

THIS IS AN UNCORRECTED TRANSCRIPT.

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

**March 18, 2003
9:00 a.m. CST**

Moderator

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for standing by. Welcome to the Analysis of President Bush's Speech and What's Ahead in the War conference call. At this time all participants 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 conference is being recorded.

I would now like to turn the conference over to our speaker, James Lindsay, Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution. Please go ahead.

J. Lindsay

Thank you very much, Linda, and I want to thank everyone who is on the line. Before I begin with a few opening remarks, let me remind everybody that Brookings is going to be holding a briefing on military strategy in Iraq this Thursday at the Brookings Institution at 10:00 a.m. and we encourage you all to come.

Yesterday President Bush announced that the United States had ended its diplomatic efforts at the United Nations and, obviously, last night gave his 48-hour ultimatum to Saddam Hussein to leave the country. Just a few basic opening observations; one, I think it is a bit premature to write the obituary for the United Nations based on the decision not to submit the resolution, though clearly this is a blow for the UN Security Council. But clearly, the United States has a lot of interest in the United Nations, and I think it's not to stretch the point too far to suggest that if the UN didn't exist we might have to invent it. In fact, it's not even inconceivable that the Bush administration might not find itself returning to the United Nations in dealing with the post-Hussein Iraq or dealing with the issue of North Korea.

I think it's also fairly clear from the President's comments and those of other senior officials over the last few days and the way these comps have been reciprocated in other capitols that the failure of diplomacy has

created some major rifts among the United States and other major powers. I think one thing to keep in mind is so far we have no evidence that the rifts that have developed between Washington, Paris, Berlin, and Moscow have hurt the international intelligence and law enforcement cooperation on the war on terrorism. In a paradoxical sense the war in Iraq might intensify cooperation in the war on terrorism, simply for the fear that we might be seeing attacks in the wake of the American invasion of Iraq.

One of the obvious questions now is given these rifts how difficult or how easy will they be to repair? I think that's going to depend upon several things; one being how well the war in Iraq goes and what we find when we get there. The other one, I think, has to do with the importance of relationships to the ability of the Bush administration to achieve its foreign policy objectives. I think in this regard it will probably be easier for Washington to repair the rifts with Moscow and Beijing than it will be to repair the rifts with Paris and Berlin. I think particularly the relationship with Paris has been hurt because the difference has become so personalized. That I think became clear by virtue of the President's comments during the

Final remarks about American public opinion, the American republic still leans by a slight majority in favor of war. There was clearly a lot of ambivalence in the polling data. I think it's clear that most Americans are expecting a war to be short and relatively bloodless, not an unreasonable assumption to make based on the first Persian Gulf War and I think the great political risk for the Bush administration is going to be if that expectation is proven wrong and this war turns out to be bloodier and costlier than many people predict.

I think, Linda, we'll stop there. I'm joined with my colleague, Michael O'Hanlon, who is a Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies at Brookings as well. We can now take your questions.

- Moderator Our first question comes from the line of David Jackson with the *Dallas Morning News*. Please go ahead.
- D. Jackson I was just wondering, Jim and Mike, what are the kinds of things the United States could do to kind of repair the transatlantic and diplomatic damage that has been done by this?
- J. Lindsay I think, David, it's going to be difficult to do it. I think the first thing you need in order to repair the rift is a willingness and desire on the part of the

Bush administration to want to repair the rift. I think, particularly dealing with Paris and Berlin, there's a great deal of anger in the White House toward how President Chirac and Chancellor Schroeder conducted themselves.

I think one of the interesting questions is going to be once Saddam Hussein is removed from Iraq whether we're going to see any effort by Washington to involve Paris and Berlin in the post-Hussein governance of Iraq. The early signals are that the administration has no interest in doing so, but obviously, particularly if French troops could be brought into a peace-keeping role, it might provide a basis in which to repair some of the damage done, but it's not at all clear that on either side of the Atlantic right now there's not a whole lot of desire to want to kiss and make up.

D. Jackson

Do you think the ... Summit might be a little bit cool this year?

J. Lindsay

I'd love to be a fly on the wall, but I imagine the temperature in the room is going to drop several degrees when President Bush and President Chirac get together. Mike?

M. O'Hanlon

I think that's well said by Jim. I think one other point he made earlier I just want to emphasize. I don't know what else to add. There's clearly a dimension of personalization of the problem that I think will be serious for as long as these respective governments stay in office and that could be a fair amount of time, clearly. It could be five and a half years in the United States and it could be a few more years in France. I don't think it will be too long in Germany; I guess two or three years in Germany as well, right? In that sense I think this will be a serious problem for the next three or four years. It will shape the way these governments think about each other on a range of issues.

What I don't know how to evaluate is the degree to which this is shaping sort of the broader political culture in each country and the way they view the other countries' political cultures. We have images of different countries clearly based on their history and on recent experience, and these things are often distinct from the actions or personalities of any one government. I don't know how much of that's being affected yet. I'll have to watch and see.

In response to your question about what to do about it, I think Jim is right on the money, but I'm not sure that's going to be enough to repair the

damage, especially, again, for these particular regime, as long as they're in power.

D. Jackson Thank you.

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

H. Witt A question, I think, for Michael in particular. Can you expostulate a little bit on the other risks that are now apparent, the risk of Israel getting drawn into this war, the risk of Turkey crossing into northern Iraq and potentially provoking a face off with the United States, the risk of instability spreading to other Arab governments? I think quite apart from how the war goes inside Iraq, what other things concern you in the region?

