

A Brookings Iraq Series Briefing

THE IRAQ CRISIS: WHAT DOES THE WORLD THINK ABOUT THE DIPLOMATIC WRANGLING AT THE UN? *Release of New Study on Arab Attitudes Toward War*



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WHAT DOES THE WORLD THINK ABOUT THE DIPLOMATIC WRANGLING AT THE UN? - 3/13/032

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MR. JAMES B. STEINBERG: Good morning. As seems always the case on Thursday morning as we meet at another important time and moment, as I walked out here I was going to say on perhaps the eve of the vote in the UN, but thanks to some of our good friends in the audience here, we hear that the vote is not going to be tomorrow. So like in all things having to do with the current crisis, what you hear today or what you hear this moment could easily change in the next few hours. So my colleagues this morning are going to have a particularly great challenge since they're going to be commenting on one of the fastest-moving and constantly shifting targets we've seen in a long time.

We're going to focus this morning on the views from more or less around the world in terms of the way this conflict is being perceived, and particularly the struggle for trying to achieve a consensus or a majority at least in the Security Council. We've seen a lot of attention over the last couple of weeks on the likelihood of how the various members of the Security Council are going to vote and our panelists are going to help us think about this a little, not just in terms of the views of the individual countries or the leaders, but more broadly how these issues are being seen in the region. Then we'll have a chance to visit not only with parts of the world that we haven't focused on as much, Latin American and Africa, but also return back to some of the views in the Middle East and Europe and Russia.

I'm very pleased to have with us today Dr. Arturo Valenzuela who is the Director of the Center for Latin American Studies at the Edmond A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, and one of our country's leading policymakers and commentators on Latin American affairs.

Then while no guest, I'm delighted to have Shibley Telhami here, a Nonresident Senior Fellow at the Saban Center and Brookings. He's going to present us with the results of his very important survey that he's just conducted and we're very fortunate to be the place in which he's going to unveil that here. Shibley, as you all, know, in addition to being a prolific commentator is the author of a recent book called "The Stakes: American and the Middle East" which is one of the most thoughtful recent contributions on that topic.

Then of course we have with us Senior Fellows and Director of the Center on the U.S. and France, Phil Gordon; Dr. Rice, a Senior Fellow here at Brookings; and Cliff Gaddy, a Senior Fellow both in Foreign Policy Studies and Governance Studies.

Before we get on with this I would be remiss if I did not point out to you that while this is all going on, at this very moment the party leaders from Northern Ireland are meeting with President Bush in the White House, and it just goes to show you that some things just never change.

With that, let me turn to Arturo.



MR. ARTURO VALENZUELA: Thanks very much, Jim. It's a pleasure to be here.

The two countries, of course, that are on the Security Council that Jim wants me to talk about are Mexico and Chile. I can tell you that while both countries at one point campaigned to become members of the Security Council, senior officials will tell you today it was a really serious mistake. We should never have done it. We should have listened to those who said unless you're prepared to vote no against the United States don't go on the Security Council. But in defense of their thinking at the time, they really expected to go on the Security Council in a different environment. This was a pre-9/11 environment, an environment where the world was moving more towards an attempt to build and strengthen multilateral institutions and international rule of law and they wanted to become players in that. They didn't expect to be in a situation like this one. They've been feeling the heat.

I'll just say very briefly where these two countries have been and where they may be going and then open it up later to questions.

Both Chile and Mexico have been fairly consistent all along. Their position has been that there should be a peaceful resolution of the conflict. They have made it clear, the Chileans a little bit more strongly perhaps than the Mexicans, that there has to be a timely disarmament, a complete disarmament and destruction of all weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, but that the process ought to be a UN process and that the inspectors ought to be the ones that are setting the benchmark and the agenda moving forward.

In the last few days both countries are continuing to be consistent in this argument. Both countries fought something of a middle ground at one particular point. The argument in favor of trying to set a more realistic deadline and benchmark actually came from some of the negotiations I understand among the six so-called undecided. They dispute the fact that they're undecided because they continue to argue that we've had a very consistent position all along. But in the face of the American resolution they have been pushing for some time now, inspired in some ways by the Canadian proposal of several weeks ago, where Prime Minister Chretien actually went to Mexico to discuss this with President Fox, of giving the inspectors more time but setting a specific deadline which in that sense would differentiate their position from the French position. Setting a specific deadline but not days, not weeks, but months along the lines of what they argue the inspectors have been saying.

Let me conclude by saying that the Presidents have been very deeply involved, Ricardo Lagos from Chile and Vicente Fox from Mexico. Ricardo Lagos has not only spoken to all of the world leaders that have called him and called back a lot of world leaders, but he's also talked directly with Hans Blix, for example, trying to get a sense of, and to officials at the United

Nations, Kofi Annan and others. They have been taking their cues very strongly from Kofi Annan's position on this.

Bottom line, they're not happy with the U.S. resolution. I don't think that either country is going to vote for the U.S. resolution. They see the British attempts right now to come up with a compromise as in some ways responding to their needs. They were pleased at that because that's what they've been arguing for, a little bit more time and some benchmarks, but they think that the time that is in the British resolution is still not enough, too little time, and they're also not terribly happy with the benchmarks that have been put down because they see the benchmarks as essentially benchmarks that are crafted in such a way that there's no way that Iraq is really going to be able to respond to those benchmarks realistically.

It's hard to say that there is a one-country position because there's a debate in both of these countries as well. A very strong debate in both of the countries. There are some people who have been pushing much more strongly that in fact, particularly in Mexico, that Mexico really cannot afford at this particular point to go against the United States on this. Those voices are many many fewer in Chile. There are some voices like that even at the high levels of the government but there are many fewer. You find in both countries, and here I really will finish, that the public opinion is very contrary to a unilateral action on this. It's contrary to a rush to war. It supports a resolution peacefully of the crisis. Chile is a centerless government and even its right wing opposition has been supporting the government on this position. Mexico is a center right government and certainly the left wing opposition has been supporting the government on this.

Thank you.

MR. STEINBERG: Before I turn to Susan let me just ask you, and I realize it's a bit hypothetical since we don't know what the actual final form of the resolution is going to be, but if one or both of these governments vote yes with the United States, what will be the domestic political repercussions for them? And conversely, if they vote no what will happen to bilateral relations with the U.S., and particularly in the case of Chile? Do you see any risk for the Free Trade Agreement if Chile bucks the United States?

MR. VALENZUELA: In both countries this has been part of the debate as well. How are we going to be hurt if we go against the United States on this? In Chile they do have a Free Trade Agreement that has been signed but needs congressional ratification in an up or down vote. What American officials have been doing is that they've been very, in this sense, have been very careful in not trying to link this. There has been no suggestion directly to the Chileans that in fact if they don't vote with the United States on this that somehow the Administration is going to back off on this, and this is a wise policy on their part because if there's one thing that would really tip the thing in the other direction in terms of public opinion that would be if there was any

perception that there are really strong-arm tactics.

On the other hand it's clear that officials are telling the Chileans that there's a lot of congressional opposition to the Chileans wavering on this issue and sort of sending the message indirectly that there's unhappiness here and that in fact the Free Trade Agreement might be in jeopardy.

I think, however, the Chileans even if it came to that, they would be willing at this particular point to give up a successful resolution of the Free Trade Agreement to stick by their position on Iraq.

With regard to Mexico, the debate there has been greater, particularly in the press, because of the view that if in fact Mexico does not go along with the United States this is going to make all of the various items on the bilateral agenda much more difficult. Immigration and so on and so forth. But remember, the counter to that that Fox himself has indicated is wait a minute, we haven't really gotten that much out of this Administration so far anyway. They're coming to us and saying hey, remember, your friends. At this particular point you've got to stand with your friends. And the Mexicans are saying we've been standing with you as friends and we thought we were friends with you for the last two years and we have gotten precious little out of this relationship. And any hint now, which I don't think has been on the table, but any hint that somehow the United States is now going to try to pony up an immigration reform policy in order to satisfy Mexico down the pike would simply backfire at this particular point.

