

America's Role in Nation-Building From Germany to Iraq

by James F. Dobbins

Over the past decade the United States has launched and led six major nation-building operations. In doing so it renewed in the post-Cold War era a form of international engagement it had practiced successfully in the immediate aftermath of WWII. At RAND we have recently produced a short history of America's experience in this field, recounting what had happened in each operation, comparing and contrasting the situations, the policies and the results of each intervention, and seeking to identify the lessons which might be drawn from them for future such endeavors, beginning with Iraq.*

For the purpose of our study, we defined nation-building as the use of military power in the aftermath of a conflict to underpin an enduring transition to democracy. We identified seven instances previous to the current intervention in Iraq in which the United States embarked upon such a mission, beginning with Germany and Japan in 1945 and proceeding through Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990's to Afghanistan in the post 9/11 era. This article summarizes the general conclusions we reached, looks at how those lessons might be applied in Iraq and seeks to explain why America's learning curve in this field appears so flat, why its performance of the post conflict stabilization and reconstruction mission has not kept pace with its mounting experience in the field.

FROM GERMANY TO AFGHANISTAN

The post-World War II occupations of Germany and Japan were America's first experiences with the use of military force in the aftermath of a conflict to underpin comparatively rapid and fundamental societal transformation. Both were comprehensive efforts that aimed to engineer major social, political, and economic reconstruction. The success of these endeavors demonstrated that democracy was transferable; that societies could, under certain circumstances, be encouraged to transform themselves; and that major transformations could endure. The cases of Germany and Japan set a standard for postconflict nation-building that has not since been matched.

For the next 40 years, there were few attempts to replicate these early successes. During the Cold War, U.S. policy emphasized containment, deterrence, and maintenance of the status quo. Efforts were made to promote democratic and free-market values, but generally without the element of compulsion. American military power was employed to preserve the status quo, not to alter it; to manage crises, not to resolve the underlying problems. Germany, Korea, Vietnam, China, Cyprus, and Palestine were divided. U.S. and international forces were used to maintain these and other divisions, not to compel resolution of the underlying disputes. U.S. interventions in such places as the Dominican

* James Dobbins, John G. McGinn, Keith Crane, Seth G. Jones, Rollie Lal, Andrew Rathmell, Rachel Swanger, and Anga Timilsina, *America's Role In Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, MR-1753-RC, 2003.

Republic, Lebanon, Grenada, and Panama were undertaken to overthrow unfriendly regimes and reinstall friendly ones, rather than bring about fundamental societal transformations.

The end of the Cold War created new problems for the United States and opened new possibilities. Prominent among the problems was a rash of state failures. During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union each—and, in some cases, both—propped up a number of weak states for geopolitical reasons. For instance, Yugoslavia and Afghanistan were regarded as important geostrategic pieces on the Cold War chessboard, and their respective regimes received extensive external support. With the disappearance of the Soviet Union, Moscow lost its capability and Washington its geopolitical rationale for sustaining such regimes. Denied such support, these and other states disintegrated. After 1989, a balance of terror no longer impelled the United States to preserve the status quo. Washington was free to ignore regional instability when it did not threaten U.S. interests. The United States also had the option of using its unrivaled power to resolve, rather than simply to manage or contain, international problems of strategic importance. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has felt free to intervene not simply to police cease-fires or restore the status quo but to try to bring about the more-fundamental transformation of war-torn societies, much as it had assisted in transforming those of Germany and Japan four decades earlier. The United States was also able to secure broad international support for such efforts when it chose to mount them. The rest of the international community has also become more interventionist. Of the 55 peace operations the United Nations (UN) has mounted since 1945, 41 (or nearly 80 percent) began after 1989. Fifteen of these were still under way in 2003.

Despite a more-supportive international environment, the costs and risks associated with nation-building have remained high. Consequently, the United States has not embarked on such endeavors lightly. It withdrew from Somalia in 1993 at the first serious resistance. It opted out of international efforts to stem genocide in Rwanda in 1994. It resisted European efforts to entangle it in Balkan peace enforcement through four years of bloody civil war. After intervening in Bosnia, it spent another three years pursuing a nonmilitary solution to ethnic repression in Kosovo.

In spite of this reticence, each successive post-Cold War U.S.-led intervention has generally been wider in scope and more ambitious in intent than its predecessor. In Somalia, the original objective was purely humanitarian but subsequently expanded to democratization. In Haiti, the objective was to reinstall a president and conduct elections according to an existing constitution. In Bosnia, it was to create a multiethnic state. In Kosovo, it was to establish a democratic polity and market economy virtually from scratch. During his presidential campaign in 2000, George W. Bush criticized the Clinton administration for this expansive agenda of nation-building. As President, Bush adopted a more-modest set of objectives when faced with a comparable challenge in Afghanistan. The current administration's efforts to reverse the trend toward ever larger and more ambitious U.S.-led nation-building operations have proven short lived, however. In Iraq, the United States has taken on a task with a scope comparable to the transformational attempts still under way in Bosnia and Kosovo and a scale comparable only to the earlier

U.S. occupations of Germany and Japan. Nation-building, it appears, is the inescapable responsibility of the world's only superpower.

CROSS CASE COMPARISONS

Following narration and analysis of our seven case studies, we compared quantitative data on the inputs and outputs of nation building. On the input side, we collected and compared statistics on

- military presence
- police presence
- total external assistance in constant 2001 dollars
- per capita external assistance in constant 2001 dollars
- external assistance as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP).

On the output side, we looked at statistics on

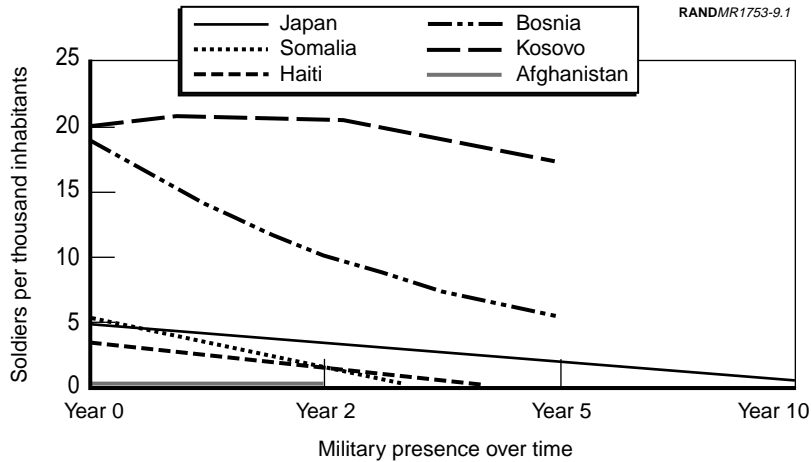
- postconflict combat deaths
- timing of elections
- changes in the number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) over time
- changes in per capita GDP over time.

