

**THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION**

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Moderator

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for standing by and welcome to the Analysis of the Hans Blix Report conference call. At this time all lines are in a listen-only mode. Later we will conduct a question and answer session and instructions will be given at that time. As a reminder, this call is being recorded.

I would now like to turn the conference over to your host, Director of Research at the Saban Center of Brookings, Mr. Ken Pollack. Please go ahead, sir.

K. Pollack

Thanks very much, Morgan, and thank all of you for joining us this afternoon. As you know, we're going to try to cover the potential fallout and the road ahead after Hans Blix's report this afternoon.

I'd like to start by turning it over to my colleague, Ivo Daalder, who I think all of you know, who is a Senior Fellow here at Brookings, the author of *Winning Ugly* among other works, and one of our experts on U.S. European relations. Ivo, why don't you start us off?

I. Daalder

Good afternoon. Thanks, all, for joining. I'll be very brief. Let me say, one, that I thought the report did not resolve the issues that have bedeviled both the UN Security Council and our relationship with our major allies, particularly in Europe. In many ways the report was a negative development from the administration's perspective, not so much the content, the content was not that different from the report we had two weeks ago, but the tone. Whereas on January 27<sup>th</sup> Mr. Blix's report really stressed the negative with regard to Iraqi compliance, and emphasized how much more needed to be done and how difficult the road was; here he did the opposite. He stressed the positive developments, particularly as Secretary Powell pointed out on the process side, and downplayed the negative, the fact that we still don't have a resolution of many of the issues.

You saw the reaction in the council and the speeches that came immediately after this. For those who thought that war should be postponed and inspections should be given more time, this report just emphasized the importance of doing that. Even the question of the ballistic missiles that Mr. Blix pointed out were in clear violation of the range limitations that were set out in Resolution 687 back in 1991. Those who think inspections ought to go on for longer emphasized the fact that the inspections had discovered these, that they now will be destroyed, that disarmament is working. Also notable, I think, was the fact that the French, in this speech by Foreign Minister de Villepin, more so even than his previous interventions, really stressed the down sides of war, the risks of war, and how, under those circumstances, giving disarmament through inspections, as he called it, a longer chance.

I think we're now at a point at which the coalition that has emerged in the Security Council of France, Germany, Russia, and China, led by those four, seems to be consolidating. They will find over the weekend, as massive demonstrations are expected to take place in Europe, that that position is solidified in terms of popular support and that, therefore, the split within Europe between those who want to have more time and, in fact, are against the war, and those who want to stand with the United States is going to be aggravated rather than resolved, and that the split between those countries in the Security Council who are leading the push towards more time, towards more inspections and the United States is also going to be aggravated, making this a very, very tough road for the administration to push, at least on the diplomatic front.

With that, I think that's an issue that Ken will address. Let me hand it over to him.

K. Pollack

Thanks, Ivo. Let me just say a couple of words, basically just kind of following on from Ivo's points, because I agree with his analysis. I think that the report was not a very good one for the administration in terms of the body language from both Blix and ElBaradei. I think that the statements by the French, the Germans, the Russians, the Chinese, and the Syrians really underscored the extent of the division in the Council right now.

I think what this really shows is how poor the administration's effort on public diplomacy has been. By and large is the fact that the administration has not really engaged in public diplomacy. We've had a few speeches by the President over the course of the fall, and the speeches by the President have actually been quite good. When the President takes up the challenge

and gives a good well-delivered, well-prepared speech, it does seem to have some impact, at least on American public opinion, but to some extent on the rest of the world as well, but there is no follow through there. There is no real effort to actually convince people and to make people understand.

I think that this is becoming truly problematic right now because what we are seeing is that popular opinion isn't just a sidebar. It's not meaningless. It has real meaning. It is hobbling coalition formation. There are countries in Europe who are opposed because their public opinion is opposed. There are other countries in Europe who would like very much to come along, but because their public opinion is so opposed are finding it very difficult to support the United States, at least in public.

As Ivo suggested, there is another element out there, which the administration has to take on, and that is the point expressed by Foreign Minister de Villepin, who basically said that a war will be extremely costly, that is why we oppose it, and that is why we are in favor of giving the inspectors more and more time. The administration has got to take these kinds of issues on. There are all kinds of arguments being raised out there, and the administration is simply not taking them on and trying to explain to people what their argument is, why the war is important, why either they believe that the costs won't be as heavy as de Villepin and others believe, or why the costs are worth bearing. The problem is that they just haven't addressed any of these issues.

What you heard from Powell today I thought was very passionate, was very compelling in a fairly narrow way, but the administration has to go beyond that. Powell is right in terms of what our interpretation of Resolution 1441 is, and I think that he's on very firm grounds in rebutting de Villepin on that, but they've got to go beyond it and they've got to take on the counter arguments to war that de Villepin started to raise today.

I think for the administration they're basically reaching a fork in the road. The question for them is do they want to try to build a big coalition or are they going to settle for a smaller coalition. If they're willing to settle for a smaller coalition, then what they probably ought to do is to introduce a second resolution very quickly and see how many countries they can basically strong arm into coming along, recognizing that they may well get vetoes from France, Russia, China, and no votes from, possibly, Germany and Syria as well, in hopes that they can at least get a nine to six vote in the council and show that the majority of the council is on their side. Under those circumstances they'll still be able to go to war, of course, and

they will at least be able to show that there are a number of countries out there with them and they can probably build a larger coalition.

