

Democracy by Force

*US Military Intervention in the
Post-Cold War World*

Karin von Hippel



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1 Introduction: dangerous hubris

*It is a dangerous hubris to believe we can build other nations. But where our own interests are engaged, we can help nations build themselves – and give them time to make a start at it.*¹

This remark, by former US National Security Adviser Anthony Lake, aptly depicts the policy of cautious engagement embraced by the US administration since the botched Somalia intervention. When US marines landed on the beaches of Mogadishu in December 1992, international euphoria about building a ‘new world order’, led by the lone Superpower, was at its peak due to the demise of communism and the defeat of Saddam Hussein. However much the Somalia debacle may have altered the US approach to nation-building, as Vietnam did to the generation before, it in no way aborted it. The US administration and military have been involved in nation-building² and promoting democracy since the middle of the nineteenth century and ‘Manifest Destiny’.³ Another failed intervention could not reverse over one hundred years of American experience.

¹ Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Remarks at George Washington University, ‘Defining Missions, Setting Deadlines: Meeting New Security Challenges in the Post-Cold War World’, 6 March 1996.

² The term ‘nation’ in fact signifies what is known as a ‘state’, but in the United States, the term ‘state’ gets confused with the fifty states that comprise the USA. Although the term ‘nation-building’ incorrectly depicts what the US government is attempting to do, as it rarely strives to create a nation, inhabited by peoples of the same collective identity, this term has become synonymous with state-building. For example, when the US government and the UN attempted to rebuild Somalia, they did not try to reunite all Somalis living in Djibouti, Kenya, and Ethiopia with Somalis in the former Somali Republic, which would have indeed created a Somali nation, but rather they focused on rebuilding the former Somali Republic.

³ ‘Manifest Destiny’ originally meant westward expansionism, but later evolved into a campaign bent on spreading democracy to foreign cultures.

Nation-building has indeed evolved from the Cold War days, when it was primarily an American- (or Soviet-) controlled endeavour, to today's occupation jointly run by any combination of the US government, the United Nations, and some member states.⁴ The campaign has also progressed, albeit incrementally, due to lessons learned from previous experiences. In order to assess what in fact has changed since 1989, this book analyses the developments in nation-building following US-sponsored military intervention through an examination of the four post-Cold War cases in which both took place: Panama, Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia.

Somalia obliged the US government and the UN to re-evaluate their roles in international crises and was responsible for a retrenchment in activity abroad, yet the sharp increase in domestic conflicts since 1989 has simultaneously compelled both to consider better conflict prevention, management and resolution techniques – no matter how unpopular involvement might be. The very notion of an international system based on supposedly equal, sovereign states, as envisaged in the UN Charter, has in fact deteriorated over the past decade because of the inability to respond consistently when states implode and/or systematically abuse their citizens' rights.⁵ During the same period when membership of the UN shot up by 16 per cent, primarily due to the dissolution of the Soviet Empire, over one-third of the total number of states in Africa alone have collapsed or are at risk,⁶ the global count of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has been steadily rising,⁷ and the number of 'civil' wars (one of the supreme oxymorons in political science) outpaces all other types of conflicts. Between 1990 and 1996, the world

⁴ Soviet attempts at spreading communism could also be referred to as nation-building, although this book considers US-led efforts.

⁵ See, for example, Jarat Chopra and Thomas G. Weiss, 'Sovereignty is no Longer Sacrosanct: Codifying Humanitarian Intervention', *Ethics and International Affairs*, Vol. 6, 1992, pp. 95–117; or Stanley Hoffman, 'The Politics and Ethics of Military Intervention', *Survival*, 37, 4, Winter 1995–96, pp. 29–51. For a historical overview of the concept of self-determination, see Karin von Hippel, 'The Resurgence of Nationalism and Its International Implications', in Brad Roberts, ed., *Order and Disorder After the Cold War*, Cambridge, MA, CSIS, MIT Press, 1995, pp. 101–16 (previously published in *The Washington Quarterly*, 17, 4, Autumn 1994, pp. 185–200).

⁶ See chapter 6, which draws on Karin von Hippel, 'The Proliferation of Collapsed States in the Post-Cold War World', in Michael Clarke, ed., *Brassey's Defence Yearbook 1997*, London, Centre for Defence Studies, 1997, pp. 193–209.

⁷ See, for example, UNHCR, *The State of the World's Refugees*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995–1998.

witnessed a total of ninety-eight armed conflicts; of these, only seven were between states, the rest were domestic.⁸

This rapid upsurge in civil conflicts and the subsequent international media spotlight that now homes in on the concomitant misery in real time, along with other factors that directly affect developed states (such as refugee flows), have caused the international community – particularly the United States – to respond to some, but significantly not all, situations that would have been overlooked during the Cold War. When mounting diplomatic pressure and economic sanctions do not mitigate the conflict, the ultimate response is undertaken: military intervention. Yet after a military operation, the intervening parties are then forced to concentrate on how to rebuild the state so that a similar crisis will not recur. This book's emphasis on nation-building *after* military intervention – democracy by force – therefore, considers issues of serious concern to the US government, the UN, and other major powers, as intervention and nation-building will continue to take place, irrespective of the desire to eschew such activity.

