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Review Article

CAN AMERICA NATION-BUILD?

By JASON BROWNLEE*

- Alexander Cooley. *Logics of Hierarchy: The Organization of Empires, States, and Military Occupation*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005, 191 pp.
- 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: Rand, 2003, 244 pp.
- Noah Feldman. *What We Owe Iraq: War and the Ethics of Nation-Building*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004, 154 pp.
- Francis Fukuyama, ed. *Nation-Building: Beyond Afghanistan and Iraq*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005, 262 pp.
- Greg Grandin. *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006, 286 pp.

THE American-led occupation of Iraq has spawned at least a shelf's worth of monographs by consultants, journalists, and soldiers, painting a bleak picture of an ill-prepared mission and its perilous consequences.¹ With such a vast literature on post-Saddam Iraq, scholars have already begun integrating the idiographic accounts into a cohesive meta-narrative.² Comparative analyses remain rare, however, and few writers have examined how Iraq differs from or conforms to prior "nation-building" attempts. The works reviewed here begin to fill this lacuna

* The author thanks Daniel Chirot, Patrick McDonald, Robert Vitalis, Kurt Weyland, and two anonymous reviewers for constructive comments on a prior version of this article.

¹ Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005); Mark Etherington, *Revolt on the Tigris: The Al-Sadr Uprising and the Governing of Iraq* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005); David L. Phillips, *Losing Iraq: Inside the Postwar Reconstruction Fiasco* (New York: Westview Press, 2005); Anthony Shadid, *Night Draws Near: Iraq's People in the Shadow of America's War* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005); Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone* (New York: Knopf, 2006); Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon, 2006); George Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2006); Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006); Nir Rosen, *In the Belly of the Green Bird: The Triumph of the Martyrs in Iraq* (New York: Free Press, 2006); Bob Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006).

² Peter Sluggett, "Blunder Books: Iraq since Saddam," *Middle East Journal* 60 (Spring 2006); Toby Dodge, "How Iraq Was Lost," *Survival* 48 (Winter 2006-7).

and include some of the first sophisticated efforts to evaluate the U.S. occupation of Iraq alongside analogous projects from the twentieth century. All five books were written after Coalition forces ousted Saddam Hussein. Applying a measure of hindsight and historical perspective, they complement monographs about “what went wrong” by considering why events transpired as they did. They also advance prior research by shifting focus from the nation-builder’s intent to the investment made in manpower and time.

This approach to nation-building as a product of commitment and duration has its limits, though. To a striking extent, the collected scholars converge in framing nation-building as a volitional effort, rather than a process conditioned by local context. Yet arguments about commitment and technique do not conform with the historical record the authors themselves consider; nor do they conform with a more comprehensive reflection on U.S.-led nation-building. In sites ranging from Germany to Haiti, nation-building has been tied to the availability of a functioning state apparatus, bureaucracy, and constitutional tradition. Where present, this political infrastructure has enabled the U.S. to rejuvenate and modify antecedent institutions, often quite rapidly. In less propitious settings, nation-building has foundered—sometimes despite prolonged attempts at institutional development. Thus, ironically the most salient thesis of these books is belied by the cases gathered: the U.S. has done best where it has done less, that is, refurbishing existing local institutions rather than attempting to construct new ones.

Post-World War II nation-building in Germany and Japan benefited from political and bureaucratic traditions that predated America’s involvement. Conversely, the dearth of analogous institutions in developing countries meant that even lengthy American occupations left only a modest political legacy. The present review evaluates the contribution of the selected works for subsequent research by addressing this tension between commitment and results. After surveying the conceptual origins and the recent renaissance of nation-building, I evaluate how these books help readers comprehend America’s varied efforts during more than a century of nation-building abroad.

KNOWLEDGE ACCUMULATION IN THE STUDY OF NATION-BUILDING

Nation-building has a long and somewhat perplexing pedigree. The concept originated in studies of postcolonial development and modernization, as political scientists analyzed the domestic processes through which nation-states (of varying regime types) emerged. Democracy

was deemed an eventual by-product of this long evolutionary process. In current scholarship nation-building denotes a deliberate process of democratization administered through foreign intervention. Thus, nation-building has shifted in terms of its outcome and its primary agent.

Among comparative political scientists and early modernization theorists, Carl Friedrich clarified how “nation” meant “any cohesive group possessing ‘independence’ within the confines of the international order as provided by the United Nations, which provides a constituency for a government effectively ruling such a group and receiving from that group the acclamation which legitimizes the government as part of the world order.”³ Nation-building was the largely domestic process of integrating and assimilating the country’s population into the emerging state apparatus, which might be quite undemocratic over the immediate term.⁴ For Karl Deutsch it was a process of deliberate construction:

As a house can be built from timber, bricks, and mortar, in different patterns, quickly or slowly, through different sequences of assembly, in partial independence from its setting, and according to the choice, will, and power, of its builders, so a nation can be built according to different plans, from various materials, rapidly or gradually, by different sequences of steps, and in partial independence from its environment.⁵

The core of Deutsch’s notion remains with us. Notably, though, nation-building is now supposed to generate a *democratic* state, as Karin von Hippel’s recent definition shows: “Nation building, which really means state building, has over the years signified an effort to construct a government that may or may not be democratic, but preferably is stable. Today, nation building normally implies the attempt to create democratic and secure states.”⁶ By bundling democratization into the establishment of a functioning nation-state, this revised definition implied an even more demanding project than previously conceived.⁷ The

³ Carl J. Friedrich, “Nation-Building?” in Karl W. Deutsch and William J. Foltz, eds., *Nation-Building* (New York: Atherton, 1963), 31.

⁴ Manfred Halpern, “Toward Further Modernization of the Study of New Nations,” *World Politics* 17 (October 1964); Walker Connor, “Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying?” *World Politics* 24 (April 1972), 322, 326.

⁵ Karl W. Deutsch, “Some Problems in Nation-Building,” in Deutsch and Foltz (fn. 3), 3. This concept of nation-building was not unchallenged, and Friedrich asked, “[A]re nations really built? Or, rather, do they grow?” Friedrich (fn. 3), 27.

⁶ Von Hippel, “Democracy by Force: A Renewed Commitment to Nation-Building,” *Washington Quarterly* 23 (Winter 2000), 96.

⁷ Indeed the definition recognized by von Hippel runs counter to some comparativists’ judgment that nationhood and stateness are chronologically and causally prior to democratization. For two influential discussions, see Dankwart Rustow, “Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model,”

books under review share von Hippel's view of nation-building as democracy building conducted by a foreign power.⁸

The emphasis on external administration makes nation-building an international process and marks a further alteration of the original concept. Deutsch and his contemporaries expected indigenous leaders to be the primary administrators of change and doubted whether external powers could be more effective:

The actual capacities of many of the new countries for self-government and for the maintenance of political cohesion have been quite limited. From the Congo to Laos and Viet Nam, political instability in many of the new countries has been extreme. In such countries only one form of rule seems even harder and more costly to maintain: government by foreigners.⁹

Nation-building in the newly independent countries was compared with earlier (indigenous) "nation-building" in Western Europe and the United States, which provided a pedagogical model.¹⁰ The latest nation-building research positions the U.S. not as a historical template but as the principal mover of the process.¹¹ James Dobbins, director of the International Security and Defense Policy Center at Rand and lead author of *America's Role in Nation-Building*, captures the zeitgeist by defining nation-building as "the use of armed force in the aftermath of a conflict to underpin an enduring transition to democracy" (Dobbins, in Fukuyama, 218). This conceptual shift accompanied the increase in overseas interventions during the 1990s and crystallized in post-9/11 debates about how to establish healthy governments in foreign societies.

National security imperatives have prompted the U.S. to consider implanting the institutions that decades of political development had not produced. Within a year of the attacks on the World Trade Center

Comparative Politics 2 (April 1970), 350–52; Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 24–29.

