

good—a possibility liberalism necessarily denies—so non-rational persuasion displaces rational argument. Thus the endless proliferation of arguments which themselves never resolve issues. This is the opposite of what the Enlightenment promised.

It is in the feeble attempt to escape from this incoherence and from the despair of making this a harmonious order, that people come to deal with public life pragmatically, instead of rationally and with philosophical reflection.

Another strange characteristic of liberalism is that practical (moral) reasoning results not in actions, but in the mere cognitive conclusion of the form: “Such and such ought to be done.” But from that conclusion, it often is the case that no action follows. This is so for several reasons. One is that the person’s ephemeral preferences may change on the spot. Another is that it is held that preferences, not reasons, are the ultimate movers. A third is that reasons are thought to be mere tools of manipulation, and not themselves practical grounds for ordering life.

Liberalism takes pure preferences to be ultimate givens. Although preferences or desires have always been recognized as possible motives for action, in liberalism they are taken as absolutes, not to be judged, evaluated, and assigned a subordinate place in the order of life as a whole. Rather, the liberal self has only the task of maximizing the satisfaction of as many preferences as possible. Thus, “effectiveness” in achieving, in whatever manner, whatever preferences one has is counted as a high value.

If a person orders his or her own preferences and fulfills them, then that person is held, in liberalism, to have achieved practical rationality. But unlike other Western traditions, this means that one can be rational without yet being just.

Like many traditions, liberalism excludes from serious consideration any position outside its own orthodoxy. But liberalism pretends that it excludes nothing. It does this either by twisting other positions into variations of itself, or it labels what cannot be so transformed as mad and, therefore, outside legitimate consideration. But it promises to listen to every legitimate voice. Thus, liberalism promises that an adjustment within itself will be found in the near future, which will install perfect justice. But that is a future which comes—and necessarily so. In these ways, all debates allowed within liberalism are merely ways of preserving the liberal social order.

MacIntyre also attacks two spawns of liberalism: relativism and perspectivism. The relativist claims that between basically different theories and modes of life, there can be no rational judgment. Perspectivism, despairing of the actualization of Enlightenment norms of formal rationalism while refusing to give them up, declares that there is no truth or falsity, there are just different, co-equal perspectives on reality. MacIntyre argues that traditions, on their own criteria, can recognize deficiencies in themselves, even to the point of accepting a different tradition as entirely better.

It is his insightful analysis (not all the points of which can be reviewed here) of the basics of liberalism in its various guises which makes this book powerful. In presenting this virtual autopsy, MacIntyre hopes to start a process of self-knowledge of those living in a liberal order which can begin to be transformative. It is, in fact, likely that some philosophers, followed by literary theorists and then artists (as well as a few interested laymen) will see this portrait of modernism’s pathology and begin seeking alternatives.

However, MacIntyre offers us no positive vision to get us out of what he identifies as another dark age, except to wait for a “new, doubtless very different, St. Benedict,” as he had written previously.

## No way to win the peace

by Mary McCourt Burdman

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### **Troubled days of peace: Mountbatten and South East Asia Command 1945-46**

by Peter Dennis

Manchester University Press, United Kingdom  
War, Armed Forces and Society series, 1987  
270 pages with index, £27.95 hardbound

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Although the scope of this book is limited to the period of Lord Mountbatten’s control of the British-led South East Asian Command (SEAC) in the months following the Japanese surrender in 1945, such a well-researched book contributes to understanding the current situation in Asian-U.S.-European relations.

The author, Lecturer in History at the Australian Defence Force Academy at the University of New South Wales, ultimately endorses the role played by Mountbatten and his commanders in the extremely difficult military and political situation in postwar Southeast Asia—but it is sober praise. The stupidity and viciousness of the Dutch and French in the area defies belief, leaving the British to “succeed” only in comparison.

Dennis details a wealth of information on the roles of all the concerned Allies—the United States, Britain, France, and the Netherlands—in making it extremely difficult for SEAC to carry out its primary tasks of demobilizing and disarming the Japanese troops, rescuing prisoners of war and internees, and restoring law and order. The men, equipment, and shipping provided were insufficient to deal with these tasks—when Japan surrendered, there were about 600,000

fully armed Japanese troops in the region, none of whom had been defeated in battle, and hundreds of thousands of POWs and internees, whose whereabouts were mostly unknown. Worse, there was no intelligence on the actual political situation within the region, especially on the strength of the nationalist governments which had just proclaimed themselves in Indochina and Indonesia—and only a colonial policy for the future of these nations.