Military intervention and nation-building: an historical overview

An analysis of these post-Cold War cases would not be complete, however, without a discussion of the evolution in military intervention (and the non-interventionary norm) and nation-building since World War II, as these changes have informed the recent operations. For clarity of argument, 'military intervention' is defined as a coercive tactic used to manipulate a country into taking a certain path that would not otherwise have been chosen. In strict terms, it consists of military involvement or the encouragement of the use of force by an outside power in a domestic conflict. This differs from peacekeeping that is the result of an invitation, usually by both parties in a dispute, such as in the Western Sahara or Cyprus. Richard Haass noted, 'Armed interventions entail the introduction or deployment of new or additional combat forces to an area for specific purposes that go beyond ordinary training or scheduled expressions of support for national interests.'⁹

⁸ Dan Smith, 'Europe's Suspended Conflicts', *War Report*, February–March 1998, p. 11.

⁹ Richard N. Haass, *Intervention: the Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War World*, Washington, DC, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1994, pp. 19–20.

The evolution of the non-interventionary norm

The principle of *non-intervention* in the domestic affairs of other states has largely been upheld in international law since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 – the original formula stated *cuius regio eius religio* (to each prince his own religion). An updated version was legally enshrined in the UN Charter, Article 2 (7), and its precise meaning appears to be definitive: ‘Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially the domestic jurisdiction of any state.’ Yet an appeal to Chapter VII of the UN Charter is permitted – the Security Council can advocate military intervention in the interest of international peace and security.

The sudden disappearance of Superpower competition and the consequent threat of the Security Council veto, along with the increase in civil conflicts, have allowed (or compelled) the US government and the UN to put humanitarian concerns high on the agenda, effectively ignoring state sovereignty when so desired by labelling the crises threats to international peace and security. This is not to say that during the Cold War both Superpowers complied with the non-interventionary norm, which they also ignored at whim. Rather, interventionary policy was based on the policy of containment, the prism through which most foreign policy decisions were measured.

Between 1969 and 1973, the Superpowers had come to several agreements whereby they tacitly regulated the arms race and tried to avoid conflict in sensitive areas, such as the Middle East and Berlin. The end result was that both sides engaged in more interventions in smaller conflicts precisely because such crises normally did not threaten to bring about nuclear war.¹⁰ In these areas, the Soviet Union intervened to spread communist ideology (and/or counter US advances), while the Americans did the same, ostensibly to spread democracy (and/or contain communism). Hence the Vietnam War, the invasion of Grenada, and the covert activity in Central America.

Since the end of the Cold War, US foreign policy no longer has the luxury of subsuming all decisions under one sweeping campaign, but rather it must encompass a range of issues. Particularly since April 1991, when safe-havens for the Kurds were established after the Gulf War due to their unforeseen flight to the mountains in large numbers, and with the Reagan Doctrine no longer applicable, Chapter VII has been applied to cases that would have been considered distinctly domestic during the

¹⁰ Philip Windsor, ‘Superpower Intervention,’ in Hedley Bull, ed., *Intervention in World Politics*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1985, p. 47–8.

Cold War – without significant international opposition.¹¹ As Thomas Weiss explained,

access to civilians has become a recognized basis for intervention, building logically on precedents established by the actions of developing countries themselves against white minority governments in Rhodesia and South Africa, where violations of human rights were considered not just an affront to civilization but also a threat to international peace and security.¹²

This humanitarian concern is also based on a drastic increase in civilian casualties in conflicts since World War II, when 90 per cent of deaths were military and the rest civilian. Today, the statistics are the exact reverse.¹³

A comparison of the response to two African interventions illustrates the significant change in the non-interventionary norm. When Tanzania invaded Uganda to remove Idi Amin in 1979, there was an international outcry against Tanzania and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) condemned the invasion, even though most observers agreed that Amin was one of the most brutal dictators of the twentieth century. Yet, after Nigerian troops intervened in Sierra Leone in early June 1997, ironically to restore the democratically elected government that had been overthrown in a coup, the international response was muted, and this time the OAU gave its nod of approval after the event.

Approximately 900 Nigerian troops were already in Sierra Leone as part of the West African-sponsored ECOMOG peacekeeping force, under an ECOWAS mandate.¹⁴ These troops, however, did not have a mandate to reverse the coup (nor, correspondingly, has Nigeria much experience in democracy). *Operation Alba*, the Italian-sponsored intervention in Albania initiated in March 1997 under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), also proceeded without any serious objections by the international community.

¹¹ See James Mayall, 'Nationalism and International Security After the Cold War', *Survival*, Spring 1992, pp. 19–35.

¹² Thomas G. Weiss, 'Collective Spinelessness: UN Actions in the Former Yugoslavia', in Richard H. Ullman, ed., *The World and Yugoslavia's Wars*, New York, the Council on Foreign Relations, 1996, p. 62.

¹³ This statistic comes from a number of sources; see, for example, the International Federation of the Red Cross on the Web (www.ifrc.org), or Dan Smith, 'Towards Understanding the Causes of War', in Ketil Volden and Dan Smith, eds., *Causes of Conflict in the Third World*, Oslo, North/South Coalition and International Peace Research Institute, 1997, pp. 9–10.

