

# Policy Analysis

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Routing

## *Failed States and Flawed Logic* *The Case against a Standing Nation-Building Office*

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### Executive Summary

In July 2004 the State Department opened the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS). Its official mandate is 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.” The idea of a standing nation-building office has strong support in the Bush administration, among academics and foreign policy analysts, and from key players in Congress.

The arguments in favor of creating such an office are rooted in the belief that failed states are threats to U.S. national security. S/CRS’s early projects included postconflict planning for Sudan, Haiti, and Cuba, all countries largely unrelated to U.S. national security concerns. Although failed states can present threats, it is a

mistake to argue that they frequently do. The few attempts that have been made to quantify what “state failure” means demonstrate that it is not inherently threatening.

Moreover, attempting to remedy state failure would pose serious problems for U.S. foreign policy. U.S. nation-building projects in the past had a highly dubious track record, and there is no indication that future projects would fare any better.

A standing office devoted to nation building is a cure worse than the disease. Sober assessment of the U.S. national interest and a more judicious approach to intervention abroad would be better guiding principles than assuming that all failed or failing states pose a threat. When interventions are absolutely necessary, existing institutional capacity is sufficient to carry out stabilization and reconstruction missions.

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## **Introduction**

In July 2004 the State Department opened the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS), borrowing funds and personnel from elsewhere in the department. The creation of the office was inspired by a sense of Congress resolution spearheaded by Sen. Richard Lugar (R-IN) in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and cosponsored by Sens. Joseph Biden (D-DE) and Chuck Hagel (R-NE).<sup>1</sup> The resolution sought to “provide for the development, as a core mission of the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development, of an effective expert civilian response capability to carry out stabilization and reconstruction activities in a country or region that is in, or is in transition from, conflict or strife.”<sup>2</sup>

The Senate bill proposed the creation of a standing Response Readiness Corps of 250 people drawn from the State Department, the Department of Defense, and other executive agencies to conduct nation-building activities. The bill also recommended the formation of a Response Readiness Reserve with a staff of more than 500 that could be called up “as needed to carry out the purpose of the Corps.” Under the Senate bill, S/CRS would receive initial funding of \$100 million; each year thereafter S/CRS would receive “such sums as may be necessary to replenish” the initial funds.<sup>3</sup>

The reasoning behind the creation of such an office was clear. Lugar, explaining the bill at a March 2004 hearing, argued, “International crises are inevitable, and in most cases, U.S. security interests will be threatened by sustained instability.”<sup>4</sup> A few weeks later, during an interview on National Public Radio, Lugar said, “The sea change, really, in our foreign policy is that now it is acceptable and, in fact, desirable for Americans to talk about successful nation building.”<sup>5</sup>

Carlos Pascual, the first coordinator for reconstruction and stabilization, and Steven D. Krasner, director of the State Department’s policy planning staff, argue that “weak and

failed states pose an acute risk to U.S. and global security.”<sup>6</sup> Behind those sentiments looms the volatile and unraveling security situation in Iraq. According to the Congressional Research Service,

For many analysts and policymakers, the ongoing Iraq operation illustrates a U.S. government need for new planning and coordination arrangements that would provide a leadership role for civilians in post-conflict phases of military operations and new civilian capabilities to augment and relieve the military as soon as possible, and greater international coordination.<sup>7</sup>

The legislative process eventually produced Public Law 108-447, a version of the Senate bill that only establishes the office and lays out its mandate. In addition to “monitoring political and economic instability worldwide to anticipate the need for mobilizing United States and international assistance for countries or regions [in, or in transition from, conflict or civil strife],” the office is tasked with “determining the appropriate non-military [responses of the] United States, including but not limited to demobilization, policing, human rights monitoring, and public information efforts.”<sup>8</sup> That law did not provide for any of the funding or staffing proposals contained within the original bill.

Although the law created a legal basis for S/CRS, Congress starved S/CRS of funding in the 2006 foreign operations bill. Congress did allocate \$24.1 million to staff S/CRS, but it zeroed out the \$100 million request for a “conflict response fund,” which would have created a standing corps of nation builders. During the conference on the bill, Congress requested that, before the State Department resubmits a funding request for the conflict response fund in 2007, it provide Congress with a “comprehensive, disciplined and coherent strategy detailing how [S/CRS] will coordinate” the U.S. approach to postconflict operations.<sup>9</sup>

When the State Department resubmits the request for funding, members of Congress should consider that the arguments in favor of

the office—namely, that instability in itself represents a threat to America and that nation building must be the cure—are deeply flawed.

Most nation-building missions are far removed from U.S. national security interests. Such operations threaten to embroil Americans in an array of conflicts abroad for indefinite periods of time, with vague or ambiguous public mandates, and with little likelihood of success. In short, this entire approach to security policy is a recipe for squandering American power, American money, and potentially American lives.

This paper will challenge the claim that state failure necessarily poses a security threat to the United States, using data on failed and failing states from several scholarly and non-governmental sources. We then explore the faulty reasoning behind the scholarly work that lends support to the idea of a nation-building office. Next, we examine the failed, costly legacy of U.S. nation-building projects in the past and argue that the creation of a standing office, contrary to the arguments of its advocates, offers little hope of improving on that track record. The paper also addresses the particular concerns arising from the Iraq war, and we respond to claims that S/CRS could have made the Iraq project more successful. Finally, we argue that insofar as the expansion of political and economic liberalism abroad is an important goal of U.S. foreign policy, the pursuit of that goal does not require an institutional nation-building capacity.

## **Here a Threat, There a Threat . . .**

The notion that state failure constitutes a direct threat to the United States is alarmingly widespread and has been in circulation for some time. In 1992 then-UN secretary general Boutros Boutros-Ghali laid the foundations for that principle in a treatise to the Security Council titled “An Agenda for Peace, Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking, and Peace-Keeping.” In that document, Boutros-Ghali explained:

The time of absolute and exclusive sovereignty . . . has passed; its theory was never matched by its reality. It is the task of leaders of States today to understand this and to find a balance between the needs of good internal governance and the requirements of an ever more interdependent world.<sup>10</sup>

Although Boutros-Ghali was speaking about the United Nations, he prescribed a course of nation building as the cure for the world’s ills and as the way to foster peace and security. Where there was conflict, Boutros-Ghali argued, the United Nations should seek a dizzying array of goals, including “disarming the previously warring parties and the restoration of order, [pursuing] custody and possible destruction of weapons, repatriating refugees, advisory and training support for security personnel, monitoring elections, advancing efforts to protect human rights, [and] reforming or strengthening governmental institutions and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation.”<sup>11</sup>

The Clinton administration wholeheartedly embraced nation building as an important part of U.S. national security policy. In an address at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies in September 1993, National Security Adviser Anthony Lake enunciated the Clinton doctrine of “enlargement”:

[T]o the extent democracy and market economics hold sway in other nations, our own nation will be more secure, prosperous and influential, while the broader world will be more humane and peaceful. . . . The successor to a doctrine of containment must be a strategy of enlargement—enlargement of the world’s free community of market democracies.<sup>12</sup>

“Enlargement,” as it turned out, was rather messy in practice and lacked broad domestic support within the United States. President Clinton’s first major foreign policy action

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turned into a tactical and strategic catastrophe in Somalia, when his administration attempted nation-building measures in that country, resulting in the deaths of 22 American service personnel. The Somalia operation led to a hasty retreat and a suspicion around the world that the United States was a paper tiger, a country that would run home with its tail tucked between its legs at the first sign of casualties.<sup>13</sup> More accurately, the Somalia experience showed that few Americans are willing to risk American lives when vital national interests are not at stake.

Nonetheless, the Clinton administration thought it could recover from the Somalia debacle. It tinkered with the formula for intervention and tried out its new theories in places as diverse (and far removed from U.S. interests) as Haiti and Kosovo. Those interventions cost billions of dollars<sup>14</sup> and resulted in neither the spread of liberal democracy nor the enhancement of U.S. national security. At the time of this writing, Haiti remains a failed state, and the crisis in Kosovo is only forestalled by the presence of international peacekeepers. Its political status is entirely unresolved.<sup>15</sup>

Even amid the disaster that was the Clinton foreign policy, nation-building theorists were undeterred. In a widely read and influential article in 1994, the *Atlantic Monthly's* Robert Kaplan warned about what he saw as "the coming anarchy." In Kaplan's view, Western strategists needed to start concerning themselves with "what is occurring . . . throughout West Africa and much of the underdeveloped world: the withering away of central governments, the rise of tribal and regional domains, the unchecked spread of disease, and the growing pervasiveness of war."<sup>16</sup> Kaplan went on to warn, "The coming upheaval, in which foreign embassies are shut down, states collapse, and contact with the outside world takes place through dangerous, disease-ridden coastal trading posts, will loom large in the century we are entering."<sup>17</sup> Kaplan based his case heavily on Malthusian economics and the notion that "the environment . . . is the national-security issue of the early twenty-first century," because competition for scarce resources and collective

action problems of environmental degradation would precipitate conflicts.<sup>18</sup>

Notwithstanding the fact that many of Kaplan's suppositions were rhetorically overheated, his and others' contributions to the national debate over foreign policy after the Cold War pointed in an inevitable direction: toward the idea that insecurity and instability in far-flung corners of the globe should be placed at the top of the list of U.S. foreign policy concerns.

The 2000 presidential election took place in the shadow of the nation-building adventures of the 1990s. Candidate George W. Bush seemed skeptical about the utility and necessity of nation building. Bush argued that the role of U.S. foreign policy should be to protect the vital interests of the United States. During the second presidential debate, candidate Bush took a shot at the interventionism of the 1990s, stating, "I'm not so sure the role of the United States is to go around the world and say, 'This is the way it's got to be.'"<sup>19</sup> Bush pointed to the high costs and dubious outcomes of nation building, stating, "I don't think our troops ought to be used for what's called nation building. . . . I mean, we're going to have some kind of nation-building corps from America? Absolutely not."<sup>20</sup> Condoleezza Rice, Bush's national security adviser during the campaign, famously described the Bush view thus: "Carrying out civil administration and police functions is simply going to degrade the American capability to do the things America has to do. We don't need to have the 82nd Airborne escorting kids to kindergarten."<sup>21</sup>

After September 11, 2001, however, the Bush administration changed course dramatically. *The United States National Security Strategy*, released in September 2002, made "expand[ing] the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy" a central plank of America's response to the 9/11 attacks.<sup>22</sup> Part of the administration's new security policy would be to "help build police forces, court systems, and legal codes, local and provincial government institutions, and electoral systems."<sup>23</sup> The overarching goal was to "make the world not just safer but better."<sup>24</sup>

Clearly, the president had changed his mind about the wisdom of attempting to build nations.