M. O'Hanlon Howard, let me start with Turkey first because I think in some ways, even though it's a tough situation, it's the easiest. I think the worst-case scenario with Turkey is that they move into northern Iraq, temporarily seize some of the oil fields, temporarily beat up on the Kurds a bit, and then ultimately withdraw. I think that's a worst-case assumption. I don't think the Turks have any realistic design on northern Iraq in a permanent sense because if they did they'd have to know they would be sealing their fate essentially as a non-ally of most NATO countries, and they'd be fundamentally jeopardizing their relationship with the United States. It would be a blatant act of imperialism so I don't think they can do that. Maybe they can try to milk a few oil resources out of Kirkuk for a few months to pay for their operation or find some other sort of such rationale, but again, that's sort of, for me, a worst-case assumption. There may be a number of dead Kurds along the way and that would be a great tragedy. I very much hope we can avoid that, but to me that's still a containable problem.

The Israel issue is probably of greater concern, and here I think we could really see the potential repercussions of Mr. Bush, frankly, sort of playing the role of junior brother to Mr. Sharon whenever they meet. Sharon sort of has the upper hand in some ways in the relationship. I think if he decides he really wants to strike back at Iraq he will or at least there is a great danger that he will. I think it would be a stupid move on his part. The idea that the Israelis have to worry about not being seen as tough or credible in that region, that seems to me the least of their problems; sort of like Mr. Bush having to worry about not being seen as capable of making his own decision when the UN disapproves. Sharon's problem is not a perception of weakness, and yet he seems to think it might be. He seems

to think he has to respond. I don't know to what extent we've been successful in talking him out of that, but if he does attack Iraq after he's attacked, as his country almost surely will be, then I think we have a real test of the coalition at that point, especially if Sharon is stupid enough to attack disproportionately with more force than he himself or his country suffered. We've definitely got to work on him. That's got to be a constant preoccupation of the top national security team.

My hope is that we can control that situation as well by convincing Sharon that in a worst case he should attack sort of the missile launchers or the area of Iraq that attacked him and his country, but there is the possibility for escalation and even a risk to the basic coalition we're putting together.

J. Lindsay

Mike, I would add one other thing in terms of other places, other countries in the region. I think if you're looking strictly in the Persian Gulf that the countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman have security services that are going to be capable of keeping a lid on any popular unrest that arises over the war, provided that the war is relatively short. We're talking six to eight weeks.

I think, however, if you were to get a war that dragged on for a considerable period of time and there was widespread perception that there were a very large number of Iraqi civilian deaths, I think that's the scenario in which you could see these governments having a great deal of difficulty controlling public opposition to the war. I also think the probability you're going to get a long war is very small.

H. Witt

Thank you.

Moderator

Our next question comes from the line of Stan Clark with *BusinessWeek*. Please go ahead.

S. Clark

In terms of relations with Europe, do you think that the current tensions will be pervasive or will it matter more in some sorts of issues than others?

The other thing is in terms of dealing with the Middle East and Europe for that matter, how much impact will the roadmap have? Is that something we should be taking seriously? Will the administration really push forward with this once a new Palestinian Prime Minister is in office?

J. Lindsay

Let me take the questions in the order they were asked. I think if you look at the issue of the rift in transatlantic relations, I think ideally everyone wishes they lived in a world in which you could keep differences contained to the subject matter on which you disagree. I think the reality is we're talking about a democratic country with democratic politics and publics that are very angry. You're going to see that anger spill over on the different issues; they're going to be entirely unrelated. Those issues are going to spill over, not necessarily in a logical fashion, but rather it's going to spill over into those areas where you think you can afford both economically in terms of domestic public opinion to press your advantage.

It wouldn't surprise me at all to see Europeans taking a much tougher line with the United States in a variety of trade issues as a way of displacing their anger they feel over U.S. policy toward Iraq. I think this is going to be one of the difficult transatlantic problems for this administration to manage.

I think if you look at, in this phone call and our public debate right now, we're very much focused on the issue of how European publics and European officials are upset with U.S. policy toward Iraq, but quite clearly for many Europeans, Iraq is one piece in a much broader swath in which this administration tends to go off on its own and disregard European interest. I think this ties back to a point Mike raised earlier; that is we're really not sure what the long-term social impact of this rift will be, to what extent it shapes public perception in Europe of the United States, whether it will remain ... and targeted against President Bush as opposed to the United States or American products. It's not inconceivable that you could see the rise of consumer boycotts or even lacking a coordinated effort to avoid American products, just a sense that all of a sudden in Europe buying American becomes the un-chic thing to do.

That sort of development is the hardest to forecast because it's generated by the choices of millions of individuals as opposed to decisions by identifiable political leaders. I think that it's going to take a while for this anger to work its way out and how bad it gets is going to be a function of, one, how this war goes and, number two, whether this administration tries to take at least some cosmetic steps to show that it's attentive to some of the concerns of its critics.

