy and forgiveness."* All the while Marie shouted accusations and repeated rumors that were certainly untrue. Also Richelieu obeyed every instruction the king gave him, even the task of trying to reconcile with her. He continued this strategy even after his appointment as chief minister. When further reconciliation attempts began, he stayed humble while the queen insulted him. He went so far that "*He wrote to all his relatives, to his niece Combalet and his cousin De la Meillerays and his old uncle La Porte, imploring them to be very careful to utter no word of complaint or criticism, to be silent and endure everything the Queen-Mother might do to them."* Richelieu had to project absolute humility to win the king to his side.

In the end, this approach to this difficult situation succeeded.

When the moment of decision arrived, Louis reflected on his own life and realized he had always been dominated, first by his mother, then by his father, and later by Luynes. By contrast, Richelieu had remained consistently loyal, never seeking to control him but instead serving the long-term interests of the state. Louis began to understand that personal feelings must never override the needs of the monarchy. He therefore chose Richelieu.

And of course Richelieu kept a contingency plan in reserve: if Louis ultimately sided against him, he would flee to Avignon and later consider Le Havre. It was merely a safety net, one Richelieu hoped he would never have to use.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 225-233.

(Trap Evasion>Emotional Understanding>Emotional Perception>Contingency)

At same time as the Day of the Dupes, Ferdinand had summoned the imperial diet to secure the election of his son as King of the Romans, which would have made the imperial succession increasingly hereditary in the Habsburg family, while he also depended heavily on Wallenstein and his enormous army to strengthen imperial authority. Richelieu sent Father Joseph and Brûlart de Léon to Regensburg to encourage the German electors' resistance, separate them politically from the emperor, and expand French influence inside the Holy Roman Empire. The mission achieved two major results, Ferdinand failed to obtain his son's election, and he was forced to dismiss Wallenstein, his most powerful and effective military commander.

Françoise Hildesheimer, Richelieu (Paris: Flammarion, 2021), p. 227-229.

(Indirect Manipulation)

The 1630 Political Purge

Once the Day of the Dupes was settled, a political purge followed, driven largely by Louis himself. Marillac was arrested, Gaston surrendered and changed sides (but eventually he would get exiled by Louis himself), and many of Marie's supporters either defected or were imprisoned, among them Bassompierre. Richelieu then addressed the council in a speech that was, in effect, a way to manipulate them, so that the king would exile Marie.

He did this laying out 4 options, walking through each in turn.

1. The first was **reconciling with Gaston**. Richelieu dismissed this quickly: the heir to the throne was unreliable and too easily led by bad influences to be trusted.
2. The second was **reconciling with Marie** herself. Equally impossible, he argued. He described her as cunning, deceitful, and vengeful, someone who would never be satisfied with anything less than full power and the destruction of her enemies. Any reconciliation would only delay the inevitable.
3. The third option was his **own resignation.** He floated it with apparent selflessness, then quietly dismantled it. Would his leaving actually end the conflict? Probably not. If anything, with him gone, the conspirators might simply redirect their efforts toward weakening the king himself.
4. That left the fourth option: **breaking the conspiracy entirely.** The difficulty, he noted, was that Marie sat at the center of it, which meant the only real solution was to remove her from court altogether and isolate her far from power. But, and here was the move, he said he could not recommend this himself, since it would appear to be personal revenge. Only the king could make that call.

Richelieu had laid out every option, discredited three of them, and pointed unmistakably toward the 4th, while keeping his own hands clean. And Louis, as intended, exiled his own mother.

Carl J. Burckhardt, Richelieu: His Rise to Power, p. 394-395.

(Logical Manipulation)

Marie de' Medici's Trap

With the decision now made, Louis trapped his mother with royal guards and issued a firm order: the Queen-Mother was to be moved to Moulins. Marie, however, openly defied the command and used every possible excuse to delay her departure. Richelieu responded by setting a trap. He withdrew the guards, knowing full well that she would seize the chance to flee, declare open rebellion, and position herself outside French territory, thereby making it far simpler to destroy her influence politically. Everything unfolded exactly as Richelieu had foreseen. Marie escaped with Joachim de Cérisy and a guard named de la Mazure.

