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## **Nation-Building Is Now Job One** **by Sheldon Richman**

“Stability operations are a core U.S. military mission that the Department of Defense shall be prepared to conduct and support. They shall be given priority comparable to combat operations....”

With that sentence the Bush administration, through Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, has declared that it is formally in the nation-building business, reports the *Washington Times*. From now on the blunt instrument of the military will regard social reconstruction as an objective on a par with winning wars. Welcome to the New World Order.

President George W. Bush’s 2000 promise of a humble foreign policy that forswore nation-building has long gone the way of his father’s “read my lips: no new taxes” pledge. Now we have it in writing. Bush made the same point in an interview with *Fox News*’s Brit Hume. He explained that transforming societies into democracies is not only good for them; it is also in the interest of the American people. He didn’t explain how turning a society into an Islamic state aligned with Iran is a good thing, but most Americans won’t ask anyway. Say what you want about democracy, but considering that decades of U.S. intervention in the Middle East have created lots of vengeful Muslims, it is not entirely clear how the Bush policy is supposed to make us safer. Leaving them alone has a better chance of accomplishing that.

The Pentagon says that all forces deployed abroad will be training in nation-building. Behold the hubris: The *Times* reports, “Among the goals and functions listed in the [Defense Department] paper are to rebuild security forces, prisons and judicial systems; ‘revive or build the private sector’; and ‘develop representative governmental institutions.’” It must be an oversight to have left out “create a new national pastime,” “revamp all clothing fashions,” and “overhaul the common language.”

Is the military really cut out to build a private sector? It takes a rather shallow knowledge of history not to know that private sectors are not built; they evolve. They certainly are not the product of precision bombs and bayonets. Just as ludicrous is the idea that the military will “develop representative governmental institutions.” Even if it could do that, representative

government is *not* the same thing as liberty. Contrary to President Bush, voting is not freedom. Freedom is being safe from the clutches of voters.

It should not go unnoticed that the military's formal embrace of nation-building will please the corporate interests that stand to gain from the lucrative contracts that will inevitably be needed to carry out the mission. That ensures we won't hear much protest from the business community against this accretion of government power.

Bush told Brit Hume that even if he had known Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction, he would have launched his war just the same. What more do we need to hear? The Bush doctrine is not about protecting Americans. It's global social engineering intended to ensure that U.S. policymakers and their clients can work their will undeterred by uppity autocrats (even if they once were allies of those policymakers). Stripped of the rhetoric of democracy and freedom, the Bush Doctrine comes down to the projection of power. The cost has been enormous, both in the Iraqi and American lives lost and the hypergrowth of the U.S. government. That it has come from the self-proclaimed party of limited government only adds insult to injury.

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**This article was originally published in December 2005.**