



# The UN's Role in Nation-Building: From the Congo to Iraq

*James Dobbins, Seth G. Jones, Keith Crane, Andrew Rathmell, Brett Steele*

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Reviews nearly 50 years of UN nation-building efforts to transform unstable countries into democratic, peaceful, and prosperous partners. The authors examine the UN's experience in the Congo, Namibia, El Salvador, Cambodia, Mozambique, Eastern Slavonia, Sierra Leone, and East Timor, as well as the U.S. experience in Iraq. The book complements the authors' earlier study, *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq (MR-1753-RC)*, which focuses on U.S.-led nation-building efforts. UN missions are nearly always undermanned and underfunded, with uneven troop quality and late-arriving components. But despite these handicaps, the UN success rate among missions studied—seven out of eight societies left peaceful, six out of eight left democratic—substantiates the view that nation-building can be an effective means of terminating conflicts, insuring against their reoccurrence, and promoting democracy. The authors conclude that the UN provides the most suitable institutional framework for nation-building missions that require fewer than 20,000 men—one with a comparatively low cost structure, a comparatively high success rate, and the greatest degree of international legitimacy. American or other major power leadership is, by contrast, needed for operations which require forced-entry operations or force levels in excess of 20,000 soldiers. Unfortunately, the United States has been less successful than the UN in learning from its mistakes and improving its nation-building performance over time, and this is reflected in the lower success rate among US-led missions studied in this series.

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