

HOMME SERIEUX: PLAYING FOR KEEPS

A Review of
The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew
 By Lee Kuan Yew

Englewood, NJ: Prentice Hall College Div., 1998, 680 pages.

W. Scott Thompson

Is it in fact the case that, in all the ballyhooed world of nationalist leaders returning from Europe to lead their people to independence, it can be said of only one that he succeeded, left office in dignity, and left his people in prosperity? Perhaps we are quibbling with a definition that precludes Nehru's inclusion, along with a few others who died on the job in Government House. True, there are also several Caribbean leaders who left office with economy and autonomy intact. Perhaps Leopold Senghor has a unique place among African leaders having passed on a baton democratically, although it is not self-evident that the Senegalese were prosperous then or now. Maybe Sir Seretse Khama, president of Botswana from 1966 until 1980, makes our list.

It has been more than 50 years since this particular show—the show of transition, promises, development and catastrophe—started in Africa and Asia, and almost 40 since Harold Macmillan's "winds of change" started blowing across Africa following his 1960 speech to the South African Parliament. That is enough time to begin an accounting.

One nationalist, and one alone, consummated this goal. In all the complicated history of this drama, Harry Lee Kuan Yew, now Senior Minister of Singapore, is one who walks with a kind of complicated honor, but who has yet truly to elicit the admiration he is due. He is difficult to place in any box, defying categorization. Even the term "nationalist" needs to be qualified, since our subject, as we will soon see, did not start with the objective of independence for the country he came to rule. His goal was a greater Malaysia, one large enough for his proper ambitions and scope, rather than the small city-state with which he ended up.

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The first volume of his memoirs, covering the years up to Singapore's unsought independence in 1965, will not impede his road to a fuller recognition. Seldom self-serving, splendidly written and often revealing, it does something far more important. Through autobiography, it shows in its full authenticity the way leadership through an epochal character truly works.

What ingredients did he use to accomplish this? One way was separating his feelings from his analysis. David Marshall, Singapore's first premier, was "too involved in his own emotional processes."¹ This was a mistake our author never made. Another ingredient was hard work. Scarcely a page goes by without testament to the zeal which he gave to work—not to mention the golf course where he worked off his frustrations.

Yet, his most significant ingredient winding through everything, including the skill with which he tells his story, which truly is the "Singapore story" of the title, is raw, simple brains—the brains with which to think out programs and policies, outwit opponents and shrewdly use Special Branch.² Some people are simply smarter than others.

Few indeed are as smart as Harry Lee. How does he deal with mere mortals? The reviewer can attest to Lee's views of at least one, the last British high commissioner in Singapore, the late Lord Selkirk. "He did not have a powerful mind, but had keen social intelligence and the charm of a nobleman out to put a plebeian at ease. He meant well and we got along."³ However, his smarter deputy sensed Lee's impatience and thus reminded him often that Selkirk, as a former cabinet minister, had access to the British prime minister. Yet, to make sure our understanding of Lee is in place, he tells us how distracting it was for him that the good Earl "toy[ed]...with his denture" when thinking hard.⁴

It was another nobleman, the great Tunku,⁵ who brought upon Lee his defining life experience by expelling Singapore from the Malaysian federation. Lee reserves his sharpest knives for him. They had shared loyalties to Cambridge, but there the Tunku "was quite literally given a degree."⁶ Lee not only got a First, he got "the only star for Distinction on the final Law...honours list."⁷ In their long negotiations, while the Tunku had his afternoon nap, Lee would "practice tee to hit 100 to 200 balls while I waited for him to get up."⁸ Having the last word is good, revenge is sweeter.

Lee's bout with his communist competitors is the centerpiece of the study—just as the inexorable move toward the breakup of Malaysia is the end piece and dénouement. It is an awesome account of a struggle for power. It is also where one may ask the most bemused, perhaps gratuitous, question of his motives. Harry Lee established the People's Action Party (PAP) with the knowing support of communist organizers. He is not wholly forthcoming on the obvious question this raises. It is true that he needed them. Indeed, arguably he could not have got off the ground without them. Then, when it came down to a "me or them," he used everything he had—and most saliently British intelligence and Special Branch—to rid the party of them, indeed to lock them up. His underlying attitude toward the imperial masters took center stage here. He even admits that the fundamental trump he had was to keep the British in Singapore until the communist threat was wholly extirpated: "to have the British in a fallback

position if the Communists should get the upper hand."⁹ This was remarkably different from the dominant brand of Afro-Asian nationalism in that period. Eventually, Harry Lee's variant worked. Lest one misses the point, this was the only way for Lee Kuan Yew to come to power, and he was playing for keeps.

