

IRAQI WEAPONS INSPECTIONS: THE MIRAGE OF SUPPORT

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In March 2003 United Nations weapons inspectors left Iraq for the last time, once again under the shadow of war. American President George W. Bush offered Saddam Hussein and his sons the chance to leave Iraq and avoid war. Hussein and his two sons did not leave. The invasion then began 19 March 2003. In the months leading up to the war, the United States and the United Kingdom built their case that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. In response, the United Nations Security Council sent the United Nations Monitoring Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) to find Iraq's alleged stockpiles of WMD, get it to disarm and avoid war. No large quantities of WMD were ever found. Yet the war still took place. Had weapons inspections been supported, this paper contends, a war might have been averted because the US would likely have lost the WMD justification for war. This lack of support was not new. It went back several years to the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM), where this paper also contends that had inspections been supported inspectors would have remained in the country from 1998 to 2002 avoiding unanswered questions which gave the Bush Administration justification for the 2003 war.

This paper first gives a general overview of Iraqi inspections from 1991 to 2003. It then looks at inspections under the Clinton administration and why they did not support the inspection process. Initially their goal was to contain Hussein believing that internal strife and unrest would overthrow him. However as the years dragged on,

Washington's impatience, domestic factors, and a lack of support from other Security Council members led to a more aggressive approach with Baghdad, sidelining the inspection process.

The shift in Iraq policy is next looked at under the Bush Jr. administration. Even before Bush assumed office in January many people who later take up key positions in the administration were calling for the removal of Hussein by military force. After Bush took office the rhetoric continued with many being skeptical of inspection process and an administration focused on preventing another 9/11. The intelligence also played a large part in the US decision. Pre-war intelligence remains a controversial issue with many proponents claiming it was puffed up to show a larger threat than what actually existed. However other nations and UNMOVIC's Cluster Document raised the prospect of Iraq possessing WMD. In addition, regional concerns, in particular Saudi Arabia, made the US more eager to invade Iraq which could help foster some stability for the House of Saud and the oil market. For the Bush administration UNMOVIC was more of a means to an end. They expected Iraq to either obfuscate the inspection process, providing justification for war or UNMOVIC would find the smoking gun, also providing justification for war.

Finally, the paper looks at other four members of the permanent five on the Security Council. After the Gulf War, the UK played a crucial in influencing the US to take unilateral actions that it may otherwise not have taken. This drove a wedge, dividing the P5 which in part led to the withdrawal of UNSCOM from Iraq. Post-9/11, the UK was America's staunchest ally, and thus not fully supportive of inspections for primarily two reasons: to give the UK influence on events at the international level and

also so the UK could win US support for its Israeli-Palestinian peace plan. For the US, the UK also provided support for the US invasion of Iraq both materially in terms of troops and legitimacy. Additionally, however small it may have been, the UK also played a role in getting the US to go through the UN nations despite Washington's skepticism about the UN.

France, Russia and China had similar reasons for not supporting inspections. Each had a history of business dealings with and strong current business relations with Iraq. The three objected to sanctions without end on Iraq and wanted clear benchmarks for their removal, a reason for their abstention on Resolution 1284. Power politics were also a factor in their decisions. France had a strong Gaullist tradition of supporting the Arabs and acting as a counter to US hegemony. Russia, although not near its former glory, also wanted a way to counter balance US hegemony. Lastly, China is the rising power and wanted to assert itself on the world stage by opposing US policy on Iraq. Due to these counter-balancing policies they dragged their heels on Resolution 1284 which created a window of uncertainty on Iraq's WMD program for three years furthering US claims that Iraq had something to hide.

I. UN Inspections in Iraq, 1991-2003

UN weapons inspections in Iraq began at the end of the Gulf War in 1991. At the conclusion of this conflict the Security Council passed Resolution 687 which created UNSCOM and sent weapons inspectors into Iraq to find and ensure the destruction of weapons that Iraq was forbidden to possess.¹ Yet Iraq did not take inspections

¹ United Nations Special Commission on Iraq. *UNSCOM: Chronology of Main Events* (Dec 1999). <http://www.un.org/Depts/unscom/Chronology/chronologyframe.htm> [27 Feb 2006].

seriously. Hussein is reported to have told his advisors that “[t]he Special Commission is a temporary measure. We will fool them and we will bribe them and the matter will be over in a few months.”² Soon after the start of the inspections the trouble began. One of the first instances of Iraqi resistance to inspections was the events of June 23-28 1991 in which an Iraqi vehicle, carrying nuclear equipment, was approached by inspectors. Iraqi soldiers fired warning shots into the air to stop the inspectors, an event which would serve as an omen for the coming years.

