

Don't Let's Be Beastly to the Germans: The British Occupation of Germany, 1945-49

By Daniel Cowling
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Reviewed by Michael C. Davies

As an idea that is teeming with clichés, recent examples of catastrophic failure, and an apparent lack of any institutionalization of lessons, “winning the peace” is an element that must be grappled with in modern strategy. To avoid it is to welcome defeat. While projects like the Afghanistan War Commission gain steam to report back its findings, other entities and individuals, such as Daniel Cowling, take a historical view of one of the West’s most successful efforts in postconflict reconstruction. In *Don't Let's Be Beastly to the Germans*, Cowling provides a wonderfully written, vivid, and humane narrative of the British Army of the Rhine and the Control Commission Germany during the occupation of Germany in the after-

math of World War II. This is a book that should be required reading for all those interested in the “day after.”

Emerging from Cowling’s doctoral thesis at Cambridge University and his position as a historian at the National Army Museum in London, the book balances the focus among organizational history, personal stories, competing weaponized narratives, political wrangling, and national and international policy. By delving deep into previously untapped archives while weaving in the personal histories and cultural landscape of the time, the book brings to life the genuineness of the characters, their stories, and the challenging circumstances. The book itself is divided into five chronological parts. The first part focuses on defining the postwar program and the ideological debates surrounding those plans. Part two concerns the implementation of occupation and the reconstruction program in the initial stages. Part three is about how Germany and the occupation started crumbling in the aftermath and how this engendered significant criticism of British authorities. Part four outlines how the program was saved from near collapse. Part five describes how the occupation changed its tactics in preparation for the reestablishment of German sovereignty.

The interesting title for the book comes from the satirical song by Noël Coward, who did in fact want to be beastly to the Germans. It is this paradox that is at the heart of the book. The question continually arises about whether it was nature or nurture that pushed the Germans toward Nazism, war, and genocide and with what degree of harshness they should be dealt with in the aftermath of the war. The attempt to find equilibrium in this matrix required the occupation to continually adapt as circumstances emerged. However, the book is also about how the occupiers interacted with the Germans themselves. On one hand, the occupiers had to come to work with and trust former Nazis of all varieties and, in doing so, formed friendships, partnerships, love affairs, and even marriages. On the other, those same occupiers saw the crimes of the German people themselves every day.

It is the constant sway between these forces of humanity and inhumanity, victor and loser, new friend and old foe that demonstrates how the personal views of individuals can influence national policy during times of chaos.

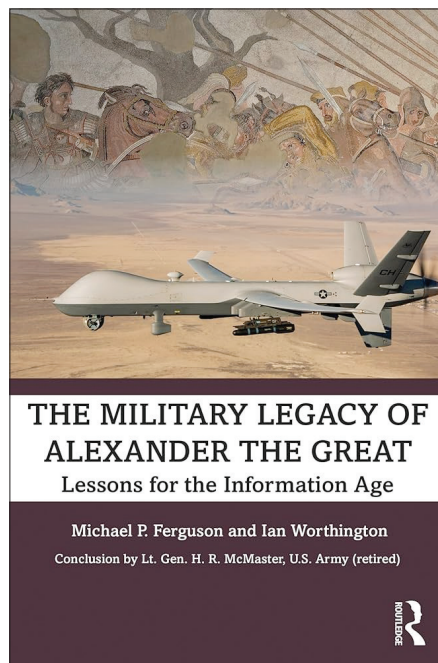
For practitioners, Cowling offers an interesting examination of how the reconstruction process nearly failed. The combination of muddled command processes; ineffective staff; colonialist mindsets; a lack of professionalism; lagging political will, helped along by negative media attention; the sheer level of destruction; and the lack of resources all pushed the situation to a breaking point. For those who have experienced the same firsthand over the past 20 years, it will be both a comfort and a depressing reminder that so little has changed. The situation became so bad that the Control Commission Germany ended up with nicknames such as “Completed Chaos Germany” and “Complete Chaos Guarantee” because of its ineptitude. Its failures eventually reached a point that the occupation itself was broadly considered, in Cowling’s words, a “blight on the country’s international standing” by the end of 1947.