⁸ A more general definition, encompassing democratic and nondemocratic outcomes, is "intervention in a state to prevent civil unrest or to promote a form of government." Cynthia A. Watson, *Nation-Building: A Reference Handbook* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 2.

⁹ Karl W. Deutsch, "The Study of Nation-Building, 1962–1966," in Deutsch and Foltz (fn. 3), viii.

¹⁰ Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 6.

¹¹ This attention is relatively recent. As Tony Smith describes in his authoritative survey of U.S. foreign policy: "Until the 1980s, American scholarship neglected to investigate with any comparative framework or historical depth the consequences for foreign peoples . . . [of the US ambition] to foster democracy abroad as a way of ensuring national security"; Smith, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 348.

and the Pentagon, the White House had declared it would not only defeat venal states but also rebuild them: "America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones. We are menaced less by fleets and armies than by catastrophic technologies in the hands of the embittered few."¹² By fall 2005 democratization had been defined as a chief tool for enhancing security, with one of the national intelligence objectives being to "defeat terrorists at home and abroad by disarming their operational capabilities, and seizing the initiative from them by promoting the growth of freedom and democracy."¹³ Several scholars concurred about the necessity of prolonged interventions. Francis Fukuyama wondered, in the face of chronic state failures, "whether there is any real alternative to a quasi-permanent, quasi-colonial relationship between the 'beneficiary' country and the international community."¹⁴ Steven Krasner agreed that: "[B]etter domestic governance in badly governed, failed, and occupied polities will require the transcendence of accepted rules, including the creation of shared sovereignty in specific areas."¹⁵ And Niall Ferguson concluded that autocratic and failed states would not correct themselves and would need to be reformed by external powers.¹⁶

After defining despotism and terrorism as the principal dangers, scholarship converged in seeing foreign intervention as the long-term solution. This agenda broke from recent trends in the field even as it revived older ones. On the one hand, foreign-imposed democratization boldly exceeded the bounds of conventional democracy promotion, which generally precluded military occupation.¹⁷ On the other hand, it was a logical step for post-World War II political development research. From Robert Dahl's *Polyarchy* to Robert Jackson's *Quasi-States*,

¹² The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2002), 1.

¹³ Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *National Intelligence Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 2005), 4.

¹⁴ Fukuyama, *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004), 104.

¹⁵ Krasner, "Sharing Sovereignty: New Institutions for Collapsed and Failing States," *International Security* 29 (Fall 2004), 85.

¹⁶ Ferguson, *Colossus: The Price of America's Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 24.

¹⁷ Thomas Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy: U.S. Policy toward Latin America in the Reagan Years* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Abraham Lowenthal, *Exporting Democracy: The United States and Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); G. John Ikenberry, "America's Liberal Grand Strategy: Democracy and National Security in the Post-war Era," in Michael Cox, G. John Ikenberry, and Takashi Inoguchi, eds., *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Thomas Carothers and Marina Ottaway, eds., *Uncharted Journey: Promoting Democracy in the Middle East* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005).

comparativists had argued that foreign powers wielded little influence over other countries' domestic developments—unless they ruled over the subject society themselves and thereby fostered the requisite institutions. Dahl saw the American occupations of Japan and Germany as exceptions that justified a focus on local forces, while Jackson considered British colonialism in Africa a model for political reform.¹⁸ As scholars responded to the post-9/11 international environment and addressed the White House's national security strategy, they evoked Japan and Germany and revisited Jackson's prescription. The books under review join this discussion about American power as a remedy to dysfunctional regimes.

The books by Dobbins and Fukuyama compile case studies and prior experiences that could inform future nation-building. In *America's Role in Nation-Building*, Dobbins and his coauthors present what has arguably become the most salient explanation in their field: "Many factors influence the ease or difficulty of nation-building. . . . However, among the controllable factors, the most important determinant seems to be the level of effort—measured in time, manpower, and money" (p. xxv). Positing a link between duration and effect, they write that "there is no quick route to nation-building. Five years seems the minimum required to enforce an enduring transition to democracy" (p. 166). This thesis is employed to account for democratization in Germany and Japan, limited results in Somalia, Haiti, and Afghanistan, and provisional success in Bosnia and Kosovo. Fukuyama's collection can then be read as a companion volume. In three parts, one on past experience and one on each of America's two most recent ventures, *Nation-Building: Beyond Afghanistan and Iraq* reinforces Dobbins's findings while incorporating recent missteps and course corrections.

The monographs by Noah Feldman and Alexander Cooley both expose a different facet of nation-building's difficulties. *What We Owe Iraq: War and the Ethics of Nation-Building* is a philosophical treatise wrapped in autobiography. Feldman draws on his summer 2003 experience consulting for the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and proposes a model of trusteeship by which the U.S. mission in Iraq can surpass its British forebears. He argues that American authorities in Iraq are obligated to hold Iraq "in trust" until they have established a viable democratic state. Cooley considers some of the pitfalls along that course. With novel case selection, *Logics of Hierarchy: The Organization of Empires, States,*

¹⁸ Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1971), 200; Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Third World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 202.

and *Military Occupation* compares America's nation-building in Iraq to attempts by other powerful states at reordering societies, for example, the Soviet Union in Central Asia and Japan in Korea. The "logics of hierarchy" are the forms relating principals to agents or, in states, national executives to subnational administrators. By citing differences in these patterns, Cooley explains the ineffectiveness of Washington and its proconsuls in Baghdad.

Students of nation-building and democracy promotion will find these four books a satisfying step beyond their recent precursors, which often split between romanticizing America's influence and imputing nefarious control.¹⁹ The works discussed in this review focus less on intentions—whether for good or ill—and instead consider America's *capacity* at nation-building.²⁰ Although this is a welcome advance, the authors' cases suggest there is still more to explore in the relationship between nation-builder and subject. To this end, Greg Grandin's historical scholarship uncovers additional cases and challenges. *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* posits that America's most frequent experiments in nation-building have taken place in its own hemisphere. Discussions focused on Germany and Japan thus "consistently ignore the one place where the United States has projected its influence for more than two centuries" (pp. 1–2). This critique raises a red flag for knowledge accumulation. If the leading studies of nation-building have selected an unrepresentative sample, the lessons they draw may be commensurately skewed.²¹ The history of nation-building indicates that the U.S. has previously applied many of the approaches now advocated by Dobbins, Fukuyama, and their contemporaries; rarely, however, have they achieved success.

¹⁹ Compare, for example, Joshua Muravchik, *Exporting Democracy: Fulfilling America's Destiny* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1992), 91; William I. Robinson, "Globalization, the World System, and 'Democracy Promotion' in U.S. Foreign Policy," *Theory and Society* 25 (October 1996), 626–27.

²⁰ A focus on capacity ameliorates the risk of retrospectively imputing intentions based on outcomes, for example, seeing "genuine effort" where success obtained. At the same time, research on nation-building still needs to take into account the motivations and goals of foreign occupiers. Full consideration of a nation-builder's motives is a serious issue itself, but one that falls outside the scope of this review because it is not an analytic emphasis of the chosen books. The contribution of the selected works lies in their evaluation of nation-building capacity and their insight into how that capacity shapes the boundaries of achievable outcomes. Future scholars may revisit the issue of intent and investigate how the objectives of nation-building are intertwined with the attempt at changing local society.

²¹ Barbara Geddes, "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics," *Political Analysis* 2 (1990), 131; Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 129.