Now in terms of the roadmap, does the President mean what he says, I think only time will tell. This is an administration which, when it came

into office, made it clear that it really did not want to get involved in the Palestinian/Israeli peace process. It saw it as a loser. It was dragged into that process against its will. It tried to take some steps to right the process. None of the parties listened to it, and ever since June of last year when the President gave a speech that was long on moral clarity and short on concrete steps on what to do, the administration has essentially tried to keep it at arm's length. What the President is going to do once an Iraq war is over with is unclear. Again, a lot of it will probably depend upon how the war itself goes. If you have a war that ends quickly and relatively bloodlessly, perhaps the President will, in fact, have the time and the political space to push this issue, but I would imagine that if the war goes well but the peace goes poorly, that the President will be too wrapped up in trying to make Iraq work to have much time to devote to the Palestinian/Israeli peace process.

Moderator

Our next question comes from the line of John Parker from *The Economist*. Please go ahead.

J. Parker

I have a question for each of you, if I may. For Jim, there was a lot in the speech last night about preemption. I wonder what you made of that. Sometimes ... of the administration have sort of tried to talk down the issue of the Bush doctrine in preempted strikes. We didn't seem to see any attempt to avoid that last night and, Jim, I wondered if you thought we learned something more about preemption in practice?

A question for Mike is you talked a little bit about the regional risks. I wondered could you talk a bit about what you see as the main risks of the Pentagon strategy as best we know them? What are the sorts of main uncertainties of the military plan?

M. O'Hanlon

I think the main uncertainties begin with the basic nature of urban combat and the assumption that the Iraqis won't fight long or hard in large numbers. That's a big assumption. If they fight as well as they are capable of doing with the weaponry at hand and in substantial numbers, let's say if most of the Republican Guard, in addition to the Special Republican Guard and Special Security organization all fight hard inside of Baghdad, we'd be looking at a very, very messy fight. This could lead to literally a couple of thousand dead coalition soldiers, as well as potentially tens of thousands of dead Iraqis, with a lot of those being civilians and all of the political backlash that could result. That's the first issue – how long and hard will a large number of Iraq troops fight.

The second issue, clearly right on the heels of that first one, is the chemical weapons subject and just how much difference it will make. I was at a briefing last week that Vernon Loeb wrote about in last Friday's *Post* in which General Pace was pressed to say how much the chemical issue would matter, especially if, in a hypothetical situation, that we waited longer, if we waited another month or two, which we're obviously not going to do, but at that point it didn't seem out of the question. He was not all that worried about the combination of heat and chemical weapons. I was surprised to hear him put things in the terms he did.

I, frankly, have talked to a lot of military commanders who don't share quite that level of optimism about our ability to handle ... I don't want to be too unfair to General Pace. He was making a narrow point about the weather, but the broader issue of how well we'll respond while fighting in chemical protective gear, I think, is a big subject. Even though we're going to have this battle before the weather gets too hot, just fighting with that gear on, and its cumbersome nature, has to be a big concern.

The third issue may be somewhat less important, as I alluded to earlier, because it involves the north and the Turkey/Kurd issue, but it's still a real matter of uncertainty to me, is how quickly the 101st air ... and other units can get up north, and whether they can really get up there in time to prevent what's going to be sort of a mini regional war beginning before we can ultimately get enough force up there to re-impose order and stop the Turks, the Kurds, and the Iraqis from fighting each other, and also begin to put out fires in the oil wells. I personally doubt we can get the units in place quickly enough to prevent a bit of a free for all, at least in the opening days, if not the first couple of weeks of the war.

I guess for me those are the three main uncertainties – the basic nature and severity of urban combat, how chemical weapons will intensify and exacerbate the difficulty of urban combat, and then finally, the northern Iraq issue.

J. Lindsay

John, to get back to your question, I think you were quite observant in pointing to what has been actually over the last week to ten days a clear change in the administration's rhetoric on the war. I think what you saw in the President's speech last night was a candid unvarnished argument for the war. The administration, if you go back a year ago this time in the wake of the Axis of Evil Speech, particularly in the June 1st West Point speech, spoke quite openly about preemption, or actually what they were really talking about was preventative war, and that was the argument the

administration made throughout the summer of 2002. It was also an argument that alienated many of our close allies for the simple reason that it's very hard to know where you put the boundaries on preventative war.

I think when Colin Powell managed to convince the President last August that he should work through the United Nations, the administration made a very clear tactical decision that they would check the language about preemption and focus instead on a case built around enforcing international law and international obligations. I think that was actually the argument the administration would have been better off making from the beginning. I think it would have improved their chances for putting together an international coalition. Indeed, if you recall the September 12th speech, it was greeted by applause in most capitals, precisely because the President had embedded himself in the notion of international rule and international law.

I think for many people in the administration it was always difficult to make that argument because deep down in their gut they didn't believe it. They believed this was always about a preventative war. I think in the last week to ten days it became clear that we weren't going to put together the coalition that Secretary Powell had wanted at the United Nations, that they had reverted back to a blunt reassessment of the motives that are driving them to war.

Moderator Our next question comes from the line of Pascal Ritchey from the Society of Liberation. Please go ahead.

P. Ritchey I have two questions. One is regarding the United Nations. Did you learn something from the speech of George Bush about what he thinks could be done for the United Nations in the next few years? Do you think he is going to try to reform the United Nations?

The other question is about the public opinion. There was a very interesting poll before the speech released by Gallup for CNN saying that 50% of the Americans were against the war without the UN approval. I guess it's going to change dramatically now, but I would like to know what are your comments about that?

