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ARTICLE

The British Occupation and the Making of Democracy in Italy and Germany, 1943–1949

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Abstract

Over the past two decades, historians have become increasingly fascinated by the question of what enabled the emergence of a stable model of democracy in post-war Western Europe, characterized by the persistence of pre-war elites and top-down forms of decision-making. This article reveals the importance of the British occupations during and after the Second World War in fostering this model of democracy. It does so by comparing and weaving together British occupation strategies in Germany and Italy between 1943 and 1949. Based on a novel examination of archival sources, it demonstrates that British ruling strategies influenced the form of democracy that emerged in these two states. As such, the article reveals the centrality of 'indirect rule' practices and their multifaceted impact. Building on imperial precedents, the occupations were primarily run through pre-existing local elites who commanded authority and influence amongst the population. The article argues that this choice explains why the British produced, first, functioning occupation regimes and, subsequently, contributed to the emergence of remarkably stable democracies. At the same time, however, this ruling strategy aided the creation of political regimes that were elite-led and that strongly limited popular participation, leaving many democratic aspirations unfulfilled.

I

In the course and aftermath of the Second World War, the British found themselves engaged, together with their wartime allies, as 'foreign rulers'[1] over the two states that had been at the heart of the attempt to create an authoritarian New Order in Europe: fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. In the post-war period,

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[1] On foreign or alien rule as a distinctive type of political rule, see M. Hechter, *Alien rule* (Cambridge, 2013).

these two countries underwent a strikingly rapid and, in many respects, successful transformation into regimes that have been regarded as paradigmatic for what historians now call the 'post-war model' of democracy. The question of what characterizes this particular form of democracy has emerged as a topic of historical fascination over the past two decades. As the path-breaking work of Martin Conway has amply demonstrated, Europe's remarkable democratic renaissance was characterized by institutions and practices that promoted top-down structures of decision-making rather than participatory forms of civic engagement.

As reborn democracies with a dictatorial past, Germany and Italy epitomize the process of constructing 'managed democracies'.[2] This article explores the socio-political impact of British ruling strategies on these two countries during the occupation period. In doing so, it provides a new perspective on the formation of the post-war model of democracy and the problem of continuity and change in mid-twentieth-century Europe. Especially for the cases of Germany and Italy, historians have long questioned the notion of a *Stunde Null* (zero hour) and the extent of political renewal at the end of the war by identifying continuities in ideas, institutions, attitudes, and practices.[3] Instead of focusing on *internal* political and social factors that have dominated in the literature, however, this article reveals the British contribution in shaping the socio-political constellation of the post-war era. We are not concerned here, however, with the implementation of Allied high policies, which has generated an extensive and rich literature of its own.[4] Conversely, based on a novel study of British archival sources, we seek to demonstrate how quotidian ruling strategies on the ground, such as most notably the co-optation of social intermediaries and the containment of specific political groups that envisioned far-

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[2] M. Conway, *Western Europe's democratic age, 1945–1968* (Princeton, NJ, 2020); M. Conway, 'The rise and fall of Western Europe's democratic age, 1945–1973', *Contemporary European History*, 13 (2004), pp. 67–88. See also J. W. Müller, *Contesting democracy: political ideas in twentieth-century Europe* (New Haven, CT, 2011); K. Jarausch, *Out of ashes: a new history of Europe in the twentieth century* (Princeton, NJ, 2016); P. Corduwener, *The rise and fall of the people's parties: a history of democracy in Western Europe since 1918* (Oxford, 2023).

[3] For the Italian case, see e.g. C. Pavone, *Alle origini della Repubblica: scritti su fascismo, antifascismo e continuità dello stato* (Turin, 1995); C. Duggan, 'Italy in the Cold War and the legacy of Fascism', in C. Duggan and C. Wagstaff, eds., *Italy in the Cold War: politics, culture and society, 1948–1954* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 1–25; M. Tarchi, 'Authoritarian past and democracy in Italy', *Southern European Politics and Society*, 15 (2010), pp. 377–93. For the German case, the most important work remains N. Frei, *Vergangenheitspolitik: Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit* (2nd edn, Munich, 2003). See also D. Rigoll, 'From denazification to renazification? West German government officials after 1945', in C. Erlichman and C. Knowles, eds., *Transforming occupation in the western zones of Germany: politics, everyday life and social interactions, 1945–1955* (London, 2018), pp. 251–69.

[4] For a review of the literature on Germany, see C. Erlichman and C. Knowles, 'Introduction: reframing occupation as a system of rule', in Erlichman and Knowles, eds, *Transforming occupation*, pp. 3–24; on Italy, key studies include S. Woolfe, ed., *The rebirth of Italy, 1943–1950* (London, 1972); I. Williams, *Allies and Italians under occupation: Sicily and southern Italy, 1943–1945* (Basingstoke, 2013); M. Battini, *The missing Italian Nuremberg: cultural amnesia and postwar politics* (Basingstoke, 2007); M. Franzinelli, *L'amnistia Togliattti. 1946. Colpo di spugna sui crimini fasisti* (Milan, 2016).

reaching political renewal, shaped the post-war model of democracy. In doing so, this article draws inspiration from and contributes empirically to work that has emphasized the significance of the intricate dynamics wrought by war and occupation to understand the political cultures of post-war Europe.[5]

Although the occupations of Italy and Germany were joint Allied enterprises, this article focuses on the British role. This reflects the power dynamics on the ground. Britain's occupation zone in north-western Germany contained the country's industrial heartland and comprised the territories from within which emerged the Federal Republic's main political parties, the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD) and the Christlich Demokratische Union (CDU), and most of its post-war ruling elite.[6] Similarly, amongst the Allied forces operating in Italy, historians have well established that the British exerted the greatest influence during the occupation period, at least until the liberation of Rome in June 1944.[7] Subsequently, they claimed 'senior partner status', believing that Italy fell within Britain's natural sphere of influence in the Mediterranean.[8] On a broader historiographical level too, the focus on Britain is important. While in the past historians often tended to focus on the activities of the American occupiers, this perspective hinged on privileging the diplomatic history of the era over socio-political dynamics, while projecting the Cold War framework backwards into the period and reducing the occupation strategies of the Western Allies to the choices made by the US.[9] As recent work has demonstrated, however, the impact of the Cold War has been unduly overemphasized in earlier accounts of the post-war period.[10] We argue that understanding the effects of occupational rule necessitates a focus away from high politics towards an emphasis on strategies that sought to establish a viable form of rule on the ground. It is here that the British had a decisive impact: while they shared with their American allies a general hostility towards projects of radical renewal and, above all, towards a communist takeover in Western Europe, they developed their own distinctive approach to occupation that, as we will show, had major socio-political effects.

Astonishingly, the British occupations of Germany and Italy have hitherto been studied entirely in isolation from one another.[11] At first sight,

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[5] M. Conway and P. Romijn, eds., *The war for legitimacy in politics and culture, 1936–1946* (Oxford, 2008).

[6] M. D. Mitchell, *The origins of Christian democracy: politics and confession in modern Germany* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2012); B. Marshall, *The origins of post-war German politics* (London and New York, NY, 1988).

[7] P. Ginsborg, *A history of contemporary Italy 1943–1980: family, society and state* (London, 2003), p. 39.

[8] M. Gat, *Britain and Italy, 1943–1949: the decline of British influence* (Brighton, 1996), p. 10.

[9] K. Mistry, *The United States, Italy and the origins of the Cold War* (Cambridge, 2014); J. L. Harper, *America and the reconstruction of Italy, 1945–1948* (Cambridge, 1986).