The other possibility though is that they do try to get a larger coalition and under those circumstance, especially because the U.S. military build-up isn't complete and probably will take several weeks more to do so, they could afford to take the next several weeks to try to broaden the coalition beyond what they can get right now, perhaps even convince the French, the Germans, and some of the other countries to come on board. But if they're going to do that, they're going to have to make the public diplomacy effort. They're going to have to put all of the heavy hitters of the administration out there, and they're going to have to make compelling cases to the rest of the world, take on all of the various counter arguments, and explain to people why this war is important and why it's important to fight it now.

Morgan, that's the end of my prepared remarks. Why don't we open it up to questions?

Moderator

Our first question comes from the line of Tom Moran from the *Star Ledger*. Please go ahead.

T. Moran

When you say they haven't made the case about why we need to do this and why now, I feel like I've heard a lot more about why we need to do this and I'm sort of convinced on that, but not why now. I haven't heard that at all. I don't understand quite their argument against indulging the French even if we don't believe inspections would be helpful for a few months in order to get support from the Security Council.

K. Pollack

Tom, are you asking me to make that argument?

T. Moran

I'd like to know what you think of that. I'm working on an editorial arguing we should wait. I'd like to know what are the consequences of waiting.

K. Pollack

Let me start by saying, as I think most of you are aware, my argument has been that while we are going to have to go to war, that it is going to be necessary and it is necessary to do so sooner rather than later. I never believed that it was necessary for us to do so this winter. In fact, I had a lot of conditions about the circumstances under which you'd want to go to war, all of the things you'd want to do before you went to war to make sure that the war minimized all of the potential costs and risks out there. While I think the administration has met some of them, perhaps even

many of them, there are also a bunch of big ones out there that they haven't addressed yet.

What I'll do is I can tell you from where I stand right now, where we are, maybe I can also tell you a little bit about what I think the administration is thinking, but my feelings and their feelings on the issue of timing are actually quite different. I think for them the issues of timing have to do, to a great extent, with the nexus that they see between Iraq and al Qaeda, the link between terrorism and weapons of mass destruction that they keep stressing. They do seem absolutely convinced that the Iraqis are in bed with al Qaeda, and that there is a very considerable risk that the Iraqis will give weapons of mass destruction to al Qaeda. I will say that I have never been convinced that the risk is as great as the administration thinks it is. While some of the evidence that Colin Powell presented at the UN last week was certainly very interesting and has made me refine my views a little bit, it hasn't transformed my views. The administration clearly believes that this is the case.

I think the other issues that are out there though are that at this point in time, having gone this far, having built up our forces, having pushed ourselves out on a limb and, in particular, all of our Arab allies out on a limb, I think it's going to be extraordinarily difficult for us to go to war at any other point than this winter. In other words, this may not have been my preference, but I'm beginning to believe or I actually do believe that it's fully now or never; that if the United States does not go to war this time around I don't expect we ever will. In part because I can't imagine stirring up the country, stirring up the world to get to this point again. Also, because what I continue to hear from Arab diplomats and Arab elites, and particularly from the Gulf, is we are out on a limb, and we have put ourselves on limb because you convinced us that you were actually going to go to war and invade Iraq and do what we've been asking you to do for 12 years.

If you don't do it this time around, after all that you've done, don't expect to come back to us again next winter. We're just not interested. I think it's one of the problems that the administration has created. I think that they have put themselves into a position where it's now or never.

T. Moran  
K. Pollack

Even two months from now or never?  
I think we probably could hold off for two months, but even that would be tough. You're starting to get into all kinds of diplomatic problems because once you hold off for two months why not hold off for longer?

I. Daalder

Tom, let me just add one point. The reason you're confused, and I think many of us are confused, because the administration has made a confusing argument. It has on the one hand said that is the nexus between terrorism and weapons of mass destruction and rogue regimes that play out here in the particular case of Iraq and gives it urgency to go to war.

If that's the case, why go through the UN? Why go through this entire charade of trying to create an international coalition if the threat to American national security is immediate, imminent, and highly dangerous? That was the case the President really made in the State of the Union address, but the diplomacy and much of our actions internationally and, indeed, with our public opinion has been about, "We want to make the UN relevant. We want to be able to enforce UN security counts of resolutions. This is about disarmament of Iraq." That has gotten us in, as some people who were against going to the UN route and the inspection route, into the trap, what Ken Pollack and others called the inspection trap.

The fact is if you really are worried about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction the French don't have a bad argument, which is at the moment they're bottled up. We're doing pretty good. Containment is working. Why not give it a couple of more months or even longer chance in order to see whether the inspectors will find the weapons and then can destroy it? What's the hurry?

That's the problem. They have tried two different sets of arguments, which lead potentially to two separate conclusions. Therefore, they have made a very good case that war is justified. They have not yet made a very good case that war is wise at this particular point, and that's what's creating the confusion in the country and, frankly, internationally.

T. Moran

All right. Thank you.

Moderator

Our next question comes from the line of Karen DeYoung with *The Washington Post*. Please go ahead.

K. DeYoung

I have a question for Ken. Just going back on what you said about making a better public diplomacy case and getting out their heavy hitters, I'm just curious about what more they could do. They've pretty much had the heavy hitters on the front line for the past several months, and short of assuming they have more information about the nexus and more information about concealed weapons or whatever they might have more information about, how could they make the case differently or more strongly than they already have in a way that would be convincing?

