

Sun Tzu in the West

It would be hard to overstate the impact of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* on military thought. Beyond its impact in Asia, the work has been required reading in translation for US military personnel since the Cold War. Sun Tzu has been interpreted as arguing for "indirect strategy" in contrast to "direct strategy," the latter idea stemming from ancient Greece. This is a product of twentieth-century Western thinking, specifically that of Liddell Hart, who influenced Samuel B. Griffith's 1963 translation of Sun Tzu. The credibility of Griffith's translation was enhanced by his combat experience in the Pacific during World War II, and his translation of Mao Zedong's *On Guerrilla Warfare*. This reading of Sun Tzu is, however, very different from Chinese interpretations. Western strategic thinkers have used Sun Tzu as a foil or facilitator for their own thinking, inadvertently engaging the Western military tradition and propagating misleading generalizations about Chinese warfare.

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