M. O'Hanlon The first question, yes, it is a very interesting question. Clearly, in the short term we're going to want to go back to the UN once the war nears completion or is over and, I think, involve the UN in a good deal of the administrative responsibility for Iraq. There is considerable talk about the

United States sort of ruling MacArthur style for a while, but I don't think we have it, really, in our interests to do that very long. I also think that it makes a lot of sense to tap into the expertise the UN system has developed in places like East Timor and Kosovo. My guess is that we'll actually want to use the UN system in its current form quickly, but once that immediate issue is addressed I think memories are going to stay pretty strong on this issue and pretty bitter for a while.

I actually would not be surprised to see this administration, maybe not right away, but maybe early in a second term if it wins re-election, think about a reform of the basic structure of the UN Security Council. We all know that in the academic world there have been debates for a while about how do you get Germany and Japan involved. I'm not sure anybody is going to be working hard to get Germany in in the near future, but the basic broader question of how do you dilute the power of a country like France that with 60 million citizens has thwarted or basically acted, I think, in a more unilateralist way than even the Bush administration in recent weeks. That has to be one that Washington is going to want to consider. If it turned out that a strong consortium of countries around the world, including important countries like Brazil, Mexico, India, Pakistan, Nigeria, if many of these countries had weighed in on the Security Council debate and also expressed an unwillingness to consider the current path or march towards war, I think it would have been a more powerful kind of opposition than simply having Mr. Chirac seeming to hold on to Gaullist pride and doing it to check the United States for that reason and that reason alone, or at least so it appeared to the Bush administration and many of us, frankly, who are not of the Bush administration.

This is a long rambling answer and I'll stop it now, but just to say that I wouldn't be surprised to see a broad debate that considers a different structure of the Security Council, perhaps taking away the notion of a permanent veto power. Of course, for the United States this cuts both ways because that means we can't protect Israel, and so in the end I wouldn't be surprised if that's ultimately the reason why we don't do this. But I think there will be a serious discussion about why we should, and the issue will get more attention in real policy terms than it ever has before perhaps; maybe not again this year, but I wouldn't be surprised to see that kind of a debate unfold, at least inside the Bush administration within a couple of years.

J. Lindsay

Let me take up the question on public opinion. If you look at all of the polling data that had been collected over the last several months on the

attitudes of the American public toward the war, I think you can tease out a couple of broad generalizations. I would urge people to look at a number of polls rather than any individual particular poll because of problems with question wording, how samples are chosen and things like that, but I think the lessons that emerge are basically along the following lines.

Number one, the American public is moderately in favor of this war. My favorite question would be the Gallup public opinion poll question about whether you favor sending ground combat troops into Iraq, and on that question the numbers have been relatively small range for the past six or seven months; a low of about 53% in favor to a high of about 59% in favor. The one exception was the week after Powell's first Security Council address when it briefly bumped up into the low 60s.

The second general observation about public attitudes is that most Americans are not enthusiastic supporters of the war. One of the better questions to look at is the question offered by Gallup, which asks people to identify the most important question facing the country. What you see in recent weeks is that for most people the top concern is the economy, not Iraq.

I think the third basic point is that you really could break the American public down into three distinct groups. About 30% of the American public is for this war no matter what. They are largely Republican in terms of their political orientation. Thirty percent of the American public is dead set against this war no matter what and they are largely Democratic in political orientation. The remaining 40% are there in the middle, in which they tend to lean toward the war, but depending on how you ask the question and whether you talk about the costs of the war, you can move their support into the opposition column. There's really a large group of Americans in the middle that are willing to defer to the President, but they have some very serious concerns.

The final point, based not on existing public opinion data, but on past public opinion data during wartime suggests that once we do go to war public support for the war will increase. You will see a rally around the flag effect. The President's public approval ratings will go up. They will stay high so long as the war goes well. The great risk to the President is if the war does not meet expectations, it's tougher than people anticipate, the costs are higher, both monetarily and particularly in terms of human life; then you can see support for the war go down. If you had the war go very

badly, and I think that's probably a very unlikely occurrence, but if the war were to go very badly, public support for the President could literally collapse. This is not a war that Americans are eager to fight and that distinguishes it from, let's say, the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan where I think most Americans were much more supportive of the war because of its direct connection to September 11th.

Moderator Our next question comes from the line of Campion Walsh from the *Dow Jones Newswires*. Please go ahead.

C. Walsh To what extent do you think that the U.S. and Britain have succeeded in distinguishing their ... from western oil interests? To what extent do you think that there could be an effect on Russian and French interests in the Iraqi oil sector as a result of the general falling out and how could that exacerbate transatlantic tensions?

M. O'Hanlon I think we have some work to do still here because, as you point out, the perception is widespread, and with the recent news that we're now thinking of giving a lot of American companies contracts in the initial period of recovery in Iraq, to the extent that extends to the oil sector as well, people are going to have their suspicions confirmed, or at least that's the way they're going to think about this around the world. However, I'm a little more optimistic in the end because I can't believe the Bush administration would, in the end, be dumb enough as to let Halliburton run most of the show or Mobil or what have you. They've got to have some sense of respecting French and Russian interests.

I'm sure there will be some hardliners who will want to say now it's payback time and now it's time to screw the French in the allocation of oil contracts and try to keep the French out of a post-war Iraq in every way they can, but I suspect they'll lose the debate. With people like Colin Powell and Condie Rice and, I think, Bush himself in authority, people aren't going to be quite that vindictive in the end. Maybe I underestimate their capacity for bearing a grudge, but I don't think it's going to extend to doing something that would actually confirm the worst suspicions many people in the world already harbor about why the United States went to war. That would work too much against our own interests.