A prime example of Iraqi obfuscation was Iraq’s biological weapon portfolio. Over a span of four years as more knowledge became known about its biological weapons Iraq was forced to disclose more information than it had originally. In August 1991 Iraq claimed its biological weapons program was for “defensive military purposes.”³ Later in July 1995 evidence surfaced forcing Iraq to admit its biological program was offensive but not weaponized. Subsequently in August 1995 after the defection of General Hussein Kamel, Hussein’s son-in-law and leader of Iraq’s weapon program, a great wealth of information became available about Iraq’s VX nerve gas, and programs.⁴ It also exposed that Iraq’s biological weapons program was much larger than initially thought including weaponization. These constant new revelations diminished, for some, the credibility of inspections. The opponents of inspections would argue that these ongoing new discoveries illustrated Iraq was one, violating inspections and needed to be punished and two, inspections were ineffective because irregardless of what they did Iraq would still continue to never disclose the extent of its weapons programs. These

²Daniel Byman, “After The Storm U.S. Policy Toward Iraq” *Political Science Quarterly* vol. 115 issue 4 (1 Dec. 2000). <http://web26.epnet.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/citation.asp> [24 December 2006].

³ United Nations Special Commission on Iraq.

⁴ Ibid.

alleged deficiencies in the inspection process would later act as a catalyst for the Clinton administrations shift in policy towards a more aggressive stance in the late 1990s.

After years of Iraqi deception, Iraqi-United Nations' relationship reached its lowest point in 1998. In January of that year, Iraq ceased its cooperation with the inspections over complaints that there were too many American and British personnel on the inspection teams, leading the Iraqi government to claim that they were spying for their governments. This led the United States to increase its military presence in the Persian Gulf with the deployment of additional aircraft carriers, planes, and troops. In February, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan went to Iraq to discuss the situation with the Hussein regime. A memorandum of understanding was signed by the Iraqi government agreeing to inspections with certain conditions. The memorandum recognized Iraqi concerns about sovereignty, specifically the inspection of Presidential sites.⁵ In respecting Iraq sovereignty the resolution in essence limited the work inspectors could do on the ground by restricting sites they had access to. When the memorandum was presented to the Security Council it was unanimously adopted, signaling a lack of support for inspectors being able to fulfill their mandate.

This understanding between Iraq and the United Nations did not last long. In August 1998, Iraq once again rejected the terms of the inspections and demanded the inspectors follow new rules set by Baghdad. Iraq also stopped cooperating with UNSCOM and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) pending the lifting of sanctions. Later, on 31 October, Iraq announced that it would end all communication with UNSCOM. However, on 14 November, a mere two weeks later after talks between

⁵ United Nations Special Commission.

Iraq, the Secretary-General and the Security Council, Iraq had an about-face saying that it would cooperate fully with inspectors. Following Baghdad's promises of cooperation, UNSCOM Executive Chairman Richard Butler began to make weekly progress reports to the Security Council on 3 December 1998. In his second report, on 9 December, he noted that Iraq was creating difficulties for the inspectors. The following week on 15 December Butler reported that Iraq was not providing the full cooperation it said it would in November, and the next day inspectors were withdrawn from Iraq.⁶ Their removal was followed by the United States and the United Kingdom launching Operation Desert Fox, a bombing campaign of Iraq. Desert Fox was indicative of a shift in US policy on Iraq from containment waiting for internal unrest to ouster of Hussein to an aggressive approach seeking the removal of Hussein from power. This shift was a result of domestic pressures on Clinton and impatience with waiting for seven years for Hussein to fall from power.

In the final UNSCOM report issued January 1999, Butler raised many concerns about Iraq's WMD programs. He cited three general problems with Iraq that had a negative effect on UNSCOM.

Iraq's disclosure statements have never been complete; contrary to the requirement that destruction be conducted under international supervision, Iraq undertook extensive, unilateral and secret destruction of large quantities of proscribed weapons and items; it also pursued a practice of concealment of proscribed items, including weapons, and a cover up of its activities in contravention of Council resolutions.⁷

Butler as well enumerated many specific concerns. An example was Iraq's missile program indicating Iraq retained biological warheads after their alleged unilateral

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Letter dated 25 January 1999 from the Executive Chairman of the Special Commission to the President of the Security Council (S/1999/94).

destruction in July 1991. Iraq also still had to account for mustard gas that was combat ready. As well, Butler raised the concern that Iraq still had the capability to restart its biological weapons program at any time it chooses.⁸