[10] M. Connelly, 'Taking off the Cold War lens: visions of North–South conflict during the Algerian war of independence', *American Historical Review*, 105 (2000), pp. 739–69. For a successful demonstration of an approach towards post-war European history that does not overemphasize the impact of the Cold War, see Conway, *Western Europe's democratic age.*

[11] For Italy, see Gat, *Britain and Italy, 1943–1949*; C. R. S. Harris, *The Allied military administration of Italy, 1943–1945* (London, 1957); D. W. Ellwood, *Italy, 1943–1945* (Leicester, 1985); E. Di Nolfo and M. Serra, *La gabbia infranta: gli alleati e l'Italia dal 1943 al 1945* (Bari, 2010). For Germany, see

differences between them seem to justify this. Most obviously, the German state at central level collapsed completely in mid-1945. By contrast, the Italian king dismissed Mussolini and signed an armistice with the Allies in September 1943 with the objective of safeguarding what remained of the Italian state, even though its sovereignty was extremely limited and the armistice terms amounted to a complete surrender. At the same time, the British occupation of German territory began only in the first months of 1945, just before the cessation of hostilities. This meant that the occupation mostly took place at a time of relative peace and within the framework of growing tensions between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union. The occupation of Italy, by contrast, began with the invasion of Sicily in July 1943 and effectively ended two years later, coinciding with the continued war against the Third Reich and the fascist puppet republic it set up in northern Italy. As a result, in contrast to Germany, the interests and choices of the occupiers in Italy were always embedded within the logics of the war effort and a concomitant set of priorities.[12]

As this article demonstrates, however, a parallel exploration of British occupation strategies in Italy and Germany reveals a shared pattern of ruling techniques that incubated common socio-political legacies. As such, the British contributed to the emergence of the post-war model of democracy in two distinctive ways. First, through the absence of a grand strategy of democracy promotion that could have guided British policies; and second, through the notion of 'indirect rule' that determined occupation practices on the ground.

It is especially this notion of 'indirect rule' that helps explain how despite the absence of a grand strategy the British first produced functioning occupation regimes and subsequently aided the establishment of stable democracies. Strikingly, however, the extensive literature that exists on the imperial practice of 'indirect rule' has mostly been confined to an exploration of its logics and consequences in non-European contexts, thus neglecting the ways in which it found its expression in Europe too. While some scholars have remarked on the discourse of indirect rule amongst British occupation officials in Germany, there has hitherto been remarkably little work that has properly analysed its impact on the ground.[13]

C. Knowles, *Winning the peace: the British in occupied Germany, 1945–1948* (London, 2017); I. D. Turner, ed., *Reconstruction in post-war Germany: British occupation policy and the western zones, 1945–1955* (Oxford, New York, NY, and Munich, 1989). This is equally true for the related Austrian case, which has hitherto largely escaped comparative analysis: A. Hills, *Britain and the occupation of Austria* (Basingstoke, 2000). For a comparative analysis of the American occupations of Italy and Germany, see S. L. Carruthers, *The good occupation: American soldiers and the hazards of peace* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2016).

[12] V. C. Belco, *War, massacre and recovery in central Italy, 1943-1945* (Toronto, 2016); C. Pavone, *Una guerra civile: saggio storico sulla moralità della Resistenza* (Turin, 1991).

[13] See Knowles, *Winning the peace*, pp. 35–9, 67–75; F. Graham-Dixon, *The Allied occupation of Germany: the refugee crisis, denazification and the path to reconstruction* (London, 2013), pp. 82–6; R. Torriani, 'Nazis into Germans: re-education and democratisation in the British and French occupation zones, 1945–1949' (Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 2005).

The British adoption of indirect ruling techniques has conventionally been associated with Frederick Lugard, high commissioner of the Northern Nigerian Protectorate from 1900 to 1906 and later governor-general of Nigeria from 1912 to 1918, who had retained the existing local authorities, political institutions, and laws. While preserving the appearance of self-rule, imperial rule in these territories had been based on the British remaining largely in the background and granting a large degree of autonomy to local chiefs, while obliging them to act according to British interests.[14] In Germany and Italy, indirect rule was referred to under a variety of names and took on different forms at the time, such as 'advisory rule' in Italy or 'indirect control' in Germany. In this article, we use the generic term to describe the overall governing philosophy that pervaded British occupation policy. In brief, building on the precedent that the British had employed across their empire, occupation rule was primarily run through pre-existing local elites who commanded authority and influence amongst the population. The basic rationale was to save material resources, while securing the stability of the occupation by leaving the day-to-day running to those who were seen by the local population as legitimate rulers.[15] As we argue in this article, these choices of the occupiers helped produce a particular model of democracy that was characterized by a continuity in authoritarian personnel of the state administrations, a strong top-down political culture, and a technocratic process of decision-making embedded within corporatist structures that widely limited participation of the population in democratic procedures.[16]

II

No military occupation operates within a state of mental vacuum. When the British arrived in Italy and Germany, they carried with them certain preconceptions of the nature of the people they were about to rule. While the British publicly committed themselves to the promotion of democracy, their policies were marked from the start by a deep-seated distrust of the Italian and German capacity to democratize. Internal British reports put forward essentialist interpretations of the 'Italian character' which was contrasted with that of the British and their presumable love of individual freedom and democratic virtues. A British general trapped in northern Italy for three months in the autumn of 1943, for example, noted that Italians had 'no political sense or conscience as it exists in England', and while peasants 'have no political ideas, the middle classes are ready to introduce graft and bribery into politics'.[17] Italians were,

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[14] J. Darwin, *Unfinished empire: the global expansion of Britain* (London, 2012), pp. 214–18; A. E. Afigbo, *The warrant chiefs: indirect rule in Southeastern Nigeria, 1891–1929* (New York, NY, 1972).

[15] On the imperial precedent, see J. W. Cell, 'Colonial rule', in J. M. Brown and W. R. Louis, eds., *The Oxford history of the British empire*, IV: *The twentieth century* (Oxford and New York, NY, 1999), pp. 236–9.

[16] See, for instance, G. Crainz, *Storia del miracolo italiano: culture, identità e trasformazioni fra anni cinquanta e sessanta* (Rome, 1998); K. Sontheimer, *Die Adenauer Ära: Grundlegung der Bundesrepublik* (Frankfurt, 1991).

[17] 'Political situation in north Italy. Sept. 1943–Dec. 1943', The National Archives, Kew (TNA), FO 371/43876.

allegedly, by nature prone to accept authoritarian government. As one characteristic report stated, 'the totalitarian mentality is still deeply rooted in the average Italian. It should not be forgotten that this mentality, subservient to the executive, has its origins way back into the history of the peninsula.'[18] Perceptions of 'the Germans' were strikingly similar in tone. German society was presented as desperately immature and retrograde. While leading on an economic, technical, and organizational level, politically, the authors of an influential study circulated widely within the Foreign Office contended, the Germans were 'among the most backward'.[19] Their respect for authority was 'almost universal' and expressed itself in their 'meticulous adherence to instructions' and a lack of moral courage. 'Blind obedience', the authors declared, 'is not only demanded [but] willingly offered' by the population.[20]

The assumption that both Italians and Germans were destined to live under authoritarian rule meant that the British failed to take seriously local democratic initiatives from below and harboured a deep-seated distrust towards building a more participatory form of democracy in the occupied territories. The emphasis on creating functioning states, rather than on large-scale democratization, was exacerbated by the fact that at the beginning, British priority lay emphatically with securing health and food supplies and rebuilding basic local infrastructure.[21] As Harold Macmillan, the UK high commissioner on the Allied Control Commission and future British prime minister, emphasized,

> after two armies have passed over an area, local organisation breaks down completely. Consequently, the civil affairs officer has to devote his time to finding food, burying the dead, cleaning towns and villages, improving water supplies where pumping machinery has ceased to function, and in milling flour where there is no power or fuel.[22]

Reports from local military government detachments in Germany confirm the significance accorded to establishing basic services at the expense of considering political issues.[23]

It was in this context of distrust towards bottom-up political initiatives and the practical challenges of day-to-day occupation that the British gradually resorted to the imperial practice of 'indirect rule'. When, for example, the British sent their first official to the island of Sardinia, he was instructed that while he was not to take control himself, 'you will not be a mere military mission to offer to the Sardinian authorities suggestions and advice which they

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[18] 'District intelligence summary, 7 Dec. 1945', TNA, FO/49783, RN ZM 6206/3/22.

