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# AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

## STUDENT REPORT

THE CONCEPT OF COMMAND LEADERSHIP IN  
THE MILITARY CLASSICS: B.H. LIDDELL  
HART

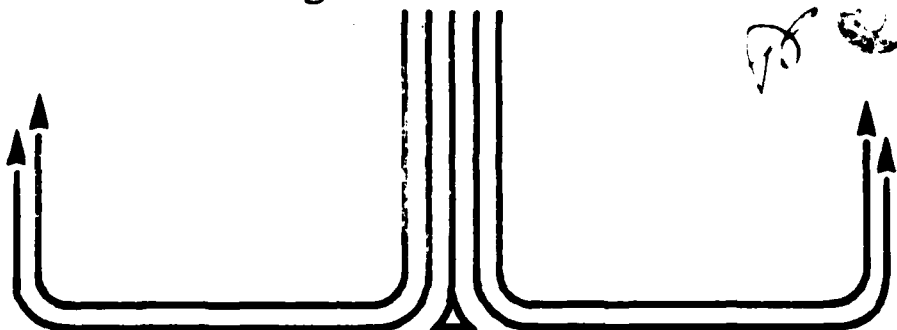
MAJ GARY G. SWENSON

86-2470

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requirements for graduation.

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## PREFACE

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The development of leaders may be the premier peacetime training challenge to the armed forces. This is evidenced by major blocks devoted to it in many military schools. Crucial issues in this area involve both means and ends--what is effective leadership and how to develop effective leaders.

In an effort to answer these questions, this paper is part of a larger project to examine the leadership views of individuals who are considered some of the greatest military thinkers and writers in history. The goal is to identify common threads in their thoughts on what contributed to effective leadership and to the training of leaders. While a system which consistently produces military geniuses may be considered out of reach, a readily achievable goal is a high level of competence in all.

The author would like to thank Dr. Donald Chipman of the Squadron Officer School for the opportunity to work on this project.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Major Gary Swenson graduated from the University of South Dakota and was commissioned through R.O.T.C. as a Second Lieutenant in the Field Artillery. Before entering active duty he attended graduate school at Iowa State University, receiving an M.S. and a Ph.D., both in economics. After completion of the Field Artillery Officer Basic Course and the Pershing Officer Course, he served with a Pershing missile battalion in the Federal Republic of Germany. Upon returning from overseas, he attended the Field Artillery Officer Advanced Course and then completed a tour with the 3d Battalion, 21st Field Artillery, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized) at Fort Polk, Louisiana. His most recent assignment was in the Concepts and Studies Division, Directorate of Combat Developments, U.S. Army Field Artillery School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Other military schooling includes the Combined Arms Services Staff School and the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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**REPORT NUMBER** 86-2470

**AUTHOR(S)** MAJ GARY G. SWENSON, USA

**TITLE** THE CONCEPT OF COMMAND LEADERSHIP IN THE MILITARY CLASSICS:  
B.H. LIDDELL HART

I. Purpose: To review the life and works of British military strategist Basil Henry Liddell Hart to ascertain his views on leadership and the development of leaders.

II. Problem: Leadership and the development of leaders are topics of continuing interest to the armed forces. The problem is both substantive and methodological. The substantive portion revolves around defining and measuring effective leadership. The methodological portion involves the training and education of leaders.

III. Data: A logical choice for learning leadership lessons is the lives and works of individuals who have impacted greatly on military history. Instead of looking at "fighters," this paper looks at the works of a military thinker and writer. His perspective is much broader than an individual who may have participated in only one war or campaign, and he is better able to articulate common leadership threads. Liddell Hart authored over thirty books, edited four more, and wrote numerous magazine articles and government position papers. By reviewing representative examples of his work, one can determine what he thought contributed to effective leadership and the development of leaders.

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## CONTINUED

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IV. Conclusions: Liddell Hart thought an individual could do much to develop his leadership ability. Study of the past military greats, coupled with open-mindedness and resistance to rigid thinking, could help an individual develop effective leadership traits.

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## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

. . . at numerous times the men have said that they would follow Captain Hart to the very depths of Hell.

From an evaluation report by a commanding officer in Liddell Hart's Army Book 439--Wartime Record of Services

As the Armed Forces become more technology oriented and the specialist and subject matter expert come to the fore, it is often forgotten that this is a people business. While the services wrestle with questions about best feasible approaches, internal economies, and optimal force structures, they often forget a fundamental question--How to get people to do things that are difficult, uncomfortable, and often dangerous? The basic question revolves around the viability of command leadership--the ability of an individual to have his forces engage the enemy and defeat him.

Studies of military leadership are often couched in terms of management theories or interpersonal communication models. Terminology that arises includes such terms as "systemic approach," "feedback," and "organizational objective" and the principles or lessons learned that evolve are formulated in terms of a list of leadership do's and don'ts. But for military leadership, it makes uncommonly good sense that leadership principles should be derived from the context in which they will be used--in a military environment. Given this argument, the writings of significant military writers and thinkers can be a valuable source of those principles.

In light of the questions raised above and the potential for gaining meaningful insight from in-depth study, this paper will look at the leadership philosophy of Basil Henry Liddell Hart. Considered "something of a legend quite early in his own lifetime," Liddell Hart may be the premier conventional warfare strategist of the twentieth century. (21:37) Because he combined the skills of a historical scholar with the keen insight of a prognosticator, his writings are especially revealing. They provide examples from the entire sweep of history, while at the

same time show the ability to rise above past prejudices and contemporary fads to see the future. Most importantly, he was a practical man. The purpose of studying history was not merely to learn its lessons but to use them to prepare for the future.

In order to derive Liddell Hart's views on leadership, his life and works will be reviewed. Chapter Two will provide a biographical sketch of Liddell Hart and briefly review his work and his reputation. Chapter Three will discuss his concept of leadership. The chapter will start with a discussion of influences on his thought and then chronologically track the development of his leadership philosophy. Common threads occur in his works that identify effective leaders, and he includes truly outstanding leaders in a group he calls "Great Captains." Finally, Chapter Four will discuss the relevance of his views to today's leaders and provide a summary and conclusion. The main emphasis will be on what Liddell Hart's ideas can contribute to the development of today's and tomorrow's leaders.

## Chapter Two

### THE MAN AND HIS WORK

We regard Liddell Hart as the best military brain in England.

Ivan Maisky, Russian ambassador  
to Great Britain, comment to  
Lloyd George, 1942

Captain Liddell Hart--I regard him as the highest and soundest  
authority on modern war whom it has been my privilege to meet.