Between these broad narratives, the book contains innumerable interesting anecdotes demonstrating how the British eventually steadied the ship. One chapter opens with the story of a young woman named Joan Bright as she arrived to aid the occupation. Ms. Bright, as it turns out, was the inspiration for James Bond’s Miss Moneypenny, and she was among the many thousands who arrived to help the Control Commission Germany right itself. Cowling also observes how the British kept specific war factories working to service the occupation. One facility churned out cars to transport the occupation authorities around, helping create jobs and becoming a core pillar of the German economy. It was also interesting to learn that the occupation forces used former concentration camps to house the flood of Germans moving throughout the country. Yet it was the requirement to care for the German people that provided the impetus to fix the infrastructure, housing, and transport systems, and in

doing so, the occupation forces jump-started the real economy that allowed the occupation to end successfully.

Don't Let's Be Beastly ends with Cowling asking whether the program worked. The answer is, "In grand historical terms, the peace was most certainly won." Great Britain, along with the United States and France, and in loose concert with the Soviet Union, turned Germany around in a short time and helped to create a situation in which Germany has never again felt as it did after the Treaty of Versailles. The problem with the occupation lay with the initial execution. The lack of three things—planning, qualified personnel, and requisite knowledge—nearly led to disaster. And herein is a key lesson for today: while we remember World War II as a splendid victory that never faltered, the truth is far less rosy. We do not truly learn the lessons of the past until we understand that the day after the battle requires an equal level of professionalism. JFQ

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The Military Legacy of Alexander the Great: Lessons for the Information Age

By Michael P. Ferguson and Ian Worthington
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Reviewed by Robert D. Spessert

The *Military Legacy of Alexander the Great: Lessons for the Information Age* offers readers a unique perspective on the relevance of Alexander's aspirations, battles, campaigns, and leadership for the 21st century. The authors make use of their diverse backgrounds to great effect. Ian Worthington, currently at Macquarie University in Sydney, represents the sage academic who, over many decades, has written on ancient Greece and Macedonia. Michael Ferguson, the younger Active-duty Army officer and doctoral student in history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, leverages his combat tours and operational and strategic experiences to relate the lessons of Alexander to the contemporary operational environment.

Worthington and Ferguson draw numerous parallels between Alexander's political and military challenges and the current issues that national security professionals and joint warfighters face. They organize their work into 13 chapters within 5 major themes: the Environment; Military Organization and Structure; Choosing Battles and Winning Wars; Eastern Exposure; and the Human Domain. Most chapters link their historical content with modern issues to provide useful insights into the overreliance on technology, the fog of war, a volunteer army, mission command, toxic leadership, and strategic overreach.

The first few chapters set the stage by addressing the rise of Philip II of Macedon—Alexander's father—and the army Alexander inherited from him. The theme of "Choosing Battles and Winning Wars" covers four chapters that explore Alexander's campaigns against the Achaemenid Empire. The following four chapters offer lessons on the consequences of mission creep, as the campaigns into Central Asia and India exceeded the scope of Alexander's father's and the League of Corinth's original pan-Hellenic project. Throughout these sections, Worthington and Ferguson provide perspective on the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war. Particularly interesting are Alexander's actions after the Battle of Issus. Instead of pursuing the Persian king Darius III, he seized Tyre, marched through the Levant, and occupied Egypt, which had recently revolted against the Persians and surrendered to the Greeks. These actions secured his rear area, denied Persian fleets safe harbor, and protected Alexander's lines of communications. They also had economic and political benefits; they permitted access to resources, enabled control of the Mediterranean trade routes, and appeased his domestic opponents.

The authors emphasize that warfare is a human endeavor waged by humans against humans to create a better, or more preferred, peace. Force becomes the tool to implement political will. In that context, Alexander performed two roles: the general wielding the military instrument of national power and the