Fox is in the hospital. He had an operation yesterday. From his hospital bed this morning he said our position is no to unilateral decisions, it's no to automatic war in a unilateral way, it's in support of the United Nations and the Security Council. We think there are alternative mechanisms, practical mechanisms to get a peaceful resolution of this issue through the work that we've been doing the last few days.

MR. STEINBERG: And if they were to vote with the U.S. would either of the governments be in jeopardy?

MR. VALENZUELA: If they were to vote with the U.S. President Fox in Mexico would have a firestorm. They just had bi-elections in the state of Mexico this past week. The PANs lost significantly, the governing party lost significantly. There are congressional races coming up in July. The President's party is not expected to win a majority. The PRI is coming back, the dominant party of the past, and this party is clearly against support for the U.S. position. As is much of the President's own party.

And in Chile, as well. I think there would be a domestic backlash.

If you look at it from a domestic point of view for either President it would be a really serious political blow to vote for the United States in terms of domestic consequences. Even though there are officials who are saying look, we also have longer-term interests. And the longer-term interests mean that we need to pay attention to what we are doing with regard to our position in the world and recognize that the United States is a super power that we need to deal with all along.

One last comment on that, the Latin American Bishops have been holding their annual meeting in Santiago, Chile and President Lagos spoke to them yesterday. The Latin American Bishops came out with a very very very strong argument against the war, and of course tracking what the Pope's position has made. The pressure on the Latin American countries also comes from that direction. They're saying look, this is a Catholic continent, you represent Latin America in many ways, please stand true to your positions is what the bishops are telling both Mexico and Chile.

MR. STEINBERG: I can't help but wonder whether we're at risk of seeing Liberty Sea Bass on the menus of the House of Representatives. [Laughter]

Susan?

MS. SUSAN E. RICE: Thanks, Jim. Good morning.



I'd like to comment on the calculations of the African members of the Security Council and in Africa more generally how they see this situation, and then offer a few thoughts on the implications of all of this for the UN and the Security Council in particular looking forward.

From the African point of view and from the perspective of Cameroon, Angola and Guinea, I think they would want nothing more than to be some place else. The idea of being between the rock and the hard place of the United States and France on this issue has got to be more uncomfortable for the Africans than for almost anybody else on the Security Council. That's for obvious reasons, due to the colonial relationship that France has with Guinea and with Cameroon to some extent and close bilateral relationships with Angola as well. And then the sheer might and force and economic significance of the United States on the other hand, and the pressure that the African countries have been under is really quite extraordinary.

I think the Africans will do all they can not to show their cards publicly until they are absolutely convinced they have no alternative.

The Administration seems relatively confident in the last few days that they have the

African votes in hand. They may well. I think there's a pretty good chance, for instance, that Angola is pretty solidly in the United States camp and I think there have been some who question the certainty of Guinea and Cameroon.

I think we can't discount the possibility that the governments in question are saying the same thing to the United States and France. It is not beyond them. And while I put a fair degree of stock in what I see to be the sort of a breathing of a sigh of relief among senior officials in the Administration who were dealing with Africa over the last few days, I think they and others would acknowledge that anything can change and turn on a dime.

If in fact these three votes are solidly in the U.S. and British camp, what accounts for that? What enables the United States if it does prevail to have prevailed?

I think the Africans are calculating several things. First of all, that the conflict is inevitable and that for the Security Council to be sidelined and out of the picture either due to a failure to find a way to support this or by the sheer force of the diplomatic train wreck, it's not in Africa's interest.

The Africans care a great deal about the United Nations, they care a great deal about the Security Council because it's really their only venue for engagement in global affairs and global decision-making. To the extent that it is severely damaged in the process it doesn't serve their interests.

Also the pressure that the United States has been putting on these countries has been intent. A lot has been made of potential inducements and I'll talk about that, but I think the pressure is more determinant than even the inducements. The notion that the United States could cut aid, could cut trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act, could oppose these countries in the IMF and in the World Bank, and just generally could make their lives miserable is not gone unnoticed in any of these three countries.

In fact the Administration's pressure, I think quite interestingly, has not been limited to the three countries on the Security Council. The President has spent some time on the phone this week talking to a variety of African leaders. President Obasanjo of Nigeria, President Mbeki of South Africa both of whom, especially President Mbeki, have been opposed to our position and our approach on Iraq. He talked to President Wade of Senegal. And more subtly, under the radar, the Administration is intensely pressuring even less significant African countries to speak in favor of the U.S. approach at this open session of the Security Council. So this is across the board and the pressure is intense and I think weighing on them.

When it comes to inducements there are things that the United States can and probably has offered the countries on the Security Council. Increased assistance, development assistance, and in the case of Angola significant humanitarian and post-conflict reconstruction assistance,

some of which was probably planned and in the pipeline but I think may well have been increased.

We don't have much of a bilateral aid relationship with Cameroon, so our ability to do much there is more limited and I think there the inducements have been largely diplomatic. The dangling of the White House visit to President [Dia] which was sort of on again-off again and may happen again at the end of next week provided Cameroon does the right thing.

With respect to Guinea, Guinea faces some very significant security threats particularly from Liberia and the United States offering to step up our military assistance training and equipping and engagement, would certainly be an attractive inducement as well as supporting them in the IMF where they seek a better situation with respect to debt.

Angola very badly wants eligibility under the African Growth and Opportunity Act. That would be of significance to them given their oil exports to the United States and I imagine that that's been on the table as well.

But looking more broadly beyond the three Security Council governments at public opinion in those countries and at public opinion across the African continent, it is overwhelmingly opposed to U.S. policy and U.S. unilateral action in Iraq. I don't think we can discount the significance of this sentiment.

Many will have forgotten that when the United States went ahead unilaterally -- not unilaterally, let me revise that. Went ahead without United Nations Security Council approval for our actions in Kosovo, that generated a great deal of anger and hostility in many parts of the world, not least in Africa. I think with respect to Iraq, just put an exponent of ten on that frustration.

In the context of Kosovo it happened where the tenor of the relationship with the United States was much improved. There was not this sense of overwhelming U.S. unilateralism as a rule. There was a greater atmosphere of collaboration and cooperation.

In the current context the opposition is based not only to the, bypassing the United Nations which as I suggested earlier would not be welcomed in Africa, but also to the specifics of the problem that Iraq poses and are opposed to it.

With Africa's substantial Muslim population I think we ought to be very concerned about the ramifications. We ought to expect significant dissent and protest in the streets of Nigeria, in the streets of South Africa, and I think we ought to expect that the risk to American interests and American people and American facilities across the continent will be substantially increased if we go ahead without UN Security Council approval, and even with Security Council approval.

So it is a difficult situation and one where we could conceivably come out with the Africans on our side on the Security Council and still face some significant ramifications down the road.

Why does it matter to the United States if a number of African governments and African public opinion opposes us on this conflict in Iraq? It does matter because while it's often overlooked one of the significant fronts in the war on terrorism is in fact on the African continent. Not just in East Africa, in [Jubuti] where we have forces and not just where we've had our embassies attacked, but more broadly where there are weak states with populations that oppose the United States and are sympathetic in a number of instances to those that are perceived to stand up to the United States, whether it be al Qaeda or Saddam Hussein. We need to be concerned about fundraising, trafficking in precious materials, even proliferation concerns as we see a disappearance of some radioactive material from Haliburton-owned facilities in Nigeria, which has gone missing and now the Nigerians and Haliburton are scrambling to figure out where that might be. This is material that they're concerned could be used in a dirty bomb.

So there is a need to have willing, cooperative partners and to minimize dissent against the United States and I'm very concerned that the way we have approached this we are not doing it.

To wrap up, let me just say that for the United Nations, we've all watched the spectacle of this diplomatic food fight with some degree of horror and fascination. It is an extraordinary spectacle. The appearance of buying and selling Security Council votes may yet have long-term implications for the efficacy of the Security Council. Not least is we have to deal with pressing issues down the road of North Korea and even potentially Iran.