Alongside the Bush administration's newfound appreciation for nation building, the failed-states-as-security-threat idea proliferated rapidly. Indeed, it has become practically an article of faith. The administration's October 2005 *National Intelligence Strategy* claims (without support) that "the lack of freedom in one state endangers the peace and freedom of others, and . . . failed states are a refuge and breeding ground of extremism." Accordingly, the strategy asks our overworked intelligence services not just to gather information on America's enemies but to "[b]olster the growth of democracy and sustain peaceful democratic states."<sup>25</sup>

Academics and pundits agree that state failure is a serious security issue. For example, Lawrence J. Korb and Robert O. Boorstin of the Center for American Progress warn that "weak and failing states pose as great a danger to the American people and international stability as do potential conflicts among the great powers."<sup>26</sup> A task force report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies agreed: "[A]s a superpower with a global presence and global interests, the United States does have a stake in remedying failed states."<sup>27</sup> Francis Fukuyama, professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, says that "it should be abundantly clear that state weakness and failure is [*sic*] the single most critical threat to U.S. national security."<sup>28</sup>

In his book *The Pentagon's New Map* Thomas P. M. Barnett, formerly a professor at the U.S. Naval War College, went even further, arguing that even the above claims fail to capture the breadth of the problem. Barnett believes that all countries suffering from "disconnectedness"—detachment from the global economy—pose the central threat to U.S. national security. "Eradicating disconnectedness, therefore, becomes the defining security task of our age."<sup>29</sup> For Barnett, an ambitious process of forcibly "exporting security" is necessary to remedy disconnectedness in "Central Asia, but also [in] the Middle East, Africa, the

Caribbean Rim, and—yes—even Southeast Asia."<sup>30</sup> Pursuing that strategy, Barnett admits, would require a radical realignment of the armed forces into a "Leviathan Force" for war fighting and a "SysAdmin Force" to police and administer countries after the United States changes their regimes.<sup>31</sup>

Once an idea of the left, the belief that failed states are threatening has found a home on the political right as well. In July 2005 Brent Scowcroft, a longtime Republican realist, cochaired a task force on postconflict capabilities convened by the Council on Foreign Relations. Although somewhat less hyperbolic than other reports, its report proceeds from the assumption that "[a]ction to stabilize and rebuild states marked by conflict is not 'foreign policy as social work,' a favorite quip of the 1990s. It is equally a humanitarian concern and a national security priority."<sup>32</sup> The report advocated tasking the national security adviser with crafting "overarching policy associated with stabilization and reconstruction activities," making stability operations "a strategic priority for the armed forces," elevating S/CRS's director to undersecretary of state, and funding S/CRS with not just \$100 million but an annual "replenishing reserve fund" of \$500 million—nearly a five-fold increase over the proposed budget.<sup>33</sup>

## Failed States and Failed Reasoning

All of those arguments suffer not so much from inaccuracy as from analytical sloppiness. It would be absurd to claim that the ongoing state failure in, say, Haiti, poses a national security threat of the same order as would, for example, state failure in Indonesia, with its population of 240 million, or in nuclear-armed Pakistan. In fact, the overwhelming majority of failed states have posed no security threat to the United States. The blanket characterization that failed states represent *anything* monolithic is misleading. Rather, the dangers that can arise from failed states are not the product of state failure itself; threats are the result of

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other conditions, such as the presence of terrorist cells or other malign actors within a failed state. It is not the “failure” that threatens.

American intelligence services, U.S. diplomats, and the entire national security bureaucracy are already properly tasked with determining which states, failed or otherwise, present threats to U.S. national security. While September 11 certainly underscored the potential dangers that nontraditional threats could pose, it did nothing to transform each poorly governed nation into a pressing national security concern.

That is not to say that threats cannot emanate from failed states. Afghanistan in the late 1990s met anyone’s definition of a failed state, and the chaos in Afghanistan clearly contributed to Osama bin Laden’s decision to relocate his operations there from Sudan in 1996. However, the security threat to America arose amid fitful cooperation between al-Qaeda and the Taliban government. The Taliban were aware that al-Qaeda training camps existed in Afghanistan. September 11 was the result of a failure of U.S. leadership to recognize the implications of bin Laden’s plans coupled with the inability to deter the Taliban regime from actively supporting al-Qaeda. Afghanistan under the Taliban was both a failed state and a threat, but, in that respect, it was actually quite a rarity.

And the fact that al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations can and do operate in failed states provides no unique insight, either. Al-Qaeda and its affiliates operate effectively from Germany, Canada, and other countries that are by no means failed states. In fact, dealing with terrorist threats in failed states can in some ways be easier than dealing with them in cohesive modern states. As Gary Dempsey pointed out in 2002:

Failed states are where the terrorists are most vulnerable to covert action, commando raids, surprise attacks, and local informants willing to work for a few dollars. Failed states are not “safe havens”; they are defenseless positions.<sup>34</sup>

At times, the claims that failed states are

inherently threatening seem so dubious that one wonders whether the arguments may not simply be a vehicle for generating support for foreign interventions. For example, Stephen D. Krasner, now the State Department’s director of policy planning, and Jack Goldsmith, then a professor of law at the University of Chicago, wrote an article in 2003 in which they identified the “problematic absence of democratic support for humanitarian intervention.”<sup>35</sup> Goldsmith and Krasner cite the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, which argued that “the budgetary cost and risk to personnel involved in any military action may in fact make it politically imperative for the intervening state to be able to claim some degree of self-interest in the intervention, however altruistic its primary motive might actually be.”<sup>36</sup> Goldsmith and Krasner conclude:

This absence of democratic support is a fundamental problem for those who insist that nations should intervene to arrest human suffering in other nations . . . this means that political leaders cannot engage in acts of altruism abroad much beyond what constituents and/or interest groups will support. This conclusion is fatal to the interventionist project.<sup>37</sup>

With that in mind, it is wise to view sweeping claims about the supposed threats posed by failed states with considerable skepticism.

What would be more helpful, and more prudent, than issuing categorical statements about what failed states mean for the United States would be to examine countries, failed or otherwise, on the basis of discrete measures of threat assessment: to what extent does a government—or nonstate actors operating within a state—intend and have the means to attack America? Afghanistan serves as a stark reminder that we must not overlook failed states, but it does not justify moving failed states to the top of the list of security concerns. And even a cursory look at the empirical data on failed states shows that state failure rarely translates into threats to the United States.

## How Can We Measure State Failure, and Which States Are “Failed”?

To assess whether or not state failure poses a threat to U.S. national security, we must first define what “state failure” means and then examine the historical cases that meet that definition. The most comprehensive and analytically rigorous study of state failure was a task force report commissioned by the Central Intelligence Agency’s Directorate of Intelligence in 2000.<sup>38</sup> In that report, the authors sought to quantify and examine episodes of state failure between 1955 and 1998. Working from their first definition of state failure (when “central state authority collapses for several years”), the authors were able to find only 20 cases of bona fide state failure, too small a number to produce statistically significant conclusions. As a consequence, the authors chose to broaden the definition to include the following lesser events.<sup>39</sup>

- Revolutionary wars (REV), defined as “sustained violent conflict between governments and politically organized challengers that seek to overthrow the central government, replace its leaders, or seize power in one region”;
- Ethnic wars (ETH), defined as “sustained violent conflict in which national, ethnic, religious, or other communal minorities challenge governments to seek major changes in status”;
- Adverse regime changes (REG), defined as “major, abrupt shifts in patterns of governance, including state collapse, periods of severe elite or regime instability, and shifts away from democratic toward authoritarian rule”; and
- Genocides and politicides (GEN), defined as “sustained policies by states or their agents, or, in civil wars, by either of the contending authorities that result in the deaths of a substantial portion of a communal or political group.”<sup>40</sup>

After establishing those new criteria, the

authors found 114 cases of state failure between 1955 and 1998.

Since one could make the case that state failure during the Cold War presented less of a threat than it does in today’s increasingly interconnected world, we explore only those cases of state failure occurring since or ongoing after 1990. Table 1 shows the task force’s state failure cases since 1990. The column labeled “NTF” highlights years in which the states in question exhibited what the authors call “near-total failures of state authority,” which more closely mirror the original definition of state failure that the task force rejected.<sup>41</sup>

A look at Table 1 calls into question some of the implications of the task force’s revised methodology. The new methodology increased the number of failed states nearly sixfold by virtue of a changed definition of what constituted state failure. Although the authors made that change in order to achieve a degree of statistical significance,<sup>42</sup> they contended that the new methodology was chosen because “events that fall beneath [the] total-collapse threshold often pose challenges to U.S. foreign policy as well.”<sup>43</sup> That speculative and highly subjective standard has produced a data set that characterizes China, Egypt, India, Iran, Iraq, Indonesia, Israel, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, and Turkey all as failed states as of December 1998. Surely it pollutes the discussion of failed states if Israel and Sierra Leone fall under the same general heading.

Further, an examination of the states characterized as failures reveals that, in fact, failed states rarely present security threats. Although the authors of the task force report did not define “challenges to U.S. foreign policy,” it is clear that the vast majority of countries characterized as failures did not (and do not) present threats that warrant broad U.S. government intervention on the order envisioned by the creators of S/CRS.<sup>44</sup> And to the extent that any of the states listed did represent security threats, broad nation-building missions targeted at the condition of state failure rather than the threat itself would not have been the most appropriate response.

For example, military action that would have

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**Table 1**  
**State Failure Incidents, 1990–98**

State	Years	Types of Conflict	NTF
Afghanistan	4/78–	REG, REV, GEN, REG, ETH, REV	1992–95
Albania	5/96–5/97	REG, REV	
Algeria	5/91–	REG, REV	
Armenia	12/96–9/96	REG	
Azerbaijan	2/88–6/97	ETH, REG	
Belarus	4/95–11/96	REG	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3/92–9/96	REG, ETH, GEN	1992–96
Burma	8/61–	ETH, REG, GEN, REV	
Burundi	8/88–	ETH, GEN, REG, GEN	1992–96
Cambodia	7/97–12/98	REG	
China	7/55–	ETH, REV	
Colombia	5/84–	REV	
Comoros	9/95–3/96	REG	
Congo—Brazzaville	6/97–10/97	REV, REG	
Congo—Kinshasa	9/91–	REG, ETH, REV	1997–
Croatia	6/91–12/95	ETH	
Egypt	4/86–	REV	
The Gambia	7/94–7/94	REG	
Georgia	6/91–12/93	ETH, REV	
Georgia	5/98–	ETH	
Guinea—Bissau	6/98–	REV, REG	1998
India	7/52–	ETH	
Iran	10/77–	REV, REG, ETH, REV, GEN	
Iraq	9/80–	ETH, GEN, ETH	
Indonesia	2/97–	REV, ETH	
Israel	6/67–	ETH	
Kazakhstan	8/95–8/95	REG	
Kenya	10/91–9/93	ETH	
Kyrgyzstan	12/95–2/96	REG	
Lesotho	8/94–12/98	REG, REG, REV	
Liberia	12/89–8/97	REV, REG	1990–96
Mexico	1/94–2/94	ETH	
Niger	1/96–7/96	REG	
Pakistan	8/83–	ETH	
Philippines	11/69–	REG, REV, ETH, GEN	
Rwanda	10/90–	ETH, REG, GEN	1994
Senegal	6/91–	ETH	
Sierra Leone	3/91–	REV, REG	1997–
Somalia	5/88–	ETH, REV, GEN, REG	1990–
Sri Lanka	7/83–	ETH, REV, GEN	
Sudan	7/83–	ETH, GEN, REG	
Tajikistan	4/92–	REV, REG	1992
Thailand	2/91–	REG, ETH	
Turkey	9/80–	REG, ETH	

State	Years	Types of Conflict	NTF
Uganda	2/66–	GEN, ETH, GEN, REV	
USSR	12/86–12/91	ETH, REG	1991
Yemen	5/90–10/94	REG	
Yugoslavia	4/90–1/92	REG, ETH	1991
Yugoslavia	2/98–	ETH	
Zambia	5/96–11/96	REG	

Source: *State Failure Task Force Report: Phase III Findings*, September 30, 2000, pp. 64–79.

