

[Schneider on Hudson, 'Army Diplomacy: American Military Occupation and Foreign Policy after World War II'](#)

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Walter M. Hudson. *Army Diplomacy: American Military Occupation and Foreign Policy after World War II.* Battles and Campaigns Series. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015. 416 pp. \$50.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8131-6097-9.

Reviewed by Benjamin M. Schneider (George Mason University) **Published on** H-War (March, 2017)
Commissioned by Margaret Sankey

Walter M. Hudson's *Army Diplomacy* is a well-written, thoughtful treatment of the origins of the military governments that the United States established to rule much of Europe and Asia in the aftermath of the Second World War. Meticulous in his presentation of the formative experiences that shaped the American army's approach to military government and the doctrine created to institutionalize that knowledge, Hudson falters only in grappling with the admittedly sprawling literature on the conduct of the occupations themselves.

Hudson sets his study of the American occupations apart from previous works on the subject by flipping the usual narrative on its head. Rather than treating the occupations as the beginning of something larger—often the Cold War writ large or decolonization in Asia—Hudson examines them as the culmination of the US Army's efforts to place postwar planning under its purview and institutionalize the practice of military government. Therefore, the work is organized around two central questions: how did the army come to be the organization with primary responsibility for postwar government and how did it learn to conduct those operations?

These questions dominate the first half of *Army Diplomacy*, which covers the development of the army's thinking and doctrine on military government from the Civil War up to the creation of positions for staff officers exclusively devoted to military government and civil affairs in 1944. Hudson argues that three major factors influenced the army's doctrinal approach to military government during this period. The first of these was the professionalization of the army in the late nineteenth century. The army developed a "separate, independent sphere of expertise" for its officer corps in which they were seen as experts by civilian agencies (p. 19). Second was the body of law related to military government developed by the US government and the international community that delineated what an occupying force was legally allowed and expected to do. The 1863 Lieber Code—developed to govern the US military during the Civil War—served as the kernel of this body of law, which would find fruition in the later Geneva Conventions and the Rules of Land Warfare. Hudson argues that the code served both to place the conduct of occupation under the purview of the army instead of a civilian agency and to make an occupation a means of furthering military ends by stipulating that all allowances made to the occupied territory were subject to the constraints of "military necessity." Third, the army developed a practical doctrine for field commanders conducting an occupation around the abovementioned body of international law and the experiences of the army in the field, particularly, says Hudson, in the occupation of the Rhineland after the First World War. As laid down in the 1920 Hunt Report and later formalized in army field manual (FM) 27-5 (1940),

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this doctrine emphasized the need for a unified military command of the occupation zone, and the creation and use of units specifically trained and tasked with military government, and “assumed functioning civil structures, unquestioned authority of the military government, and a benign environment free of partisan guerrilla activity” (p. 43).

The second half of *Army Diplomacy* is devoted to three case studies examining the occupations of Germany, Austria, and Korea. While at first glance this trio comes across as odd—Hudson feels the need to defend the omission of Japan and the inclusion of Austria—the selection is intended to offer a selection of cases that illustrate how the army occupied nations it conquered (Germany), those it liberated (Korea), and those in between (Austria). Across these three studies, Hudson argues that the army was most successful where conditions on the ground met the optimistic assumptions laid out in FM 27-5. Driven by “a narrow focus on military goals” and believing in “prolonged occupations beyond its ability and expertise,” in Hudson’s telling, the army ignored long-range concerns about the Soviet Union or postwar stability in Asia in favor of rapidly establishing functioning, stable occupation governments (p. 12). In Austria, this worked well, but led to larger problems in Germany and Korea where former Nazis and Japanese colonial administrators were needed to accomplish these goals.

Hudson is at his strongest when handling the institutional history of the army’s development of its doctrine of military occupation. With a clear command of the source material, his argument about its origins is consistently insightful and thought provoking. It is a testament to his skills as a writer that a history largely devoted to discussing training manuals and organization charts moves at a brisk clip. The only major shortcoming in this section is a relatively sketchy outline of how the army outmaneuvered its civilian competitors to secure primacy in the planning and execution of the occupations.

More troublesome is the failure of Hudson’s case studies to cohere smoothly into a larger argument. While taken individually each is an enjoyable overview of a specific occupation, the larger themes of the work often seem submerged by the need to cover so much ground in such a short space. In part this is because Hudson has argued so effectively that the army was focused on rapid stability and transition, and so it comes off as peculiar that so much space is devoted to the development of the Cold War instead of a detailed examination of the challenges of building a functioning government that provides food, rebuilds, and deals with displaced persons. While these issues are not absent entirely, they play a subordinate role in Hudson’s account.

Despite these flaws, *Army Diplomacy* is a fascinating and provocative account of the postwar occupations, and one that any future work on these events will have to engage with.

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