But I think one possibility, and I don't want to characterize this was a probability, but one possibility we need to bear in mind is if the Security Council ends this effort in effectively a train wreck. The United Nations will be perceived at least in the short term again as primarily a service organization, just providing humanitarian assistance. Then we get into a difficult situation because it becomes the General Assembly that has to make decisions on the allocation of resources for all the UN agencies that will be engaged in post-war reconstruction and humanitarian assistance, and I don't discount the possibility that the fallout from our handling of this in the Security Council could come back to haunt us as we seek to have the UN play the role we want it to with respect to post-conflict reconstruction and humanitarian assistance as people exercise the power of the purse in the General Assembly.

MR. STEINBERG: Thank you, Susan.

Cliff, earlier in the week it looked like the Russians were definitely on the "V" word,

now there kind of seem to be intimations that maybe the pendulum on that one is swinging back. There's always the question about when we hear from Lavrov and Ivanov whether they're speaking for Putin. What's going on in Moscow?



MR. CLIFFORD G. GADDY: Let me address exactly that question of what is happening with Russia. I was struck as I listened to Arturo and Susan, of how many of the arguments that they give about the considerations of the Latin American and African members of the Security Council could apply to Russia as well. We could probably have a contest to see here who is most uncomfortable with being a member of the Security Council at this point. [Laughter]

Russia's days of grandeur and dreams of greatness I think are something they would gladly trade at this point to get rid of the burden not just of being a member of the Security Council, but one that can't vote no, that has to veto. Let me take this last issue about Russia's vote first and then to come back to some more general considerations. The really unfortunate thing for Russia right now is what I like to call the missing fourth option. Russia can vote yes, Russia can vote no. That no is a veto. Russia can abstain, which would be a weak yes. So you have a strong yes and a weak yes. You have a veto that's a very strong no. You don't have the fourth option of some wishy-washy, mealy-mouthed weak no, one that wouldn't be so bad, wouldn't be so committal. I think that really sums up in the immediate context Putin's dilemma. And I think Putin, because -- I want to make it clear that when you talk about Russia in this context I think you're not talking about the country, you're not talking about public opinion. That is a strong contrast I think to the situation described here.

Public opinion in Russia is presumably against a war in Iraq. Public opinion in Russia may be somewhat more anti-American than it was before. But public opinion does not matter when it comes to Russia's choice in foreign policy matters, nor does essentially the views of anyone else except Mr. Putin.

And for Putin, and I will talk in these terms, this is fundamentally not at all a question or a crisis around Iraq. It is not Russia's interest or relationship with Saddam Hussein, fears or concerns about his aggressiveness, his proliferation potential, about arms contracts, oil contracts, debt and so on. These are not the essential issues. For Mr. Putin the problem is the world international order. It is the foreign policy situation in which his country is operating. I think that in one sense—and I guess we could have a contest on this as well, at least in Mr. Putin's eyes—I think he believes that he has the biggest stake of anyone or any country in the outcome of this whole issue.

The reason is because I think he believes, and I might tend to believe him, that he has the biggest domestic political agenda of any leader of any country, and he also regards his own role

in solving and fulfilling that domestic agenda as important in a way that few other if any other leaders in the world see themselves.

He's now been in power for three and a half years. He has achieved a great deal of success domestically. His main goal has been to stabilize the situation, bring together the country politically, stabilize it economically, bring it together socially. He's done that remarkably well. Everything is really on track domestically to begin to tackle the real problems that he thinks Russia has in rebuilding itself.

One of his preconditions for being able to deal with this domestic agenda all along, from the very beginning, has been an international political situation that is as he repeatedly says, predictable and stable. Predictability and stability—and sometimes he throws in “understandable,”—are the watchwords for him.

This has been a much more difficult road. Obviously Russia has much less control over the international situation that Mr. Putin has in the domestic political situation. But after 9-11-2001 it seemed like things were going in a remarkably positive direction in that area as well.

There probably has been no one who has been more enthusiastic about the concept of the Grand Antiterrorist Coalition than Mr. Putin. He sees it as the seed of a new world order, as the first concrete manifestation of the post Cold War era, an era in which we're all together. There is no disunity, there is no divisiveness, there are no blocs. We can disagree, but not in the context of permanent institutionalized divisions and blocs.

This, by the way, is the same principle that he likes to apply at home, that stability comes from unity. You must have a sense that there are no organized, institutional permanent divisions or bloc within the country. I think he sees this internationally as well.

He now sees this slipping away. You see it day by day in his telephone calls, his speeches, his discussions with leaders. He feels this is getting out of control and it is very frustrating for him. And I think you have to understand who he regards himself as to understand his dilemma. Mr. Putin does not see himself as a politician. He's not worried about pleasing public opinion. He's not worried about votes. He believes that he's been called, literally, called by fate, by destiny. He has a mission. And he has this grand mission and he has a grand agenda.

He now finds himself threatened to be reduced to engaging in petty bargaining, the kind of petulance and obstructionism that he has tried to avoid. He doesn't like this at all, and he doesn't know what to do about it. He doesn't know how to get out of this situation. He continues to desperately hope that somehow there can be a compromise, that somehow there can be consensus, that above all somehow there can be unity. He stresses it doesn't matter if we disagree. We can disagree on tactics. We disagreed on Yugoslavia. That is not the end of the

world. We can disagree on NATO expansion. We can disagree on ABM deployments. We can disagree on this crisis too, but we cannot allow this crisis to degenerate to a point that will re-create or create new blocs and divisions that for Mr. Putin would make it almost impossible for him personally to devote himself to the domestic agenda he has set.

Because foreign policy for Russia is incredibly intensive work. The leverage, the power, the maneuvering power is much smaller than before. It requires a great deal of effort by Putin personally and that's all it will depend on. To the extent that he's drawn into that and trying to manage and somehow salvage the international situation, he has that much less time, that much less effort to devote to the grand task of trying to stabilize and rebuild Russia.

I don't have the answer of what he's going to do. Can he make abstention—the nominal weak yes—look less like a yes by some of the things he says and the way he might qualify what he does? Can he on the other hand make this no, which has to be a veto of course, look weaker? He's trying to do that through personal telephone calls and conversations with George Bush but I'm not sure there is a way out of this. And frankly I can't make the call of whether or not he is going to go ahead with the veto (or give his minions the order to cast the veto), or whether he will remain with an abstention. But I think in either case it's a tragic defeat for him and a real setback in the overall agenda that he has.

MR. STEINBERG: Cliff, there have been reports of some comments by Ambassador Vershbow suggesting that the stick may be in play, in a gentle way implied here in terms of Russia's economic interests in Iraq. How would that factor into --

MR. GADDY: It's not to say that Mr. Putin can ignore the economic concerns about Iraq but I think this is very much a tertiary or even lower consideration.

He has said he's not willing to trade positions of principle for short-term economic interest. I frankly have never thought that Russia's economic interests with respect to Iraq were all that great. We've talked about that a little bit. But I think he is much much more concerned, as I say, about the relationship with the United States and not primarily as a bilateral relationship. Not in terms of the goodies he can get from the United States, if there are any, but his ability to act as a mediator and to be on the inside bringing the United States into what he likes to call a multi-polar—meaning multilateral—world.

MR. STEINBERG: Phil, when we last talked about this there was some hope that after the first shock of the first Turkish vote that it could be repaired by the election of Erdogan to Parliament and his ability to become Prime Minister, and yet now we hear that not only are we not going to get basing rights we may not get overflight rights and airspace rights. What's going wrong in the calculation there? Is this a failure of diplomacy or is this just something that

Turkish politics has run away with itself? How big a problem is this for the Administration?



MR. PHILIP H. GORDON: I think as we've said here before it's an enormous problem for the Administration. Let me say something about Turkey and then I'd like to say a word about Britain and France and try to put it all together in the end.

Where the Turks are concerned I think we have consistently underestimated how difficult it was going to be to get them. We just assumed all along that strategic partner, they'll be there. We were a little bit surprised that we had to offer them more money and more rights in Northern Iraq than we initially expected, but we did it and we finally got the cabinet after weeks and weeks of haggling to approve this, and then we were shocked again when the Parliament wouldn't go along with the party leadership in giving us that. What we've underestimated is that Turks, even more than every country we've talked about so far, see this as a total negative for their country. They remember the last Gulf War and the price that they paid both in economic terms -- All of this is not right, but it is their perception. That this destroyed their economy, undermined their economy, they were flooded with 500,000 Kurdish refugees, and they fear exactly the same thing this time. There's not even a threat to begin with, in their perception, and we're going to bring about all of these problems, undermining tourism which is one of their main economic sources of revenue, and so on.

