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# The Postwar Occupations of Germany and Japan: Implications for Iraq ~~(C//NF)~~

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~~CONFIDENTIAL//NOFORN//X1~~**The Postwar Occupations of Germany and Japan: Implications for Iraq ~~(C//NF)~~****Summary ~~(U)~~**

For the postwar occupations of Germany and Japan, the United States had both a sweeping international mandate and long-lasting support of key regional countries.

- Obtaining an international mandate and regional support will be key for any US occupation of Iraq.
- Iraq's Arab neighbors view a strong Iraq as a bulwark against Iran and are likely to push for an early end to a US occupation and quick rearming of Iraq. ~~(C//NF)~~

In both Germany and Japan, the US occupation started with sweeping goals for political, social, and economic change that were rapidly scaled back in order to deal with the challenges of the Cold War. The need to impose stability required the use of local bureaucracies and institutions to implement occupation policies. The seven-year occupation only laid the groundwork for success—it took a generational change reinforced by the continuing presence of US troops to solidify the gains.

- The legacy of colonialism, tribal culture, and Islam are key factors in determining how Iraqi society would react to an occupation. ~~(C//NF)~~

In postwar Germany and Japan providing humanitarian relief was the most crucial problem. US generosity toward the general population and leniency toward leaders provided a legacy of gratitude.

- In Iraq, the ability of the occupation forces to control the security situation and provide humanitarian aid is key to earning the hearts and minds of average Iraqis and overcoming a decade of Saddam's anti-US propaganda.
- Iraq's wealth of natural resources and experience in reconstruction, rationing under the Oil-for-Food program, and the presence of UN agencies might provide a basis for the postwar period. ~~(C//NF)~~

In both Germany and Japan, the United States administered the occupation through limited occupation staffs working via local authorities and institutions, backed by the presence of hundreds of thousands of

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occupation troops. The rapid transfer of authority moderated resentment against the US occupation, but it still took years to turn weary acceptance to support for the United States. The shared partnership in defense against the Cold War threat of communism laid the framework for a lasting alliance.

- A rapid transfer of authority to local officials is possible in Iraq because the country's large bureaucracy probably would survive regime change. The downside is that this Sunni-centric bureaucracy is not inclined to respond to local religious and ethnic minorities' demands for greater control and inclusion. ~~(C//NF)~~

The United States began the occupations of Germany and Japan with the goal of finding, removing from public life, and punishing war criminals. The need to rely on local institutions and leaders moderated that goal. In the end, few Germans and Japanese were permanently barred from public life.

- In Iraq, most atrocities were committed by members of Arab Sunni tribes closely affiliated with the regime. These same tribes control the institutions to which an occupation would look to take charge in any rapid transfer of power.
- In Germany and Japan, crimes against humanity were targeted against foreign or marginalized groups; in Iraq the targets were the majority of the population. ~~(C//NF)~~

The retention of the Emperor provided a unifying symbol for Japan's relatively homogeneous population. In Germany, the Federal Republic prospered in spite of the lack of a clear national identity because of the external threat posed by the Soviet Union and the government's use of Marshall Plan funds to provide economic advantage to membership in the federal system.

- Iraq's lack of a national identity or homogeneous population renders Japan's model difficult to use.
- The German model offer better parallels for Iraq, but implementation would require a large, extended US military presence. ~~(C//NF)~~

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**The Postwar Occupations of  
Germany and Japan:  
Implications for Iraq (C//NF)**

**International Mandate and Regional Support Key  
to Success (U)**

The post-World War II occupations of Germany and Japan between 1945 and 1952 had a *broad international mandate* because all the Allied powers had been direct victims of German and Japanese aggression. International support for the neutralization of the military threat from both countries continued at least through the start of the Cold War in 1948. Although China and the Soviet Union became hostile to the continued US presence in both countries—particularly after the start of the Korean war in 1950—US allies and other regional states opposed ending the occupations in both countries.

