

How Great Is Alexander The Great?

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Defining Greatness in Historical Leadership

Greatness is not achieved by cruelty. Greatness is not obtained by egotistical self-consumption. Greatness is not a minimal period of time, for if one is great, then the achievements that made him so great last for eternity. And so, is Alexander the Great great? Or is this assumed title false? Alexander was the son of the Philip of Macedonia, and because of his father's death, he achieved the power of the throne. His father merely did not have "great" in his title, yet he achieved so much. So why must Alexander receive such a title? Why must people mourn over his death to such extremities when they solely had no idea who he truly was? Alexander the Great killed thousands for his irrelevant pleasures, had an ego that was too large for his own shell, and yet his empire fell apart only ten years after his death, and if that deserves the title of "great", then our society as a whole has diminished into extinction of moral sanity. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.)

A closely related analysis is available in [Alexander the Great, Legacy, and Influence Around the Conquered Regions](#).

Conquest Violence and Civilian Deaths

Among the many of Alexander's narcissistic "accomplishments," he "accomplished" killing thousands of harmless individuals. Just by glancing at a map of Alexander's empire, it is clear that he did not show much concern at each battle, and he was very brutal even in places where he didn't belong (Doc. A). He caused unnecessary battles. For example, Porus and his army stood on the side of a river that Alexander and his troops desired to reach. After numerous fake attacks, Alexander and his army attacked Porus and his troops unexpectedly, and Alexander let Porus retain administrative rule even though Alexander won the battle. Although this may appear noble, a trait that is necessary to be great, he merely killed thousands of people just to cross a river, which in the end only faulted his decrepit ego (Doc. B). Along Alexander's march down the Mediterranean coast, he crucified thousands of men due to the fact that they did not share the same beliefs as him. This demonstrates how Alexander is capable of great brutality, yet such cruelty could never be considered great. He may have been a successful commander, but his actions prove just how immoral he truly is (Doc. C). Overall, Alexander killed 100,000 enemy soldiers and civilians in just four battles. He invaded them, and in their attempt to protect what was rightfully theirs, he killed them.

Alexander's Ambition and Personal Ego

Even if some tend to assume that Alexander truly was “great,” one cannot fully argue with the fact that Alexander had a huge ego, and he could barely maintain it himself. He was only twenty years old when he launched his invasion of the Persian Empire, and he could have had such a bright future that allowed him to deserve the title of great. Yet even Alexander’s army turned back after eight years of marching due to the fact that his ego could not wrap around the idea that all of these battles remained useless (BGE). Conquering so much land for personal pleasures just demonstrates how power-hungry Alexander truly was. The city name “Alexandria” appears eleven times on the map of his empire. He was so conceited that he wanted people to know how much land he was capable of conquering (Doc. A). In his march down the Mediterranean, he decided not to kill anyone who took sanctuary in the temple due to the fact that he feared trial from the gods, and such trial could fault his expansive ego (Doc. C). The legends about Alexander represent the fact that if he was so great, why would he lead his men to such deathly conditions in the desert (Doc. D)? His ego led him to believe that everyone adored the idea of him, yet when he left to return to Greece, some of his men stayed in India and married locals. If they adored him to the immense extent he believed they did, why would they not leave with him? Also, his soldiers never truly belonged there in the first place, but the soldiers chose to leave his control for merely the local women they had just met (Doc. F). Alexander must have realized at that moment how their loyalty had faded and how his ego may have been too full of self-adoration.

Political Instability After Alexander's Death

Alexander’s empire only remained intact for ten years after his death. The political stability was wobbly at best when he ruled. If this empire only remained intact for ten years after his death, then what accomplishments did he make that we, as modern citizens, can recognize, for they no longer matter or seem to exist (Doc. E)? Sure, he was remembered, and he still is, but that does not make him great. Bad people, such as Hitler or Bin Laden, are easily remembered, but are they considered great as well? No. So yes, Alexander did many things that some people may think are great, but do you not think that some people admired Hitler as well? He had his “followers,” and now Alexander’s large ego requires supporters as well. So if all of one’s so-called accomplishments have now fallen only ten years after their death, greatness is not necessarily considered within such a fall of an empire.

Historical Reputation and the Meaning of Achievement

Three hundred years after Alexander’s death, Julius Caesar remained in tears in front of a statue of Alexander, inspired by his achievements at such a young age (BGE). But what accomplishments were

so inspirational? Alexander killed thousands due to his personal beliefs. If only his heart was as big as his ego. And because of this, his empire collapsed forever. So, if greatness is defined by Alexander's mad mind, maybe his title is not the only problem here; maybe we are supporting Alexander in defining the measures we would take to achieve greatness. Alexander "The Great" sure was great. Not a great hero or a great soul, but such an intricate greatness of insanity and brutality. (Plutarch, 1919) And never could so much cruelty deserve such a title.

References

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