



Chapter Title: Introduction

Book Title: After the War

Book Subtitle: Nation-Building from FDR to George W. Bush

Book Author(s): James Dobbins, Michele A. Poole, Austin Long and Benjamin Runkle

Published by: RAND Corporation

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg716cc.8>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



This content is licensed under a RAND Corporation License. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://www.rand.org/pubs/permissions.html>.



RAND Corporation is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *After the War*

JSTOR

Introduction

The United States has attempted at least eight significant nation-building operations over the past 60 years, beginning with the occupations of Germany and Japan at the conclusion of World War II. The next major spate of nation-building came at the end of the Cold War, in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Finally, in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks, the United States has found itself similarly involved in both Afghanistan and Iraq. The post–World War II operations were planned under Franklin D. Roosevelt and carried out under Harry Truman. The first post–Cold War operation was initiated by George H. W. Bush; it and three subsequent missions were conducted under William J. Clinton. Yet, perhaps, no president’s foreign policy has been more dominated by nation-building than that of George W. Bush.

In all eight cases, the style, structure, and process of presidential decisionmaking have affected the mission’s outcome. Administrations learned lessons from their own activities that they later applied to their operations. Unfortunately, there has been less carry-forward of expertise from one administration to the next. This monograph suggests remedies to that deficiency, examines how successive presidents and their national security teams have approached the initiation and management of nation-building operations, and identifies best practices for the conduct of such operations in the future.

Decisionmaking processes are central to the functioning of government. Without structure, decisions are often delayed, made without analysis, or simply not made at all. Further, even the best decisions can

go unimplemented without a sound structure to task and coordinate the relevant federal agencies. This can occur even absent the infighting, personality clashes, and willful obstruction that are not uncommon in the executive branch.

Nation-building can be defined as the use of armed forces in the aftermath of a conflict to promote an enduring peace and a transition to democracy. Other terms currently in use to describe this process include *stabilization and reconstruction*, *peace-building*, and *state-building*. Since 1989, the frequency, duration, and scope of such missions have grown exponentially, with no end in sight, either for the United States or the rest of the international community.

Presidential style and bureaucratic structure are by no means the sole determinants of success in any such endeavor. In previous volumes, we have looked at the nature of the societies being reformed, the level of external resources applied to the process, and the content of the policies effected.¹ But if style, process, and structure are not dispositive, they do exert an important influence. Some of the previously mentioned administrations proved better at this task than did others. All improved over time, but those improvements have not always been passed on undiminished to their successors. This monograph looks at how successive presidents and their national security teams made and implemented decisions, and identifies barriers to the transmission of accrued expertise in the field of nation-building from one administration to the next.

¹ See James Dobbins, John G. McGinn, Keith Crane, Seth G. Jones, Rollie Lal, Andrew Rathmell, Rachel M. Swanger, and Anga R. Timilsina, *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MR-1753-RC, 2003; James Dobbins, Seth G. Jones, Keith Crane, Andrew Rathmell, Brett Steele, Richard Teltschik, and Anga R. Timilsina, *The UN's Role in Nation-Building: From the Congo to Iraq*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-304-RC, 2005; and James Dobbins, Seth G. Jones, Keith Crane, and Beth Cole DeGrasse, *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-557-SRF, 2007.