**Table 2**  
**Fund for Peace/Foreign Policy List of Failed States as of 2004**

State	Ranking	State	Ranking
Côte d'Ivoire	1	Guatemala	31
Dem. Rep. of the Congo	2	Tanzania	32
Sudan	3	Equatorial Guinea	33
Iraq	4	Pakistan	34
Somalia	5	Nepal	35
Sierra Leone	6	Paraguay	36
Chad	7	Lebanon	37
Yemen	8	Egypt	38
Liberia	9	Ukraine	39
Haiti	10	Peru	40
Afghanistan	11	Honduras	41
Rwanda	12	Mozambique	42
North Korea	13	Angola	43
Colombia	14	Belarus	44
Zimbabwe	15	Saudi Arabia	45
Guinea	16	Ecuador	46
Bangladesh	17	Indonesia	47
Burundi	18	Turkey	48
Dominican Republic	19	Tajikistan	49
Central African Republic	20	Azerbaijan	50
Venezuela	21	Bahrain	51
Bosnia and Herzegovina	22	Vietnam	52
Burma/Myanmar	23	Cameroon	53
Uzbekistan	24	Nigeria	54
Kenya	25	Eritrea	55
Bhutan	26	Philippines	56
Uganda	27	Iran	57
Laos	28	Cuba	58
Syria	29	Russia	59
Ethiopia	30	The Gambia	60

Source: *Foreign Policy*, July–August 2005.

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assaulted the al-Qaeda leadership in Afghanistan could well have left Afghanistan a failed state but at the same time greatly reduced the threat emanating from that country. Attacking a threat rarely involves paving roads or establishing new judicial standards. For instance, in September 2000 a joint Defense Department-CIA operation used Predator drone aircraft to reconnoiter and potentially target bin Laden and the al-Qaeda leadership in Afghanistan. On its first flight the Predator caught sight of a “security detail around a tall man in a white robe at Bin Ladin’s Tarnak Farms compound outside Kandahar.” The intelligence community would later conclude that that man was likely Osama bin Laden.<sup>45</sup> Pursuing the Predator program and targeting bin Laden would have dealt a meaningful blow to al-Qaeda in 2000, while doing little to address Afghanistan’s governance. Afghanistan would have remained a failed state, but the threat to the United States would have been greatly reduced.

Other lists of failed states confirm that state failure in itself does not constitute a security threat. The British Department for International Development (DFID) used the World Bank’s Country Policy and Institutional Assessments methodology to draw up its own list of “fragile” states, defined almost exactly the same as are “failed” states in other studies.<sup>46</sup> DFID’s list included such countries as Burundi, Cameroon, Comoros, Guinea Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Indonesia, Kenya, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, São Tomé and Príncipe, Sierra Leone, the Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga, and Vanuatu.<sup>47</sup> DFID says that fragile states are problematic because they “are more likely to . . . fall prey to criminal and terrorist networks,”<sup>48</sup> but it is difficult to understand how many of the above countries could present security threats to the United States in any foreseeable scenario.

The Fund for Peace and *Foreign Policy* magazine published their own “failed states index” in the July–August 2005 issue of *Foreign Policy*. Using 12 indicators of state failure,<sup>49</sup> their methodology yielded a list much like those of the CIA task force and the DFID. The top 20 countries are considered “critical,” the next 20 “in danger,” and the final 20 “borderline.”<sup>50</sup>

The Fund for Peace/*Foreign Policy* list of failed states is given in Table 2.

The Fund for Peace/*Foreign Policy* list raises more questions than it answers about the state-failure-as-threat thesis. By the methodology used, the Ivory Coast is more “failed” than Iran, North Korea, and even Iraq. If one assumes that state failure in itself represents a threat, then the logical conclusion is that American security concerns for the Ivory Coast would be greater than they are for any of the less-failed nations. But that is obviously not the case. There are much better metrics for assessing levels of threat than the degree of state failure. The lists of “failed states” and “security threats” will no doubt overlap, but correlation does not equal causation. The obvious nonthreats that appear on all lists of failed states undermine the claim that there is something particular about failed states that is necessarily threatening.

## **An Unbounded Mandate and Its Potential Consequences**

S/CRS believes the advancement of political and economic reforms—in particular, the spread of democracy—constitutes part of its mandate. However, that way of thinking carries with it serious risks. For example, the CIA task force report, from which Table 1 is taken, calls into doubt the wisdom of attempting to push countries from autocracy to democracy. Task force members Jack A. Goldstone and Jay Ulfelder admit that “the transition from autocracy to democracy is not a simple process; indeed, the highest risk of political crisis lies in the middle ground, in autocracies with some political competition and in nominal democracies with factional competition and/or dominant chief executives.” Goldstone and Ulfelder worry that states in that stage “appear most vulnerable to the outbreak of large-scale violence, antidemocratic coups, and state collapse.”<sup>51</sup>

It is not only internal unrest that can follow in the wake of regime transformation. The risk

of full-blown war actually tends to increase in countries where political change has recently occurred. Professors Edward D. Mansfield of the University of Pennsylvania and Jack Snyder of Columbia University point out that

countries do not become mature democracies overnight. More typically, they go through a rocky transitional period, where democratic control over foreign policy is partial, where mass politics mixes in a volatile way with authoritarian elite politics, and where democratization suffers reversals. In this transitional phase of democratization, countries become more aggressive and war-prone, not less, and they do fight wars with democratic states.<sup>52</sup>

Thus, if U.S. foreign policy seeks to prevent widespread internal unrest or minimize the risk of war in the near term, or both, it may wish to eschew ambitious projects of “democratization,” or else be willing and able to occupy target countries indefinitely in the hopes that a fully formed democracy will eventually emerge. Without achieving “risk-mitigating” conditions such as “high levels of material well-being and openness to trade,” the CIA task force report warns, “[s]imply installing a democratic or partially democratic regime is unlikely to produce political stability.”<sup>53</sup>

In many cases, then, well-intentioned interventions could push states headlong into chaos and possibly even create security threats where none existed before. Although the pursuit of stability should not represent the totality of U.S. foreign policy, we should be confident that any intervention will produce outcomes beneficial to U.S. interests at an acceptable cost. Unfortunately, nation building has an extremely poor track record of achieving beneficial outcomes at acceptable costs, and it is far from clear that S/CRS can reverse the lessons of history.

Considering the three lists of failed states discussed above (CIA task force, *Foreign Policy*/Fund for Peace, and DFID), certain trends in classification emerge. Almost all of

the countries in question are poor to varying degrees, and most of them are struggling with the aftereffects of 20th-century colonialism. As Marina Ottaway of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and Stefan Mair of the SWP German Institute for International and Security Affairs point out, “There is hardly a low-income country that does not face the possibility of failure.”<sup>54</sup> In addition, one can see that the vast majority of failed states today were once colonized by a foreign power. Of the 77 countries that appear on at least one of the lists above, 64 were decolonized or achieved independence for the first time during the 20th century. More than half emerged from Western colonialism.

If so many of those nations are postcolonial constructs, meaning they became nations only when they were dubbed such by exiting colonial powers, that calls into question the fundamental structure of the nations S/CRS would be attempting to build. Francis Fukuyama argues that we ought not to talk of nation building at all; rather, he prefers the term “state building.” That is because “nation building in the sense of the creation of a community bound together by shared history and culture is well beyond the ability of any outside power to achieve . . . only states can be deliberately constructed. If a nation arises from this, it is more a matter of luck than design.”<sup>55</sup> Fukuyama’s admission, however, begs the question: can a cohesive state be successfully built where there is no nation? In many failed states, there exist several “nations.”

The case of Bosnia is instructive in this context. Ten years after the Dayton accords, Bosnia still lacks any meaningful sense of sovereignty. After years of foreign administration and billions of dollars spent on democratization, that country remains under the control of the Office of the High Representative. According to Gerald Knaus and Felix Martin of the European Stability Initiative, a European think tank, the OHR “can interpret its own mandate and so has essentially unlimited legal powers. It can dismiss presidents, prime ministers, judges, and mayors without having to submit its decisions for review by any independent appeals body. It can

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veto candidates for ministerial positions without needing publicly to present any evidence for its stance. It can impose legislation and create new institutions without having to estimate the cost to the Bosnian taxpayers.” Indeed, the authors admit, “such political arrangements bear an uncanny resemblance to . . . that of an imperial power over its colonial possessions.”<sup>56</sup>

In Bosnia, then, the enduring troubles of an ethnically and culturally diverse society were either too great to overcome, or the outside authorities in charge of the nation-building project were unwilling to let Bosnians try. As a result, Bosnia remains under the administration of outsiders, with no end in sight. That is precisely the type of mission in which S/CRS would be involved in the future.

### **Nation Building or Benevolent Colonialism?**

Since the empirical research on failed states does not demonstrate that they necessarily present threats, it is difficult to understand why the belief that they do is so widely held. A look at the scholarly literature on failed states helps to shed some light on the intellectual underpinnings of the logic behind S/CRS. Much of the analysis—including the work of the same public officials now arguing for the institutionalization of S/CRS—is quite explicit in explaining how and why the United States should base its foreign policy on overarching projects to address state failure. A number of scholars have advocated an office much along the lines of S/CRS, yet their final goal is even more ambitious.

Many advocates of nation building favor unraveling the Westphalian system of sovereignty that has prevailed roughly since the end of the 30 Years’ War in 1648 and installing in its place a different world order based on the rejection of sovereignty. Some have gone so far as to call for the restoration of colonial control over poorly governed parts of the world.<sup>57</sup>

Retired diplomats Gerald B. Helman and Steven R. Ratner proclaimed in 1993 that “it

is becoming clear that something must be done” about failed states.<sup>58</sup> They scorned the “talisman of ‘sovereignty,’” which they saw as an obstacle to an ambitious program of nation building. “That ill-defined and amorphous notion of international law,” they complained, “has been used to denote everything from a state’s political independence . . . to the more extreme view that all the internal affairs of a state are beyond the scrutiny of the international community.”<sup>59</sup>

Helman and Ratner set the tone for the sovereignty debate as it would go forward. By 2003 retired diplomats James R. Hooper and Paul R. Williams argued for what they called “earned sovereignty”: the idea being that target states would need to climb back into the good graces of the intervening power to regain their sovereignty. In some cases, that would take the form of “shared sovereignty”: domestic governments would perform whatever functions were allowed by the intervener, but other duties would be retained by the outside actor. “The element of shared sovereignty is quite flexible . . . as well as the time frame of shared sovereignty. . . . In some instances, it may be indefinite and subject to the fulfillment of certain conditions as opposed to specified timelines.”<sup>60</sup> The premise seems to be that countries will be returned to the control of their indigenous populations when the intervener decides it is appropriate.