In the detail of the struggle we find a great deal of sheer strategic brains. Lee realized, for example, that the key was "not to let the Communists exact a heavy price for putting them down,"¹⁰ i.e., not to put too fine a point on it, to get away with it. That involved putting the Communists down totally and mercilessly. How he outwitted the attractive and clever Lim Chin Siong makes irresistible reading. "He needed me, I needed him,"¹¹ but only one could win. The Chinese population knew how to count, and Lee knew that the Singapore populace would go with the forces that they saw surviving. They "were prepared to stand up and be counted" only when the critical 1963 ballot, so shrewdly organized by Lee's forces, showed the Communists only had a fourth of the votes—and those 25 percent were blank ballots.¹² From then on it was a mop-up operation. A fourth usually could determine the outcome of an election—witness what happened throughout Eastern Europe. Yet Lee had preempted the opposition organizationally.

Lee Kuan Yew's secret was less that he was smart as such but that he used his brains as well as his sense of measurement to understand power. He saw it in how the Catholic Church kept its minions in line. He saw it in the physiological superiority of some communist agitators in the street. Most of all, though, he saw it in the Japanese occupation: "my appreciation of governments, my understanding of power as the vehicle for revolutionary change, wouldn't have been gained without this experience."¹³ Astonishingly, this is revealed to be the source of his political understanding, teaching him more than "any university could have taught."¹⁴ Lee concedes that the three years of Japanese occupation "were the most important of my life."¹⁵

Lee goes on, "I had not yet read Mao's dictum that 'power grows out of the barrel of a gun,' but I knew that Japanese brutality, Japanese guns, Japanese bayonets and swords, and Japanese terror and torture settled the argument as to who was in charge, and *could make people change their behavior*, even their loyalties." (my emphasis)¹⁶ He even gives the first rationale for the American nuclear bombs that I for one have ever found credible. The trajectory the Japanese were on was one that could only be stopped by such a power, and the alternative was the death of "hundreds of thousands of civilians in Malaya and Singapore, and millions in Japan itself."¹⁷

It boils down to the realization that Lee used the same tactics Leninist Communists used throughout the Third World to achieve power in splendid reverse: allying himself with the Communists, then outwitting them and locking them up, as they were doing to the social democrats wherever they came to power. The overwhelming difference, however, was that he understood that to sustain power in the long run he would have to bring prosperity to his people. And he was smarter than any Leninist in realizing that the state was just too inefficient a mechanism for doing so. The question was, however, how to keep a hold on power while letting the market bring the prosperity. Only a person as

smart as Lee would have been able to think through step by step how the mechanics of government could provide the framework within which people would change their behavior—this included the crafty work of Special Branch—while working as hard as possible to bring riches and glory to their state.

Yet, in the immediate post-war years in London and Cambridge, Harry Lee was as much influenced by Fabians and the socialist Left as any of the other Afro-Asian nationalists. So surely our most important question is how he came to the point of realizing that “the need to generate revenue” for his poor city was his priority long before he could “even think, let alone talk, of redistributing it.”¹⁸ I find the secret in an otherwise unremarkable comment of young London children calling him “a Chinaman or a Chink,” which would have drawn blood or at least ire on most anyone’s part. Yet, “it did not trouble me. If they meant it as a term of abuse, my business was to make them think differently one day.”¹⁹ That was his secret—having the long-term view. That is the nexus of God-given brains and a developed self-confidence. He could see where policies were going, and what the long-term effects of policies were. When he traveled through Africa to round up support for Malaysia’s independence—against Sukarno’s ranting and raving—he saw just precisely where those states were going with their redistributive policies. He could think it out and shift ground accordingly.

There is one troubling omission in his book. He was playing for keeps, but he never discusses and rarely even alludes to his ambition. This is not to doubt that his motivation to improve the lot of his fellow Chinese in Singapore was less than genuine. But his relentless quest to do so, the depth of his bitterness against his Malay partners in the Malaysian enterprise, and most of all his deeply competitive nature—down to the twice-mentioned achievement of his wife in beating him in economics and English at Raffles College—makes us realize who he really is. Maybe he will give us a more measured estimate of himself in the next volume. In this one, we get just a bit too much of who measured up to whom, who beat whom and who was smarter than whom.

