

The Bald Eagle Nests: The United States Role in State-Building: Germany, Kosovo, and Iraq

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Short Communication

This paper aims to explain and analyze the role and the commitment of the United States in state-building, looking at three case studies coming from different regions and periods of time – from Germany to Iraq and Kosovo. The objective is to answer some critical questions such as how successful was the transition of state-building when it comes to security, economy, and institutions; what was the U.S. commitment; what happened for the better and for the worse; why in some countries was the state-building successful and in some countries not; and last but not least, how important is the role of the U.S. leadership in the future concerning the issue of state-building in the weak or failed states. The bald eagle nests are usually strong and deep; but, sometimes they fail to build such nests.

Introduction

The post-World War II era was predominantly influenced by U.S. foreign policy and hegemony. The U.S. started to engage in the process of state-building in different areas of the world, from Germany (1945) to Iraq (2003). The U.S. has invested a significant amount of resources and energy on military occupations, humanitarian interventions, post-conflict stabilization processes and state reconstructions. Most importantly, the U.S. played a prominent role in ensuring peace and stability, and making sure to design the best practice policies for democratizing states and preventing or minimizing future conflicts.

State-building is a very complex issue. American political scientist Francis Fukuyama defines state-building as the creation of new government institutions and the strengthening of existing ones – states exist to ensure law, order, security and wellbeing for their citizens [1]. From post-World War II onwards, the U.S. has taken major responsibilities for state-building, such as in Germany, Kosovo and Iraq – having a tremendous success in Germany, followed by some mistakes, such as in Bosnia, a mediocre outcome in Kosovo, or as James Dobbins calls it a “modest success,” [2] and a devastating failure in Iraq. All interventions were geopolitical concerns. Obviously, the U.S. did better in post-World War II in Europe, than post-war Balkans, because when you see the Balkans in 2015 you do not find the Europe you had in 1965, and if you compare Kosovo to Iraq, it gets even worse – Iraq is on the edge of becoming a failed state. Considering the differences between three states – the gap is overwhelming. The U.S. has been crucial in building and rebuilding other weak or failing states since World War II – from Germany to Iraq – the U.S. was, and remains a pillar of democracy, security, and order in the international system.

A Story of Success: A Strong Nest

After the devastating brutality of the World Wars, the Western world underwent a process of reconstruction. The U.S. and the allies were determined to transform the collapsed German socio-economy into a stable and working democracy accompanied with well-established institutions and an efficient economy – they also wanted to make sure that Germany would never threaten Europe again. The only countries that had the needed resources to rebuild Europe were the Soviet Union and the United States; the latter had more options due to its economic growth.

Europe had a collapsed economy and a refugee crisis; it was pretty much dysfunctional, experiencing a deep crisis – they desperately needed immediate humanitarian help and support. President Truman had a plan to rebuild the war-torn Europe, but this was a difficult task to achieve since the Congress was divided on this matter. However, the Soviet attacks in Czechoslovakia and threats to Finland, Norway, and Austria, changed Congress' behavior; these events created a favorable environment for helping Europe. Moreover, another crucial reason was that without economic assistance, a divided Germany was at risk of falling under Soviet control. As a result, the U.S. allocated approximately \$13 billion (around \$130 billion in current value) on aid for Western Europe; the plan was called the Marshall Plan [3]. Germany was the third largest recipient of the Marshall Plan (receiving about 11% of the total).

Economic conditions in Europe, as well as the U.S. interest to invest there, resulted in the implementation of the Marshall Plan¹. The main objective was to gain and maintain a geostrategic partnership in Europe as well as rebuild the European economy. The U.S. sent material goods to Europe that were of greater value than those received – the U.S. received diminishing returns – the U.S. gained influence; the basis for what Klaus Knorr calls “patronal leadership,” which we have referred to as hegemonic leadership [4]. By providing huge resources to Europe, Germany in particular, the U.S. provided itself with the political leverage to achieve hegemonic cooperation. Also, this phenomenon increased European cooperation as well. Trade relations led to more cooperation. Most importantly, the economic prosperity led by the coal and steel industries between France and Germany helped shape the foundations of the European Union. There were other organizations established, such as NATO, which later had a critical impact on regional stability and security in former Yugoslavia.