According to James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, both political science professors at Stanford University, the new doctrine “may be described as neotrusteeship, or more provocatively, postmodern imperialism.”<sup>61</sup> As Fearon and Laitin see it, this imperialism should not carry the stigma of 19th- or 20th-century imperialism. “[W]e are not advocating or endorsing imperialism with the connotation of exploitation and permanent rule by foreigners.” On the contrary, Fearon and Laitin explain that “post-modern imperialism may have exploitative aspects, but these are to be condemned.”<sup>62</sup>

### **A New Principle for International Order?**

While perhaps not intentionally exploitative, postmodern imperialism certainly does

appear to entail protracted and perhaps permanent rule by foreigners. Fearon and Laitin admit that, in postmodern imperialism, “the search for an exit strategy is delusional, if this means a plan under which full control of domestic security is to be handed back to local authorities by a certain date in the near future.”<sup>63</sup> To the contrary: “for some cases complete exit by the interveners may never be possible”; rather, the endgame is “to make the national level of government irrelevant for people in comparison to the local and supranational levels.”<sup>64</sup> Thus, in Fearon and Laitin’s model, nation building may not be an appropriate term; their ideas would more accurately be described as nation ending, replacing national governments with a supranational governing order. Evidently the nation-state withers away and dies.

For his part, Stephen D. Krasner, now the director of the State Department’s policy planning staff and a leading advocate of S/CRS, was much more candid about his views on failed states before he joined the government.

Krasner believes that the “rules of conventional sovereignty . . . no longer work, and their inadequacies have had deleterious consequences for the strong as well as the weak.”<sup>65</sup> Krasner concludes that, to resolve that dilemma, “alternative institutional arrangements supported by external actors, such as de facto trusteeships and shared sovereignty, should be added to the list of policy options.”<sup>66</sup> He is explicit about the implications of those policies:

In a trusteeship, international actors would assume control over local functions for an indefinite period of time. They might also eliminate the international legal sovereignty of the entity or control treaty-making powers in whole or in part (e.g., in specific areas such as security or trade). There would be no assumption of a withdrawal in the short or medium term.<sup>67</sup>

Krasner’s candor about the implications of his policy views, however, was not equaled by a willingness to label them accurately. “For

policy purposes, it would be best to refer to shared sovereignty as ‘partnerships.’ This would more easily let policymakers engage in organized hypocrisy, that is, saying one thing and doing another. . . . Shared sovereignty or partnerships would make no claim to being an explicit alternative to conventional sovereignty. It would allow actors to obfuscate the fact that their behavior would be inconsistent with their principles.”<sup>68</sup>

John Yoo, former deputy assistant attorney general in the Office of Legal Counsel in the Department of Justice, argued along similar lines during a 2005 lecture at the American Enterprise Institute: “Where the United States, its allies, and the United Nations have erred . . . is to assume that because strong nation-states are the guarantors of international stability, every territory must have a nation-state. Hence, the United States and its NATO allies have set as their goal in Afghanistan the reconstruction of state institutions, rather than a trusteeship or colonial arrangement.”<sup>69</sup>

Yoo’s prescription, like all of the other proposals above, could well precipitate a radical reordering of the international system. The implications of such a change, over time, could be far-reaching and potentially harmful to U.S. national interests.

One particularly striking aspect of the arguments against sovereignty and in favor of nation building in failed states is how ill-defined the terms of debate have been. How can we measure state failure? What are the historical correlations between the attributes of failed states and the supposed security threats they pose? As shown above, by the established definitions of state failure and a reasonable interpretation of the word “threat,” failed states almost always miss the mark. As Professor Jeremy Rabkin of Cornell University points out, “The arguments for subordinating or denying sovereignty are so unconvincing on their own terms that one is bound to feel they respond less to actual analysis of costs and benefits than to an inchoate moral outlook.”<sup>70</sup>

### **If Not Sovereignty, Then What?**

Some foreign policy thinkers have been call-

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ing for a colonial rebirth for some time. As early as 1997 neoconservative thinker Irving Kristol was hailing an “emerging American imperium” and calling on Americans to “awaken to the fact that we have become an imperial nation.”<sup>71</sup> Historian Paul Johnson responded to the 9/11 attacks by arguing that the answer to terrorism was colonialism.<sup>72</sup> Also writing in the weeks following 9/11, avowed imperialist Max Boot took to the pages of the *Weekly Standard* to make the “Case for American Empire.”<sup>73</sup>

Calls for empire became more common, more sophisticated, and more mainstream with the passage of time. Writing in *Foreign Affairs* in March 2002, *Washington Post* columnist Sebastian Mallaby said: “The logic of neoimperialism is too compelling for the Bush administration to resist. The chaos in the world is too threatening to ignore, and existing methods for dealing with that chaos have been tried and found wanting.”<sup>74</sup> Francis Fukuyama wonders in the context of failed states “whether there is any real alternative to a quasi-permanent, quasi-colonial relationship between the ‘beneficiary’ country and the international community.”<sup>75</sup> In the fall of 2003, Jeffrey E. Garten, dean of the Yale School of Management, called on the U.S. government to organize a colonial service.<sup>76</sup>

It may seem hyperbolic to liken S/CRS to a colonial office. Americans are rightly uncomfortable with the implication that U.S. policies resemble those of past empires. They are even more loath to label them “imperial.” President Bush is most emphatic on that point: during the 2004 State of the Union address, for example, the president asserted that America’s “mission comes from our most basic beliefs. We have no desire to dominate, no ambitions of empire.”<sup>77</sup> But regardless of the terminology used or even the intentions, the logic behind the creation of S/CRS and a meaningful pursuit of the office’s mandate would lead to an American foreign policy with global goals and global responsibilities comparable to those of past empires. Indeed, Carlos Pascual, the first coordinator for reconstruction and stabilization and incoming vice president for foreign policy studies at the

Brookings Institution, interprets part of S/CRS’s mandate as seeking to “provide for *global* security.”<sup>78</sup>

Anti-sovereignty academics, pro-empire pundits, and pro-nation-building bureaucrats are largely of one mind. The internal logic behind S/CRS is perfectly coherent, if one can accept the premises. If instability anywhere in the world poses a threat to America, and if the best recourse is to nation build in those countries, and further, if one acknowledges that to be successful, nation building must be done at very great expense over a very long period of time, the functional distinction between S/CRS and a colonial office all but evaporates. The flaws exist not in the internal logic but in the premise that failed states present a problem and that nation building can be a solution.

Although most Americans are appalled at the mere suggestion of imperial designs, avowed advocates of empire have not hidden their pleasure at the creation of S/CRS. In advancing the case for an American colonial office, Max Boot once noted that “of course, [a colonial office] cannot be called that. It needs an anodyne euphemism such as Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance.”<sup>79</sup> In 2005 Boot expanded on that idea in the context of S/CRS: “The United States needs its own version of the British Colonial Office for the postimperial age. The recent decision to set up an Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization within the State Department is a good start. . . .”<sup>80</sup> Another advocate of American imperialism, Niall Ferguson, was summoned to the Departments of the Treasury and State in the fall of 2002 to discuss his case for empire.<sup>81</sup>

As John Judis has noted, one large discrepancy between traditional imperialism and the conduct of U.S. foreign policy in the 21st century is that the United States does not seek to establish a formal empire.<sup>82</sup> The United States seeks neither to plunder resources nor Christianize foreign populations. Indeed, the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and even the nation-building projects of the 1990s, have carried significant economic costs, not benefits. The differences in intentions and goals, however, should not obscure the fact that resource shortfalls and

pushback from indigenous populations would likely occur no matter what the endgame.

Given that failed states in themselves do not present threats to U.S. national security, an office of nation building in the form of S/CRS would truly be a cure worse than the disease. That is partly because S/CRS's nebulous mission of helping to "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"<sup>83</sup> portends an entire set of serious problems, with which S/CRS's partisans rarely grapple.

## The Case for Sovereignty

The implications of the erosion of sovereignty in the international system are particularly troubling, as are the potential responses of the citizens of target states. As Winston Churchill said of democracy, sovereignty may be the worst system around, except all the others. A system of sovereignty grants a kernel of legitimacy to regimes that rule barbarically, it values as equals countries that clearly are not, and it frequently endorses borders that were capriciously drawn by imperial powers. However, it is far from clear that any available alternative is better.

If the United States proceeds on a course of nation building, based largely on the premise that sovereignty should be deemphasized, where will that logic stop? Who gets to decide which states will be allowed to retain their sovereignty (or what "type" of sovereignty) and which states will be determined to have forfeited their sovereignty? Will other powers use our own rhetoric that deemphasizes sovereignty against us in order to justify expansionist foreign policies? Potential flashpoints in eastern Europe and East Asia would not be hard to envision. The apparent support for a long-term but dramatic change to the international system has puzzled scholars since 9/11.

Indeed, the United States should seek to codify the current international system, not

undermine it. Since the United States now sits largely unchallenged at the top of the existing international order, it would be perplexing for the reigning superpower to dismantle the system that currently institutionalizes its own dominance. As John J. Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago has written:

[T]he ideal situation for any great power is to be the only regional hegemon in the world. That state would be a status quo power, and it would go to considerable lengths to preserve the existing distribution of power. The United States is in that enviable position today; it dominates the Western Hemisphere and there is no hegemon in any other area of the world.<sup>84</sup>

Although Mearsheimer was writing before the September 11 attacks, it has by no means been established that nonstate terrorism presents such an existential threat to the United States that it should seek a radical change to the international order.

Unraveling state sovereignty in order to nation build could paradoxically undermine stability and peace, whether during the turbulence of democratization or if democratization fails to produce a cohesive state. In short, an agenda for fixing failed states could backfire, jeopardizing genuine American interests. Further, given finite resources for dealing with myriad real threats, nation building could distract Americans from their focus on the war on al-Qaeda. A lack of discrimination with respect to intervention can also squander not only American power but American legitimacy and credibility. But the problem goes beyond the opportunity costs of misplaced resources and attention. Overreach could make the world more volatile and violent in the near term. As Rabkin points out:

If peace is our priority, we would serve that priority more effectively by focusing on the particular states that threaten peace, and the particular practices of these states that are most threatening—

**An agenda for fixing failed states could backfire, jeopardizing genuine American interests.**

**The costs of making nation building a core object of U.S. foreign policy—as envisioned by the advocates of S/CRS—would greatly outweigh any benefits.**

such as their sponsorship of international terrorism and their attempts to acquire weapons of mass destruction.<sup>85</sup>

Moreover, some recent research suggests that a strategy of nation building, which would necessarily be highly contingent on security enforced by a foreign military presence, may result in an increase of suicide terrorism. Robert A. Pape, a political science professor at the University of Chicago, surveyed all recorded suicide terrorist attacks between 1980 and 2003. Pape concluded that “nearly all suicide terrorist attacks have in common . . . a specific secular and strategic goal: to compel modern democracies to withdraw military forces from territory that the terrorists consider to be their homeland.”<sup>86</sup> Of course, there have been many interventions and nation-building projects that have not resulted in terrorist blowback, but if the prospect exists that nation-building operations could produce more terrorism directed at the United States, that should factor heavily in a discussion of whether to engage in such interventions—especially when U.S. national security interests are not directly at stake.