¹⁴ ECOWAS stands for the Economic Community of West African States, while ECOMOG stands for the ECOWAS Monitoring Group.

The cases examined in this book start with Panama, which may have appeared a typical Cold War intervention because it took place without UN approval, but it also did not fall under the Reagan Doctrine because the Soviet Empire had already collapsed, and anyway there was no communist threat in Panama. Even though the Security Council deemed the post-Panama cases ‘unique, complex and extraordinary’, the non-interventionary norm again evolved because these civil conflicts were described as threats to international peace and security – threats that would not have been considered as such during the Cold War. By the time the USA intervened in Haiti, the reversal of democratic elections, initiated after western pressure, was one such threat.

In Panama, however, this rationale was not yet sanctioned, although it was given as one justification by the Bush administration. In fact, five days before the invasion, on 15 December 1989, the General Assembly passed a resolution entitled, ‘Respect for the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States in their electoral processes’. The resolution ‘Affirm[ed] that it is the concern solely of peoples to determine methods and to establish institutions regarding the electoral process, as well as to determine the ways for its implementation according to their constitution and national legislation’.¹⁵ Just five years later, the democracy excuse was approved in the Security Council, albeit the democratic entitlement was not considered a universal right. Here, the motives behind military intervention and nation-building would finally merge.

The significant change in policy with respect to the democracy rationale and the non-interventionary norm can also be illustrated by the current widespread use of external observers to validate domestic elections. States now invite international observers to monitor their *national* elections, and the approval of these observers endows the newly elected government with the sought-after mandate to direct *domestic* affairs. Similarly, the Somalia and Bosnia interventions also broke new ground as a result of their humanitarian pretext, although, as with the democracy excuse, this would not be applied universally.

The international legal obstacles for all these cases have been overcome by the UN granting a member state a lead role in the intervention, but only with the participation of other member states, to uphold Article 2 (4) of the UN Charter, which prohibits state-to-state interference. This is now referred to as ‘subcontracting’, i.e., a UN-authorized, multi-national intervention carried out under the leadership of one country,

¹⁵ General Assembly Resolution A/RES/44/147, 82nd plenary meeting, 15 December 1989.

such as France in Rwanda, the US government in Kuwait, Somalia, and Haiti, Russia in Georgia, and Italy in Albania, with the lead country supposedly paying the bulk of the intervention costs and undertaking the command and control of the operation. After the military intervention takes place, responsibility is often transferred to a peace support operation, as in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia.

American allowances

Just as the legality of armed intervention in domestic conflicts has evolved at the UN since the demise of the Soviet Empire, so too have these rationales become more acceptable to the US government, although at the same time, American enthusiasm to right the world's wrongs has abated considerably. Before committing itself to intervene, the US government now tends to adhere to a mixture of guidelines set out by John M. Shalikashvili, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Warren Christopher, former Secretary of State, and Anthony Lake, former National Security Adviser. The three men have also correspondingly represented the different foreign policy communities within the US government: defence, state, and intelligence.

Shalikashvili described the instances when the military would be used to protect US national interests:

- 1 First in priority are our vital interests – those of broad, overriding importance to the survival, security, and territorial integrity of the United States. At the direction of the NCA, the Armed Forces are prepared to use decisive and overwhelming force, unilaterally if necessary, to defend America's vital interests.
- 2 Second are important interests – those that do not affect our national survival but do affect our national well-being and the character of the world in which we live. The use of our Armed Forces may be appropriate to protect those interests.
- 3 Third, armed forces can also assist with the pursuit of humanitarian interests when conditions exist that compel our nation to act because our values demand US involvement. In all cases, the commitment of US forces must be based on the importance of the US interests involved, the potential risks to American troops, and the appropriateness of the military mission.¹⁶

¹⁶ John M. Shalikashvili, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 'National Military Strategy, Shape, Respond, Prepare Now – A Military Strategy for a New Era', 1997. His strategy built on that of his predecessor, Colin Powell, who said that force would be used if we would definitively answer the following

Christopher's prerequisites include:

- 1 Clearly articulated objectives;
- 2 Probable success;
- 3 Likelihood of popular and congressional support; and
- 4 A clear exit strategy.¹⁷

Lake outlined the instances that could lead to the use of force by the United States (which, incidentally, are also after-the-fact justifications for interventions already undertaken):

- 1 To defend against direct attacks on the United States, its citizens, and its allies;
- 2 To counter aggression [e.g., Iraq's invasion of Kuwait];
- 3 To defend our key economic interests, which is where most Americans see their most immediate stake in our international engagement [e.g., Kuwait];
- 4 To preserve, promote and defend democracy, which enhances our security and the spread of our values [e.g., Panama and Haiti];
- 5 To prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, international crime and drug trafficking [e.g., Panama for the last];
- 6 To maintain our reliability, because when our partnerships are strong and confidence in our leadership is high, it is easier to get others to work with us, and to share the burdens of leadership [e.g., Bosnia];
- 7 And for humanitarian purposes, to combat famines, natural disasters and gross abuses of human rights with, occasionally, our military forces [e.g., Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia].