The Marshall Plan brought stability and economic growth in both Europe and the U.S. and it turned out to be the most successful

¹ According to Revisionists, the Marshall Plan of aid to Europe was simply a way to expand the U.S. economy

historical adjustment. The program transferred \$13 billion in aid from the United States to Western Europe in the years from 1948 to 1951 [5]. The U.S. had a profound influence on the economic stability of Europe; ergo, it became the producer of security of the post-World War II and post-Cold War eras. The U.S. reconstruction of Germany provides important lessons on how societies can be encouraged to change into democracies and become more cooperative. The most remarkable aspect of the Marshall Plan is that the U.S. gave up its usual demands for reciprocity – Marshall Plan aid consisted of grants, not loans [4].

The U.S. is credited with successful state-building in postwar Germany, where it was an occupying power; however, asserting that U.S. helps was the main successful factor in rebuilding Germany is myopic. The U.S. support surely had a major impact on rebuilding Germany and Europe in general, but Germany was already highly developed, an economically advanced society. This certainly explains why it was easier to reconstruct Germany than other states [2]. However, a very decisive indicator was the Germans themselves. The U.S. did not provide any assistance to rebuild institutions or administrative capacities. Germany was a very strong bureaucratic state long before the U.S. defeated them; indeed, it was the strength of their state and institutions that led them to be a great power and a threat to the international system in the first place [1]. The German state was preserved after the war. What the U.S. changed successfully, and should mostly be credited for, is the regime change – the transition from autocracy to democracy.

In the second part of the 20th century, there wasn't another World War; instead there was a Cold War – a period of intense hostility and a military capability race between the U.S. and Soviet Union. But with the collapse of the Soviet Union, world affairs changed too – new states emerged and the U.S. became the world's most powerful state – the hegemon.

A Devastating Failure: A Broken Nest

After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the Bush administration based its rationale for war on the assertion that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction and that its government posed an immediate threat to the U.S. and its allies. On 29 January 2002, in his State of the Union address, President Bush used the term Axis of Evil to describe governments (including Iraq) as supporters of terrorism and seeking weapons of mass destruction. However, after the U.S. had invaded Iraq and overthrown Saddam Hussein, no weapons of mass destruction were found.

In March 2003, the U.S. invaded Iraq, aiming to topple Saddam Hussein. From the very beginning, the U.S. invasion faced numerous troubles and started to deteriorate. Even though they gained diplomatic support from the United Kingdom, Spain, Japan, and Australia, they failed to secure support from three permanent members of the United Nations Security Council: France, China and Russia. Some of the most important allies of the U.S. – such as Germany and Turkey – did not support the war in Iraq. Poll results available from Gallup International, as well as local sources for most of Europe, West and East, showed that support for a war carried out "unilaterally by America and its allies" did not rise above 11 percent in

any country. Support for a war if mandated by the UN ranged from 13 percent (Spain) to 51 percent (Netherlands) [6].

Most of the European and Arab countries, including U.S. allies have officially condemned the war in Iraq. They opposed the Iraq War in principle, citing in some cases that they believed it was illegal, and in others that it required a United Nations mandate. They opposed the invasion on the basis that it was conducted without United Nations' approval and was hence a violation of international law exercising military power in violation of the UN Charter undermines the rule of law and is illegal vigilantism on an international scale.

Since the occupation of Germany and Japan, the United Nations had never undertaken such an ambitious task – military interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo are the most comparable in terms of ambition, but those countries are smaller entities compared to Iraq. Besides, Kosovo and Bosnia had major international support, something the occupation in Iraq never had. Moreover, President Bush was using a religious rhetoric (Axis of Evil) to describe his "War on Terror." This made Europeans feel uncomfortable, because it gave the impression of a religious war.