The other troubling element is that he does not appear to see his own defect, and if he does, then the conclusion is even more troubling. It is not his willingness to “bluff, bully and blackmail up to the eleventh hour,”²⁰ as Lee delightfully cites Colonial Secretary Duncan Sandys’ cable to Macmillan. It is his realization of his own brilliance, which is never far from the surface. Nor, one must conclude, was it far from that of his interlocutors. The Tunku was one of those great intuitive characters of the colonial transition who had more in common with the colonial power than the masses on whose backs he rose to unchallenged leadership in Malaya. He never trusted Lee, though, partly because their interests were irretrievably different, partly because his sixth sense told him something important about Lee’s trustworthiness, and partly because, no doubt, he felt Lee’s contempt. Lee cannot resist quoting the Tunku’s comments after the 1964 race riots as the “most unhappiest moment of my life,” mercifully without a “sic.”²¹ And a discussion with the brilliant Lord Head reveals more than Lee intends: “He guffawed when I said the Tunku believed the Africans were slow-witted, for Head had met many Africans smarter than the Tunku, quite a few of whom had taken Firsts at Oxford.”²² The coded message is virtually gratuitous. We know who Lee thought was slow-witted.

The Tunku's conclusion was that Lee was on a trajectory of promise and power and might not know the limits. This realization pushed him close to locking Lee up. He might well have done so, provoked as he was, had Lee's *doppelganger* Harold Wilson not scared him off. Indeed, when Lee reminds us that with Singapore in the federation Chinese outnumbered Malays, without suggesting he understood the irrelevance of this point in so many ways, we see the Tunku's point.²³ We get close to the heat of the matter when Lee in 1965 near the end of the federation gave one of his most important speeches in parliament, and definitely his most important in Malay. He logically and ruthlessly exposed the illogic in the calls for, in effect, affirmative action—remedial and compensatory measures for Malays. He rubbed in the “stunned silence,” the “electric” air that filled the house, as well as the fact that the Tunku would later attribute to that speech the turning point.²⁴ They realized Lee was going for it, he was on a roll. The Tunku and his people saw that Lee could indeed make inroads in and on their home turf. A conflict was inevitable since there was not enough room for both of them. This was still Malaya underneath Malaysia, and despite the demographics, given the distribution of traditional power and land and the heritage of British colonial politics, the Malays were not under any circumstances going to cede power to the Chinese under a one-man-one-vote authority. In particular, they were not going to cede power to the smartest Chinese of all, whose abilities to master a polity had been only too well displayed in Singapore. Lee's readiness to lock up his opponents, use Special Branch, fall back on the British or pull in his international alliances, stung all too sharply.

Yet, when we are talking about his defects, what measure of man are we taking? In the history of the world, no leader since Lorenzo the Magnificent has so successfully imprinted his personality and projected his own character on a legitimate polity as did Lee Kuan Yew on Singapore. Prohibitions against chewing gum and harsh punishments for vandalism came right from his drawer, while the smoking he indulged in was excepted. The hard work he thrived on became the leitmotif of the republic, but it was the brilliance of its policies, mirroring his own relentless and restless search for the best solutions to any problems coming across his path, that made Singapore so rich. Seminars at Harvard and The Fletcher School, counsel with Cambridge dons, wherever ideas were available outside his home turf, Lee was open to information. He got globalism right before anyone had named it. Moreover, it was his own ability to articulate the dilemmas of whole generations, such as the need to generate wealth first, that gave his country so enormous a head start over almost everybody else.

I have to mention my distaste for rulers who entitle their memoirs by the name of their country. *Ghana*, Kwame Nkrumah's autobiography, is a pretense made more galling by the ruin in which he left his country—a ruin from which it has yet to recover. Lee gets away with it. In fact one does not begrudge him the title *The Singapore Story*. Even this imprint and projection of his should elicit little admiration—Hitler did that, too—had it not brought so much good to so many. To see the pictures of his city when he came to power, the slums, the hovels, the pot-holed streets, and to see this marvel of technology, financial planning, and long-sighted political-economic trajectories today is to acknowledge

that a realized vision that empowers a people is its own justification. He wraps up his book with the deep pain he felt upon the breakup of the federation upon whose realization he had so labored, but knowing his own people "shared our feelings" and "were prepared to do whatever was needed to make an independent Singapore work. I did not know I was to spend the rest of my life getting Singapore not just to work but to prosper and flourish."²⁵ It is difficult not to share his pain and the triumph as we anticipate the gains that his leadership brought, and when we come to the end of this must-read, we anticipate the next volume where we will see the making of the first little tiger. Lee's *schadenfreude* as he anticipates his country's leaps ahead of Malaysia is in this sense justified. They were mortals, they could not bear the thought that a larger person—one that was racially different from them—could leap ahead of them both economically and politically. It is no wonder that they acted as they did in mercilessly kicking him and Singapore out, and it is a small wonder that even Lee Kuan Yew, who could separate his emotions from his rule, broke down on air on this occasion. But when the World Bank's ranking of the world's countries a mere 33 years later put Singapore short only of Luxembourg at the top of the world's list for per capita income, ahead of Germany, the United States, Kuwait, Japan and most assuredly Malaysia, it became obvious just how much one determined person can achieve. "Prosper and flourish," indeed. ■

NOTES

- ¹ Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew* (Englewood, NJ: Prentice Hall College Div, 1998), 235.
- ² The British secret service in colonial territories.
- ³ Lee Kuan Yew, 363.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵ Abdul Rahman Putra Alhaj, called Tunku (Prince), was the first prime minister of independent Malaya (1957-63) and then of Malaysia (1963-70).
- ⁶ Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story*, 223.
- ⁷ *Ibid.* 117.
- ⁸ *Ibid.* 411.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 229.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 251.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 233.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 485.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 74.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 231.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 502.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 9.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 522.
- ²³ See *ibid.*, 618.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 613.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 663.