The three sets of guidelines are purposely rather vague – which gives the US government latitude in deciding whether to become engaged. As such, a new type of conflict could be subsumed under one of the above. At the same time, it would be legitimate to claim that these conditions did not apply universally. Anthony Lake explained,

Not one of these interests by itself – with the obvious exception of an attack on our nation, people and allies – should automatically lead to the use of force.

questions: 1. Is the political objective we seek to achieve important, clearly defined, and understood? 2. Have all other non-violent policy means failed? 3. Will military force achieve the objective? 4. At what cost? 5. Have the gains and risks been analysed? 6. How might the situation that we seek to alter, once it is altered by force, develop further and what might be the consequences? (Colin L. Powell, 'US Forces: Challenges Ahead', *Foreign Affairs*, 72, 5, Winter 1992–93, pp. 32–45.)

¹⁷ From testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in April 1993. Cited in Haass, *Intervention*, pp. 16–17.

But the greater the number and the weight of the interests in play, the greater the likelihood that we will use force – once all peaceful means have been tried and failed and once we have measured a mission’s benefits against its costs, in both human and financial terms.¹⁸

Certainly it is impossible to ensure that any of the conditions elaborated by the three can be met throughout and, in some cases, such as in Somalia, they could change dramatically once the intervention is underway, which makes it very difficult – and often dangerous – to have a fixed exit strategy, for example. This only encourages war-lords and militias to regroup, rearm, and wait until foreign troops leave, while confidence-building measures are not taken seriously because there does not appear to be a public, long-term commitment to help rebuild the state. Despite such problems, it is important to spell out when the US government will consider military engagement for reasons of consistency and to provide an early warning signal to errant leaders. Even though many motives to intervene exist, less emphasis is placed on the aftermath of the intervention. It is to this subject, often termed ‘nation-building’, that we now turn.

Nation-building and democratisation defined

While UN and US government allowances for intervention have increased significantly since the end of the Cold War, with conventional notions of sovereignty effectively ignored in certain cases, the commitment to nation-building has also evolved, albeit in the opposite direction. For continued clarity, the terms ‘democratisation’ and ‘nation-building’ will be defined in the following manner.

The promotion or support of democracy, also known as ‘democratisation’, has developed in several stages since World War II, when it stood for demilitarisation, denazification, and re-education of an entire country’s population, to Vietnam and later in Central America, when it was equated with the fight against communism. Then, attention was placed more on challenging communist advances than on actually implementing democratic reforms.¹⁹

Only since the end of the Cold War has the campaign once again

¹⁸ Examples in brackets are author’s inclusions. The conditions and quote come from Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Remarks at George Washington University, ‘Defining Missions, Setting Deadlines: Meeting New Security Challenges in the Post-Cold War World’, 6 March, 1996.

¹⁹ For more information, see Thomas Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy: US Policy Towards Latin America in the Reagan Years*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991.

attempted to fulfil its stated purpose, with the ultimate aim now the enhancement of international peace and security. The promotion of democracy is based on the assumption that democracies rarely go to war with each other, and therefore an increase in the number of democratic states would imply, and indeed encourage, a more secure and peaceful world. Anthony Lake described this transition of US policy in the following way:

Throughout the Cold War, we contained a global threat to market democracies; now we should seek to enlarge their reach, particularly in places of special significance to us. The successor to a doctrine of containment must be a strategy of enlargement – enlargement of the world's free community of market democracies.²⁰

Efforts to reinforce or establish democratic and transparent institutions are undertaken by a variety of organs, including parts of the US government, NGOs, QUANGOs, and multilateral institutions such as the UN, the OSCE, and the Organization of American States (OAS).²¹ Activities include programmes that strengthen the rule of law, enhance respect for human rights, support international electoral observers, improve financial management and accountability, promote decentralisation, expand civilian control of the military, and improve electoral processes, the judicial system, the police, legislatures, political parties, the media, and education at all levels of society. Most of the organisations undertaking these programmes prefer to work with local and grassroots groups in host countries, and normally do not have a specific formula to implement, but rather a compendium of ideas and policies that are adapted on a case by case basis.

Nation-building, which really means state-building (see footnote 2), signifies an external effort to construct a government that may or may not be democratic but preferably is stable. The US-led ventures in Germany and Japan were intended to build democracies, while in Vietnam and most of Central America, the focus was on establishing anti-communist governments that did not necessarily have to be democratic. For the purpose of this book, however, nation-building as pursued by the US government since the end of the Cold War will imply an attempt to create a *democratic* and secure state.

Although it will no longer abet a dictator only because he is not communist, there are cases, such as in China, Saudi Arabia or Uganda, where the

²⁰ 'From Containment to Enlargement', Address at the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, 21 September 1993.

²¹ An NGO is a non-governmental organisation, while a QUANGO is a Quasi-NGO.

US government will provide support to a country, even though it may not be pursuing a democratic agenda, or at least reforms deemed satisfactory to the US government. Here, however, the USA is not involved in nation-building. In Panama, Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia, however, it has attempted to assist in the establishment of at least rudimentary forms of democracy. Thus democratisation efforts are part of the larger and more comprehensive nation-building campaign, but democratisation can also occur in places where the state is relatively secure and does not need to be rebuilt, such as with electoral reform in Mexico.