The U.S. invasion of Iraq to overthrow Saddam's regime came out to be a big failure, or as Thomas E. Ricks would call it in his book, a Fiasco. When the U.S. committed itself to rebuilding Iraq after the war, it committed itself to integrating Iraq with the world at large, so the U.S. 'unilateralism' in war merely set in motions the inevitable multilateralism peace [7]. Iraq represents a failure model of state-building; the high presence of U.S. military troops throughout the years created a negative impact on the Iraqi citizens. They started to perceive U.S. troops as oppressive, which stimulated violent resistance [1].

According to the US Department of Defense, the cost of Iraq war are staggering; 4,488 U.S. service personnel were killed directly, 32,223 troops injured, 134,000 civilians killed directly, 655,000 persons who have died in Iraq since the invasion that would not have died if the invasion had not occurred. \$1.7 trillion amount in war expenses spent by the U.S. Treasury Department as through Fiscal Year 2013 [8].

Obviously, there are other social aspects of state-building apart from assistance and financial help. The question is, what did the Germans do that the Iraqis didn't? Well, they accepted defeat and they never complained about it. The Germans were ashamed and responsible for their own evil; they wanted to save what was left of them; they simply gave up on war and had the will to move forward. After World War II, Germans taught their children not to display the German flag or cheer for their beloved German teams in sport events. Kurt Vonnegut's (American soldier during WWII) novel *Slaughterhouse Five* (1969)² portrays the heavy fire bombings of Dresden where dozens of innocent German civilians were killed, but the Germans never complained about this loss of innocent life; they simply accepted defeat, remained silent, and moved forward. There was no insurgency in Germany.

The worst problem the Iraqis had was they—Saddam Hussein was the way it was, because Iraqis were the way they were. Iraqis did not see the U.S. intervention as a regime change; instead they perceived the U.S. as a thief who wanted to steal their economy and oil. Even the imams were advocating against the U.S. military—a very prominent Iraqi Shi'ite populist cleric told his followers to target the U.S. troops³.

² Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse Five*, or *A Duty Dance with the Devil*, or *The Children's Crusade*.

³ Al-Jazeera, Iraq: The Reinvention of Muqtada al-Sadr.

Unlike Germans, the Iraqis never accepted defeat; they fought the occupation until the very last day.

Another issue is that the U.S. stayed too long in Iraq, from 2003 until 2011 – staying long does not guarantee success, whereas leaving early ensures failure – the U.S. stayed too long indeed. But the U.S. didn't lack resources or experience or commitment; the resources were poorly spent; the U.S. spent billions of dollars in Iraq without any successful outcome. The decision to invade Iraq resulted in a costly, unsuccessful war. The costs have been ruinously high – for Americans, for America's reputation, but especially for Iraqis⁴. Moreover, Iraq never had a tradition of pluralist-democracy, meaning that they were always under authoritarian rule. The country is divided amongst religious, tribal, ethnic, and geographic grounds – the sense of Iraqi nationality is very weak; this made the recovery process very challenging.

A highly successful reconstruction of Germany and a modest reconstruction of Kosovo are not due only to European values or location, but to the level of effort that the U.S. together with the international community put into the political democratic transition. The U.S. and its allies have put 25 times more money and 50 times more troops, on a per capita basis, into post conflict Kosovo than into post conflict Afghanistan [2]. Furthermore, since 1999, the European Union and its member states have invested approximately four billion euros in Kosovo – this is indeed the biggest financial contribution per capita (Kosovo population: 1.8 million)⁵. As a result, Kosovo is a more stabilized country, having small economic growth, high unemployment and corruption, but no fundamental security issues such as in Afghanistan or Iraq.

States must have efficient administration which needs to be rebuilt, but not reconstructed from scratch. The international community knows how to supply government services; what it knows much less well is how to create self-sustaining indigenous institutions [1]. This is one of the major mistakes in Iraq. To provide stability, a state must be staffed by local civil servants assisted by the international community in order to facilitate and ensure security and development – similar processes such as in Kosovo. Thus, the U.S. together with the international community should concentrate more on transferring knowledge to countries with weak institutions, rather than doing institution building themselves. If the U.S. wants to rebuild Iraq they will have to use the Iraqis – Iraq must be administered by Iraqis. Nevertheless, the situation in the Middle East is very complex. In 1945, Germans wanted to rebuild, they gave up on war, but in 2016 everybody wants revenge, no one is willing to admit defeat.