[19] Research Branch, Office of the Chief of Staff (BZ), Main HQ CC for Germany, The German character, 22 Sept. 1945, p. 1, TNA, FO 1005/1908.

[20] Ibid., pp. 4–5.

[21] M. Patti, 'Governare il Mezzogiorno. Gli Alleati e l'occupazione/liberazione del Sud', *Meridiania*, 82 (2015), pp. 109–33. For many graphic illustrations of this concern with basic utilities in Germany, see F. S. V. Donnison, *Civil affairs and military government: north-west Europe, 1944–1946* (London, 1961).

[22] Macmillan to Eden, 5 Sept. 1943, TNA, FO 371/37327, RN 9952/6712/22.

[23] See e.g. the reports of the *Kreis* detachment for Essen, TNA, WO 171/7926, and Bergisch Gladbach, TNA, WO 171/8119.

will be free to disregard'. Rather, the task of the Control Commission was to 'establish itself near the Italian government and instruct it and guide it'.[24] The same rationale was put in force in Germany by the end of 1945. As the military governor, Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, who had also commanded the British Eighth Army during the invasion of Sicily and southern Italy, explained in a directive, the new ruling philosophy was that 'the Germans govern themselves subject to control and supervision by us'.[25]

British indirect-rule strategies on the ground were, therefore, similar in Germany and Italy. After the armistice with the Allies, the Italian king hastily fled Rome to the port town of Brindisi on the Adriatic coast, and his administration initially governed from a hotel room, lacking even a typewriter. The Italian government, therefore, disposed of very little administrative and material capacity, relying on the Allies to provide food, secure health and hygiene, and keep the administration running, while fully depending on the Allied telegraphic services, meaning that they were not able to communicate in secrecy.[26] With the flight of the king and his entourage from the capital and the division of the country in Allied- and German-controlled areas, national political life was effectively suspended, leading to 'a triumph of a culture of localism'.[27] The Allies ruled occupied territory and supervised the Italian government through the Allied Control Commission (ACC, later simply Allied Commission) to save scarce personnel and financial resources, and because it was 'essential that as soon as the military situation permits, provinces are given back to the Italian government to prevent Germans portraying Allies as conquerors'.[28] This gave notables such as landowners, clergymen, lawyers, and doctors who enjoyed local prestige an opportunity to expand their power base and act as intermediaries between the British occupiers and local populations.

From the start, British rule depended, therefore, on the use of pre-existing local elites. For the sake of political stability, their administrative qualities and the extent to which they enjoyed local support were much more important than their political convictions. There were, of course, limits to how far the British were willing to go in working with those who quite evidently could not be made to fit into democratic clothes. Thus, upon arrival in Sicily, the British tried to imbue local authorities with a modicum of popular legitimacy. They removed all fascist-appointed prefects on the island as well as more than half the mayors. Yet below the top level, and even there as the occupation reached the Italian mainland a few months later, the British imposed fewer radical changes. While a two-page questionnaire, the *scheda personale*, was used to investigate the activities of civil servants and teachers during the fascist *ventennio*, the effects of such methods were highly limited and did not lead

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[24] Instructions for Allied control over Sardinia, 7 Oct. 1943, TNA, FO 371/37284.
[25] Montgomery, The evolution of government in the British Zone, 3 Dec. 1945, TNA, FO 1030/148.
[26] Ellwood, *Italy*, pp. 107–25.
[27] R. Forlenza, *On the edge of democracy: Italy, 1943–1948* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 205–7.
[28] Report by Major Henry T. Rowell for General Holmes on Brindisi government, 30 Oct. 1943, TNA, WO 204/9728.

to a deep purging of the administration.[29] This followed the logics of indirect rule. In a report circulated at the beginning of the occupation, Macmillan detailed Allied initiatives to eradicate Fascism, such as the dissolution of the Fascist party, the arrest of over 1,000 fascists, and the replacement of fascists holding office. He also explained, however, that indirect rule implied making use of the 'occasional fascist', as the Italian state apparatus had been infested with fascists over the course of two decades and it was impossible to fundamentally cleanse it without rendering the whole state system dysfunctional.[30] For example, for law enforcement alone, Macmillan predicted, 'a minimum of 10,000 allied police personnel would be wanted, which if the *Carabinieri* had not played, would have had to have been found among [Allied] combat troops'. Such practical considerations also caused restraint in the purge of other state personnel, as by 'no conceivable stretch of the imagination...can the Allies do without the Italian personnel engaged in the manifold technical work of public utilities, roads, railways and urban administration'.[31]

The removal of fascists from top-level office, however, left a vacuum that had to be filled. Despite the Moscow Declaration's promise to promote local democracy, there were no local elections until 1946 and the British made key appointments themselves. Local elites, such as doctors, school masters, and priests, were consulted to identify suitable candidates.[32] In filling the positions of mayors and prefects, the British displayed a strong preference for aristocrats and large landowners.[33] This was visible in the two largest cities of the island. In Catania, they simply re-nominated the last fascist *Podestà*, the marquis of San Giuliano, as *sindaco* of the city. In Palermo, they appointed the powerful landowner Lucio Tasco Bordonaro as mayor, a count who had received fascist awards as president of the regional agricultural organization.[34] Similarly, removed prefects were often replaced with the vice-prefects and pre-fascist deputies.[35] Politically, the occupiers had a clear preference for the liberals of the pre-1922 order, and certainly not for any of the representatives of the anti-fascist parties, which were deemed to be orientated too far to the Left.[36] Progressive prefects were the exception, such as in the province of Caltanissetta, where the prefect was allegedly 'pink enough to please the News Chronicle, if not red enough to satisfy them'.[37]

In general, therefore, the British hired men who had earned their merits in pre-fascist Italy and were mostly of conservative-liberal signature rather than having strong anti-fascist credentials. This created, at best, an image of political restoration to the *status quo ante* Fascism and, at worst, of continuity after two decades of dictatorship. Yet it also served an important purpose. The

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[29] AMG policies in the province of Ancona, 15 Oct. 1944, TNA, WO 204/10042.
[30] Situation in Italy, 5 and 6 Sept. 1943, TNA, FO 371/37266.
[31] Macmillan to Eden, 5 Sept. 1943, TNA, FO 371/37327, RN 9952/6712/22.
[32] Ellwood, *Italy*, p. 58.
[33] Tarchi, 'Authoritarianism past and democracy', p. 379.
[34] Patti, 'Governare il Mezzogiorno', p. 120.
[35] Pavone, *Alle origine*, pp. 149–50.
[36] Patti, 'Governare il Mezzogiorno', p. 120.
[37] Sicily appointment of prefects, 25 Sept. 1943, TNA, FO 371/32727.

British emphasized that 'public opinion has always been consulted within the limits of time and circumstances', and they were intent on identifying intermediaries who appeared to them to command local loyalty.[38] This did not imply the establishment of real popular representation. Rather, by soliciting support from the church and specific local elites such as large landowners or lawyers, the British primarily sought to create stability in a period of political upheaval using pre-existing transmission belts of political mediation.

