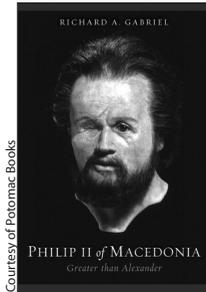


and Mandelbaum are correct in that America's competitive advantage is at risk. Keeping the United States a first-class competitor depends largely on revitalizing the nation's capacity for economic growth and innovation. Real American grand strategists must master domestic policies not just foreign affairs.



Washington, DC:
Potomac Books,
2010

318pages

\$29.95

Philip II of Macedon: Greater than Alexander

by Richard A. Gabriel

Reviewed by Dr. John A. Bonin, Professor of Concepts and Doctrine, US Army War College

In *Philip II of Macedon: Greater than Alexander*, historian Richard Gabriel seeks to elevate Alexander's father, Philip II, to a "greater general and national king" than was his son. He is a member of a growing number of historians who seek relevant insights to present problems from the distant accounts of Greek and Roman wars. Gabriel is a distinguished professor in the Department of History and War Studies at the Royal Military College of Canada and in the Department of Defence Studies at

the Canadian Forces College in Toronto. He has written numerous books and articles on military history.

What Gabriel seeks in this work is to examine "Alexander's inheritance" in detail. The author claims that "Philip's legacy was so significant that without it, there would have been no Alexander the Great." He goes on to state that "Philip was a military genius who invented the military instrument that allowed Alexander to carry out his conquest of Asia."

The book's first three chapters are short and readable accounts of Philip's personality, his strategic environment, and the Macedonian war machine. Gabriel also argues that "Philip was a supreme strategist in that he understood the place of war in policy, and he knew its limits." Philip had a manifest preference for political solutions over military ones, and was flexible in his willingness to change course politically or militarily when events required. Philip's grand strategy had two aims: to unify the Macedonian state into an effective national entity, and to expand Macedon's hegemony over all of Greece. When Philip came to power after the defeat and death of his brother Aymtas, for all practical purposes, the Macedonian Army had ceased to exist. Over the next 24 years Philip innovatively created a balanced and modern Macedonian war machine that transformed warfare itself. Gabriel states that "Philip's creation of the first competent corps of Macedonian infantry was not only an achievement of military genius but also an experiment in social engineering." This Macedonian phalanx employed a longer spear, or sarrisa, than Greek hoplites, also elevated peasants to paid members of the king's "foot companions and changed infantry combat completely by providing a unit with greater combat power, flexibility, and maneuverability than the traditional hoplite phalanx." Philip also reformed his cavalry from a noble mob incapable

of defeating infantry *hoplites* to arguably the most effective cavalry arm in antiquity capable of breaking opposing infantry by employing penetrating wedge formations. In addition, Philip created a logistics service capable of supporting distant expeditionary operations and an engineering arm capable of successfully conducting sieges.

The remaining six chapters are an engaging narrative survey of the numerous campaigns of Philip. These cover the period from 359 BCE when he assumed responsibility for governing Macedonia, through his unification and expansion of Macedonia to his becoming the *hegemon* of Greece, and ending with his assassination in 336 BCE. One of Gabriel's interesting arguments is that the Persians, not Alexander's mother Olympias, were probably behind Philip's death because of motive, means, and opportunity.

Even though the sources dealing with Phillip are limited, the author succeeds in bringing Philip II's dramatic story to life. He credits Philip with creating a strong sense of national identity among the diverse peoples of his realm as a strategic base. Phillip also saw war as only one of several means to obtain his goals. Phillip much preferred to achieve his strategic objectives by employing other less kinetic, but smart, power means such as diplomacy, bribery, or even marriage. To Gabriel, Philip was the ultimate and better strategist than Alexander, who relied too much on the single strategic option of his magnificent army.

This reviewer believes that Gabriel fails to completely prove his contention that Philip was a greater overall general than Alexander. He acknowledges that "there is no doubt that Alexander was a brilliant tactician in his own right" as Alexander employed tactics he learned from Philip. But, while Alexander never lost a battle and conquered the mighty Persian Empire, Philip lost several battles, sieges, skirmishes, and never made it out of the Balkans.

While the research for this book is extensive, Gabriel makes several assertions about the Macedonian Army and its enemies not supported by recent scholarship. For example, he states that prior to Phillip, Macedonian infantry "were little more than untrained peasants," when most likely Macedonian tribesmen resembled the *peltasts* of their neighbors. The author also presents the primary reason for Phillip's defeat at the hands of the Phocians during the Sacred War as a result of Phillip being ambushed by massed "stone-throwing catapults." Gabriel awards the Phocian leader "Onomachus the distinction of being the father of field artillery" for this brilliant military innovation. Modern scholars, however, have suggested that the "stone throwers" may have been using their hands and not machines. Regardless, *Philip II of Macedon: Greater than Alexander* is a must for readers interested in ancient military history or for a current perspective of the strategic parallels between today and the classical world.