Although each case is unique, we attempted to find areas in which comparisons might be useful. In particular, we attempted to quantify and compare measures of nation-building input (troops, time, and economic assistance) and output (democratic elections and increases in per capita GDP).

Military Presence over Time

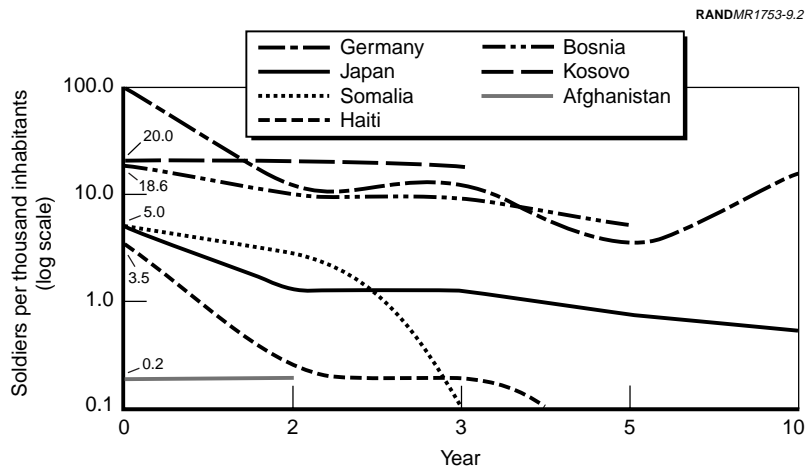
Military force levels varied significantly across the cases. They ranged from 1.6 million U.S. forces in the European theater of operations at the end of World War II to the approximately 14,000 U.S. and international troops currently in Afghanistan. Gross numbers, however, are not always useful for making comparisons across the cases because the sizes and populations of the countries are so disparate. For purposes of comparison, we calculated the numbers of U.S. and, when the U.S. led a multilateral coalition, international soldiers per thousand inhabitants for each country. We used these numbers to compare force levels at specified times after the end of the conflict or after the U.S. operation began.

As Figures 9.1 and 9.2 illustrate, force levels varied widely across the seven operations. Large numbers of U.S. military forces were initially deployed to Germany, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Initial force levels in Japan, Somalia, Haiti, and Afghanistan were more modest—in some cases, much more so. In most cases, forces have stayed for very long periods. Forces were still in Bosnia five years after the conflict ended; U.S. forces remain in Germany and Japan today, more than 50 years after the end of World War II. In the cases of Haiti and Somalia, U.S. soldiers stayed for two years or less, and international forces left not long thereafter.



NOTE: Year 0 represents the end of the conflict.

Figure 9.1—Military Presence over Time, Excluding Germany



NOTE: In order to capture Germany in the same chart, we used a logarithmic scale because Germany started with a much higher troops-to-population ratio than all the other cases. The figures for Germany represent the level of U.S. troops at the end of the war as a proportion of the population in the U.S. sector.

Figure 9.2—Military Presence over Time, Including Germany

INTERNATIONAL POLICE PRESENCE OVER TIME

A more recent innovation has been dispatching U.S. and international police to supplement the efforts of military forces to provide security for local inhabitants. These initiatives have differed greatly in scope and scale. Some have principally consisted of training programs for local law enforcement officers; others have been major operations that have included deploying hundreds or thousands of armed international police to monitor, train, mentor, and even substitute for indigenous forces until the creation of a proficient domestic police force. Figure 9.3 shows numbers of foreign police per thou

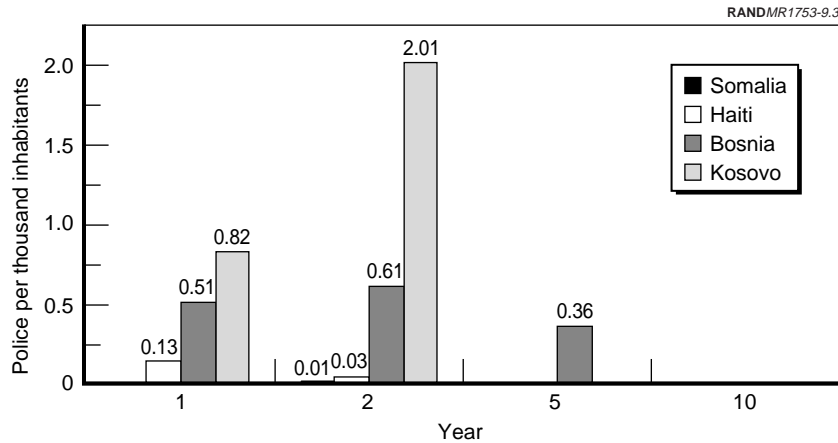
sand inhabitants over time for the four cases that featured significant deployments of international police.

As Figure 9.3 demonstrates, it can take a year or more to build up and deploy a CIVPOL force once combat has ended. In Kosovo, for example, it took until the end of the second year of the operation to reach the target level for foreign police in the country. These delays can create a short-term vacuum of law and order and can increase the pressure on nation-building states to use their military forces, including military police, to maintain internal security.

POSTCONFLICT COMBAT-RELATED DEATHS

One of the most sensitive aspects of postconflict operations, especially after the 1993 U.S. retreat from Somalia, has been the issue of casualties. During the 1990s, the U.S. military, under guidance from its civilian leaders, placed tremendous emphasis on force protection to avoid U.S. casualties. As Figure 9.4 illustrates, casualty figures have not been high in postcombat environments. Somalia and Afghanistan top the chart with 43 and 30 deaths, respectively.

Afghanistan has the second-highest total for postconflict combat-related deaths, which reflects the nature of the operation. Although the fighting against the Taliban government



NOTE: Year 1 represents the end of the first year of military presence.