The apex of nation-building: the Allied occupation of Germany and Japan

Even though promoting democracy and peace are major objectives of President Clinton's foreign policy, the actual resources – financial, time, and personnel – devoted to this have been down-graded significantly since the Allied occupation of Germany and Japan immediately after World War II. In neither the Cold War nor the post-Cold War period have democratisation and nation-building been as intense. The US government did spend vast sums trying to contain communism during the Cold War, especially in the western hemisphere and in Vietnam, but the actual focus on democratisation in nation-building efforts took a back-seat to the struggle against communism.

The US defeat in Vietnam particularly caused the nation-building process to be pared down significantly (which will be discussed after the efforts in Germany and Japan have been addressed). When Vietnam faded from memory after the euphoria that accompanied the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Somalia disaster once again put the brakes on the nation-building machine (see chapter 3). An analysis of the nation-building efforts in Germany and Japan after World War II thus provides an instructive point of departure for the cases examined in this book.

Germany and Japan: an overview

The following depiction of Germany just after the war illustrates the challenge that lay ahead for the Allies: 'The war had destroyed 33 per cent of [the country's] wealth, nearly 20 per cent of all productive buildings and machines, 40 per cent of the transportation facilities, and over 15 per cent of all houses.'²² Moreover, it created at least 20 million

²² Edward N. Peterson, *The American Occupation of Germany: Retreat to Victory*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1977, p. 114.

refugees and IDPs, and was responsible for the loss of life of 20 per cent of the population.²³ The scale of destruction resembles that which has occurred in more recent civil conflicts, in Rwanda, Somalia, and Bosnia, for example. Yet today's thriving democracies in Germany and Japan attest to the success of externally sponsored nation-building efforts. Significantly, as Roy Licklider explained, 'the resulting governments are impressive testimony that it is possible for outsiders to establish relatively benign governments which locals will support for at least half a century'.²⁴

There were, however, three significant factors that facilitated this process in Germany and Japan – factors that do not exist to nearly the same extent in the cases discussed in this book. One, the unconditional surrender after World War II gave the Allies *carte-blanche* to do what they wanted. Two, the level of development and education in both countries – Germany and Japan were (and still are) highly literate industrialised societies – favoured and facilitated change. And three, the serious commitment on behalf of the Allies to create democratic states in both countries was evident. Despite these differences, it is important to consider the Allied occupation in discussions of political reconstruction because these experiences shaped the way the US government – especially the US military establishment – has approached nation-building in less-developed countries. Further, the Allied occupation also demonstrates the breadth of US experience in democratisation, a point that isolationists in the United States and Europe often deliberately and conveniently overlook.

This discussion focuses primarily on US involvement in Germany and Japan, even though the Soviets, British, and French were also in charge of different sections of Germany, because this book concentrates on US-sponsored nation-building attempts.²⁵ The preoccupation of Britain and France with their own societal restructuring, much of it backed by

²³ Michael Ermarth, ed., *America and the Shaping of German Society, 1945–1955*, Oxford, Berg, 1993, pp. 4–5.

²⁴ Roy Licklider, 'State Building After Invasion: Somalia and Panama', Presented at the International Studies Association annual convention, San Diego, CA, April 1996. The relevance of the Allied Occupation to this book was inspired by Dr Licklider's paper. The author would like to thank him for developing this link.

²⁵ In Germany, the Allies and the Russians managed their own zones in distinct fashion. Stalin, in fact, had demanded large quantities of German machinery and several million Germans for the reconstruction of Russia. For more information, see Roy F. Willis, *The French in Germany, 1945–1949*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1962, and Ian D. Turner, ed., *Reconstruction in Post-War Germany: British Occupation Policy and the Western Zones, 1945–1955*, Oxford, Berg, 1989.

US financial support, also permitted US policy to take the lead overall.²⁶ Finally, the Soviet Union never intended to set up a democratic state.

In both Germany and Japan, the Americans initially expected the occupation to last a few months, which, of course, was completely unrealistic. In Germany, three of the occupation powers (Britain, France, and the United States) helped to establish a federal state by 1949, and the majority of foreign troops remained until 1955. In Japan, the effort was directed entirely by General Douglas MacArthur, and the bulk of US troops stayed until 1952. Germany and Japan are still home to US troops.²⁷

Nation-building in Germany and Japan encompassed the development and reconstruction of the press, education (through a purge policy of re-educating the entire country), the economy, industry, legal institutions (including the establishment of a war crimes tribunal), reparations and restitutions, police retraining (another purge programme that removed those tainted with the previous regimes), and finally, sweeping disarmament, demobilisation and demilitarisation activities, which concluded successfully with no soldiers, no weapons and disarmed police forces. In both Germany and Japan, US government representatives also played a major role in the preparation of the new constitutions, which was anyhow the prerogative of the victor. Most of these activities would be integral components in the subsequent nation-building attempts discussed in this book, although once again, because of the difficulties experienced, they would not be carried out in such a thorough and organised manner.