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**A Review of
To End a War
 By Richard Holbrooke**

New York: Random House, 1998, 408 pages.

Ryan C. Hendrickson

In the post-Cold War era, U.S. foreign policy makers are faced with a variety of new and complex security issues. The protection of human rights, terrorism and ethnic cleansing have moved to the forefront of the American foreign policy agenda. The collapse of the former Yugoslavia presented those challenges and plagued Bill Clinton for the first three years of his presidency. As chief negotiator for the United States at the Dayton Peace Accords, Richard Holbrooke helped bring peace to Bosnia through his diplomatic efforts in what is arguably the Clinton administration's greatest foreign policy achievement.

In *To End A War*, Holbrooke chronicles U.S. foreign policy toward the former Yugoslavia beginning with the Bush administration and concluding with the implementation efforts of Dayton through mid-1998. The author does not develop a broad theme or overriding argument, but rather offers personal recollections of his role in these efforts that provide an insightful contribution to the history of the Dayton Peace Accords and the making of American foreign policy.

Holbrooke implies that much of Dayton's success was due to his forceful diplomacy with the Balkan country's leaders. He recalls many instances when he threatened those leaders with the use of force, yelled at them and even walked out of talks with their chief negotiators. Holbrooke focuses principally on his staff's efforts to bring about a peace settlement at Dayton. Yet, he also notes that well-timed visits to Dayton from U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher and phone calls from President Clinton to the presidents of the Balkan countries greatly enhanced his ability to produce a negotiated peace. The author's anecdotes will keep most readers interested throughout the book. Particularly interesting is Holbrooke's description of Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic, who is depicted as cunning, charming and detestable all at once. Moreover, readers will likely find themselves intrigued with Holbrooke's sensitivity to the details of effective diplomacy. Holbrooke describes his strategies and purposes in determining where

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negotiators sat at the table, at what time the talks occurred, who was allowed to attend the talks and what the physical setting of the negotiating room was.

Holbrooke also offers a number of critiques of the Bush administration for its inaction on Bosnia. On more than one occasion he recalls Secretary of State James Baker's remark that the United States did not have a "dog" in that fight. He also notes the problems of "Euro-passivity" in the 1990s. As the United States sought to encourage greater European leadership within NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the European states' national interests and their different assessments of the causes of the war and possible remedies paralyzed these multilateral security organizations. They proved ineffective without U.S. leadership. At the same time, it is remarkable that the author holds no restraint in condemning the U.S. Department of Defense, and especially NATO commander Admiral Leighton Smith, for not encouraging NATO's forces to capture the Bosnian Serb leaders accused of war crimes. He also blames Smith and his NATO troops for passively watching Bosnian Serbs burn their homes as they left their conquered territory and resettled in the Republika Srpska, exacerbating the already tentative peace agreement.

Holbrooke is critical of the Clinton administration for acting so slowly in the region, yet he offers no analysis for why the administration watched the carnage without taking action. Neither does he offer personal criticism of individuals in the top echelon of the Clinton administration. He rather provides only a broad-based critique of its unwillingness to act forcefully against Milosevic and the Bosnian Serbs. In his conclusion, however, the author does not neglect his own mistakes. He notes a number of areas in which the Dayton Peace Accords have failed and what should have been done to improve the prospects for success.

Some readers may find this book self-serving and short on evidence. For example, Holbrooke notes in the introduction that he interviewed many members of his staff who contributed to the Dayton Peace Accords, but provides few citations within the text and only a long list of those he thanks in the end. However, this book is to date the best written source analysts have for understanding how the United States was able to craft the agreement. The book's style is engaging, and it is accessible for readers who have only a limited background on the Balkan conflict. In short, *To End a War* is essential reading for all those interested in U.S. foreign policy, and especially for students of diplomacy. Readers will gain a much greater appreciation of the diplomacy of the Clinton administration, and the complexity of the issues surrounding the Dayton Agreement. ■