I think in the end we're going to make sure France and Russia have at least some role in this and it will be, therefore, more role than the French and Russian oil companies have in Iraq right now and their economies' unbalance will benefit, at least slightly. Whether it will be as good of a

deal as they had once hoped for is sort of irrelevant because, let's face it, if we followed French and Russian preferred policy we'd keep sanctions on Iraq for another ten or 15 or 20 years until Saddam died and maybe even after that when Odai or Qusai took over.

The French and Russians, if they were doing realistic market savvy planning, they were not counting on any great oil revenue or realization of oil contracts anytime soon in Iraq anyway and, if anything, the net position of their companies, I think, should improve as a result of this war, but again, we do have to watch this carefully because the perception is widespread and every little faux pas we make will be magnified and read for all sorts of intentions that may not even be there. We've got to be awfully careful about how we handle this.

J. Lindsay

Mike has given an excellent answer and I would emphasize in particular his point that what will matter in a lot of these debates is peoples' perception of American behavior even more so than what the United States may do.

I would add one other thing, and that is at some point American occupation of Iraq is going to give way to Iraqi control of Iraq, and assuming that comes and is successful, all of the evidence of history of the last four years indicates that countries don't like to be dependent upon a single country supplier and that the Iraqi government will make decisions about Iraqi oil fields and may, in fact, see in its interest to make sure there is more than one player competing for its business.

Moderator

We have a question from the line of Carol Giacomo from Reuters. Please go ahead.

C. Giacomo

The French ambassador apparently made a comment today to the extent that if Iraq does use chemical weapons the French have some capability in protecting against this, and they may then involve themselves in the war on the U.S. side. I wondered how you think this would strike Americans and the coalition forces in general?

The other question I had was what do you think Iran and North Korea will take out of this military action?

M. O'Hanlon

Taking the first question, I think that French help, in many ways this is a political question too, of course, because I have no doubt that France does have capability. I'm not intimately familiar with France's chemical protective capabilities, but I do not think that they're better than those of

the United States. They may have certain detection equipment, for example, that's pretty good, but Czechs and Germans, I think, are typically at least as well known for those capabilities, and we've done a lot to improve our chemical protective and decontamination assets in the last decade or so. My guess is that the French help would be appreciated, but not critical in a military sense.

Having said that, I certainly think that the sooner you begin to repair the political damage the better, and if American citizens see France standing, again, shoulder to shoulder with the United States on the battlefield, even if it's in a relatively modest sort of deployment, I think it would still be the beginning of recovery from this really remarkably regrettable current state of affairs. I would encourage it and I'm glad the ambassador talked about it. Let's see what happens.

J. Lindsay

The only thing I would add to that, Carol, is that part of the problem for the French is whether anyone in the United States is going to notice their offer. I think part of the problem the French are going to be combating is exactly the problem Mike referred to in the previous question in terms of dealing with the perception that this is all about oil for the United States. That is, many Americans have made up their mind that the French can't be counted on, and so they won't necessarily pay attention to evidence that the French want to be by our side.

Nonetheless, I do think it is in Paris's interest to find any way to signal solidarity with the United States and to do so quite loudly, even if the Bush administration either as a result of military necessity or a result of personal peak decides not to allow the French to play a role.

Getting to the second half of your question about what will the Iranians and the North Koreans take away from all of this, I would imagine that they would take away a lesson that they already seem to have learned, which is the mistake Saddam Hussein made with not to have a nuclear weapon. If anything, the Bush administration's handling of North Korea since last October seems to send a signal to Pyongyang that if you have nuclear weapons we will deal with you diplomatically, and if you don't have nuclear weapons we will deal with you militarily. I think that's sort of a perverse sort of occurrence.

I think with respect to Iran there is clearly the case that the Iranian nuclear program is real and it could lead in the not too distant future to a nuclear weapon. I think the United States is going to find itself very poorly

situated to solve the problem in Iran militarily. I think, clearly, the hope there is that democratic forces, reformers, will be able to gain currency. I'm not sure either a), that's going to happen soon enough or b), even if it happens that democratic reform of Iran leads to a non-nuclear Iran, though it might be an Iran that is less threatening. But clearly, the Iranians are going to get a nuclear weapon as a hedge against the United States and increase their ability to project power within the region and I think the North Koreans are doing likewise.

One of the things that concerns me and Mike, who is writing an excellent book on the topic of North Korea probably should jump in when I finish, is that you run the real risk right now that North Koreans will take steps while the United States is engaged in war in Iraq in terms of its own nuclear processing plant. I think Pyongyang's behavior in recent months has been provocative, and all indications are that they are willing to take advantage of opportunities when events deal them their way. I think that could create some real problems for the Bush administration as we go forward in Iraq, and that is the rest of the world is not going to stand still while we fight a war for Baghdad.

Mike, I think you should talk about North Korea.