EARLY NATION-BUILDING

America's attempts at imposing democratic institutions date back as early as the aftermath of its own civil war.²² President Lincoln initiated Reconstruction (1865–77) to reincorporate the defeated Confederate states, and the project continued under Presidents Johnson and Grant. Stymied by local resistance, though, the federal government ultimately retreated from its goals of marginalizing the southern plantation aristocracy and enfranchising African American males.²³ This largely abortive experiment in postconflict democratization prefigured what would be the tools of nation-building abroad: a robust military presence, a political framework for empowering marginalized constituencies, and elections to foster new leadership. Analogous techniques were next applied in America's colonization of the Philippines.

The Spanish-American War of 1898 brought the Philippines and Cuba under American control. Wrested from Spain's dominion, the heavily populated archipelago of the Philippines was deemed unsuitable for American statehood.²⁴ Instead, U.S. presidents made the Philippines a colony (and Cuba a de facto protectorate). Although Filipinos had welcomed their freedom from Spanish rule, they began a nationalist insurgency when President McKinley signaled his intent to rule and "civilize" them. Within two years the U.S. had defeated the indigenous rebellion, at the cost of some four thousand American lives and nearly two hundred thousand Filipino lives.²⁵ As in the American South, political success proved more difficult to achieve than military victory. Even after the Philippines tacitly submitted to American administration and a U.S.-style electoral system, large landowners controlled the country's politics. This class of caciques (local bosses) soon dominated the incipient state constructed under U.S. auspices.²⁶ As nation-building veered off course, early proponents grew frustrated with the society they had intended to change; President Theodore Roosevelt ruefully

²² Tony Smith's *America's Mission* is one of the few comparative works that addresses how post-Civil War reconstruction anticipated the challenges of modern nation-building; see Smith (fn. 11), 19–33.

²³ Edward L. Ayers, *What Caused the Civil War? Reflections on the South and Southern History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005); William Blair, "The Use of Military Force to Protect the Gains of Reconstruction," *Civil War History* 51 (December 2005).

²⁴ Theodore Friend, *Between Two Empires: The Ordeal of the Philippines, 1929–1946* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 35; Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 32.

²⁵ David Wurfel, *Filipino Politics: Development and Decay* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988), 9.

²⁶ Benedict Anderson, "Cacique Democracy in the Philippines: Origins and Dreams," *New Left Review* 1/169 (May–June 1988), 10–11.

dubbed the Philippines “our heel of Achilles.”²⁷ By contrast, the caciques embraced their ambivalent stewards and the lucrative access to American consumers that came with the colonial relationship. Eventually, in 1935 a motley alliance of nativists and anti-imperialists within the U.S. foisted an independence agreement upon the Philippines. This jolt toward sovereignty did not break the caciques’ oligarchic control, and America’s last high commissioner in the Philippines saw the country drifting “from democracy and in the direction of totalitarianism or dictatorship.”²⁸ Decades after independence in 1946, the Philippines’ American-made regime remained vulnerable to coup plotters and power-hungry presidents.

During the same period in which America attempted to mold Philippine politics, successive U.S. presidents intervened in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. As Grandin assesses in *Empire’s Workshop*, the United States struggled to translate military supremacy into political authority: “Over thirty military expeditions in but a few decades not only had failed to pacify the Caribbean and Central America but had heated passions even further, leading FDR’s Republican predecessor, Herbert Hoover, to begin to talk of being a ‘good neighbor’ to Latin America and to draw down U.S. military ambitions in the region” (p. 33). These ineffectual expeditions receive comparative treatment by Minxin Pei, Samia Amin, and Seth Garz in their contribution to Fukuyama’s *Nation-Building* volume. Their chapter, “Building Nations: The American Experience,” compiles nation-building efforts since the Spanish-American War: *seven* of their fifteen cases occurred in the Caribbean and Central America before 1925.²⁹ Not one of these countries had become a democracy ten years after the end of administration by the U.S. or its surrogate (Pei, Amin, and Garz, in Fukuyama, 66).³⁰ Attending to these understudied interventions, Grandin traces

²⁷ John B. Judis, *The Folly of Empire: What George W. Bush Could Learn from Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson* (New York: Scribner, 2004), 67–68.

²⁸ Francis B. Sayre, *Glad Adventure* (New York: MacMillan, 1957), 196.

²⁹ They are Cuba (1898–1902), Panama (1903–6), Cuba (1906–9), Nicaragua (1909–33), Haiti (1915–34), Cuba (1917–22), and the Dominican Republic (1916–24); Pei, Amin, and Garz, “Building Nations: The American Experience,” in Fukuyama, 66.

³⁰ The authors under review seemingly disagree about the total number of cases that count in assessing American nation-building efforts. Whereas they all include the same few cases of successful nation-building (for example, Germany, Japan), they differ in the number and type of unsuccessful cases they recognize. For example, Dobbins and his team limit themselves to post–World War II experiences, whereas Pei and his coauthors address the many early-twentieth-century U.S. interventions as well. These discrepancies are not randomly or evenly distributed. The omitted cases fall mainly at lower values of the dependent variable, raising the risk of a truncated sample and biased inferences. The only fully satisfactory solution to this problem will be for future scholars to concur in definitively specifying the full universe of cases. Pending such an agreement, analytic gains in robustness and

how nationalist sentiment drove local movements to resist American imposition but embrace diplomatic overtures: "Resistance to U.S. aggression not only revealed the limits of militarism but punctured the puffed-up, self-justifying rhetoric that had been issuing out of Washington since at least the time McKinley had fallen down on his knees to ask the Almighty for permission to take Manila" (p. 38). After Franklin Roosevelt formally implemented the Good Neighbor policy, the United States gained through diplomacy the markets it had earlier sought through conquest (pp. 34–36). Nation-building thus ebbed during the interwar years and then took on new life after World War II.

THE APEX OF NATION-BUILDING

Successful democratization in post-World War II West Germany and Japan has become the gold standard for nation-building ever since. Within a few years the authoritarian Axis powers had been resurrected as representative democracies, a political feat of enormous magnitude and one the U.S. has not subsequently reproduced. Set in the long history of U.S.-led nation-building, Germany and Japan appear as outliers: inspiring deviations from a prosaic pattern of long occupations with limited results. If these are the exemplars of modern nation-building, what actions or conditions generated that success? Dobbins and his coauthors point to one answer: unlike America's maladministered and poorly supported interventions elsewhere, nation-building in Germany and Japan was skillfully executed and properly sustained. U.S. commitment, they aver, propelled democratization then and remains critical for nation-building today.

In *America's Role in Nation-Building*, Dobbins et al. recount the process and product of American involvement in Germany, Japan, and their other cases, closing each chapter with a list of "lessons learned." The authors are especially interested in understanding how the United States turned its Axis foes into democratic allies. But while Dobbins and his coauthors place their commitment thesis in the foreground, their case studies signal the U.S. relied on local actors and institutions capable of governing the society in question. Thus, nation-building in Germany and Japan bore significant resemblance to prior efforts in the

reliability argue for considering the fullest range of nation-building efforts, thereby maximizing the number of observations and the range of variance in outcomes while maintaining internal validity around the shared definition of nation-building as imposed democratization. On truncation and selection bias, see David Collier and James Mahoney, "Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research," *World Politics* 49 (October 1996), 61–63.

Philippines and in the Caribbean: the exigencies of rule compelled U.S. forces to collaborate with the very elites they had aimed to supplant.

The territory that would become West Germany was jointly administered by the United States, Britain, and France. The massive military presence of 1.6 million U.S. troops stationed in Europe at the end of World War II helped to establish security in the immediate postwar period (Dobbins et al., xvi). Yet even as the occupying powers demobilized the German military, they also depended on other local institutions and personnel. Germany's prior experience with parliamentary government and active political parties provided an infrastructure for nation-building (p. 6). Once the goal of denazification had been abandoned, the mechanisms of government could be managed by civil servants of the vanquished regime: "Although denazification was one of the principal objectives of the early occupation period, the proposed scale of denazification quickly proved impractical. . . . U.S. forces found it impossible to administer the state without interacting with and utilizing competent bureaucrats and officials, at least some of whom were complicit in the Nazi regime" (p. 14). Only 3.2 percent of the 3.6 million "persons considered chargeable" were convicted, prompting Dobbins's team to reverse the ostensible roles assigned to nation-builder and subject: "[M]ost analysts contend that scaling back U.S. and allied denazification efforts resulted *from the recognition of what was attainable*. In the long run, this more practical policy . . . eliminated remaining support for the return of such an autocratic regime" (p. 14, emphasis added).