BETWEEN IRAQ AND A HARD PLACE: THE PARADOXES OF U.S. IRAQ POLICY

J. Alexander Thier

U.S. IRAQ POLICY IN A DEAD END

Eight years ago, a global coalition united against Iraq and enacted the most comprehensive sanctions and disarmament regime in history. Today, palpable mistrust and resentment pervade the Security Council, Saddam Hussein threatens his neighbors while continuing his quest for weapons of mass destruction,¹ and the largely U.S.-enforced sanctions policy has demolished the Iraqi economy, causing disturbing increases in malnutrition and infant mortality across Iraq. In 1990, the Security Council's approach to Iraq appeared to be a potential model of global action to combat aggression and ensure regional stability. Today, the United States is accused of being on a unitary, vindictive, even imperialist rampage that is exacting a harsh penalty on millions of impoverished Iraqis, while the Russians and French undermine the United States and court Baghdad in hope of a future payoff.

Is the apparent failure by Washington to deal effectively and humanely with Iraq a result of anti-Arab, anti-Saddam, pro-Israeli, pro-cheap-oil policies as Baghdad and its allies suggest? Despite the embarrassing and hypocritical revelation that, after years of accusation and denial, the United States had planted spies in the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM),² U.S. policy seems more misguided than malicious.

The failure of U.S. Iraq policy lies in three seemingly irreconcilable paradoxes with regard to the effects of sanctions, the use of force and the U.S. attitude toward the Iraqi leadership. As the issues are currently framed, each appears to be a no-win situation. To escape this morass, each question must be broken down and its constituent assumptions examined. The following is an attempt to do this and to provide some suggestions intended to improve the balance of benefit and cost associated with each issue. There are, however, no silver-bullets, and all reasonable alternatives will require expenditure, patience and flexibility.

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THE THREE PARADOXES

SANCTIONS

The first paradox is that long-term economic sanctions create an environment in which they are least likely to achieve their objectives.

After eight years, the sanctions neither appear to be an effective tool of coercion, nor are they tolerable on humanitarian grounds. And the current debate over sanctions is divisive and emotional. As a growing lobby pushes for the end of sanctions that reportedly kill 4,500 children per month,³ some commentators have gone so far as to charge that the sanctions regime is perpetrating genocide against the Iraqi people.⁴ Meanwhile, oil company executives write editorials calling for the altogether elimination of Iraqi oil sales that support humanitarian programs.⁵ The degradation of Iraq's physical and economic infrastructure has unquestionably induced debilitating poverty to a once thriving nation, and levels of malnutrition in children are alarming.

Calls to simply end the sanctions regime are equally problematic. Returning *carte blanche* use of U.S.\$10 to U.S.\$20 billion annually to Saddam and his megalomaniac aspirations to dominate the Middle East could have disastrous effects on the people of Iraq and the region. The international community should be prepared to go to great lengths to avoid a repeat of the horrors visited upon millions of Iraqi Kurds and Shiites, Iranians, Kuwaitis and gas-mask toting Israelis. The members of the U.N. Security Council have to ask themselves if the suffering of thousands can be tolerated for the possible protection of millions. This is a devilish choice, but perhaps one that does not need to be made. There are several wayward assumptions concerning the implementation and effects of sanctions embedded in these options. The choice between starving Iraq's children and handing Saddam the bomb is a false one.

The first and most confounding question is whether sanctions are an effective means to achieving their stated goals. These goals are twofold. The first objective is to prevent Saddam from rebuilding his once massive arsenal of conventional and unconventional weapons. He has amply proven his propensity to use both, and few criticize the broader objective of limiting Saddam's power. But physical barriers cannot stop the development of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The technological know-how to make chemical and biological weapons can be disseminated in a briefcase, an e-mail or a scientist's head. The materials can be carried in a gallon jug. These are things that cannot be successfully interdicted. The manufacture of nuclear weapons requires some harder-to-find items and technology, but if found, these too can be smuggled rather easily.

Assuming that someone will always be willing to provide these inputs if the price is high enough, the only possible limitation imposed by sanctions on WMD development is to restrain the accumulation of hard currency needed to purchase these goods. This limitation has not, however, proven very effective against Baghdad. The Iraqi government continues to fund WMD programs, build

palaces and pay, feed and clothe several hundred thousand troops. Sanctions may be much more effective against big-ticket items like tanks and missiles, but Saddam still has enough weapons to threaten his subjects and neighbors.

The next objective of sanctions is to punish the Iraqi population, in hope that they will become so enraged that they will rise up against Saddam. This assumes that the Iraqi people believe their president is to blame for the sanctions and that his ouster will result in the lifting of sanctions. There can be little doubt in this regard that Saddam is winning the propaganda battle: the United States cuts off the food supply and Saddam hands out food every month.⁶ The United States bombs Baghdad and Saddam stands unbowed before his people saying, "I will defend you." It is too much to ask the Iraqi people to believe that their suffering is Saddam's choice, or that the United States will shower them with affection and riches once Saddam is gone.