Unfortunately, the Bush administration failed to draw on its prior experience (Germany and Kosovo) when it entered Iraq. The U.S. had a major success in post-World War II Germany, but an extreme failure in Iraq. The U.S. inability to stabilize Iraq probably made the states of Europe less safe, [9] because weak and failed states are both a national and international problem. In today's world, there are approximately 40 weak or failing states, [10] therefore state-building will remain a crucial issue for at least the next three decades – if states cannot take care of their own citizens, they create problems for other states. As a result, there cannot be one part of the world that functions and the

other that doesn't – state-building is a major and challenging issue for powerful states, and it will be part of the agenda setting for at least the next thirty years – the *deus ex machina* from the U.S. is required to maintain stability and order.

A Mediocre Case: An Average Nest

The breakup of Yugoslavia produced seven new states (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYR of Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo). Today, the country that faces most of the challenges is Kosovo. Albanians and Serbs, which are the dominant communities in Kosovo, wrestled for control over the territory for years. Even though Kosovo today is populated by approximately 92% ethnic Albanians, Serbs were always culturally attached to Kosovo – they perceived it as their holy land or “the heart of Serbia” or “The Jerusalem of Serbia⁶.” When the former Yugoslav President Milosevic revoked Kosovo autonomy in 1989, tensions started to erupt. The regime intensified its repression of the Albanian population, including depriving their most fundamental basic rights, destroying their educational system and high numbers of political dismissals of civil servants [11].

Albanian citizens began to protest peacefully, but without concrete results – these events initiated the need to create more military methods; thus, the Kosovo Liberation Army was formed. Milosevic responded brutally with ethnic cleansing, killing thousands of innocent civilians, including women and children. The fear of having another “Srebrenica genocide” made the international community feel compelled to intervene militarily in Kosovo. Thus, on 24 March 1998 NATO started a bombing campaign in Yugoslavia with the objective of removing Serbian forces from Kosovo – the bombing was triggered by Milosevic's rejection of an interim settlement of Kosovo reached in Rambouillet, France.

In the 1990s, the Westphalian system was no longer an adequate framework for international affairs. Sovereignty and legitimacy could no longer be the *de facto* power authority in a certain country; dictators and human rights abusers like Milosevic (Former President of Yugoslavia) could not hide behind the principle of “sovereignty” to protect themselves. Criminals like Milosevic were responsible for huge violations of human rights such as ethnic cleansing, therefore under these circumstances the international community (in the name of human rights and democratic legitimacy) had the right⁷ and the obligation to intervene.

In the Kosovo war, between 1998 and 1999, approximately 12,000 people died,⁸ close to one million Kosovar ethnic Albanians were displaced, and nearly two-thirds of homes were damaged or destroyed [12]. NATO military intervention proved successful, Yugoslavian forces withdrew from Kosovo territory, and there was finally peace. The United Nations, under 1244 resolution, officially mandated its mission in Kosovo. The West was obliged to transform the poorest region of former Yugoslavia to the Athens of Pericles [13]. In July 2007, during an official visit to Albania, President George W Bush stated that “the time is now, we need to keep moving, and the result is independence.” The next year, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

⁴ Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, p: 224.

⁵ European Court of Auditors, “European Union Assistance to Kosovo related to the Rule of Law,” Special Report No.18/2012, 16 October 2012, P: 11-14.

⁶ Lene Kuhle and Carsten Laustsen, “The Kosovo myth: Nationalism and Revenge & Tonny Kundsen and Carsten Laustsen, “Kosovo between War and Peace (Abingdon 2006) p: 19-36.

stated “the independence of Kosovo was the only pragmatic solution in order to promote stability in the western Balkans⁹.” The same year, Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence. Undoubtedly, this was the most pragmatic solution since Kosovo’s population is very homogenous – 92% ethnic Albanians (2011 Census). Moreover, another factor was that the Albanians of Kosovo would never agree to have Serbian sovereignty in their territory.