By retreating from denazification the U.S. boosted its political leverage.³¹ America's efforts were not an independent variable transforming German society but a component in the reciprocal influence between the occupiers and those they aimed to reform. Dobbins and his colleagues recognize these patterns of mutual dependence but do not emphasize them. And they stop short of one plausible implication: democratization in Germany was premised on the revival of past institutions and personnel for governance. General Douglas MacArthur's legendary efforts in Japan were similarly channeled by the target society, a country deemed even more challenging than Germany for postwar democratization.³²

³¹ This compromise matches what John Ikenberry has called "institutional binding," a process by which victorious powers incorporate the defeated party's preferences to increase their own authority; G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 63.

³² John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 27, 212.

For Dobbins and his fellow analysts, nation-building in Japan showed the world that “[d]emocracy can be transferred to non-Western societies” (p. 51). This “transfer” was based from start to finish upon institutions the Japanese had already developed, however, including the country’s bureaucracy, its parliament, and, symbolically, its monarch. Much like their attitude toward Germany’s loathsome nazified bureaucracy, Americans settled on a *modus vivendi* with their erstwhile enemy Hirohito: “U.S. experts on Japan argued that retaining the emperor, at least during the initial stages, would be a low-cost, low-risk method of governing. . . . MacArthur was also persuaded that retaining the emperor would facilitate a smooth and successful occupation” (pp. 38–39). The Americans promptly proceeded to burnish Hirohito’s image, as historian John Dower has described: “[Emperor Hirohito] became, as it were, a beacon of continuity in the midst of drastic change. . . . Much the same sorts of continuity took place at the levels of both national and local government. . . . [F]or all practical purposes the bureaucracy remained intact, top to bottom.”³³ Indeed, Dobbins’s case study notes MacArthur ruled “through existing Japanese government machinery” (p. 30). Further, American cooperation with the emperor and Japan’s extant civil service meant that these groups were effectively amnestied from “their roles in the conduct of the war” (p. 40). Notably, “less than 1 percent” of Japan’s bureaucracy was purged, and even this fraction of the fallen regime regained their political rights and were freed from incarceration by 1952 (p. 42).³⁴

As is widely recognized, MacArthur’s administration altered Japanese politics in dramatic ways. The constitution indefinitely disarmed Japan, accorded the emperor ceremonial powers, and elevated the country’s legislature (the Diet) as the pinnacle of government (Dobbins et al., 43). This arrangement remedied the Japanese military’s usurpation of power in the 1930s.³⁵ By the time the constitution came into effect in May 1947, U.S.-supervised legislative elections had produced a parliament dominated by the same conservative parties that had held sway before the U.S. occupation (p. 44). Later that year “MacArthur pronounced the aims of the occupation complete” (p. 35). Although U.S. forces would remain in the country for another five years, the most fundamental changes and continuities had solidified. What explains

³³ John W. Dower, “A Warning from History,” *Boston Review* (February–March 2003), <http://www.bostonreview.net/BR28.1/dower.html> (accessed February 27, 2007).

³⁴ An estimated 920 Japanese, most of them military officers, were eventually executed for war crimes; Dower (fn. 32), 447.

³⁵ Smith (fn. 11), 150.

such remarkable results accomplished at such a brisk pace, when much longer projects in the Philippines and the Caribbean had yielded much less? Dobbins and his collaborators reason: "The most important lesson from the U.S. occupation of Germany is that military force and political capital can, at least in some circumstances, be successfully employed to underpin democratic and societal transformation" (p. 21). But they also cite local factors: "Co-opting existing institutions can facilitate nation-building better than building new ones from scratch" (p. 51).

These discordant conclusions raise anew the question of whether American nation-builders can achieve similar results elsewhere. *Was* "the most important determinant . . . the level of effort—measured in time, manpower, and money," or was that effort successful only by virtue of the domestic political and human resources it could muster in these industrialized and previously parliamentary states? Local conditions receive careful attention in the empirical material, but the authors' conclusions focus on the nation-builder's actions. Cooley's book clarifies the assumption of voluntarism that seems to underpin this approach.

The main explanatory variable in *Logics of Hierarchy* is the bureaucratic form through which an occupation is administered. In multidivisional hierarchies (known as "M-form" in the literature on firms) units are divided by geography or other nonfunctional criteria. These divisions operate autonomously from one another, but each is responsible to the core executive (pp. 25–26).³⁶ Cooley traces success in Germany and Japan to this multidivisional structure (p. 145). By contrast, unitary hierarchies ("U-form") comprise parallel lines of command based on functions; organization therefore depends on constant cooperation across these functional divisions. Cabinet ministers heading national departments (Interior, Defense, Foreign Affairs) are part of a unitary hierarchy (p. 24). Cooley links institutional outcomes to hierarchical variations, based on their tendency to create different management problems. Multidivisional hierarchies face principal-agent problems between the head and the divisions; unitary systems are vulnerable to interdepartmental feuding (pp. 47–50). Cooley does not investigate the origins of the hierarchies themselves, thus leaving open the possibility that prior variables generate the hierarchies and their putative institutional effects. Rather, he regards institutional arrangements as independent from the societies on which they rest, even venturing that "there is nothing 'material' about organizing a firm or polity according

³⁶ The U.S. government would seem to provide a case of multidivisional hierarchy, but Cooley notes that truly federal systems are nonhierarchical ("H-form" in organizational theory) (pp. 27–28).

to functional or territorial principles, yet, once adopted these hierarchical forms tend to structure the behavior of administrators” (p. 11).

The literature on postcolonial development has shown institutional arrangements are rarely so autonomous in their origins or operations.³⁷ Material and nonmaterial calculations have substantial bearing upon, for instance, the difference between the colonization of the Philippines and the accession of Hawaii (classified a U-form periphery, p. 37). It follows that hierarchical forms may be endogenous to the conditions that precede their establishment. Cooley seeks to “examine how the organization of hierarchy can . . . independently affect the governance and behavior of political actors” (p. 8), but the reverse may be more accurate. As in nation-building in Germany and Japan, institutional designers respond to the populations they seek to organize. Thus, unitary and multidivisional hierarchies may reflect, rather than reshape, social behavior. More fundamentally, they may have little capacity for resolving the underlying political conflicts military occupations continue to face.³⁸ By crediting American approaches for successful nation-building in Germany and Japan, the books by Dobbins et al. and Cooley presume a form of political agency that was as elusive amid these successes as it had been in prior failures. They understate the significance of the defeated regimes’ institutional inheritance and, consequently, have difficulty accounting for the troubled record of subsequent nation-building.

NATION-BUILDING DURING THE COLD WAR

With the onset of the cold war the United States began supporting autocrats who could halt putatively pro-Soviet movements. Coups in Iran (1953) and Guatemala (1954) inaugurated a series of covert interventions aimed at buttressing or installing right-wing dictators.³⁹ Most of these episodes did not entail prolonged U.S. military occupation and fell short of nation-building. Notable exceptions augured poorly for any hopes the U.S. would soon duplicate its accomplishments in post-war Germany and Japan.

³⁷ Michael Mann, “The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms, and Results,” in John A. Hall, ed., *States in History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 109–36; Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Joel S. Migdal, Atul Kohli, and Vivienne Shue, eds., *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Catherine Boone, *Political Topographies of the African State: Territorial Authority and Institutional Choice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

³⁸ The Philippines under American colonial rule, which Cooley does not code, would have been an M-form hierarchy, structurally akin to those credited with success in Germany and Japan.