Lloyd George, British Prime  
Minister, 1916-1922, inscription  
in a copy of Lloyd George's  
memoirs presented to Liddell Hart  
in 1934

### THE MAN

Basil Henry Liddell Hart was born in Paris on 31 October  
1895. His father was a Wesleyan minister at a Paris church that  
served the large British contingent in that city. The family  
returned to England shortly after the turn of the century and  
Liddell Hart attended St. Paul's school in London and then  
entered Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, in 1913. (18:493-494)

With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, he obtained a  
commission in the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. Shipped  
to France in mid-1915, Liddell Hart and his battalion were  
assigned to the Ypres salient. Wounded during a bombardment in  
late 1915, he was evacuated to England and returned to France in  
the spring of 1916 after convalescing. His battalion was  
deployed to the Somme sector and took part in the British  
offensive on 1 July 1916. On 15 July 1916 he was gassed and  
again evacuated to England. Found fit only for "light duty in an  
office" even after convalescing, he served the rest of the war in  
various staff positions, particularly training posts. (8:1-33)

Although nominally planning to make the Army a career,  
post-war austerity programs, coupled with his ill-health,  
resulted in his separation. This occurred even though numerous

individuals who had been impressed with his ability tried to keep him on by arranging assignments in which he could continue to contribute, e.g., Historical Section of the War Office. He was placed on half-pay status in 1924 and was retired as a Captain in 1927. (8:34-127)

Even before he left the Army, Liddell Hart had established a reputation as a military writer by writing manuals and articles for military journals. Because of this reputation, he was able to join the London Daily Telegraph as its military correspondent, a position which he held from 1925 to 1935. In that year he went to the London Times and served as its military correspondent until 1939. During this time he also wrote numerous magazine articles, books, and served as military editor for the Encyclopaedia Britannica. (3:825)

Throughout this period he continued his contacts within the War Office and the Army. This was especially true at the Times, where he closely monitored the development of the British military and developed insights into problems and progress. His influence culminated in 1937-1938 when the new Secretary of State for War, Leslie More-Belisha, enlisted him as an unofficial advisor. (18:494) He left the Times in 1939 after suffering a nervous breakdown, and his prestige waned during World War II. (3:825) After World War II his stature recovered and he continued writing on military affairs and arms control until his death in 1970. (18:495)

#### HIS WORK

Two features stand out when one reviews the military writings of Liddell Hart: their volume and their breadth. The volume itself is impressive. He authored over thirty books on his own and edited four more. These were in addition to his regular newspaper columns, numerous magazine articles, and occasional position papers written at the request of government officials (A list of books by Liddell Hart is in Appendix A). Equally impressive is the scope of the subjects covered. The books range from technical training manuals written for the Army, to historical biographies, to history, to books on defense policy, to books on grand strategy. But what matters more than sheer output is the fact that his works were read, accepted, and used. As a result, his thinking significantly influenced twentieth century history.

As a point of departure in discussing the impact of his works, his own summary of an essay he submitted to a contest sponsored by the Royal United Service Institution in 1922 is quoted below. The subject of the essay was to deal with the



organization of British forces for "the next great European war."

. . . I submitted an essay. . . which epitomised my argument that mechanised forces would be decisive in the next war. Its main conclusions were that horsed cavalry were obsolete for fighting and even for reconnaissance; that tanks and aircraft would be the dominant arms of the next war, and that their action would be combined; that self-propelled guns would be the best form of field artillery; that a new type of light infantry, carried in cross-country armoured vehicles, should be developed to cooperate with the tank forces; that air transport should be developed as a "secondary line of supply" for such mobile forces, and also for carrying troops. (8:91-92)

As can be seen from this essay, Liddell Hart was a pioneering military thinker. Much of his writing in the 1920s and 1930s advocated the development of mechanized forces and the use of these forces in massed, sweeping attacks. The equipment, organizations, and tactics used in World War II vindicated his foresight. Unfortunately for England, Liddell Hart's ideas were widely ignored in that country. His essay got a "chilly reception" (his words) and did not even place among the three awards. (To complete the story, the essay that won first prize dealt with the limitations of the tank and emphasized the need for horsed cavalry.) (8:91-92)

Liddell Hart's most zealous students were in Germany. The organizations he discussed in the 1922 essay showed up in 1939 as Panzer divisions, and the tactics he encouraged emerged as the Blitzkrieg. Several of the outstanding German generals of World War II acknowledged a debt to Liddell Hart.

General Heinz Guderian, the creator of the Panzer forces, stated after the war,

It was Liddell Hart who emphasized the use of armored forces for long-range strokes, operations against the opposing army's communications, and also proposed a type of armored division combining panzer and panzer-infantry units. Deeply impressed by these ideas I tried to develop them in a sense practicable to our own army. So I owe many suggestions of our further development to Captain Liddell Hart. (19:62)

In a similar vein, Field Marshal Rommel noted Liddell Hart's influence on his thinking. General Fritz Bayerlein, Rommel's chief of staff in North Africa, stated,

During the war, in many conferences and personal talks with Field Marshal Rommel, we discussed Liddell Hart's military works, which won our admiration. Of all military writers, it was Liddell Hart who made the deepest impression on the Field Marshal--and greatly influenced his tactical thinking. (1:226-227)

Although his ideas were not being applied in England, his judgement was respected and his opinions widely sought. During the 1937-1938 period when he was unofficial advisor to Secretary of State for War Hore-Belisha, the relationship was so close that at one time Hore-Belisha called it a "partnership." (9:1) Liddell Hart's influence at this time was so well known that one of the London papers referred to "the Liddell Hart School" of military thought (9:104) and Winston Churchill passed on to Hore-Belisha the rumor that ". . . people were saying that he (H-B) was merely and entirely 'following Liddell Hart's ideas . . .'" (9:74)

Even though Liddell Hart's foresight in the areas of weapons' development and force structure was uncannily accurate, his greatest contributions were as a strategist, or more accurately, a grand strategist. In this light, he is best remembered as the proponent of what he called "the strategy of the indirect approach." (15:xix) Keenly aware of the truth in Clausewitz's famous line that "war is nothing but the continuation of policy with other means," some of his most profound insights deal with the relationships between war and policy. (2:69) His advocacy of mechanized forces was merely advocacy of the most efficient means to an end--that end being the hasty conclusion of hostilities and resumption of peace.

Liddell Hart was particularly appalled by the slaughter in World War I, which he described as a war in which ". . . armies battered out their brains against the enemy's strongest bulwark." (7:189) His work as a military writer, especially as military editor for the Encyclopaedia Britannica, afforded him an opportunity to review the entire history of warfare and to gain acute insights into the conduct of war. Reflecting on the development of his thought, he stated,

During this survey one impression became increasingly strong--that, through the ages, effective results in war have rarely been attained unless the approach has had such indirectness as to ensure the opponent's unreadiness to meet it. The indirectness has usually been physical, and always psychological. (15:5)

Within the Liddell Hart framework, the purpose of grand strategy was to "coordinate and direct all resources of a

nation, or band of nations, towards the attainment of the political object of the war--the goal defined by fundamental policy." (15:322) The term "strategy" related more exclusively to military matters--"the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy." (15:321) Both of these definitions revolve around the Clausewitzian war-policy connection.

