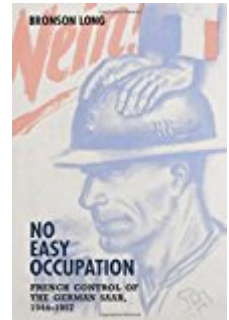


**Bronson Long.** *No Easy Occupation: French Control of the German Saar, 1944-1957.*  
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The German Saar River valley, notable for its coal and steel production, was an important economic region for both imperial and Nazi Germany. In 1945, the Saar was occupied by American soldiers but was rapidly turned over to the French to be incorporated into their zone of occupation. Economically devastated by Allied bombing and culturally devastated by the destruction of the Nazi state, the French aimed to rebuild the Saar as an autonomous state free from German influence. They began a political, cultural, and economic transition that sought to protect French economic interests as well as promote French culture. However, an uneven French administration, coupled with a resurgent West Germany, undermined support for the new arrangement within the Saar. Rather than create an independent state, many Saarlanders believed that the French wanted to turn the Saar into a European colony, or worse were preparing the region for annexation into the French Republic. By the mid-1950s, the economic argument for independence fell away as the German economy overtook the French. Fur-

ther, growing resistance to French imperialism in Algeria and Indochina helped weaken their reputation in Europe. In 1955, Saarlanders voted overwhelmingly to return to West Germany. This rejection of independence ended French control over the region and began the process of reunification with West Germany.

Bronson Long's *No Easy Occupation* tells the story of the Saar's transition from the perspective of the French and their primary supporters in the Saar, including Johannes Hoffmann, the Saar's first and only prime minister. The book's primary focus is on France's attempt to shape the cultural and economic reconstruction of the Saar. Long argues that development of the "Saar Question" following World War II mirrors that of Germany, and Europe as a whole. In deciding the future of the Saar, France and Germany set new norms in their relationship. Instead of the bellicose language that typified relations between 1870 and 1945, France and Germany instead cooperated in settling key territorial disputes. However, this story is often downplayed or ignored in English-lan-

guage sources. Long attempts to rectify this historiographic gap, and includes a discussion of many of the relevant French and German authors. These sources augment a large body of primary source research. Specifically, Long uses documents from the French foreign ministry to illustrate how France influenced the leading politicians and directed administrators within the Saar.

*No Easy Occupation* offers a mostly chronological narrative of the reconstruction of the Saar, and is divided into three sections spanning the period from 1944 to 1955. The first two sections deal with the French occupation and cultural reconstruction of the region. The chapters in these sections, six in total, are further broken up into multiple subsections. Each discusses a wide range of topics from denazification, to the creation of soccer teams, to the ratification of a national constitution. These chapters are broad in scope, but they lack the broader context required to connect them to the overarching narrative that Long tries to create. While the book broadly presents a chronological account, each chapter jumps between periods, topics, and actors in such a way as to rob the narrative of much of its momentum. Ultimately, Long's narrative and conclusions are fundamentally political, and while his sections on the cultural development of the Saar complicate that narrative, they ultimately distract from his central arguments.

The third section largely focuses on the political and diplomatic developments surrounding the Saar's reunification with West Germany. This section, the most relevant to historians beyond the region, deals with attempts to create a pan-European community. This section places the "Saar Question" within the context of the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community as well as the failure of the European Defense Community. It highlights the importance of the "Saar Question" in the Franco-German relationship. Both countries felt that the Saar was vital to their national interests, and each attempted to forge sup-

port for their given policies. However, while the French had tremendous political control over the Saar, they were unable to generate a unique national identity in the Saarlanders, many of whom identified as German. Instead, many of the French policies, which focused on "De-Prussianization," only served to disenchant the Saarlanders, whose experiences in World War II were reason enough to reject Nazism and "Prussianism." Long argues that while there was initially some room for the creation of a distinct Saar nationality, this opportunity was lost as the result of policies insensitive to the attitudes of the Saarlanders.

*No Easy Occupation* sheds light on an important topic in the development of Germany after World War II, as well as that of a pan-European community. The resolution of the "Saar Question" suggested a major shift in the nature of European relations. France, long a major European power, was eclipsed by a dynamic and democratic West Germany. Instead of a victor and occupier, France was forced to deal with Germany as an equal power. In the Saar, this shift was felt most acutely, as tensions often erupted between pro-French and pro-German groups, especially in the run-up to the 1955 referendum. The "Saar Question" further demonstrates a shift in European diplomacy away from the bellicose language of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Instead of solving territorial disputes by destroying Europe, France and Germany were able to resolve the "Saar Question" in a way that strengthened the European community. With the threat of Soviet invasion and nuclear holocaust at their backs, politicians in Paris and Bonn recognized that there was more to be gained by diplomacy and cooperation than by militarism.

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