

Strategy Study Guide

Strategy by Basil Liddell Hart

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Plot Summary

This book is the sort that could serve quite well as a textbook on military strategy. It provides a historical overview of the subject from an undeniable European bias from as far back as the fourth century BC up through the present. Describing real battles and the generals and great captains who led them is the method that the author uses to get the main principles of military strategy across to the reader.

At the outset, the main cause and method of war as described by this "master" B. H. Liddell Hart is deception. He separates and cites the distinction between using an indirect approach to achieving goals and more direct methods. Obviously, indirectness and deceit make "great bedfellows".

What is outstanding about this is that the great generals of military history figured out how to apply these very principles even using enormous bodies of men. The more deeply this is understood, the more one is able to discern the awesome counteractive results that satellites and satellite photography really do have to offer. Another fascinating observance in this book is the clarification of the difference between strategy and grand strategy; that is, different levels of order of strategic actions.

The limitations of historical generals and other lessons are also included.

By the end of the book, one has been introduced to the most important features of military strategy. This can be of great use not only for the warriors out there, but also for the civilian who simply wishes to understand the news or some of the behavior of the military and the politicians during times of war. This book, cited as a classic in its field, continues to offer readers a fantastic introductory overview of an often complex but at times quite simple subject: military strategy.



Chapter 1: Strategy from Fifth Century BC to Twentieth Century AD: Chapter 1: History as Practical Experience

Chapter 1: Strategy from Fifth Century BC to Twentieth Century AD: Chapter 1: History as Practical Experience Summary and Analysis

There are two very brief sections prior to chapter one. The book begins with a sequence of aphorisms, short erudite sayings used to train others in the art of successful strategy. However, at the very top, just under the recognition that all war is rooted in deception, there soon follows the acknowledgment that whenever there is a war, the parties of all participatory nations suffer more than gain in participating in war. On some level, this either is or appears to be self-evident. After that follows a foreword that begins with a discussion of the development of nuclear weapons and their implications.

However, this sets the stage for unquestionable gains of terrain and power and global influence during or as a consequence of war, and thereby indicates its contradictory nature, as one finds to be the case that with every lie there is contradiction.

There is an incredibly important idea put forth here in the beginning, that "the moral is to the physical as three to one". The psychological significance of conditioning every soldier and the moral importance and often root cause of military decision making are both emphasized here. As the book progresses, it is shown that this dictum, translated into English from the French, was frequently said by Napoleon Bonaparte.

The need for deceit to harbor the element of surprise to face an unprepared opponent is also cited as one of the greatest significances for the best military strategies. Stability of control, morale, and supply are the "center" of every country's military power. When these are attacked along the opponent's "natural line of expectation", which is especially the case when this is done directly, then the enemy actually has the greatest chances of successfully resisting. As such, the indirectness of strategy includes a need to make plans that allow for the militaries to progress moving along "other lines" but leading to the same goal.

The final main topic or principle introduced in this first chapter is the whole idea of "dislocation" of the enemy's center, or focus. This is another instance where one quickly sees how attacks upon another's resources and psychological conditions are incredibly effective methods, although nonviolent strategic offensives.



Chapter 2: Greek Wars-Epiminondas, Philip and Alexander

Chapter 2: Greek Wars-Epiminondas, Philip and Alexander Summary and Analysis

This chapter, like the previous one, is written in the third person in an educational tone, and is designed to instruct the reader in the growth and development of military strategy throughout history by reviewing specific battles and wars. The author points out that the first known account of military strategy being used, at least from the European standpoint, was in the fifth century cBC. However, it wasn't used by the Europeans at all, but rather the Persians.

The author introduces the reader to the first "Great General" from this period in history: Darius, the Persian. He introduced strategy to the Mediterranean by invading some of the Greek city-states and discouraging Greek colonies in Asia Minor from revolting against their Persian overlords.

The first prominent move on the part of the Persians, and this really was a "new move" in the history of humanity, at least on this scale, was that in order to attack the city of Athens, the Persians landed twenty-four miles away. This is a primary example of effective use of the "indirect approach". The purpose of it was to draw the Athenian military away from Athens herself and for the Persian to intentionally bring on an attack which they were fully prepared to meet. This stage took effect in 490 BC.

Three years later, the Greeks were able to counteract the Persian's attack through a successful expansion of their naval fleet.

However, the truth of what saved the Greek city-state of Athens was not her own power, but the effectiveness of an Egyptian revolt which required a tremendous amount of Persia's resources to address, and on another military front. As this drew away much of their opponent's force, the pressure upon Athens abated. The other true factor was that the Persians lost their top man: the military genius Darius. The combined effect was to reduce the power of the Persians in the Mediterranean in 484 BC to a manageable opponent of the Athenians.

The author further enhances one's appreciation for basic military principles through a description of a problem that developed in 481 BC. In this case, the Persians launched such a large assault against the Greek peninsula that the city-states in fact united against the common foe. On the Persian side, the attack they launched was so vast that it forced them to depend upon their own navy and other sea vessels to serve the sole purpose of providing supplies for their troops. This intensified interdependency enabled the Persians to transport and supply a comparably giant army to the Greek peninsula, but it destroyed their ability to hide their moves from the Greeks and reduced the ways



that the fleet and the army could support each other. This created what in military strategic terms is known as a "line of expectation" that could clearly and easily be seen.

The Persians were joined in their efforts by a sailor queen of the region, who recommended using an indirect approach to force much of the Greek fleet to retreat in such a way as to cause their own demise. Her advice however, had to be combined with an entirely different strategic move—that of outright deception—to foster a distraction. This was, in fact, to send a message from Themistocles that the Greek fleet was weak and ready to give way and surrender, although this was not remotely true. This idea, however, was presented to Xerxes of the Persians, who was eager to conquer the Grecian Peninsula as it was.

The Greeks were saved in this real life story by their strong fleet and what in sports one calls the home court advantage. The Persians did force them into a retreat, and initially, it may have appeared towards surrender. Instead, however, the Greeks were able to halt the incredible onrushing force of their enemies by retreating to the inside of a narrower strait, yielding them a strong advantage to contain and confront the Persian sea borne opponents. Their success at that time was so influential that they secured seventy years of freedom from the Persians.

The use of communications was most common amongst the naval forces of the Mediterranean. Control of communications was effective for cultivating the indirect approach in strategy. In fact, this was used as a great means for the Greeks to maintain their liberty from the Persians during the seven decades mentioned above.

Here in chapter two the author sets forth two definitions that are vital to understanding this subject. Strategy, Liddell Hart has defined as "Generalship- the actual directing of military forces". Grand strategy is the other new term supplied, and this directly relates to the policies that govern or closely relate to the Generalship.

More Generals are described, such as Epaminondas, who led another Greek city-state "coalition" to overcome the ascended state of Sparta beginning in 371 BC.

The chapter concludes, following a description of the truth of Alexander the Great who was, in fact, furthering a plan devised by his father. The happy news for his allies was that in this case the son was quite capable of living up to his father's great expectations. However, for those who had thought that Alexander had made all that up on his own, that isn't remotely true.



Hannibal, Scipio, and Caesar

Hannibal, Scipio, and Caesar Summary and Analysis

In this chapter, the author introduces the next series of wars that yielded what the author calls decisive results. One of the other main themes put forth by the author is that of decisive versus indecisive results. When a nation or other political body makes some longstanding gains, then the results are deemed decisive. It appears that this is the advantage of human warfare to people, whereas the bulk of the process is just painful and costly. When there are indecisive results, despite victories in battles, there is neither a long term beneficial shift in political or territorial powers, nor control over resources.

The Fabian strategy is introduced by the author in the same consistent educational third person style. The General Fabius not only avoided battling his opposition at their convenience, but would go so far as to forestall the conflict until he had what was good timing for his army but a bad time for his opponent. He did this as much to inflict morale damage as for the physical advantage. Fabius had an enduring psychological effect in Italy by persisting in being undefeated even when Hannibal had gained the undeniable upper hand. He used "guerilla tactics" to limit and to contain the effects of Hannibal. The resistance of Fabius to Hannibal prevented disloyalty among Italian residents. The author shows how much the General makes a difference, and how the need to exert patience and to "rein in troops" had an influence at that time. Following Fabian's fantastic leadership, a more offensive and battle zealous leader named Varro ended up at the head. The raw desire for fighting was a strong energy within the armies, but unlike Fabian, Varro did not have the balancing forces to curtail this with the more strategic interest of making the right moves at the best times, including when to engage the enemy.