When it came to the actual conduct of a war, however, Liddell Hart and Clausewitz, or more specifically the disciples of Clausewitz, were diametrically opposed. Clausewitz had enumerated three general objectives in war--the military power, the country, and the will of the enemy. This order led to catastrophic results in World War I. As Liddell Hart stated, "But his vital mistake was to place 'the will' last in his list, instead of first and embracing all others, and to maintain that the destruction of the enemy's military power was essential to ensure the remaining objects." (11:93)

In planning for World War I, the General Staffs of the powers involved had keyed on the first element in Clausewitz's triad, the military power. Their doctrines were based on ". . . the Napoleonic method of 'absolute war'--that the national object in war can only be gained by decisive battle and the destruction of the main mass of the enemy's armed forces." (11:88) But in their planning, the General Staffs had failed to account for advances in technology, particularly the machine gun; changes in tactics this technology would require; and the level of casualties that would result. Liddell Hart described the conduct of the war as follows: "Thus mechanical butchery became the essence of war, and to kill if possible more of the enemy troops than your own side loses was the sum total of this military creed, which attained its tragi-comic climax on the Western Front in the World War." (11:104)

On a grand strategy level, conducting war in such a manner was futile to Liddell Hart. In his architecture, "The object of war is to obtain a better peace. . . ." (15:353) The attrition rates of World War I effectively precluded this. The losses were so great on both sides and the terms of the Armistice so severe no one came out a winner. In his discussion of the peace following World War I, Liddell Hart observed, "To inflict widespread death and destruction is to damage one's own future prosperity, and by sowing the seeds of revenge, to jeopardise one's future security." (11:110)

The Indirect Approach was specifically designed to prevent a repetition of a World War I-type conflict. In discussing the actual conduct of World War I, Liddell Hart remarked (in the context that the war was a disease on the general state of world

peace) that "So ineffectual was the treatment prescribed by the military practitioners who were called in that the illness took over four years to run its course. . . ." (10:3-4)

To counter the World War I military mentality, he conducted his military inquiries with the following goal: ". . . our object being to gauge its [war's] future tendencies, in order, if possible, to limit its ravages and by scientific treatment ensure the speedy and complete recovery of the patient." (10:3)

To accomplish the objective mentioned above, Liddell Hart went back to the third element in Clausewitz's threesome--the will of the enemy. From a policy standpoint, "The aim of a nation in war is, therefore, to subdue the enemy's will to resist, with the least possible human and economic loss to itself." (10:19) To attain this aim, "It is the function of grand strategy to discover and exploit the Achilles' heel of the enemy nation; to strike not against its strongest bulwark but against its most vulnerable spot." (10:21)

The essence of the Indirect Approach is to realize any opponent is vulnerable and the primary task of a grand strategist is to determine that vulnerability. The means to subdue the enemy's will could be military, political, economic, or social. To be successful, the grand strategist must consider all of these elements. The problem in World War I was the obsession with only the military aspect.

Liddell Hart's interest turned to tanks and mechanized warfare because, within the military sphere, the Indirect Approach applied to armies facing each other. Citing Napoleon's maxim that "the moral is to the physical as three is to one," Liddell Hart realized the most economical way to defeat an army was to undermine its will to resist. In order to undermine that will, he observed, ". . . while the strength of an opposing force or country lies outwardly in its numbers and resources, these are fundamentally dependent upon stability of control, morale, and supply." (15:5)

In actual military operations, the goal should be to attack the stability of the three elements listed above. In Liddell Hart's terminology, what should be sought is "the dislocation of the enemy's psychological and physical balance." (15:6) The enemy could be dislocated physically by using moves which upset his dispositions, separated his forces, endangered his supplies, or menaced routes of withdrawal. He could be dislocated psychologically by imposing on him a "sense of being trapped." (15:326-327)

Mechanized forces were especially well suited to achieving this "dislocation." They brought speed and mobility to the battlefield, two factors which Liddell Hart considered to be the most important in any future war. Of speed, he stated,

. . . of all qualities in war it is speed which is dominant, . . . . This speed, . . . , will transform the battlefield of the future from squalid trench labyrinths into arenas wherein manoeuvre, the essence of surprise, will reign again after hibernating for too long in the mausoleums of mud. (22:49)

Mobility was an all encompassing term to Liddell Hart, covering movement, action, organization, and thought. (11:v) As with speed, mechanized forces were well suited for providing mobility. The mobility was especially important because it would provide a commander "opportunities for the use of his art and brain." (10:74)

Liddell Hart believed the surest way to destroy the stability of control, morale, and supply, i.e., attain dislocation, was to attack the enemy's command and control structure. Commenting on the British campaign in Palestine in September 1918 in which the Turkish forces were decisively defeated, mainly because of attacks which specifically targeted their command and control, Liddell Hart remarked,

To cut an army's lines of communications is to paralyse its physical organization. To close its line of retreat is to paralyse its moral organization. And to destroy its lines of intercommunication--by which orders and reports pass--is to paralyse its sensory organization, the essential connection between brain and body. (15:183)

Even though this campaign was in World War I, it was highly mobile and included integrated operations involving aircraft and mechanized forces--a precursor to World War II.

The effect had been the same in August 1918 when the Allies launched the first great tank offensive and succeeded in breaking through German defensive positions and penetrating to rear areas. Ludendorf, the Chief of Staff of the German Army, described it as follows: "August 8 was the black day of the German Army in the history of the war. . . . The divisions in line allowed themselves to be completely overwhelmed. Divisional staffs were surprised in their headquarters by enemy tanks." (11:42)

Because they provided the speed and mobility which Liddell Hart considered so important, tanks and mechanized forces were particularly adept at attacking command and control

infrastructures. Commenting on this threat in the 1935 Annual Report, Chief of Staff of the United States Army General Douglas MacArthur wrote, "A modern Army is a highly organized and in some respects a delicately adjusted mechanism. Its most sensitive points are found on its flanks and rear areas, where, generally speaking, they are safe from attack except by extremely mobile units." (8:270) The mobile units which Liddell Hart advocated, conducting massed, penetrating attacks, were to prove a real nemesis to the delicately adjusted mechanisms against which they were eventually unleashed.

The basic precepts of the Indirect Approach are universal in nature and the potential for their utilization was not exhausted in World War II. Several authors (20,25) have noted that Israeli successes against their neighbors in almost all cases incorporated the basic tenets of the Indirect Approach. Many of the individuals who contributed to Israeli successes attributed much of their thinking to the writings of Liddell Hart.

Haim Laskov, a British major in World War II who eventually became chief of staff of the Israeli Defense Forces, stated, "I read Liddell Hart in the mid-1930s and realized even then how much we needed to fight this kind of war. It's the best there is for a nation numerically weaker, but better organized, educated, and trained than its enemies." (25:14)

Numerous Israeli commanders offered the same testimony--that they were familiar with Liddell Hart's writing and it influenced their thinking. When Liddell Hart visited Israel as a guest of the government in 1960, the press referred to him as "the greatest military expert of our time" and "the Clausewitz of the 20th century." He returned the compliment by calling the Israelis his best disciples and the most brilliant soldiers in the world. (20:86)

This chapter has been a cursory review of Liddell Hart's life and works. But even this brief summary has pointed out his influence on twentieth century military thought and operations. The next step is to determine important leadership characteristics in his framework with the ultimate goal of learning lessons from his ideas so that these lessons can be used in the development of future leaders.