If the costs of successfully administering foreign countries were low and the prospects for success high, the new strategy might make sense. However, a simple look at what it takes to “get nation building right” demonstrates that the costs of making nation building a core object of U.S. foreign policy—as envisioned by the advocates of S/CRS—would greatly outweigh any benefits.

### **Nation Building: Elusive Successes, Plentiful Failures**

At least three key questions must be answered in the course of the debate over whether or not to prosecute a comprehensive U.S. foreign policy predicated on repairing failed states. First, what is the historical track record of success? Second, what costs must be paid in order to have a reasonable expectation

of success? Finally, what are the implications of failure?

In the most thorough survey of American nation-building missions, the RAND Corporation in 2003 evaluated seven cases: Japan and West Germany after World War II, Somalia in 1992–94, Haiti in 1994–96, Bosnia from 1995 to the present, Kosovo from 1999 to the present, and Afghanistan from 2001 to the present. The authors count Japan and West Germany as successes but all the others as failures to various degrees.<sup>87</sup> They then seek to determine what made the Japanese and West German operations succeed when all of the interventions since have failed.<sup>88</sup>

The answer is complex and not entirely satisfactory. One of the central points that recur throughout the work is that “[n]ation building . . . is a time- and resource-consuming effort.”<sup>89</sup> Indeed, “among controllable factors, the most important determinant is the level of effort—measured in time, manpower, and money.”<sup>90</sup> But expenditures on the two successes—West Germany and Japan—consumed only a fraction of the aid per capita spent on the failures in Bosnia and Kosovo.<sup>91</sup> Why, with a lower resource expenditure and—at least in Japan—a shorter occupation, would we expect better results?

One plausible answer the authors offer is that, in the case of Japan, the entire country was devastated by war: Japan’s population had been wracked by sustained firebombing and the detonation of two atomic bombs. Germany had also been devastated by firebombing, and the sense of total defeat was widespread. The lesson the authors draw from that distinction is that “[w]hen conflicts have ended less conclusively and destructively (or not at all) . . . the postconflict security challenges have proven more difficult.”<sup>92</sup>

The Defense Science Board (DSB), a panel that advises the Defense Department on strategy, came to much the same conclusion. In its *2004 Summer Study on Transition to and from Hostilities*, the DSB concluded that in stabilization and reconstruction (S&R) missions, “military defeat of the enemy forces [is] essential but not sufficient to achieve long-term aims”

and that although “postconflict success often depends on significant political changes,” the “barriers to transformation of [an] opponent’s society [are] immense.”<sup>93</sup> Without the requisite outright defeat of the warring party or parties, fighting may persist, potentially undermining the reconstruction efforts.

In other words, successful nation building is highly contingent on security within the country. Given that, it is particularly striking that the question of military involvement in postconflict stabilization and reconstruction is often left out of the S/CRS debate entirely. Supporters of S/CRS rarely mention, let alone describe, the role that the U.S. military will be asked to play in such operations. Known in military jargon as MOOTW (military operations other than war), the non-war-fighting roles that the military would be asked to play would be overwhelmingly taxing to both the armed services themselves and to the United States.

## The Military Requirements of Nation Building

In every stabilization and reconstruction effort, there will have to be a military component. By definition, the target state will be emerging from conflict or collapse, and the American administrators will need to operate within a relatively secure environment as they initiate and implement S&R programs. But how many troops does it take to support an S&R mission? What types of troops? And how long will they have to stay?

The answers based on the historical record are not heartening. One of the best estimates regarding the military requirements of postconflict missions comes from the DSB. Its study assesses nation-building operations over the past two millennia and lays out some sobering facts:

Stabilization operations can be very labor intensive. . . . The United States will sometimes have ambitious goals for transforming a society in a conflicted

environment. Those goals may well demand 20 troops per 1,000 inhabitants . . . working for five to eight years. Given that we may have three to five stabilization and reconstruction activities underway concurrently, it is clear that very substantial resources are needed to accomplish national objectives.<sup>94</sup>

Extrapolating from the DSB’s numbers to particular countries paints an even darker picture. Achieving “ambitious goals” in Iraq, for example, under the DSB framework would have required roughly 500,000 troops in Iraq for five to eight years. Less populous countries such as Haiti, by the DSB’s rule of thumb, would call for roughly 162,000 American troops. Even “less ambitious” goals are extremely burdensome: less ambitious goals in Iraq would call for roughly 125,000 U.S. troops for five to eight years; in Haiti they would call for 40,500 troops.<sup>95</sup>

Table 3 uses the Fund for Peace/*Foreign Policy* list of failed states and juxtaposes the populations of the top 20, “critical,” states with the number of foreign troops that could be needed for S&R missions, using the DSB’s calculation.

By DSB’s calculations, successfully running three to five concurrent nation-building operations could require hundreds of thousands of American service personnel in hostile theaters overseas for several years. If history is any guide, effective execution often requires deployments approaching 10 years or more.

As for efficacy, the current U.S. ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton rightly pointed out in 2000 that “the ability of external actors to create a functioning civil society in failed states is really quite limited.”<sup>96</sup> Historically, American troops and administrators have had only a small impact on even the most modest of goals: increasing the rule of law and decreasing the level of violence. Another report from the RAND Corporation gauges the Kosovo and (UN-led) East Timor interventions as successes according to those modest benchmarks, but Panama, El Salvador, Somalia, Bosnia, and Haiti are all considered unsuccessful.

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**Table 3**  
**“Critical” Failed States with Defense Science Board Estimations for Troops Needed**

Country	Ranking	Population <sup>a</sup>	Troops Required for	
			Ambitious Goals <sup>b</sup>	Less Ambitious Goals <sup>c</sup>
Côte d’Ivoire	1	17,298,040	345,961	86,490
Dem. Rep. of the Congo	2	60,085,804	1,201,716	300,429
Sudan	3	40,187,486	803,750	200,937
Iraq	4	26,074,906	521,498	130,375
Somalia	5	8,591,629	171,833	42,958
Sierra Leone	6	6,017,643	120,353	30,088
Chad	7	9,826,419	196,528	49,132
Yemen	8	20,727,063	414,541	103,635
Liberia	9	3,482,211	69,644	17,411
Haiti	10	8,121,622	162,432	40,608
Afghanistan	11	29,928,987	598,580	149,645
Rwanda	12	8,440,820	168,816	42,204
North Korea	13	22,912,177	458,244	114,561
Colombia	14	42,954,279	859,086	214,771
Zimbabwe	15	12,746,990	254,940	63,735
Guinea	16	9,467,866	189,357	47,339
Bangladesh	17	144,319,628	2,886,393	721,598
Burundi	18	6,370,609	127,412	31,853
Dominican Republic	19	8,950,034	179,001	44,750
Central African Republic	20	3,799,897	75,998	18,999

<sup>a</sup> Population figures from CIA World Factbook, online at <http://cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook>.

<sup>b</sup> “Ambitious goals” equal 20 troops per 1,000 indigens.

<sup>c</sup> “Less ambitious goals” equal 5 troops per 1,000 indigens.

**The one commonality in nation-building operations is that success is a function of determination.**

ful or mixed.<sup>97</sup> The DSB’s assessment is also sobering. DSB analyzed historical S&R projects and concluded that “[t]he pattern suggests a less than impressive record—one that has not improved with time and historical experience.”<sup>98</sup>

In addition, nation-building missions are extremely expensive, regardless of whether they succeed or fail. For example, Zalmay Khalilzad, former U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan and current ambassador to Iraq, believes that in the case of Afghanistan, “it will take annual assistance [of more than \$4.5 billion] or higher for five to seven years to achieve our goals.”<sup>99</sup> Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti cost more than \$2 billion.<sup>100</sup> Operations Provide Relief and Restore Hope in Somalia ended up costing \$2.2 billion.<sup>101</sup> As of 2002 the United

States had spent more than \$23 billion intervening in the Balkans since the early 1990s.<sup>102</sup>

Add to those high economic, military, and potential political costs the fact that even staunch advocates of nation building such as Francis Fukuyama admit that nation-building efforts have “an extremely troubled record of success.” As Fukuyama concedes, “It is not simply that nation building hasn’t worked; in cases like sub-Saharan Africa, many of these efforts have actually eroded institutional capacity over time.”<sup>103</sup> There simply is no “model” for nation building. That undermines the argument of S/CRS’s advocates that the government can build institutional knowledge that will allow lessons from one mission to be transferred to a new one. The one commonality in nation-

building operations is that success is a function of determination: a relentless determination to impose a nation's will, manifested through billions of dollars spent, years and years of occupation, and, in some cases, scores of lives lost.

Other advocates of nation building agree. According to Stephen Krasner, "The accepted international practices to promote democracy . . . haven't proved to be all that satisfactory." In 2003 Krasner admitted, "The simple fact is that we do not know how to do democracy building."<sup>104</sup> Unless our knowledge has grown dramatically in two years, that is not exactly inspiring language coming from one of the top U.S. officials in charge of democracy building.

If we intend to seriously embark on a plan to build nations, we must be prepared to bear heavy costs in time, money, and even in American lives—or we must be prepared to fail. As Fukuyama concedes, nation building "has been most successful . . . where U.S. forces have remained for generations. We should not get involved to begin with if we are not willing to pay those high costs."<sup>105</sup>

In the inadequate debate about creation of S/CRS, the real costs of vigorously pursuing the office's mandate have escaped scrutiny. For example, one member of the DSB's Summer Study team argued that S/CRS as currently proposed "is so small and so modest that it's not going to make a difference" on the ground.<sup>106</sup> Similarly, two of the task force reports on state failure note that, in order for S/CRS to have any effect, it would need vastly more funding than has been requested thus far. The Council on Foreign Relations report argues that S/CRS would need up to \$500 million per year, and the Center for Global Development suggests a figure of \$1 billion per year.<sup>107</sup> But even those figures are far too low, given the historical costs of nation building.

The small size and half-measure approach of S/CRS raises yet another troubling prospect. Neither the legislation establishing S/CRS nor the public statements by its officers clarify when and where S/CRS will be authorized to deploy. Would there need to be a congressional resolution? An executive order? If U.S. personnel are on the ground in dangerous parts of the

world, America could become entangled in military engagements when its vital interests are not at stake. For instance, if our nation builders are killed in the line of duty, will there be a U.S. military response? It seems likely that Congress and the American people would demand military retaliation, and at that point the United States could become involved in either a spiraling military escalation (as in Vietnam) or a humiliating retreat (as in Somalia). Both of those prospects are troubling and may emerge if a nation-building office obtains an institutional mandate without broad public support.

In a sense, the position of the more extreme of the neoimperialists is more coherent than that of people who think we can nation build on the cheap. Niall Ferguson, for example, fantasized that a proper approach to Iraq might require something on the order of 1,000,000 foreign troops on the ground in Iraq for up to 70 years.<sup>108</sup> If resources were unlimited, or if the American people were prepared to shoulder such burdens, one could envision a more positive outcome for Iraq on those terms. But the notion that enterprises like Iraq—or even less ambitious missions—will not be extremely costly is badly mistaken.