M. O'Hanlon

I'll say a quick word. It seems to me that I haven't heard in the last week or two exactly where we think things stand with North Korea, but it does appear they are either on the verge of or already actively engaged in reprocessing more plutonium, which means that as every month goes by they'll potentially have the material for yet another bomb. At what point does a current severe problem turn into a major crisis? If they already have one or two bombs worth of plutonium, does adding one more bomb's capability really transform the situation radically? Maybe not, but when you get up to adding six more I think you really have a much greater potential for North Korean's sale of ... material, or in the event of a war, for successful North Korean delivery of a nuclear weapon. They might not be able to deliver one or two weapons; they may both get shot down or otherwise stopped, but if they had six or eight the odds of successful delivery go up so it's a very serious problem, and it's a problem that's intensifying every day that goes by potentially.

I don't have the latest intelligence on where this North Korean program is right now, and I think the administration is being careful not to talk about it and probably all of you should be asking about it, as should we, because I haven't seen the press spend much time on this lately. My guess is that

the North Koreans are already beginning to reprocess and, therefore, this situation has to be addressed very soon.

What does that mean to address it? Without going into the full argument of this book or that full issue, I think what it means is a much different kind of proposal, a much different diplomatic approach than we have right now because we have two approaches on the table and they're both failing. One of them is the traditional engagement strategy of the Clinton administration, as well as the former South Korean president, sort of the nuclear related engagement issue, but to Mr. Bush that feels like blackmail and he doesn't want to play that game.

The other approach is Mr. Bush's current approach, which is, essentially, ignore the North Koreans, hope to pressure them, coerce them, strangle their economy into submission so they have to come around to our terms. I think the North Koreans are a lot more ornery than that model suggests, and they're less likely to be persuadable so we need some kind of a new approach that is referred to by many people as more for more. You have to demand more of the North Koreans, including in the conventional military's fear, even as you offer more inducements.

The reason I go into this detail, and I'll stop here on North Korea, is not to totally change the subject, but to say that this is going to take a lot of time. If I'm anywhere close to right in this argument, it's going to take a lot of time for Washington to figure out what the contours of a new option or new approach would be, and it's hard to do while you're waging a big war somewhere else that could lead to the largest number of American casualties since the Vietnam period.

This is a real mess. We're in a mess. I think the Bush administration is going to be heavily criticized by historians for how it let the North Korean situation get out of hand. They've got to figure out a way to spend some time on it and come up with this kind of a new approach as soon as they can without waiting even for this Iraq war to be over. Now that Mr. Bush has made his big round of phone calls and his last bout of diplomacy, maybe he has to let General Franks do a little bit of the war management and start spending an hour a day on North Korea himself because I don't think he can afford to wait until this summer to address the situation.

Moderator

Our next question comes from the line of Alex Tenavaris from *The Bloomberg News*. Please go ahead.

A. Tenavaris

I was hoping you could elaborate a little bit on this notion of a spillover effect of the transatlantic rift between the United States and Europe spilling over into trade relations. Particularly, I'm wondering whether there's anything that would suggest that multi-national corporations are somehow in a more difficult spot now if they have interests both in Europe and the U.S. that might be affected, and if there's any particular area or decision that's being weighed right now that might be impacted by this rift?

J. Lindsay

There are two parts to your question. One is the issue of what governments do; the second is what do individuals do. Let me talk first about governments.

There are many issues in contest between the United States and Europe, whether we're talking about ... treating and global warming or we're talking about the ICC, International Criminal Court, or whether we're talking about trade issues. There are lots of issues and in many European countries, unlike in the United States, these issues are politically important and mobilize key constituencies. Over the past two years they've caused a lot of heartache in the U.S./European relationship, and I think one of the real dangers you run into as this rift intensifies and as it gets personal, which I think it has clearly become, particularly between Washington and Paris and Washington and Berlin, that it becomes harder for politicians to do what is sensible as opposed to what is politically appealing.

There are a number of trade issues we could talk about, whether talking about the overall ... round or whether we're talking about issues dealing with farming subsidies or agreements about pharmaceuticals to developing nations, or even talking about the question of compliance with WTO rules, I think the worse transatlantic relations get, the harder it is for European political officials, even if they want to, to cut Washington slack. I think that could become a growing problem over time.

On the second level, the second set of problems really deals with the choices individual consumers make, and this is where I think many multi-national corporations, at least companies with major American brands become vulnerable, because there is nothing that requires people to buy Coca-Cola. If all of a sudden American products are seen to be un-chic or associated with a behavior abroad that people dislike, you could suffer in that way.

Companies may have lots of ways to respond to those kinds of shifts in consumer preferences. They could even create their own faux European brands and there also is a potential that it could hurt not just American exporters, but it could hurt American travel destinations. If Germans decide with their extra travel dollars they're not going to go to Walt Disney World, but rather they're going to go to ..., that has a real impact on the American economy, or at least on sectors of the American economy. The problem is it's very hard to predict how individual consumers are going to make their choices and how those choices might change or evolve over time.

Moderator Our next question comes from the line of Walter Shapiro with *USA Today*. Please go ahead.

W. Shapiro I just want to go all of the way back to the whole question of preemption and raise at least the notion, does Bush have to find something equivalent to a quasi-active nuclear weapons program that the inspectors missed to justify when the war is over that we have done it for our own security reasons? Or will the whole notion of exactly what was the magnitude of the Iraqi threat be something that will be just glossed over in the post-war euphoria that we won?

J. Lindsay Walter, I think the answer to your question depends upon the audience you're talking about. I think in terms of the American public what the President has to do is to avoid a costly and prolonged war. I think that will be sufficient, in part because most Americans operate from the very reasonable assumption that Saddam Hussein is a bad guy and if we got rid of him that in itself would be good.