³⁹ Smith (fn. 11), 198.

Bestriding Japan's colonial legacy, U.S. forces in South Korea built (1945–48) and defended (1950–53) an autocratic developmental state.⁴⁰ South Korea then led its region in economic development—a feat Cooley attributes to M-form hierarchies bequeathed by Japan (p. 143)—but retained an authoritarian government.⁴¹ On the other side of the globe American troops returned to the Dominican Republic in 1965 to prevent reformist Juan Bosch from gaining power.⁴² The Dominican Republic is the first post–World War II nation-building effort coded by Pei, Amin, and Garz and a further instance in which democratization did not occur within the following decade (Pei, Amin, and Garz, in Fukuyama, 66). The next case on their list is South Vietnam.

America's involvement in South Vietnam was the most costly and prolonged attempt at nation-building during the cold war. The initial intervention under President Eisenhower flowed ideologically from the Korean War.⁴³ Leading U.S. politicians, including then Senator John F. Kennedy, depicted Vietnam as a crucial arena for fending off communist tyranny:

Vietnam represents a proving ground of democracy in Asia . . . the alternative to Communist dictatorship. If this democratic experiment fails . . . then weakness, not strength, will characterize the meaning of democracy in the minds of still more Asians. The United States is directly responsible for this experiment—it is playing an important role in the laboratory where it is being conducted. We cannot afford to permit that experiment to fail.⁴⁴

This bid to repel the North Vietnamese carried the same idealistic aspirations that seemed to have borne success in Germany and Japan. In 1962 President Kennedy sustained the sentiment of his earlier remarks when he spoke of the “burden we must bear of helping freedom defend itself all the way, from the American soldier guarding the Brandenburg Gate to the Americans now in Viet Nam, or the Peace Corps men in Colombia.”⁴⁵ Under Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon, U.S. involvement

⁴⁰ Atul Kohli, *State-Directed Development: Political Power and Industrialization in the Global Periphery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 64–67.

⁴¹ Mark Peceny, “Forcing Them to Be Free,” *Political Science Quarterly* 52 (September 1999), 564; David M. Edelstein, “Occupational Hazards: Why Military Occupations Succeed or Fail,” *International Security* 29 (Summer 2004), 88.

⁴² Smith (fn. 11), 230–31.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 200.

⁴⁴ John F. Kennedy, “Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy at the Conference on Vietnam Luncheon in the Hotel Willard, Washington, D.C., June 1, 1956,” available at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum; http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/Speeches/JFK/JFK+Pre-Pres/002PREPRES12SPEECHES_56JUN01.htm (accessed February 23, 2007).

⁴⁵ John F. Kennedy, “Address in New Orleans at the Opening of the New Docks Terminal,” May 4, 1962, available at the American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=8633&st=&st1=> (accessed February 23, 2007).

in South Vietnam escalated from providing a few hundred military advisers to deploying over half a million American troops.

During the war American social scientists struggled to decipher the right methods for “transferring institutions and innovations to the Vietnamese in a situation of chaos, chanciness and rapid political change.”⁴⁶ But unlike in South Korea, nation-building in South Vietnam did not even establish an authoritarian ally for America. Nor was America’s extension of nation-building into Cambodia (1970–73) any more successful (as Pei, Amin, and Garz record, in Fukuyama, 66).⁴⁷ Vietnam’s unification under a communist government in 1975 capped a decades-long effort at political engineering by American administrations and their French predecessors.

Given the scale of resources the U.S. poured into Vietnam, one would expect the experience to yield significant lessons for nation-building. Yet the latest comparative works are silent on the subject. Dobbins, both in the volume he leads and in his chapter in Fukuyama’s collection, considers military interventions during the cold war “infrequent” and “limited in both duration and in objective” (Dobbins, in Fukuyama, 219). With the exception of the study led by Pei, other contributions to *Nation-Building: Beyond Afghanistan and Iraq* do not challenge this hollowed-out version of history. It is as if nation-building were a venture tried successfully after World War II, then shelved until after the cold war. For books championing institutional memory, this recall seems oddly selective. Surely readers have as much to learn from the United States’ nine years at building institutions and countering an insurgency in Vietnam as from MacArthur’s two years pacifying the Japanese and reactivating their parliament. For a thesis based on material commitments, Vietnam should present a challenging test. By leaving it out, the authors pass up a key opportunity for advancing knowledge in this area, a chance it is hoped their successors will embrace.⁴⁸

Chastened by America’s experience in Vietnam, Presidents Ford and Carter generally refrained from nation-building and direct military interventions. However, President Reagan’s policies in Central America revived counterinsurgency tactics from Vietnam and, writes Grandin in *Empire’s Workshop*, primed them for use twenty years later. By supporting right-wing governments in El Salvador and Guatemala

⁴⁶ Kenneth T. Young, “United States Policy and Vietnamese Political Viability, 1954–1967,” *Asian Survey* 7 (August 1967), 508.

⁴⁷ Takashi Inoguchi, “Three Frameworks in Search of a Policy: U.S. Democracy Promotion in Asia-Pacific,” in Cox, Ikenberry, and Inoguchi (fn. 17), 283.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Marilyn B. Young and Lloyd Gardner, eds., *Iraq and the Lessons of Vietnam: Or, How Not to Learn from the Past* (New York: New Press, 2007).

and anticommunist rebels in Nicaragua, the Reagan administration catalyzed an especially brutal conflict. By Grandin's count, "U.S. allies . . . killed over 300,000 people . . . and drove millions into exile" (p. 71). Grandin draws grim parallels between American programs in El Salvador—"Washington's most ambitious nation-building project since South Vietnam" (p. 102)—and its current approach to Iraq. The analogy originates with the Bush administration's invocation of El Salvador's 1984 elections as an exemplar of voting amid violence (pp. 87–88). Success in El Salvador, though, depended on a campaign of indiscriminate killing "outsourced" to local paramilitaries that ensured U.S. forces would avoid a quagmire like Vietnam (pp. 88, 96). Even then, overwhelming force did not yield the desired political outcome. Washington ultimately parted ways with its favored candidate in 1984 and accepted a peace deal that granted many of the left-wing opposition's long-standing demands. For Grandin, the U.S. had come full circle: "After twelve years of fighting, fifty to sixty thousand civilian deaths, another twenty to thirty-four thousand military deaths, and more than six billion of Washington's dollars, it took an unvanquished insurgency to force the kind of democratization that the United States had grudgingly supported as a means to defeat that insurgency in the first place" (p. 108).

Not all interventions in Central America proved as costly and futile. The 1983 invasion of the island of Grenada and George H. W. Bush's 1989 ouster of Manuel Noriega in Panama were demonstrably succinct in comparison with the experience in El Salvador. In Pei, Amin, and Garz's comparison Grenada and Panama are the only instances since Germany and Japan when nation-building left a democratic legacy. The authors are cautious, though, about inferring much from these small countries (population 92,000 and 2.3 million, respectively, at the time of intervention) (in Fukuyama, 65–66). Perhaps more significant than the size of the country was the scope of the mission, particularly in Panama, where a force of some thirty thousand American troops entered the country, seized the local autocrat, and "installed a new democratic government—all within three weeks' time" (Grandin, 192). This brevity recalls MacArthur's rapid results in Japan and suggests a counterintuitive flip of the commitment thesis: successful nation-building has come quickly while failure has often lasted much longer. Pei and his coauthors do not explain why America's brief nation-building effort in Panama in 1989 ostensibly bestowed a more democratic legacy than its lengthy involvement from 1903 to 1936 (p. 66). A likely source of success was Panama's local development during the intervening years,

particularly the country's decades of raucous but real republicanism before a military junta seized power in 1968. Competitive electoral practices that preceded Noriega's regime may have laid the basis for democracy following his removal. As it happened, nation-building after Panama proved lengthier, costlier, and much less successful.