From 50 BC onwards, the author focuses on how in five years of battle the Mediterranean became Caesar's. His use of timing and surprise was excellent. His indirect and direct approaches gave others an at times false appearance of rashness that was really rooted in a thorough understanding of his main opponent: General Pompey's mind. Such a remark points one toward the contemporary dictum, "know the enemy". Caesar also succeeded bloodlessly, which he preferred because it made it easier to turn previous opponents into followers, normally by combining attacks for control of supplies with limiting assaults on armies. Caesar chases his main opposing General Pompey into a death at the hands of Ptolemy of Egypt while he and his sister Cleopatra were in-fighting over which of them would rule Egypt. In the end, Caesar succeeded when he relied upon an indirect approach and failed when he used a direct approach. He excelled at sapping the morale of his enemy's soldiers but was inadequate at effectively attacking the leaders of his opponents.

The author ends this chapter with the same instructional and factual tone, with the assessment of the great General Caesar.



Byzantine Wars-Belisarius and Narses

Byzantine Wars-Belisarius and Narses Summary and Analysis

From out of the East, after the birth of the nations of Western Europe free from the hand of Rome, came Belisarius during the 500s AD. With great strategy, support from the still strong Eastern Roman Empire, under Caesar Justinian, he reconquered much of the Western regions that had spent some time as part of the Roman Empire centuries earlier.

The main strategic point of this General, according to Liddell Hart, is that he had the greatest success by superior force rooted in defense tactics instead of offensive tactics. He was able to succeed based upon this by systematically creating conditions under which the enemy attacked his forces just as generals who were superior with offensive tactics found their success by getting to the enemy and making the first strike.

The other noteworthy quality of General Belisarius is that he succeeded at numerous bloodless conquests, or recapturing of lands. He had impressed the Emperor with his work against the Persians, thus capturing his promotion to Commander-in-Chief of the forces turned into the West. His victory at a place called Daras produced the first triumph of the Byzantines over the Persians in that region for generations.

Belisarius claimed that true victory lies in getting the enemy to change and to give up his purpose. To achieve this affect without violence is generally viewed as superior, the desire among troops to use violence notwithstanding.

The author reminds the reader that people do learn when they pay attention. A loss at the hands of a Gothic cavalry had led to an entire restructuring of the Roman armies in 378 AD. During centuries, the military played around with this idea until they settled onto something.

Belisarius was sent to attack a kingdom in Africa that had been populated and created by Germanic Vandals, who used raised and piracy to establish the wealth of their body politic. The reason that Belisarius was sent to conquer them was that a nephew had usurped a friend of the Emperor's and had refused to release the man at the specific request of the Emperor. The new king's "no" led directly to the order for Belisarius to go take the kingdom. He was sent with fifteen thousand men, one third of which were cavalry. This was considered to be a small number even in those days when the global human populace was far lower than it is today.

Here again, the author educates one on the significance of "picked troops". This is viewed as a customary way to offset lower numbers of soldiers.



Belisarius's conquest of Naples affected the people so intently that they brought in a new leader: this one a "war chief", Vitiges. This man was already facing a Frankish war and decided that it was more important to do this than it was to reclaim Naples, to the dissatisfaction of the people. His effort to complete the Frankish war caused Belisarius to be in fact the Roman to reconquer Rome herself. The political situation was such that this task proved to be relatively easy for the Roman Belisarius to do.

The future of strategy had been changed forever: the Byzantines founded their military strategy on the defensive-offensive combinations used by Belisarius.

Centuries later, in 1068, a military General was "elected" Emperor to face a Turkish threat. However, in this case, the results were decisive. Due to the folly of an excessively hot-headed General, a portion of the Eastern Roman Empire was lost to the Turks.



Medieval Wars

Medieval Wars Summary and Analysis

In this chapter the author uses the same instructional tone and predominantly third party, neutral narrative voice as is found throughout the book. He begins the chapter by pointing out that he is making an effort to move through the transition between the ancient period of strategy and modern forms of this.

The most important features of the famous "battles of 1066" are that they were decisive and that they involved successful use of distraction combined with an indirect approach. William of Normandy invaded England during this feudal era. He was joined in this endeavor by two incredibly important allies: one of whom was the Norman King's brother Tostig, and another invader, the King of Norway, who was on a personally led invasion of the Yorkshire Coast.

The attack on the northeastern region of the main island of Britain by the Norwegian king was successfully defeated. However, it was the power of that attack that caused William of Normandy to succeed in his attack that he began by entering the island from the southeast, which forced the island's main defenders into a long southern run.

The author points out that during the medieval time period, military strategies increased dramatically and many of the European struggles reveal the ability with which these new skills were acquired and applied. Among these were "false retreats", and improvements of the Belisarian tactic of drawing out the opponent. Drawing the opposition into the best position from which to launch an attack was another strategic skill employed in this time period. This skill was needed to make the most of the cavalry. Likewise, it is worth noting that long standing professional armies—which are the norm in this part of the world during the current era had become the standard of many nations in the region.

The other developments in war strategy at the time were caused by the combination of specializing in certain types of enemies, such as people who would come out of the mountains to fight during good weather then retreat to safety in the hills during the "off season" only to return again when the weather did not prevent invasion to their region, and technological developments, especially the use of bows, which are now laughingly outdated. The composite military force of archery on horseback presented genuinely new opportunities.

One of the Princes Edward is cited for his military genius, including the extreme of castle fortification, along with the strengthened infrastructure of roads between castles applied in conjunction with pressures that forced the enemy to keep moving so that he eventually wore down his opponent. The next great comes over one hundred years later and was a man named Constable du Guesclin. Despite the English superiority with the longbow during the era, the French had set their conquering hearts on Britain. The Constable re-invoked the Fabian strategy. The author tells us that the man succeeded in



relying upon the line of expectation and applying numerous effective attacks, but never at the main body of the army. He used the psychological tactics of nurturing dissent among the peoples within enemy territory with great success. He took relatively undefended garrisons and regularly interfered with supply lines intended to provide for the main body of the military. Through five years of consistent effort, the French military Commander was able to drive the English out of all but two "French" areas.

The significance of supplies for success in war continues to be acknowledged. The author mentions one case where funding was a major source of "rescuing" one of the British military leaders with what he needed to press forward with his military campaign.



The Seventeenth Century- Gustavas, Cromwell, Turenne

The Seventeenth Century- Gustavas, Cromwell, Turenne Summary and Analysis

The author brings the reader immediately into awareness that, by his estimation, nothing about the entire thirty years of war led to decisive results. Indecisive results are indicated in the preceding chapter when one finds a French Constable picking away at the English occupation. Had the English conquered that region of France, or had they just occupied it? The brief nature of the "conquered condition" suggests an overall indecisive nature to the conditions, although at some point the area remained a decisive French condition.

By now the reader has learned to "expect the unexpected", since the indirect approach and using the lines of least resistance and least expectation are well known principles of strategy. Luring opponents into positions where the opponent is strong has become a common method. Avoiding bloodshed and battles have been revealed to be well known aspects of military strategy even back into ancient times.

Pincer moves, and driving up an enemy's flank—quite often a drive up the right flank—have reliable affects. The significance of the basic types of military forces in use in the historical time period covered have been the naval fleet of ships, the infantrymen and their hand held weapons, and cavalry and the use of mounted weapons including bows.

Communication lines and their importance have been referred to. The reader has been exposed to true novelty and improvements in the art of strategy and also how old lessons well learned can return to help someone succeed during another time in history.

Again the author provides descriptions of some campaigns that yield insights. In this case, the reader is shown another repetition of how inferiority in numbers can be overcome by the proper use of strategy and tactics. In this chapter, the author shows one how Cromwell moved in a large sweeping indirect move towards the enemy while making the wise choice to gather supplies along the way, strengthening whatever position they might take up. Once faced with the enemy, there were 8,600 men who were faced with twenty thousand opponents. Fortunately, they overcame the Scottish majority by forcing a turn upon them that caused their opponent to have to divide itself into much smaller groupings in order to oppose them. Thanks to this, they were able to meet the attack and to win, despite the smaller numbers of soldiers.

Turenne is cited as the one general who actually did continue to improve with age.

The author points out that the actual skillfulness of the soldiers and higher level strategists during the era of the British Civil Wars was at a peak. The result of this was

that many well applied strategies were readily parried by their opponents when in other eras the moves would have yielded victories. This generalized upgrade in ability in fact limited the scope of even the best of available generals.



The Eighteenth Century-Marlborough and Frederick

The Eighteenth Century-Marlborough and Frederick Summary and Analysis

Liddell Hart explains to the reader that the wars of the Spanish Succession were fought with what were rather direct strategic methods. The famous Great Captain Marlborough supplied breakthroughs in part because of the fact that he would provide greater subtlety and some indirect strategic manouvres.

The war did not begin in either "camp" and there were multiple nations on both sides of the war. Another asset to this author is his ability to limit himself to showing the strategic power of generalship without exposing much of any particular personal bias other than the basic fact of who he chose to include as examples. For some, this is a perfect indication of the indirect strategic method: for a war to begin away from the lands of either group of forces behind the war.