I think if you go outside the United States it becomes more important to do what you suggest, and that is to show to the French and the Germans that they were really wrong, not just that they had capabilities, not that Iraq had capabilities, but they had an active program going on and it was bigger than anything that we anticipated. I think that would help the administration blunt some of the criticism of its behavior.

I should also emphasize that you're not going to ... everybody, regardless of whether you find one smoking gun or a dozen. I think that how people interpret what happens in the fighting or in the war is going to depend, as much, if not more on how the war is fought or how it's perceived it's being fought as to anything we might find. Particularly, once you get outside of Europe and you get to parts of the Middle East, even if you find

an active nuclear program, I'm not sure how much that is going to change public opinion, in part because you're going to run up against the denial effect that people have, their ability to believe something quite contrary to what the rest of us would acknowledge as fact, and I would note that the popularity in much of the Islamic world has the belief that September 11th was orchestrated by agents of Massoud. People can believe very strong things when the facts don't fit with their basic worldview of the major players in the international scene.

M. O'Hanlon

I would just add one point because I think both of you hit on it, Walter and Jim. I think the nuclear issue is a very important one, and while I think in public opinion terms Jim is probably right that it may not matter that much what we find, I think strategists and serious politicians on both sides of the Atlantic will look at the nuclear issue to see, in a sense, who was most right.

To be fair to the French, they don't really believe that Iraq has been disarmed; they just don't believe that the chemical and biological arms that are inside Iraq today are likely a big threat. They think containments work pretty well, and they think the inspection process can ferret out even some of the chem/bio stocks if we just let it play out. Of course, they fail to acknowledge that it's U.S./U.K. forces that are forcing this kind of Iraqi compliance, but nonetheless, there is something to the French argument on those grounds, but the French, I think, would acknowledge, at least many French strategists that I know, that if we found a nuclear weapons program in an advanced state inside of Iraq that would radically change the basic strategic situation in the Middle East or, let's say, if it had gone unchecked it would soon have done so. I don't think there are too many French strategists who would have looked with complete calm on the reality of an Iraqi nuclear weapons capability.

I think what we find in the nuclear domain is actually going to, this may be more of an academic point, but I think in strategic debates you will see people make a fair amount of that. As I suspect will be the case, if we find not very much at all, but we do find plenty of chemical and biological weapons, I think the French and the Germans will stick with their current opposition to the war and still say that it wasn't really necessary, and they won't claim that they thought Iraq had been disarmed. They would just simply say, again, that containment works in dealing with chemical and biological agents because Saddam has had those for his entire period of rule and he hasn't used them in 13 years, ever since the U.S. and coalition

partners have been focused on Iraq in so intent of a way. Again, I think that really will be a big part.

When you try to do the scorecard and say who was more right than wrong, the nuclear issue and how far along, if at all, Iraq has progressed in recent times will be a big part of deciding who had the better case before the war.

W. Shapiro If I'm allowed a quick follow-up?

J. Lindsay You are, Walter.

W. Shapiro It's just simply what are the odds that, a), Saddam will not use chemical or biological agents in this war or b), it turns out the stocks are pretty much the leftover stuff from 1991 and that they have not been significantly augmented since the Gulf War?

M. O'Hanlon I'll quickly say and then, unfortunately, I have to run; I have an 11:00 commitment. I will simply say that I think the stocks are similar to those of the Gulf War period. I don't think they're more dangerous and I think, nonetheless, they're still plenty dangerous and, as I alluded to earlier, depending on which American military commander you talk to, the number one or number two worry of most of them about just how complicated it will be for us to fight in a chemical environment going on the tactical offensive is not something the United States has really done before in its modern military history, of course. We don't really have a lot of experience watching other modern militaries do it and so I have a great deal of worry, even with the sort of old-fashioned stuff that he has and being able to dispense this stuff by artillery is already a sufficiently potent concern and potent threat when you're dealing with close quarter combat in an urban environment. I don't think the stocks are any more worrisome than they were before, but they're still worrisome enough.

With that I'm going to say good-bye and thank you all.

J. Lindsay Good-bye, Mike. Walter, I would just add to that I think the probability is about as close to one as you can get that Saddam Hussein will try to use chemical and biological weapons. I think there are just two outstanding questions. Number one is the question you alluded to; what kinds of weapons does he have and what shape are they in? Question number two is can he get his subordinates to carry out his orders?