Another mistaken assumption is that somehow a weakened population will rise up against Saddam and his massive military and state-security forces. Despite the somewhat superficial autonomy of the Kurdish controlled North, Saddam maintains an iron grip on Iraq. A recent assessment in *Foreign Affairs* concerning the likelihood of Saddam's ouster is extremely pessimistic, even when the scenario includes internal revolt accompanied by massive outside military intervention.⁷ The chances of a spontaneous and successful uprising by the populace are infinitesimal.

The second, more fundamental question concerning sanctions is whether they are a tolerable option on humanitarian grounds. Can the United States justify using food as a weapon of war? Although the international legal standards are regrettably not clear on this matter, it does not take a utopian idealist to believe that a policy that uses the systematic impoverishment of a population as means to achieving its objectives is wrong. The U.S. government has denounced blockade policies in places like Sudan and Afghanistan for humanitarian reasons. How is Iraq different? If U.S. policymakers originally did not realize that the effects of sanctions would be as disastrous as they have proven to be, they should admit as much and change course.

Economic sanctions may be effective in the short term to send powerful signals or cause short-term domestic economic and political turmoil. They are most likely to be successful against countries where citizens participate politically and do not eschew criticism in fear of their lives. Sanctions are also a useful tool to serve as a precursor for the use of force. They demonstrate both the seriousness of the international community's concern and show that the resolve necessary for coordinated action exists. However, sanctions are not designed to be a long-term tool. Like any weapon, they should target governments, not civilians. One of the enduring lessons of U.S. Iraq policy in the 1990s may well be that the long-term imposition of comprehensive economic sanctions is both ineffective and unethical.

THE USE OF FORCE

The second paradox is that the continued use of force, intended to ensure Iraqi compliance, has effectively ended compliance.

For the last two years, Saddam Hussein has played the UNSCOM inspectors and the massive array of U.S. armed forces in the Persian Gulf like a yo-yo. When convenient, the U.N. inspectors are kicked out, bringing a flurry of aircraft carriers, diplomats and threats. Finally, in December 1998, after seeding the clouds for nearly two years, Saddam reaped another Desert Storm, costing Iraq possibly several hundred soldiers, several dozen civilians and scores of military installations. The financial cost to the United States is probably over U.S.\$1 billion, not to mention the enormous political capital spent with its Security Council partners and regional allies.

Why has the use of force, conceived as the option of last resort, become the only option to U.S. policymakers? Each time the United States is pushed to the brink and threatens to use force, it becomes harder to withdraw the threat. One of the primary strategic justifications for the recent use of force is the need to show that the threat of force is credible. In order to be credible, the threat must be perceived by its target to be both likely to occur and to be sufficiently detrimental as to deter the undesirable activity. In the case of Iraq, the threat of force needs to be sufficiently credible to ensure compliance with the inspections and disarmament regime. In fact, however, it fails to accomplish that goal.

Previously, the U.S. administration had both a carrot—lifting sanctions—and a stick—the use of force—to deal with Saddam. However, through statements made by the Clinton administration since 1996 and the passage of the Iraq Liberation Act in 1998, the US has given Saddam every reason to believe that sanctions will not be lifted until he is gone, thus eliminating their carrot and leaving only the stick. Consequently, the threat of military action has become the lone factor ensuring Iraqi cooperation. Yet, Saddam seems to have figured that he could take what the United States would be willing to dish out and that his resolve would outlast theirs.

Ironically, the recent bombing campaign may have ensured the demise of the very inspections regime it sought to enforce. The use of force is now justified only by the actual physical damage that it causes. It is no longer a credible means of ensuring compliance. Operation Desert Fox's only explicit objective was to "degrade" suspected weapons and military facilities. Although the immediate effectiveness of this operation is unknown, the longer-term implications are clear: the United States must be ready to use costly and unpopular military actions of questionable effectiveness repeatedly for years to come.

For several reasons, this policy is unlikely to last. First, such a policy requires sustained financial and military commitment. The continued cost of containing Saddam with periodic use of force and maintenance of capabilities in the region is staggering. Second, this policy is politically costly with one-time U.S. allies. Many members of the original Gulf War coalition have showed less and less support for actions taken by the United States. The next step could be

that certain countries ignore the sanctions regime altogether. Will the United States be prepared to act against Russian ships in the Persian Gulf? Turkish pipelines? Iranian refineries processing Iraqi crude? Increasingly blatant and unanswered breaches of the sanctions are likely to have a domino effect.