The nature of the wars described in this chapter was heavily influenced by the political conditions in Europe. During this time, many of the nations that the reader is accustomed to thinking of as one clear country with a long established clear boundary and well known political structure were not in their present condition. As was shown in the previous chapter, many a land may have shared cultural traits but had been under princes and other lords who had broken out of a unified order, possibly in a revolt from the entire idea of hierarchy and perhaps simply because there was no one popular and impressive enough to make the other leaders willing to capitulate themselves in order to follow. The limits of their power showed in their limited terrain. It was often enough to make many happy, but not enough to impress people centuries later who were more impressed by the kings of empires than heads of Greek city-states and Germanic or French, English or Spanish "principalities".

Marlborough had one style of leadership but often shared with another who was far more cautious. This at times hampered his ability to make progress.

It is in this chapter that Liddell Hart presents grand strategy for the first time. This is the higher level of strategy. It often includes both policy and military strategy and is the point at which one can see how obviously religion could become involved on this level.

Along with the newness comes a consistent reminder that all the gains of war are maintained by active effort. This is not a foreign idea to the reader, but worthy of note. Decisive victories can be rapid or can take decades or longer to come to be, and then once established, the care to preserve the gains against old or new opposition requires energy. Strategies must be developed and applied to maintain whatever is gained, or regained for that matter.



The French Revolution and Napoleon Bonaparte

The French Revolution and Napoleon Bonaparte Summary and Analysis

New conditions in Europe made the age of "broken up territories" move towards a new end. B. H. Liddell Hart brings the reader to the new stage by showing how France was transformed by its Revolution, and how the international popular support for the new form of government served as an emotional support for the moves of Napoleon. France developed into a position of dominance and Liddell Hart terms the country as having become a "menace", which means it was willing to expand the power to new territorial boundaries.

Napoleon turned out to in fact be a fantastic general. He was known to have rallied or reminded his troops with the insight that "the moral is the physical as three to one". Once this principle of strategy is understood, the reader will be able to see its influence in arenas ranging from international news and war related conditions and policies, but also in Biblical and other scriptural works involving war, and how often outnumbered and apparently weaker players were informed by God or a deity that the mission could be accomplished anyway. Liddell Hart's book shows multiple case examples of how it might be achieved.

Numerous additional strategic methods and the tactics that support them are divulged in this chapter. Many are "cumulative", being based upon those fundamentals already described in the earlier chapters. The importance of mobility has been disclosed but not explained, as it pertains not merely to an individual troop but to the larger bodies of forces all the way up to the entire armies and fleets. The choice of larger scale weapons and sizes of attacks are a self-evident factor once one develops the habit of mind of taking them into account. Dispersing the enemy's forces was, like dislocation of the opponents' main armies, further explained in this chapter. Lightly equipped infantry that eat off the countryside are going to get one further faster than heavily equipped troops who have wagons of food and canons or battering rams or other heavy weapons that are perfect for some attacks but not good for maximum mobility.

In an entirely different field, but similar in its structure, Bonaparte, like the Christ, was supreme at fulfillment of pre-existing knowledge. Napoleon did study strategy, and his application was excellent; unlike some of those Liddell Hart wrote about in earlier chapters, invention when it came to strategy was not Bonaparte's strongest point.

Nevertheless, despite the large number of nations who united in opposition to France, Napoleon changed the face of Europe by leading France into such far reaches as to be viewed as an Empire, and the General Napoleon had risen to such heights of

achievement that he was more than once likened to the first Caesar to the crowned Emperor of Rome.

The tone of the text continues to provide examples of leaders, case studies of battles, and the introduction of some terminology with repetitions that include the growing number of strategic terms.



1854-1914

1854-1914 Summary and Analysis

The purpose of this chapter, like all the others, is to provide an account of another portion of history and to give the reader further teachings upon strategy through use of examples supported by the author's educational commentary.

In this chapter, one of the main changes was that the military forces became more professional. This had a long lasting effect upon the entire nature of war. Here the author points up the need for balance. Length of service within the professional atmosphere can make the participants a bit stale and can give way to complacency. However, if they have enough experiences that invigorate them, then they won't suffer so much from this debilitating problem. At the other end of the spectrum, there are terrible consequences due to efforts to rely upon unprofessional soldiers, as was painfully recognized during the American Civil War.

However, during this historical period, despite the difference in the nature of the overall method of the military, the armies of Europe were in a condition where their instinct for directness surmounted the normal strategic emphasis on indirectness. At this point, B H Liddell Hart has brought up the simple truth that some men like to fight. A portion of these did not, but developed a liking of it as a side effect of training or experience. Also, inspirational speakers have long held the power to incite or to inspire passionate men (and at times women or even children) to arms and to fighting. For this reason, the more battle-prone have had a requirement in their best leaders, a handling that keeps them in check or held back when the time is not ripe for engaging the enemy. Again, this simply needs to be kept in balance with the energies of inertia or passivity in order to be kept in its proper perspective and course of action.

Technology had a tremendous influence on war methodology. In the case of the American Civil War, which serves one of the main examples in this chapter, the railways allowed more troops to be moved further and faster, but the way they were used caused them to cease to be advantageous. One setback they led to was a loss of mobility, since the masses of troops and their food supplies were tied to preserving and relying upon the railway. You cannot alter your flank's runs when they have to take the train rather than marching or riding horses along lines that the commander can readily shift to suit the conditions when the latter means are used.

Another difficulty is presented by Liddell Hart, which is how the principle of concentration can experience or create conflict with the indirect approach because it reduces the ability of the opposition to pursue the enemy's line of least expectation. The results can be overly direct, which has been known to be a problem in strategy. As also mentioned, however, the amassing and joining of armies together can provide much needed concentrations of force to dislocate an opponent's efforts. Only very adept

soldiering can prevent concentration from weakening instead of strengthening an assault through the loss of indirectness.

The Russians and the Japanese and some of the Germans, however, found great success through relatively direct approaches. Such strategies depend more upon tactical powers and on the weapons and systems used by the soldiers.

In this chapter, the reader's attention is directed to the importance of communications. One high risk situation mentioned is when the communications of two or more opposing military forces come into close contact with one another.



Conclusions from Twenty-Five Centuries

Conclusions from Twenty-Five Centuries Summary and Analysis

As clearly as the chapter is titled, the author presents conclusions here. The first that he goes into is how the nature of both man and of war, from a male perspective, has predominantly relied upon the direct approach. Even so, Liddell Hart shares with the reader the results of his research: decisive results, ones with relatively long standing effects, are consistently the outcome of indirect strategies instead of direct ones.

Since the author has shown illustrated in earlier chapters the difference between indecisive results and those that are decisive, the reader at this point is meant to automatically understand what is intended.

Another major elucidation herein is that all Great Captains, especially when they are in the weaker position, either materially or in the realm of raw force, do best to evade any direct confrontation.

Difficult conditions and circuitous routes are all correctly viewed as preferable to any kind of direct conflict that would blight the weaker force with defeat. One case of this, Liddell Hart shows, is how taking an army all the way around a mountain range could yield successes, whereas skirmishes at a small well-held garrison could cause decisive defeat.

One more incredibly important conclusion that BH Liddell Hart has made is that the moral and psychological arenas are most important. These effect matters on the ground a great deal and are often the root source or apparent source of the conflict and direct strategies in the first place. Hence, whenever a moral victory is won, if this can be done without fighting, then the entire war has been won by the destruction of the purpose that motivated it.

Finally, the instructive tone of the book has remained consistent. This guide informs the reader that the pure principles of strategy became far clearer from a study of a variety of wars that took place throughout history. These strategies the author has revealed to the reader one or a very few at a time as he has progressed, so that by the end the average reader will have been able to painlessly absorb a substantial body of knowledge that suffices to make a decent introduction to the subject of military strategy on the whole.



Section 2: Strategy of the First World War: Chapter 11: The Plans and Their Issue in the Western Theatre, 1914

Section 2: Strategy of the First World War: Chapter 11: The Plans and Their Issue in the Western Theatre, 1914 Summary and Analysis

By this time, as the educational tenor of presentation continues, the reader is shown how valuable the previous experience has been. In the case of the First World War, the greatest of the military leaders employed strategies that were striking in their similarity to those applied by previous Great Captains which have been introduced in preceding chapters.

This time, pre-war conditions are spotted as the best place to start. This time, it is the inherent proximity between the then border of Germany and its nearest neighbor France, and how much the proximity affected the overall situation is highlighted. During the wars of this time, the French and the British, famed a few centuries earlier for their enmity, forged and held a strategic alliance that would serve them in good stead for quite some time.

