

# Sanctions Against Iraq

## A Difference of Opinion?

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Dear Editors

WHILE Matt Welch's article in *Policy* Winter 2002 appears on the surface to be a rational analysis of the effect of sanctions in Iraq, in fact he has simply played the part of 'good cop' as against the mad left's 'bad cop', but with the same effect.

He demonstrates that deaths of children are much higher than they ought to be, but has utterly failed to point to credible evidence, as distinct from assertions, that ANY OF these 'excess deaths' are directly attributable to sanctions.

I don't wish to dispute Richard Garfield's estimate that there were between 106,000 and 350,000 excess deaths of children in Iraq between 1991 and 1998. These are presumably estimates using various statistical methods which may or may not be credible. Assuming the figures are credible, he cites many causes including the Gulf War itself, contaminated water, lack of high-quality water, inadequate breast feeding, poor weaning practices, and inadequate health care supplies.

He then asserts that sanctions played an 'undeniably important role'. No mention is made of what role other than to say that the Iraqi people would not be undergoing such privations in the absence of the prolonged measures imposed by the Security Council [that is, sanctions].

These statements don't constitute evidence. They are assertions and opinions. What Garfield is saying, and Matt Welch is repeating, is that if the UN [read USA] had refrained from putting any pressure on Saddam Hussein he would not have been tempted to punish his own people in a propaganda exercise. Do what the nice man wants and nothing bad will happen . . .

While CIS is doing excellent work in promoting reasoned debate to counter the hysterical left's dominance of our mainstream media, in this case it has let itself down by falling for the apparent non-left reputation of Matt Welch, who in this instance is furthering the irrational left's agenda.

**Ron Mead**

ONE reason why rational observers such as Richard Garfield don't attempt to assign direct proportional blame for excess child deaths in Iraq is that they know such an exercise would be wildly speculative at best. Saddam Hussein blocks access to any kind of meaningful study, period. So how, then, can we say that sanctions have *contributed* to the problem? Because Saddam's flouting of sanctions meant he couldn't sell oil on the world market legally until 1996, thereby depriving his country of the source of more than 90 percent of its foreign income. To imagine that this had no effect on the humanitarian situation in Iraq—a country over-dependent on imports for basic foodstuffs—is barking mad.

Mead's assertion that I somehow believe 'that if the UN [read USA] had refrained from putting any pressure on Saddam Hussein he would not have been tempted to punish his own people' is in itself a 'propaganda exercise', and a rather clumsy one at that. I have never so much as hinted at such a thing, ever, and I invite skeptical readers to scour [www.mattwelch.com](http://www.mattwelch.com) for any evidence to the contrary. I suggest Mr. Mead read a bit slower before nominating new candidates to the 'hysterical left'.

**Matt Welch**