And Iraq, to be sure, looms large in the debate over postconflict reconstruction missions. Many people who would otherwise not be disposed to support the creation of an office like S/CRS may look at Iraq and think, "Well, if we're going to do these types of things anyway, we may as well get it right."

That is an entirely reasonable sentiment. Unfortunately, there is no reason to believe that S/CRS would have been the key to success in Iraq. Still, some observers may argue further that there was a dearth of planning for Iraq, so an office like S/CRS might have headed off some of the poor decisions made during the occupation. That is a pernicious myth that deserves thorough treatment.

## S&R in Iraq

As the Bush administration committed numerous errors during the occupation of

**If we intend to seriously embark on a plan to build nations, we must be prepared to bear heavy costs in time, money, and even in American lives—or we must be prepared to fail.**

**Working from a proper set of assumptions when planning for security and other stabilization measures is necessary for success.**

Iraq, critics began to accuse it of having failed to plan for postwar conditions. That line of argument became particularly sharp during the 2004 presidential election<sup>109</sup> and has persisted since. But was there in fact a failure to plan on the part of the government?

The short answer is no. Thousands of pages of documents on countless aspects of postwar S&R issues were produced, most famously by the State Department's Future of Iraq project (FOI). Thomas Warrick, a career civil servant, convened a large panel of Iraqi exiles, U.S. diplomats, academics, and other specialists to examine the potential problems of and prospects for a postwar Iraq. The project was begun in April 2002 and was undertaken on Warrick's own initiative in his role as a special adviser on Northern Gulf affairs. The FOI foresaw a number of issues that would need to be taken up over the course of the postwar S&R operations. Perhaps most important, the FOI warned that grave problems could emerge if the Iraqi army were disbanded abruptly.<sup>110</sup>

While the FOI believed the postwar circumstances would be perilous, the civilian leadership at the Pentagon was working from two competing assumptions. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, officials at the Pentagon assumed that coalition forces would "inherit a fully functioning modern state, with government ministries, police forces and public utilities in working order—a 'plug and play' occupation," and "that the resistance would end quickly."<sup>111</sup> Pentagon adviser Richard Perle would admit in the summer of 2003 that the DOD civilians' plan centered on installing Iraqi exile Ahmed Chalabi as the new leader of Iraq. In Perle's view, had the Chalabi plan been enacted, "we'd be in much better shape today."<sup>112</sup>

Critics of the FOI point out that the project did have shortcomings, that it was not a precise plan, and that it lacked detailed analyses of all aspects of a postconflict strategy for Iraq.<sup>113</sup> That is true. We are not claiming that the FOI had a path to victory in Iraq. Rather, we are suggesting that the FOI's assumptions and concerns about the postconflict environ-

ment proved to be largely accurate. Working from a proper set of assumptions—such as the notion that there would indeed be an insurgency or that cashiering the Iraqi army would be a disaster—when planning for security and other stabilization measures is necessary for success. The FOI made the right assumptions about what the postconflict environment would look like; if those assumptions had been embraced by policymakers, the postwar planning (and perhaps even the decision to go to war) would have been based on a much more sober appreciation of what the United States would be facing in the aftermath of the war.

As James Dobbins of the RAND Corporation would say of the prewar preparations: "It's not true that there wasn't adequate planning. There was a volume of planning. More than the Clinton administration did for any of its interventions." Dobbins added that the problem was that DOD "should have anticipated that when the old regime collapsed, there would be a period of disorder, a vacuum of power. . . . They should have anticipated extremist elements would seek to fill this vacuum of power."<sup>114</sup> The FOI project and other assessments warned of just those problems. For whatever reason, the warnings went unheeded.

Warrick, the head of the FOI, was later asked to bring the knowledge he had gleaned from organizing the project to the occupation authorities. Jay Garner, who had taken over the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance in February 2003, requested that Warrick come to Iraq and work for ORHA after the conflict had started. Inexplicably, the civilian leadership at the Pentagon blocked Warrick from accepting the appointment, and the FOI materials remained largely unused until later in the occupation, at which point they reportedly became the "bible" for the Coalition Provisional Authority.<sup>115</sup>

The uniformed military repeatedly voiced concerns about the lack of postwar planning they had at their disposal. During a presentation of the plans for the Iraq War in March 2003, the month the war started, an Army lieutenant

colonel who was giving a Power Point presentation on the war plan flipped to the slide that was to describe the postconflict plans. The slide said simply “To Be Provided.”<sup>116</sup> Gen. George Casey, who would later become the commander of coalition troops in Iraq, continually pressed to get access to the Phase 4 plans—the military’s name for postconflict planning. At one point, according to a senior defense official, “Casey was screaming, ‘Where is our Phase 4 plan?’”<sup>117</sup> Both the State Department and the uniformed military recognized the need for a postconflict plan and made scrambling attempts to provide one. By all appearances, the leadership in the Pentagon or at the White House, or both, decided either to ignore the planning or to discard it.

And it was not just a case of the State Department’s work not getting to the Pentagon. The U.S. Army War College conducted studies on postwar reconstruction as well. Among the insights one of its reports offered were the following:

- “Rebuilding Iraq will require a considerable commitment of American resources, but the longer U.S. presence is maintained, the more likely violent resistance will develop.”
- “To be successful, an occupation such as that contemplated after any hostilities in Iraq requires much detailed interagency planning, many forces, multi-year military commitment, and a national commitment to nation building.”
- “An exit strategy will require the establishment of political stability, which will be difficult to achieve given Iraq’s fragmented population, weak political institutions, and propensity for rule by violence.”
- “To tear apart the [Iraqi] Army in the war’s aftermath could lead to the destruction of one of the only forces for unity within the society. Breaking up large elements of the army also raises the possibility that demobilized soldiers could affiliate with ethnic or tribal militias.”
- “The possibility of the United States winning the war and losing the peace in Iraq is real and serious. Rehabilitating Iraq

will consequently be an important challenge that threatens to consume huge amounts of resources without guaranteed results.”<sup>118</sup>

The institutional knowledge within the War College regarding the general difficulty of S&R operations went at least as far back as 1995. In that year James T. Quinlivan of RAND published an article in *Parameters* simply titled “Force Requirements in Stability Operations.” Among the many prescient warnings were the following:

- “In any stability operation it is almost certain that the force devoted to establishing order will [need to] be both larger in numerical terms than the forces dedicated to field combat and more aligned to political aspects of a ‘hearts and minds’ concept of operations.”
- “Very few states have populations so small that they could be stabilized with modest-sized forces.”
- “Unless the capital city is quickly brought under both control and visible order, the credibility—locally and globally—of the intervention as a force for stability drains away together with whatever political legitimacy the intervention possessed.”
- “Force ratios larger than ten members of the security forces for every thousand of population are not uncommon in current operations. . . . Sustaining a stabilizing force at such a force ratio for a city as large as one million . . . could require a deployment of about a quarter of all regular infantry battalions in the U.S. Army.”<sup>119</sup>

Quinlivan went on to point out that the United States itself boasts roughly 2.3 police officers per 1,000 population. Troop levels in Iraq have hovered near 5 troops per 1,000 indigens since the invasion. To suppose that the maintenance of order in postwar Iraq would require only twice as many security forces as there are police in the United States seems an absurd leap of faith.

**The uniformed military repeatedly voiced concerns about the lack of postwar planning for Iraq.**

**An open discussion about the extremely high costs of the project in Iraq might have greatly damaged the case for war.**

But perhaps the most damning fact is that the president's own National Security Council drafted a memo in February 2003 assessing the historical record and suggesting that, if historical precedent were followed, 500,000 troops would be necessary to successfully pursue stabilization and reconstruction in Iraq.<sup>120</sup> It is unclear whether that report made it to the president himself, but then-national security adviser Condoleezza Rice did read the memo. Here again, the assessment was either ignored or dismissed.

An open discussion about the extremely high costs of the project in Iraq might have greatly damaged the case for war. The common theme running through essentially all of the postwar planning was that the project in Iraq was going to be incredibly difficult and require a great deal of resources and sacrifice. Contrast that view with the view of the civilian leadership at the Pentagon at that time. The Pentagon believed that, by and large, resistance would be light and that a new liberal Iraqi leader could be implanted without a great deal of trouble. Accordingly, it appears that the Pentagon brushed aside pessimistic assessments from the Department of State and the War College as unduly negative. It is unclear how or why all of that would have been avoided had S/CRS existed at the time. Political decisions were made, and the administration decided to work from an optimistic set of assumptions.

Although President Bush recently designated S/CRS as the lead office in postconflict reconstruction projects, including the ongoing operations in Iraq, S/CRS officials have offered no revolutionary plan for fixing Iraq. Moreover, according to a senior State Department official, S/CRS was not designed with situations like Iraq in mind because the State Department "doesn't foresee any more Iraqs." Instead, according to the official, S/CRS was intended to handle crises in places like "Monrovia [Liberia], Freetown [Sierra Leone], Haiti."<sup>121</sup> Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice confirmed that vision during a Town Hall Meeting at the State Department in June 2005. Rice stated that S/CRS is "working, right now, for instance on a

plan for Sudan because it is our hope that at some point, we'll be in a post-conflict stabilization phase in Sudan. We know that we're going to face this in Liberia. We're doing it in Haiti."<sup>122</sup>

The fledgling S/CRS office has already caused controversy by apparently making regime change in Cuba part of its portfolio in addition to the humanitarian operations foreseen in Liberia and Sudan. Caleb McCarry was appointed as the Cuba coordinator for S/CRS on the recommendation of the Commission for Assistance for a Free Cuba, a group that seeks to "accelerate the demise of Castro's tyranny." McCarry quickly introduced a plan for Cuba that the United States Institute for Peace, a government-funded think tank, denounced as "an exercise in destabilization, not stabilization."<sup>123</sup>

None of that has stopped S/CRS's leadership from dropping hints that the real value of their office is that it would have been able to save Iraq. During testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in June 2005, Carlos Pascual, the coordinator for stabilization and reconstruction, suggested that

in the case of Iraq, by changing the dynamics enough to allow just one division to leave one month early we would have saved \$1.2 billion. We save hundreds of millions by allowing peacekeepers to end operations sooner. Funding the types of initiatives S/CRS is developing is not only an investment in peace and democracy; it saves money. Even more importantly, it saves lives by removing our troops from harm's way. We owe it to our troops, to the American people, to our national prestige, and to those around the world who struggle to emerge from conflict, to improve our capabilities.<sup>124</sup>

It is very difficult to believe that \$100 million given to a small office in the State Department could have saved billions in a large and fractious country like Iraq by bringing U.S. troops home sooner. Iraqis still harbor deep-seated and animating political differ-

ences. They are largely hostile toward interference by outsiders, having suffered exploitation by the Ottoman Empire and more recently by the British Empire. The ability of outside diplomats to make those problems evaporate seems dubious—take, for example, the earnest labors of a host of American diplomats who have attempted (and are still attempting) to reconcile the conflicts in Palestine and Israel, Bosnia, and elsewhere.