So the hostility for this is very deep.

What I think we also misunderstood is the difficulty for this new government, brand new elected, being tested, to come in and as the very first thing it does do something that is against the interests and wishes of 95 percent of the population. I think we just assumed the military would tell them what to do and they would do it.

I don't think this completely rules it out. It's finely balanced between the government not wanting to immediately come to power and overrule the population, and the other thing we misunderstood in negotiation is how it would play. All of the money that we offered to Turkey, if you followed the Turkish press and public discussion of all of this, rather than being played as oh, we're going to get a lot out of this, it was really, the Turkish belly dancer trying to seduce the rich Americans vis-à-vis Turkish democracy standing forward and the Parliament seeking and defending Turkish interests. And it played exactly backwards.

All of these cartoons in our press about the belly dancer and the money just totally backfired and it led those deputies who voted against supporting the U.S. on this to be heroes in their constituencies in their country rather than the other way around.

So that's why it's such a challenge even now, and that's why Jim, as you say, the bar seems to be getting even higher where overflight, which we assumed from the start, are even in question and they've told us now that the Parliament is going to have to vote on that as well.

I don't think it's impossible because all of the factors I just mentioned are counterbalanced by the fact that Turkey doesn't want to offend its greatest friend in the world. I think we've talked about those polls in Turkey where when Turks were asked who's your closest friend in the world, Shibley will get to his polls in a minute, but the Turks' closest friend in the world, the United States, 25 percent; second is nobody at 35 percent. [Laughter]

So they know they need this relationship. The Chief of the General Staff has now come out and said he would like to see this cooperation go ahead. So it's finely balanced, and it plays into everything else we're talking about in the sense that for new Prime Minister Erdogan to shift from what was a very popular vote in the Parliament against it a couple of weeks ago, he needs something new and I think one think one new thing might be a UN resolution. You get a bit of a chicken and the egg problem and I think that's one reason, and I'll get to this in a moment, the U.S. and U.K. might be willing to wait is that we desperately need Turkey and all of the Administration officials trying to say we have a Plan B and other military operations. There are other military options, but they're much much worse than the Turkish option.

We will be willing to wait for this if we can get it and I think that one thing that might be necessary to get it is a UN Security Council resolution. So let me get to that by just briefly talking about the French who have something to say about that and the British.

And by the way in our competition as to which country is least comfortable, I think the French would concede that in a minute. They're fine. [Laughter] And if any of the other countries are reluctant to exercise their vote, I'm sure France would be happy to exercise it for them. That's not a problem where the French are concerned.

The British I think are key here because more than anything the reason we're in this whole discussion at the UN, not the only reason, is because of the British. Tony Blair absolutely needs UN Security Council support to do this. We saw that 120 members of his own party voted against supporting him on this without a resolution, overwhelming public opinion against it, members of the Cabinet threatening to resign if he goes ahead without a Security Council resolution. That's why we've seen the British leading the desperate measures now to try to get one.

We had the U.K.-U.S.-Spanish proposal ten days ago, whenever it was. It was clear that wasn't going anywhere with the Security Council so the British said all right, how about a deadline, March 17th. Which at the time was perceived by the Americans as waiting too long, dragging it out. That wasn't good enough, now they're coming back again with a benchmark to

maybe the end of the month. All of this shows -- and these are British ideas, British thoughts. The U.S. hasn't formally backed them yet. All of this shows Tony Blair's absolute desperation to get a deal.

A lot of that will hinge on these other countries and France which I'll finish up with in a moment, but let me conclude on Britain, as desperate as they are, I don't see the Brits backing out of this or Tony Blair backing out of this. There too there has been an evolution where a couple of weeks ago he was making clear he needed this resolution but if there was a single, unreasonable vote against or veto, that wouldn't stop him. In other words if you had a majority and only the French vetoed it, it would be legitimate in his view and he'd go ahead.

He's back-pedaled on that too, to a series of unreasonable vetoes where still he wants the majority but if France and Russia veto, that's not going to stop him. I think the back-pedaling cannot stop. I don't see how Tony Blair can pull out of this. And if we get to that point where we don't get the vote I think they would be prepared to pull the resolution and base it on 1441 and it would be hell for him, but I don't see how he pulls out of this now.

Let me conclude on the French. I think there's more certainty there than there is on the Russians. The French have now made it quite clear, we've all been speculating for weeks. Now Chirac has said that under whatever circumstances France is not going to support this resolution.

He gave a press conference Monday night and he talked about the reasons why France is opposed to this. We don't need to get into that now. But what's important to stress here I think is that many of the reasons France is opposed to war are similar to everyone else in Europe. Fear of more terrorism, the fear that you can't hold Iraq together afterwards and so on. But what distinguishes France quite clearly is the question of world order that was mentioned vis-à-vis Russia as well. The French are simply not prepared, as many of the other European leaders are -- the Spanish, the Italians and the British -- to defer to the United States. If their population is massively opposed and they think this is a colossal error, they're not prepared simply to say well, the U.S. is the leader, we'll see how it goes.

Chirac stressed that, I thought it was very interesting Monday night, the very first question from the questioners was can you just tell us clearly and simply why are you so opposed to this war. The first half of his answer, of his very first answer was we need to live in a multi-polar world where Europe has a strong role to play and the Security Council has a strong role to play. He didn't start with terrorism and war and all of those things, it was multi-polarity. To be fair, he went on to talk about the other things, but it was interesting that the very first thing he mentioned was we want to see a world in which other powers, in particular Europe, can stand up to the United States.

So I think they're dug in. I don't see even the wiggle room. Everyone was hoping I think

that two things. One is when push came to shove they wouldn't dare veto alone. Or that maybe at the end they would accept benchmarks and a later date or something, but they've made quite clear they're not interested in benchmarks, they're not interested in even 45 days, because that would be automatic war and they're not prepared to support automatic war.

Where does that leave us in the United States? I think it's quite simple. We have to write off this resolution. I don't think there's a circumstance under which a French veto. What this about it seems to me now is whether you can get a nine-vote and that single veto which is what the U.S. and U.K. would be willing to push for. That would be success. But I don't think anybody should have the illusion that what we're really trying to get here is a passed resolution.

We might be willing to wait for that because we'd surely rather go with nine votes and a single unreasonable veto, which might give time to get the Turks as well, than no resolution at all. That's why I think we probably will see another couple of weeks of negotiating on this.

MR. STEINBERG: I would just observe that you at least hear a little bit of muttering about, perhaps arguing that eight is a victory since that is a technical majority, and perhaps even less if we get a plurality, depending on the number of abstentions. We'll see how much interpretation is left to go, especially for Blair, and at what point this becomes unattractive for him.

We come finally to Shibley who, as I mentioned at the outset, is going to tell us about his new poll. Shibley probably can make an equal case for, at least in some parts of his world, a profound lack of enthusiasm for what we see over the horizon.



MR. SHIBLEY TELHAMI: I think when you look at it the Bush Administration is appreciating authoritarianism by the day since they are having the quiet support of Arab governments while we're talking about dissent within democratic European countries, just at the same time when the public opposition is at the highest level ever registered by polls. And let me just put this poll that I want to report to you, and I'm glad to unveil it today here at Brookings, to put it in perspective for you, although I'm going to focus largely on the opinions regarding the Iraq issue and U.S. foreign policy. This is part of a much bigger project.

The survey was really over 50 questions in six countries conducted at the end of February and the beginning of March. The countries included Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, and Lebanon. Today I'm not reporting on the United Arab Emirates because that has not been quoted yet, but generally the United Arab Emirates has not been different in pattern from the others.