Her goal was to reach La Chapelle, a fortress near the frontier. From there she intended to:

- obtain protection,
- negotiate directly with the king,
- and possibly secure help from the Spanish Netherlands (France's rival power).

Yet something unexpected occurred. When she drew near the fortress, she learned it had been sealed against her. The governor had been replaced and given explicit orders to deny her entry, an arrangement Richelieu had prepared, having correctly anticipated her plan. This was no coincidence. Blocking La Chapelle was itself a crucial part of the trap. With every option inside France closed off, Marie had no path left but to cross the border entirely, and that was precisely what Richelieu needed. The moment she set foot outside France in open rebellion, he had the legal and political justification to strip her of her titles and cut off her pension. Had she remained on French soil, even as a prisoner, she would have retained her status as Queen-Mother, making such measures far more difficult to impose without scandal or foreign outcry. But a rebel who had fled to France's enemies could be treated as one. La Chapelle had been her last hope. With that door now closed, she had no choice but to abandon the kingdom entirely. She crossed the border into the Spanish Netherlands and took refuge in Brussels. She still clung to the belief that she might someday return. She never did. In the end it no longer mattered whether she was captured or not; by fleeing she had placed herself in open rebellion against the king, her titles were stripped and her pension cut off, and she was not even in France, so she couldn't create domestic problems like she did in the past, precisely the outcome Richelieu wanted. Destitute and without the means to rebuild any power base, she eventually died in poverty in Cologne.

Carl J. Burckhardt, Richelieu: His Rise to Power, p. 397-400.

(Trap Setting>Emotional Understanding>Forecasting>Planning Coverage)

Richelieu also dealt with the Queen, Anne of Austria, who was getting too close to Marie. Richelieu uses spies inside Anne’s household, as he suspects reports say her apartments are full of anti-Richelieu talk. So he dismisses her ladies-in-waiting and starts breaking up her inner circle.

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 7, note 5.

(Info Gathering)

Gaston is driven into exile after openly defying Louis, who dispatches troops to put him down. He escapes to Lorraine, where he launches a propaganda campaign against Richelieu, accusing him of starving the French people, destroying the country, and ruling as a tyrant. Richelieu's counter-move is characteristically shrewd: rather than suppress the letters, he publishes them himself, but appends a thorough, point-by-point rebuttal to each charge.

Then to further consolidate his grip on public opinion, Richelieu brings in intellectuals like Paul Hay du Chastelet to produce justifications for his government. He also backs the creation of the Gazette de France, run by Théophraste Renaudot (one of the earliest newspapers in history) which, being state-controlled, serves as a direct instrument for shaping the narrative in Richelieu's favor. Some dissidents keep Gaston's propaganda alive, and others go so far as to write scandalous material targeting the Cardinal directly. Richelieu has an extensive spy network, through which offenders are tracked down and identified. According to Blanchard, the reach of this apparatus was so feared that people grew cautious about what they said even in private, those caught faced being condemned to the galleys, a brutally punishing form of forced labor.

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 7, notes 8-9.

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 7, note 28.

(Mass Manipulation>Tactical Response>Info Gathering)

Now there is the matter of what to do with Lorraine, but since it's harboring enemies like Gaston, it gives Richelieu the excuse he needs. Seeing an opportunity, he decides the moment is ripe to move against the duchy, knowing it has been left weakened after Breitenfeld. The campaign goes as he forecasted: Lorraine is defeated and forced to submit through the Treaty of Vic in 1632. Gaston has to escape again, this time to Brussels, where he resumes his anti-Richelieu propaganda campaign, now with Spanish backing.

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 7, note 19.

(Abusing Insecurities)

Gaston would start yet another revolt, this time alongside Montmorency, but the uprising was so poorly organized that it collapsed almost immediately. Richelieu hardly needed to intervene, so the details are scarcely worth dwelling on.

The Execution of Montmorency

What matters more is what Richelieu did before and after the revolt.

Montmorency himself was a remarkably courageous noble, driven by a desire to restore unity within the royal family, and he entered the rebellion with this idea. Yet the effort was doomed from the start; its disorganization made failure almost inevitable, something Richelieu clearly foresaw.