K. Pollack      First, Karen, I would disagree with your first statement. I don't think they've had the heavy hitters out there and on the line. I think they ought to have Condi Rice, Colin Powell, Rich Armitage, Steve Hadley, and even Don Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz out there on a regular basis making speeches, going around the country laying things out, having town hall meetings. There ought to be more speeches by the President on this. Before the State of the Union, the last time he spoke on the issue was back in, what, September? November? I can't even remember.

K. DeYoung      But now he speaks about it every day just about.

K. Pollack      He's starting to, absolutely, but it's got to be more and it's got to be in a more visible forum. Just having the State of the Union, which is something that the whole country is watching and then not doing anything else about it isn't good enough. You need op eds. Powell's op ed, that was a good start. Condi's op ed, that was great too; more of that. Just thinking back to when we were trying to do this stuff in the Clinton administration, there's tons more stuff that you can do.

I'd also like to see them, and you raised the point, releasing more information. They fought for how many months to get just that little bit of information released in Colin Powell's report? They need to be putting more of that stuff out there.

Here I'd even disagree with Ivo where I don't think that they have yet really convinced the country why this is important, because I continue to go around the country and talk to people, and I keep hearing from people that they don't feel like the President has explained to them why this is really important.

K. DeYoung      Is it possible that having more information, which would be variations on themes they've touched on a number of times, would, in fact, not convince people because they don't have the case for it?

K. Pollack      Listen, I think they do have the case for it. The information that is out there was enough to convince me, turn me around from where I was, and over the course of 11 years convince me that this was necessary to do. When I get out there and I talk to people, at least what I hear from the people I speak to, is they also find that convincing, but they don't find what the administration is saying to them convincing.

Again, what the President said in the State of the Union was a very nice start, but you've got to flesh out that argument. You've got to put meat on those bones. You can't just say if Saddam Hussein gets nuclear weapons it would be bad. You have to explain to people why it would be bad. We all live in Washington, D.C. inside the beltway and we're inundated with what these people are saying and thinking. The people in the rest of the country are not because it's not coming to them in the kind of high profile venues that they need to get it.

I. Daalder Karen, can I just add a slightly different part to that? If we haven't engaged in enough public diplomacy, and I tend to agree with Ken, we have engaged in no diplomacy. It is remarkable, for example, that the Secretary of State does not fly over to Paris and talk to Jacque Chirac and tell him what he thinks. We have had no direct conversation with Chirac, who is the one making the decisions, not de Villepin, not anybody else, but Jacque Chirac. We have a Secretary of State who, on this particular issue, has yet to travel abroad.

Compare that to Baker when he was creating the coalition. Mr. Bush calls the Angolan Prime Minister, but not the German Chancellor.

I. Daalder He did call Chirac, but it's more than one conversation. That's the first one we've had since November 7<sup>th</sup> between those two and the Secretary of State hasn't been part of it. Powell went to Devos. He didn't stop in London. He didn't stop in Berlin. He didn't stop in Paris. We think we can do this over the phone with quick demarches back and forth. We need to convince not only the American people; we need to convince deeply skeptical governments that what we're about to do is the right thing to do and we are failing miserably, as I think de Villepin said this today. The statement from de Villepin, which was a direct contradiction of everything we've been arguing, which is that war is the worst possible case. You saw Powell's face. He couldn't quite believe it was coming, but this is not at the beginning of the process. This is the end of the process and we're this far apart. We're in deep, deep trouble.

Moderator Our next question comes from the line of Michael Bagfish from .... Please go ahead.

M. Bagfish I had a question. The risk in the UN Security Council is very deep, so how strong will this resistance remain? I mean Russia and China, they pleaded both for a political solution, but they did not exclude the use of

force. What will the administration actually do? Will it come forward with a second resolution? What would the cornerstones be of that second resolution? What will it do to get the nine votes, especially also the smaller countries like Mexico, Cameroon, and Chile and so on.

I. Daalder

Michael, if I were the administration I would try to lay down very clearly a resolution that has the following elements: One, here are the unresolved issues that the IEA agrees on, that Blix agrees on, that we as the Security Council agree on. Secondly, to set a deadline for those to be resolved, not by the inspectors, but by Iraq, that is to the satisfaction of the inspectors, but resolved by Iraq. We can debate what that deadline is, whether it's four weeks, six weeks, eight weeks, whatever. Third, that failure to meet that deadline automatically authorizes the use of force. It's at that point that you confront, it seems to me, France, which also said that force is a last resort, Russia, and China, with the fundamental decision that we thought they made when they signed onto 1441, but they are now wiggling out under.

To say you either put up or shut up. We all know there are substantive problems, which is what Blix said. We need to resolve those substantive problems. Here is how that can be done, but if there is a failure to do so within an agreed time frame, that is here's your extra time, we then need to go to war. Under those circumstances if France and Russia, etc. were to say we will veto that resolution, I think you will have much greater support internationally and certainly at home to go to war. But to put on a resolution now, which says 1441 material breach, we need to have serious consequences, all necessary means, etc., it is going to be exceedingly difficult even to get nine votes.

