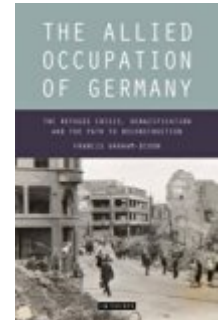


**Francis Graham-Dixon.** *The Allied Occupation of Germany: The Refugee Crisis, Denazification and the Path to Reconstruction.* I.B. Tauris, 2013. xiii + 348 pp. \$95.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-78076-465-8.



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As the British occupation forces discovered in post-WWII Germany, it is often easier to break things than to fix what is broken. Confronting the would-be occupiers were shattered cities, millions of refugees, destroyed infrastructure, the reality of an extermination program that murdered millions, and the apparent necessity of rooting out the pernicious weed of National Socialism that had directed every aspect of German society for the previous twelve years. Even assuming that no missteps were made, it presented a daunting task.

However, as author Francis Graham-Dixon points out, things did not always go as planned: “For the Western Allies, reconstruction priorities dramatically shifted from the earlier unanimity of purpose and will in defeating Nazism, to insulating Germany from the threat of encroaching Soviet influence” (p. 260). Between these polar political opposites, Britain ran the gamut from reasonably clear policy objectives to idiosyncratic practices that effectively served to undermine what they most wished to accomplish.

After defeating Hitler, Britain resumed pursuit of its own economic self-interest, and an important part of that was reestablishing Germany as a trading partner. Despite this, British policy also operated to undermine that goal by continuing to dismantle German industrial plants and further erode the economic recovery in an effort to facilitate reparation payments to the Soviets—at least until it was abundantly clear that the Russians had supplanted the Germans as “the other.” Consequently, the German economy foundered all while German politicians sought to achieve a measure of sovereignty in exchange for following the lead of the Allies. This was not completely resolved—if it ever was—until 1955 when the British fully turned over governmental functions to the Federal Republic of Germany, although it continues to maintain a military presence (British Forces Germany).

To take just one of many issues that Francis-Dixon touches on: how best to implement a policy of total demilitarization of a historical enemy when it was equally apparent that a militarized

Germany was a necessary deterrent to the spread of communism? German leaders, particularly Konrad Adenauer, were quick to take advantage of the schism between British intent and Cold War reality. Adenauer effectively extorted concessions from the Allies on the issues of “a cessation of the defamation of the German soldier and a satisfactory settlement of sentences for war crimes” by making German participation conditional on a favorable outcome—despite the fact that German soldiers were implicated in war crimes and that it meant every adjudicated mass murderer would be free other than those convicted at the International Military Tribunal (p. 239).

While the title of the book is slightly misleading—the content is exclusive to the British occupation zone in northern Germany, not comprehensive Allied policy anywhere else—Francis Graham-Dixon makes excellent use of the relevant sources and her interpretations are both nuanced and balanced. The legal aspects of British postwar policy, in particular the Nuremberg Trial, the war crimes trials held in the British zone of occupation, and the denazification policy under Control Council Law No. 10 are less well covered and there are a few minor inaccuracies, although none of these serves to undermine the factually correct evidence that the author uses quite well. The use of Helgoland as a near-metaphor for chronic short-sightedness in British policy is particularly apt and interesting.

As outlined in the introduction, the author seeks to answer one question above all: “Was it possible to reconcile British liberal democratic values as an occupying power, and if so, how?” (p. 4). Given the enormity of the task, and the changing winds of global power relationships between East and West, the amazing thing is not that the British failed in many of their intended tasks, but rather that they did as well as they did despite conflicting guidance, national and international policy minefields, historical and cultural differences of vast proportions, and an honest ef-

fort to transition Germany from the bestial plague of Nazism into something more like Britain and America. Modern democratic Germany is a testament to at least some things being done right, even if they were not always what the British policymakers envisioned.

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