Indeed, given that virtually all of the empirical evidence indicates that successful nation building is predicated on the ability to stay in-country for a very long time with many troops and a large amount of money, it is unclear how Pascual could support his testimony. Moreover, given that the State Department's own personnel have as much as admitted that S/CRS has no unique insight to offer on the Iraq mission, and given that they have said that they seek not to work in strategically important countries such as Iraq but rather in strategically detached countries such as Sierra Leone and Liberia, it is hard to take Pascual's argument seriously. A permanent office like S/CRS would place greater demands on the military. The likely result is *more* U.S. troops in more theaters abroad for long periods of time.

## Conclusion

People who favor S/CRS envision the world as both more threatening and simpler than it actually is. It is not as threatening as they see it, because their fear of failed states is largely overblown: failed states most often do not represent security threats. At the same time, the world is vastly more complex than they would have it: nation building in failed states is extremely difficult; again, in Krasner's words, "The simple fact is that we do not know how to do democracy-building." Most often, attempts at nation building have resulted in billions of dollars spent, a distraction from genuine issues of national security, and failure, even on the nation builders' own terms.

If it were to materialize, there is certainly a point at which Robert Kaplan's "coming

anarchy" would threaten American interests. For example, Niall Ferguson supposes that, if America were to step back from its role as a global policeman, the world would be characterized by

Waning empires. Religious revivals. Incipient anarchy. A coming retreat into fortified cities. These are the Dark Age experiences that a world without a hyperpower might quickly find itself reliving.<sup>125</sup>

But that hypothetical is unfounded and silly. To find a historical precedent on which to base his argument, Ferguson had to reach back to the ninth century. Ferguson's prediction of a "Dark Age" hinges on a belief that America will collapse (because of excessive consumption, an inadequately large army, and an "attention deficit" in regard to its empire), the European Union will collapse (because of an inflexible welfare state and shifting demographics), and China will collapse (because of a currency or banking crisis).<sup>126</sup> In fact, there is little reason to believe that the world will descend down this path if America hews to a restrained foreign policy focused on preserving American national security and advancing vital U.S. interests.

The world has made great strides in both political and economic freedom in recent years, and direct American intervention has rarely been a factor. Obviously, the collapse of the eastern bloc at the end of the Cold War caused a precipitous advance in freedom—both political and economic—without U.S. officials on the ground attempting to direct the change. But even taking the end of the Cold War into account, between 1994 and 2004 the world continued to make advances. According to Freedom House, 46 percent of the world's countries are politically "free" as opposed to 40 percent in 1994.<sup>127</sup> The numbers of "partly free" and "not free" countries have declined since 1994.

Similarly, economic liberalization continues to move forward. According to the 2005 edition of the *Economic Freedom of the World Annual Report*, average economic freedom has

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advanced even during the very recent past. Between 1995 and 2003 the mean economic freedom of countries around the world advanced from 6.01 to 6.4 on a scale of 0 to 10.<sup>128</sup> As is political freedom, economic freedom is advancing steadily.

So there is little reason to worry that the world will decline to “Dark Age” misery if America refuses to administer foreign countries. Accordingly, Americans should be skeptical of the reasoning behind S/CRS: the notion that failed states are threatening, the idea that the current international order is unfavorable to America and should be overturned, the notion that nation building is a manageable endeavor that can be performed successfully at a controlled cost, and the idea that S/CRS could remedy a planning gap for projects like Iraq all fail to pass scrutiny.

In truth, S/CRS hearkens back to the Clinton foreign policy. As Michael Mandelbaum observed in 1996: “Historically the foreign policy of the United States has centered on American interests, defined as developments that could affect the lives of American citizens. Nothing that occurred in [Bosnia, Somalia, or Haiti] fit that criterion. Instead, the Clinton interventions were intended to promote American values.”<sup>129</sup>

What has changed since 9/11 is the increased attempt to shoehorn American interests into nation building. As Gary Dempsey wrote in 2002:

Liberal internationalism, in short, is back, and this time it is posing in the realist attire of national self-interest. But its utopian premise is still the same: if only we could populate the planet with “good” states, we could eradicate international conflict and terrorism.<sup>130</sup>

A standing nation-building office with dedicated funding and institutional support would likely become a vocal advocate of nation building. Bureaucracies are remarkably inventive in finding ways to justify their own existence. In the case of S/CRS, justifying its

existence would involve agitating for a costly, dangerous course of foreign policy that would generate reconstruction and stabilization missions to work on. In an age in which international terrorism could just as plausibly arise from Marseille, France, as it could from Tashkent, Uzbekistan, America cannot afford to lose its focus and sap its strength by attempting to build nations. Terrorism is an incredibly challenging threat that requires intelligence, discrimination, and determination. To take on nation-building missions that aim for the capillaries of the international system is to dangerously juggle priorities and could well end up creating new security challenges where none existed before.

Before embracing a policy of nation building, America should at least have a meaningful debate over whether that approach to security policy is the best course. As seen above, failed states are almost always no or a negligible security threat. Ignoring that reality, the leadership of S/CRS insists that in order to be secure the United States must “mak[e] long-term investments of money, energy, and expertise” in an attempt to “establish democracies that improve the lives of ordinary individuals.”<sup>131</sup> The real costs of such a policy are frequently left out of the discussion. Policymakers, pundits, and all Americans should think long and hard about what the institutionalization of a nation-building office would mean to U.S. security policy.

## Notes

1. Senate bill S.2127, Report no. 108-247, passed 19-0 in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, February 25, 2004.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 2, lines 9–15.
3. The Congressional Research Service points out that “the 108th Congress turned down five Administration requests for the creation of a \$100 million emergency crisis response fund, as now proposed. . . . Congress has long resisted the provision of ‘blank check’ pots of money as an abdication of constitutional appropriation and oversight powers.” Nina M. Serafino and Martin A. Weiss, “Peacekeeping and Conflict Transitions: Background and Congressional Action on Civilian Capabilities,” CRS

- Report for Congress, Order Code RL32862, April 13, 2005, p. 13.
4. Richard Lugar, Statement at Hearing on the Stabilization and Reconstruction Civilian Management Act, before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 3, 2004.
  5. National Public Radio, *Weekend All Things Considered*, March 21, 2004.
  6. Stephen D. Krasner and Carlos Pascual, "Addressing State Failure," *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 4 (July–August 2005): 153.
  7. Serafino and Weiss, p. 5.
  8. 22 USC 2651(a) note.
  9. *Congressional Record*, November 2, 2005, p. H9526.
  10. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "An Agenda for Peace, Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking, and Peace-Keeping," Report of the secretary-general pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on January 31, 1992, <http://www.globalpolicy.org/reform/initiatives/ghali/1992/0617peace.htm>.
  11. Ibid.
  12. Anthony Lake, "From Containment to Enlargement," Remarks to the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, September 21, 1993, <http://www.fas.org/news/usa/1993/usa-930921.htm>. The doctrine of enlargement reappeared in President Clinton's 1996 National Security Strategy titled "A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement," <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/national/nss9602.htm>.
  13. For more on the Somalia intervention, see Gary T. Dempsey with Roger W. Fontaine, *Fool's Errands: America's Recent Encounters with Nation Building* (Washington: Cato Institute, 2001), chap. 2. Osama bin Laden would later remark that the evacuation from Somalia indicated the "weakness, frailty and cowardice of the U.S. troops." Quoted in Peter Bergen, *Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden* (New York: Free Press, 2001), p. 22.
  14. As recently as 2000 the United States was paying more than \$2 billion per year for military and non-military aspects of its project in Kosovo. See Dempsey and Fontaine, p. 129. Haiti had cost more than \$1.6 billion by 1995. See U.S. General Accounting Office, "Peace Operations: U.S. Costs in Support of Haiti, Former Yugoslavia, Somalia, and Rwanda," March 1996, GAO/NSIAD-96-38, p. 6.
  15. Charles A. Kupchan, "Independence for Kosovo: Yielding to Balkan Reality," *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 6 (November–December 2005): 14–20.
  16. Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," *Atlantic Monthly*, February 1994, p. 48.
  17. Ibid., p. 54.
  18. Ibid., p. 58.
  19. Quoted in David E. Sanger, "Rivals Differ on U.S. Role in the World," *New York Times*, October 30, 2000, p. 1A.
  20. "2nd Presidential Debate between Gov. Bush and Vice President Gore," *New York Times*, October 12, 2000, p. 22.
  21. Quoted in Michael R. Gordon, "Bush Would Stop U.S. Peacekeeping in Balkan Fights," *New York Times*, October 21, 2000, p. 1A.
  22. George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington: White House, September 17, 2002), p. 21.
  23. Ibid., p. 31.
  24. Ibid., p. 1.
  25. Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *The National Intelligence Strategy of the United States of America*, October 2005, p. 8, <http://www.dni.gov/NISOctober2005.pdf>.
  26. Lawrence J. Korb and Robert O. Boorstin, *Integrated Power: A National Security Strategy for the 21st Century* (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2005), p. 7.
  27. Commission on Post Conflict Reconstruction, "Playing to Win," Center for Strategic and International Studies/Association of the U.S. Army Report, January 2003, p. 6, <http://www.csis.org/isp/pcr/playtowin.pdf>.
  28. Francis Fukuyama, Comment on Center for Global Development Task Force Report, "On the Brink: Weak States and US National Security," [http://www.cgdev.org/section/initiatives/\\_archive/weakstates](http://www.cgdev.org/section/initiatives/_archive/weakstates).
  29. Thomas P. M. Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map: War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2004), p. 8.
  30. Ibid., p. 179.
  31. Ibid., pp. 315–27. Barnett does not attempt to determine the costs or specific structural require-

- ments of this policy, but he does qualitatively describe the “SysAdmin” force, which is to be the nation-building force. It would not be subject to Posse Comitatus restrictions on using military assets to police the homeland; it would be structured like a multilingual, multicultural police force to “serve and protect” both at home and overseas” (p. 322) and would “merge extensively with those assets of the Department of Homeland Security focused on border defense and internal disaster mitigation” (p. 325).
32. Council on Foreign Relations Task Force, “In the Wake of War: Improving U.S. Post-Conflict Capabilities,” July 2005, p. 6.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 13, 19, 20.
34. Gary T. Dempsey, “Old Folly in a New Disguise: Nation Building to Combat Terrorism,” Cato Institute Policy Analysis no. 429, March 21, 2002, p. 13.
35. Jack Goldsmith and Stephen D. Krasner, “The Limits of Idealism,” *Daedalus* 132, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 59.
36. International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect: Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 2001), p. 36. Cited in *ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*
38. *State Failure Task Force Report: Phase III Findings*, September 30, 2000, <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/stfail/SFTF%20Phase%20III%20Report%20Final.pdf>.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
40. *Ibid.*
41. The task force’s assessment period ended in December 1998, so any state failures or state repairs occurring after that date are not included in this table.
42. The report sought to determine, from a set of nearly 1,300 variables, what conditions are likely to lead to state failure. The authors used a random case-control methodology, which evaluated “problem” countries in the years before they failed against control countries that had not ultimately failed. They needed a larger sample of failed states in order to use this methodology; thus, the expanded definition of failed state. *Ibid.*, pp. 1–3.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
44. Humanitarian interventionists may argue that human suffering on a certain scale should warrant intervention in a country. That argument can be dealt with separately; in this paper we are confronting the question of whether failed states present threats to Americans and their way of life.
45. National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2004), p. 190.
46. DFID defines fragile states as those where “the government cannot or will not deliver core functions to the majority of its people, including the poor. The most important functions of the state for poverty reduction are territorial control, safety and security, capacity to manage public resources, delivery of basic services, and the ability to protect and support the ways in which the poorest people sustain themselves.” Department for International Development, “Why We Need to Work More Effectively in Fragile States,” January 2005, p. 7, <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/fragilestates-paper.pdf>. DFID’s full list of fragile states is available in the annex to the report.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 27–28.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
49. Specifics on this report’s methodology can be found at <http://www.fundforpeace.org/programs/fsi/caststep2.php>.
50. This is perplexing methodologically. It is not clear that by this standard there is a marked quantitative difference between country no. 20, which is considered “critical” (the terms are also undefined), and country no. 21, which is only “in danger.”
51. Jack A. Goldstone and Jay Ulfelder, “How to Construct Stable Democracies,” *Washington Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (Winter 2004–2005): 17.
52. Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, “Democratization and the Danger of War,” *International Security* 20, no. 1 (Summer 1995): 5. For an updated and expanded treatment of this issue, see Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).
53. *State Failure Task Force Report*, p. 16.
54. Marina Ottaway and Stefan Mair, “States at Risk and Failed States: Putting Security First,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Democracy and Rule of Law Project, Policy Outlook, September 2004, p. 2, [http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/Ottaway\\_outlook3.pdf](http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/Ottaway_outlook3.pdf).
55. Francis Fukuyama, *State-Building: Governance*

and *World Order in the 21st Century* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 99.