Under those circumstances, you may lose Great Britain when it comes to the question of war. After all, that's what this is about. We don't want to lose Tony Blair. If we lose Tony Blair, we lose Turkey, if we lose Turkey we may well lose the Arabs. We may not be able to do this war. It's very important to keep Britain on board. This is a country that tomorrow or the day after will have a million people in the streets of London. Under those circumstances we need to start thinking about how do we get sufficient number of the people to support us, not whether our arguments are right in and of itself.

K. Pollack

Let me just add, because I actually completely agree with Ivo; in fact, the point about an ultimatum as being the way to handle this and to build the support for something that Martin Indyk and I wrote on January 27<sup>th</sup> in *The LA Times*, saying that this was the way to handle the first Blix report.

The one point I'd make there, just a little bit of a difference with Ivo, is I doubt that we'll lose the Arabs pretty much at any point right now. I think that he's absolutely right about the problems that we're going to have building the coalition in the Security Council, the problems that we'll have in Europe, the problems that could be created even for Great Britain. What I continue to hear from the Arabs, especially the Gulf Arabs who've committed to doing this, is you guys have to go. We are way too far out on a limb for you to pull back now.

M. Bagfish

That sounds very logical, the linkage between the deadline and the automatic use of force. Do you think that the administration will pursue that path?

I. Daalder

My contacts with the administration are even worse than Ken's. I'll let Ken answer that one.

K. Pollack

I think that they're strongly debating that because, as always, within this administration there remains this question of how important is the UN for all of this. It is always important to remember that there is a school of thought within the administration, which basically argues we never should have gone to the UN. The UN is feckless. It was always a mistake to have even tried to do this through the UN. They have revealed themselves to be feckless. Let us build the coalition of the willing outside because that plays into a larger perspective on foreign policy. I think that that debate is in there. Even within those elements that are most amenable to the idea of going through the UN root, I think that there is some concern about a deadline because I think that the big issue that's out there for this administration is part of what Ivo was saying, which is the length of time.

If you come in and say there ought to be a deadline, and we say that deadline ought to be a week, inevitably the French will come in and say it ought to be eight weeks. Eight weeks may be too long. Who knows? Maybe they say that the deadline is four months. If you wind up with a lengthy and nasty debate over the length of time for the ultimatum, that in and of itself might become problematic because you wind up with the United States looking like it wants to give the Iraqis so little time that they can't possibly comply.

Again, this is all part of the problem with having gone down this road to begin with is the United States, through its diplomatic efforts to try to secure the vote to go to war, simply alienating people by convincing them that we were never serious about giving the inspections time.

Moderator

Our next question comes from the line of Ken Fireman from *Newsday*. Please go ahead.

K. Fireman

A question for either one of you. The Whitehouse today, in the wake of Blix and ElBaradei and the debate, continues to say that they think they can assemble the votes and that people will eventually come around in the UN and in NATO. Do you see any basis for this kind of hope or do you think they're just kind of spinning?

I. Daalder

The French said before this quietly, as did the Brits, that, in fact, the French had a vote for a new resolution for a longer period of time. They had nine votes. I think it's exceedingly difficult in view of this report to create a scenario in which they get votes, nine, let alone one that passes without a veto, for a resolution to go to war without giving more time. The deal is we get a resolution for authorization of force, but only in return for giving more time for inspectors to do whatever it is that inspectors need to do. That one I can see, but I don't see any way you're going to get to nine votes, certainly not to nine votes and no veto on a resolution that authorizes the use of force without that time element as a central part of this.

K. Fireman

What kind of time element?

I. Daalder

This is the issue that Ken just raised. Again, like Ken I would have preferred that we had done this on the 27<sup>th</sup> or even earlier because we've missed three weeks, and at that point we could have said two months or eight weeks. Now if we want troops, the morale issue, and the Gulf question issues are playing in, four weeks already becomes difficult. Six weeks or eight weeks becomes nearly impossible, but that's maybe what it will take.

K. Pollack

Let me just add to that because I don't disagree with anything that Ivo said. What I am hearing from the administration, why I am hearing that they think that they can get this, and I am hearing that they remain very optimistic, is they really believe that all of the different countries' incentives will change when it becomes clear, when they're told that the United States has simply made the decision to go to war. When we come in and say we are going to war, all of the countries on the Security Council will all of the sudden start thinking in different ways. There is still this expectation that all of the other non-permanent members will basically look at it and say if Saddam Hussein's a goner anyway, why on earth do we want to cross the United States over this issue?

This, of course, has been the problem all along, is for the non-permanent members of the Security Council Iraq really isn't a terribly meaningful issue. It's not really important to their very narrow specific interests. The question becomes if the United States is going to make this its most critical issue of all, will a country like Cameroon or Colombia or Mexico want to cross the United States with a no vote? My guess is that the administration is probably going to remind them what happened to Yemen after Yemen voted no on the first Gulf war. At that point in time you had the U.S. Ambassador to the UN saying that is going to be the most expensive no vote that you ever cast, and for ten years we made good on that pledge to Yemen.

I think that the administration is also expecting or hoping, however you want to put it, and all I'm doing here is giving what I'm hearing from the administration, but they're also hoping and expecting that the Russians and the Chinese will ultimately cave. They also seem to believe that for the Russians this is an issue on which the Russians are willing to compromise if the Russians have other issues that are of greater importance to them taken care of.

They also seem to believe that if they can line up enough support the French too will be willing to cave on them. From what I can tell, they actually seem to believe that the Germans are likely to be the biggest hold out.

