



# Liddell Hart and the Weight of History (Cornell Studies in Security Affairs)

*John J. Mearsheimer*

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For almost half a century, Sir Basil Henry Liddell Hart (1895–1970) was the most highly regarded writer on strategy and military matters in the English-speaking world and even today, his ideas are still discussed and debated. Although he helped to formulate Great Britain's military doctrine after the First World War, it was his critique of British strategic policy before and during the early years of the Second World War that earned him a seemingly unassailable reputation as a brilliant strategist.

In this unflinching but balanced book, John J. Mearsheimer reexamines Liddell Hart's career and uncovers evidence that he manipulated the facts to create a false picture of his role in military policy debates in the 1930s. According to Liddell Hart's widely accepted account, his progressive ideas about armored warfare were rejected by the British army and adopted instead by the more far-sighted German generals. The Wehrmacht's application of his theory of blitzkrieg, he claimed, resulted in the defeat of France in 1940, a disaster he foresaw. Setting the historical record straight, Mearsheimer shatters once and for all the myth of Liddell Hart's prescience in the interwar period.

Liddell Hart had, in fact, "been quite wrong on the basic military questions of the 1930s," Mearsheimer finds, "and his writings helped lead the British government into serious error. Wide recognition of Liddell Hart's misjudgments badly damaged his reputation during the war, and Mearsheimer shows how he mounted a successful campaign to restore his image. Although some of Liddell Hart's military theories are still relevant, Mearsheimer warns that they should be applied with caution. This troubling book offers a striking illustration of how history can be used and abused?how a gifted individual can create their own self-serving version of the past.

Based on scrupulously documented evidence, *Liddell Hart and the Weight of History* is certain to be of great interest to those concerned with military policy and history.

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