Germany

The US military government in Germany was tasked to prevent 'Germany from ever again becoming a threat to the peace of the world . . . [and to prepare for] an eventual reconstruction of German political life on a democratic basis'.²⁸ Beyond destroying any future possibility of

²⁶ The US and British zones were united in an economic unit on 30 July 1946, with the aim of facilitating industrial and economic recovery, while the French were more preoccupied with security so did not join this bizonal area until the North Atlantic Pact united all these countries in common defence. All three did co-operate on major decisions, even though they may have conducted matters separately in their spheres.

²⁷ Approximately 45,000 US soldiers are stationed in Japan, while Germany is home to 75,000 troops. *The Military Balance*, London, International Institute of Strategic Studies, 1996/97.

²⁸ 'Documents on Germany 1944–1985', US Department of State, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs (USDS), 1985, as cited in Richard L.

renewed German military capacity, this meant full-scale democratisation, which was implemented in co-operation with Germans. The Germans adapted the above-mentioned components of democratisation to their own particular traditions, especially in developing the Basic Law, which later became the constitution.

Although US involvement was significant, as Edward Peterson stressed, ‘The occupation worked when and where it allowed the Germans to govern themselves.’²⁹ This devolution of power resulted from necessity due to the pressing need to feed 45 million Germans and keep them alive, without the US government footing the whole bill. The focus on ameliorating the widespread famine remained the priority throughout the first three years of the occupation.

Accordingly, the reduced emphasis on democratisation was a retreat from the more interventionist original plan. Even in the denazification programme, considered vital to the rehabilitation of Germany, it became expedient to let the estimated 10 per cent of the population who were proven anti-Nazis conduct this process themselves.³⁰ Practical exigencies thus tended to take precedence over theoretical ones. Nevertheless, the commitment remained enormous, and far greater than in the four main cases discussed in this book.

Working with the residents of the host country would normally have been integral to any democratisation plan, but because the entire programme was led by a US military governor, General Lucius Clay, after a horrific war in which it was believed that the majority of Germans had been brainwashed or were just plain evil, complete co-ownership of the process was just not possible. Moreover, it was estimated that most of the population needed to be re-educated – or *re-oriented* as many called it at the time. As described in the 1944 US Army Military Handbook (concerning the fact that Germans had been cut off from the ‘truth’ for so long and were therefore ignorant of what had been occurring in the world):

Where this state of affairs concerns you is in the irritation that will naturally arise in you when in the normal contact of occupation you try to tell the Germans what the score is, and they reply with their parrot-like repetition of ‘All lies. All Democratic propaganda.’ Don’t argue with them. Don’t try to convince them. Don’t get angry. Give them the – ‘Okay-chum-you’ll-find-out-soon-enough’ treatment and walk away. By NOT trying to convince them, or to shout them down, by the assumption of a quiet demeanor you can help to create a

Merritt, *Democracy Imposed: US Occupation Policy and the German Public, 1945–1949*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1995, p. 270.

²⁹ Peterson, *The American Occupation of Germany*, p. 10.

³⁰ Willis, *The French in Germany*, p. 155.

genuine longing and thirst for the truth and real news in the German people, and break down their resistance to it.³¹

The new Bonn constitution was prepared under the supervision of General Clay, although written primarily by Germans. The resulting federal constitution suited the Germans and the Allies: both believed that a democratic and decentralised state – the antithesis of the preceding government – could succeed where the fascistic and highly centralised state had failed. The Nazi government brought them only shame and ruin, not world domination as promised, while pre-Hitler Germany was essentially federal, enshrined in the Weimar constitution adopted in 1919.³² The Allies also wanted to avoid a repeat of such a concentration of power, and thus supported the decentralised option, with a new army only to be used for defensive purposes. Finally, a federal option left open the possibility of a reunited Germany.³³

Democratisation in Germany started at the grass-roots level and worked up in an orderly fashion to the top. For example, local council elections preceded regional elections, which were held before national elections. As General Clay explained, ‘The restoration of responsible German government from the village to the state within the United States Zones was a systematic, planned, and to a large extent scheduled-in-advance program to carry out our objectives.’³⁴ Political party formation was also encouraged from November 1945, and again started locally and then expanded from the states to the occupied zones.

The path to democracy in Germany was not an entirely smooth transition, and troubles were encountered throughout the reconstruction period. This is hardly surprising as democratisation is by necessity experimental, and proceeds on a trial-and-error basis because

³¹ *Information and Pocket Guide to Germany*, US Army Service Forces, 1944, p. 20.

³² At least initially the Germans preferred this system. Polls in mid-1948 showed an increasing German interest in a more centralised state. For more information on these polls, see Merritt, *Democracy Imposed*, pp. 340–1.

³³ Interestingly, as described in greater detail in chapter 3, the project in which this author was involved from 1995 to 1997, which disseminated information on different types of decentralised governments that could be compatible with a future Somali state, was originally undertaken on a similar premise. Somalis believed that only a decentralised state could prevent another dictator usurping power at the centre as Siad Barre had done for far too long. Somalis also naturally conduct their affairs in a very decentralised fashion. Moreover, this project was conceived by a German, Sigurd Illing, who grew up during the occupation.