This is part of a project sponsored by the Anwar Sadat Chair at the University of Maryland and done in cooperation with [Zugby] International. The idea behind it is not simply to look at attitudes related to Iraq and the U.S. but really to look at over time how the new media is changing not only political attitudes in the region, but also notions of political identity in the region. So we have lots of questions about what people are watching which are interesting, what television stations, the impact of satellite television, the new radio, as well as political attitudes and social attitudes on matters related to the role of religion and politics, to gender issues, in addition to foreign policy. So I want to put that in perspective. We have data on that. I would be glad to answer some of it today if you raise the questions because I have these answers as well.

But I would like to just focus on those aspects that are related to U.S. foreign policy and to Iraq specifically. The most striking result at the outset is the low favorability rating of the U.S.. Only four percent of Saudis have a somewhat favorable view of the U.S. today. Only six percent in Jordan and Morocco. Only 13 percent in Egypt. The lowest I have seen.

When you ask them what drives your attitude towards the U.S., is it policies or values? The majority say it's U.S. policies, not values.

When you ask them about their attitudes, what motivates U.S. policy toward Iraq? Clearly they are very suspicious of U.S. motives. The number one answer that they give is oil. The number two answer is Israel. Actually we gave them a list of issues -- oil, Israel, democracy, economic development, peace in the Middle East. And the only ones that do well, extremely high -- oil, often as high as nine out of ten of people think it's oil. Israel comes next with seven to eight percent, seven out of ten, 70 to 80 percent of the public. And democracy, very few people believe it's about democracy, usually in the ten percentage range. Very few people believe it's about economic development. Very few people believe it's about peace.

More importantly, I asked them a question about what they expect after the war. Do they expect more democracy or less democracy? The overwhelming majority, over 80 percent, believe the Middle East will be less democratic than before the war. The overwhelming majority, again over 80 percent, in some instances 90 percent, believe there will be more terrorism in the Middle East after the war than before the war. The overwhelming majority across every country believes the Middle East will be less peaceful after the war than before. And the overwhelming majority thinks the prospect of an Arab-Israeli settlement will be a lot less than before the war.

So you can imagine that their interpretation of the consequences of war are such that they're very frightened by the outcome.

Now an interesting question that I had to sort of give you an indication that I think will make Jacques Chirac very happy, is I asked two questions to get a sense of whom they admire

most among world leaders outside their own country. I didn't want these issues to be struck out in the survey. I must say, remarkably this was the most intrusive political survey that we have ever conducted in the Arab world and remarkably, not a single one was censored in any of the countries. I was actually surprised because some of them were very intrusive, particularly about the role of religion and politics for the first time.

But one of the open question was whom among world leaders do you admire most. An open question. You name whoever you want. And Jacques Chirac emerges as a most popular leader, certainly number one in at least three countries and number two in a couple of others. Very very significant.

You also get in this grouping of people who rank relatively highly on this list, Nelson Mandela being named. You get Yasser Arafat being named. You get occasionally Saddam Hussein but very few Islamists. The only Islamist that is named that gets relatively high number three in Jordan, is [inaudible] [Muslala] of Hesbolla. But by and large the Islamists don't get mentioned in the most admired, and most of the figures that are admired are nationalists. [Yamal Abdamasser] is mentioned also frequently in the voluntary list, and most of them are figures that are associated with defiance of the West and the U.S. and of nationalism in the region, not of Islamism which is interesting.

A second question related to that was whom among the following list of historical and foreign figures you admire most. Here I was trying to get a sense of where the heart is. I gave the names ranging from Mahatma Ghandi to [Yamal Abdamasser] to Eisenhower to Churchill to Stalin. There were 13 names of historical figures including Arab figures. [Nasser] was the unanimous number one in every single one of the countries. [Nasser] of Egypt as again a symbol of Arab nationalism and anti-imperialism. The second most frequently mentioned name was Nelson Mandela. The third was Yasser Arafat. Those were the names that are mentioned generally. Mahatma Ghandi surprisingly does exceptionally well. He follows in the list and gets high ranking in several of the Arab countries.

Let me end by talking about a question that I left for last which is the role of the UN in all of this. You will be very interested I think in some of the results related to how the region views the role of weapons of mass destruction in all of this. In one question that I submitted, we asked them if Iraq, let me in fact read you the question because I think it would be more accurate to present it. If Iraq does not comply with the United Nations inspectors or if the UN finds that Iraq has been hiding weapons of mass destruction, would you support or oppose the United States unilateral action to make Iraq comply?

The overwhelming majority, in fact in many of the countries 90 percent oppose. That's not as surprising because that's unilateral.

But what about when you say if Iraq does not comply with the United Nations inspectors or if the UN finds that Iraq has been hiding weapons of mass destruction, would you support or oppose United Nations military action to make Iraq comply?

The vast majority opposed military action even by the UN, even if weapons of mass destruction were found.

There is a slight discrepancy between the unilateral and the UN action ranging anywhere from only two to three percent in Jordan to about 15 percent in places like Saudi Arabia, but the rest of it really is the overwhelming majority that about seven out of ten would oppose even a UN action, even if Iraq was hiding weapons of mass destruction.

Now why is there less of a discrepancy between the two? Let me give you my own interpretation based on the interviews that we have done.

One, is that the double standards argument. Why are you targeting Iraq? There are other countries that have weapons of mass destruction. Why not North Korea? There is a pervasive sense that Arabs and Muslims are being targeted and there is a rejection of that in their mind.

Second, and this goes to the buying of votes in the UN. The vast majority see the UN largely as an instrument of American power. So if there is a UN resolution it will only confirm that the U.S. once again succeeded in establishing its hegemony and they reject that as well.

It makes a difference with some, but by and large it doesn't make much of a difference.

MR. STEINBERG: I suppose it will give comfort to those in the Administration who felt that going to the Security Council didn't add very much to begin with.

Let me push you beyond the good and really remarkable polling numbers that you've got to the question that is on a lot of people's minds which is given this level of distrust of the United States and opposition to any form of action with or without the Council, what does that translate in terms of an Arab reaction? You said we have the authoritarian governments there. Can the governments keep them clamped down? Will the public suffer in silence even though they're opposed?

MR. TELHAMI: That's a very good question. Let me answer it in two ways.

First, if they succeed they're going to succeed only by being more repressive. So those who think this is going to be an era of democracy, you can see why the public is suspicious of that because they already see that many of these states are unleashing their security services in expectation of a public reaction and they know what they're witnessing right now and they

understand what to expect after. So if they succeed we have more repression in the region, not more democracy.

They believe they can succeed, but the cost of repression is increasing on them. There are two things that they're less certain about, these governments, than they were certain about in the past. One is they know that in this Arab globalization it's much easier to organize non-state actors so therefore opposition is a little bit easier, getting weapons a little bit easier, coordination was a little bit easier, so even as their own security services have grown, they're less certain about what to expect in these uncharted waters of Arab globalization. Second is the information issue.

One reason why these governments were very confident a decade ago was that they knew they monopolized information. Today they don't. One of the findings is that where in my previous surveys in Egypt for example two years ago, only seven or eight percent said they had satellite television. Very few people said they were watching satellite television stations like Al Jazeera or NBC for that matter. And today 46 percent of the people say they have access and a large number of people in Egypt itself say they're getting news increasingly from outside their own boundaries. Obviously that is something that makes them very insecure when they're trying to spin the events as they're unfold in order to mitigate the [anger of the problem].

MR. STEINBERG: You've heard a very rich view around the world. Now let's open it to your questions.

QUESTION: Bob Deans with Cox Newspapers, and you probably have others thinking as I do -- I hope I never face a battery of doctors who diagnose my health quite the way you've diagnosed the body of American diplomacy at this point.

I have to ask, how much of this is the Administration's fault? How much of this is this is what we have, we have a tough situation? How much of it is the fault of the diplomacy the Administration has waged, the lack of effective face-to-face diplomacy? And if given that the vote is likely now to bleed over into next week, what if anything can be done in this four day window to try and turn this around?