Richelieu even warned Montmorency in advance, Burckhardt argues this was done to justify the severe measures he would later take once the rebellion had failed, since when Montmorency was captured, there was widespread sympathy for him, even from the king, given his status as a leading noble.

Richelieu, however, carefully positioned himself as moderate while subtly directing events toward execution. He did this by reframing the issue. Rather than presenting it as the punishment of an individual, he cast it as a matter of state survival. Richelieu understood Louis XIII perfectly and appealed to his deepest concerns: fear of weakened royal authority, fear of ambitious nobles exploiting disorder, and fear of instability, especially in times of illness. He reduced the situation to a stark necessity, either Montmorency must die, or royal authority would lose all meaning.

During the trial, Richelieu would write memos designed to damage Montmorency's reputation.

Carl J. Burckhardt, Richelieu and His Age, pp. 79-89.

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 7, notes 31-33.

(Logical Manipulation>Demoralization>Anticipation>Mass Manipulation)

WAR AND DEATH:



After consolidating power, things went smoothly for Richelieu for a time. Gustavus's death conveniently removes the worry of Sweden growing too powerful. He then receives intelligence that Wallenstein might be willing to turn against the Emperor if France offered its support. Meanwhile, France begins occupying Lorraine after the Parlement of Paris provides legal cover for the move, and Richelieu sets about constructing a defensive buffer zone in the east. French influence expands further as princes in Alsace accept French protection, drawing them deeper into his orbit within the Holy Roman Empire. But then the situation turned upside down immediately. The Habsburgs have Wallenstein killed, and their forces go on to win the Battle of Nördlingen, a stronghold the Protestants had been counting on holding. The victory hands the Habsburgs control over southern Germany, and the Protestant alliance structure begins to crack. The Heilbronn League and similar coalitions start falling apart, with some member states openly considering a separate peace with the Habsburgs. Now, if the Dutch were to make peace with Spain, Madrid could redirect its armies squarely against France. Richelieu now faces a stark choice between two deeply uncomfortable options: continue with indirect support, which is clearly no longer working, or intervene directly in the war, a move that is effective but enormously risky. This is the crossroads at which the Cardinal finds himself.

Spain slowly starts tightening its grip on the situation.

In Brussels, where Gaston and Marie are exiled, the Habsburgs pressure them to swear loyalty, a demand that puts Gaston in an awkward position. Ever unpredictable and patriotic, he escapes

away and returns to France, where he reconciles with Louis. Richelieu, however, is under no illusions about Gaston's reliability. The man had secretly married Marguerite of Lorraine and had written to Pope Urban VIII making clear that any attempt to annul the marriage would be treated as coerced, hardly the behavior of someone to be trusted. Puylaurens, who had come back with Gaston and helped broker the reconciliation, was also suspect, with strong reason to believe he was still quietly maintaining contact with Brussels.

Richelieu and the king moved. They lay a trap, inviting Gaston and Puylaurens to a royal ballet rehearsal, at which point Puylaurens was arrested. Richelieu then moves swiftly to neutralize Gaston himself: seizing control of his household, imprisoning his associates, and replacing them with loyal men. Gaston, characteristically, seemed unbothered, he was back on the dance floor that same night. But whatever he felt about it, he had been effectively defanged.

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 7, notes 62-69.

(Trap Setting>Planning Coverage)

By this point Habsburg started to act against France. Imperial forces seize the Elector of Trier, the Habsburgs reconcile with Protestant princes, and Spanish troops begin massing on the borders. Richelieu concludes that the moment has come to prepare France for open war.

When the war starts, rather than fighting the whole Habsburg system at once, he sets his sights on Spain, specifically on the Spanish Netherlands, since the region had been thrown into political instability following the death of Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia.

France manages to secure a victory at Avein.

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 8, note 3.

(Abusing Insecurities)

But then the French army begins to desorganize. Spain strikes back, capturing the Lérins Islands near Cannes, and French forces struggle across the board, failing in particular to sever the critical supply line linking the Spanish Netherlands to Spanish Italy, which had been one of Richelieu's objectives. Encirclement starts to look like a real possibility.

