Exercise the Power of the Purse with Hussein

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Recommended Citation
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This program would require the Iraqi dictator to bring out from hiding Iraq's entire cache of chemical and biological weapons for inspection, verification and destruction by UNSCOM inspectors. The rogue state's failure to abide by these terms would meet with swift, severe and sustained U.S. air strikes and cruise missile launches against the Republican Guard and vital command and communication centers.

No doubt, to some at Foggy Bottom and on Capitol Hill, this "poison for food" proposal might sound like diplomatic heresy. But consider the military option and the Arab state of affairs in this implacable crisis. The Pentagon has all but publicly conceded that air and missile strikes would not necessarily wipe out Iraq's chemical and biological stockpiles or ring in a new Iraqi leader. Despite the intimidating build-up of the U.S. arsenal in the Persian Gulf, traditional notions of brinkmanship are proving inadequate to resolve the Clinton Hussein stalemate.

Unfortunately, President Clinton's threats of unilateral U.S. military action against Iraq are only deepening the already wide Arab schism within the 1991 American-led Gulf War coalition. American myopia to the supremacy of ethnic identity over sound policy appears to be setting in. Led by Egypt, many Arab nations now perceive continued UN-imposed economic sanctions against Iraq as insufficient to assuage their battered economies, while Iraq's ability to launch limited missile attacks against Israel, the U.S. and Europe makes Saddam Hussein an attractive client in the reconstruction of the Middle East.

The incentive for the U.S. to employ these scientists in such a manner--"To prevent brain drain" to nuclear weapons-hungry states like Iran and North Korea, who are only too eager to sign up the atomic geniuses for their own programs. Once again, the Pentagon probably neutralized a potential military crisis with dollars. With these two cases as precedent, a new paradigm in strategic foreign policy is being carved out by the U.S.

Recently, Secretary of Defense William Cohen graphically stated that Hussein's biochemical genie could "kill every man, woman and child on the face of the Earth."

This is not alarmist rhetoric. The stakes could not be higher in the current U.S. deadlock with Iraq. Hussein might demand an astronomical sum of money before he signs over the atomic warheads and lethal nerve agent arsenal under this proposal. But that cost would probably be cheaper than what the Pentagon would have to spend to neutralize a crisis, and would be a smaller price to pay to make the world safer from the specter of apocalyptic-type plagues.

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