Figure 9.3—International Police Presence over Time

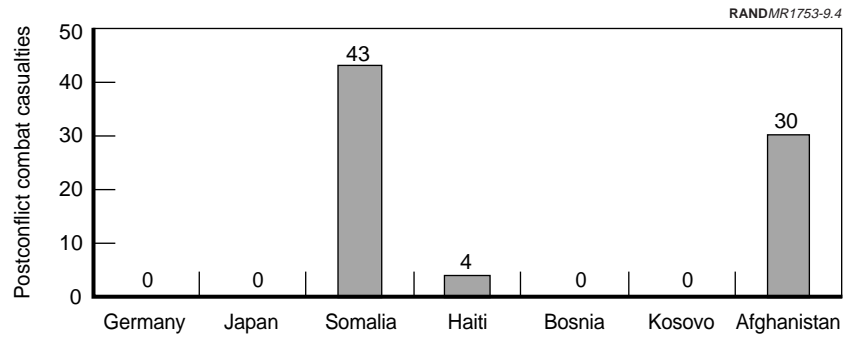


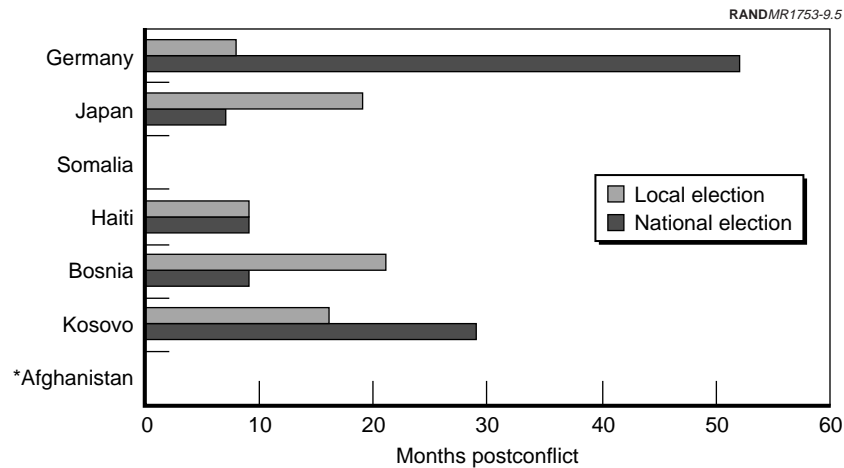
Figure 9.4—Total Postconflict Combat-Related Deaths

ended in December 2001, combat operations against al Qaeda and Taliban remnants continue in what amounts to a low-level counterinsurgency campaign.

The highest levels of casualties have occurred in the operations with the lowest levels of U.S. troops, suggesting an inverse ratio between force levels and the level of risk. Germany, Japan, Bosnia, and Kosovo had no postconflict combat deaths. The postconflict occupations in Germany and Japan proved relatively risk-free because both Japan and Germany were thoroughly defeated and because their governments had agreed to unconditional surrender. The low numbers of combat deaths also show that postconflict nation-building, when undertaken with adequate numbers of troops, has triggered little violent resistance. Only when the number of stabilization troops has been low in comparison to the population have U.S. forces suffered or inflicted significant casualties.

TIMING OF ELECTIONS

Democratization is the core objective of nation-building operations. Central to this process has been the planning and conduct of democratic elections. The timing of these elections varied by case, as Figure 9.5 illustrates.



*In Afghanistan, the quasi-democratic *loya jirga* was held in June 2002, six months after the war. National elections are scheduled for June 2004, 30 months after the conflict.

Figure 9.5—Timing of Elections

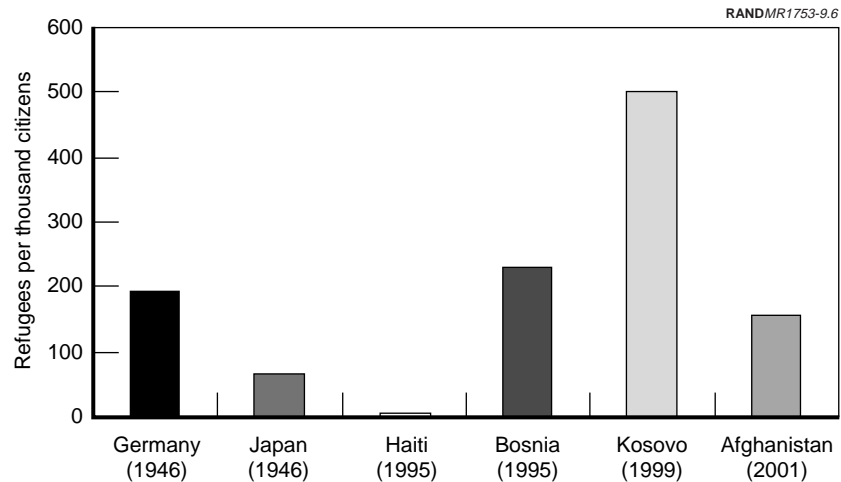
In Somalia, the situation never stabilized long enough for elections to occur. In Germany and Kosovo, local elections preceded national polls by at least 18 months. National elections in Germany had to wait until a new country, the Federal Republic of Germany, was created from the Western occupation zones. As a consequence, national elections were not held until 52 months after the fall of Hitler, excluding the Soviet zone. In Japan, Haiti, and Bosnia, local elections were held at the same time or well after national elections.

The case studies suggest the desirability of holding local elections first. This provides an opportunity for new local leaders to emerge and gain experience and for political parties to build a support base. The extended preparatory periods in Kosovo and Germany appear to have facilitated the building of political parties and the establishment of other aspects of civil society, such as a free press. In contrast, the early national elections in Bosnia were probably counterproductive because they legitimated the nationalist governments responsible for the civil war in the first place. Early elections, driven by a desire to fulfill departure deadlines and exit strategies, can entrench spoilers and impede the process of democratization.

REFUGEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

All these conflicts caused citizens to flee, either abroad as refugees or to other areas of the country as IDPs. The number of refugees and IDPs a conflict generates is an important indicator of the degree of domestic instability. In almost all the cases, large numbers of people fled their homes. The exodus of people also had important political effects, especially if the destinations were countries that had the ability to intervene to reduce these flows. In Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo, refugee flows to the United States and EU, respectively, were a significant factor in the decisions to intervene to stop the fighting. The U.S. and European governments recognized that, until secure conditions were created in these areas, people would continue to flee, and refugees would not return.

Figure 9.6 shows the number of people who fled their homes during each conflict. For purposes of comparison, we calculated the number of refugees and IDPs per thousand



NOTE: The total for Kosovo was actually 500.9.

Figure 9.6—Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

population, rather than the total numbers of refugees and IDPs.

The wide range in the number of IDPs and refugees is noteworthy. Although Haiti had the smallest number of refugees per thousand inhabitants (1.9), the flow of refugees from Haiti seeking asylum in the United States was a major factor in the U.S. government's decision to intervene. At the other extreme, the Bosnian civil war led to the displacement of over a million people, 229 people per thousand, roughly one-quarter of the population. Similarly, millions of ethnic Germans fled their homes in regions outside Germany or that had been annexed from Germany at the end of World War II, creating an enormous problem of refugees in the immediate postwar years. Despite the number of refugees and IDPs in Germany following World War II, the most striking displacement occurred in Kosovo, where virtually half of the province's population fled their homes during spring 1999. By late May, 863,000 Albanian Kosovars had fled Kosovo and approximately another 250,000 were internally displaced.¹

INITIAL EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE

In all the cases studied, substantial amounts of assistance in the form of grants of money, goods and services, or concessionaire loans were given to help revive the local economies. Assistance has been provided by private individuals, often emigrants from these countries, and from governments and international organizations, such as the IMF, UN, and EU. Figure 9.7 illustrates the total assistance in constant 2001 U.S. dollars provided to each of the countries in the two years immediately after the end of its conflict.