Also, in this chapter, the northeastern front of Germany, Prussia, comes into play as what might be strategically viewed as the buffer between Russia and Germany. Bavaria was continuing to function independently.

Plans were made by the French that depended upon a German predecessor General Clausewitz for their inspiration, but were improved by modifications by the French themselves.

Meanwhile, now the power of literacy seems to have kicked in on some level, since the Germans were able to devise war strategy that in part relied upon the wisdom and shrewdness shown by General Hannibal from ancient days and earlier chapters.

A number of tactics were, as is standard, combined with the overarching strategies in search of decisive victories by opponents during this time.

For the first time, the Americans appear in a manner that is even relevant to the Europeans having grown to the power of a worthy ally and formidable opponent.

This time, the guiding light of the author points up vital but detailed points: these include matters such as whether the infantry are up for long hard marches with only small food rations. Other factors are also brought into play, one of which is how the highest levels of people devising the strategies ran into trouble. In this case, there was a new idea



coming into the realm of strategy, but when it made some effort to gain recognition among the French, it was viewed as scandalously passive and defensive as to threaten offensive strategies altogether. As noted with Belisarius, there have been generals who attained greater mastery of the defensive, but it was more common for the Great Captains to master offensive aspects of strategy. A discernible lack of power in either can be of great value. If the opposing general(s) know this, then a strategy can be developed that follows the dictum of "know thy enemy" with precision.

Liddell Hart provides a description of the bad circumstances that led to a German retreat. The High Command had been sensitively alert for danger to the rear of their forces where the majority of their communications were positioned. What was found at one point was that the assembly of opposing troops had only grown, with troops from other nations being predicted to annex themselves in a united front of support.

The author concludes the chapter with a disparaging review of four years of the Western Front of World War I. The direct approach was used, and the fighting yielded inefficient results as far as the writer of this book is concerned.



Chapter 12: The North-Eastern Theatre

Chapter 12: The North-Eastern Theatre Summary and Analysis

During this chapter, the author takes many a reader from the comfort zone of the west over into the harsh reality of the eastern side of the region of Germany and her bordering states during the first decades of the twentieth century.

Earlier in the book, the author also showed that differences of opinion at the top can in fact cause problematic results. Effects can be surmountable in many cases, but in other circumstances the loss of cohesion of activity and planning can devastate a military strategy.

The feelings of allies also have a synergistic influence. Unfortunately, this does not always result in every ally taking the easiest route. Russia is cited as having agreed to follow a course of action that was for her forces quite risky and rather limited by their directness in order to support her allied military forces. Prussia and Russia and Austria were major players on the Eastern side of Germany.

The Russians had to organize their attacks, and chose to focus on the weaker of their main opponents: in this case, Austria, during a period of time when she lacked the support that she needed. They would focus their attacks upon Germany only after they had grown stronger or Germany had weakened, whichever came first.

This is the first chapter in which both Russia and East Prussia figure largely. Pressures from the Russians forced Germany to extend aid and assistance to Austria.

The Grand Duke Nicholas as the military leader serves as the example in this chapter.

Ludendorff was the Duke's main opponent. This German was forced to learn to devise strategies to manage the Russian opposition. Strategy was limited between the dependence upon the railways and other limiting factors. However, the author emphasizes that while strategy was abnormally limited, tactics were virtually unlimited when it came to facing the Russian enemy in Austria and in Prussia. The armies mainly employed flank attacks in an effort to achieve this.

Later in the war, when Ludendorff's forces had been reduced to very little, he was granted permission to try an attack against Russia via an assault against its Vilna-Dvinsk railway. This was effective, despite what Liddell Hart defines as "meagre" resources. The fact that it was a potent attack suggested how much more effective it could have been had it been conducted when the German forces under Ludendorff hadn't been reduced and if those over him had not "undermined his efforts".



Although Liddell Hart has pointed out a few cases of obvious undermining amongst high ups, the strategy book does not focus on this challenge. Leadership studies do, however, and within them it has been shown that the practice of training for succession has generally been recognized as the best-known effective way to overcome or to balance out undermining followers, in order to allay fears of being usurped by them.

Finally, in this chapter, the author teaches more about the truth that by creating large traps, armies can actually capture hundreds of thousands of troops. Such events took place even hundreds of years ago. Also, the instructor explains that the sense of mental strength within the high command is vital to the well being of the forces below them. More than one million Russian soldiers died during World War I, yet they won. Liddell Hart tells the readers, however, that a loss of faith among the top command "did them in".



Chapter 13: The South-Eastern or Mediterranean Theatre

Chapter 13: The South-Eastern or Mediterranean Theatre Summary and Analysis

Here, the reader is faced with the conditions of the Italian front. Another idea that the author has introduced is the reality that even generals are normally focused on the parts of the armies and fronts that are most immediately within their control. Their own biases come to bear during war councils.

The time came for Ludendorff to face the southern region of the Italians. This nation, that centuries earlier had been north of Rome, had found itself fighting the Austrians. This country, like Russia, suffered from having over one million soldiers killed in only two and a half years with virtually no ground gained but perhaps also not lost. This appears to have been the result of the use of the direct approach in strategy. Six hundred fifty thousand Austrian soldiers died as well. It is numbers such as these that imply that one reason why Europeans have not suffered from radical overpopulation is the carnage of war as different groups of Europeans have slaughtered one another over the centuries.

The use of the wedge to effectively separate allied forces is another point of strategy shown in this and preceding chapters. In this case, it was used to drive apart Italian armies. Obviously, by implication, it also means that effectively preventing or avoiding such a "drive to create a wedge" is a very powerful counter-attack of the defensive strategic approach.

Nations are apt to use their own strengths, which is no mistake. In the case of World War I, this meant that the British used their naval forces to make headway and to protect their defensive positions.

Although the Germans were subdued by their enemies in the war, and decisive results were obtained—decisive meaning that the effect lasted for decades—it was not easy to accomplish and the war ended in 1918. However, much like weeding out a plant but leaving part of a tap root behind, the seeds of potential German reemergence and the entire Second World War were either left or sown by the war; their defeat was handled in 1918.



The Strategy of 1918

The Strategy of 1918 Summary and Analysis

During this chapter the author takes the reader on a tour of how the Eastern realms gained precedence in military strategy. In this case, the modern Franco-British alliance sought to thwart further Germanic progress by setting upon the former East Roman capital: Constantinople.

The Allies were hoping to re-unify Greece and even Bulgaria into a full force. However, when they did reach the Turkish end of the saber, so to speak, they met with powerful resistance. The Turks had the "home court advantage" of familiar terrain that was particularly difficult for the Allied invaders to overcome. The Turks successfully repelled the invasion.

The seizure of colonial lands or other strategic points or holdings outside of the main nations was a relatively common military practice. At least, the idea was, we can get hold of our enemy's out-of-country holdings while we are struggling and attempting to make progress against their mainland. The effort is not necessarily direct, but has a profound effect. The author describes it in the book as serving as a therapeutic "tonic" for the nations who are unable to conquer their opponents' main forces.

Liddell Hart differentiates the Turks from the Arabs and describes the radical distinction in their strengths and weaknesses. The Turks could sustain heavy losses, but were vulnerable and sensitive to attacks made upon their supplies. The Arabs were virtually the opposite, unable to carry on with much loss of life of their soldiers but able to handle heavy attacks against their supplies and resources.

Here the writer alerts the readers to a new development in strategic methods. The approach of the Arabs was unorthodox when compared with the other styles that Liddell Hart has shown in the earlier parts of the book. Their strategies tended to more closely resemble of the French Constable who endeavored to rid France of the English. They would tend to attack their enemies' supplies and supply lines, with a minimum of soldiers.

Whereas the standard armies would seek to engage the enemy and to maintain contact, the Arabs adopted a strategy of rapid attacks and departures. Hence, Arabs were more apt to leave their enemies feeling "raided" than anything else, since they dodged the customary prolonged assaults that the attack of an army's right flank by the left would yield. Like the previously mentioned French Constable, the Arabs kept at it, to an extent that their opponents recognized it as a different war strategy.

The other strategy that was employed by a man named Lawrence involved trapping forces through dependency and then weakening them there. This was a strictly military

form of "contain and confine" that would later be applied to the fiercest of conclusions by Hitler's direct Jewish confine and attack by attrition techniques.



Hitler's Strategy

Hitler's Strategy Summary and Analysis

First and foremost, the author explains clearly that one of the most startling features about Hitler is that he wrote about and otherwise disclosed what it was that he was going to do before he did it, well into having taken over the country and making war upon other nations. The bad news is that from the point of valuing the indirect approach and the matter of not underrating one's opponents, this was a grievous error. The good news, from an unbiased perspective, is that this showed that as he succeeded at every phase, those who were already alerted to his plans developed the kind of confidence in him that comes about directly as a consequence of observing someone who acts upon his or her word and follows through effectively on plans.