## Chapter Three

### LIDDELL HART'S CONCEPT OF LEADERSHIP

I had a "grandstand" view of a renewed attack. . . one saw thin chains of khaki-clad dots plodding slowly forward, and becoming thinner under a hail of fire until they looked merely a few specks on the landscape.

The Liddell Hart Memoirs,  
Volume I, commenting on his  
view of a British attack  
during the Battle of the  
Somme, 1 July 1916

Liddell Hart offers a unique perspective from which to study leadership. He was first and foremost a grand strategist, so he tended to view things from a macro level. His primary interest was how to mitigate the effects of war so that a better and more prosperous peace could be obtained. Much of his writing revolves around tools to expedite the swift completion of hostilities. This large scale view, however, had been tempered by the microcosm of the trench warfare of World War I.

This chapter will track the development of Liddell Hart's leadership philosophy and discuss some of the attributes and characteristics of individuals he considered great leaders. He realized that successful execution of war required a fine meld of materiel and personnel considerations. Although much of his writing stressed the materiel side, i.e., development of armored forces and joint armored-air operations, a significant body of his work revolves around personnel considerations. This is evidenced by the biographies he wrote (6, 7, 14) and by devoting portions of other books specifically to leadership (11:Chapter XI).

This is not to suggest that personnel and materiel considerations can be separated. Liddell Hart realized it was their combination, expressed in tactics and strategy, that was the overriding determinant of success or failure on the battlefield. The tracing of the development of his concept of leadership will show that his Great Captains were masters at using the personnel and materiel available to their maximum potential. They were able to do this because at all times they

kept their true objective in sight and tailored their plans or forces to achieve it.

Before discussing Liddell Hart's concept of leadership, it is necessary to review the one single event which dominated and shaped his thinking throughout his entire career--World War I. As mentioned in Chapter Two, he experienced it personally, first being wounded in 1915 and then gassed during the Somme offensive of 1916. Liddell Hart was appalled at the lack of originality of the allied commanders and their wanton waste of lives. Describing the retirement of his battalion from the front after the Somme offensive, Liddell Hart wrote, "The remains of our battalion, which had been more than eight hundred strong at the outset, set off back across no-man's land in three small parties--in all less than seventy men, with four officers." (8:23)

The General Staffs of the Allied Powers had been brought up in the shadow of Napoleon and Clausewitz. This tended to have a numbing effect on original military thinking. Commenting on the impact of this intellectual heritage, Liddell Hart observed,

For, by making battle appear the only "real warlike activity," his [Clausewitz's] gospel deprived strategy of its laurels, reduced the art of war to the mechanics of mass slaughter, and incited generals to seek battles at the first opportunity, instead of creating an advantageous opportunity. (5:128)

This pursuit of battle at the first opportunity was coupled with technical advances (e.g., development of the machine gun) which were ignored or wrongly interpreted. Foch, while Commandant of the French Staff College and hence in a position of significant influence, stated, ". . . any improvement in firearms is bound to strengthen the offensive." (5:135)

As a result, the manner in which the Allied High Command chose to carry out the war was entirely inconsistent with reality. Plans called for lengthy artillery preparations (at the Somme it lasted one week) which negated any chance of surprise. Rigid time tables didn't allow for advancing or holding up the barrage as the infantry assault proceeded. No room was allowed for initiative or flexibility in exploiting a penetration. Finally, reserves were used to buttress an attack that had become stalled by a strongpoint instead of following up a success. The sum result was infantry trying to attack well-protected and well-concealed machine gun strongpoints--an unfair fight.

It was plans which departed from this rigid stereotype which had the greatest influence on Liddell Hart. On 14 July 1916, two



weeks after the opening of the Somme offensive, the British army was to resume the attack on a portion of the German positions. Liddell Hart described the plan as follows: "So Rawlinson [4th Army Commander] planned the exposed stretch should be crossed by a night advance followed by an assault on the 14th, and preceded by a hurricane bombardment of only a few minutes duration--a plan which revived the use of surprise." (8:24) General Haig, the British Commander in Chief, resisted the idea but finally agreed to the plan. Describing the results, Liddell Hart wrote, "The plan proved successful, and at much less cost than had been paid on July 1, when the attack had been mostly met with failure. This time, grey-clad corpses outnumbered khaki ones on the battlefield. That sight, and contrast, deeply influenced my future military thinking." (8:24)

Throughout his works, Liddell Hart couches his points in contrast to the failures of 1914-1918. He frequently uses the methods employed in World War I as examples of how not to do things and laments their use when other methods had been successfully employed in the past. That World War I made such an impression on him is evidenced by the fact he is able to work in its lessons regardless of the period of history he is discussing.

In his book on Scipio Africanus, the Roman general who ultimately defeated Hannibal at the Battle of Zama in 202 B.C., Liddell Hart commented on Scipio's execution of an attack by noting that "They [the Romans] were clearly imbued with the principle that a penetration must be promptly widened before it is deepened--a principle which in the war of 1914-1918 was only learnt after hard lessons. . . ." (7:36) Commenting on an observation on the liability of large armies by Marshal Saxe, a French general who achieved notable success in the War of the Austrian Succession, 1740-1748, Liddell Hart stated,

Few facts stand out more clearly from the history of 1914-1918 than the powerlessness of the high commands to attain decisive successes--a condition due to the unwieldy masses allowing neither opportunity nor room to manoeuvre--and the constant stultification of offensives owing to the difficulty of supply. (6:43)

Nor were his World War I analogies confined to Europe or the distant past. Liddell Hart noted the failure of European soldiers to learn from more recent history. In their study of the American Civil War, European students of war tended to concentrate on the war in the East, which was characterized as a war of attrition between Grant and Lee. This had the following result:

Yet so far as any impression of the American Civil War penetrated the consciousness of the General Staffs of Europe it was that of the battledore and shuttlecock tournament in Virginia--which they faithfully imitated with even greater lavishness and ineffectiveness on the battlefields of France from 1914 to 1918. (14:viii)

This perception of the wastefulness of World War I, coupled with the view that it was the result of faulty military leadership, was to be the driving force behind Liddell Hart's views and writings. He expressed this determination in the following comment on the remark in his Wartime Record of Services book that the men would follow him to the depths of Hell (the quote used to introduce Chapter One):

So it was evidence of how readily men respond to any lead which shows a grasp of the problem and gives them the sense that if they go into action they will not be used recklessly or stupidly. A realisation of this basic condition in effective leadership, and the importance of that trust, was the spur to my efforts in the years that followed--to ensure that if war came again there should be no repetition of the Somme and the Passchendaele. (8:32)