The U.S. administration wished to maximize European responsibility for Kosovo’s reconstruction and democratization – all top positions, including NATO and UN, were European in Kosovo; this allowed the U.S. to reduce the scale of its financial and military commitments to only 16% of the reconstruction funding and peace keeping [2]. Besides, only four soldiers died in combat in Kosovo therefore their military campaign was successful both militarily and financially. However, there was a military crisis in Kosovo within the international community actors – Russian troops moved into Kosovo unexpectedly and seized the Pristina airport. NATO Supreme Commander General Wesley Clark directed that the KFOR (Kosovo Force) commander, UK Lieutenant General Sir Michael Jackson, to compel the Russians to withdraw from the airport of Pristina. General Jackson responded that the confrontation should be resolved diplomatically¹⁰. Later, the U.S. and Russia agreed to have Russian troops formally serve under the U.S. command, but not NATO’s – the issue was resolved.

Providing humanitarian assistance, security and civil administration were key to establishing a peaceful environment in Kosovo. Unlike Bosnia, Kosovo had no institutions; thus, it became easier for the international community to maintain peace because KFOR and UNMIK cooperated with each other. Moreover, UNMIK helped through well-qualified staff members who professionally assisted the local civil servants – something the U.S. failed to do in Iraq. Within years, UNMIK was capable of creating working institutions – in three

years Kosovo had a fiscal policy, tax system, and government, and democratic elections were held. In the same time period, KFOR was constantly providing professional and military assistance to the ad hoc Kosovo Protection Corps, which today is known as the Kosovo Security Force (not an army).

Germany has been the best U.S. managed venture in nation-building overall, but Kosovo has been the best post-Cold war endeavor. One of the most significant features has been the collaboration or burden sharing among international countries – for instance, the U.S. troops represented only 16% of the force in Kosovo¹¹. Moreover, Kosovo enjoyed the highest economic recovery after the war, apart from Germany. Most importantly, the U.S., together with the EU, was determined to establish a democracy in the Western Balkans, because Kosovo was a source of constant tension. Chronologically, the Marshall Plan reconstructed Europe, Germany in particular – the cooperation between European states created NATO, which later stopped the genocide in Kosovo. It is important to note that after a period of five decades, German troops were part of an international military mission.

Although Kosovo’s status remains unresolved, the main problem of Kosovo is the inability of the government to provide efficient public services and the inability to interact with other states, mainly due to Kosovo’s lack of state recognition and membership in international organizations, such as the United Nations. Building efficient institutions is a key feature of a state, therefore state-building requires strong institutions; however, institution building needs substance and time.

The transformation to state-building in Kosovo would have never happened without the U.S. commitment, and people of Kosovo are aware of that. Kosovo sees the U.S. diplomatic, political and military power as the main defender of its independence. As a result, Kosovo tries to repay this reward by having an indisputable support and trust in the U.S. For example, according to a survey in 2003, 87% of

⁷ UN Charter: The prohibition against the use of force in the UN Charter can be found in article 2(4) with two specific exceptions against this prohibition provided for in the Charter. The first is in Chapter VII, where the Security Council has been given power to fulfill its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Article 42 states that should the Security Council consider that measures provided for in Article 41 would be inadequate or have proved to be inadequate; it may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security. Such action may include demonstrations, blockade, and other operations by air, sea, or land forces of Members of the UN. The second specific exception is found in article 51, regarding the right to self-defense. The article states that nothing in the present charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the UN, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security.

While NATO did not have the backing of the UN Security Council to use force in Yugoslavia, nor claims an armed attack occurred against another state, its advocates contend that its actions were consistent with the UN Charter, claiming that the UN Charter prohibits unprovoked attacks only by individual states but condones such attacks by military coalitions of several states, such as NATO. NATO had justified the actions in Kosovo under Article 4 of its charter, which allows involved parties to consult together whenever political independence or security of any of the parties is threatened.

Interpretation of Article 52 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties in the signing of the Rambouillet Agreement by Serbia may conclude that the agreement is void due to the threat or use of force.

The Rambouillet Agreement was a proposed peace agreement between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and a delegation representing the Albanian majority population of Kosovo. It was drafted by the NATO and named for Chateau Rambouillet, where it was initially proposed. The significance of the agreement lies in the fact that Yugoslavia refused to accept it, which NATO used as justification to start the Kosovo War. Belgrade’s rejection was based on the argument that the agreement contained provisions for Kosovo’s autonomy that went further than the Serbian/Yugoslav government saw as reasonable.