K. Fireman

Do you have a sense that the Whitehouse and the administration was somewhat taken aback today by what Blix said, that they weren't expecting the tenor of his report?

K. Pollack

What I was hearing from people in the administration led me to believe that they probably would have, that they were expecting a more mixed report than what they actually got. I mean, as you heard both Ivo and I say early on, we both think, and I think that the administration will also come to the conclusion, that this was a mostly bad report for them. I think that they were expecting one that was not as good as the first one, but just more down the middle.

K. Fireman

Thank you.

Moderator

Our next question comes from the line of Howard Witt with the *Chicago Tribune*. Please go ahead.

H. Witt

This question is primarily for Ken. I just wondered if you can elaborate a little more on this notion that you've talked about. Is it possible to argue at this point that it was a complete mistake for the U.S. to take this to the UN? I mean Bush wanted to show that he wasn't being unilateral so he went through this whole effort. Now here you are today, they've got themselves into this mess. The effect of Powell's speech from last week, his presentation, seems to have been pretty much completely dissipated at this point. Powell looked pretty well deflated today. You've meanwhile provoked these terrible profound splits in NATO and between Europe. Is it possible to argue, which the hawks would argue, that this whole experience now shows what a mistake it was for the U.S. not to act unilaterally in the first case and just get this thing taken care of?

K. Pollack

Let me start by saying, Howard, that I think that, unfortunately, that argument by the hawks is going to be reinforced. I think there is no question that it is being reinforced. This was my point earlier. They're coming in and saying, "Look, we told you the UN was useless and feckless, and we never should have gone down this route at all. Look what a fine mess you've got us into."

That said, I don't believe that that's the case. I believe that it was a mistake to have handled the UN the way that we did, to have put all of our eggs in the basket of inspections. That said, I always believed it was important to try to bring the UN on board to this effort, and I still believe that had the administration handled things differently, both in terms of the specific tact they took at the UN, what they were asking the UN to do, how they were asking the UN to deal with the Iraq problem, and also the issue of their broader public diplomacy and, as Ivo pointed out, their broader diplomacy, I think this could have worked out much better.

As a point on that last, which we're not really talking too much about, I think it's important to remember, at least in my experience with so many of our allies, is that they are deeply concerned as much by the atmospherics and the rhetoric. In fact, what I constantly hear from foreign diplomats is, "Look, we're not really concerned about Iraq. We know Saddam Hussein is evil. We know that Saddam Hussein has got these weapons, and we know the world would be a much better place without him, but we are deeply concerned about the course of U.S. foreign policy. We don't want this to be the first of many pre-emptive wars. We don't believe that military force is the right way to solve most of the world's problems." They look at things like the administration's national security strategy, and they see Iraq as being part of a pattern laid out in that national security strategy.

Another one out there that no one is paying any attention to was the testimony the other day by Doug Fife and Mark Grossman saying that Tommy Franks was going to be the military governor of Iraq for at least two years after a war. It's things like that that I think send many foreign diplomats into paroxysms because they're deeply concerned, not so much about the war itself, but how the war is going to be waged and how it's going to fit into the administration's larger policy. I think that if the administration handled all of those things differently they would not be in the mess that they're in now.

K. Pollack Ivo?

Moderator Our next question comes from the line of Craig Gilbert with the *Milwaukee Journal*. Please go ahead.

C. Gilbert Ken was talking earlier about the possibility of putting together a larger coalition. I'm wondering, given the tenor of the French speech today, is it even in the realm of possibility at this point that they would buy into the idea of an ultimatum? Because the tenor of his remarks were so at odds with the idea of urgency and any kind of a drop dead date, which sort of raised the question of where the French are placing the trigger for war. I think the comment in his speech was that as long as the inspectors tell us that continuing inspections is not an impossibility we should avoid the alternative of force. I'm wondering how much we should read into that aspect of the French speech.

K. Pollack      Clearly, the French are against war. The French position is very clear. They think that the costs of war far outweigh whatever benefits we have, particularly since we are now in a situation in which what they think is a robust containment of Iraq is, in fact, the case. Note that de Villepin directly challenged the contention on Iraq and the link to al Qaeda. He said all of the analysis and information we have, including what we get from you guys, just ain't there, and that the threat that Iraq represents is a threat of Iraq and its weapons of mass destruction, which the French have always argued you could deal with through containment, rightly or wrongly so the French haven't changed their position.

What's disturbing, however, is we are not engaged in trying to create common strategies anymore. We're engaged in spitting matches. We're engaged in grandstanding on both sides of the Atlantic. We're doing it on the hallowed institutional grounds of our security structures that have kept the peace and kept our security system in place for the last 50 years. In so doing we're trampling on those structures to the point that they're starting to break, I mean NATO and the UN, all in order to make a point. In the French case the point that the United States is arrogant, that it needs to be opposed on this issue, and that in any case on the question of Iraq, the Americans are wrong to point that they can do all of this stuff alone and they don't need "old Europe" in order to be part of this.

This has, unfortunately, been the level of discourse that we've had. We haven't had summit meetings. We haven't had foreign ministers and presidents getting together. This is serious business. This is real business, and we are doing and treating this issue as if it were a disagreement over a minor issue. We are in the midst of creating the greatest crisis between us and major European countries and, quite frankly, within Europe over this issue that we've seen in a very, very long time. It is unhealthy. It is not, in fact quite frankly, worth it and it is totally and completely unnecessary.