MR. VALENZUELA: I think what you would find in Latin America, and particularly among the decisionmakers in the two countries that are on the Security Council is the notion that, and the concern that the United States wanted to go to war anyway. So consequently from the very beginning this has not been an issue of trying to find a diplomatic solution that was acceptable. I'm pushing that a little bit. Certainly that's not the unanimous view among decisionmakers, but if there's an inclination there it's to be skeptical about the motivations of the United States from the beginning in this regard, that the UN was being used simply as some kind of a rubber stamp. In fact I've heard very high level officials in both countries use that. What we

didn't want to be put in the position of being in the UN is a rubber stamp.

This gets back to a comment that Susan made. The concern among many of the Latin Americans is that the UN is being undermined not by the fact that it's not, the Security Council is not being able to go along with its responsibilities, but it's being undermined because of the unilateralist action in the United States.

MS. RICE: I think the mess we face is unfortunately to a substantial extent the fault of the Administration and the way they've handled it. I'm not just talking about the tactics and the immediate diplomacy leading up to the resolution. I think that their error has been longer term and strategic in nature.

We have not sold to the world and I think to a substantial segment of the American population the necessity of this conflict at this time, and I think we have, as Arturo said, not gone about this vis-à-vis the international community in any way that's given credence to a sense that we in fact care about what the rest of the world thinks. We have created a sense that we're going ahead and doing this and the consequences be damned, even as Secretary Rumsfeld suggested, even if the Brits aren't with us. I think that sends an extraordinary message to the rest of the world that it would be very hard to recoup from.

And this in the larger context of two years of international diplomacy going far beyond the question of Iraq which has not done anything to increase confidence around the world that we care a great deal about the perspectives, the interests, and the concerns of others.

So I think it's a problem to a substantial extent of our own creation, not in the last few weeks alone or in the tactics of the Security Council but in the broader orientation of our foreign policy.

What can be done to recoup this in the next several days? It depends on what our definition of success is. If our objective is to get the nine votes then I think there may yet still be some room for jockeying, horse trading, pressuring and a slightly prolonged deadline, but I don't know. I think certainly for the countries that I'm most familiar with I think we could probably get them in this context. I'm not certain about the Latins, and Arturo I defer to you on that. But if the definition of success is a more united international community, and minimizing the global political and security risks of our going into Iraq by fashioning some degree of international consensus, then I think what it's going to take is a radically different tact of American foreign policy and a willingness to grant this inspection process that we ourselves launched. Greater time to unfold and greater time to demonstrate its efficacy or inefficacy. That would mean as the Administration will strongly resist, leaving our forces in the region for a couple or three more months to give the inspectors time to do what they say they need to do. That obviously comes with some consequences, but I think one could argue the consequences of going ahead in what is

almost appearing to be sort of a kamikaze approach to diplomacy could be quite serious as well.

MR. GORDON: I think it would be unfair to pin it all on the Administration. You asked how much of it. It would be unfair to pin it all on the Administration. I do think we have to recognize that this would be hard under any circumstances. I mean we could -- Mr. Rogers could be the President of the United States and invading an Arab country in the heart of the Middle East out of the blue against world opinion would not be easy.

So I wouldn't want to say it's all because of them. Having said that, there are a number of things you can point to that they made it harder on themselves than it needed to have been. In the first two years of the Bush diplomacy suggesting that our view of the world was one in which we decide things and you follow. Contempt shown for allies across a range of issues whether it's treaties or NATO itself. And the particular diplomacy of going into this again with the attitude being suggested, being suggested because that was the attitude, that we have decided to do this and it's your job to play along and we'll play it out a little bit if you like, and we'll pretend, I don't think that's too strong a word, I'll finish the sentence, pretend to go to the United Nations so long as you know we're only going there because we're telling you that we're going to go anyway but we assume that you're going to go along with us. That has not made it easier for this Administration.

People sometimes ask us would it have been easier with a Democratic Administration? I don't know what Jim's view of that is but I would say two things about that. One is it would be hard to picture a Democratic Administration, depending on under whom, doing this. If the opposition was so great across the range of countries in the international system would we have really been willing in the face of all of that to do it? I wonder. I think the answer is probably no.

So where it leaves you with, and I think Tom Freedman wrote this and I think it was exactly right. Only this Administration was likely to have done this, but this is probably the worst Administration to get it done.

MR. TELHAMI: I think that if you want to look at the role of the Administration in this "mess", you have to look at it not as an Iraq issue. Obviously the issue here is not Iraq. It's not about evidence, it's not about even how people in the region view the Iraq issue. It's about this is seen as case one of something much bigger. It's about the global order, it is about the regional order. It is about the relationship with the United States. And I'd give you sort of a contrast, in 1990 I served as an advisor to the U.S. Delegation at the UN right after Iraq invaded Kuwait. The argument that won most states at that time for the coalition was this, do you want in the first episode of the post Cold War era, do you want the norm to be established that a powerful state would unilaterally attack a weaker state? That single idea was probably the most persuasive idea in getting people on board. And right now it's exactly the opposite.

I mean the sense here is that joining in a way is legitimizing the norm for preemption which people see as much bigger than Iraq itself. So it is a resistance of the order of policy. It's not just a resistance of the issue of Iraq, and I frankly think that even in the region one could have made even a moral argument about the Iraqi -- especially since tensions are not likely to be relieved without some fundamental change. Had the intention been seen to be different and had the relationship with other Arab countries and there international community been seen different.

I think the way it was done is certainly part of it.

MR. STEINBERG: I agree with Shibley on this broad point and framing it that way, but I would just add to that that in some respects the highlight of diplomacy, Resolution 1441 in effect turned out to be a disingenuous bargain between the United States and France. What it looked like 1441 was about was that the United States was prepared to take yes for an answer under some circumstances, and France was prepared to accept that if the answer was no it would do something about it, and it's turned out that neither of those things were true. Basically the Administration was not prepared, for a lot of reasons, and you can argue whether they're right or not, but it seems like it really the yes that they want to take; and equally there doesn't really seem to be anything that Saddam could do that would convince the French to support action.

So what you had was the sense in November that maybe diplomacy could work. And I do think the Administration could have moved more effectively right after 1441, and particularly after the December 7th final declaration, when they could have gotten to this issue of benchmarks and kind of operationalized what it meant for Saddam not to be in compliance, and had given this rather than a week or ten days to deal with the benchmark issue, had set that out much more clearly in a kind of way of determining whether the answer was yes or no, at a time when we would have been further away from the war so people might have been more willing to accept a benchmark. I think that would have helped the diplomacy at the end, but at the end of the day we'd never have solved this fundamental problem that the U.S. is about is really kind of a transformational world change here, which can't possibly be achieved simply by satisfying ourselves that Saddam doesn't have WMD.

QUESTION: Michael Backfisch, German Business Daily, [inaudible].

A question beyond french fries which are now called liberty fries on Capitol Hill. Gordon, with Chirac's desire of having a multi-polar world, do you think he is trying to build up his image of the counterweight of the United States? And if so, what does that mean for the international issues beyond Iraq? And what does that mean for economic and trade relations? And do we have to fear boycotts, for example?

MR. GORDON: I think the boycott discussion is overblown. I think it's unlikely that we would really move towards an official boycott. Of course the trade relationship with the

European Union, it would be difficult to distinguish French products from other products. In the world of globalization the question of what is a French product is an open one. You would quickly find yourself boycotting goods built in America. You want to boycott Renault cars or something and you find out that 30 percent of the company is owned by Anglo-American shareholders and 20 percent of the cars are put together in South Carolina using parts made in Germany and Southeast Asia and so on.

So whereas there's a lot of gut instinct out there to retaliate with trade sanctions, I think in these cases cooler heads usually prevail, both because it's hard to do it for the reason I just said and because there's also the question of retaliation. The European Union responding to the United States, this is clearly a major setback for both sides and that's why what you usually end up with is sort of silly symbolic things like the name of french fries on Capitol Hill.

So I don't think that particular issue is a terribly serious one.

The first part of your question though is much more serious. Yeah, I do think, and I suggested that, that the French see this in many ways as providing a counterweight to the United States. The word you hear from them themselves, they don't deny, as I said, about multi-polarity. They don't want to accept a world in which the United States can simply decide everything it wants on questions of war and peace. That's why they value the Security Council and why they value a strong European Union.