But Richelieu manages to achieve some success and counter this. As the siege of Corbie went well. The town is blockaded and starved into weakness, after which Richelieu orders trenches dug toward the walls, mines laid, and an artillery bombardment launched just as winter is setting in. The combination of cold, exhaustion, and relentless pressure breaks the defenders' will, and they surrender. The timely arrival of Dutch forces at that moment only adds to the pressure on Spain, whose commanders think twice about pressing further.

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 8, note 19.

(Demoralization)

Meanwhile, a different problem happens at home. Louis has taken a new favorite, Louise-Angélique Motier de La Fayette, and she is proving to be more than a distraction, she actively opposes Richelieu's alliances with Protestant princes, giving her real political weight at court. Richelieu's spy network duly brings this to his attention.

He uses indirect manipulation to deal with this problem.

He secretly enlists a Dominican priest, Father Carré, to nurture La Fayette's already evident religious inclinations toward convent life. Richelieu likely calculated that she was susceptible to this, after all, she was devout by nature and only 16 years old. The manipulation works: on May 19, 1637, she willingly enters the Convent of the Visitation, removing herself physically and politically from the Louvre. Louis is left heartbroken, as he even wanted to make her his mistress.

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 8, notes 27-31.

(Indirect Manipulation>Emotional Manipulation>Info Gathering)

The Case of Anne of Austria

Anne, who was being carefully spied on by Richelieu, had her letters intercepted by her servants who reported on her. Remember, after the day of the dupes Richelieu had her inner circle infiltrated. Anne had begun secretly corresponding with France's enemies, most notably the Marquis of Mirabel. When Richelieu informed the king, Louis XIII granted him full authority to handle the matter as he saw fit.

What's particularly interesting is why Richelieu didn't simply move to punish Anne the moment he had the letter. Blanchard mentions it vaguely, Anne could plausibly dismiss it as innocent family correspondence, after all, the Cardinal-Infant was her own brother. Without a fuller picture of her communications, Richelieu risked building a case that any competent defense could foil. A failed accusation against the Queen of France wouldn't just be an embarrassment.

His first move was to target La Porte.

One of his spies had identified him not as an ordinary servant, but as the queen's principal courier and trusted go-between for her secret correspondence. Richelieu had La Porte seized, imprisoned, and interrogated, while his home was searched. Investigators uncovered secret codes linked to the queen and a letter addressed to the Duchess of Chevreuse. Despite all of this pointing firmly at La Porte, and though more damning material would later surface, for now he had concealed it effectively, there wasn't enough to formally charge him.

Richelieu therefore shifted strategy: he needed a confession, either from La Porte or from Anne herself.

La Porte held firm under interrogation, refusing to break even when threatened with torture. Attention then turned to Anne.

Anne fully aware that any admission could implicate her in dealings with Spain, she denied everything. Richelieu responded with harsher treatment, and after two days without food, she relented. When Anne finally agreed to meet with Richelieu, she began cautiously, acknowledging she had written to the Cardinal-Infant in the Spanish Netherlands but insisting it was merely an exchange of pleasantries. Richelieu called her bluff, he had the intercepted letter and the evidence recovered from La Porte's rooms, and made clear he already knew there was more. He then offered to speak to the king on her behalf, so that she wouldn't get punished, if she provided him with everything. Anne asked the others to leave. Alone with the cardinal, she finally confessed in full. According to Richelieu's own account, she exclaimed, “How good you must be, Monsieur le Cardinal!” as she laid out the full extent of what she did. Then came a remarkable gesture: she extended her hand toward him, a striking breach of protocol for a queen who almost never permitted physical contact. Richelieu, with characteristic precision, declined, stepping back rather than accepting. In that single restrained movement, he simultaneously projected deference and asserted dominance.

With the confession secured, Richelieu made a move that might seem surprising:

He advised Louis XIII to reconcile with Anne. But this was entirely strategic. Because a public rupture, divorce or exile, would have undermined royal legitimacy and caused a diplomatic crisis given Anne's Spanish ties. Controlled forgiveness served the interests of the monarchy far better than public punishment.

Planning Coverage:

Yet forgiveness, in Richelieu's hands, meant something very specific, it meant total surveillance, now conducted openly. Anne remained queen, but effectively became a monitored political prisoner. Her letters were screened by an assigned overseer before dispatch, and her isolation deepened. Richelieu now did this publicly, he did not need a network of spies to keep her monitored, as this case served as an excuse for it.