The third reason is growing Arab antagonism. Anger at U.S. hegemony and bottomed-out crude prices, the economic effects of which are just beginning to be felt, are likely to cause greater unrest on Arab streets than has been seen in decades. A violent reaction by Israel to the declaration of a Palestinian state could cause a severe backlash across the Middle East. For every bomb dropped and every child malnourished, there will be another five, ten or fifty disenfranchised, disenfranchised Arabs whose aggression will be given a name and an outlet: the United States.

Finally, the use of force is extremely proscribed under international law, and questionable uses of force severely undermine international peace and security. Except for situations of self-defense or explicit authorization by a U.N. Security Council Resolution under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, the use of force by one state against another is prohibited. The United States argues that Security Council Resolutions from 1990 and 1991 authorizing "all means necessary" to enforce Iraqi compliance are still valid justification for the use of force against Iraq today. Given the vagueness of the resolutions and the lack of a temporal limitation, it is possible to strictly construe the resolutions as still valid. Other Security Council permanent members argue that their unanimity, required for passage of the resolutions, no longer exists, and therefore the authorization is no longer valid. There is broad consensus, however, that the U.S.-enforced extended no-fly zones are illegal.⁸ This debate raises an important question in international law, but alas, there is not an independent international judiciary, which can or would be permitted to make a determination. Nonetheless, the United States must be extremely careful not to completely undermine the international order based on the rule of law that it has labored to create.

IRAQI LEADERSHIP

The third paradox of U.S. Iraq policy is that although the United States publicly calls for Saddam's ouster, it seems to prefer Saddam to the probable alternatives.

It has become conventional wisdom that the U.S. military stopped short of Baghdad in 1991 in part because it feared what would happen if the Ba'hist regime was toppled. Would the Shi'i majority take over, significantly extending Teheran's regional influence? Would Iraq break up altogether with parts going to Turkey and Iran? These frightening scenarios may have caused the United States to take the stick-with-the-devil-you-know approach.

It has been suggested that the best outcome of the current attrition policy would be to spark a military coup. Although this may be the only realistic short-term solution to Saddam's grip on Iraq, it most likely means that another dictator cut from the same cloth will take power. This scenario validates the suspicions of those who view U.S. policy as a vengeful campaign to "get Saddam"

for daring to defy the United States and who believe that the United States was never too concerned about the Iraqi dictator's past atrocities or the future of the Iraqi people.

If true, this analysis also flies in the face of the stated policy to support the Iraqi opposition. The U.S.\$97 million allocated to the Iraqi opposition under the Iraq Liberation Act has reportedly not been disbursed to the disorganized and fratricidal opposition groups.⁹ Even in the extremely unlikely event that these groups would be able to take and hold parts of Iraq, such a development could hasten the feared balkanization of the country. Therefore, it appears that within the current framework of policy options there are no good alternatives to Saddam's leadership.

SUGGESTIONS

The following brief suggestions are intended to cut the Gordian knots described above. There are two fundamental precepts at the core of the approach outlined here. The first is multilateralism: proposals concerning sanctions and the use of force should be approved by the Security Council and implemented multilaterally. The second is a focus on the welfare of the Iraqi people who should be the primary beneficiaries of these policies. Ideally, the Iraqi government could also be convinced to sign onto significant agreements.

SANCTIONS: FEWER RESTRICTIONS, MORE MONITORING

The current sanctions regime should be scrapped entirely in exchange for a new approach. If the Security Council cannot reach consensus, the sanctions could be reduced piecemeal. Either way, the focus of the sanctions regime should be shifted from completely shutting off the Iraqi economy to monitoring oil sales and imports. In exchange for lifting the oil embargo, the Iraqi government would agree to the following.

First, UNSCOM or a new organization under the auspices of the Security Council must be allowed broad and unfettered access to Iraqi military facilities on a semi-permanent basis. The mandate of this organization could only be revised or revoked by a unanimous vote of the Security Council.

Second, a U.N. import-export inspection regime would be established, also under the auspices of the Security Council. U.N. customs inspectors would monitor all imports upon entry and would have the power to hold any prohibited or suspect items for clarification. U.N. observers working throughout Iraq would spot-check potential dual-use items to ensure that they are sold to the public rather than stockpiled for military use or re-exported. U.N. oil monitors would record all oil sales and verify price and delivery. The authorities in Baghdad would have to provide accounting for all expenditures. The expert personnel and structure for the import-export monitoring regime already exists to a large extent in the U.N. Oil for Food Program. Staff and facilities could be quickly augmented to take on these additional responsibilities.