The problem it seems to me is that the Europeans themselves are divided on this. It would be one thing if Europe were united behind Jacques Chirac and the French of Franco-German position, and you had a strong European poll and it was prepared to stand up to the United States and then we would have to face multi-polarity. But the Chirac position, while supported by a majority of European public opinion is not supported by a majority of European governments. That's why what you see is a much messier situation and one in which I think Chirac is not managing to create this multi-polar world in balance with the United States, but actually the fragmentation of the European Union itself.

Ironically this is coming about at a time when Europe is launching its constitutional convention and putting together a common foreign and security policy meant to lead to a true union of European states and peoples. But if you look at the diplomacy between Britain and France right now where the British are publicly calling the French to task. When Chirac said under no circumstances will we vote for this, that's evoked a reaction publicly by Jack Straw and Tony Blair saying I'm sorry, that's just not how it works.

I think it's going to be just as hard to repair some of these intra-European relationships as the Trans-Atlantic relationship. What we're really seeing, without exaggerating, is a breakdown of the fundamental post-2nd World War order and we're going to have to see if we can put it

back together after whatever happens in Iraq.

MR. STEINBERG: Because Arturo has to leave momentarily, does anybody have a specific question related to Latin America or that they'd like Arturo to touch on before I let him go and thank him for his wonderful insight?

QUESTION: I'm [inaudible] with the Navy.

I want to ask a different question from a different perspective. UN resolution 1441 was essentially unanimity of the world for Saddam --

MR. STEINBERG: Excuse me, if you have a question about Latin America, I asked if anybody --

QUESTION: Well, it will sort of get there.

MR. STEINBERG: All right. Because I will let Arturo go if there's not anything specific. Arturo, than you for joining us.

MR. VALENZUELA: Thank you.

[Applause]

MR. STEINBERG: Okay, go ahead.

QUESTION: 1441 was essentially unanimous world position that Saddam ought to disarm, he ought to get rid of his weapons of mass destruction. My question really is what are the countries around the world doing as far as putting one-to-one direct pressure on him to do so? Or are they leaving all the responsibility to the UN to be their surrogate?

MR. STEINBERG: -- talk about the Arab countries. It's been an interesting question about how they see this. There's certainly been a lot of public stuff about what they're doing.

MR. TELHAMI: In the Arab world, in all honesty, I think many of them are trying to protect their bets because they have basically decided war is coming and they're worried about it and they're worried about appearing to work with the U.S. and appearing that all the blame is with the U.S.. And I think much of the exercise by many of the Arab countries to go to Iraq, to put pressure on Iraq, to ask Iraq to disarm isn't really because of a belief or genuine belief that Iraq still has weapons of mass destruction or that Iraq can do a lot more than it is doing, but rather more as part of beginning to shift the blame to Iraq a little bit so as to reduce the public anger. And I see that as the strategy of a number of the states who are quietly cooperating with

there U.S..

So yes, they're putting pressure. Do they expect anything more? Most of them probably don't. They all don't want the war. There is no Arab country with the exception of Kuwait, that really thinks that it will benefit from the war. Most of them are frightened by the prospect. And not only domestically but also strategically. Not just because of the public opinion. But they have reconciled themselves to the fact that it's coming and now it's a question of survival and they're trying to position themselves to deal with it. That means shifting a little bit of the anger away from the U.S. and away from them because they're frightened by this degree of anti-Americanism that could come back to haunt them.

MR. STEINBERG: Cliff, 12 years ago the end game of the first Gulf War was characterized by a certain amount of diplomacy on the part of the then Soviet Union. There was a flurry about two weeks ago or so, the suggestion that maybe Primakov was going to be back in the game. But not much since then. The Russians, do they have any influence? Do they seek to exert any?

MR. GADDY: They clearly are seeking to do it. They keep sending people down there and there are of course continued rumors about deals they might be trying to cut about even giving Saddam a haven inside Russia.

But at the same time I find it very interesting that whereas Shibley points out that some of the Arab countries may be trying to appease the United States by appearing to put pressure on, put part of the blame on Saddam, you repeatedly hear Putin say—he said this several times—that Iraq is making efforts to comply with the demands of the inspectors. Iraq has shown a willingness to do this and that. And several times he even said that they agreed to allow unannounced inspections of private homes. "I personally," said Putin, "think that's a violation of human rights. I wouldn't go that far."

So this is not exactly siding with, putting the blame on Saddam. So it's very very unclear what they're doing...as usual.

QUESTION: [Inaudible]

MS. RICE: I didn't --

MR. STEINBERG: The question was referring to the fact that the Administration has made an analogy to the failure of the League of Nations to step up to its responsibilities and the statement that the UN is facing the same kind of challenge now with the same potential repercussions for the future.

MS. RICE: I think the Administration is reaching in a number of respects as it tries to pressure the international community into coming with us on the resolution that's been tabled. I think that statement is overblown and an exaggeration. But they're some other things that are also quite extraordinary and you wonder whether the motivation is to spur the international community towards doing what the Administration believes is the right thing or whether it stems from those in the Administration who have perhaps never viewed the United Nations in a favorable light and perhaps see this as one more nail in its coffin.

But you've heard the Administration refer to the UN's failure to act not only with respect to Kosovo, but with respect to Rwanda which I think is an extraordinary statement coming out of this Administration where you had the President say during the campaign that he would not have thought it was in the United States interest to intervene in Rwanda. So to view that as an example of a United Nations failure, which is an argument that others on the left have made, whatever you view the validity of that argument, it's a big ironic and rich in the current context as it's being used.

MR. STEINBERG: Obviously Susan has put it very well that there are multiple strands behind it but there is an element which I have some sympathy for here which is that in dealing with Iraq the Council has been less than steadfast over the last 12 years in taking seriously its own requirements. There have been, as the President loves to keep reminding us, resolution after resolution after resolution, relating to particularly the disarmament but also the other obligations that Iraq undertook at the end of the Gulf War and it does undermine the credibility of the Council for these things to go forward.

Now the fact that we have these resolutions doesn't mean you have to go to war in every case to enforce them, but there's been essentially no evidence of the Council's willingness to do anything to enforce them.

Periodically we made some progress largely as a result of unilateral U.S. pressure to put the spotlight back on, but it is only under the circumstances where there is unilateral U.S. pressure that the Council begins to take up this action seriously. And that does have long-term implications. If the Council wants to play a role in dealing with North Korea and it's going to want to start trying to put some multilateral leverage on North Korea, the prospect that the Council then pass a bunch more resolutions is not something that I would think that anybody would take a great deal seriously.

So you can question the motivation in some cases of the Administration but I think there is a germ of truth about the overall performance of the Council in dealing with these things in which it's easy to pass resolutions and very hard to get the Council to take their enforcement seriously.

MR. TELHAMI: I have a little bit of a different interpretation of how the Administration saw the UN. I don't think they sought to undermine it. On the contrary I think they thought that this is all about how to effectively exercise overwhelming American power in the world, including in international organizations. I think from the beginning they believed that once you make your intentions, that the U.S. has not employed the overwhelming advantages and power that it has had since the end of the Cold War, and that if the U.S. does and makes its intention known that it will exercise that power, the minute people know that we're going to move they will jump on the winning American bandwagon because everyone is going to want to be on the winning side. And that at the UN that would be the case as well, once that intention is declared, and including the Security Council which will appear itself illegitimate if it couldn't stop the U.S. from carrying out a war on its own and therefore members of the Security Council themselves would want to ultimately in the end, before this resolution to sort of give it a cover so as not to undermine and deal with [inaudible] themselves. That's the notion about how you use power to get organizations to work for you, to use organizations in your behalf. I think they thought with 1441, you heard the President say, well nobody expected it, we got unanimous support, it's going to happen again, and the more you make your intention known the more you tender your forces, the more you do it, the more people are going to come on the bandwagon, it hasn't worked out that way.

So now it's a question of reassessment. And rather than saying the strategy didn't work, you start asking questions about the UN itself and that's the way I see it. I don't think that was the intent from the beginning.

QUESTION: Al Millican, Washington Independent Writers.