In this chapter, Liddell Hart describes Clausewitz as a Prussian rather than as a German, when he shows that Hitler made a break from those who had studied and used their masterful predecessor's wisdom.

While Hitler is not the only general referred to in this chapter, he is the main one. The author pulls a nonpolitical move by describing Hitler's behavior purely in terms of his abilities as a strategist rather than in terms of "right and wrong" or "good versus evil". The pure unadulterated truth is that he excelled in this area, but there was a limit to his powers which will be discussed in the next chapter. For those used to Hitler-the-Villain, this can seem dramatic; however, the author does not put Hitler forth as "the good guy", either. It is simply an analysis of high quality generalship.

The author introduces grand strategy in this chapter and shows that Hitler managed to situate himself so that he could be in the best position to do this. This produced a peculiar political situation, however, because of the relationship between political policy and military strategy. The consolidation of these two powers enabled Hitler to function with both policy and strategy at his dual command. Predecessors such as Alexander and Caesar and Napoleon were themselves in such a leadership situation.

Again, the significance of psychology has been reiterated in this portion of the work. Entire armies can become useless if and when they have lost the force of their leader's commitment to their goal or goals. This was one of the apparent effects of Cleopatra's ability to have Roman generals for lovers. Once taken or given or shared, she sent the Romans home, allied and held off by her powers. If through the mind, resistance can be diminished or destroyed, then the war is more likely to won bloodlessly.

The truth of this might well explain the "hard and closed mindedness" sometimes found among the citizenry of any nation and members of any religion. They may well simply be protecting their minds from external attacks, or even from internal ones. While open-mindedness is normally viewed as beneficial and improves learning by creating the "sponge" effect, it can also leave people excessively open to mental assaults, often



dished out with soft approaches as well as any hard direct attacks, such as open disagreement and political behaviors. According to the generals, one matter of significance is to harbor multiple objectives; not only to have an orderly step to help attain goals, but when conducting war, alternative aims are needed in an effort to achieve a specific end.

Finally, here the author explains grand-strategy more precisely as military strategies that are inclusive with respect to the nature of the peace they wish to achieve by decisive results of war.



Hitler's Run of Victory

Hitler's Run of Victory Summary and Analysis

The events recounted in this chapter begin in 1939, well after Hitler had begun what was or appeared to be a setup to find a way of attacking the rears of Spain and France. He had already gained political ascendancy in Germany, mainly by exploiting infighting, which is the same way that most divorce attorneys make their money.

The use of mechanization was another technological transition that made new gains and some moves in warfare possible. What began with the "turnaround" of the fallen condition of Germany led to renewed health, followed by an expansion that was, in reality, quite successful until it began to overstretch its own bounds. Once overstretched in territories, maintaining the condition was only increased in its difficulty.

One additional factor of major importance was for the leaders and troops on one team to guard themselves against the underestimation of their opposition since overconfidence can be a cause of failure in a more powerful enemy. Hitler was well aware of this, and according the guiding author of this work, had the sense to avoid making this mistake.

Timing and the combination of strategic elements are discussed in this chapter. For example, the fact that Hitler missed the timing on his opportunity to defeat Britain by taking Dunkirk ultimately led to his own demise precisely because Great Britain, once back on her feet, was able to participate in defeating his military forces.

The interplay of the various armies, on all sides of a military conflict, really is truly interdependent. Nevertheless, the entire time, the majority of mass movements had the now familiar forms of efforts to get to the rear of an army's forces. The manipulation of fronts so that they ultimately can be transformed into giant "trap bags" are a common strategy that often depends upon some deception with respect to movements. Armies set up so that flanks can attack their enemy's flank, sometimes the same sided one, sometimes the one of the opposite side. Entrenchment was not a new tactic in this war, but was used here even as Belisarius had employed it over a millennium earlier.

There were two major changes. One of these was that the generals had often read at least some of the wisdom and experience of earlier generals, giving them the advantage of such knowledge but perhaps egos or senses of confidence that leaned into their dependence upon the "Masters" they had studied.

Hitler's Decline

Hitler's Decline Summary and Analysis

The power of the psychological attack has been well noted throughout this book. It continued to be entirely relevant at this stage in time that the author presents. An element of the influence of education may have had a hand in the events along this stage. There is often an attitude against students excelling over their masters, or events that can lead to undermining behaviors, especially if such a psychology succeeds against the students. Then the damage could be found in their tendency to hold back or to be unprepared, for they should be positioned where the solution is to make bold new steps that their predecessors and even exemplars were not able to achieve. Hitler faced this, in actual fact, when he had "made it as far as the famous Napoleon", but needed to in fact outpace his Great predecessor. His very downfall was that he did not surpass Napoleon Bonaparte, but only matched the Frenchman's performance as a military commander.

The entire purpose of strategy, Liddell Hart reminds the reader again, is to get the enemy to abandon their goal. This makes it very clear why people might develop means of resisting when faced with differences of opinion, and of values. Most like to be corrected when wrong and intensely, justifiably dislike being attacked by enemies or even supposed allies who wish to convert one in one's views. Liddell Hart's book Strategy serves to emphasize why this makes sense.

The strategies and tactics involving mobility and flexibility are shown through case example in this chapter. During World War II, there were generals able to change the direction of their attacks by large forces with a mobility that was equal or superior to that found among some of the more adroit cavalry units centuries earlier. This time, another feature is revealed. In this case, it is the reality that, thanks to the onset of military aircraft development, the air force can provide new forms of support to the land forces, and in some cases the naval fleets.

Hitler's Fall

Hitler's Fall Summary and Analysis

The author informs the readers that Hitler's failure was in the realm of grand strategy. He had created a situation in which he needed to establish and settle physical boundaries of German dominance and then to generate support with a well placed sense of security among the peoples of the other nations of Europe. To show what this was is to remind readers that part of Belisarius of Rome and Napoleon of France's successes were founded in their popular support. People who were not even French were happy to have Napoleon rule over them. Hitler's difficulty with giving peoples throughout Europe the feeling that living in a united German-dominated continent would be fabulous was the main source of his downfall.

The other most substantial trouble was Hitler's challenges in terms of how much Germany could handle expansion, and then what to do with the global fears of the constant threat of that extension. Russia stood to bear the label of the defining factor of the limits of German power in the northern east. Although the Germans were effective in penetrating Russia, the depths of Russia served to create a seemingly natural endpoint to how far Germany could go; as far as they went, there was still plenty more Russia.

In this chapter, the educational force introduces a new strategic concept: this one is called the "horns of a dilemma". Circumstances that draw forces for legitimate reasons that are effective in confounding the enemy can cause opponents to run into the horns of a dilemma. Sometimes these are created by successful strategic artifice and ruse. Other times they are simple, real conditions. If the efforts on two fronts are facing such strong opposition that when one arm calls for reinforcements the other flank or front cannot without threatening to give way, then they are in danger of being caught on the horns of a dilemma.

At the chapter's conclusion, the reader has been led through the rest and the Eastern side of World War II. Hitler met with his end, but only after a rapid sequence of terrific, and to his enemies, terrifying success.



Chapter 19: The Theory of Strategy

Chapter 19: The Theory of Strategy Summary and Analysis

This chapter brings together what has been previously introduced into a new whole. This time, the author educates the reader for the first time in the theory of strategy per se. The first step applied is to provide definitions of strategy and policy and to describe the basics of how and why the present world and democracy especially is not designed to cultivate the superior military political leader. In democratic and other free nations, the military is always subservient to the civilian "body politic", which separates policy from strategy as least as much as Americans have sought some kind of separation of Church and state even when religion figures heavily in the politics of the people and the government.

Next, the writer explains "limited aim", or the strategic goals most often used by a militarily inferior or weaker force. This can take root in a people based upon the idea that raw might does not guarantee "right", let alone cases where control is really the main concern. Most contemporary "wars" have only limited aims; the American presence in Iraq exemplifies a strategic limited aim. This is in contrast to decisive aims. Generals who have "gone wild" and conquered or attempted to entirely take massive tracts of territory or destroy the enemy's military have at times overstepped the limited aims of their nation's war policy to chase after "old fashioned decisive aims". "Decisive" here means gains that last the victor at least decades of favorable conditions.

Grand strategy, strategy, and tactics are put in order. Grand strategy is more the realm of policy, and of war policy. Strategy is the implementation of policy. Tactics are the methods and techniques that portions of military forces smaller than armies or fleets employ to achieve the objectives. The fact that military tactics are not always needed and that strategy can be bloodless is readily observed in smaller, civilian versions of conflicts when, say, lawyers are used to perform bloodless tactical maneuvers. Even wars have had times and leaders who were able to apply military forms of such tactics, especially the attacks against supplies, and elements of the siege. If supply lines are cut and containment is established, then a siege can be made bloodless simply through the "trap and starve" method of assault against an enemy. Dislocation, by what ever means, is the main purpose of any and every attack.