- W. Shapiro I appreciate it.
- Moderator Our next question comes from the line of Jim Puzzanghera from the *San Jose Mercury News*. Please go ahead.
- J. Puzzanghera I'm sorry if this was asked earlier. I joined this late thanks to our friend in the tractor downtown.
- J. Lindsay Is he still on the tractor?
- J. Puzzanghera I don't know where he is, but everything is still closed. I'm wondering if, in this case, the diplomacy ever had a chance in this circumstance, given the strong views by a number of people within the Bush administration, and whether there was any hope that this would work or ultimately they're at where they would prefer to be at, which is doing this on their own terms without encumbrances?
- J. Lindsay Jim, you ask a question I don't think any of us can answer. I think this is a question that people are going to be arguing over for years to come, and I am sure when I am in my old age I will be reading competing books by historians arguing both sides of the case.
- I think what we can say is that the Bush administration's diplomatic efforts were not up to par with the ostensible goal they set for themselves. That is, the Bush administration's diplomacy tended to be haphazard, episodic, and often counter-productive. I think part of that has to do with something you hinted at in your question, which is that there was disagreement within the Bush team over doing this. I think Vice-President Cheney laid down his marker last August. I think his skeptical view of the whole UN process is a view shared by other major figures in the administration, particularly Mr. Rumsfeld, who at times seemed to be on a one-man mission to torpedo any diplomatic effort. I don't think you can lay blame for the Transatlantic rift solely at the feet of the Bush administration, however poorly you may judge its diplomatic efforts to have been. I don't think the French have covered themselves in glory on this issue.
- One of the unknown questions is really what Paris's bottom line was, whether there were ever a set of circumstances under which Paris would have considered going to war. If the answer to that question is no, then it really doesn't matter what kind of diplomatic effort the Bush administration made. It wasn't going to change the outcome, although I think what you can say fairly is that if the Bush administration had been

more adept and seemed more interested in the opinion of others that we might have been able to hold down the collateral costs where we ended up.

Moderator We have a question from the line of John Parker with *The Economist*. Please go ahead.

J. Parker A follow-up to Walter's question. What did you make of Vice-President Cheney's remark that he had evidence Iraq has, I can't remember the exact phrase he used, but has an active nuclear program?

J. Lindsay I think he undercut that statement several sentences later when he said that they didn't have a nuclear weapon. There's always a tendency to read too much into what people say on the Sunday morning news talk shows, but then again, since Vice-President Cheney appears in public so seldom, it is natural to want to parse everything he has to say. I would suggest to you that Vice-President Cheney has been consistent in seeing the worst in world states for close to two decades now, so I'm not surprised that he has a very pessimistic reading of events.

It's not at all clear to me that the U.S. military has conducted themselves in way that would indicate that they had any concern that they had a nuclear warhead or active ... material. I think this is one of the great unknowns that we're going to get there, and we're going to settle a question that has divided this town and has divided many of my colleagues, and that is does Hussein have an active nuclear program or not. There is a lot of betting money that says the administration has little evidence of an Iraqi nuclear weapons program for the simple reason that there is none.

Moderator We have a follow-up question from the line of Jim Puzanghera from the *San Jose Mercury News*. Please go ahead.

J. Puzanghera I just wanted to follow up on the question briefly before. There has been a lot of talk about the domestic concerns with Tony Blair with going to the UN. It's interesting you mention the Cheney speech last August and, obviously, shortly after that the President decided to go to the UN. I'm wondering if you think there were political domestic concerns for the President, both in seeking support of Congress and in the upcoming November elections in 2002 that may have pushed him in that direction to go to the UN even if he did not wholeheartedly believe in that being the best course to go?

J. Lindsay

I think there were probably numerous factors that influenced President Bush in his decision to go to the United Nations. It's unclear how much weight each might have. Looking at domestic public opinion, it's pretty clear that the President could have gone ahead without going to the UN. That would not have been a particularly tough sell for the President. I think it's hard to argue that the President decided to go to the United Nations because he was afraid he wouldn't have public support for the war otherwise. All public opinion data going back for quite a long time argues against that.

In terms of why he decided to go to Congress, if anything, domestic politics may have been involved of a different sort, and that is it was recognized within the administration that Democrats on the Hill in the summer of 2002 had been talking about having a debate. The administration's initial reaction is the one the administration always has, which is to say we're not going to give you a debate because we can do what we want because we have the power because the President is the Commander-in-Chief. Then someone said if we actually ask Congress for the authority, they're going to have to give it to us or the Democrats are going to have to say no and that will make them look very bad in the run up to the November 2002 elections.

Lo and behold! They went up to the Hill and the Democrats who had called for the debate all of a sudden found themselves having to make the decision whether to support or oppose the authorization just weeks before the November elections, and many Democrats, a majority in the Senate, though not in the House, decided that they would sign on to what the President might do, even though they knew full well in doing so that they could not know what the circumstances would be under which the President would actually exercise the vast authority they were giving him, which is interesting. They issued a blank check in October, and in the last several weeks we've seen some buyers' remorse by Senator Feinstein. We've seen it from Senator Daschle. We've seen a little bit of it, depending upon the context and audience, from Senator Kerry. I think all of that was to be expected.

I think there were real strategic reasons to go to the United Nations, and I don't think you want to try to make it all hinge on it depending upon domestic politics or even Tony Blair's domestic politics.

I think, Linda, we could take one more question and then we're going to have to wrap this up.

Moderator

Mr. Lindsay, there are no further questions. Please continue.

J. Lindsay

I just wanted to say thank you to you, Linda. For anyone who is still on the line I just wanted to remind everyone that Brookings is going to have a press briefing here at 1775 Massachusetts Avenue on the military aspect of the war in Iraq this Thursday morning at 10:00 a.m.

Thank you, everybody, for listening in and have a nice day. Good-bye.

Moderator

Ladies and gentlemen, this conference will be available for replay after 1:30 p.m. eastern time today through midnight on Wednesday, March 19, 2003. You may access the AT&T Teleconference Replay System at anytime by dialing 1-800-475-6701 and entering the access code 678628. International participants may dial 320-365-3844.

That does conclude our conference for today. Thank you for your participation and for using AT&T Executive Teleconference. You may now disconnect.