The same pattern can be observed in occupied Germany. As Harold Ingrams, head of the Military Government's Administration and Local Government Branch, explained confidently in July 1945, indirect rule was a distinctively 'British invention' that was in use across much of the British empire and that had to be applied to Germany too.[39] Ingrams, who had spent more than twenty-five years in the Colonial Service,[40] went on to lobby hard for the swift imposition of indirect rule in Germany, defining the latter in August 1945 as 'rule through indigenous authorities' that offered a way of 'teaching people to take responsibility in governing themselves'.[41] This notion quickly gained traction amongst the higher echelons of the British administration as the occupation progressed. This was aided by the fact that, like Ingrams, most high-ranking British Military Government officials had served across the British empire. Knowledge of different forms of 'indirect rule' figure prominently in their recollections of their imperial careers.[42] To those involved in the making of British occupation strategies, the gap between the colonies and Germany was ultimately not a major one, not even on a temporal scale: in the case of Germany, the British began their occupation assuming that it would last at least twenty years and would require the setting up of a Control Commission Service, with long-term career paths for officers akin to those available within the Colonial Office.[43] Running the British Zone through German intermediaries first required, however, a cleansing of the existing administration and a removal of committed Nazis who might counteract British interests. Based on intelligence that had been gathered throughout the war, often after consultation with German refugees in the UK, the British had created so-called 'white' and 'black' lists of German officials.[44] Armed with these lists, local detachments now moved to arrest or purge *Bürgermeister*, *Landräte*, and other public officials such as police presidents who had been appointed by the Nazis. In the absence of a democratic process, the British now had to find suitable candidates to replace them.

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[38] Macmillan to Eden, 5 Sept. 1943, TNA, FO 371/37327, RN 9952/6712/22.

[39] Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge (CAC), IGMS 2/1, WHI/DML, file note, 24 July 1945, p. 3.

[40] Roger Stearn, 'Ingrams, (William) Harold', in *DNB* online January 2014, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/46523, accessed 19 July 2015.

[41] Working Party on Democratic Development, [Aug. 1945], 2–3, CAC, IGMS, 2/1.

[42] See C. Erlichman, 'Strategies of rule: cooperation and conflict in the British Zone of Germany, 1945–1949' (Ph.D. thesis, Edinburgh, 2015), pp. 77–83; Knowles, *Winning the peace*, pp. 35–9.

[43] M. Ahrens, *Die Briten in Hamburg: Besatzerleben, 1945–1958* (2nd edn, Munich, 2011), p. 12; Barraclough to KROs, 14 Jan. 1948, TNA, FO 1013/1327.

[44] See e.g. Background Information from PID, 1 Nov. 1945; PID, Possible candidates for posts in local administration in Germany, 19 Nov. 1945, TNA, FO 371/46974.

There was a high similarity in the sociological profile of those selected to that of the groups supported in Italy. These were representatives from the pre-existing elites: lawyers, local industrialists, influential farmers, doctors, civil servants, retired politicians from the Weimar Republic, and priests. In identifying suitable candidates, the British made local enquiries and then settled on a candidate who was politically not too compromised and seemed to enjoy popular support.[45] A typical point of call for recommendations was the local clergyman or bishop.[46] Echoing the procedure established with the *scheda personale* in Italy, those selected had to fill out a questionnaire about their professional and political past. Consequently, the typical procedure was to assess a candidate on the basis of five points, amongst which professional qualifications, administrative 'efficiency', a disposition towards 'co-operation' as well as 'local knowledge of the town and the people' outweighed political convictions.[47] While former members of the Nazi party could not be appointed at first, this rule was quickly abandoned. Thus, emulating Macmillan's use of the 'occasional fascist' in Italy, local commanders concluded that 'it is better to appoint a [Nazi] party member who is a good organizer and check his activities, than to appoint a non-party member who has to be supervised and almost carried in order that some semblance of order can be restored'.[48]

To be sure, many of those appointed in the first weeks and months of the occupation because they were 'capable of getting towns and cities functioning' were often subsequently removed when substitutes with a stronger anti-Nazi record had been located.[49] Nonetheless, considerations of efficiency continued to trump political ones. Ingrams articulated a recurring British position when he argued that

> care should be taken by Military Government that they are not influenced by political considerations in choosing any of the executive officials. Subject to de-nazification, administrative efficiency here takes the first place and as long as a man has no Nazi connections it should not matter which political party he personally favours, because he will be absolutely forbidden...from playing any part in politics.[50]

Just like in Italy, this reflected the British desire to increase their legitimacy by appointing officials who were 'politically representative of the town or region', so that the British would have to suffer 'less upheaval...when the elections come along'.[51]

The British therefore tended to appoint technocratic figures with administrative expertise who had a distinctively bourgeois profile, rather than those who had strong democratic pretensions, such as the members of the grassroots

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[45] For many graphic examples, see the files documenting local appointments in TNA, FO 1030/382.
[46] See e.g. Interrogation of Catholic bishop of Aachen, 31 Jan. 1945, TNA, FO 371/46808.
[47] 213 Det Mil Gov, Appointment of German officials, 14 Mar. 1945, TNA, FO 1030/382.
[48] 222 Det Mil Gov to Mil Gov 30 Corps Main HQ, 14 Mar. 1945, TNA, FO 1030/382.
[49] King to O'Neill, 21 Aug. 1945, TNA, FO 371/46983.
[50] Ingrams to Balfour, 20 Sept. 1945, CAC, IGMS 2/1.
[51] Steel to P Det Commanders, 20 Dec. 1945, TNA, FO 1049/609.

'Anti-Fa' committees that had emerged at the end of the war.[52] This can be demonstrated statistically for North Rhine-Westphalia. Of fifty-three British-appointed *Landräte* for whom information is available, 73 per cent were later CDU or former Zentrum members, while only 22 per cent were affiliated with the SPD.[53]

In both Italy and Germany, this choice ultimately reflected the determination of the British to prioritize political stability on the ground over political change. That strategy had, however, the effect of privileging elites that had been powerful in the 1920s and 1930s. It was also based on the belief that the British possessed the tools to know accurately who was 'representative' of the will of the population without disposing of any adequate mechanism to evaluate it. It was in keeping with this notion that when the deputy military governor in Germany, General Brian Robertson, was approached in April 1946 by a disgruntled corps commander complaining about the interference of the Labour government in getting SPD politicians into positions of authority, he responded that this was not the policy of the Military Government, since to do so would conflict with the established policy 'of placing in authority persons having the backing of the majority of the population'.[54] While, in theory, this attitude seemed to attest to the impeccable democratic credentials of the occupiers, in practice it gave rise to an extreme concentration of influence amongst those social intermediaries who the British had singled out as the ventriloquists of the will of the population. Despite the existence of a new Labour government in the UK, there was therefore a strong continuity in the overall conservative character of British foreign policy between the wartime and immediate post-war period.

III

Local intermediaries were thus central to the doctrine of indirect rule. By governing through them, the British were able to pursue their twin objectives of both saving resources and avoiding the impression that they were, in the manner of conquerors, imposing their will on local populations. By making the process of regime transformation appear as emerging from within local society, it increased popular acceptance for the transition to democracy and reduced incentives for social unrest. The theory of indirect rule had to be adapted, however, to the changing situation on the ground, whether in the form of new developments in the war, as in Italy, or evolving Cold War tensions, as in

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[52] L. Niethammer, U. Borsdorf, and P. Brandt, eds., *Arbeiterinitiative 1945: Antifaschistische Ausschüsse und Reorganisation der Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland* (Wuppertal, 1976), pp. 640–3; G. Pritchard, *Niemandsland: a history of unoccupied Germany, 1944–1945* (Cambridge, 2012).

[53] This is based on an analysis of a register containing the names and short biographical sketches of all *Landräte* and *Oberkreisdirektoren* in North Rhine-Westphalia: Landkreistag Nordrhein-Westfalen (ed.), *Landräte und Oberkreisdirektoren in Nordrhein-Westfalen: Dokumentation über die Landräte und Oberkreisdirektoren in Nordrhein-Westfalen 1945–1991* (Düsseldorf, 1992).

[54] Quoted after Knowles, *Winning the peace*, p. 96.

Germany. This put the question of *how* exactly indirect rule ought to be put into practice centre stage.