³⁴ Lucius D. Clay, *Decision in Germany*, New York, Doubleday, 1950, p. 393.

democratic reforms need to be adapted to the changing particularities of different cultures. Democracy also allows for open debate, which by definition creates controversy. As Alexander Hamilton commented in *The Federalist Papers*,

I never expect to see a perfect work from imperfect man. The result of the deliberations of all collective bodies must necessarily be a compound, as well of the errors and prejudices as of the good sense and wisdom of the individuals of whom they are composed. . . How can perfection spring from such materials?³⁵

Add in the complication of outside interference from more than one state, and the result is bound to be even more diluted. At the same time, it is important to emphasise that externally influenced, US military-controlled, democratic reforms successfully permeated all segments of German society, to the point that most Germans today believe that their country is firmly democratic.³⁶

Japan

As in Germany, democratic reforms in Japan were implemented in a relatively autocratic manner by the US military, in fact even more so because General Douglas MacArthur retained tight control of the entire operation. President Truman bestowed upon MacArthur the title of Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP). As one political adviser to MacArthur later commented, ‘This was heady authority. Never before in the history of the United States had such enormous and absolute power been placed in the hands of a single individual.’³⁷

Presidential Policy, Part I described the goal of the US government:

The ultimate objectives of the United States in regard to Japan . . . are . . . to bring about the eventual establishment of a peaceful and responsible government which will respect the rights of other states and will support the objectives of the United States as reflected in the ideals and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The United States desires that this government should conform as closely as may be to principles of democratic self-government *but it*

³⁵ Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist Papers*, edited by Isaac Kramnick, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1987, p. 484.

³⁶ For more information on how Germans rebuilt trust and instituted safeguards in their constitution to avoid a repeat of a fascist government, see Merritt, *Democracy Imposed*, pp. 349–82.

³⁷ Cited in Toshio Nishi, *Unconditional Democracy: Education and Politics in Occupied Japan, 1945–1952*, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1982, p. 34.

*is not the responsibility of the Allied Powers to impose upon Japan any form of government not supported by the freely expressed will of the people.*³⁸

The overall intent was to change the economic and political institutions. In fact, MacArthur chose to work indirectly through existing government institutions, and did not overhaul them as occurred in Germany. Instead, the US government focused on an extensive re-education programme for the masses – and this programme proved to be highly successful because the Japanese hold a deep respect for education.³⁹ The emphasis on re-education would no longer be a priority in the post-Cold War cases, although here the problem was the lack of basic education in countries with high illiteracy rates.

Presidential Policy explained it this way: ‘The Japanese people will be encouraged to develop a desire for individual liberties and respect for fundamental human rights, particularly the freedoms of religion, assembly, speech, and the press. They shall also be encouraged to form democratic and representative organizations.’⁴⁰ Land reforms also took place, which gave farmers ownership of the land they worked on, and removed it from absentee landlords. The Americans additionally encouraged the formation of political parties and labour unions, and separated Church and State.⁴¹

Another major component of US policy was to purge tainted Japanese from public life. Overall, between two and three hundred thousand Japanese were eventually removed, including military officers, government officials, party politicians, and business leaders. While over 80 per cent of military personnel were purged, the bureaucracy remained essentially the same, only 16 per cent of the pre-war Diet and 1 per cent of civil servants were replaced (many, however, committed suicide).⁴²

Although the Japanese wrote the first draft of their constitution, this draft was heavily influenced by MacArthur and his staff, much more so than in Germany. After reading the draft, MacArthur was still unsatisfied and therefore decided to prepare a new one, which included the famous renunciation of future wars as well as the ban on the army, navy, and air force (the Japanese were eventually ‘allowed’ limited

³⁸ Cited in Edward M. Martin, *The Allied Occupation of Japan*, Westport, CT, Greenwood Press, 1972, p. 45. Emphasis added.

³⁹ See Nishi, *Unconditional Democracy*, for more information about the sweeping educational reforms.

⁴⁰ Cited in Martin, *The Allied Occupation of Japan*, p. 46.

⁴¹ Nishi, *Unconditional Democracy*, p. 286.

⁴² Paul J. Bailey, *Postwar Japan: 1945 to the Present*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1996, p. 34.

rearmament for self-defence purposes). MacArthur then forced his draft on the Japanese cabinet, the members of which made minor revisions and then adopted it, as did the Diet with no further changes. The new constitution went into effect in 1947.

As in Germany, the Japanese public desired a distinctly different government from the imperialistic and militaristic rulers who had brought them to defeat, although the emphasis was not on decentralisation as in Germany, but rather on general democratic reforms. Finally, hunger was also a major issue in Japan. And as in Germany, hunger forced the Japanese government to embrace democracy.

While the Allied success in democratising Germany and Japan was enhanced by public will, even more important were respect for education, high literacy rates, and high levels of industrialisation. Although local support for a change in government has been a factor in the cases discussed in this book, the last three factors have not been evident, barring Panama and Bosnia to a lesser degree in terms of moderately high literacy rates. Success in Germany and Japan was also achieved by a significant Allied commitment to policies that administered vast economic, political, and educational reforms affecting the entire population and most government institutions. Finally, these reforms were facilitated by the unconditional surrender, also not evident in the post-Cold War cases.

