MEMORANDUM:

TO: U.S. President
    George W. Bush
FROM: The Secretary of State
RE: Organizing the
    Government to Handle
    Post-Intervention Situations

The purpose of this memorandum is to propose that you launch a major initiative to create a highly skilled, well-funded, and permanent agency to handle the aftermath of U.S. military intervention in other countries. Such an endeavor would recognize the reality that our nation will be forced to intervene militarily in many other countries in the coming decades and that the success of those operations depends on our ability to establish minimum conditions for stability and lay the foundation for subsequent political and economic progress. In short, as an empire in all but name, the United States must create an institution akin in its professionalism, its focus, and its skills to the former British Colonial Service.

The technical requirements for this initiative will be wide ranging. But even more demanding will be winning political support at home and abroad to marshal the financial and human resources to do the job right. To accomplish this goal, you must persuade Americans that sending their sons and daughters to help other countries recover from war is an indispensable prerequisite of our national security, as well as the morally right thing to do.

This plan entails significant political risks, especially in a presidential election year. But in both the short and long run, failure to create the civilian capability to address the immediate aftermath of serious conflicts will undermine our ability to convert military victory into lasting success.

This memorandum lays out the scope of the problem, a framework for a solution, some operational implications and political considerations, and a recommendation for next steps.

The Problem
For decades to come, the United States will be forced to continue to intervene militarily in many countries. The reasons are many and they have increased since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001: preempting attacks by governments that threaten us with terrorism or with weapons of mass destruction, stopping
genocide, restoring order in countries where government has ceased to function and where lawlessness spills across borders. Looking ahead, the possibilities for more U.S. intervention of some kind are well known to you: a chaotic post-Castro Cuba, a collapsing North Korea, and disintegration in Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Angola. In addition, countries along the southern rim of the former Soviet Union, such as Uzbekistan, are ruled by brutal dictators and are vulnerable to destabilizing Islamic radicalism. Anarchy in Pakistan or Venezuela cannot be ruled out. Haiti remains a failed state.

Your administration has already launched a major overhaul of our armed forces that recognizes these new circumstances. Yet our institutional capability to handle the challenges the “day after” U.S. troops achieve military dominance in a country remains ad hoc, underfunded, and understaffed. We had disastrous experiences following the deployment of U.S. forces in Haiti and Somalia. In Afghanistan and Iraq, we spent infinitely more time and resources on the two military campaigns than we did on planning and implementing the post-conflict peace, even though in both cases the latter is critical to our overall mission and will last much longer than the combat phase.

For the implementation of the Marshall Plan, launched in 1947, the United States established a special agency to oversee our programs for European recovery—the Economic Cooperation Administration (which was lodged in the State Department and drew on both public and private sector resources). Unfortunately, no agency in the U.S. government today has the mandate, flexibility, talent, and money to oversee nonmilitary interventions in all their complexity. This capability is critical regardless of how much the United Nations and other agencies are involved, for in the end the United States must exert leadership proportional to its overwhelming power and consistent with its goals for democracy, human rights, and market-oriented societies.

To take just a few examples of the country’s institutional deficit, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has been eviscerated by funding and personnel cutbacks in the last two decades. An ever increasing array of congressional mandates has reduced USAID’s ability to meet the wide-ranging and immediate demands of promoting post-conquest stability. The Export-Import Bank and Overseas Private Investment Corporation have some resources, but Congress has declared that the primary goal of these two institutions is to enhance U.S. commercial interests, including job creation in the United States. As a result, these agencies have great difficulty providing what down-and-out countries need, such as working capital, short-term credit facilities, and the financing of small enterprises.

The U.S. government lacks not only the proper structure to deal with a conflict’s immediate aftermath but also the right kinds of people. We don’t have enough economists with hands-on experience in managing failed financial systems; we don’t have enough lawyers to support judicial systems; we don’t have enough
experts for police work; we lack experience in general civil administration; we lack the requisite language skills and knowledge of local politics and culture in huge swaths of the developing world; and we certainly don’t have the leaders who can oversee all these areas.

Finally, we have not met the financial challenge for post-conflict stability. We do not have an adequate planning process to anticipate and plan for funding requirements. We do not have a centralized disbursement mechanism to deploy resources quickly, flexibly, and without unnecessary waste. And we do not have sufficient agreement with Congress on the magnitude of the funding problem and the need to respond to it.

Framing the Solution
You will need to make a huge political leap from where you have been on this issue. During the presidential campaign, you expressed deep-seated skepticism about nation-building. But September 11 changed the nature of the threats the United States faces and the country’s role in the world, and it would not be seen as hypocritical if you expressed a new position based on the post–September 11 realities. The magnitude of the change in national direction should be equivalent to when President Harry S. Truman launched, for the first time in U.S. history, large-scale foreign aid and technical assistance programs to Greece and Turkey in the face of new communist threats. The shift should echo President John F. Kennedy’s establishment of the Peace Corps at the height of the Cold War, with the ring of new responsibilities for the United States and our determination to fulfill them.