- London, Canberra, and all of Tokyo's East Asian neighbors harbored a deep distrust of Japan and opposed the 1952 peace treaty that ended the occupation on the grounds it returned sovereignty to Tokyo too quickly.
- The end of Germany's occupation in 1952 and subsequent remilitarization was greeted with deep suspicion by its neighbors and opposed by the Soviet Union. (C//NF)

In both cases, opponents were reassured by the promise of a continuing United States military presence after the formal end to the occupation. In the case of Japan, the US signed separate security treaties with many of its former victims to counter their fears of potential, renewed Japanese militarism. One historian has said that the entire purpose of NATO for Europeans was to "keep the American in, the Russians out, and the Germans down." The

continued US presence in both countries to this day receives widespread regional support. (C//NF)

**Implications for Iraq (C//NF)**

- Receiving an international mandate and gaining regional support are key factors in planning for an occupation. Overcoming the skepticism of Iraq's neighbors regarding the military or security threat Saddam poses would facilitate gaining such support.
- Iraq's neighbors have viewed the country as a military bulwark against Iran; many of them continue to harbor deeper concern about Iranian long-term expansion than Iraqi aggression. Pressure for re-arming Iraq is likely to come sooner than was the case in Germany and Japan.
- The religious and cultural gap between occupying Western forces and the Iraqi population would be wider than was the case in Germany or even Japan. The legacy of colonialism is likely to spark broad regional resentment to an "infidel" force occupying an Islamic country. (C//NF)

**Not Unqualified Successes (U)**

In Germany and Japan, the occupations started with goals for sweeping political, social, and economic change that were rapidly rolled back in order to ensure that Japan and Germany would become stable and firm members of the anti-communist camp. This retreat from early lofty goals for social and political reformation reflected changing US policy goals due to the start of the Cold War and allowed many of the traditional elites and institutions to retain power and influence.

This assessment was prepared by the Offices of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Analysis; Asian Pacific and Latin American Analysis; and Russian and European Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the [redacted] Manager, NESAF, on [redacted]

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- In Japan, occupation authorities reversed course from their early attempts to break up the *zaibatsu* industrial conglomerates; these groups became the postwar *keiretsu* networks that today continue to engage in monopolistic, anti-competitive practices.
- In Germany, the early goals of transforming the country, most fully expressed in the Morgenthau Plan to change Germany from an industrial to an agricultural nation, were quickly scrapped. ~~(C//NF)~~

In both countries, the seven-year long occupation merely laid the foundation for success. Solidifying the political gains required a generational change. As late as the early 1960s, there were still questions about the depth of Germany's commitment to democracy. Some observers of Japan today question the strength of Japanese democracy, and many of Tokyo's Asian neighbors still welcome the US military presence because of continuing fears about the danger of Japanese remilitarization.

- Allowing the Germans to craft institutions that matched their political and historical traditions facilitated Germany's successful democratization. The US helped integrate Germany firmly into Western European political and economic life, an integration that opened it up to influence from its democratic neighbors and from US culture.

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#### Implications for Iraq ~~(C//NF)~~

- A transformation of Iraq to a true democracy could require a US role lasting a generation.
- Any US commitment to sweeping changes in Iraqi society and politics could be effected by unanticipated developments, as the Cold War changed US goals in Germany and Japan.
- Allowing Iraqis to craft institutions that mirror their society and culture but guided by overall US goals would enhance the likelihood for a positive outcome. However, permitting Iraqis to craft their own institutions would be risky given Iraq's short,

turbulent history and the experience of life under the repressive Ba'th Party.