¹ OSCE (1999).

The amount of external aid varied widely between countries and postconflict situations. Germany, Japan, and Bosnia received the highest amounts of assistance in absolute terms during the first two postconflict years, at \$11.6 billion, \$4.1 billion, and \$4.5 billion, respectively. In contrast, Haiti, Kosovo, and Afghanistan all received less than \$2 billion.

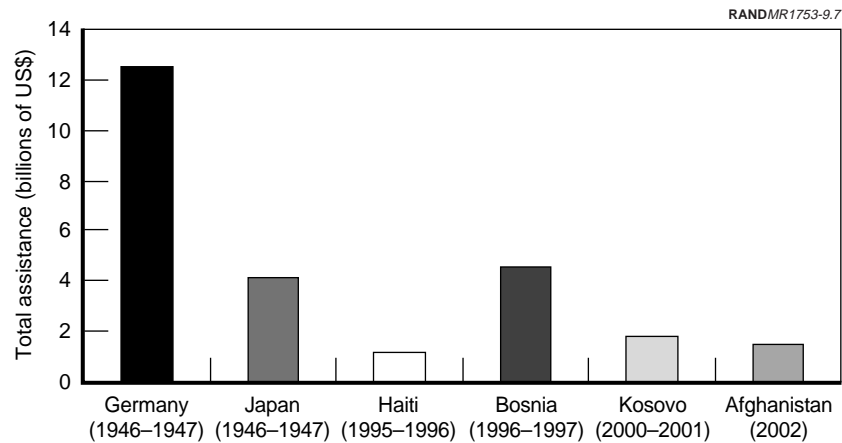


Figure 9.7—Total Assistance During First Two Postconflict Years

EXTERNAL PER CAPITA ASSISTANCE

Aggregate numbers are not always the most useful metric when comparing countries with very different populations. Consequently, Figure 9.8 provides data on assistance in constant 2001 dollars on a per capita basis.

On this basis, Germany, which was granted the most assistance in aggregate terms (\$12 billion) after the first two years of conflict, does not rank as highly: Per capita assistance ran a little over \$200. Kosovo, which ranked fourth in terms of total assistance, received over \$800 per resident. Levels of per capita assistance have had some bearing on the speed of economic recovery. Kosovo, with the second-highest level of assistance on a per capita basis, enjoyed the fastest recovery in levels of per capita GDP following the conflict. In contrast, Haiti, which received much less per capita than Kosovo, has experienced little growth in per capita GDP since the end of the conflict.

EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE AS A PERCENTAGE OF GDP

Another useful measure is assistance as a percentage of GDP (Figure 9.9). Although the numbers vary, external assistance in relation to GDP has been substantial in many of the