To answer the question, we're not engaging. It's very difficult to know if we were to engage where the French would, in fact, end up. The French have an interest in the end of the day to stand with us to resolve the problem, but they're not going to do it in order so that we can prove that we're more powerful than they are. That's just not the game they're going to play. They're going to do it because they believe they got the maximum out of their position that they could, and so far they have the Russians, they have the Germans, they have the Chinese with them, so why should they change?

Moderator

Our next question comes from Miles Benson, *Newhouse Newspapers*. Please go ahead.

M. Benson

Gentlemen, come back for a moment to the problem of holding American public opinion in line as the water gets rougher right now. It seems that the administration itself has made it pretty self-evident that in the short term the risk to U.S. security is going to go up in terms of terrorist threats if we attack Iraq, but in the long term Americans are going to be safer if we do this. What's the most convincing case that the administration could present to explain how it makes the United States safer in the long term?

K. Pollack

I've got a 400-page book on the subject, Miles. Again, my argument is different from the administration's. My argument is the threat of Saddam Hussein with nuclear weapons, what we know not only about his behavior, but also about his thinking about nuclear weapons, my argument is that I think we have a choice. We either prevent him from getting nuclear weapons by going to war sooner or we're going to wind up in a nuclear confrontation, if not a nuclear war, with Saddam Hussein at some point in the future.

There is also the humanitarian argument, which the administration started to make in the President's State of the Union and which, I will tell you, I find has much greater resonance among people in developing countries than any of the other arguments being made. The terrorism argument you forget about, even the nuclear weapons argument. For most of the developing world it is the human rights argument that is the most compelling to them. The terrorism argument, I think, is one that people would find compelling if there was something there, but as soon as you have congressmen who have seen the evidence and intelligence sources who are leaking to various newspapers and foreign governments, like the British in particular, coming out and saying we just don't see that it's there, it really undermines the case about terrorism.

M. Benson

The terrorism link right now, but how do you make the case to the American people that over time the threat of terrorism is diminished by the action we take in Iraq?

K. Pollack

As I've been saying all along, I don't find the terrorism link for Iraq to be a compelling one for war. I think that there are compelling cases to be made, but they're not the terrorism ones because ...

M. Benson

Is the opposite then true, that the action in Iraq over the long term will make it more likely that we'll be subjected to terrorism?

K. Pollack

I wouldn't necessarily say that. That is a glib response by a lot of people and it could be the case, but there's no reason it has to be. I think that the long-term question of does this incite more terrorism or dampen more terrorism is largely about how we conduct the war, both in terms of how we justify the war, how we fight it, what we find afterwards, and what we do afterwards, both in Iraq and in the region.

Talking to Arabs, which I do on an almost constant basis, people in the region, government elites, business people, everything I can possibly get to, what I'm consistently hearing is I think actually a much subtler

message than what's being broadcast in the media, which is not we're opposed to war. It's very much look, we know Saddam Hussein is the worst thing in the world for the Iraqi people, and we know that the Iraqi people will be better off without him. What we don't know is what the U.S. is intending to do when you get there. Are you going to colonize the place? Are you going to install some dictator who will leave the country, perhaps, as badly off as it is under Saddam? Are you going to get serious about the peace process after you take out Saddam Hussein? Are you going to get serious about pushing for social, political, and economic change throughout the region or are you going to do as you have for the last 50 years and simply leave the autocrats in place and leave us to our misery?

I think that if the administration had good answers, and the answers are out there. Colin Powell's speech back in December about democracy in the Middle East was a very important speech. It was a very tentative speech. It was a baby step in the right direction, but it was a very important baby step, and I think that's another one where if the administration would follow up on that it would convince a lot more people that the U.S. was fighting this war for the right reasons.

M. Benson

So we'd have to run this war just about perfectly, an exemplary war, an exemplary outcome, and the aftermath would have to be smooth as silk?

K. Pollack

No. I really don't believe that.

M. Benson

Otherwise, we're in deep ...

K. Pollack

I think that's greatly exaggerating it. This is a war. It's always going to be messy. There are always going to be problems, but I think to suggest that this war has to come out perfectly or else it's going to be a disaster is just a tremendous overstatement.

M. Benson

Not a disaster, just to leave us better off as to worse off in terms of the threat to U.S. security.

K. Pollack

I don't think that it has to be perfect even for us to be in a better position. I think that we have to do a lot more than we're doing now. I think that there are a lot of things that we can do and actually are not that difficult to do. I'll just give you one example. If the President would announce that after Saddam Hussein has fallen, the United States is going to convene a new peace conference in the Middle East, exactly as his father did back in

1991, I think that would have a tremendous impact on Arab popular opinion.

In fact, what I am constantly hearing from people in the region is why on earth isn't the administration doing that? It's such an easy one. It is such a no-brainer. It is such a "gimme" for them that they ask why can't you at least do that? I think it's little gestures like that that could have a big meaning, and the absence of those little gestures also has a big meaning for people.

I. Daalder

Let me add two points because I agree completely with what Ken said.