Liddell Hart tells the reader that the dependence of a military force on its communications systems is proportional to its size. Entire armies suffer terribly if their communications systems sustain a powerful blow, whereas a smaller military group can more readily find alternative ways around such an inconvenience.

Next the author explains how "distraction" works. Distraction is more potent in the higher command, and to confound the enemy's leadership is a major goal. This is achieved typically through deceit: "mystify and mislead". The best way to improve upon



this is to also surprise. The guide to strategy assures the readers that this is yet another reminder that the psychological and/or moral ground is of greater significance than the physical, although one is accustomed to seeing how warfare and the rest of life are often "the psychological as experienced through the physical". What Hart does not mention is that for the majority of people, a main source of mental limitation seems to be aspects of life that appear to resist conforming to the will and mind of a given perceiver. Hence, the "belief in the flesh", so to speak, is simply "that which resisted the power of my mind to conform it to my will".



The Concentrated Essence of Strategy and Tactics

The Concentrated Essence of Strategy and Tactics Summary and Analysis

This chapter, though brief, is most instructive. The educational tone continues, and it follows the preceding one in that it more closely resembles a lesson that could be easily conducted in a classroom setting.

The topics covered stem from the basic concept of concentration and the limitations that ensue when an enemy is well aware of "concentrated forces". This amounts to "strength faces strength" and is generally ill advised.

Flexibility is advised through adjusting ends to the present means and circumstances. Maintaining greater flexibility for a military force is strongly preferred.

The object or goal should be kept clearly in mind, and the means through which objectives are reached should be considered in view both to their possibility given the circumstances, but also with a mind to what to do in the event of failure, of partial success, or complete success. One must know what to do with it, should one succeed in attaining the objective. This is in part what the author began to teach the the reader about when referring to grand strategy as those methods which have as their aim not only victory but the state of the peace after it is achieved. One must choose the line of least expectation so that the military forces can surprise the enemy's forces.

Liddell Hart urges the reader to pursue the line of least resistance and provides the explanation of how this differs with respect to strategy and tactics. After that, as he continues with brevity, he encourages a line of operation that enables a military force or nation to pursue alternative objectives. This makes it easier to succeed at any one of the objectives and may make it possible to achieve multiple outcomes from the same line of operation. This, the writer explains, forms the very basis of infiltration tactics. The author provides another guideline. Again, it is about flexibility; however, in this case, Liddell Hart tells the audience that plans and dispositions or formations of military forces need to be arranged to enable "next steps". Formations should be made to allow the most rapid adjustments possible.

The last section of this short chapter is about what Liddell Hart calls "negative" aspects of strategy. These include, foremost, the abandonment of a technique that once failed. The next is to avoid attacking an opponent who is on guard. He concludes the chapter by telling readers that dislocation of the enemy and exploitation of any weakness or advantage gained through dislocation are the two most important matters of strategy.



National Object and Military Aim

National Object and Military Aim Summary and Analysis

The first lesson provided here is that national "object" or policy goal is closely related to but different from military strategy. In truth, policy is the real intention, and military aims are one of the means through which this is achieved. Bear in mind that he has also taught that direct physical battles are far from the main military means.

Next, Liddell Hart brings up the importance of Clausewitz. The reader was introduced to this general in earlier chapters, but here, the importance identified is not the wars Clausewitz fought in but the books that he wrote, which themselves grew to prominence and thereby had a massive influence on military strategy long after he had died.

However, the author informs the readers that the man's shortcomings actually created a sort of "regressive influence", since they overlooked changes that mechanization brought into the realm of possibility that genuinely had not previously existed. These included the fact that Clausewitz wrote in a philosophical mode, but Liddell Hart thinks the man was never a real philosopher. Further, the author informs the readers that the majority of students of military strategy would probably not be able to follow the books, and would end up falling into seeing mainly that it's best to have the most soldiers and majority of supplies uniformly and that combat was the lynch pin of all military strategy despite the unreality. In fact, the writer states that Clausewitz's most famous book's original manuscripts acknowledged that his material was subject to misconceptions and was not really finished or complete. Even so, it was popularized. What he did have, according to Liddell Hart, served to have a terrible influence upon the whole way that World War I was waged.

Grand Strategy

Grand Strategy Summary and Analysis

Between the tail end of the preceding chapter and this one, the author comes forward as very much a war strategy theorist. He informs the readers that he began this great personal task as a major critique of Clausewitz. He also clarifies yet again the distinction between grand strategy that is war policy and military strategy which is the way in which the military forces are used to seek the policy objectives. He also reminds the readers that bloodless victories, and attacks made against factors other than the lives of the enemy's people, especially soldiers, are at least as much genuine military strategy if not more so than the bloodshed that takes the form of battles between the human forces themselves.

It is clear that Liddell Hart objects to the terrible and unnecessary loss of life that some military theories and attitudes have contributed to. He has made it very clear that the indirect approach in strategy is but one of the many ways to avert the disaster of victory through sheer numbers and mass slaughter of soldiers. It is true that one of the features of the armies with vastly superior numbers is their ability to sustain heavier casualties (deaths). However, their capacity to be more mobile and to cover more terrain without ending up on the horns of a dilemma are the features that "should" be recognized as the prevailing advantage that larger armies supply.

The rest of the chapter, delivered with the same instructive tone, is devoted to descriptions of military aims and the different responses of the war. Aggressors, robbers, domestic squabbles, peaceful people, and nations are all used to facilitate the author's points.

Guerilla War

Guerilla War Summary and Analysis

While it is true that guerilla methods were employed by peoples during wars now and then throughout history, it was not until the nineteenth century that they began to be recognized as such, and that these methods became studied. The realities surrounding guerilla warfare are essentially intricately involved with the current conditions in the nations of Iraq and Afghanistan. However, early in the book the techniques used by a French Constable were often guerilla tactics, as were the actions of the famous "Robin Hood". The Arabs were the next group in the world to make the most of these, most famously in their efforts to gain independence from the Turks.

Guerilla war relies upon relatively small, comparatively irregular forces. Their advantage in this very disadvantage is that their relatively organic nature makes them less reliant upon mass scale organizational levels and hierarchies. Two diverse factions of these were used among the Chinese to successfully reduce and repel the Japanese. The work done during those decades yielded the fruitful political gains when the end of World War II caused the Japanese to be fully "routed" out their Chinese occupation. In America, the Viet Nam War is well known to have been fought with a high proportion of guerilla tactics amongst the populace which sowed confusion and extra fear amongst the soldiers.

The development of the hydrogen bomb and the American political attitude of using the threat of massive violent retaliation for even small attacks led, according to Liddell Hart, to the nurturance of guerilla tactics: fear, avoidance, evasion and indirect attacks. Interpersonal behaviors often deemed "weak" or unethical are the same ones relied upon in war and in guerilla war: to win with a minimal loss or pain to oneself and one's allies.

Finally, Liddell Hart cites Lawrence, from earlier chapters, as the greatest of the Great Captains, along with recognizing that caution is the wisest course in the realm of grand strategy and war policy, but often a disadvantage in battle. Camouflaged war has superseded the Cold War, and to have the best modern generals, one needs to combine embracing the truly new, creating new ways with learning from the successes, but also the failures of the greats of history.

With this, the book concludes in its text, although there are two appendices.



Characters

Hitler of Modern Europe

The author presents this general without political bias. Some may find this offensive but others will not. One reason that he was a great general, according to the author, is that his ability to achieve victory without bloodshed was superior to many other Great Generals throughout history. For the Allied mind, this may come as a shock, for he is associated with the savage elimination of Jews and with the aggressive occupation of most of Western and Central Europe. Nevertheless, the truth is that he actually was not one of the bloodthirstier generals at all. In reality, the largest problem with Hitler was that he was probably "supposed to" and even had the potential to surpass his famous predecessor Napoleon Bonaparte, but only equaled that man instead. Here, one must ask oneself if Hitler was mentally "crippled" or "held back" or "attacked" by the idea that he couldn't be greater than Napoleon when really he was, but failed to overcome—and surpass. Until reading this book, the one writing the summary had no idea of this truth "either".

Despite the justified unpopularity of Hitler's anti-Semitism and the fact that the Allied nations were thrilled to have conquered him and the other Axis powers, once the propaganda is removed, he has been revealed to be one of the world's greatest military generals of all time. For Americans, there is liable to be a strong "even though we do not like it" sting to the truth of this.