At the center of your new approach to nonmilitary intervention will be the need to create within the U.S. government an institutional cadre of highly skilled and motivated experts, adequately trained and financed, whose careers will be devoted to operating in politically chaotic situations. The American people are not interested in remaining in these countries any longer than required, but no one should underestimate the time necessary to establish a transition to stability.

Making It Work
First, you should appoint someone you trust to occupy an office in the White House and become the “czar” for this effort, in the same way you once asked Tom Ridge to organize the massive homeland security effort. This person’s first task will be to improve our efforts within the current structure. The czar will have to focus on Afghanistan and Iraq, of course, but his mission must be broader; he should be charged with looking at the organizational needs for the future. We will not need anything like a new cabinet-level department, but something much more flexible, perhaps an organization resembling the Federal Emergency Management Agency, with a rapid response capability, a reservoir of experienced talent, and an adequate
budget. The new agency should have the ability to expand and contract in response to changing circumstances.

This czar will have to establish a plan for finding, training, and retaining the best personnel for this kind of work. He will have to create a new branch of the Foreign Service, with a distinct set of competencies and a mindset geared to working in areas where severe problems of every imaginable kind, requiring unprecedented innovation and improvisation, are daily fare. The new service must contain people who are dedicated to the cause, and who would be willing to spend most of their careers abroad. A number of retired Foreign Service and aid officers with highly relevant experiences could be excellent resources. And we can find pockets of deep technical knowledge in international agencies such as the World Bank and regional development banks. We should cast the net broadly, to include especially first-generation Americans with deep knowledge of their former cultures.

Frankly, it is unclear how large this new service will have to be, because we don’t know how many interventions will be necessary. England ruled India with very few British overseers, because they were highly skilled in training local civil servants. Moreover, I, for one, would like to see much more reliance on multilateral institutions—the United Nations and others—than we have allowed in Iraq, for example. My guess is that very few Americans, perhaps just a few thousand, may be needed to provide essential leadership and oversight of both unilateral and multilateral efforts.

As part of a new organization, the czar should create a new institute in the United States to expand our knowledge of the nonmilitary aspects of intervention. This institute could promote research on the challenges the country faces now and will confront in the future. It could support new training opportunities at places like the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University or the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, and it could stimulate new and innovative cross-disciplinary programs that can benefit tomorrow’s cadre of skilled personnel.

Second, whatever the specific organizational structure, we will need a better funding mechanism for our nonmilitary stabilization efforts abroad. Financing these new activities with funds that are reprogrammed from long-term foreign aid would be a shame. Yet under the excruciating budget pressures that are building, this reprogramming is exactly what will happen without a dedicated trust fund from which money can be disbursed quickly and flexibly. For years, Congress has been moving to curtail the ability of the executive branch to have such prerogatives. But we must fight for it in the same way we do for new funds to support the military.

Third, this initiative will founder if you do not get out in front and rally the administration, the Congress, and the American people as only a powerful president can. Just as you have made the case for military intervention when U.S.
interests have been threatened, you must make an equally compelling case for other components of an effective policy.

Political Hurdles
This initiative will be intensely controversial. Some critics will say that you are turning foreign policy into social work. Some will argue that the United States will become mired in political quicksand abroad. Others will bemoan the financial costs in light of pressing domestic needs. Some will say that we should turn everything over to the United Nations. And others still will argue that no significant constituency exists at home or abroad for these policies.

These charges embody important points that call for serious responses. But the bottom line is clear: If we win wars only to lose the peace, your second term in office could be plagued by rising criticism within the United States and around the world about the United States’ failed foreign policy. Many will say that without an effective political, economic, and social stabilization component to our interventions, we will be unable to reduce the threats to our national security—and perhaps even increase them. You could become so steeped in defending our problem-plagued post-conflict interventions that your political effectiveness in achieving many foreign and domestic goals for the nation could be seriously eroded. In the end, the choice is as clear as it is tough.

Recommendation
I urge you to call a meeting of the National Security Council to discuss the most effective way to equip the U.S. government to handle post-intervention situations. I would be happy to circulate background papers and to make the initial presentation.

APPROVE_________ DISAPPROVE_________

SEE ME_________

Jeffrey E. Garten is dean of the Yale School of Management. He was a member of the policy planning staffs of former U.S. Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and Cyrus Vance, under secretary of commerce for international trade in the first Clinton administration, and a managing director of Lehman Brothers.