



The Armed Humanitarians: The Rise of the Nation Builders

Nathan Hodge

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In May 2003, President George W. Bush declared victory in Iraq. But while we won the war, we catastrophically lost the peace. Our failure prompted a fundamental change in our foreign policy. Confronted with the shortcomings of "shock and awe," the U.S. military shifted its focus to "stability operations": counterinsurgency and the rebuilding of failed states. In less than a decade, foreign assistance has become militarized; humanitarianism has been armed.

Combining recent history and firsthand reporting, *Armed Humanitarians* traces how the concepts of nation-building came into vogue, and how, evangelized through think tanks, government seminars, and the press, this new doctrine took root inside the Pentagon and the State Department. Following this extraordinary experiment in armed social work as it plays out from Afghanistan and Iraq to Africa and Haiti, Nathan Hodge exposes the difficulties of translating these ambitious new theories into action.

Ultimately seeing this new era in foreign relations as a noble but flawed experiment, he shows how armed humanitarianism strains our resources, deepens our reliance on outsourcing and private contractors, and leads to perceptions of a new imperialism, arguably a major factor in any number of new conflicts around the world. As we attempt to build nations, we may in fact be weakening our own.

Nathan Hodge is a Washington, D.C.-based writer who specializes in defense and national security. He has reported from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Russia, and a number of other countries in the Middle East and former Soviet Union. He is the author, with Sharon Weinberger, of *A Nuclear Family Vacation*, and his work has appeared in *Slate*, the *Financial Times*, *Foreign Policy*, and many other newspapers and magazines.

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