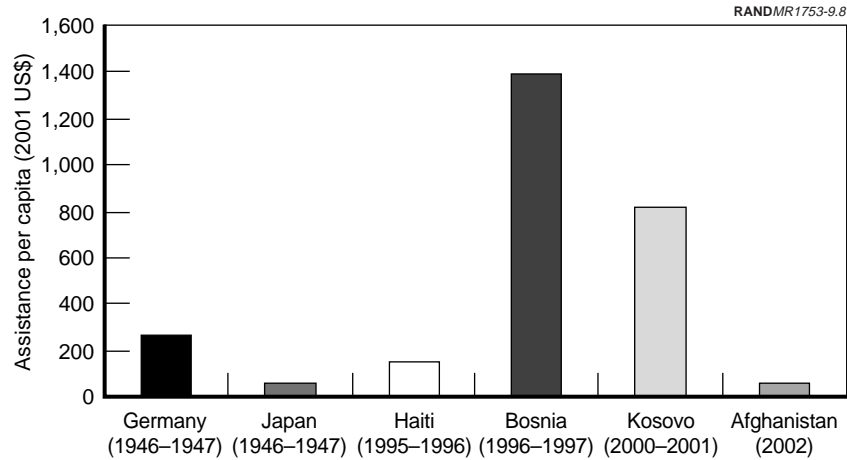


Figure 9.8—Per Capita Assistance in First Two Postconflict Years

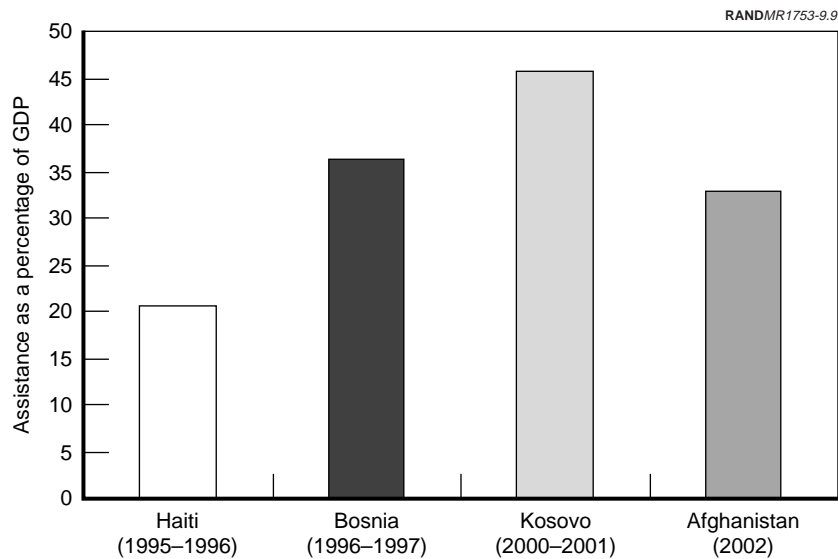


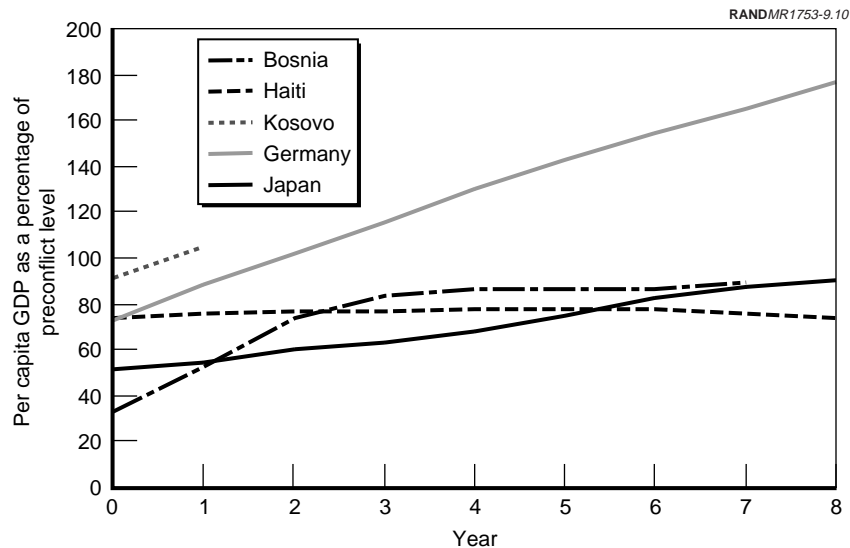
Figure 9.9—External Assistance as a Percentage of GDP

post–Cold War cases, running between 20 and 45 percent of the country’s GDP in the first two years after the conflict. These levels of assistance were generally the outcome of donor conferences, during which international financial institutions presented assessments of need to potential donors. The levels illustrate both the depressed levels of economic activity after conflicts and the substantial sums that, according to experienced outside observers, could be profitably used to speed reconstruction and recovery.

CHANGES IN PER CAPITA GDP

One of the most important indicators of a country’s economic revival after a conflict is the recovery of incomes as reflected in per capita GDP. Figure 9.10 tracks changes in per

capita GDP in each country in the years following the conflict. The figure shows postconflict per capita GDP as a percentage of per capita GDP in the year immediately prior to the conflict.



NOTE: Year 0 is the first year after the conflict.

Figure 9.10—Post conflict Per Capita GDP Growth

Although per capita GDP for all the countries increased during the immediate postconflict years, it did so to varying degrees. Haiti's per capita GDP recovered very slowly and then remained stable at about 75 percent of what it was prior to the conflict. On the other hand, Germany's per capita GDP jumped from 75 in 1946 to 175 in 1953. Although estimates of per capita GDP in the immediate aftermath of the conflict are prone to large margins of error, Bosnia appears to have experienced the sharpest drop in income over the course of the conflict. In 1995, per capita GDP was estimated at just one-third of preconflict levels. However, postconflict recovery was swift, primarily due to the large amounts of external assistance Bosnia received. By 2002, per capita GDP had reached close to 90 percent of prewar levels. In Japan, per capita GDP was half its 1939 level in 1945, but by 1952, incomes had risen to 80 percent of their levels in 1939. However, in contrast to Germany, Japan's initial economic recovery was slow.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS

The German and Japanese occupations set standards for postconflict transformation that have not since been equaled. One of the most important questions an inquiry such as this must address, therefore, is why those two operations succeeded so well while all subsequent efforts have fallen short to one degree or another. The easiest answer is that Germany and Japan were already highly developed, economically advanced societies. This certainly explains why it was easier to reconstruct the German and Japanese economies than it was to make fundamental reforms to the economies in the other five

case studies. However, economics is not a sufficient answer. Nation-building is not principally about economic reconstruction; rather, it is about political transformation. The spread of democracy in Latin America, Asia, and parts of Africa suggests that this form of government is not unique to Western culture or to advanced industrial economies: Democracy can, indeed, take root in circumstances where neither exists.

No postconflict program of reconstruction could turn Somalia, Haiti, or Afghanistan into thriving centers of prosperity. But the failure of U.S.-led interventions to install viable democracies in these countries has more than purely economic explanations. All three societies are divided ethnically, socioeconomically, or tribally in ways that Germany and Japan were not. Thus, homogeneity helps. But it is not a necessary condition. The kind of communal hatreds that mark Somalia, Haiti, and Afghanistan are even more marked in Bosnia and Kosovo, where the process of democratization has nevertheless made some progress.

As Table S.1 summarizes, what principally distinguishes Germany, Japan, Bosnia, and Kosovo from Somalia, Haiti, and Afghanistan are not their levels of Western culture, economic development, or cultural homogeneity. Rather it is the level of effort the United States and the international community put into their democratic transformations. Nation-building, as this study illustrates, is a time- and resource-consuming effort. The United States and its allies have put 25 times more money and 50 times more troops, on a per capita basis, into postconflict Kosovo than into postconflict Afghanistan. This higher level of input accounts in significant measure for the higher level of output measured in the development of democratic institutions and economic growth.

Japan, one of the two undoubted successes, fully meets these criteria, at least in terms of the amount of time spent on its transformation. On the other hand, Japan received considerably less external economic assistance per capita than did Germany, Bosnia, or Kosovo. Indeed, it received less than Haiti and about the same as Afghanistan. Japan's postconflict economic growth rate was correspondingly low. U.S. spending on the Korean War, however, spurred Japan's economic growth during the 1950s, which subsequently helped consolidate public support for the democratic reforms that had been instituted soon after the war. As with the German economic miracle of the 1950s, this experience suggests that rising economic prosperity is not so much a necessary precursor for political reform as a highly desirable follow-up and legitimizer.

Table S.1**America's History of Nation-Building**

Country	Years	Peak U.S. Troops	International Cooperation	Assessment	Lessons Learned
West Germany	1945-1952	1.6 Million	Joint project with Britain and France; and, eventually NATO	Very successful; an economically stable democracy and NATO member within 10 years.	Democracy can be transferred. Military forces can underpin democratic transformation.
Japan	1945-1952	350,000	None	Very successful; economically stable democracy and a regional security anchor within 10 years.	Democracy can be exported to non-Western societies. Unilateral nation-building can be simpler (but more expensive) than multilateral efforts.
Somalia	1992-1994	28,000	UN humanitarian oversight	Not successful; little was accomplished other than some humanitarian aid delivered in Mogadishu and other cities.	Unity of command can be as essential in peace as in combat operations. Nation-building objectives need to be scaled to available resources.
Haiti	1994-1996	21,000 ^a	UN help in policing	Not successful; U.S. forces restored democratically elected president but left before democratic institutions took hold.	Exit deadlines can be counterproductive. Building competent administrations and democratic institutions takes time.
Bosnia	1995-present	20,000	Joint NATO, UN, and OSCE effort	Mixed success; democratic elections occurred within 2 years, but government is constitutionally weak.	Nexus between organized crime and political extremism can be a serious challenge to enduring democratic reforms.
Kosovo	1999-present	15,000 ^b	NATO military action and UN support	Modest success; elections occurred within 3 years, and economic growth is strong. But there has been no final resolution of Kosovo's status.	Broad participation and extensive burden-sharing can be compatible with unity of command and U.S. leadership.
Afghanistan	2001-present	10,000	Modest contribution from UN and NGOs	Too early to tell; no longer a launch pad for global terrorism, but there is little democratic structure, and there is no real governmental authority beyond Kabul.	A low initial input of money and troops yields a low output of security, democratization and economic growth.