USE OF FORCE: RETURN TO MULTILATERALISM

It is imperative that the United States and its allies move away from the current drawn-out state of low-grade war with Iraq. Forging agreements with both the Iraqi government and other Security Council members will be useful not only in achieving their explicit goals, but also in rekindling diplomacy and cooperation. A return to a workable inspections regime and an easing of sanctions will help return the use of force to an option of last resort. Nevertheless, the use of force against the Iraqi leadership must remain an option in case of substantial breaches of the disarmament agreements. Any new policy that removes sanctions and reintroduces inspection regimes must be accompanied by international guarantees that agreements broken by Baghdad will be met with a forceful response. The provisions on the use of force should be endorsed by Baghdad and by capitals of key former coalition partners, including Paris, Riyadh and Ankara. Military reprisals against Iraq's refusal to cooperate with the weapons inspections will be aimed strictly at military targets.

In addition to military action, the Security Council would authorize the imposition of economic sanctions on countries found to be providing Iraq with explicitly forbidden military items. The U.N. should foster national and international responsibility for the actions of private corporations that violate international law.

LEADERSHIP: BUILDING A DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION

With military dictatorships and royal dynasties in control of most Middle Eastern capitals, little serious thought is given to promoting the growth of participatory democracy in Iraq. The Iraqi government's secret service network of fear and intimidation is said to spread into every Iraqi home, effectively silencing the population. Yet, the greatest democratic successes in recent history, such as those in Poland, Czechoslovakia and South Africa, all took place in countries steeped in horrible repression with pervasive secret services prior to their democratic transition. Ultimately, the temptation of individual prosperity, global participation and individual freedoms set a course for change. A peaceful transition of leadership in Iraq, including the reintegration of the Kurdish regions in the north, would be a milestone in this troubled region.

Efforts directed at changing the leadership in Iraq should focus on systemic challenges, rather than on individuals. There are several means to achieve this. The United States and its partners should establish centers for a democratic Iraq instead of simply funneling money to fratricidal rebels. These centers could work to develop a viable transitional leadership mechanism without appointing a leader.

The democratic opposition could use the newly established Radio Free Iraq as a tool to reach the dissident in every Iraqi. Propaganda should aim to shore up national and Arab pride while deriding not just Saddam, but the repressive and destructive path that military dictatorship, and yes, even royal dictatorship, has set; to publicize the economic potential of Iraq and its relatively small

population, which could become not just an exporter of oil, but an economic powerhouse in the region; to extol the virtues of Iraq's cultural diversity; to develop a "liberation theology" for Islam; and overall, to emphasize that the world community knows that it is complicit in the day-to-day suffering of the Iraqi people, and that their well-being is truly the goal of this effort. ■

NOTES

¹ Although significant quantities of arms have been destroyed and much has been learned by the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), numerous outstanding issues remain. See for example *Report of the Executive Chairman on the activities of the Special Commission established by the Secretary General pursuant to paragraph 9 (b) (i) of Resolution 687 (1991), S/1998/920 (1998)*, October 6, 1998.

² Tim Weiner, "U.S. Spied on Iraq Under U.N. Cover Officials Now Say," *The New York Times*, January 7, 1999, A 1.

³ The widely cited figure of 4,500 Iraqi children dying per month was derived from a 1995 UNICEF report. *The Status of Children and Women in Iraq: A Situation Report*, UNICEF, September 1995. C.f. *Report of the Secretary General Pursuant to Paragraph 10 of Security Council Resolution 1153 (1998)*, UN Doc. S/1998/1100, November 19, 1998. This report states a stabilization in malnutrition rates following the implementation of the Oil for Food Program. Although the broad statistical accuracy of the UNICEF report may be questionable, it is noteworthy that the reported infant mortality rate for 1995 was more than seven times the reported figure for 1989.

⁴ See Noam Chomsky, Edward Herman, Edward Said and Howard Zinn, "A Call to Action on Sanctions and the US War against the People of Iraq," *Z Magazine*, [<http://www.zmag.org/ZNETTOPnoanimation.html>], accessed February 25, 1999.

⁵ George Yates, "Iraq's Not-So-Secret Weapon," *The New York Times*, February 9, 1999, A 23.

⁶ Although this food comes from the U.N.'s Oil for Food program, the government of Iraq distributes the food.

⁷ See Daniel Byman Kenneth Pollack and Gideon Rose, "The Rollback Fantasy," *Foreign Affairs* 78, (January/February 1999): 24-41.

⁸ Timothy P. McIlmail, "No-fly zones: the imposition and enforcement of air exclusion regimes over Bosnia and Iraq," *Loyola of Los Angeles International and Comparative Law Journal* 17 (November 1994): 35-83.

⁹ Roula Khalaf, "U.S. Scheme to Overthrow Saddam Runs into the Sands," *Financial Times*, February 4, 1999, 4.