- Pressure from disenfranchised religious and ethnic minorities for wider inclusion and reform of Iraq's institutions would encounter an entrenched Sunni Arab elite controlling the reins of economic, industrial, and military power.
- Key variables affecting how Iraqi society will react to the competing possibilities of reform versus restitution of sovereignty include the tribal culture, impact of exiles and returning refugees, the legacy of colonialism, Islam, and the religious schools.
- The regional context in the Middle East is one of authoritarian, not democratic, states. ~~(C//NF)~~

#### Humanitarian not Security Problems ~~(C//NF)~~

Planning for the postwar occupation of Germany and Japan started as soon as the United States entered the war. Much pre-occupation planning centered on the need for security, in actuality the greatest problems were the widespread devastation, starvation, and crime. ~~(C//NF)~~

Postwar occupation planning started almost as soon as the United States entered the war. By 1942, planning staffs for both Germany and Japan were working on a full range of tasks related to the occupation, including rebuilding the infrastructure, recreating an administrative and governmental structure, overseeing the economy, reforming the educational system, democratizing the populations, and apprehending and punishing war criminals. The largest initial concern was security due to fears that recalcitrant Nazis and Japanese militarists would attempt to continue the war. The defeated German and Japanese populations were relieved to see the end of the war, a fact that allowed the occupation forces to concentrate on relieving the humanitarian situation. ~~(C//NF)~~

The greatest problems facing the occupation forces in both countries were humanitarian crisis and criminal activity.

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- The disintegration of civil society and breakdown of the ration distribution system combined with millions of displaced or homeless people to present a daunting challenge to occupation planners.
- Many people turned to crime out of necessity or opportunity due to the disbanding of—or corruption in—the police forces. ~~(C//NF)~~

In Japan, US generosity toward the general population and the lack of retribution surprised a population conditioned by wartime propaganda to expect a harsh occupation. In Germany, US generosity during the occupation and especially during the Berlin Airlift helped to change public attitudes toward the US presence: an entire generation of German politicians talked about US Care packages distributed during the occupation and what they meant to them. ~~(C//NF)~~

#### **Implications for Iraq** ~~(C//NF)~~

- The ability of occupation forces to control the security situation will again be critical.
- The greatest initial challenges might be to address humanitarian relief, displaced persons, and criminal activity that would only be exacerbated by revenge killings on Ba'th Party and security officials.
- Leniency toward the Iraqi population should yield dividends over time.
- The Iraqi domestic experience in reconstruction, rationing, and managing the Oil-for-Food program since 1996, along with the presence of UN agencies, might provide a valuable framework for the postwar period.
- Iraq's wealth of natural resources, if properly used, would help smooth the political and economic transition under US occupation. ~~(C//NF)~~

#### **Administration Through Local Authorities**

~~(C//NF)~~

The United States administered both Germany and Japan indirectly, relying heavily on existing local authorities for most functions while retaining overall policy control. ~~(C//NF)~~

*In Germany*, the state of Bavaria had a Minister-President (state executive) in place in May 1945, the same month the German authorities signed the surrender. The occupation authorities permitted political activity to begin in 1945 with the licensing of political parties. The decision to allow the Social Democratic and Christian Democratic Parties to operate first set the stage for the postwar party system. The German civil service—with a reputation for loyalty, honesty, and impartiality—remained in place to serve first the occupation authorities then the new German government. ~~(C//NF)~~

*In Japan*, the occupation authorities abolished the Japanese military, the Home Ministry, and the Special Higher Police—also known as the “thought police”—but left the civilian bureaucracy that ran the war effort largely untouched. At its height, the occupation authority had a staff of only 3,200 American military and civilian personnel, forcing it to rely on Japanese officials to implement occupation directives. Small inspection teams monitored compliance at the local and prefectural levels—although with questionable effectiveness given the language barrier and their small numbers. ~~(C//NF)~~

In both countries, the authority of small-sized occupation staffs was reinforced by the presence of a garrison of hundreds of thousands of troops. The size of the occupation force tended to mitigate any attempt to challenge the occupation authority. ~~(C//NF)~~

Responsibility for administering the ration distribution system in each country was quickly turned over to local authorities, serving to deflect complaints about rationing away from the occupation authorities. In Japan this led to corruption where



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local officials would divert rations and supplies for sale on the black market. ~~(C/NF)~~

This rapid transfer of authority at the local and state/prefecture level, use of the existing civil service bureaucracy, and placing of responsibility for the rations distribution system in local hands worked to moderate initial German and Japanese resentment toward the US presence. It still took years for attitudes to change from weary resignation and resentment of the US toward acceptance—and there remains lingering antipathy to the US presence in both countries.

