The balance of power has been a central concept in the theory and practice of international relations for the past five hundred years. It has also played a key role in some of the most important attempts to develop a theory of international politics in the contemporary study of international relations. In this book, Richard Little establishes a framework that treats the balance of power as a metaphor, a myth and a model. He then uses this framework to reassess four major texts that use the balance of power to promote a theoretical understanding of international relations: Hans J. Morgenthau’s *Politics Among Nations* (1948), Hedley Bull’s *The Anarchical Society* (1977), Kenneth N. Waltz’s *Theory of International Politics* (1979) and John J. Mearsheimer’s *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (2001). These reassessments allow the author to develop a more comprehensive model of the balance of power.

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For Christine
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