^a Plus 1,000 international police.

^b Plus 4,600 international police.

The stabilization (or, as it was then termed, occupation) force in Japan was also smaller in proportion to population than those in Germany, Bosnia, or Kosovo, although it was larger than those in Haiti and Afghanistan. The willing collaboration of the existing power structures and the homogeneity of the population undoubtedly enhanced the ability to secure Japan with a comparatively small force. But the very scale of Japan's defeat was also important: Years of total war had wrought devastation, including the firebombing of Japanese cities and, finally, two nuclear attacks. As a result, the surviving population was weary of conflict and disinclined to contest defeat. When conflicts have ended less conclusively and destructively (or not terminated at all)—as in Somalia; Afghanistan; and, most recently, Iraq—the postconflict security challenges are more difficult. Indeed, it seems that the more swift and bloodless the military victory, the more difficult postconflict stabilization can be.

Unity of Command Versus Multinational Participation

When it was shouldering the burden of Japan's transformation and most of that for West Germany, the United States generated some 50 percent of the world's GDP. By the 1990s, that share had dropped to 22 percent. The decline in the United States' share of global GDP and the concomitant rise in output and incomes elsewhere have made international burden-sharing both politically more important for the United States and more affordable for other countries.

Throughout the 1990s, the United States wrestled with the problem of how to achieve wider participation in its nation-building endeavors while also preserving adequate unity of command. In Somalia and Haiti, the United States experimented with sequential arrangements in which it organized, led, and largely manned and funded the initial phase of each operation but then quickly turned responsibility over to a more broadly representative and more widely funded UN-led force. These efforts were not successful, although the operation in Haiti was better organized than that in Somalia. In Bosnia, the United States succeeded in achieving unity of command and broad participation on the military side of the operation through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) but resisted the logic of achieving a comparable and cohesive arrangement on the civil side. In Kosovo, the United States achieved unity of command and broad participation on both the military and civil sides through NATO and the UN, respectively. While the military and civil aspects of the Kosovo operation remained under different management, the United States ensured that the mandates and capabilities of the two functional entities, the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the UN Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK), overlapped sufficiently to prevent a gap from opening between them.

None of these models proved entirely satisfactory. Arrangements in Kosovo, however, do seem to have provided the best amalgam to date of U.S. leadership, European participation, broad financial burden-sharing, and strong unity of command. Every international official in Kosovo works ultimately for either the NATO commander or the Special Representative of the Secretary General. Neither of these is an American, but by virtue of the United States' credibility in the region and its influence in NATO and the UN Security Council, the United States has been able to maintain a satisfactory leadership role while paying only 16 percent of the reconstruction costs and fielding only 16 percent of the peacekeeping troops.

The efficacy of the Kosovo and Bosnian models for managing a large-scale nation-building operation depends heavily on the ability of the United States and its principal allies to attain a common vision of the enterprise's objectives and then to shape the response of the relevant institutions—principally NATO, the European Union, and the UN—to the agreed purposes. When the principal participants in a nation-building exercise have such a common vision, the Balkan models offer a viable amalgam of burden-sharing and unity of command.

In Afghanistan, the United States opted for parallel arrangements on the military side and even greater variety on the civil side. An international force, with no U.S. participation, operates in Kabul, while a national, mostly U.S. force, operates everywhere else. The UN is responsible for promoting political transformation, while individual donors coordinate economic reconstruction—or, more often, fail to do so. This arrangement is a marginal improvement over Somalia, since the separate U.S. and international forces are at least not operating in the same physical territory, but it represents a clear regression from what was achieved in Haiti; Bosnia; or, in particular, Kosovo. By the same token, the overall results achieved to date in Afghanistan are better than those in Somalia, not yet better than those in Haiti, and not as good as those in Bosnia or Kosovo. However, the operation in Afghanistan is a good deal less expensive.

Duration

Another aspect in which these seven cases differ is in duration. Some began with clear departure deadlines that were adhered to, such as Haiti. Some began with very short time lines but saw those amended, such as Germany, Japan, Somalia, and Bosnia. And some began without any expectation of an early exit, such as Kosovo and Afghanistan. The record suggests that, while staying long does not guarantee success, leaving early ensures failure. To date, no effort at enforced democratization has taken hold in less than five years.

And if democratization takes hold, does that provide the ultimate exit strategy? As these case studies suggest, not necessarily. U.S. forces have left clear failures behind, such as Somalia and Haiti, but remain present in every successful or still-pending case: Germany, Japan, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. These five interventions were motivated by regional or global geopolitical concerns. Democratization alone did not fully address such concerns. Germany and Japan were disarmed and consequently required U.S. help in providing for their external security long after they became reliable democracies, fully capable of looking after their own internal affairs. Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan may also require assistance with their external security long after internal peace has been established. Whether this help will take the form of an external troop presence, an external security guarantee, or external leadership in forging new regional security arrangements remains to be seen. But some security relationship is likely to continue long after the democratic transformation is completed. Indeed, if Germany and Japan are any guide, the more thorough the democratic transformation the more deeply forged the

residual links may be. The record suggests that nation-building creates ties of affection and dependency that persist for a substantial amount of time.

Lessons Learned

With these considerations in mind, we draw a number of general conclusions, in addition to the numerous case-specific lessons:

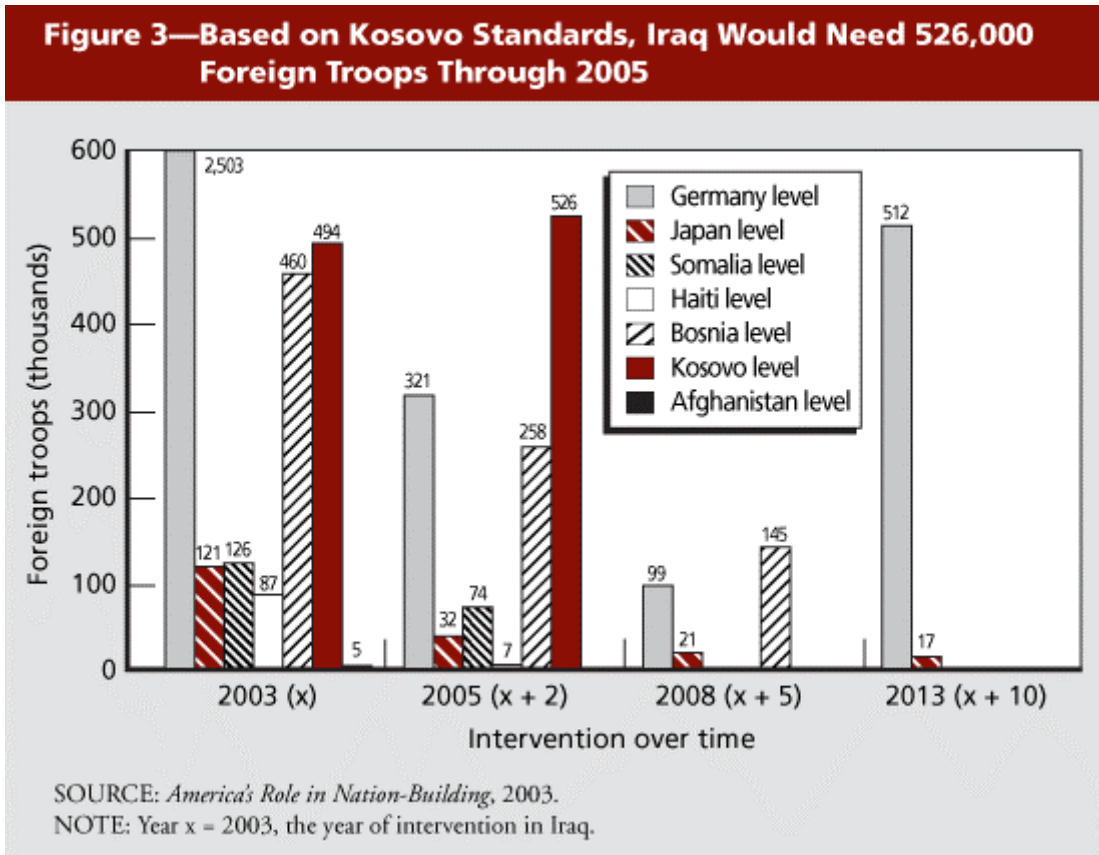
- Many factors influence the ease or difficulty of nation-building: prior democratic experience, level of economic development, and national homogeneity. However, among the controllable factors, the most important determinant seems to be the level of effort—measured in time, manpower, and money.
- Multilateral nation-building is more complex and time consuming than undertaking unilateral efforts but is also considerably less expensive for participants.
- Multilateral nation-building can produce more thoroughgoing transformations and greater regional reconciliation than can unilateral efforts.
- Unity of command and broad participation are compatible if the major participants share a common vision and can shape international institutions accordingly.
- There appears to be an inverse correlation between the size of the stabilization force and the level of risk. The higher the proportion of stabilizing troops, the lower the number of casualties suffered and inflicted. Indeed, most adequately manned post-conflict operations suffered no casualties whatsoever.
- Neighboring states can exert significant influence. It is nearly impossible to put together a fragmented nation if its neighbors try to tear it apart. Every effort should be made to secure their support.
- Accountability for past injustices can be a powerful component of democratization. It can also be among the most difficult and controversial aspects of any nation-building endeavor and should, therefore, be attempted only if there is a deep, long-term commitment to the overall operation.
- There is no quick route to nation-building. Five years seems to be the minimum required to enforce an enduring transition to democracy.

Applying the Lessons to Iraq

The challenges facing the United States in Iraq today are formidable. Still, it is possible to draw valuable lessons from America's previous experiences with nation-building. There are four main lessons to be learned for Iraq.

The first lesson is that democratic nation-building can work given sufficient inputs of resources. These inputs, however, can be very high. Regarding military forces, Figure 3 takes the numbers of troops used in the previous cases of nation-building and projects, for each, a proportionally equivalent force for the Iraqi population over the next decade. For example, if Kosovo levels of troop commitments were deployed to Iraq, the number would be some 500,000 U.S. and coalition troops through 2005. (There are roughly

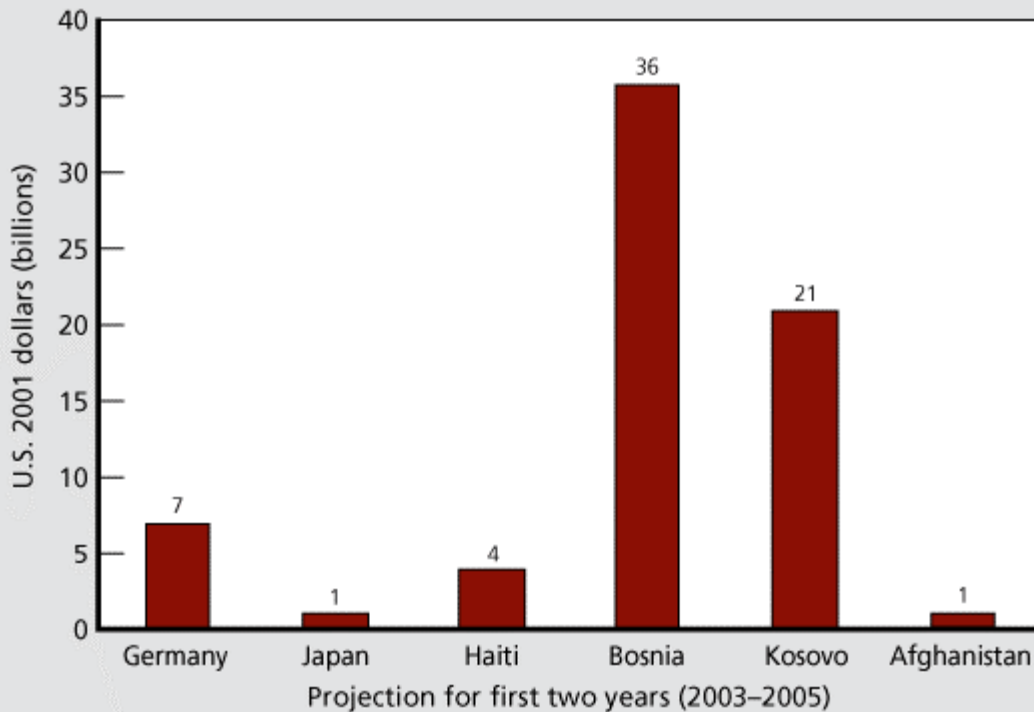
150,000 coalition troops stationed in Iraq today.) To provide troop coverage at Bosnia levels, the requisite troop figures would be 460,000 initially, falling to 258,000 by 2005 and 145,000 by 2008.