- It took the transfer of sovereignty, the Berlin Airlift, the pressures of the Cold War and the communist threat, and rapidly improving economic conditions to start the German and Japanese populations on the road to friendship and eventual alliance with the United States.
- A shared partnership in defense of Germany and Japan against an external security threat served as the foundation for the eventual close alliance between the US and Germany and Japan. ~~(C/NF)~~

#### Implications for Iraq ~~(C/NF)~~

- A large portion of Iraq's elaborate and pervasive bureaucracy is likely to survive any military action.
- A rapid transfer of power to local and governate level authorities in Iraq would facilitate moderation of Iraqi resentment at the US presence.
- Responsibility for setting and distributing the food ration should be delegated to local authorities as quickly as possible.
- The fact that equitable distribution of rations has not occurred under Saddam gives the United States a good opportunity to set a better record for ordinary Iraqis during an occupation, particularly in southern Iraq.

- Use of the existing structure and civil bureaucracy can facilitate this transfer of power, but also cause corruption.
- The existing Iraqi system has been in place since 1968; its strength is its organization, but its weakness is its secrecy.
- It will be difficult to strike a balance between bolstering a new central government and meeting the likely demands for greater local control by religious and ethnic minorities. ~~(C/NF)~~

#### Prosecution of War Criminals ~~(C/NF)~~

The United States began the occupation of Germany and Japan with the goal of finding and punishing war criminals but rapidly scaled back its goal due to the need to rely on local institutions and leaders. Denazification in Germany started with almost 13 million Germans being required to fill out questionnaires called *Fragebogen* outlining their participation in the NAZI rule. By early 1946 the process had been turned over to German-staffed committees to monitor and, under the pressures of the need to staff the local administrations, the process became an exercise in absolution. In Japan, the occupation authorities purged the military and security forces but never extended that to a wider audience. ~~(C/NF)~~

This change of policy resulted in most Germans and Japanese being rapidly rehabilitated. In Germany less than 20,000 people were permanently excluded from public life. In Japan, only about 200,000 were stripped of their political rights—and many of those had their right restored after the end of the occupation. The occupation authorities had previously purged almost half of the members of the first post-occupation Diet's Lower House. ~~(C/NF)~~

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*Nobusuke Kishi, who headed the munitions ministry during World War Two and presided over Chinese forced labor in occupied Manchukuo during the 1930s, is perhaps the best example of the shallow effort to purge those responsible for Japanese aggression. He was arrested as a war criminal but then released—and later became prime minister and in 1960 signed the revised US-Japan security treaty with President Eisenhower. (C//NF)*

The prosecution of war criminals did have some positive results in Germany. The Nuremberg Trials helped prompt Germans to confront Nazi abuses. In Japan, the rapid return of the political and economic leadership to public life contributed to Japan's persistent reluctance to come to terms with its war guilt. (C//NF)

The occupation authorities did impose controls on the political process. In Germany, US authorities rejected a provision for the socialization of property in the Hesse draft constitution. While Germans managed the process, the United States had a direct impact through by selecting members from the Christian Democratic or Social Democratic Parties or like-minded religious, social, or labor groupings to staff administrative positions. This reinforced the acceptable policies and set the tone of the political debate. In Japan, the occupation authorities took full control of writing a new constitution after Japanese officials produced a draft that offered few changes to Japan's prewar political structure. Another important element was the comprehensive censorship apparatus that employed about 6,000 people to monitor and translate print media, literature, films, and plays for US officials who would then judge whether the material was consistent with the objectives of the occupation. In both countries, an early attempt to rewrite school curriculum to purge it of nationalist sentiment was hampered by the lack of skilled occupation personnel conversant in the culture, language, and history of the countries. (C//NF)

#### Implications for Iraq (C//NF)

- A decision would be needed regarding how to purge Ba'th Party members and officials complicit in

crimes against humanity from public life while retaining the skilled administrators, teachers, bureaucrats, and local public leaders necessary to administer Iraq.