That indirect rule harboured specific challenges when it came to the trade-off between political stability and instituting a form of democracy that promoted popular participation and socio-economic renewal became already clear in Italy in the final months of 1943. While Marshall Pietro Badoglio and the king governed a few Italian provinces from their Brindisi hotel rooms after they had fled Rome, the Italian state was brought to its knees. This situation of political openness offered a real window of opportunity for the British to enforce more fundamental change. Instead, little happened. While the British informed Badoglio that ministers should be of 'unequivocal liberal and democratic principle',[55] they made few efforts to convince such politicians to enter government. Badoglio's government failed, in turn, to establish its anti-fascist credentials.[56] Frank Noel Mason-MacFarlane, the (British) Allied High Commissioner, reported that 'the whole machinery of the state is used…to prevent the opposition from making itself heard' and observed the 'maintenance of fascist officials in power', which meant that 'the people distrust the government as, essentially, fascist'.[57] As a censorship report showed for Apulia, 'in all administrative bodies *squadristi* and fascists survive'. The suspension of political freedoms continued too. In Brindisi, the local police did 'not hold favourable views of the communists' and, despite the reinstitution of freedom of association and expression, removed communist posters from walls and impeded party meetings.[58]

For the British, the ongoing war against the Germans and the Italian Social Republic meant that pushing the king and his government to make a more radical rupture with the past was not a priority. Rather, London's instructions to local officials were that they should not interfere in political affairs. MacFarlane held almost daily meetings with Badoglio, but was specifically instructed by London that 'in no case should any member of the Mission act as an intermediary or influence in any way [the Italian government's] decisions…Our policy should be to refrain from interference in Italian internal affairs.'[59] In practice, this policy of non-interference shored up the Badoglio government. Indeed, Prime Minister Winston Churchill personally instructed Macmillan that 'nothing is done to make the King and Badoglio weaker than they are'.[60]

At the same time, the British were reluctant to engage with what emerged as the best organized forces of anti-fascism: the Italian political parties that were (re-)founded in the summer of 1943. While in the north, these parties organized the partisan struggle against Mussolini and the German occupation, in German-occupied Rome they formed a clandestine Committee of National

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[55] Allied Military Mission, memo from MacFarlane, 23 Sept. 1943, TNA, WO, 204/9728.
[56] Harris, *Allied military administration*, p. 148.
[57] 'Allied Military Mission, outgoing message by MacFarlane, 10 Nov. 1943', TNA, WO, 204/9728.
[58] Censorship report, n.d. [probably Nov. 1943], TNA, WO, 204/9728.
[59] FO to MacFarlane, Nov. 1943, TNA, WO 204/9727.
[60] Personal message from prime minister to Macmillan, 23 Oct. 1943, TNA, WO 204/9728.

Liberation (CLN) under the leadership of the former liberal premier Paolo Bonomi.[61] In the Allied-controlled south, parties organized meetings openly, with the Christian Democrats emerging as the party around which moderate Italians regrouped.[62] Yet, the British distrusted such initiatives and therefore did not even support moderate groups within the anti-fascist front. Low opinions of Italians and their aversion to democracy played a role too. One civil affairs officer in Sicily, for example, reported that he had met with a representative of 'an organization entitled Christian Democrats', who had 'hardly given the impression of being either a Christian or a Democrat'.[63] Such disdain for bottom-up anti-fascist initiatives that could weaken the king and Badoglio also had practical implications ranging from neglect to active obstruction. Thus, when the anti-fascist parties hosted a congress to discuss Italy's democratic future in Bari in January 1944, the British first postponed the congress and then aimed to limit its impact. They strictly controlled the number of visitors, cordoned off the square where it was held, and impeded the press from gaining access to the proceedings.[64]

Upon the liberation of Rome in June 1944, the slumbering tensions between the anti-fascist party politicians and Badoglio's government came to boiling point. MacFarlane was present at the crunch meeting between them at the Grand Hotel, where the CLN made clear it would no longer serve under Badoglio nor plead allegiance to the crown. Badoglio gave in and Bonomi took over the premiership. The fact that MacFarlane did not prevent this change in government led to furious reactions in London, demonstrating the lack of belief in Italian initiatives to build democracy and break with Fascism.[65] Since the Americans did not share the British affection for the Italian monarchy, however, Bonomi's government was still sworn in shortly afterwards.[66]

The liberation of Rome and the change of government raised the question of how indirect rule should be adapted to the new situation on the ground. As they fought their way up the peninsula, the British encountered a different kind of local elite than they had in the south. In regions like Tuscany, Piemonte, and Lombardy, local liberation committees often set up their own administrations in the time between the German retreat and Allied advance. They often displayed anti-monarchical attitudes and were dominated by the Left. In other words, this was precisely the kind of local elite the British had hitherto sought to avoid empowering.[67] The British did, therefore, not hesitate

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[61] G. Scilanga, *Le due Italie dalla Resistenza alla Repubblica* (Bari, 2010), pp. 111–12.

[62] Political situation, Report no. 6, 10 Nov. 1943, TNA, WO 204/9728.

[63] Minutes of meetings of SCAOs and AMGOT Headquarters Staff held at HQ AMOT Palermo, 20–1 Aug. 1943, TNA, FO 371/37327.

[64] Ellwood, *Italy*, p. 79.

[65] Charles to FO, 9 June 1944, TNA, FO 371/43793.

[66] In general, the Americans seem to have been more far-sighted when it came to promoting democratic government especially when it came to battling communism; see R. Ventresca, *From Fascism to democracy: politics and culture in the Italian elections of 1948* (Toronto, 2011), pp. 35–7.

[67] Ellwood, *Italy*, pp. 90–102. On the tense relationship between the Allies and the Italian resistance, see also T. Pfiffer, *Gli Alleati e la Resistenza italiana* (Bologna, 2010).

to over-rule local liberation committees when they judged they veered too far to the Left. In the province of Ancona, the War Office reported that the Allied Military Government (AMG) 'systematically suppresses all kinds of propaganda, private meetings, political manifestations suspected to be of anti-monarchical character…Any leaflets which mentioned the King are confiscated and distributors arrested'. More importantly, AMG also forced the prefect, nominated by the local liberation committee, to resign 'because of republican tendencies. He has been replaced by a career official, formerly fascist, of the AMG Commissioner's liking'.[68]

At the same time, however, the notion of indirect rule was by nature pragmatic and flexible so that the British could adapt it to changing conditions on the ground. The Allies were still convinced of prioritizing the establishment of public order and 'to disarm the patriots, provide public security and [ensure] preservation of order in the factories'.[69] But local liberation committees were integrated into the alliance of local powerholders that the Allies constructed everywhere in the north in late 1944 and early 1945. Indeed, British intelligence officers warned that

> there is a gradual increase in popular clamour for the quick and harsh punishment of the people responsible for the ruins and cruelties inflicted upon them by the Fascists in collaboration with the Germans…This general attitude of the public entails the tendency in political circles to concentrate all power and political initiatives including government functions in the hands of the Committees of Liberation.[70]

This meant that liberation committee-appointed mayors were now often allowed to stay in office. But this did not mean that the British opened the door to far-reaching reforms. Indeed, these novel alliances, in which the liberation committee was a dominant player, included the local clergy and notables, and differed strongly from the various practices with participatory 'council democracy' that local liberation committees propagated at factory and street level, and which they had practised in many 'partisan republics' behind enemy lines.[71]

By both involving the anti-fascist resistance and neutralizing its most radical elements, the Allies successfully restricted the prospect of massive protests, strikes, and demonstrations that they feared could culminate in full-scale revolution in the north. The resistance was consequently successfully incorporated in the precarious balance of power that the Allies had set up between themselves, the Roman government, and the monarchy. After the liberation in April 1945, the resistance was ultimately integrated in the newly formed government in Rome, headed by resistance hero Ferruccio Parri,

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[68] AMG policies in the province of Ancona, 15 Oct. 1944, TNA, WO 204/10042.
[69] Political advisors – Sitreps from N. Italy, 18 May 1945, TNA, WO 204/9761.
[70] Communist-socialist manoeuvres, Office of Strategic Service, report A2-212, 15 Oct. 1944, AMG policies in the province of Ancona, 15 Oct. 1944, TNA, WO 204/10042.
[71] C. Vallauri, ed., *Le repubbliche partigiane: esperienze di autogoverno democratico* (Bari, 2013).