Belisarius of the Roman Empire

This general reconquered most of the Western Roman Empire, coming out of Constantinople while the Eastern region of the Roman Empire was still reasonably strong. This may have occurred simply because the West, which had been strong enough to shake off the Romans, had weakened, while the Eastern fringes had grown stronger in their resistance, hence changing the best direction for further expansion. Belisarius had a similar effect as Caesar upon those he conquered: some began to call him "the Emperor of the West". The Emperor Justinian was suspected of feeling rather threatened by this, which may have led to him undermining Belisarius. Another main feature about this general is that he led prior to the proliferation of written texts. This means that, although there is a good chance that he was literate, his ability to access much written material on historical strategy was far more limited than what was available to European military generals from the 1700s onward.

Belisarius was unusual in that he was the master of defensive strategies, and of defensive-offensive strategy. The majority of generals in the book are superior at offensive strategy, which makes Belisarius stand out as exceptional in this other manner. His first and last successes took place in the East, where he kept Persia out of the Roman Empire. His reconquest of the West took place in the middle of his career.



Due to the popularity of the Roman Empire and the distance from it in time, most readers will be cheerful enough about accepting this general's greatness regardless of political preferences.

Clausewitz

This German general figures prominently for his military leadership during one or two chapters. However, the longer term effects of one his "sideline activities", that of having written about and having pondered upon military strategy, turned out to be of great importance even though his widow somehow managed to get his work published even though he had not and may not have even finished it because he died before completion. His influence develops later in the book as an effect of literacy among the more modern military experts and the publication of his military book *On War*. According to the author, the bad news is that the successful popularization of his works might have caused more bad than good.

Lawrence of Arabia

This is one of the Great Captains used as a model in this book. His military strategy and his ability to apply them were both phenomenal. Much like Clausewitz, although he only figures in largely during one chapter as the model commander, his name recurs as having been a resource to numerous future generals. Despite the truth that Liddell Hart does not "go on about him at great length", the name crops up right until the very end as holding significance to modern generals.

Julius Caesar

He was a fantastic general who's popularity was so great that the people of Rome and especially of the conquered Roman lands actually preferred to have him as their head, even though this meant that they had committed what feels to most Americans like a "faux pas" by "reverting from a form of democracy in order to have an Emperor. There are direct accounts of some of his strategy early on in the book's first section.

Napoleon Bonaparte

The author uses Napoleon as an example of the unification of grand strategy, which is war policy, and that the primary military force are best for achieving certain objectives. In fact, it appears that this is the best arrangement for a nation during a time when political and economic expansion by military expansion is a main political objective. However, this is one of the few situations or time periods during which it may in fact be in a country's best interests to have a leader who really is very much a Master of grand strategy (war policy) and also of military strategy who thereby has the power to truly utilize both. One reason why Napoleon, like Belisarius, did so well was that he was well liked in many of the lands that his armies conquered. Hence, rather than simply being



"hurt" and "bitter" to have been conquered by him, many of the people welcomed him as their new and great leader. This has undeniable political benefits that lend themselves towards long term decisive gains.

Darius

In 490 BC, this Persian general led assaults against the city-state of Athens on the Greek peninsula. The author provides his excellent example of how to win by drawing out the armed forces of an opponent combined with making the most of those forces that are in favor of the invaders (for whatever reasons, such as public policy, economic, religious, or others). He achieved this by landing twenty-four miles from Athens in order to attack it, and the opposition was lured into a frontal assault that distracted them from their defensive positions.

Artemisia

This is one of the two primary examples of women who also functioned as both political and military heads of state. Artemisia was used to show that, in her era, mercenaries were more commonly relied upon for warfare as it was, among other things, less expensive than maintaining a standing professional national military force or set of forces. She was a queen who used mercenaries for her country. The impression given is that, like the majority of the more old fashioned generals, she traveled with her military in order to lead from among them rather than from the great physical distances that the contemporary military forces tend to keep between the soldiers on the ground and the generals or Great Captains.

Themistocles

A Greek who is noted for having provided the Greek city-states with an advantage over their Persian adversaries by supplying the Persian leader Xerxes with false information. In other words, he passed on a lie, the belief in which greatly helped his own people, the various Greeks, to victory by giving the false impression that Greece was weak and disloyal enough to be ripe for treachery that would serve the Persians.

Hannibal

This man excelled at using the indirect approach, not so much through raw deception, but by being able to keep a line of operation that left the enemy uncertain as to his next move. His large scale actions show the ways that strategy and tactics are related. He showed that facing hazardous conditions in order to secure a place from which the enemy can be caught off guard is a sound strategic policy that he employed with success. During Hannibal's era, there was a decided distinction between Roman territory and the nation of Italy, even though at some point that ceased to be true.



Fabius

Fabian not only excelled as a general as shown in the very early chapters, but his wisdom regarding military strategy would continue to be named well over a millennia later. Fabius also knew how to secure respites for his soldiers. The irony of this was that he was politically chastised for the unimpressive manner of his governance or his leadership during such times. He was most criticized for this by the very people who were most benefiting from the decisions that he had implemented in order to safeguard them.

Constable du Guesclin

This French Great Captain made as his main contribution the riddance of the English from "predominantly" French territory. His methods consisted of an introduction to elements of guerilla war tactics combined with showing the importance of attacking supply lines instead of, or as much as, assaulting opposing troops. He consistently refused to engage well fortified garrisons just as Belisarius had also refused to do. "No attack without surprise", was a phrase for which he is still famous.



Objects/Places

Persia

In the beginning of the book this is one of the world's most powerful Empires, and it's proximity to the Mediterranean Sea is what brings it "into view" to the limited awareness of the world's events from the book's perspective.

Athens

One of many city-states located on the Greek Peninsula. While somewhat united by culture and councils that balanced power, there was no real Greek federal government. However, when they weren't fighting among themselves for dominance of the region, they would unite against common foes. Athens was greatly strengthened and protected by her fleet of ships.

Britain

Like Athens, the prominent realization is that it was her reliance upon and adeptness with boats, her military fleet, that set this nation apart from most of the others in terms of strategy.

Cavalry

These are columns, divisions, or other large groups of mounted soldiers. They were an incredibly powerful advantage in the generations prior to mechanized warfare.

Mounted Archers

These were a further advance—cavalry archers, which developed after the successful introduction of the bow as a military weapon.

Carthage

Although founded by a tribe that had migrated southward from or through what is now known as Germany, this Empire grew up in North Africa where it's proximity to Spain and to the Mediterranean Sea helped to ensure it's involvement in the regions politics and economy.



Egypt

Egypt only factors into the book a few times. Once is when the author points out that the struggle for power between Cleopatra and her brother was intense and involved armies, and next, Egypt is noted for being an unconquered border of the Roman Empire at the height of its expansion.

Tanks

Although familiar nowadays, these land roving armored vehicles with numerous weapons were a first step in mechanized warfare. World War I was the first European centered war in which this level and type of technology was used extensively, and the effect of strategy was profound. Tanks were faster than infantry and cavalry, but less adaptable, quiet, or flexible.

The Eighth Army

The entire body of troops serving in Libya (Western North Africa) under General Cunningham during World War II.

Minsk Railway

One of the major railways that provided a whole new level of infrastructure to Russia in the nineteenth century. Attacks against this railway were made by Russia's enemies during the so-called World Wars, which are misleadingly named in that large numbers of nations were not involved.

Anti-tank guns

Clearly named, these weapons show that technological development had an upsurge in how much it was strategically used to create advantages, but also to conjure up methods for effective new counter-strokes.

Two Scratch Divisions

In this case, these were a group of German soldiers occupying the island of Sicily. They show a smaller matter of the zone of tactics meeting strategy. They were unable to repel their opposition, but are written of as having succeeded in holding off a group having many more soldiers for a month, and the author points this up as having been a feat of significance.



The German-French Front

This stretch of land is a mere 150 miles. It has posed a unique problem during some wars since it is so narrow an area. The special trouble is that it makes it so that one of the fronts and the rear of an army end up being forcibly united all too easily within that particular area of land.

On War

A book on military strategy written by a German named Clausewitz.

Themes

Historical Introduction to Wars

One major theme of this book is to provide a historical introduction to wars through the use of examples over the course of many centuries. The author has focused on that part of the world that directly connects with the Mediterranean Sea or the Black Sea or both. Although nations bounded by the North Atlantic and Atlantic do enter into the book, it is only because they are directly connected by land to another nation that does have the Mediterranean "in reach". As such, the military examples provided begin with the canonized version of "Western" when Persia faced the Greek city-states circa 490 B.C. By the time the book ends, the Second World War has been covered, and some of the Post War conditions, especially the hydrogen bomb development of the 1950s, have been mentioned. The survey is excellent in that in that it is rather extensive.

