

Current Books

sportswriter's hard-bitten style, and his book is rife with memorable phrases. A fastball is "a false God." Kenny Lofton, leadoff hitter for the Cubs, taps his black bat on the plate "as if it's a divining rod in search of water—plentiful abundance around that plate if he can just find it." And my favorite: "The ball itself is sometimes cruel, not simply a benign layering of twine and rubber and leather but a little organism with a perverse love of turmoil. *Where can I go to create the most disruption? Who needs to be tested right away?*"

It takes a perverse mind to want to tangle with that. We understand how such a mind works after reading *Three Nights in August*—maybe even enough to make us retire as armchair managers and leave it to the pros. No, forget that. Second-guessing is one of the timeless pleasures of the game.

—APRIL SMITH

YOU, THE PEOPLE: *The United Nations, Transitional Administration, and State-Building.*

By Simon Chesterman. Oxford Univ. Press. 296 pp. \$95

In this fine, timely, and usable study, Simon Chesterman analyzes the complicated process of transferring power from an international authority that has governed a country temporarily to a viable local regime. Before shifting power, the outside authority must build sustainable institutions and train local people for government jobs, while also laying the groundwork for democracy by building trust in government institutions and encouraging people to take part in the democratic process. But the preparations for democracy are hampered by the fact that the transitional administration itself is anything but democratic: Notwithstanding the good intentions of its creators, it's essentially a military occupation. The contrast between pragmatic means and idealistic ends is stark. As Chesterman, a senior associate at the New York-based International Peace Academy, asks at the beginning of his book, "Is it possible to establish the conditions for legitimate and sustainable national governance through a period of benevolent foreign autocracy?"

His answer is a tentative yes, but only if certain conditions are met. In chapters on the recent experiences in Kosovo, East Timor, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, Chesterman describes how transitional administrations have maintained law and order, provided humanitarian and development assistance, consulted with local populations, established the rule of law, and administered elections, all with varying degrees of efficacy. The factors that make a transitional administration more likely to succeed come as no surprise: a realistic plan tailored to the specific situation, the commitment of troops from a powerful nation or coalition, coordination between military operations and efforts to build a new government, ample time, and plenty of money.

But Chesterman also analyzes why so many efforts founder, and why the United Nations and countries that contribute troops to these efforts are often unwilling to invest sufficient resources. The UN has only recently begun to oversee transitional administrations, and it does so on a strictly ad hoc basis, without a permanent office for managing such missions. Its reluctance is unfortunate, but many within the UN believe that traditional peacekeeping is the only type of military operation appropriate for the organization, and they fear, justifiably, that if the UN were better prepared for state-building missions, it would be called upon to undertake them more often.

In Iraq, the failure of the United States to plan effectively led to a breakdown of law and order, which in turn provoked resentment and resistance from the population and required far more time, troops, and money than expected. The January elections may have seemed like a magic bullet, a chance to give the people their democracy and then get out of the way. But without peace and security, sustainable institutions, and economic stability, democracy won't necessarily take hold. As Chesterman shows, fledgling democracies can quickly devolve into autocracy or civil war. A successful transition from autocracy to democratic self-rule takes years, not months.

—HADLEY ROSS