The colonial Netherlands and France, had been conquered nations in Europe, and with Britain, were ignominiously defeated by the Japanese in 1941-42. Toward the end of the war, the Japanese had encouraged the nationalist movements throughout the region, but the colonial nations had no policy, other than armed force, to deal with the nationalist governments. The desperation of the European nations to recover their empires, demonstrates the bankruptcy of Western policy coming out of World War II, especially after the death of President Roosevelt and the end of his “American Century” policy. Rather than a development policy for the southeast Asian nations that were to show such remarkable economic growth a few decades later, the colonial nations were determined to use whatever force necessary to retake power and salvage their own economies.

To do this, the European nations enlisted the enemy Japanese Army, to “maintain order” throughout the region, and until early 1946, months after surrender, armed Japanese soldiers were used against the nationalists—although many Japanese, of course, handed over their arms to the Viet Minh or Sukarno forces. The ultimate Dutch, French, and British defeat was assured.

The Potsdam summit in August 1945 was another Yalta for East Asia. The United States redrew the areas under the Southeast and Southwest (U.S.) Asian commands, handing over all of Indonesia (then the Netherlands East Indies) and Indochina, as well as Burma and Malaya, to the British under Mountbatten, and washing its hands of this problematic region. Indochina was divided north and south between SEAC and China. The “Europeanists” consolidated control in the U.S. State Department, selling out what should have been in U.S. interest in Southeast Asia, to allow the return—by military force—of the former colonial powers.

However, as Dennis presents in devastating detail, SEAC and the French and Dutch “limped” back into the region. Outside of MacArthur’s command, there was no policy for “winning the peace” in Asia. The Allies had agreed already in 1944 that British soldiers would be discharged as early as possible for reconstruction at home, leaving the SEAC with the choice of using well-trained Indian troops—a big political danger for Britain in India—the untrained and vicious French and Dutch colonial troops just released from detention camps, or the Japanese.

As their military situation deteriorated, the Japanese had initiated a quasi-independent Indonesia, and on Aug. 17, 1945, Sukarno and Muhammed Hatta proclaimed an Indo-

nesian republic. Unaware—and unwilling to learn—of the breadth of the nationalist movement, the Dutch refused utterly to allow any negotiations that would have given even de facto recognition to the nationalists. The British had only some 1,500 troops facing 100,000 Indonesians, some so fanatical they attacked tanks with bamboo spears, but refused to allow the Dutch to land, realizing this would send the situation over the edge.

In Indochina, another crisis point with just one British brigade under Maj. Gen. Douglas Gracey to take control from the 70,000 Japanese soldiers near Saigon alone, SEAC went over to the French. After widespread Vietnamese riots broke out in September, Gracey helped the French colonialists stage a coup against the provisional Viet Minh government, and made good the French shortcomings with Indian troops to the point of using air power against Vietnamese.

Mountbatten alone was not responsible for the policy failure, but certainly his tremendous political ambition conceded to the Dutch and French what they needed to force their way back into Southeast Asia. Mountbatten defied the Allied Joint Chiefs policy of repatriating all Japanese troops as fast as possible, and allowed the Dutch to keep some 22,500 Japanese troops in the Netherlands East Indies for labor. “Dickie” Mountbatten also sacrificed his N.E.I. commander, Lt. Gen. Sir Philip Christison, who had been appointed to “carry the can” in this nasty situation. Because Christison insisted, even for military reasons, on negotiating with the nationalists, Mountbatten forced him out as the Dutch asked, before cutting out himself in order to be back in London in time for the June 1946 victory parade.

Dr. Dennis’s book is well worth reading. The primary thing I would quarrel with is its price, which might restrict it to the technical, rather than general, reader.

## Sophistry on behalf of Moscow’s troops

by Daniel Platt

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### **Revolutionaries and Functionaries: The Dual Face of Terrorism**

by Richard Falk

E.P. Dutton, New York, 1988

222 pages, \$17.95 hardbound

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Professor Falk’s principal qualification to discuss the problem of terrorism is that he has been promoting it energetically for years. The ostensible thesis of this book is that to break