who made short-lived but far-reaching attempts to purge the public administration and pushed for early elections after he was ousted in a palace coup by conservative forces led by Alcide De Gasperi's Democrazia Cristiana.[72]

The British occupation of Italy, therefore, demonstrated the flexible application of indirect rule, while contributing to an intricate balancing act between restoration and renewal that marked the Italian transition to democracy. Despite its anti-fascist credentials, Bonomi's and even Parri's governments were still the expression of a compromise with the pre-existing Italian state. British occupation policies had played a fundamental role in protecting that state at its most critical moment and helping it back 'to its feet again'.[73] Formally, the British propagated de-fascistization and democratization, and saw indirect rule (or 'advisory rule', as it was referred to after the armistice) as proof that they came as harbingers of democratic values since they were presumably letting Italians take care of their own affairs. In practice, this meant, however, buttressing those who even in the Foreign Office's view enjoyed the support of 'rich individuals, the court, high officers, fascist elements'.[74] The first genuinely anti-fascist government therefore had to rely on alliances of local elites that had, since the armistice in September 1943, become dominated by men who had earned their merits in either (or both) pre-1922 or pre-1943 Italy.[75] They formed the basis for a strong 'wind of the south' that later blocked any far-reaching attempts for political change.[76]

In Germany, the situation after the war differed from that in Italy in some important respects. Most notably, the central state machinery had collapsed entirely in the last weeks of the war and the British, together with their allies, enforced an unconditional surrender that offered no place to even a skeletal German government. Through the full suspension of political life until late 1945 and a ban on parties and political gatherings to maintain the safety of Allied troops and avert a revival of Nazism in disguise, the British obviated the need to engage with a range of competing political factions.[77] This ban was only lifted at the local level on 15 September 1945,[78] though it took one more year until the first local elections in the British Zone were held on 15 September and 13 October 1946.[79] When the main political parties were allowed to form subject to British licensing, this coincided with the British decision to reduce their own presence in Germany and devolve powers to German institutions as quickly as possible so as to cope with the catastrophic

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[72] Ventresca, *From Fascism to democracy*, pp. 45–6.

[73] Ellwood, *Italy*, 237.

[74] Political situation, Report no. 6, 10 Nov. 1943, TNA, WO 204/9728.

[75] H. Woller, *I conti con il Fascismo: l'epurazione in Italia, 1943–1948* (Bologna, 1997), chs. 1–2.

[76] A. M. Imbriani, *Vento del sud: moderati, reazionari, qualunquisti, 1943–1948* (Bologna, 1996).

[77] See D. E. Rogers, *Politics after Hitler: the Western Allies and the German party system* (Houndmills, 1995), pp. 20–41.

[78] Military Government Gazette Germany: British Zone of Control, No. 4 (1945), Ordinance No. 12: Formation of Political Parties, pp. 12–14.

[79] Military Government Gazette Germany: British Zone of Control, No. 10 (1946), Ordinance No. 31: Election of Councillors, pp. 222–6. *Gemeinden* and *Ämter* voted in September, *Kreise* and *kreisfreie* cities in October.

state of the British exchequer and simultaneously prop up a new West German state as a bulwark against communism.

These choices did not imply, however, that the British simply contented themselves with watching the West German state emerge from afar. The question was rather how to exercise influence on Germans through means other than direct intervention. Montgomery issued a new directive in December 1945 ordering a gradual transition from direct control by the military to indirect control carried out by civilian regional commissioners, to be based in the new *Länder* and controlling only the top of the German governmental machinery, 'while at the lower levels no control will eventually be exercised other than such inspections as may be necessary to ensure that instructions given to the higher echelons of administration are being faithfully executed by the lower'.[80]

Indirect rule was ultimately a pragmatic realization of how limited British power was. As Montgomery reasoned in a subsequent directive that laid out the next stage of occupation policy in March 1946, the British would not be able to wage the next 'Battle of the Winter' because they no longer disposed of 'sufficiently numerous staff to enable us to do it'. Thus, echoing the imperial precedent of building up a self-governing but dependent elite, once the right Germans had been selected, the next step was

> to use them and support them. All senior German officials have been put into office by us. They know that their interests lie with us. This means that our instructions should concern no more detail than is necessary to ensure execution of essential policy. We must give them some latitude and show them that we place confidence in them. We should not, of course, in any way court their goodwill, but we should deal with them generously, pay attention to their advice and build up their prestige in the eyes of their own people.[81]

In practice, indirect rule therefore rested on establishing a mode of productive co-operation with local elites. The first step towards achieving this was the setting up of so-called 'Nominated Representative Councils', a system developed in detail by Ingrams and modelled directly on the colonial precedent. These German councils were to be created by local British detachment commanders, who had to select people who, in their view, adequately represented the interests of a community, including representatives from political parties, trade unions, religious institutions, as well as those representing the interests of farmers and industrialists. By May 1946, 7,738 such councils had been established in 7,969 *Gemeinden,* and in 189 of 193 *Kreise,* leading a British official to conclude that through these bodies 'the meaning of British democracy is beginning to penetrate the dormant, apathetic minds of the average German citizen'. More than being an exercise in democratization, however, the creation

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[80] Montgomery, The evolution of government in the British Zone, 3 Dec. 1945, TNA, FO 1030/148.
[81] Ibid., pp. 2–3.

of these unelected councils primarily revealed a strong top-down conception of democracy.[82] The same logic applied to the Zonal Advisory Council, which the British had formed on 6 March 1946 in Hamburg as a council of representatives from the major political parties, trade unions, and different branches of administration. This body had no executive powers, and its only remit was to advise the occupiers, to discuss subjects approved by the occupiers, and 'to form a good recruiting ground for administrators in central or zonal administrations if and when it is decided to set these up'.[83] What mattered most to the British was, therefore, not to involve the 'people' in the business of government, but rather to ensure that those who assumed positions of power in Germany were compatible with British interests.

With the promulgation of Military Government Ordinance No. 57 in December 1946, the British devolved extensive powers to the *Länder*, though they retained their power of veto when vital interests of the Military Government were at stake.[84] At the local and regional level, this was seldom the case. As one official explained in a British Forces Network broadcast in March 1947, after Ordinance No. 57 had been released, 'the giving of orders no longer rests with Military Government officers'. Instead, German officials now could only be supervised and the British needed to behave as 'guides, philosophers and friends' to their German counterparts.[85] This major shift in policy gave rise to a system that was akin to what in Italy had been labelled 'advisory rule': the British would henceforth try to mould German democracy not through visible interventions, but by influencing the behaviour of German elites through 'soft measures'.

Indirect rule, therefore, required a new drive towards establishing contacts with leading Germans by all British senior personnel. This happened in different ways. At the local level, and once more following the imperial precedent of resident officers posted at the court of local rulers, the British posted *Kreis* resident officers (KROs) to all local districts. These officers had several functions, most notably supervising the implementation of general British policies and reporting about local developments. Above all, however, their task was to establish good and close relations with local German elites.[86] This happened through informal invitations to tea or dinner, by entertaining Germans with drinks and cigarettes, as well as through joint elite activities, such as going together on hunting parties in rural areas, attending concerts of classical music, or jointly inspecting factories and reconstruction work in more urban parts of the British Zone.[87] While there were often conflicts between

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[82] Progress of nominated representative councils, 9 May 1946, CAC, IGMS, 2/1.

[83] ZPI 12, establishment of the Zonal Advisory Council, 15 Feb. 1946, TNA, FO 1005/1585.

[84] Military Government Gazette Germany: British Zone of Control, No. 15 (1947), Ordinance No. 57: Powers of Länder in the British Zone, pp. 344–6.

[85] British Forces Network broadcast, 'Reform of government in the British Zone', 13 Mar. 1947, quoted after Knowles, *Winning the peace*, p. 155.