Richelieu did not always destroy his enemies outright, but neutralized them, contained them, and kept them permanently within his sight.

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 8, notes 34-39.

(Emotional Manipulation>Direct Manipulation>Demoralization>Info Gathering>Abusing Insecurities>Planning Coverage>Preclusion>Abductive Reasoning)

Caussin was a Jesuit confessor loyal to Louis XIII, yet he harbored deep suspicions that Richelieu was manipulating the king. As an outsider looking in, he described the cardinal's manipulation in almost supernatural terms.

"it seemed as if [the cardinal] had emitted towards him some kind of active and penetrating venom, some enchanted fumes that altered his judgment, and made him suddenly like all he previously hated, approve all he condemned, and embrace with trouble of the mind and unnatural passion, everything that the cardinal wanted."

Caussin urged Louis to arrange a direct confrontation, promising that given the opportunity he could dismantle Richelieu's arguments and expose the manipulation. Louis agreed, but with a telling condition. The meeting had to appear accidental, because he was afraid of provoking his own minister. That fear speaks. A king so wary of upsetting the man who served him was not truly in command at all; he was, in every meaningful sense, under Richelieu's thumb.

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 8, notes 42-43.

(Emotional Manipulation)

Richelieu's Reversal Trap Against Caussin

Richelieu, however, had spies watching Caussin and learned of the plan in advance. Rather than panic, he prepared himself quietly and waited. When Caussin arrived, Richelieu greeted him with warmth, and the two started a philosophical debate about the vanity of worldly affairs, exactly the kind of intellectual arena in which Caussin intended to expose and humiliate him. Caussin, still believing he held the advantage, waited for the king to arrive so he could spring his trap, **but what he didn't know was that Richelieu was also waiting.**

When Louis finally arrived, Richelieu made his move. He told Caussin to hide himself in a secret passage, claiming the king was suspicious of them both and might grow angry if he found them together.

Note: Louis was indeed somewhat wary of Richelieu during this time, which was precisely why he had agreed to Caussin's plan in the first place. Richelieu had taken a genuine truth and bent it to his own purposes.

Caussin obeyed, and in doing so sealed his own fate. But why? The reason is that he could not protest without revealing that the meeting was premeditated, that the king was expecting him, and that the entire encounter had been orchestrated against Richelieu. His own secrecy had become a weapon turned against him.

Richelieu had achieved total control of the situation.

Alone now with the king, Louis inquired about the confessor. Richelieu replied that he had not seen him. A lie obviously, but then he does 2 things simultaneously:

1. Defending himself: he used the moment to defend his actions, defending Marie de' Medici's exile, justifying the Protestant alliances with references to respected theologians.

2. Attacking Caussin: Then he would attack Caussin's credibility entirely, suggesting the man's arguments were so weak he had not even dared to show up.

Through this, Richelieu manipulates the king, planting the impression that Caussin may be too weak as Richelieu suggested.

Meanwhile, Caussin sat waiting in the backroom for hours, alone in the dark. It was only at nightfall, as he later wrote in his report to the Jesuit general, that he understood what had happened. He had been outsmarted completely, and went home having accomplished nothing

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 8, notes 42-45.

(Trap Evasion>Trap Setting>Misdirection>Logical Manipulation>Sophistry>Acting Skills>Info Gathering)

What follows is Caussin's complete downfall. He is stripped of his role as royal confessor, his quarters are searched, and a compromising letter from Marie de' Medici is discovered. He is then exiled to a convent in Brittany, and as a final humiliation, Richelieu coldly quips that he now has all the time in the world to write more of his Holy Court.

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 8, notes 44-45.

(Info Gathering)

Marie de Hautefort was officially a lady-in-waiting to the queen, but in practice one of the most emotionally significant people in Louis XIII's life. She was openly hostile toward Richelieu. This relationship carried real political weight. Access to the king's affections meant access to his decisions, and by extension, to the direction of France itself. Richelieu understood this clearly and saw Hautefort as a threat to his own influence. Thus Richelieu orchestrates the introduction of Cinq-Mars into the king's circle, a deliberate move to displace Hautefort with someone he could control. He even deployed spies to subtly steer the king's attention toward the young man, engineering the relationship from behind the scenes.