- Indirect administration of any occupation working through local officials would help moderate potential Iraqi resentment and facilitate the US presence—but probably would leave in place people and institutions that supported the current regime.
- In Iraq, most atrocities were carried out by a limited segment of the society—the Arab Sunni tribes closely affiliated with the regime—a fact that would facilitate limiting investigations and prosecutions. But that same segment of society also staffs and controls the institutions to which an occupation would look to transfer power. Any robust investigation of crimes against humanity would chance alienating the same people needed to assume local control.
- In Germany and Japan, crimes against humanity were targeted at foreign or marginalized groups, whereas in Iraq the target is the majority of the Iraqi population. There would likely be a constituency in Iraq for an aggressive campaign to locate and punish individuals responsible.
- Rewriting the school curriculum to replace the current extolling of Saddam Husayn and the Ba'th Party would be a requirement in any political transformation of Iraq. (C//NF)

#### Key Reforms That Reshaped Society (C//NF)

In Japan the occupation authorities instituted a radical land reform policy that reshaped the social and political structure. The occupation authorities in 1946 distributed four million acres of land to two million farmers—a process that created a middle class of small landowners that became the cornerstone of Japan's stable conservative politics. The Liberal Democratic Party, which has ruled Japan virtually uninterrupted since 1955, to this day relies heavily on

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support from rural areas to maintain its Diet majority.

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In Germany, international control of coal and steel production set the stage for the later creation of the European Coal and Steel Community. By its support of selected political parties and organizations through the allocation of jobs, the occupation authority fostered a political atmosphere favorable to US policies and eventual full democratization. ~~(C//NF)~~

#### Implications for Iraq ~~(C//NF)~~

- Land ownership is an historic lever of power in Iraq, along with Iraq's oil wealth, offering key opportunities which US occupation authorities might use to reshape Iraq.
- In Iraq, the oil sector and heavy industries are state owned and operated; there is widespread private ownership of land and light industry in a mixed socialist and capitalist system. ~~(C//NF)~~

#### Key Similarities and Differences ~~(U)~~

In Japan, retaining the Emperor as a symbol of Japanese unity, in spite of his possible guilt as a war criminal, was critical to maintaining the unity and morale of the Japanese people. The emperor became for many Japanese a symbol of the country's commitment to peace—although for Japan's neighbors he symbolized the ruling class' successful evasion of wartime responsibility. ~~(C//NF)~~

The success of the Federal Republic and the US occupation of Germany was due at least in part to confronting a set of issues that had undermined previous German regimes. Regional particularism, ethnic strife, and a lack of a clear identity had undermined the Weimar Republic and facilitated Hitler's rise to power. The postwar change to Germany's borders removed Prussia from West Germany and changed the religious balance from Protestant domination to a relatively even split between Protestants and Catholics. Occupation policies reinforced this process. The United States supported a strong federal system that allowed

regions to express their distinct identities without undermining central authority, and US authorities encouraged the Christian Democratic movement that brought together Catholics and Protestants in one party.

- The Federal Republic prospered despite the lack of a clear national identity due to the existence of a clear external threat and the federal government's success in providing economic advantages to the public by administering Marshall Fund moneys.

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#### Implications for Iraq ~~(C//NF)~~

- Iraq has no "unifying myth" such as the emperor nor is it ethnically or religiously unified. Iraqi exiles and oppositionists have been unable to articulate any political goals past getting rid of Saddam, posing challenges for any attempt to follow the Japanese model for an occupation.
- The German model of a strong, US backed federal structure offering regional and ethnic minorities advantage through participation in the central government and economic gain could provide a useful model for Iraq, but one which may well require a large, extended US military and occupation presence. ~~(C//NF)~~

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