[86] Handbook for *Kreis* resident officers, Part II (Technical), Pamphlet No. 1: Local Government, Feb. 1947, TNA, FO 1071/91.

[87] Acting regional administrative officer to HQ Hamburg district, 12 May 1947, TNA, FO 1014/451; Thompson, KRO main duties, 21 Feb. 1949, TNA, FO 1072/13; KRO LK Aachen, a *Kreis* resident

Germans and British officials, most notably concerning questions of the distribution of material resources, the KRO system tended to render these largely invisible by confining such disagreements to the office of the KROs. Similarly, the establishment of Anglo-German clubs contributed to the close rapprochement between British and German elites.[88] The cumulative effect of this way of setting up Anglo-German alliances at elite level was that it tended to exacerbate pre-existing social inequalities. Instead of leading to the building up of new elites, it tilted the social balance of power decisively in the direction of those existing elites that the British had encountered at the local level.

This policy contributed to the establishment of an elite that generally accepted the basic parameters set by the British. Like in Italy, indirect rule had therefore a moderating influence. It rewarded those groups that were keen to be co-opted into the exercise of power and made no qualms about sacrificing the more radical elements within their ranks. Just like in the British handling of the liberation committees in Italy, this became particularly visible in the way in which the occupiers managed to integrate potentially disruptive groups. The German trade union movement was a point in case. The British successfully built up the moderate trade unionists under the auspices of the *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (DGB) by providing them with the basic resources such as paper, accommodation, and information. More generally, they invested heavily in strengthening the unions' public 'prestige' through favourable propaganda and by integrating them into the structures of corporatist decision-making.[89] This was evident in the way in which the unions were assigned a seat at the table in many of the key committees of the time, most notably those dealing with the distribution of food and coal. More broadly, the British tried to encourage the creation of structures of tripartite negotiation in which the trade unions gained a seat at the table alongside employers and the state administration.[90]

In return, the trade unions used their heightened influence amongst the working class to contain serious trouble that could have threatened the occupation. Thus, when mass demonstrations and strikes broke out in the industrial areas of the British Zone to protest at the dismal material conditions during the harsh winters of 1946/7 and 1947/8, bringing millions of Germans onto the streets, the trade unions ably took the helm of the protests and channelled them in such a way that they petered out without any significant

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officer's duties, [Feb. 1949], TNA, FO 1072/13; Dunlop to KROs, letter no. 4, 3 Nov. 1946, Imperial War Museum, IWM, Dunlop papers 74/164/18; *Shooting Times*, 'I hunted for democracy', 1965.

[88] See e.g. TNA, FO 1050/1141–3.

[89] Chief manpower officer to chief secretary HQ North Rhine-Westphalia, 23 Nov. 1946, TNA, FO 1051/925; Barber and Mullaney, Labour unrest in Land North Rhine/Westphalia, 19 Jan. 1948, TNA, FO 1051/932; G. Foggon, trade unions in the Ruhr and the food situation, 23 Jan. 1948, TNA, FO 1051/932.

[90] Ansprache von Mr. Luce an die Arbeitgeber, 13 Jan. 1948, fols. 4–5, Archiv der sozialen Demokratie, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Bonn (ADSD), 5/DGAC000063; Wörtliche Niederschrift, fols. 68–84, ADSD, 5/DGAC000029.

consequence.[91] The moderate, social-democratic trade unions consequently became reliable partners for the British, functioning in the long term as a very effective buffer against communist influence in working-class areas.[92]

This, then, reflected the highly flexible character of indirect rule, the generally lenient attitude towards German intransigence, and the sense that the British were at all costs not to be seen as a coercive and repressive force. This attitude was well demonstrated when an influential CDU politician, Maria Meyer-Sevenich, delivered a range of nationalist speeches in 1947 and went on a hunger strike to protest living conditions under the occupation. The British decided to do nothing as she was 'not a danger to security' and 'if repressive action were taken against her by the occupation authorities, there is the possibility that her somewhat vague "mystical" qualities might elevate her to the status of political martyr'.[93] A similar attitude prevailed vis-à-vis the SPD. When its leader Kurt Schumacher delivered a very critical public speech about the Allies contending that 'what has prevented in all four zones the necessary revolutionary shifting' was 'the fact that an occupying power exists', the foreign minister, Ernest Bevin, did not take much offence.[94] In determining the response to German criticism and resistance, the British were, however, highly selective in accordance with their broader political objectives. Thus, while criticism by the SPD and CDU was broadly tolerated, the Communist Party, which openly lambasted the occupiers, was repressed severely as the Cold War gained pace, with their leaders repeatedly being banned from political activity or thrown in jail.[95]

IV

The British arrived in Germany and Italy with disdain for the capacity of the local population to democratize. Years of direct engagement with Germans and Italians on the ground did not make the British substantially reassess their own views. Rather, even towards the end of the period of occupation prospects for democracy looked hardly any better than when the British first arrived. In December 1945, British officials warned London that the average Italian 'finds it difficult if not impossible to understand the true practical meaning of "democracy"…Although he is reluctant to admit it, even to comprehend any other system of Government than that which will impose his own political views, or rather those of his Party.'[96]

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[91] See the Industrial Relations Branch monthly reports in TNA, FO 1013/1814. See e.g. Bercomb to Manpower Division Lemgo, 1 Apr. 1947, TNA, FO 1051/925; Barber and Mullaney, Labour unrest in Land North Rhine/Westphalia, 19 Jan. 1948, TNA, FO 1051/932.

[92] On the general partnership with the British, see A. Ingenbleek, *Die britische Gewerkschaftspolitik in der britischen Besatzungszone, 1945–1949* (Essen, 2010).

[93] Regional Intelligence Staff, Frau Maria Meyer-Sevenich, 14 Aug. 1947, TNA, FO 1049/803.

[94] Steel to Bevin, 25 Feb. 1947, TNA, FO 945/29.

[95] P. Major, *The death of the KPD: communism and anti-communism in West Germany, 1945–1956* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 229–56.

[96] 2 District Weekly Intelligence Summary, 7 Dec. 1945, TNA, FO 371/49783.

Despite such gloomy predictions, democracy was successfully consolidated in Germany and Italy in the coming decades. However, it was a particular model of democracy that had emerged from war and occupation. These were democracies that were inclusive to the extent that they delivered tangible material benefits to wide sectors of the population. The ruling elites' preference for restoration over renewal, stability over experiments, and compromise over conflict, however, meant that they left little room for democratic practices that would have allowed broader parts of the population to participate in the political process. Neo-corporatist arrangements, top-down models of decision-making (inside and outside of political parties), and a reliance on state officials at the national and local level who had hard-earned their merits in previous decades characterized both the Adenauer era and the years of 'centrism' in Italy.[97]

It would obviously be misleading to relate all these characteristics of the post-war model of democracy exclusively to British interference during the occupation years. British ruling techniques were, however, an important contributory factor in the emergence of the model of 'governed' or 'restrained' democracy that became characteristic of post-war Italy and Germany. Above all, it was the lack of a decisive strategy for political renewal in conjunction with the indirect nature of rule that left a deep mark. In Italy, instead of endorsing anti-fascist initiatives and participatory forms of democracy, the British opted to forge their own alliance of local powerholders. In their nominations, they displayed a strong preference for conservative political figures such as aristocrats, the clergy, high-level bureaucrats, and large landowners, especially in the south. The fact that the British enlisted the support of these particular social groups gave them an advantage in terms of political organization, networking, and constituency-building that was decisive in the post-war Republic – an advantage that most of all the Christian Democrats seized and used to fortify their power position in the state.[98] It is one explanation for the fact that some of the more radical political projects of post-war renewal fell by the wayside, such as most notably far-reaching agricultural reforms, participatory forms of democracy, and the nationalization of key industries.