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 9, note 12.

(Indirect Manipulation)

While Richelieu was managing domestic affairs at home, the war against Spain and the Habsburgs continued to grind forward on multiple fronts with mixed results. In Germany, French armies had success at the victory of Rheinfelden, and they pressed on to besiege Breisach, a fortress whose capture would hand Richelieu control of the Rhine, a strategic goal he had wanted. But also there were setbacks, Spain managed to reinforce positions, and Spanish forces struck at Savoy, a French ally/

With this complicated situation in mind, Richelieu turned to an attack on Fuenterrabía, a fortified Spanish town on the border between France and Spain. Whoever controlled Fuenterrabía

controlled the Atlantic Gateway, the most direct passage between the two kingdoms, making it both a defensive anchor and a potential launching point for deeper operations into Spain. Richelieu thought ahead to what would follow it. He reasoned that the moment Fuenterrabía fell, Spain would move immediately to retake it, just as the Spanish had done when the French captured Corbie. He therefore wrote that preparations for the aftermath needed to begin before the siege was even concluded.

Blanchard, Éminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France, chap. 9, notes 3-7.

(Analytical Thinking, Inductive Reasoning)

When negotiating the marriage between young Condé and his niece Claire-Clémence, Richelieu offered a huge dowry to make it attractive, but quietly excluded her from his will, keeping his fortune out of Condé's hands. Henri II de Bourbon thought he saw an opening. He outwardly accepted Richelieu's terms while secretly preparing a legal protest to launch after Richelieu's death, hoping to eventually claim the dowry, the alliance, and a larger slice of Richelieu's fortune. But Richelieu outmaneuvered him. The marriage happened, the Condés were bound to his family, Condé was politically neutralized, and Richelieu kept control of his estate, Henri never blocked any of it. Even after Richelieu died in 1642, his meticulous and detailed will held up; the Condés never got the windfall Henri had hoped for. His secret plan amounted to nothing, Richelieu had outplayed him even from beyond the grave.

Godley, E. C. (1915). The Great Condé: A life of Louis II de Bourbon, Prince of Condé. London: John Murray, p. 28.

(Bluffing>Contingencies)

There was a quarrel over who had more authority, a prince or a cardinal, a quarrel in which Richelieu and Condé participated. To symbolize Condé' submission; Richelieu would set a trap against him. Condé's journey home would naturally pass through Lyon, where Richelieu's brother, Cardinal Alphonse de Richelieu, lived. Richelieu arranged for Alphonse to prepare an elaborate welcome, refurbishing his palace and organizing a grand reception, so that Condé's expected visit would serve as a public, symbolic act of submission, forcing him to formally acknowledge Alphonse's precedence over him. At first Condé saw through it and refused to play along, he passed through Lyon without visiting Alphonse, staying elsewhere. Richelieu thus changed strategy, he shifted the pressure onto Condé's father, Henri, blaming him, and accusing him deceptively of instructing the insult. This eventually worked, Henri II personally intervened, pleading, ordering, and threatening, until Condé relented and returned to complete the humiliating visit, giving Alphonse precedence and dining with him, though "very sorrowfully."

Godley, E. C. (1915). The Great Condé: A life of Louis II de Bourbon, Prince of Condé. London: John Murray, pp. 37-38.

(Strategy Flexibility>Fabrication>Indirect Manipulation>Trap Setting?)

Richelieu managed one final success before his death, he ordered Condé to return to Paris and treat his wife, Claire-Clémence, properly. By then she had matured, and while Condé still didn't love her, from this moment on, he would stop openly humiliating her. This is very weird, as he would do so despite having so much hatred over Richelieu.

Godley, E. C. (1915). The Great Condé: A life of Louis II de Bourbon, Prince of Condé. London: John Murray, p. 39.

(Emotional Inducement)

Richelieu died on December 4, 1642, and the reaction was striking. The King reportedly said he finally felt like a king, and the public celebrated, songs even depicted Richelieu arriving in Hell, where the devils themselves saluted him. This reaction shows just how feared, and often hated, Richelieu had become.

(EXPECT FUTURE UPDATES)