NATION-BUILDING IN THE 1990S

Although the history of U.S.-led nation-building extends over a century, most comparative works look first to Germany and Japan and then to the post-cold war interventions undertaken by Presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton. Unsuccessful operations in Somalia (1992–93) and Haiti (1994–96) are invoked by Dobbins and company as confirmation of the commitment thesis. Regarding Somalia, they remark: “There was no sustained effort to help Somalia reestablish national and regional institutions or civil administration. . . . The lessons learned were predominantly negative” (pp. 68–69). For *America's Role in Nation-Building* the lessons are also technical, relating mainly to security provision and the coordination of forces (p. 69) but saying little about how local conditions in Somalia plagued American forces in much the same way they beset subsequent authorities. The emphasis on American commitment and technique is even more striking in the analysis of Haiti, which, with the dubious exception of the Duvaliers (r. 1957–86), has not established a stable government in two centuries of independence. Pei and his coauthors label Haiti “a case of complete failure” for nation-building, even though the “deployment of overwhelming military force quelled any thought of resistance from enemies of the displaced President Aristide” (Pei, Amin, and Garz, in Fukuyama, 69). The problem, they contend, lay in the aftermath of the invasion and precipitous cutbacks in troops levels. The main culprits were “inadequate military commitment” and a mismanaged reconstruction effort (despite pledges for over \$1 billion in international assistance) (pp. 70, 72).

By minimizing the role of antecedent conditions, the Dobbins and Pei teams nearly reverse cause and effect. In Haiti, for example, Aristide's restoration to office proved less daunting for U.S. forces than the monumental job of demobilizing his aggrieved adversaries.⁴⁹ Thus, the reduction in forces invoked as the Achilles' heel of nation-building is more correctly seen as a rational adaptation to constraints faced in the field. Such a response reflects the same kind of concession to underlying

⁴⁹ Bob Shacochis, *The Immaculate Invasion* (New York: Penguin, 1999).

conditions that the U.S. practiced in Germany and Japan when it curbed denazification and colluded with the emperor—the difference being that Somalia and Haiti lacked a functioning state to which American forces could defer. After discussing nation-building's failure in Haiti, mixed results in Panama, and success in Japan, Pei, Amin, and Garz write that “greater commitment translates into greater leverage and increased capacity to implement reconstruction policies” (p. 82). It is hard to reach that conclusion from their table showing four successes (Germany, Japan, Grenada, and Panama) among fifteen cases with an average duration of 7.8 years.⁵⁰ One might instead reason that *preexisting bureaucratic and parliamentary institutions in the target society translate into increased capacity to implement reconstruction policies*. The projects steered by Dobbins and Fukuyama take note of local institutions but then infer that the successes of Germany and Japan are replicable, given the right combination of effort and know-how. Analysis of the Iraq War and occupation perpetuates this voluntarist understanding of nation-building.

LEARNING FROM IRAQ

On March 20, 2003, the United States began its most ambitious attempt at nation-building in nearly thirty years. From its inception, the ouster of Saddam Hussein and occupation of Iraq far exceeded American's prior mission fostering a new government for Afghanistan. In 2003 Dobbins and his colleagues were already arguing that the “troop-to-population” ratio in Afghanistan had been low. Using even the largest totals of 14,000 troops, it equaled 0.5 soldiers per thousand inhabitants, as compared with 18.6 in Bosnia and 20.0 in Kosovo (pp. 136, 149–50). Although hopeful about what the U.S. had achieved in Afghanistan with “a comparatively modest investment of troops and money” (p. 147), they postulated that to match the per capita security deployment in Bosnia, Iraq would need 460,000 foreign troops in the initial year of occupation, drawing down to 258,000 by 2005 and 145,000 by 2008 (p. 198).⁵¹ In the event, the commitment of U.S. and allied forces numbered approximately 150,000 by summer 2003. More robust than the foreign presence in Afghanistan but still relatively low, troop levels in Iraq were blamed for the violent instability that continued past the

⁵⁰ For alternative inferences from a similar set of cases, see Christopher J. Coyne and Steve Davies, “Empire: Public Goods and Bads,” *Econ Journal Watch* 4 (January 2007), 33–37.

⁵¹ Dobbins underlines the point in his chapter; Dobbins, “Learning the Lessons of Iraq,” in Fukuyama, 223.

formal declaration of the end of “major combat operations” on May 1, 2003. Ten days after that Ambassador L. Paul Bremer assumed control of the Coalition Provisional Authority, which was charged with stewarding Iraq’s democratic reincarnation. If an insufficient troop supply remains the most cited cause of America’s difficulties in Iraq, Bremer’s ill-starred tenure heading the CPA comes a close second.

During his first week on the job Bremer ordered the “De-Baathification of Iraqi Society” and drafted an edict disbanding Iraq’s military (issued on May 23). These commands cut far deeper into the political infrastructure than Bremer’s predecessor, retired general Jay Garner, had advised, and they alienated an estimated four hundred thousand Iraqi civil servants and soldiers.⁵² Subsequent accounts, including those in Fukuyama’s collection, have stressed how Bremer’s initial actions undercut the possibility of political reconciliation, exacerbated the insecurity of Iraq’s Sunni Arab minority, and fueled a nascent insurgency (Diamond, in Fukuyama, 192–93; Forman, in Fukuyama, 204–5; Dobbins, in Fukuyama, 224; Fukuyama, in Fukuyama, 234–36).⁵³ Isolated from Sunnis who had largely staffed the Baathist state, America’s viceroy fumbled again when dealing with Iraq’s Shia majority. Constituting an estimated 55 percent of the country’s population, Shia Arabs were the presumptive beneficiaries of Saddam Hussein’s overthrow; any shift to representative government would enable them to convert demographic strength into political influence. Accordingly, the CPA balked at the notion of early elections, despite the endorsement of the measure by Iraq’s most influential Shia leader, Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani (Diamond, in Fukuyama, 183–84). Instead of initiating elections, Bremer approved a twenty-five-member governing council with a presidency that would rotate principally among returned Iraqi exiles.⁵⁴ In the view of former CPA consultant Larry Diamond, Bremer pursued control over Iraqis rather than legitimacy among them (p. 186). For most of his tenure he seemed to lack both.⁵⁵

The consequences of Bremer’s early missteps were witnessed by Noah Feldman during his stint with the CPA. Feldman arrived in Iraq in May 2003, dismayed by his colleagues’ in-flight reading selections: “new books on the American occupation and reconstruction of Germany and Japan” (Feldman, 1). While others recalled post-World War

⁵² Phillips (fn. 1), 145, 149; Woodward (fn. 1), 193–98.

⁵³ Ibid.; Packer (fn. 1), 195–96; Shadid (fn. 1), 151–52.

⁵⁴ Woodward (fn. 1), 234.

⁵⁵ Recalling Ikenberry’s work, it would seem that Bremer was unable to “dominate” the population or to “bind” U.S. forces with Iraqis into a “mutually acceptable postwar order.” See Ikenberry (fn. 31), 50–51.