By soliciting support from these elites, the British aimed to build popular consent, increase the legitimacy of political institutions, and contain the risk of a revolution. This strategy ultimately precluded any thorough confrontation with the fascist past. Since the British refused to get directly involved in the running of the country, and even kept pressure on Badoglio to take over increasing swathes of Italian territory without his disposing of the necessary administrative capacity to do so, the Italian administration relied heavily on the continued employment at all levels of personnel that had operated under the fascist regime. Indeed, General Holmes noted in August 1943 that 'after 21 years of control the Fascist Party had become so woven into the

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[97] Crainz, *Storia del miracolo*; Sontheimer, *Die Adenauer Ära*.
[98] R. Forlenza, 'A party for the *Mezzogiorno*: the Christian Democrat Party, agrarian reform and the government of Italy', *Contemporary European History*, 19 (2010), pp. 331–49.

warp and woof of all phases of life in the country that when the party officials fled provincial and municipal administrations came to a standstill'.[99]

In Germany, ruling indirectly through intermediaries cast democracy in a similarly conservative mould. Grassroots groups advocating a radical renewal of democracy, such as most notably the Anti-Fa groups that had sprung up across defeated Germany at the end of the war, were disowned and suppressed. Most substantially, in the period following the resumption of political life after the summer of 1945, the British insistence on a proper 'representation' of local interests by not privileging any particular political party and withholding support from those factions advocating large-scale reforms had a strikingly conservative impact. Major socio-political reforms, such as large-scale plans for what was then called the 'socialization' (nationalization) of heavy industry as well as plans for an extensive land reform were aborted or petered out. Other key reforms, such as the democratization of industry through *Mitbestimmung* (co-determination of workers at the workplace), were postponed until after the creation of the Federal Republic, so that they were ultimately limited to the coal and steel industries only.[100]

Just like in the Italian case, applying the logic of indirect rule by identifying and using those groups that were respected by the population and commanded local authority meant that the occupation not only ensured a continuity of the pre-existing distribution of power, but gave a heightened public profile to very specific social elites. This included, most notably, technocratic administrators drawn from the upper bourgeoisie as well as members of the clergy and moderate trade unionists. The more durable consequence was that these groups managed to maintain their public influence well into the post-occupation period and came to dominate the political culture of the Federal Republic. It was therefore no coincidence that the post-war CDU and SPD primarily recruited amongst the elites that had come to the fore during the occupation period.[101]

As this article has sought to demonstrate, post-war democracy was, therefore, bound to a particular time and place. As such, it was not built on a *tabula rasa* that offered endless possibilities, and there never was a situation of radical openness that was wasted by the failure of radical groups to act or that was simply suppressed by the logics of the Cold War.[102] Rather, the occupiers

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[99] Lt. Holmes to Hildring 18 Aug. 1943, quoted after H. L. Coles and A. K. Weiberg, *Civil affairs: soldiers become governors* (Washington, DC, 1986), p. 197.

[100] G. Müller, *Mitbestimmung in der Nachkriegszeit: Britische Besatzungsmacht - Unternehmer - Gewerkschaften* (Düsseldorf, 1987); G. J. Trittel, *Die Bodenreform in der Britischen Zone, 1945–1949* (Stuttgart, 1975).

[101] B. Marshall, 'The democratization of local politics in the British Zone of Germany: Hanover, 1945–1947', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 21 (1986), pp. 413–51; M. Roseman, 'Restoration and stability: the creation of a stable democracy in the Federal Republic of Germany', in J. Garrard, V. Tollz, and R. White, eds., *European democratization since 1800* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 141–61.

[102] On the liberation period as a moment of (missed) opportunity, see most notably G.-R. Horn, *The moment of liberation in Western Europe: power struggles and rebellions, 1943–1948* (Oxford, 2020), passim and esp. pp. 3–6, 250; T. Behan, *The long-awaited moment: the working class and the Italian Communist Party in Milan, 1943–1948* (New York, NY, 1997); G. Eley, 'Legacies of antifascism: constructing democracy in postwar Europe', *New German Critique*, 67 (1996), pp. 73–100; K. Lowe, *Savage continent Europe in the aftermath of World War II* (London, 2013).

had pre-configured the basic framework in fundamental ways by seeking to establish a viable and inexpensive form of rule. In doing so, they became one of the key levers guaranteeing the continuity of the influence of pre-existing elites as they transitioned from the wartime into the post-war period.

It is important to stress that the British approach to foreign rule was never the only option and therefore the 'default' mode of occupation. Both German and Soviet rule in Central and Eastern Europe emphatically demonstrated how a policy of replacing pre-existing elites could fundamentally alter the socio-political make-up of occupied societies.[103] And even in certain parts of Western Europe such as in Germany, at least until mid-1946, the Americans engaged in a much more thorough policy of cleansing local administrations, purging state bureaucracies, and assisting those that they thought were committed democrats, while in Italy they did not hesitate to support anti-communist forces materially and politically.[104] The lack of fundamental renewal under the British was therefore not accidental, but intentional. To be sure, Italians and Germans soon had to distribute positions of power amongst themselves, and this came to give their post-war democratic regimes their own distinctive character. But they did so within conditions that were not exclusively of their own making. As others have rightly demonstrated, the war had major socio-political effects that narrowed the range of possible futures.[105] As we have tried to show in this article, so too did the occupation period that came in its wake.

This exercise in comparative occupation history has two wider implications. First, it suggests the importance to consider the specific socio-political causes that led to the striking convergence and uniformity of the political cultures of Western European states after 1945. Now that historians have firmly identified the ingredients of the post-war model of democracy, it is time to explain in empirical detail why this particular model became so hegemonic across very different European societies, especially in light of the heterogeneity of regime types that had characterized the continent until 1945. This might protect from the unfortunate tendency, prevalent in much social-science writing, to assume that this model was a 'default' condition to which Europeans simply reverted once authoritarian regimes subsided. Conversely, the emergence of this model was the outcome of very particular conditions that were specific to a historical context, and that are therefore not easily replicable elsewhere. Much of the current, ahistorical nostalgia for post-war democracy as part of the general lament about the 'death of democracy' is therefore blinded by a missing realization that the

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[103] See e.g. T. Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Stalin and Hitler* (New York, NY, 2010), pp. 149–54, 330–1; N. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: a history of the Soviet zone of Germany* (Cambridge, MA, 1995).

[104] R. Boehling, 'Transitional justice? Denazification in the US zone of occupied Germany', in Erlichman and Knowles, eds., *Transforming occupation*, pp. 63–96; Harper, *America and the reconstruction of Italy*, ch. 5; Ventresca, *From Fascism to democracy*, pp. 61ff.

[105] J. T. Gross, 'Themes for a social history of war experience and collaboration', in I. Deák, J. T. Gross, and T. Judt, eds., *The politics of retribution in Europe: World War II and its aftermath* (Princeton, NJ, 2000), pp. 15–35; Conway, *Western Europe's democratic age*, pp. 31–4.

post-war model of democracy was an emphatic product of its age, which declined as the historical conditions that maintained it waned.[106]

Second, an examination of the impact of occupation on democratization suggests that the relationship between the two is intricate at best, if not highly fraught. As we have shown, occupation did contribute to the transition to democracy, but this democracy had serious shortcomings that were not accidental side-effects, but the direct product of the logic of indirect rule by which the occupation was run. More historical work is needed to examine this relationship, and to explore the durable socio-political effects of the ruling strategies of the occupiers in other times and places.[107] If anything, however, this article suggests that calls for democratization through 'regime change' wrought by military occupation need to be received with a significant dose of scepticism.

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[106] D. Runciman, *How democracy ends* (London, 2018); S. Levitsky and D. Ziblatt, *How democracies die: what history reveals about our future* (London, 2019).

[107] The comparative study of military occupations is still in its infancy and has not explored this phenomenon. For first attempts at a comparative approach, see P. M. R. Stirk, *A history of military occupation from 1792 to 1914* (Edinburgh, 2016); P. M. R. Stirk, *The politics of military occupation* (Edinburgh, 2012); D. M. Edelstein, *Occupational hazards: success and failure in military occupation* (Ithaca, NY, 2010).