If one had to characterize a single common thread in Liddell Hart's works, it would be the search for timeless principles. Because his outlook was that of a strategist, Liddell Hart was concerned mostly with the ideas and concepts of leaders. As an example, in the preface to his biography of Sherman he stated, "This study of Sherman is an attempt to portray the working of a man's mind, not merely of a man's limbs and muscles encased in uniform clothing. . . . This book is a study of life, not a still life. An exercise in human psychology, not in upholstery." (14:vii-viii)

Before going on to a broader discussion of Liddell Hart's view of leadership, a brief review of the development of his own military strategy will help put it in perspective. This will point out the role of the leader in his schema and provide for a transition to the broader discussion of effective leadership and leadership characteristics. His earliest writings (pre-1920) were an immediate response to the immobility of World War I. They tended to be technical in nature and focused on platoon or company level. Even here, he was starting to stress that effective leaders understood fundamentals. While discussing the responsibilities of small unit leaders, he commented, ". . . those who are called upon to lead the combat unit and its sections shall be imbued with an understanding as well as a ready power of application, of the principles which govern the action of the combat unit in attack and defence." (24:289)

The dominant themes of these early works were direct rebuttals to the methods employed by the higher commands in World War I and the war of attrition to which those methods led. At this stage of his thinking, the primary considerations of any leader were economy of force and the methods to achieve it. Commenting on efforts to derive new tactics, Liddell Hart cautioned, "Such attempts must be based on the great doctrine of the economy of force; seeking methods which will achieve a greater force behind the blow at a reduced cost in personnel." (23:666) In the preface to his 1926 book on infantry tactics, he stated that the purpose of his framework was

To exalt "economy of force" as the supreme law, embracing all the other principles, and show how these are each derived from, and contribute to it. To emphasize that "mobility" is not only fused in the principles of "security" and "surprise," but must link and control them. (13:xiv)

It should be noted that all through this period his writing and research were leading him to develop his umbrella concept of the Indirect Approach which was crystallized in 1929 with the publication of The Decisive Wars of History--a Study in Strategy (republished in later editions under the title Strategy).

That the implementation of the Indirect Approach depended on the leader is shown by his comments in the preface to The Remaking of Modern Armies. Previewing the contents of the book, Liddell Hart stated,

The keynote of this book is MOBILITY--of movement, action, organization, and not least, thought. For mobility of thought implies originality in conception and surprise in execution, two essential qualities which have been the hallmarks of the Great Captains, distinguishing the artists from the artisans of warfare. (11:v) (Mobility capitalized in original text)

Here one sees the central position the mind and plan of the leader play. Specifically addressing the chapter on leadership in the book, Liddell Hart discussed the problem of leadership as he saw it: "Such an inquiry naturally raises the greater question of leadership in the Army as a whole, and we are confronted with the problem why modern armies, despite their technical development, have shown a decline in the art of generalship and an absence of great captains." (11:ix)

Given his strategist outlook and the tempering of that by his experiences in World War I, Liddell Hart's concept of leadership revolves around how well leaders plan and orchestrate the use of

their resources to achieve their goal at minimum cost. Most of his examples are leaders on a grand scale, either generals who were also their country's political leader, such as Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, or were in supreme command of a military campaign, such as Wallenstein in Germany during the Thirty Years War or Scipio Africanus in the Second Punic War. These individuals were ideal vehicles for Liddell Hart to use to expound his views of leadership. As representatives of their governments, they were charged with political objectives and had to be concerned with strategy. At the same time they were military commanders and had to employ their forces to achieve the strategic ends.

The distinguishing features of Liddell Hart's Great Captains can be summarized in three characteristics. First of all, they were strategists. By this is meant they, at all times, kept their overall objective in mind, which may have been more than a mere military victory, and were realistic in their attempts to achieve it. Secondly, they optimized the employment of the tools at their disposal. Under this comes the actual tactical employment of their resources. Finally, they refused to accept the norm if it was not compatible with the first two. They were not adverse to trying new ideas if existing ones were not sufficient.

Throughout his works, Liddell Hart makes the point that his Great Captains kept sight of their true objective. This notion is a direct application of his concept of the Indirect Approach. By keeping track of the true objective, leaders can marshal their forces and efforts to accomplish it. It was the losing sight of the objective that resulted in countries throwing their armies at each other in World War I. A corollary to this is determination. Frequently the true objective is not obvious and its pursuit seems inconsistent with short run considerations. Liddell Hart's leaders had the vision to see the true objective and the will-power to achieve it.

His works are laced with examples of leaders identifying the true objective and then pursuing it with a single-mindedness. Scipio Africanus realized the one sure way to get Hannibal out of Italy was by threatening Carthage itself. To this end, he first subdued Spain, at the time a Carthaginian province, and then proposed an expedition to Africa. What followed was a classic case of short-run considerations obscuring the true objective. The Roman Government was appalled at the thought of sending an army to Africa and leaving Rome undefended. Their proposed solution was to attack Hannibal in Italy, a strategy which up to that time had met with singular failure. Commenting on the discussion, Liddell Hart wrote, "How familiar to modern ears is this argument employed against any military heretic who questions

the doctrine of Clausewitz that the enemy's main army is the primary military objective." (7:91)

Several other examples also make the point of the importance of identifying the true objective. In the Thirty Years War, Wallenstein, the commander of the imperial forces, was charged with driving Gustavus Adolphus out of Germany. Wallenstein's plan called for securing a treaty with Denmark which would give the German states control of the Baltic. This would facilitate an attack on Sweden, with the end result of forcing Gustavus to retreat to defend his homeland. Wallenstein's plans were frustrated because he did not have a monarch with as clear a view of the strategic objective and thus his master plan was not implemented. But militarily he was able to carry out a modified version of it. Wallenstein realized his forces were inferior to those of Gustavus and he could not achieve his objective by battle. Instead of engaging in a battle to drive the Swedes out of Bavaria, Wallenstein threatened their allies in Saxony and their lines of communication in northern Germany. This had the same effect as defeating them in battle--it forced the Swedes to withdraw. (6:187)

Combined with the vision to see the true objective and the willpower to pursue it, the leader must also have the self-discipline to settle for only the objective he has the wherewithal to achieve. When the Mongols invaded Europe in 1241, their goal was the Hungarian plain. This they achieved, and an obvious question is why they did not continue farther into Europe, having already achieved a string of successes over European armies. The Mongols restrained themselves because they knew their military advantage lay in their mobility and cavalry, and to go into the hills and forests of Europe would put the Mongolian horsemen at a disadvantage. Commenting on this restraint, Liddell Hart pointed out, "It is an object-lesson for modern political strategists who frame their foreign and imperial policies without reference to their military means and limitations." (6:23)

A second characteristic of Liddell Hart's leaders is the employment of the resources at their disposal to maximum advantage. This characteristic relates to the actual tactical employment of their forces. In this respect, Liddell Hart's strategist perspective is especially evident. He is particularly concerned with the the selection of the site of the battle, troop dispositions, and the plans of the leader. In this context, A successful leader has combined these three elements in such a manner the battle is won before the forces are even engaged. Liddell Hart uses the whole panorama of history for examples of this characteristic.