56. Gerald Knaus and Felix Martin, "The Travails of the European Raj," *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 3 (July 2003): 61–62. For another critical assessment of the nation-building effort in Bosnia, see Patrice C. McMahon, "Rebuilding Bosnia: A Model to Emulate or to Avoid?" *Political Science Quarterly* 119, no. 4 (Winter 2004–2005): 569–93.

57. A few examples are Gerald B. Helman and Steven R. Ratner, "Saving Failed States," *Foreign Policy*, no. 89 (Winter 1992–1993): 3–20; James R. Hooper and Paul R. Williams, "Earned Sovereignty: The Political Dimension," *Denver Journal of International Law and Policy* 31, no. 3 (June 2003): 355–75; James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Neotrusteeship and the Problem of Weak States," *International Security* 28, no. 4 (Spring 2004): 5–43; Stephen D. Krasner, "Sharing Sovereignty: New Institutions for Collapsed and Failing States," *International Security* 29, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 85–120; John Yoo, "Fighting the New Terrorism," Bradley Lecture, June 6, 2005, [http://www.aei.org/include/pub\\_print.asp?pubID=22633](http://www.aei.org/include/pub_print.asp?pubID=22633); Rosa Ehrenreich Brooks, "Failed States, or the State as Failure?" *University of Chicago Law Review* (forthcoming).

58. Helman and Ratner, p. 3.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

60. Hooper and Williams, p. 364.

61. Fearon and Laitin, p. 7.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 12, n. 19.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

65. Krasner, "Sharing Sovereignty," p. 85.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 108. See also Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

69. Yoo.

70. Jeremy Rabkin, *The Case for Sovereignty: Why the World Should Welcome American Independence* (Washington: AEI Press, 2004), p. 26.

71. Irving Kristol, "The Emerging American Imperium," *Wall Street Journal*, August 18, 1997, p. A14.

72. Paul Johnson, "The Answer to Terrorism? Colonialism," *Wall Street Journal*, October 9, 2001, p. A22.

73. Max Boot, "The Case for American Empire," *Weekly Standard*, October 15, 2001, pp. 27–30.

74. Sebastian Mallaby, "The Reluctant Imperialist," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 2 (March–April 2002): 6.

75. Fukuyama, *State Building*, p. 104.

76. Jeffrey A. Garten, "Wanted: A U.S. Colonial Service," *Foreign Policy*, no. 138 (September–October 2003): 63–67.

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81. Benjamin Wallace-Wells, "Right Man's Burden," *Washington Monthly* 36, no. 6 (June 2004): 40–47.

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83. U.S. Department of State, "About S/CRS," <http://www.state.gov/s/crs/c12936.htm>.

84. John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), p. 42.

85. Rabkin, p. 22.

86. Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005), p. 4.

87. Even the occupation of Japan, which is often cited as the great success of postconflict reconstruction, has recently come under scrutiny. Some authors have argued that Japan's recovery in fact began apart from—and in some cases, despite—the U.S. efforts at postwar administration. See Yoshiro Miwa and J. Mark Ramseyer, "The Good Occupation," Discussion Paper no. 514, John M. Olin Center for Law, Economics, and Business, May 2005, [http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/olin\\_center/papers/pdf/Miwa\\_Ramseyer\\_514.pdf](http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/olin_center/papers/pdf/Miwa_Ramseyer_514.pdf).

88. James Dobbins et al., *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2003), p. xix.
89. *Ibid.*, p. xix.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
91. West Germany received roughly \$200 per capita and Japan received even less, whereas Kosovo received more than \$800 per capita and Bosnia received roughly \$1,400 per capita (all figures constant 2001 dollars). *Ibid.*, p. xviii.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 162.
93. U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Science Board, *2004 Summer Study on Transition to and from Hostilities, Supporting Papers*, January 2005, p. 63, [http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/2005-01-DSB\\_SS\\_Transition\\_SupportingPapers.pdf](http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/2005-01-DSB_SS_Transition_SupportingPapers.pdf).
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95. DSB projects that "less ambitious" missions will require roughly 5 troops per 1,000 indigens. DSB does not define "less ambitious." The 20 troops per 1,000 indigens figure also appeared in a recent war game conducted on North Korea. Sam Gardiner, a retired U.S. Air Force colonel who has conducted war games for more than 20 years, estimated that in the event of a war against North Korea, 500,000 troops would be required to handle S&R; North Korea's population is roughly 23 million. See Scott Stossel, "North Korea: The Wargame," *Atlantic Monthly*, July–August 2005, p. 105.
96. John Bolton, Testimony to Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights of the House Committee on International Relations, Hearing on United Nations Peacekeeping, September 20, 2000.
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99. Zalmay Khalilzad, "How to Nation-Build," *National Interest*, no. 80 (Summer 2005): 26.
100. David Malone and Simon Chesterman, "Don't Liberate and Leave; Security, Time and Serious Resources, over the Long Haul, Are the Keys to Nation-Building," *Globe and Mail*, March 29, 2004, p. A13. None of these figures reflects the exact cost of operations, since various U.S. government agencies calculate costs differently. Contributions from other UN member-states, the European Union, and other international organizations are not included in these calculations.
101. U.S. General Accounting Office, "Peace Operations," p. 11.
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103. Fukuyama, *State Building*, p. 100.
104. Stephen D. Krasner, "We Don't Know How to Build Democracy: Regime-building Is the Central Challenge of Our Time, But Surprisingly Little Is Known about How to Do So Successfully," *Los Angeles Times*, November 16, 2003, p. M1.
105. Francis Fukuyama, "Nation Building 101," *Atlantic Monthly*, January–February 2004, p. 162.
106. Quoted in Elaine M. Grossman, "DOD 'Summer Study' Wants New Group for Pre- and Post-Conflict Plans," *Inside the Pentagon*, September 2, 2004, p. 1.
107. Council on Foreign Relations, Task Force Report, "In the Wake of War," p. 20; Center for Global Development Task Force Report, "On the Brink," p. 4.
108. Niall Ferguson, "Cowboys and Indians," *New York Times*, May 24, 2005, p. A21.
109. For example, on September 20 John Kerry claimed that one of the reasons the Iraq war had not been more successful was that it was "plagued by a lack of planning." See "Kerry: Bush's Iraq Policy Has Endangered U.S.," *CNN.com*, September 21, 2004, <http://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/09/20/kerry.iraq/>.
110. Eric Schmitt and Joel Brinkley, "State Dept. Study Foresaw Trouble Now Plaguing Iraq," *New York Times*, October 19, 2003, p. 1A. Also, some of the Future of Iraq project's materials have been released pursuant to a Freedom of Information Act request by the National Security Archive at George Washington University and are available at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB163/>. The FOI is skeptical about disbanding the Iraqi army, and the trouble with disbanding armies was foreseen as far back as 1995. Mansfield and Snyder observed that "the process [of democratization] goes most smoothly when elites that are threatened by the transition, especially the military, are given a 'golden parachute.'" Mansfield and Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," p. 36.

Emphasis added.

111. Mark Fineman, Robin Wright, and Doyle McManus, "Preparing for War, Stumbling to Peace: U.S. Is Paying the Price for Missteps on Iraq," *Los Angeles Times*, July 18, 2003, p. A1.

112. Jonathan S. Landay and Warren P. Strobel, "Pentagon Civilians' Lack of Planning Contributed to Chaos in Iraq," Knight-Ridder News Service, July 13, 2003. According to *U.S. News and World Report*, Vice President Cheney told Secretary of State Colin Powell in the fall of 2003 that the United States wouldn't be having so many problems in Iraq if Chalabi had been put in charge. Kenneth T. Walsh et al., "The Man behind the Curtain," *U.S. News and World Report*, October 13, 2003, <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/031013/13cheney.htm>.

113. For example, the RAND Corporation notes, "Even the famed State Department 'Future of Iraq' project that many have touted as an example of unused prewar planning did not seriously address internal security institutions." Jones et al., p. xvii.

114. Quoted in Fineman, Wright, and McManus.

115. Schmitt and Brinkley. *Newsweek* magazine alleged that the decision to block Warrick from joining ORHA came from Vice President Dick Cheney. According to *Newsweek*, Donald Rumsfeld "ordered General Garner to drop . . . Warrick from his reconstruction team. Garner protested, his aides recall; he needed Warrick, who had been the author of a \$5 million, yearlong study called 'The Future of Iraq.' Rumsfeld's reply, as relayed by Garner to his aides, was: 'I'm sorry, but I just got off a phone call from a level that is sufficiently high that I can't argue with him.' Sources tell *Newsweek* that Rumsfeld was taking his orders from Vice President Cheney. Administration officials say that Warrick was vetoed because he did not get on with Iraqi exile leaders." John Barry and Evan Thomas, "The Unbuilding of Iraq," *Newsweek*, October 6, 2003, p. 34.

116. Warren P. Strobel and John Wolcott, "Blunders, Ignored Warnings Mire Effort to Rebuild Iraq: U.S. Knew of Instability Threat, Need for Troops," *Detroit Free-Press*, October 16, 2004, p. 2.

117. *Ibid.*

118. Conrad C. Crane and W. Andrew Terrill, "Reconstructing Iraq: Insights, Challenges, and Missions for Military Forces in a Post-Conflict

Scenario," U.S. Army War College Monograph, February 2003, pp. vi, 1, 1, 32, 42, <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ssi/pdf/PUB182.pdf>.

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129. Michael Mandelbaum, "Foreign Policy as Social Work," *Foreign Affairs* 74, no. 1 (January-February 1996): 17.

130. Dempsey, p. 16.

131. Krasner and Pascual, "Addressing State Failure," pp. 154, 163.

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