In addition to military forces, it is often important to deploy a significant number of international civil police. To achieve a level comparable to the nearly 5,000 police deployed in Kosovo, Iraq would need an infusion of 53,000 international civil police officers through 2005 (in addition to the forces represented in Figure 3).

It is too early to predict with accuracy the required levels of foreign aid, but we can draw comparisons with the previous historical cases. Figure 4 takes the amount of foreign aid provided in six of the seven previous cases of nation-building and projects proportionally equivalent figures for the Iraqi population over the next two years. If Bosnia levels of foreign aid per capita were provided to Iraq, the country would require some \$36 billion in aid from now through 2005. Conversely, aid at the same level as Afghanistan would total \$1 billion over the next two years.

Figure 4—Based on Bosnia Standards, Iraq Would Need \$36 Billion in Foreign Aid Through 2005



SOURCE: *America's Role in Nation-Building*, 2003.

Iraq will require substantial external funds for humanitarian assistance and budgetary support. It is highly unlikely that taxes on the Iraqi oil sector will be adequate to fund the reconstruction of the Iraqi economy in the near future. Judging by the experiences of Bosnia and Kosovo, territories that have higher per capita incomes than Iraq, budgetary support will be necessary for quite some time. To manage immediate operating expenditures, we suggest that the post-conflict authorities in Iraq first establish a reasonable level of expenditures, then create a transparent tax system, and ask foreign donors to pick up the difference until the nation gets on its feet. We believe that this will be the most efficacious avenue to economic recovery.

At the same time, we suspect that Iraq will not receive the same per capita levels of foreign troops, police, or economic aid as did either Bosnia or Kosovo. Figures of 500,000 troops or \$36 billion in aid are beyond the capacity of even the world's only superpower to generate or sustain. Even half those levels will require the United States to broaden participation in Iraq's post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction well beyond the comparatively narrow coalition that fought the war, thereby mounting a broader international effort on the Balkan models. According to the lessons learned, the ultimate consequences for Iraq of a failure to generate adequate international manpower and money are likely to be lower levels of security, higher casualties sustained and inflicted, lower economic growth rates, and slower, less thoroughgoing political transformation.

The second lesson for Iraq is that short departure deadlines are incompatible with nation-building. The United States will succeed only if it makes a long-term commitment to establishing strong democratic institutions and does not beat a hasty retreat tied to artificial deadlines. Moreover, setting premature dates for early national elections can be counterproductive.

Third, important hindrances to nation-building include both internal fragmentation (along political, ethnic, or sectarian lines) and a lack of external support from neighboring states. Germany and Japan had homogeneous societies. Bosnia and Kosovo had neighbors that, following the democratic transitions in Croatia and Serbia, collaborated with the international community. Iraq could combine the worst of both worlds, lacking both internal cohesion and regional support. The United States should consider putting a consultative mechanism in place, on the model of the Peace Implementation Council in the Balkans or the "Two Plus Six" group that involved Afghanistan's six neighbors plus Russia and the United States, as a means of consulting with the neighboring countries of Iraq.

Fourth, building a democracy, a strong economy, and long-term legitimacy depends in each case on striking the balance between international burden-sharing and unity of command. As noted above, the United States is unlikely to be able to generate adequate levels of troops, money, or endurance as long as it relies principally upon the limited coalition with which it fought the war. On the other hand, engaging a broader coalition, to include major countries that will expect to secure influence commensurate with their contributions, will require either new institutional arrangements or the extension of existing ones, such as NATO.

Beyond Iraq

In its early months, the U.S.-led stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq has not gone as smoothly as might have been expected, given the abundant, recent, and relevant U.S. experience highlighted in our study. This is, after all, the sixth major nation-building enterprise the United States has mounted in 12 years and the fifth such in a Muslim nation. In many of the previous cases, the United States and its allies have faced similar challenges immediately after an intervention. Somalia, Haiti, Kosovo, and Afghanistan also experienced the rapid and utter collapse of central state authority. In each of these instances, local police, courts, penal services, and militaries were destroyed, disrupted, disbanded, or discredited and were consequently unavailable to fill the postconflict security gap. In Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan, extremist elements emerged to fill the resultant vacuum of power. In most cases, organized crime quickly became a major challenge to the occupying authority. In Bosnia and Kosovo, the external stabilization forces ultimately proved adequate to surmount these security challenges; in Somalia and Afghanistan, they did not or have not yet.

Over the past decade, the United States has made major investments in the combat efficiency of its forces. The return on investment has been evident in the dramatic improvement in warfighting demonstrated from Desert Storm to the Kosovo air campaign

to Operation Iraqi Freedom. There has been no comparable increase in the capacity of U.S. armed forces or of U.S. civilian agencies to conduct postcombat stabilization and reconstruction operations. Throughout the 1990s, the management of each major mission showed some limited advance over its predecessor, but in the current decade, even this modestly improved learning curve has not been sustained. The Afghan mission can certainly be considered an improvement over Somalia but cannot yet be assessed as being more successful than Haiti. It is too early to evaluate the success of the postconflict mission in Iraq, but its first few months do not raise it above those in Bosnia and Kosovo at a similar stage. The decision in the weeks leading up to the Iraq intervention to transfer from State to Defense responsibilities for the civil aspects of post conflict reconstruction which the latter agency had not exercised since 1952 added significant additional start up costs to an already very challenging enterprise.

Nation-building has been a controversial mission over the past decade, and the intensity of this debate has undoubtedly inhibited the investments that would be needed to do these tasks better. Institutional resistance in departments of State and Defense, neither of which regard nation-building among their core missions, has also been an obstacle. As a result, successive administrations have treated each new mission as if it were the first and, more importantly, as if it were the last.

This expectation is unlikely to be realized anytime soon. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has become increasingly involved in nation-building operations. In the 1990s, the Clinton administration conducted a major nation-building intervention, on the average, every two years. The current administration, despite a strong disinclination to engage U.S. armed forces in such activities, has launched two major nation-building enterprises within 18 months. It now seems clear that nation-building is the inescapable responsibility of the world's only superpower.

If that recognition becomes more widely accepted, the United States may take the steps needed to improve its performance in this area. These steps would include regularizing and institutionalizing the manner in which it handles its post conflict responsibilities, allocating roles among agencies in a manner likely to endure from one Administration to the next, and creating a body of learned lessons, accepted doctrine and standing capabilities. With responsibilities clearly allocated among those agencies, and with recognition that agencies were likely to have to meet those responsibilities soon and often, long term investment in the retention, training and career management of experienced personnel could create a cadre of individuals available to fulfill these missions when the need arose and a set of standard operating procedures to guide them in so doing.