Speaking generally about the selection of the battle site, Liddell Hart observed this was key to the success of his Great Captains. They would rather conduct a retreat or a forced march through natural obstacles, which if formidable were at least predictable, than face an enemy from an unfavorable position. As Liddell Hart stated, "Natural hazards, however formidable, are inherently less dangerous and less uncertain than fighting hazards. All conditions are more calculable, all obstacles more surmountable, than those of human resistance." (15:146)

As an example from a specific campaign, Liddell Hart cites Hannibal's selection of a particularly arduous line of march toward Rome from northern Italy in 219 B.C. His route selection was based on the fact Roman armies were covering the obvious routes and the selected route would attack the flanks and rear of the opposition. Liddell Hart noted that "Hannibal. . . , like other Great Captains, chose to face the most hazardous conditions rather than the certainty of meeting his opponents in a position of their own choosing." (15:25)

The converse of avoiding battle under unfavorable conditions is forcing the enemy to fight under conditions unfavorable to him. Liddell Hart's Great Captains were particularly adept at this. In the battle against the Spaniards for final mastery of Spain, Scipio Africanus realized he would be at a disadvantage on an open battlefield because the Spaniards had a superior cavalry. To offset this, Scipio forced a battle in a valley. This limited the use of the cavalry and made for cramped quarters, where the Roman legions were superior. Also, the valley was so narrow the Spaniards had to leave one-third of their infantry out of the battle to provide room for their cavalry. The result was a complete Roman victory. (7:80)

Once the battle site had been selected, initial deployments were also particularly important to Liddell Hart's leaders. As with the actual site, the outcome of a battle could be predetermined by proper deployments of forces. Liddell Hart's classic example of this is the Battle of Ilipa, which was fought in Spain in 206 B.C. between a combined Carthaginian-Spanish force of 75,000 and a Roman-Spanish force of 48,000.

For several days the armies formed up for battle with their own forces in the center of their lines and their Spanish allies on each flank. On each of these days, the Carthaginians presented themselves first and the Romans fell out several hours later. On the day of battle, the Romans fell out first (several hours earlier than the normal hour of the Carthaginian appearance) and placed the Spaniards in the center and their own forces on the flanks. In their haste to match the Romans, the Carthaginians fell out in their normal manner--the Carthaginian

force in the middle and the Spanish forces on the flanks. For the Carthaginians, the battle was lost before it even started. It was impossible to rearrange forces in the face of the enemy, the Spanish on the flanks were no match for the Romans, and the Carthaginian center was pinned by the presence of the Roman's Spanish allies. The Romans crushed both flanks and then rolled up the center for a complete victory. Summing up this battle, Liddell Hart wrote,

Military history contains no more classic example of generalship than this battle of Ilipa. Rarely has so complete a victory been gained by a weaker force, and this result was due to perfect application of the principles of surprise and concentration, this is in essence an example for all time. (7:62)

It is wrong to think that initial troop dispositions were relevant only to the ancients. It can be argued that much of the initial German success in the West in World War II was a function of troop dispositions--correct ones on the part of the Germans and incorrect ones on the part of the French and British. The French had a Maginot Line mentality and banked on it for providing a successful defense. To compound this, they thought the Ardennes was impassable to mechanized forces and left only a few second-rate divisions to cover this approach. When the main German attack came through the Ardennes, not only was it ill-defended, but this route also trapped British and French forces in Belgium and northwest France and forced the Dunkirk evacuation. (15:219)

The final way to optimize the effectiveness of one's resources lay in the leader's plans for the conduct of the battle or campaign. Although the first two methods of optimizing force effectiveness, site selection and initial dispositions, may appear subsets of this, there are instances where neither one of those was crucial and the battle plan itself decisive. History again offers numerous examples for Liddell Hart.

When Scipio Africanus initially crossed to Africa, the Carthaginians and their allies, the Numidians, were in winter camps. All through the winter Scipio negotiated with them. Each negotiating party contained selected scouts and centurians and each negotiating party contained different individuals, thus familiarizing more of the Romans with the camps. When Scipio felt the time was right for attack, he established a ruse by showing preparations for departing his camp and sieging the city of Utica. At night, Scipio's forces set fire to one of the camps and destroyed the occupants as they ran out. The occupants of the other camp thought the fire was accidental and came to offer assistance, thus also putting themselves at risk. The result was

a complete rout. (7:131-137) Liddell Hart quotes the Greek historian Polybius in describing the outcome: "It is not possible to find any other disaster which however magnified could be compared with this, so much did it exceed in horror all previous events." (7:137) Here we see the leader's plan the single determinant of the outcome of a battle.

Once again, the decisiveness of the plan is not restricted to ancient history. Liddell Hart's examples range from Wolfe's victory at Quebec, where surprise was achieved by climbing supposedly unassailable cliffs (6:Chapter V), to the Palestine campaign in World War I, which Liddell Hart noted was "one of the masterpieces of military history, as classic in execution as in design," (12:257), to the eastern front in World War II, where Liddell Hart calls Field Marshal Manstein's Kharkov counter-offensive in the spring of 1943 "the most brilliant operational performance of Manstein's career, and one of the most masterful in the whole course of military history." (16:15)

The third characteristic Liddell Hart thought contributed to effective leadership was originality and the willingness to change things if the status quo was not consistent with the objectives. Liddell Hart believed it was the lack of originality and the routine acceptance of the current military doctrine that lead to the carnage of World War I. The high commands accepted as gospel the writings of Clausewitz and the example of Napoleon and drew their plans accordingly, oblivious to changes in technology. Using General Haig, the British Commander in Chief, as an example of this mentality, Liddell Hart wrote, "His mind was dominated by the instinct of method, a valuable asset; where he failed was in the instinct of surprise in its widest sense--originality of conception, fertility of resource, receptivity to ideas." (12:147)

Two of Liddell Hart's Great Captains were truly original thinkers. Marshal Saxe proposed numerous changes in tactics, the organization of armies, and materiel. Summing up his myriad contributions, Liddell Hart observed, "In an age of regularity he introduced irregularity as a lever. In an age of immobility he laid the foundation of mobility. In an age of convention he showed more freedom from convention. . . ." (5:31) Gustavus Adolphus was also credited with many innovations in the areas of materiel, organizations and formations, and tactics. Commenting on these contributions, Liddell Hart wrote,

Thus, to summarize, his supreme achievement was to create the first scientifically designed instrument of war of modern times, blending hitting power, guarding power, and mobility; . . . . By teaching them [infantry, cavalry, and artillery] the lesson of mutual support



toward a common objective, he founded combined tactics.  
(6:123-124)

Equally as important as being an original thinker was the Great Captains' refusal to accept the status quo if it was not consistent with their plans. In describing Scipio's ultimate victory over Hannibal, Liddell Hart pointed out that in order to defeat the Carthaginians it was necessary to negate their cavalry, which the infantry-oriented Roman legions could not match. It was because of this inferiority Scipio declined to attack Hannibal in Italy. Instead, by crossing to Africa, not only would he threaten Carthage, but he would have the opportunity to recruit allies that possessed cavalry. Commenting on this, Liddell Hart noted, "His vision penetrating the distant future, a quality in which he perhaps surpassed all other great commanders, enabled him to realise that the tactical key to victory lay in the possession of a superior mobile arm of decision--cavalry." (7:96)

The discussion so far has covered outward manifestations of Liddell Hart's Great Captains. We have seen that they were strategists, supreme tacticians, and innovators. What has not been discussed is what they were like as people--what character traits did they possess that also contributed to their success? A closer look at some of Liddell Hart's observations on Scipio Africanus will serve to answer this question.

