GEORGE BUSH TO SADDAM HUSSEIN:
DO AS WE SAY, NOT AS WE DO!

Elias H. Tuma

That is the message of President Bush to President Saddam Hussein, for what is permissible for the United States (US) may not be permissible for others. That same message tends to poison the relationship between the US and many countries around the world. Here the focus is on the relationship with Iraq. Saddam Hussein and George W. Bush have unreal expectations of each other, and thus are increasing the danger of war, though war IS avoidable. Both leaders are incurring much waste in their economies, and both seem to give welfare and civil rights of the people a low priority in their policy framework. Both also seem intoxicated enough with power not to rethink their approaches toward each other until forced to do so. Saddam Hussein rattles his sword and considers that good diplomacy. George Bush punishes Iraq with sanctions and missiles and declares that there is no room left for diplomacy. The people of both the US and Iraq suffer the consequences.

Mr. Bush is threatening to wage a war against Iraq in order to disarm it of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), and to dislodge its president Saddam Hussein and his regime, and replace them with a “democratic” government. That the United Nations (UN) has not approved dislodging Saddam Hussein, and that democracy cannot be imposed do not seem to make a difference. To give himself an excuse to go to war, Mr. Bush has demanded that Iraq “prove” that it has no WMD. How to prove the negative is unclear. To oblige, Saddam Hussein has submitted about 12,000 pages of denial that Iraq has any SMD. Mr. Bush charges that Iraq has not told the truth, but how else to prove it remains unclear. On his part, Saddam Hussein says: here is our list and it is up to the UN
inspectors and the CIA agents to show otherwise. Saddam Hussein knows that it is virtually impossible to check every spot in the country, and George Bush knows that Iraq cannot prove the impossible. Hence, war remains highly probable.

Equally fanatic loyalists who reinforce their leader’s faulty policies back up the two leaders. George Bush has Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and John Ashcroft to reinforce his position. However, Mr. Bush has Colin Powell to make him rethink some of those policies. Saddam Hussein has Taha Hussein, Tareq Aziz, and Nagi Sabri to say YES to the leader. Whether he has a moderating voice is not clear, unless it is his son Addi. However, luckily for Iraq, Kofi Anan, the Secretary General of the UN has been a moderating force. Whether these moderating factors will succeed in avoiding war is still unclear.

In preparing for the war with Iraq, while also waging a war against terrorism, Mr. Bush has ignored the worsening economic conditions, the rising unemployment, and the increase in the number of poor and homeless. At the same time economic resources are being wasted, most conspicuously on the anti-missile program that has been judged ineffective, even by high ranking members of the armed forces. The war on terrorism has also been incurring waste by applying presumably preventive and protective measures that have hardly been effective. However, economic waste in the United States can hardly be compared to waste in the Iraqi economy. Saddam Hussein has dissipated the oil wealth of his country on two unnecessary wars, against Iran and Kuwait, and since then on building grand palaces and mosques to immortalize himself. In the meantime, the economy is in depression and the quality of life for a majority of the people has fallen to the level of mere survival. Mr. Bush invokes the concept of security and defense to justify his budget. Saddam Hussein blames the hardship on the UN sanctions against his country, but fails to rethink his policies and the possibility that they have been wasteful.
Saddam Hussein has ignored international law by invading his neighbors, and has ignored the civil and human rights of his people. He has suppressed the basic freedoms, allowed the assassination of his opponents, and has reduced Iraq’s system of government to one of fear, blind obedience, or self-inflicted exile by those who can afford to leave the country. Now fear of terrorism is gripping the United States. To fight terrorism, the US government has been treading on the basic freedoms and civil rights of its residents. Fear of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) has permeated large segments of the population. Residents originating in the Middle East and other Muslim countries are constantly in fear of questioning, arrest, detention, or disappearance on the basis of new powers given to those agencies. While most of those subjected to arrest and detention are aliens; some citizens have been harassed and caused pain because their relatives have been persecuted in the name of the fight against terrorism. Not only has Mr. Bush approved these measure, he has authorized the assassination of presumably known terrorists whose names are engraved on a hit list. That the US Constitution guarantees the rule of law and due process does not seem to make a difference.

The US is now preparing for war with Iraq, but is such a war justified or can it be avoided without giving up on containing the power of Iraq to produce or use WMD? In view of Mr. Bush’s conviction that Saddam Hussein is “evil”, apparently that is enough justification. Presumably Iraq is a threat to its neighbors and to the US, which is about 10,000 miles away, even though Iraq’s military is under-trained, under-equipped, and could in no way be a threat to the US. Nor is Mr. Bush asking whether war is avoidable because were he to ask, the answer would not be to his liking. Yet, war with Iraq is avoidable, to the benefit of all parties. Going to war with Iraq without adequate justification would be similar to Saddam Hussein’s attack on Iran in 1980 and Kuwait in 1990. Saddam Hussein was intoxicated with power and made up self-satisfying
justifications to go to war. One would think that Mr. Bush, the leader of the most powerful country, would be above power intoxication and so much hatred for another leader that he would go to war without strong justifications. The argument that Iraq may have WMD is not sufficient justification; many other countries have such weapons and are not being invaded. The argument that Saddam Hussein is a despotic dictator is insufficient. The world is full of his likes and the US is not deposing them. In fact some of them are political friends of the US.

Saddam Hussein will never be a great leader, all the palaces and mosques he has built notwithstanding. He has inflicted too much pain and suffering on his people and others to be remembered with kindness and respect. Nor will he be considered a good diplomat. To their disadvantage, he has isolated his country from much of the world. Mr. Bush may still prove to be a good leader and a good diplomat. Good leadership and successful diplomacy require patience, persuasion, understanding of the opponent, and willingness to negotiate, give and take, and sometimes to make compromises. Now that Saddam Hussein has virtually surrendered completely to the UN Mr. Bush would do well to rethink his approach and try other means of diplomacy to contain Iraq and avoid the pending war he is contemplating.

For example, the UN, with help of the US and other countries, can still contain the power of Iraq, as it has done for the last ten years. The Arab League can sustain its pressure on Iraq to contain its power and belligerence. Reminding Iraq of its outdated technology and military equipment would help to make Iraq rethink its own stand. However, the most important deterrence against Iraq's potential aggression is fear of retribution by more powerful countries, especially the US, which has maintained a close watch on Iraqi military movements within the country. Even Saddam Hussein knows that his country cannot stand against the power of the United States.
However, if Mr. Bush is truly concerned for the Iraqi people, as he declares frequently, he might approach the problem in still another way. Instead of going to war and wasting hundreds of billions of dollars, he might use the carrot instead of the stick and give economic and humanitarian aid to the people of Iraq. Let them taste the fruits of development and peace. He might persuade the UN to remove all the sanctions except those on WMD material and equipment under a strict regime of inspection. Free trade of peace commodities will help to awaken the Iraqi people and alert them to the possibilities available to them. Expanding the means of electronic communication and information systems may enhance these steps. These measures would be more viable for propagating democracy at the grassroots and less costly than going to war. Economic and humanitarian aid and free contact with the outside would go a long way toward making the people of Iraq aware of their abused basic rights and freedoms. Only then will they fight for their rights, and only then will democracy be viable.

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