The wars of the book also take the reader all the way through the ups and downs of some Empires, so that one ends up feeling like the rise and fall of empires is more like bull and bear cycles of the Dow than anything that can be totally controlled by human behavior. Nevertheless, gains made can be held, and every longstanding triumph gained through war is well noted as "the purpose of having gone through the war in order to get it". These are what the author tells readers are "decisive victories", and they are only maintained through vigilance.

Instructing the Reader

Another theme in this book is to simply educate the reader. The author makes the effort for the book to be enjoyable to read and does an excellent job of not assuming that the reader has much education in this subject already. Liddell Hart teaches the reader strategy by providing several chapters of simplified descriptions of wars. He covers centuries, gently introducing new concepts along with examples of different battles and nonviolent measures used as part of military strategy.

Liddell Hart actually does a very good job of leading the reader into the subject of strategy from a point that does not presume foreknowledge. He does this by providing many chapters of examples of battles, during which he introduces key phrases. He also shows readers other terms that refer to main types of tactical maneuvers and kinds of military formations such as divisions, battalions, columns, flanks, fronts, armies and fleets. He does this over the course of many chapters, while also introducing a little "hero reverence" through the sample of great military leaders he has selected to include in the book.

By the end of the book, the author has provided far more instruction. By the end it has grown clear that, while the book can be read for pleasure, it in fact does or would make an excellent university or military academy text book for the newest of recruits. The



Second Section and beyond are where the book transforms into a format even better designed to suit the role of instruction. In the end, the educational purpose has been fulfilled.

World's Great Military Leaders (Western World)

A third theme of the book is to show the reader a series of some of the world's greatest military leaders. The fact that the book covers millennia helps to show readers both what has definitely changed with the times while also letting one see how some principles really are "timeless" in their nature when it comes to military strategy.

To do this, the author takes the readers on a long journey that introduces a series of generals. In the earlier times, there was not a lot of the kinds of technology one finds today. This being the case, it was only halfway into the book that the strong advantage created by armies using the "quick step" march was undeniable and consistent. This being the case, with an impressive level of objectivity, the author shows the strategic abilities of generals, or Great Captains, or queens as he calls them, without political bias. The people who are chosen to be examples are easily able to impress the readers thanks to the way Liddell Hart describes some of the wars they were in.

Through the introduction of these great generals, the reader is also shown the fundamentals of tactics and strategies. The most rudimentary principles of strategy are the indirect and direct approaches. The other prominent methods are offensive and defensive methods. The majority of generals were superior at offensive strategies, which made those who were best at defensive strategies noteworthy for this difference.



Style

Perspective

The author is deceased. He died in 1970. Apparently, by the time he was in his thirties or forties he had already managed to make a name for himself as a writer on military topics. Given that the author biography reports his highest military rank as having been Captain, one wonders why that was the case, and suspects reasons that are either rooted in social class or in roles that an intimate knowledge of internal military rank structures would be required to make any sense of. The book has been "sanctioned" by high ranking living or more recently deceased men who actively practiced warfare, and people on multiple sides of World War II have acknowledged his apparent greatness with respect to military strategy.

The reasons for his writing may have been to find a way to educate or to get across as much knowledge of military strategy as possible. The impression is very strong that he wanted the information used for education.

The intended audience is certainly collegiate level educated, or else intended for people who have educated families. This is clear from the vocabulary which, while not uncommon among the educated, might leave some folks feeling as if they have been duped due to the use of "pointlessly complex language". This is a legitimate criticism with a perfectly just rebuttal: how does it help to dumb down rather than to uplift those readers who will take the trouble to improve their vocabularies by reading this book? However, Liddell Hart makes a very similar criticism of Clausewitz, arguing that the prose in which it is written is overly complex, just because that author had been reading Kant rather than "Reader's Digest" or the daily local newspaper.

The intended effect is for people to have a healthy overall knowledge of the basic principles of military strategy and to have had fun acquiring this new found wisdom.

Tone

The tone of the book is educational and entertaining. The approach is decidedly objective. The author is very effective in helping the reader to maintain one's focus by leaving out all irrelevant information. In this case, nothing of the personalities is revealed except or unless it shows through their generalship. No political bias of the author's is exposed. Only the intentions and methods used are expressed. This is excellent and absorbing for those interested in the military strategy, but would be discouraging at best for those who might like to know about the personal lives of any of the generals discussed in the book, or who feel passionate and sensitive about the politics of any of the military forces referred to in the book.

The book is clearly written for an educated audience, as it presupposes a vocabulary level associated with university educated people, or those who are well read of their



own volition. The manner is objective without being "cold". It is easy enough to read for anyone within this demographic and is fully functional without being attached to a course. However, it is well suited to function as a textbook. Most of the lessons of strategy could be well taught using figurines or little plastic model soldiers or drawings and pointing at large unfurled maps of the places referred to in the book.

Structure

The book is divided into sections. This is advantageous as it has made it possible for the author to introduce the topic in a way that does serve a relatively general audience. That means that one may really like it even if it isn't because one signed up for the course in military leadership.

Once the general swing of the book's topic has been set in motion by a set of stories about ancient heroic battles and giant sweeping moves made by entire armies led by brilliant men, the author switches gears and takes the readers "to school" so to speak, and sets out a theory of military strategy. For those who do have a great deal of previous knowledge, this might be overly simplistic, dull, or a brief refresher course. However, for first timers this will be great, since the author is so clear. The one advantage for those already "in the know" on strategy is that there may be something new and different about Liddell Hart's theory, but the average reader, not being a trained military expert, would not be able to tell that.

The biggest benefit of this structure is that it makes the book well suited for use in education, even though it remains enjoyable to read. It progresses chronologically, which also makes sense, especially for those who are functioning within an academic environment. The structure is such that a reader can easily see how to use it to run a class. Maps and lay outs so that students and even readers can more readily and accurately visualize how the forces are positioned and how the progress that has been put into words looks when "played out".

The structure's disadvantage might be the way that it effects the flow of the information. Overall, there doesn't seem to be any disadvantage to it, due to the purpose of the book.

Quotes

"I prefer to profit by others' experience." p. 3

"Thus Fabius, by his immunity from defeat, thwarted the effect of Hannibal's previous victories upon the minds of Rome's Italian allies and checked them from changing sides." p. 27

"In the realm of strategy our survey of the Middle Ages may well close with Edward IV, who in 1461 gained his throne, and in 1471 regained it, after being in exile, by his exceptional use of mobility." p. 60

"In 1471 there was more subtlety and no less mobility in Edward's strategy. He had lost his throne in the interval; but with a loan of 50,000 crowns from his brother-in-law, 1,200 followers, and some promissory notes of assistance from his former supporters in England, he attempted to retrieve his fortune." p. 60

"The War of the Spanish Succession (1701 - 1713) is remarkable for its curiously dual nature." p. 74

"In the physical and moral effect of this deceptive direction lies the only reasonable explanation of his unchecked progress across 425 miles of country strewn with obstacles." p. 135

"The break-through proved quick, the exploitation rapid. Yet the plan failed. Where did the fault lie?" p. 191

"On the 15th of July Ludendorff launched his new attack, but its coming was no secret." p. 198.

"Meantime, however, the Allies evolved a new strategic method." p. 199

"Lawrence of Arabia remarked of Lenin that he was the only man who had thought out a revolution, carried it out, and consolidated it." p. 208

"Ludendorff's picture of the way the next war would be waged was merely an intensified reproduction of the offensives he had carried out in 1918—which had been brilliant in their opening but barren in their issue." p. 211

"[t]he military weapon is but one of the means that serve the purposes of war: one of the assortment which grand strategy can employ." p.211

"[t]he Germans had more real respect for the power of modern defence than any of the Allied soldiers or statesmen." p.214



"Hitler favoured the idea of preserving Norway's neutral position as cover for his flank and a covered route for Germany's shipments of Swedish iron-ore via the Norwegian Atlantic coast port of Alvik." p. 215

"The leading role would always be played by the rear attack in one of it's forms." p. 219

"The object of war was to make the enemy capitulate." p. 219

"The vital weakness of the French lay, not in quantity or quality of equipment, but in their theory." p. 232

"[a]nd although the air commanders were willing to take the risk, the army command was not." p.267

"The delay made a vital difference to it's prospects." p. 272

"It is not too late to learn from the experience of history." p. 370



Topics for Discussion

What is the benefit of a narrow front?

How did the author show how cavalry was well used prior to the Middle Ages?

Please discuss the relationship between tactics, strategy and grand strategy.

Please name one of Napoleon's contributions to strategy and describe some of the implications of this.

Discuss the changes made by the introduction of mechanized military weapons.

What is the relevance of communications in the military?

What difference does it make whether the best force of a nation is its naval fleet or its army?

What might an army be able to do to decipher the difference between a wide front and a 'trap' leading to a 'bag'?

Please discuss the advantages and problems of having written studies of previous Generals for modern military geniuses and Generals.