Scipio perhaps best embodied all of the characteristics of a Great Captain. Numerous examples have already been given of Liddell Hart's references to him when trying to make a point on strategy, tactics, determination, or innovation. Even though Scipio achieved his successes over two thousand years before Liddell Hart was born, Liddell Hart thought Scipio's examples were timeless. In the introduction to his biography of Scipio, Liddell Hart states, "The reason for this book is that, . . . , his military work has a greater value to modern students than that of any other great captain of the past." (7:vii)

Given the timelessness of Scipio's work, several characteristics of his stand out. One characteristic he had was supreme self-confidence. In 211 B.C. the Roman armies in Spain suffered crushing defeats at the hands of the Carthaginians and it was necessary to elect a new pro-consul for Spain. Scipio's father had been killed in Spain in the latest Roman reverses and Scipio declared himself a candidate. The eligible voters were caught up in the excitement and unanimously elected him. However, there was an immediate backlash, and they regretted their decision, especially entrusting a province to one who was only twenty-four years old. Scipio detected this sentiment and called an assembly of the people and restored their confidence

with a moving speech. Describing this speech Liddell Hart wrote, "The secret of his sway, extraordinary in one so young, over the crowd mind, especially in times of crisis, was his profound self-confidence." (7:23)

Scipio reveals throughout his career that he was a master psychologist. There are numerous examples of mental ploys used either to bolster his own men or unsettle the enemy. Before he crossed to Africa, Scipio assembled his army on Sicily. Shortly before the actual departure, Scipio took a small force to southern Italy, engaged Hannibal in a minor action, and defeated him. This was important because "he had 'blooded' his troops against Hannibal, and by this successful enterprise given them a moral tonic, which would be of immense value in the crucial days to come." (7:108-9) That one action thus destroyed the image of Hannibal's invincibility.

Besides improving the morale of his own forces, Scipio was adept at unsettling his foes. When both armies (Scipio's and Hannibal's) were in Africa maneuvering prior to the battle of Zama, two spies from Hannibal were caught in the Roman camp. Scipio instructed a tribune to show them around and point out the arrangement of the camp. When they were done, Scipio provided them with provisions and an escort and told them to report to Hannibal what had happened. Commenting on this, Liddell Hart wrote, "This superb insolence of Scipio's was a shrewd blow at the moral objective, calculated to impress Hannibal and his troops of the utter confidence of the Romans, and correspondingly give rise to doubts among themselves." (7:168)

As a final aspect of leadership, the behavior or actions of a leader will be discussed. Liddell Hart's leaders won their battles with their minds and as a rule he does not discuss their conduct during battles. In fact, he makes it a point that leaders should not get caught up in the action. Scipio, as a rule, did not expose himself to danger--he realized he was more valuable as a commander than as a combatant. In discussing this fact Liddell Hart condemned the leaders of World War I who thrust themselves into the platoon leader's role at the expense of their proper duty. (7:11)

Throughout this discussion of leaders, several basic issues such as training, discipline, use of military intelligence, and other military arts have not been discussed. These were presupposed in a Liddell Hart leader. For example, commenting on General Wolfe's command of a regiment in Scotland before he was to gain fame as the conqueror of Quebec, Liddell Hart noted that when Wolfe left the regiment it was recognized as "the best drilled and disciplined in the Kingdom." (6:219)

All of these other attributes are important and all contribute to making a great leader, but the Great Captains rose above these. In summing up the success of General Wolfe, Liddell Hart stated, "And he has done much to perpetuate the lesson that it is military genius and not mere competence which decides the fate of nations." (6:273-274) The next chapter will look at the development of these Great Captains to see what lifted them above "mere competence."

## Chapter Four

### THE MAKING OF LEADERS

The courage of the troops must be reborn daily, . . . the true skill of a general consists in knowing how to guarantee it by his dispositions, his positions, and those traits of genius that characterize great captains. . . .

Marshal Saxe  
From the Preface to  
My Reveries Upon the Art of War

The previous chapters have covered the life of Liddell Hart, his contributions to military thought, and his ideas on leadership and the characteristics of successful military leaders. Given this background, the current topic is whether or not there are any lessons in this for modern military students. Is there a common thread among the careers of Liddell Hart's Great Captains that enabled them to achieve their stature? This chapter will discuss the things Liddell Hart considered significant influences on them and discuss the relevance of those influences today. The ultimate goal is military education and leadership training that can consistently turn out products worthy of the Great Captain title.

Liddell Hart apparently had some preconceived notion of the physical appearance of a leader and the image a leader should project. On several occasions he comments someone had none of the outward characteristics or traits he considered attributes of a leader. Commenting on the entry in his Wartime Record of Services Book (the quote at the start of Chapter One) Liddell Hart stated, "It was a surprise because I had never felt that I possessed the obvious characteristics and magnetism of leadership." (8:32)

Another example of his preconceived leadership image is shown in his comment on his first impression of Bernard Montgomery, at the time a captain and a student at the British Staff College. Describing Montgomery, Liddell Hart wrote, "He did not show the natural signs of leadership, or a knack of handling men--indeed, when he was eventually given command of a battalion, after sixteen years on the staff, he brought it to the verge of mutiny by misjudged handling." (8:55)

Since there is apparently no certain relationship between outward appearance and actual success, and even the handicap of lacking outward leadership traits can be overcome, what made Liddell Hart's leaders? The single answer to that question is the fact they were all professional students of military science. To a man they studied and reflected on their profession. Any description of their successes as due to general terms such as "brilliant leadership" or "tactical genius" does not give them enough credit. As flattering as those descriptions are, they don't give the individual credit for the study and thought that was put in before their actual successes.