II nation-building, Feldman expected substantial differences and carried with him the area expertise to apprehend Iraq's specific challenges. Chapter 1 of *What We Owe Iraq* enumerates how post-Saddam Iraq was more severely disadvantaged than post-Axis Germany and Japan for "the creation of reasonably legitimate, reasonably liberal democracies" (p. 8). While recognizing that modern-day Iraq is an artifact of British "nation-building" during the 1920s, Feldman argues that the United States has an ethical obligation to leave a better legacy—and that it can (pp. 30–32). Ironically for an endorsement of foreign stewardship, Feldman expresses surprise at the CPA's chaotic operations and pins his hopes on the democratic maneuvers of Iraqis like Sistani. In fall 2003 Bremer belatedly reached out to the eminent cleric and acquiesced to his call for an elected constitutional drafting assembly (p. 41). American officials hoped through these measures to win over Sistani's supporters and prevent the rise of more radical clerics.⁵⁶ For Feldman, that convergence of foreign goals and local interests is the crux of successful nation-building (p. 51).

His book's second chapter, "Trusteeship, Paternalism, and Self-Interest," wrestles with the perennial problem of occupiers placing their own interests ahead of their charges' needs. Feldman pegs nation-builders' morality to their responsibility for holding "in trust" the country over which they preside: "Put simply, the occupying force owes the same ethical duties to the people being governed that an ordinary, elected democratic government would owe them. It must govern in their interests; and it must not put its own narrow interests ahead of the interests of the people being governed" (p. 64). But there is one glaring problem that Feldman himself acknowledges: the occupier will not stand for election; there will be no binding mechanism for holding the nation-builder accountable to the public he purports to serve (pp. 64–65).⁵⁷ In trying to resolve this ethical and logical conundrum, Feldman slides from legalism to optimism. When unfettered by elections, the occupier should vigilantly guarantee freedoms of association and expression so that the occupied population may communicate its interests: "[I]t is the ethical duty of the trustee to allow, and even to facilitate, these forms of participation" (p. 68). Thus, after asking, "Who guards the guardians? Who keeps an eye on the trustee . . . ?" (p. 65), Feldman answers that the guardians will guard themselves, a circular proposition belied during the very period Feldman spent in Iraq. By fall 2003 the unelected CPA

⁵⁶ Woodard (fn. 1), 264.

⁵⁷ In the next chapter Feldman writes: "The nation builder will not stand directly for election, so it follows as a matter of course that he can never be as accountable as elected politicians can be" (p. 100).

was already deflecting Iraqis' criticisms and constraining the country's public space.⁵⁸ Even the tragedy of Abu Ghraib—gamely sidestepped with the phrase “abuses happen”—is treated as an anomaly rather than a by-product of Feldman's autotrusteeship (pp. 68–69).

Notably, Feldman acknowledges his own limits at managing Iraqis' affairs. Remarking on his interactions with Iraqi lawyers, he recalls the encounters “showed me just how little I really understood the thought world of the Iraqis with whom I had the greatest amount in common” (p. 76). These semiconfessional anecdotes do not inspire confidence in foreign trusteeship: if the Oxford-educated Feldman is at pains to execute his charge, what trouble might his less qualified colleagues stir up? Rather than resolving this tension, *What We Owe Iraq* oscillates between self-awareness—“[T]he reality is that we do not really know how to build a nation any better than do its citizens” (p. 71)—and self-justification—“The United States now has no ethical choice but to remain until an Iraqi security force, safely under the civilian control of the government of a legitimate, democratic state, can be brought into existence” (p. 81).⁵⁹ On balance, Feldman's avowal of the occupier's ineptitude is more cover than critique.

Feldman's third and final chapter discusses how effective nation-builders will put themselves out of business by handing power to an elected “democratic government [that] does exercise actual sovereignty” (pp. 94, 97). The occupier's incentive to relinquish sovereignty is not specified and underlines the problem of Feldman's work: *What We Owe Iraq* assumes a self-abnegating benevolence by the nation-builder that is as illusory in current Iraq as in the prior cases Feldman reproves. Four years after Feldman's stint in the CPA, many readers may embrace rather than mock his Hippocratic straw man: “I can almost hear readers saying. ‘A little more inaction is just what we need in the international sphere to help us avoid getting into messes like the one in Iraq’” (p. 27). Perhaps. As lawyers and political scientists assess the United States' mounting obligations to Iraq, the ethics of nonintervention may fare quite well.⁶⁰ Bremer's tenure illustrates how nation-builders court a backlash proportionate to their attempts at change.

⁵⁸ On media censorship in post-Saddam Iraq, see Marc Lynch, *Voices of the New Arab Public: Iraq, Al-Jazeera, and Middle East Politics Today* (New York: Columbia University Press), 214–27.

⁵⁹ At points contradictory statements follow one another: “In the end . . . not we, but the Iraqis, will have to run these institutions and make them work—and there is just too much that we do not understand about the complexities of Iraqi politics and society. My skepticism, however, does not lead me to conclude that we should abandon any role in the process whereby institutions must be designed”; Feldman, 82.

⁶⁰ For a critical accounting based on international law, see Richard Falk, Irene Gendzier, and Robert Jay Lifton, *Crimes of War: Iraq* (New York: Nation Books, 2006).

Even as Bremer recognized Sistani's influence and pursued inroads with Iraqi Shia, he tried in vain to marginalize the militant cleric Muqtada al Sadr. Despite having only midranking clerical credentials, Sadr bore the nationalist mantle of his father (a senior cleric slain under Saddam Hussein's rule) and already commanded one of Iraq's largest militias when the CPA began operating.⁶¹ Drawing on his experience in Iraq in early 2004, Diamond details how the U.S. attempted in vain to sideline Sadr, only to find the cleric mobilizing masses of armed supporters to his cause. Bremer's futile quest to arrest Sadr strengthened the young cleric's hand, burnished his nationalist bona fides, and signaled to other political movements that the rule of militias trumped the CPA's writ (Diamond, in Fukuyama, 178–81). The CPA chief's hapless manhunt highlights a more daunting challenge than a dearth of commitment—an inability to use extant allocations of military resources and institutional authority to neutralize adversarial elites. The CPA could neither ignore Sadr nor dislodge him from his pivotal position in Iraqi society. Thus the proverbial firebrand continued shaping the nascent post-Saddam state long after Bremer had formally handed over sovereignty and departed from Iraq on June 28, 2004.

Bremer's clumsy pursuit of Sadr paralleled his troubles with the Sunnis. Yet the two problems are best understood in tandem. The decision to de-Baathify the state and disband the army was linked to the CPA's challenge of including Shia in the post-Saddam order. Any consideration of what went wrong must grapple with the counterfactuals of what new challenges the alternatives might have catalyzed. Had the CPA behaved more leniently toward Sunni Baathists, it would likely have fueled Sadr's radicalism and doomed the modest rapport Bremer eventually struck with Sistani. A more aggressive policy against Sadr would have confronted the mass-based movement surrounding him. Tactical criticisms of poor decisions thus oversimplify the political problems that overshadowed the CPA's thirteen months. It is tempting to imagine in hindsight a tortuous but effective path toward harmonizing U.S. goals with indigenous authorities—a formula that reconciled or removed the strongest local actors. But the history of nation-building cautions against such a judgment and shows how the intended process yields to the surrounding context. In the Philippines, Japan, and Vietnam, American administrators conceded to the very elites they intended to replace and deferred to the societies they meant to transform. Plans for

⁶¹ Juan Cole, "The United States and Shi'ite Religious Factions in Post-Ba'athist Iraq," *Middle East Journal* 57 (Autumn 2003), 552–53; Etherington (fn. 1), 88.

reactivating state-owned enterprises and amnestying Baathists suggest this pattern is recurring in Iraq.⁶² Miscalculations by Bremer and his successors are manifestations of this dilemma but not its root causes.