Do any of you have a further sense about how the rest of the world is thinking about defending against a chemical or biological attack or how there may be a possible loss of oil, or how human shields may affect war strategy, or how the spying on the middle six nations is playing out?

MR. GORDON: Six different questions in one.

Preparing for chemical and biological attacks, [inaudible]. I think all countries are battenning down the hatches. You see great security measures being taken throughout Europe domestic security because one of their greatest fears is that we're going to bring about terrorism. What else can they do? They're preparing. [Inaudible] countries in the region are preparing as well.

MR. STEINBERG: I think there's obviously particularly a concern in Britain which has a great vulnerability in this respect.

QUESTION: Colonel Data, [inaudible] Foreign Policy Association.

After 22 years experience in the Middle East, some of it in Iraq itself, I couldn't agree with Professor Telhami more. He has really made a very categorical strict observation.

My question is the question of disarming Iraq has polarized the Security Council. It is between da and nyet. Yes a war, and no a war generally speaking. But it is for their own vested interests, both these sections. Who has really [inaudible] the interests of the Middle East, the Arab countries, the Muslim countries? A war that will create more expense on reconstruction rather than destruction?

My question is that has the United Nations ceased to be an honest broke?

MR. STEINBERG: Let me try this. I think that you or we or others may disagree with the motivations of any of the players here, but I actually don't think that this is about countries being narrow in their interests. You hear a lot about this being about oil or this being about the Russian economic interests or this being about the French economic interests. I do think as Shibley said this is about a fundamental difference about world order. I believe without the slightest bit of doubt that the people in the Administration believe that this is not only in the interest of the United States and our security but will make a better world. I think there's a deep conviction about that. I have my skepticism about it, but I don't doubt that they think that what this is about is dealing with a fundamental problem which is a long term threat not only to the United States but to the well being of the people of the Middle East and the world more broadly, and that this is the United States acting in its traditional role of providing public goods and providing leadership to get things done that will benefit everybody, and they believe at the end of the day once this is done, with or without international support, that the international community will see that they were right and that this will be deeply appreciated.

I also believe that Chirac deeply believes that this is a dangerous risk and it will make the world less safe.

So I actually think there is a very profound and serious debate about the public good there. There just happens to be deep deep division about how the world works and what is at stake here. And I think that's largely what's playing here.

MR. GORDON: I agree with all of that. Let me just add one further thought.

I think the ideal of the United Nations and the Security Council is taking a real blow, a deep blow in all of this, however it turns out. By that I mean even if we manage at this point, and I would say it didn't have to be this way and I'll tell you why. But even if we manage at this point to get a majority, even not a resolution but a majority, the perception of the world -- I mean who

is going to think that this was because the international system came together and the members of the Security Council believed that for the sake of the world this was the right thing to do? It will be perceived as one, the U.S. threatened to do this; other countries were against it; the U.S. threatened to do it without the UN so they figured they had to go to the UN and do it; and then in the process of buying off and leverages and incentives and trade concessions and all of that, they came.

So the notion that legitimacy is derived from this motley group of countries elected in a certain way, and some legacies of the 2nd World War and all of that, I think the notion, the ideal of the UN is really suffering.

I believe the U.S. and France are both significantly to blame for this. We talked about the Bush Administration, the certain irony that one of the best arguments for going to war in Iraq right now is that it's, as Jim said before, all of these UN Security Council resolutions. But who really believes that that's what's driving them, the enforcement of UN resolutions? In France too. As I've explained, Chirac profoundly believes it's important not to turn the UN Security Council into a rubber stamp for the Americans. At the same time by pushing it to this point France is also undermining the UN.

If a month or two ago France had said we still believe this war will have disastrous consequences, we fear the consequences and all of the rest, but there are resolution there, 1441 is clear and Saddam hasn't complied. That would have been a major step towards the support of a notion that you enforce resolutions and this is important.

But the interplay between these two sovereign powers has led to what I fear is going to be an irreparable blow to the UN Security Council.

QUESTION: Gary Mitchell.

This is a Colin Powell question, I'm not quite sure how to phrase it, but let me just say that one of the questions that is growing for me is whether in this -- What has happened to Colin Powell, particularly in terms of his ability to deal with the rest of the world? What's happened to him in this process? Is that something that's possible to talk about in advance of whatever does or doesn't happen in Iraq?

MR. STEINBERG: I'll give it a try but I'd be interested in my colleagues' view.

I think at the end of the day that most of Secretary Powell's interlocutors around the world believe he's trying to do the right thing. They may question whether he's willing to put his neck on the line enough to get it done, but they basically believe that he's the one champion for at least some attempt to make the international system work, to talk to others. They see him as

not seized with a deep ideological agenda. So I think that there's not a sense that he's responsible. So I think his own stature is not going to be seriously affected by how this comes out. I think in part because all these countries have to continue to work with the United States. However this comes out, however sharp the divisions are, there will continue to be issues in the post-Iraq world and they will need a point of contact, a point at which to get their views in to the American system, and he is clearly the place to do it. There really is nobody else and no way else to get this done for the vast majority of countries that have to hope that the United States is going to come to grips with issues that are a concern to them.

So I think that it would take an awful lot for others to say that his role or stature has been diminished. They place their hopes in him. Whether they're justified not, he's still seen as the one place that you can go to get that done and I think most countries will point evidence that although he may not be prevailing in every case, that it is at least having some impact on the way things go forward.

MR. TELHAMI: But domestically he will be the fall guy. He will be the one guy who said we need to use the UN and if the UN doesn't materialize it's going to look worse than it would have looked had the U.S. not gone through the UN and he will be the fall guy domestically I think for that strategy.

MS. RICE: You mean internally within the Administration.

MR. TELHAMI: Internally. Domestically.

Public opinion so far obviously still seems to support him a lot. I mean he has been consistently I think since 9/11 the most trusted member of the Bush Administration including the President by the American public. But I do think that we're likely to see, particularly if there is a collapse of the UN effort, increasing fingerpointing at Powell for taking the Administration through that route that backfired. I don't know how that will play with the public but I see that more as a part of the discourse.

MS. RICE: I think internally he will face some very difficult straits. I agree, Jim, with what you said. I think the only question that I would add to Jim's comments about the international perception of Powell is the extent to which countries will have any confidence that even though he will certainly listen will he be able to deliver often enough to still be considered relevant? They'll continue to talk to him, but I think whether he can deliver will be an open question.

MR. STEINBERG: I'll let Phil have the last word as to whether he thinks the Colin-Dominique relationship can be saved.

MR. GORDON: It would take too long -- No is the short answer. [Laughter]

But you explained at more length why. Both sides feel betrayed. Dominique actually believes that Colin was a powerful figure in the Bush Administration and 1441 meant that there was an inspection path that wouldn't lead to war, and he feels that it turned out that Colin didn't have the power to do that and Colin shifted, and vice versa. Powell just feels that they signed up to 1441 but they never really meant to use force. That relationship has really taken a blow.

Let me just, my last sentence will be to take an opportunity to debunk what I think is a myth that really emerged from all of this that Shibley suggested when you talk about Powell becoming the fall guy for all of this mess.

MR. TELHAMI: The UN mess.

MR. GORDON: By going to the UN he got us bogged down in this process, and all of the diplomacy and, Cheney and Rumsfeld were right. You can see that becoming part of the mythology of the war because all wars [inaudible].

Do not believe for a minute that if we had followed the, I'll call it the Cheney approach in August and just said we are going to war, that it would have been any easier. That the Turks wouldn't have said no and the Arabs would have been fine with it and the NATO allies and Blair would have been on board. They were wont to portray this, as we should have just done it, but it would be seen even worse if we had just said we don't need the UN, we don't need any resolutions, we're just going. Who's coming along?

MS. RICE: Agreed.

MR. STEINBERG: And I think it's always dangerous to read weekly shifts in polls but I think if you look at the CBS poll this week, where the public is now beginning to accept the fact that we're not going to have the UN resolution, it's only been after a very long period of time, the public being very strongly supportive of trying to go the UN route, that they've now begun to feel that it's more or less run its course.

Thank you all, see you next week.

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