⁸ Center for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia.

⁹ The U.S. Secretary of State, official statement 08 February 2008, www.state.gov.

¹⁰ Ibid, p: 116.

¹¹ Ibid, p: 127.

Kosovars support the U.S. leadership, which puts Kosovo on the second place worldwide. Since 2003, this support remains the same [14].

Conclusion

The U.S. should be most credited for the regime change in all three cases – Germany, Kosovo, and Iraq – even though the last was a failure. Regime change from autocracy to democracy is very important, because democracy increases the likelihood of economic reforms, tax revenues, and education advancement and reduces child mortality¹². Democracy is the foundation of state-building.

The U.S. reconstruction of Germany is undoubtedly a story of success and deserves grade A+ due to its economic recovery, fast progress, the reconstruction's transformation of the continent, and the increased cooperation among Western nations. When it comes to Kosovo, the U.S. did an average job; the country still faces numerous problems, such as the lack of international recognition, low economic development, and high unemployment rates; thus, the grade is C+. Unlike Germany and Kosovo, the situation in Iraq is very tense – Iraq is on the edge of becoming a failed state. There are a lot of socio-political tensions and several terrorist organizations. Even though the U.S. made a huge commitment and spent a lot of resources there, the outcome was catastrophic. However, toppling Saddam Hussein took one thing off the bucket list; the Middle East region and the world overall is better off without Saddam; as a result, the final grade for Iraq is a D.

The issue of reconstruction is going to remain a major issue for great powers, institutions, and non-state organizations, because there are everywhere so many states that are not able to take care of their people. Other powerful states, such as Russia and China, do not know how to help state reconstruction because they do not have the experience or the resources to do it, most importantly, they are not democratic societies – the U.S. is pivotal in this case, because it has the experience and money.

Nation or state building has been a controversial issue over the past 20 years. Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has become gradually involved in the process of state-building operations worldwide. In the 1990s, the Clinton administration conducted a major state-building intervention on the average, every two years¹³. The Bush administration has launched two major state-building operations, in Iraq and Afghanistan. The U.S., as the world's superpower, has the main responsibility for providing prosperity, security, and stability in world politics.

The mid-21st century is all about the Asian continent, specifically the Middle East, considering the complexity of the region, religious problems, and nuclear capabilities. Thus, state-building will remain a vital issue. State-building and reconstruction will be more helpful if the U.S. is involved; otherwise, the number of failed states is going to increase. As a result, the number of terrorists and criminals will increase, and this will cause a domino-effect in other countries as well – Middle East is the starting point.

In 1945, the U.S. could do it alone (state-building), but moving to 2010-2020, no state can do it on its own. No state can solve the situation in Syria alone, primarily because it will be too costly and

most importantly they don't want to create more problems for themselves. Nevertheless, the bald eagle is important because of its great strength and long life – no other bird can build stronger nests. So, the way the bald eagle builds its nest in the future is significant, because it will affect its surrounding environment.

Recommendations

- Before initiating the process of state-building and reconstruction, you need to understand the history and geography of the region's complexity, including its cultural differences, religious affiliations, ethnic homogeneity, or heterogeneity.
- To achieve reconstruction and stabilization, you need a legitimate footprint related to circumstances and local conditions. If citizens of the state accept the outcome of the war, it is more likely that you will gain the support of the locals.
- Successful state-building is characterized by having (1) international support, (2) a good reason to intervene/occupy, (3) a long-term strategic plan, (4) a reconstruction process for institution-building, (5) a financial plan to contribute to the economy, law, order, and education, and (6) an exit strategy.
- Promoting the rule of law is the most difficult aspect of democratic reform. In comparison, designing constitutions and holding elections can be comparably easy.
- You need to make sure the new elected government is compatible with your plan; otherwise you will not have a desired outcome.
- No matter what you do, if you don't rebuild the economy, state-reconstruction will not work.

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¹³ Ibid, p: 221.