Number one is we have to be very clear that on the main terrorist threat that we have now confronted for the past ten years and that has really come home to roost on September 11<sup>th</sup>, whatever we do with Iraq, whether we go to war or not, whether we fight it smartly or not, whether we win it smoothly or not, that threat is going to be the same because they're not linked. They're not at all related to each other. They may feed on each other, but they're not linked. Al Qaeda can do what it can with or without Saddam Hussein, with or without Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

One of the fundamental flaws in the administration's argument is to believe in the constant reiterations, where the axis of evil comes from, it's where the President's speech comes from, is this notion that we're going to lick the terrorism problem by licking Saddam. We're not. We're not going to make it better. We may not make it worse, but we're not going to make it better. That's point number one.

We can make it terribly worse by really screwing up the way we run the war, and particularly what we do with regard to the region afterwards, exactly in the ways that Ken lays out. We can make over the long term, in ten, 15, 20 years, things a lot better if we play it really, really right; that if we can dry up the recruitment of al Qaeda in the future, but for the immediate future, for the next weeks, months, years, frankly, we're facing a real threat that Saddam Hussein, whether he stays in power or not, whether he has chemical biological nuclear weapons or not, is not going to make an iota of difference for us. We're going to be as vulnerable tomorrow after Saddam is gone as we are today with regard to that main threat.

M. Benson

But you say if we play it really right, ten, 15, 20 years down the road there will be a pay off.

I. Daalder

Yes, because you are going to end up diverting the recruitment that is now feeding al Qaeda, that is giving it the thousands of young recruits and terrorists who have no hope. They are going to be diverted into much more productive and much better ways. To use the Tom Creighton phrase, as long as that will allow you to keep the Arabs in the street and away from the basement, that's exactly right, but that's a long-term prospect.

For the moment we are dealing with threat that exists that is completely independent from Saddam Hussein, but whatever the evidence is out there only suggests maybe at the margin sustained by it, but is otherwise completely independent and exists regardless of Saddam. That's the threat that you and I are buying duct tape and plastic for. By the way, don't; it's a scam by 3M.

K. Pollack

Morgan, have we got any other questions?

Moderator

Our next question comes from the line of Alan Berger with *The Boston Globe*. Please go ahead.

A. Berger

I was going to raise the question of the deadline ultimatum. Let me ask two questions related to that. First, whether you think there's a possible compromise between France and the U.S., basically, but with Russia and China signing on on the question of how long a deadline it will be?

Then a related matter, does France have a price? That is, with Russia I gather they do. They talk openly about oil contracts. In negotiations about setting a deadline are there things that France would want that we could give them?

I. Daalder

I don't think that France has a price. I don't think that this is about oil or debt relief or money or economic interest. I believe we have a fundamental difference of opinion about the nature of the threat and what you do about it. The price that is hanging out there is the relationship between the United States and France, which both for the United States and for France is really important. We may not say that publicly. We, in fact, may say the opposite publicly because that gets laughs in both of our countries, at least among the elite, but in the end these are two countries that, as Colin Powell said, and Devos, have been in marriage counseling for 225 years, but they are still a married couple. The price, the cost here is the potential of divorce, which is a really big one. I think that's the issue that we need to play.

Then the question becomes how long that deadline? How long an ultimatum? Remember, in 1990/'91 we had an ultimatum of six weeks, seven weeks. Late November is when we passed 678 for a January 15<sup>th</sup> deadline. If we play, as I think we have quite correctly, on the fact that we had 11 days, Jack Straw, I thought, was very effective in saying go back to 687. It was disarmament in 90 days; that's June 3<sup>rd</sup>. We're now 11 months, seven days, seven months, 23 days, whatever it was, further and he still hasn't disarmed. I think a four to six week, I would have preferred an eight-week deadline three weeks ago, but a four to six week or maybe an eight-week deadline may be sufficient to get the French on board.

The effort of trying is crucial to demonstrate that we are trying to get an international coalition together, that we're not bully headed, that we don't just want to go to war because that's the perception out there, and we need to do something to change that perception. One way is to take Rumsfeld off TV and just never let him speak again until the war starts, and put Colin Powell up front.

The other is, in fact, to engage people to demonstrate that we are trying to build an international coalition, not because we need them for the war, but we need them for the peace to demonstrate we're serious. There have been times when we did this really effectively, September 12<sup>th</sup> through November 8<sup>th</sup> of 2002 come to mind, and there have been times when we've done just an atrocious job, January 22<sup>nd</sup> to the present comes to mind. We need to go back to that earlier period, muzzle Rumsfeld so that we don't get these kinds of outrageous statements we've had in the past two to three weeks, and go out and be really great diplomats, behooving a great power of trying to get people to support our case. We haven't done that. We need to do it. Without it the French are not going to come on board.

K. Pollack

Let me just add one thing there, take the question in a slightly different direction, Alan, which is to say that I think that Ivo's points are absolutely right. If I were an advisor to the French President or if I could sit down with Jacque Chirac for a few minutes and give him some advice as to why they might want to consider coming on board for the second resolution, one thing that I might say to him is that if they are concerned about U.S. unilateralism, and if they are concerned about where U.S. foreign policy is headed, then actually coming on board with that second resolution, in particular, when I suggested, Martin as well, with a new ultimatum somehow in that direction, but getting the UN behind the war with Iraq is to say that this will preserve the Security Council its prerogative and it's ability to control U.S. actions.

As an American, but as an American who might be speaking to a French President, I think that there could be nothing more dangerous if you were worried about U.S. unilateralism than the council simply refusing to authorize the use of force in some way, shape or form here. I think it is very clear the Bush administration intends to go to war. I think that if we go to war, having had a whole big chunk of the Security Council simply turn its back on the project, you're going to reinforce the standing of the unilaterists in the administration. The next time around when they've got another country in their sights the voices that are going to be arguing that we ought to take the matter to the UN are going to be that much weaker.