The nadir of nation-building: Vietnam

Despite the successes experienced in democratising and rebuilding Germany and Japan, and later in South Korea, the US government would significantly down-grade its democratisation and nation-building efforts after Vietnam. The most prominent US foreign policy disaster of the twentieth century and one that touched all Americans, the US defeat in Vietnam has subsequently had a profound impact on US foreign policy, not only in military terms, but also in democratisation and nation-building. Three million US troops served in Vietnam, and 58,000 were killed. Between 1965 and 1973 when the last combat soldier left Vietnam, the US government sunk over \$120 billion into what it called a nation-building campaign, but what was in fact a war based on the erroneous assumption that the entire region would fall to communism without American intervention.⁴³

President John F. Kennedy saw in South Vietnam his opportunity to

⁴³ See Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, London, Century, 1983, p. 24, and entire book for a comprehensive account of the war.

test America's increasingly visible international role, and particularly the chance to build a democracy in another part of south-east Asia after China had 'fallen' to communism.⁴⁴ The quest to change Vietnam was in many ways nothing new: it abided with America's historic missionary zeal to 'enlighten' other societies, what Daniel Bell has referred to as America's perception of its own 'exceptionalism'.⁴⁵ The crusade to remould Vietnam also transpired when US confidence was at a peak: Americans believed they could rebuild the world in their image, and they sent out government experts to many developing countries to accomplish this task. As Stanley Karnow explained, the Americans did not think they were

imposing colonialism but, rather, [they were] helping the Vietnamese to perfect their institutions. They called it 'nation-building,' and they would have been arrogant had they not been utterly sincere in their naïve belief that they could really reconstruct Vietnamese society along Western lines.⁴⁶

Nation-building in Vietnam, originally instigated by John Foster Dulles, US Secretary of State from 1953 to 1959, involved organisations that promoted democracy through various propaganda and aid channels. The International Rescue Committee, for example, described itself as a 'lighthouse of inspiration for those eager to preserve and broaden concepts of democratic culture'.⁴⁷ Between 1955 and 1961, the USA gave more than \$1 billion in economic and military assistance to South Vietnam. By 1961, it was the fifth largest recipient of US foreign aid, with military assistance taking up the bulk (78 per cent).⁴⁸ Roads, bridges, railroads, and schools were built while development experts worked on agricultural projects. Teachers, civil servants, and police were trained in the 'American way'.⁴⁹ US advisers even helped draft a constitution, again western-style.

Despite the infusion of funds, experts, and enthusiasm imported from abroad, things did not go as planned in South Vietnam, especially after the war was fully underway, for two major reasons. First, there was no co-ordinating mechanism for US government departments working in Vietnam – the State Department, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States Intelligence Agency, the

⁴⁴ As cited in Karnow, *Vietnam*, p. 247.

⁴⁵ As cited in Karnow, *Vietnam*, p. 11.

⁴⁶ Karnow, *Vietnam*, p. 255.

⁴⁷ As cited in George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950–1975*, 2nd edition, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1986, p. 56.

⁴⁸ Herring, *America's Longest War*, p. 57.

⁴⁹ Herring, *America's Longest War*, p. 61.

Department of Defense, and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) – and consequently each operated fairly independently of the others, which inevitably meant overlap and agencies working at cross-purposes.⁵⁰ Brown pointed to another side-effect of the lack of co-ordination: six major western-promoted economic and political strategies operated simultaneously throughout the war.⁵¹

Second, unlike in Germany and Japan, democracy was not the priority in Vietnam. Halting the communist advance was more important, which is why the bulk of foreign assistance went on military spending. The greater emphasis on military aid meant less funding for sustainable development programmes, and a reduced effort to understand how democracy could be adapted to Vietnamese culture, or if indeed this was at all desired or possible. Additionally, many of the democratisation programmes were overly concentrated in the cities, even though 90 per cent of Vietnamese lived in rural areas.

The straightforward economic assistance also did not help establish a stable economy, but rather most of it artificially buffered the Vietnamese economy. As Herring explained, this aid only ‘fostered dependency rather than laying the foundation for a genuinely independent nation . . . Vietnamese and Americans alike agreed that a cutback or termination of American assistance would bring economic and political collapse.’⁵² Herring concluded, ‘Lacking knowledge of Vietnamese history and culture, Americans seriously underestimated the difficulties of nation-building in an area with only the most fragile basis for nationhood. The ambitious programs developed in the 1950s merely papered over rather than corrected South Vietnam’s problems’.⁵³ The same criticism would later be levelled against the US government after the ineffectual Somalia intervention, and also with the benefit of hindsight (even though most of the well-known expatriate experts on Somalia had been consulted throughout the operation). In South Vietnam, the Americans only made a feeble attempt to generate ownership of the democratic process, in

⁵⁰ T. Louise Brown, *War and Aftermath in Vietnam*, London, Routledge, 1991, p. 225.

⁵¹ These were: social mobilisation and organisation building; improvement of local government and administrative reforms (UK-sponsored); the authoritarianism and power concentration practised by Diem and later by Thieu; the building of democratic institutions advocated by certain, more liberal Americans; the stability and economic development option; and the military occupation approach of the US Army. Brown, *War and Aftermath in Vietnam*, p. 236.

⁵² Herring, *America’s Longest War*, p. 63.

⁵³ Herring, *America’s Longest War*, p. 72.