HONING THE TECHNIQUE

Given the breadth of political problems that dogged Bremer's CPA, the conclusions of Fukuyama's edited volume seem disproportionately narrow. Despite an impressive set of contributors, *Nation-Building: Beyond Afghanistan and Iraq* mainly amplifies Fukuyama's prior call for a "standing U.S. government office to manage nation-building," based on Presidential Decision Directive 56 (PDD 56) of May 1997.⁶³ As a response to the hybrid political-military nature of early post-cold war interventions (in northern Iraq, Somalia, and Haiti), PDD 56 offered general guidelines for cooperation between departments, particularly State and Defense (Flournoy, in Fukuyama, 96–103). The Bush administration did not follow PDD 56 in Afghanistan or Iraq, although it belatedly created a "Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization" (Fukuyama, in Fukuyama, 241).⁶⁴ Distilling the lessons from "many of the chapters" in his edited volume, Fukuyama concludes, "Managing a postconflict reconstruction is an enormously complicated task, made more difficult because it is not done often enough to become routine" (p. 240). It follows that the United States should institutionalize its nation-building practices, either by resurrecting PDD 56 or by buttressing the nascent Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization. The interior chapters that support this conclusion echo the voluntarist focus of the study led by Dobbins.

Michèle Flournoy's chapter, for example, draws unremarkable lessons from Clinton-era nation-building: avoid having rival agencies at home and competing chains of command in the field (pp. 88–89); preserve public support for the effort (p. 91); provide requisite manpower (p. 92); keep operational orders in step with policy changes (p. 93); and establish the framework for an orderly transition to local or international

⁶² "U-turn as U.S. Tries to Revive Iraq State Industry," *Financial Times*, March 8, 2007; "Iraq Moves to Ease Rules on Baathists," *Financial Times*, March 28, 2007.

⁶³ Francis Fukuyama, "Nation-Building 101," *Atlantic Online* (January–February 2004), <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200401/fukuyama> (accessed February 27, 2007).

⁶⁴ The Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization was created on August 5, 2004. Its principal mission "is to lead, coordinate and institutionalize U.S. Government civilian capacity to prevent or prepare for post-conflict situations, and to help stabilize and reconstruct societies in transition from conflict or civil strife, so they can reach a sustainable path toward peace, democracy and a market economy"; <http://www.state.gov/s/crs/> (accessed March 12, 2007).

authority (p. 94). While sensible as policy guidelines, these proposals may have an ephemeral impact on the political challenges confounding U.S. interventions. If the conditions in Germany and Japan are any indication, nation-building success has hinged less on what occurs within Washington and more on the prior experiences of the target societies. Francis Sutton's somewhat nostalgic chapter, "Nation-Building in the Heyday of the Classic Development Ideology," passes over nation-building's sordid course through Southeast Asia and concludes: "[W]e continue to be ready to undertake brave ventures to bring democracy—and its necessary condition, hope for prosperity—to distant and troubled places" (p. 61). These chapters seem set on reviving rather than revising discredited approaches from the past, ironically linking Fukuyama's call for a nation-building bureaucracy to the (notorious) performance of earlier nation-building bureaucracies. PDD 56 is not the Alliance for Progress, but one could reasonably expect from it the same shortfalls that bedeviled Kennedy-era planners.⁶⁵

Like Fukuyama, Cooley sees Iraq through the prism of interagency communication and faults the CPA for combining the worst aspects of multidivisional and unitary hierarchies. M-form in its relationship to Washington, the CPA divvied up government functions among an unprecedented number of independent contractors (pp. 145–47). "This use of for-profit contractors for individual functions," he writes, "is a critical organizational difference between the administration of Iraq and that of previous occupations," including MacArthur's Japan (p. 146). The consequent coordination problems drove Bechtel and Halliburton's debacle restoring electricity in fall 2003, one of the CPA blunders cited in Fukuyama's volume (Forman, in Fukuyama, 206): "While Bechtel needed natural gas and fuel [managed by Halliburton] to operate Iraqi power stations, Halliburton required electricity [administered by Bechtel] to restart Iraqi refineries. As a result, the necessary project integration was delayed by months and the power crisis in the country was unnecessarily exacerbated" (Cooley, 150). This is a cogent account of one of the CPA's more spectacular failings, but Cooley's emphasis on the differences between firm-type hierarchies seems ill suited for explaining more fundamental defects of America's work in Iraq. Readers may nod in assent at his prognosis that effective institutional change in Iraq "will be highly unlikely for the foreseeable future, regardless of

⁶⁵ Robert Packenham, *Liberal America and the Third World: Political Development Ideas in Foreign Aid and Social Sciences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973); Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

future American commitment, resolve, or spending in the country" (p. 156). But they may also question whether a more streamlined subcontracting regime would have made much difference. As illustrated by the dilemmas of managing Sunni-Shia politics in post-Saddam Iraq, institutional hierarchies are imbricated in the societies they seek to organize.

CONCLUSION

America's political legacy in Iraq is far from settled and comparative analysis of that impact has barely begun. Academicians and general readers will appreciate the efforts of Dobbins, Feldman, Cooley, Fukuyama, and Grandin at illuminating these turbid cases. Situated in a broader record of involvements abroad, the United States' recent experience in the Middle East can be rendered more intelligible, if not any less complex. A series of popular books on the Iraq War have become a first draft of history, centered on poor planning, inadequate resources, and incompetent administration. Cooley, Fukuyama, and Dobbins et al. reinforce that interpretation and instruct future generations on how to remedy these shortcomings: coordinate the proper departments, marshal the requisite forces to maintain security, and, above all, prepare for a prolonged commitment. But, sometimes despite themselves, they also suggest a more provocative lesson. Arguments about greater inter-agency cooperation at home and sustained commitment abroad clash with cases included and with those left out.

Although a conclusive judgment on America's capacity for nation-building lies beyond the scope of this article, the record of interventions casts doubt on the prevailing thesis of effort and technical competence. By showcasing the outliers of Germany and Japan, comparative studies of nation-building have placed in relief the shared conditions that predated U.S. tutelage, particularly a robust history of national sovereignty, institutional development, and experience with parliamentary government. Appropriate consideration of the Philippines, Vietnam, and other prolonged interventions further highlights the importance of local authority patterns. Over the past century nation-building outcomes have greatly depended on prior conditions in the subject society. Industrialized parliamentary regimes (Germany, Japan) possessed the needed political infrastructure for democratization, whereas developing countries gained little institutionally from even lengthy American occupations. The United States has succeeded at nation-building most demonstrably (and most quickly) when its interventions have built upon local institutions and traditions. In the metaphor of Karl Deutsch, the

U.S. has been more effective at refurbishing and strengthening an existing state than at laying a new foundation: it has done best where it has attempted less. This reinterpretation of America's role in nation-building helps resolve an unaddressed tension in the reviewed works. It also echoes an earlier wariness about externally induced democratization.

In a chapter of *Polyarchy* titled "Foreign Control," Robert Dahl judged it very unlikely that the United States would soon repeat its landmark performance in democratizing Germany and Japan: "Comparatively speaking, reestablishing polyarchy in these countries was an easy job. In fact, the very smoothness with which polyarchy was inaugurated encouraged American policy makers to adopt simplistic and overoptimistic assumptions about the prospects of inaugurating polyarchy elsewhere."⁶⁶ His prognosis was somber:

The end of formal colonialism means that the outside power today must move into a nominally independent country where nationalism is probably strong and the boomerang effect [of mass disdain for the occupier] is likely to be powerful. A substantial proportion of political activists are likely to favor a hegemonic regime of some sort. Public contestation, which may allow deadly enemies to enhance their following, will seem to be a luxury at best, at worst downright pernicious. . . . Thus the outside power is drawn into massive coercion.⁶⁷

The pursuit of nation-building for political development and international security presently confronts the dilemmas Dahl dreaded. Having attended to technical variables regarding the home bureaucracy and resources in the field, scholars of nation-building must again grapple with the political and social challenges that generated skepticism among an earlier generation. As academics and policymakers assess the products of America's latest try at nation-building, they should scour this literature for lessons new and old.

⁶⁶ Dahl (fn. 18), 200.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 201.