I think, on other hand, if this is done through the UN, if the Security Council does pass a second resolution that ultimately sanctions the use of force against Iraq, then I think the next time around, if there's another country that the United States is thinking about going to war with, it will be that much harder. In fact, I would say it would be much, much harder for the United States to go to war without the blessing of the Security Council.

Perhaps one more question then we're going to have to wrap up, I'm afraid.

Moderator

Our last question comes from the line of Jeff VanWeisel from the *Jerusalem Report*. Please go ahead.

J. VanWeisel

Ken, you said earlier that it's now or never, which means the U.S. has made a decision to go to war and there is no way back without too much loss of face, also being that it's too expensive to move them back and forward.

The other question is if the Europeans do not participate, and the French and the Russians both veto a Security Council resolution, what will be the impact after Saddam is removed regarding the reconstruction of Iraq? One of the arguments is that they will come back anyway because there is a lot of money to be made. Is that a correct argument?

K. Pollack

Jeff, I'd love to hear Ivo's thoughts on this as well, so let me be quick. When I said I think it's now or never, it's the combination of the different military and political factors that go in there. Particularly, as I said, for me as a Middle East expert the thing that is so glaring is the fear and the anger among the Arab governments right now that the U.S. has really put them out on a limb. It's forced them into a position that they only got into because they were convinced that we were going to go to war, and that if

we don't pull the trigger this time around they're simply not going to let us try this again, in large part because if we don't do it this time they don't think we ever will. They may well be right about that. In fact, they probably are right about that. I'm not suggesting I think this is a good thing. I think that it's terrible that we find ourselves in this situation, but unfortunately, I think that that is where we are.

With regard to your second question about the reconstruction, I am concerned about the day after. Again, there are a number of people who are making the argument that even if the Security Council doesn't authorize the war itself, in its aftermath it will inevitably come around and want to be a part of the reconstruction and want to have a major say in the reconstruction of Iraq. That may well be the case, but I think that even under those circumstances, even if the UN is willing to, and I think there is an argument to be made that they will, I think the enthusiasm of members is a very important thing. When this is all over, we're going to want to have German and French and a whole bunch of other countries sending troops to Iraq to help with the multi-national force. We're going to want them sending resources and aid and their NGOs and everybody else who can help contribute. I think there's a big question about how much they will be willing to do that if we go to war in such a way that alienates them. If we go to war in such a way that alienates them, we may get a battalion of troops from Germany when we'd really like to have a couple of brigades. I think that that is meaningful. I think it does matter to the reconstruction of Iraq.

You also need to talk about money. We may get a billion dollars from the German government when we'd really like to have \$5 billion or \$10 billion from the German government. That's also meaningful. Even beyond that, I think there's also a very important price to be paid in terms of the long-term health of the international community, the western world, the western alliance.

For me, again, the big concern is not so much Iraq, because I think the U.S. military can handle it militarily, and even if the reconstruction is more expensive for us, it is probably something the U.S. can handle even in that sense because Iraq is fairly richly endowed. But I'm deeply concerned about what happens after Iraq. Iraq is not going to be the last international crisis that we face. There are likely to be other crises in the future that aren't going to be so easily handled by the United States unilaterally, crises where we really are going to need our allies. Under those circumstances I'm very concerned that if we do this the wrong way

we're not going to have our allies when we really need them the next time. Ivo?

I. Daalder

Let me just close exactly on that point, and emphasize it perhaps even more. This town has a tendency, here in Washington, which is where we are, of looking at this issue in the here and now, as if it is the only thing that matters. Iraq may be very important, but even today it is not the most important issue. Even today we have the questions of al Qaeda. We have the question of North Korea, let alone what's happening here at home. The spillover effect of how we handle or mishandle Iraq on all of the other questions that are there today, let alone the ones that come out tomorrow, are extraordinarily high, and we need to spend a little bit more time thinking about it. Even if we get proven to be "right" on this one, the fact is if we get there by having lost the alliance, having lost the United Nations in the process, we may well have a short-term gain for a very long, long-term loss, and in the cost benefit analysis that one has to do that is not a very good possibility.

The reason it is important, again, to keep the allies on board as we try to make this a better case is not only, as Ken rightly points out, about winning the peace and getting the kind of contributions we need, both in Iraq and in the region in order to maintain allies for other things when we want them, when we need them. It is a conceit on the part of this administration that we don't need allies. We do. We're the most powerful nation in the world, but there's nothing we can do in many, many instances without the support of others. Losing them sillily, as opposed to over principle, this is not about principle, this is about having the right kind of diplomacy, and is quite remarkable and not very wise.

With that, we want to thank you all for joining us this afternoon and hope we have been able to help you out.

K. Pollack

Thank you all very much. Have a good afternoon.

I. Daalder

Take care.

Moderator

Ladies and gentlemen, today's conference will be available for replay beginning today, February 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. eastern time and will run through tomorrow, February 15<sup>th</sup> at midnight. You may access the AT&T Executive Playback System by dialing 1-800-475-6701, or international participants dial 320-365-3844 with the access code 675546.

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That does conclude our conference for today. Thank you for your participation and also for using AT&T's Executive Teleconference. You may now disconnect.