As an example, after stating that Montgomery did not have the appearance of a leader and had problems at battalion level, Liddell Hart went on to observe,

Montgomery not only studied military history, but he profited from it more than most of his fellow-soldiers. In particular, he learned the methods by which Napoleon and the other "Great Captains" had impressed themselves on troops en masse and evoked an enthusiastic response from their armies. Monty provides an outstanding example that a "born commander" can be surpassed by a "made commander"--made by concentrated application to the job and the problem. (8:55)

Liddell Hart's Great Captains willingly conceded that their studies significantly influenced their thinking. General Wolfe was especially a zealot in pursuing military education. When Wolfe's tactics seemed particularly novel (at Louisburg in 1758) and one of his officers commented on them, Wolfe replied, "I had it from Xenophon [Greek chronicler of the exploits of Cyrus the Great, founder of the Persian empire], but our friends here are astonished at what I have done because they have read nothing." (6:253-254)

Liddell Hart cites numerous examples of study, and particularly historical education, having profound effects. Several of Napoleon's maxims specifically address the importance of studying the history of past campaigns. In order to become a Great Captain, Napoleon advised, "Read and reread the campaigns of Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar, Gustavus Adolphus, Turenne, Eugene, and Frederick; take them for your model, that is the only way of becoming a great captain, to obtain the secrets of the art of war." (7:248) Also, "Knowledge of the great operations of war can only be acquired by experience and by the applied study of all the great captains. Gustavus, Turenne, and Frederick, as well as Alexander, Hannibal, and Caesar, have all acted on the same principles." (7:248) (Liddell Hart felt compelled to point out these comments by Napoleon because he was apparently

chagrined Scipio Africanus, whom Liddell Hart called "a greater than Napoleon," was not included in the list in either quote.)

Napoleon himself was a supreme student of military history. Commenting on Napoleon's first victory, in which the relatively young and inexperienced Bonaparte defeated a veteran Austrian general, Clausewitz observed,

Bonaparte was twenty-six years old, Beaulieu [the Austrian commander] sixty-two. Bonaparte had a vast historical education; the great events of the history of the world had passed in panorama before his eyes. Beaulieu had merely forty years of official pedantry for education. (11:184)

While serving out his exile on St. Helena, Napoleon stated, "I have fought sixty battles and I have learned nothing which I did not know at the outset." (5:104) He could make this statement because he was so well versed in military science at the outset of that first battle.

Liddell Hart goes to great length to make a cogent case for the importance of studying military history. This was almost a necessity because of the low esteem military training had at the time of his most influential writings. The General Staffs of the European powers had all studied at great length previous campaigns and, based on how World War I was conducted, all of that study was apparently for naught. As he noted, "And the outcome in 1914 of all this study was a plan of fantastic unreality and a doctrine of the offensif a l'outrance which led them to hit their heads against a solid wall when they were not hitting the air." (11:169) Civilian critics of the handling of the war were particularly scathing in their criticism of military training--they argued common sense was enough and cited the poor performance of professional soldiers. (11:171)

Liddell Hart considered military history a great source of education because, in his words, "in history we have bottled experience, from all the best growths, only waiting to be uncorked." (5:181) He discounted personal experience as being too limited to form the basis for a sound theory of war. History provided greater variety and extent than the solitary soldier could observe. It provided the experience of many under numerous conditions, and it was because of this that history had its "preponderant practical value in the training and mental development of a soldier." (15:4)

After establishing the value of studying military history, Liddell Hart comes back with a caveat on what to study and how to approach the study of it. He conceded the European General

Staffs had studied before World War I, but they had studied the wrong things. Commenting on how the British army studied the American Civil War, he wrote, "To be able to enumerate the blades of grass in the Shenandoah Valley and the yards marched by Stonewall Jackson's men is not an adequate foundation for leadership in a future war where conditions and armament have radically changed." (11:170-171)

According to Liddell Hart, history should be studied from a scientific viewpoint, looking for causal relationships and general principles that had universal applicability. This necessitated studying the entire sweep of history. Commenting on this, Liddell Hart wrote,

. . . any theory of war should be as broad as possible. An intensive study of one campaign unless based on extensive knowledge of the whole history of war is likely to lead us to pitfalls. But if a specific effect is seen to follow a specific cause in a score or more cases, in different epochs and diverse conditions, there is ground for regarding this cause as an integral part of any theory of war. (15:5)

After delineating the need for a broad study of history, Liddell Hart states definite views on how to approach that study. Specifically addressing this issue, he stated,

But the value of military history depends on the quality of the student and on the attitude in which he approaches the subject. . . . The aim of military study should be to maintain a close watch upon the latest technical, scientific, and political developments, fortified by a sure grasp of the eternal principles upon which the great captains had based their contemporary methods, and inspired by a desire to be ahead of any rival army in securing options on the future. (11:173)

The successful study of history required an open mind, and Liddell Hart was alarmed the military tended to negate this asset. The very organization of the military, with its discipline and uniformity, tended to stifle individualism. In a general comment along this line, he observed, "One of the greatest dangers with which every profession is faced is the loss of mental elasticity by those who give up their lives to its service." (22:47)

In his view, the formal military schooling institutionalized this stifling. Commenting on the value of staff schooling, Liddell Hart wrote,

No system of Staff College training, however far developed, can escape the danger, because of its very nature, that it may become a factory for the mass production of stereotyped brains. . . . We have a strong proof of how leaders who have passed through the professional mill tend to lose those particular qualities of originality of conception and vision which are the essential qualities of the great captains. (11:182-183)

As an example that excessive molding of minds can lead to disastrous results, Liddell Hart cites the German generals of World War II. Products of the Prussian military tradition, Liddell Hart stated they "were the best-finished products of their profession--anywhere." (4:300) But as good as they were, they still had their limitations. As Liddell Hart puts it:

The German generals had studied their profession with the greatest of thoroughness, devoting themselves from youth on to the mastery of its technique, with little regard to politics and still less to the world outside. Men of that type are apt to be extremely competent, but not imaginative. (4:167)

It was because of this narrow, technical view that they essentially became tools of Hitler's strategic ploys with the resulting catastrophic effect on their country. It is ironic these men, who were among the first to embrace the prophecies of Liddell Hart when he was ignored in his own country, fell into the exact trap he warned soldiers to avoid.

What lessons are there in this for the aspiring Great Captain? He is apparently caught in a dilemma. He is charged with study and open-mindedness on the one hand, while at the same time the system for which he is doing these things is trying to shape his mind in an entirely different mold. Liddell Hart would leave the aspirant with advice and a warning, embodied in the following passage, "Indeed the lesson of history seems to be that not only are study and reflection the keys to success, but that profitable study can only be made by a mind which has not yet fallen into the grooves of custom and which still possesses an unfettered habit of thought." (11:191)

The point to be gained from this is that an individual can do much to improve his leadership ability. Most of Liddell Hart's Great Captains read of land campaigns because they were land soldiers. But his point has broader application. The point is to maintain a search for professional knowledge. This search has to be tempered by cognizance of the fact the military institutions themselves, while not opposed to this search for knowledge, by their very nature tend to limit the usefulness of



it. What matters is the individual's ability to assimilate his knowledge with an open mind and not be tied to a conventional outlook. This requires a certain amount of determination on the part of the student.

Summing up, as a formula for making Great Captains, the following two quotes are provided as a guide. They both come from the chapter on leadership in Liddell Hart's book that was specifically written to recast armies in a mold to avoid a World War I-type conflict (11). The first one is: "These two qualities of mental initiative and a strong personality, or determination, go a long way towards the power of command in war--they are indeed the hall-mark of the Great Captains." (11:193) The second one is: "Napoleon's 'read and re-read' is still the only sure foundation for commanding in war, and study and reflection are the almost essential complement to the natural gifts of leadership--will and originality." (11:195)

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