Mohamed El Baradei, the head of the IAEA, in his report to the Security Council on IAEA activities up to 16 December 1998, downplayed the Iraqi threat compared to the UNSCOM final report. In the report the IAEA said they had a "...technically coherent picture of Iraq's clandestine nuclear programme...." It further went on to say that there were no indications Iraq could produce significant amounts of nuclear material for weapon use, however there was the caveat that "no indication" did not imply "non-existence". IAEA concerns were mainly related to further documentation questions about Iraq's nuclear program and the Ongoing Monitoring and Verification (OMV) efforts which the report noted needed to be intrusive and continue, to ensure future Iraqi compliance.⁹ The final UNSCOM and IAEA reports additionally raised questions about the effectiveness of inspections. Inspectors had been in-country for eight years and still were not able to finally confirm the destruction of all of Iraq's WMD. These reports raised questions about the effectiveness of inspections and supported the hawks who said that Iraq should be attacked and its WMD capabilities destroyed.

In the aftermath of the UNSCOM departure from Iraq, concerns were raised about Butler's relation with the US, and about the independence and legitimacy of UNSCOM. In an attempt to restart inspections and restore their legitimacy, the Security Council created three panels led by Brazilian ambassador Celso Amorim.¹⁰ Two months

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Letter dated 8 February 1999 from the Director General of the International Atomic Energy addressed to the President of Security Council (S/1999/127).

¹⁰ United Nations Special Commission on Iraq.

later in March 1999 he reported back the Security Council with the Amorim Report. Some of the key points in the report were that: the intelligence relationship should be asymmetric with intelligence only given to inspectors; inspections need to be intrusive but not confrontational; and, most importantly and a subtle critique of UNSCOM, that inspectors needed to be under the authority of the Security Council, not member nations.¹¹

In December 1999, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1284, which formed UNMOVIC. UNMOVIC assumed all the responsibilities of UNSCOM, with the hope of someday returning to Iraq to continue the inspections started under UNSCOM. UNMOVIC trained and submitted reports to the Security Council under the leadership of Chairman Hans Blix. However, France, Russia, and China abstained on the vote for Resolution 1284, registering their unhappiness with UNMOVIC. Most notably they disagreed with the lifting of sanctions and preferred a quicker end to them. The US and the UK, being pragmatic, realized the Security Council would not authorize the use of force on Iraq and they settled for the next option of continued sanctions on Iraq in hopes of internal unrest usurping Hussein from power. This division on the Council also, to extent, benefited Baghdad. The US and the UK were not, at this point, willing to go unilaterally around the Council for a full-scale invasion of Iraq and as a result their actions were constrained by France, Russia, and China. However the constraining by these three countries would mean four years of unanswered questions on Iraq's WMD programs. This allowed the Bush administration to later claim, with some degree of

¹¹ Letter dated 27 March 1999, from the Chairman of the panels pursuant to the note by the President of the Security Council of 30 January 1999 (S/1999/100) addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1999/356).

credence, that Iraq still possessed WMD because there were no inspectors in Iraq to prove to the contrary.

On 8 November 2002, under the threat of war from the US, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1441 which ordered weapons inspectors back into Iraq. The resolution contained strong language saying that Iraq was in "...material breach of its obligations under relevant resolutions 687 (1991), in particular through Iraq's failure to cooperate with United Nations inspectors and the IAEA..." and also "...that the Council has repeatedly warned Iraq that it will face serious consequences as a result of its continued violations of its obligations." Finally, on 27 November 2002, nearly four years after UNSCOM left Iraq, weapons inspections were once again underway¹². However, the inspections did not satisfy the US. A presentation by Secretary of State Colin Powell alleged that the Hussein regime still possessed WMD. The US case for war solidified with the UNMOVIC report *Unresolved Disarmament Issues: Iraq's Proscribed Weapons Programmes*, issued on 6 March 2003, dubbed the "Cluster Document". In it, UNMOVIC raised several concerns about Iraq's weapons programs. One concern was with Iraq's unilateral destruction of chemical weapons and missiles because of discrepancies in the records. On the biological weapon portfolio because the program was under the control of different authorities there were some concerns about potential unknown aspects of the program, in addition to concerns because of unilateral destruction. Other specific UNMOVIC concerns included the accounting of Scud-B missiles, biological and chemical warheads, and bombs used to deliver biological and chemical weapons. US patience ended when inspectors were

¹² United Nations Monitoring Inspection and Verification Commission. *Chronology of Main Events*. (2005) <<http://www.un.org/Depts/unmovic/new/pages/chronology.asp>> [27 Feb 2006].

advised to leave Iraq for their own safety and on 18 March 2003 inspectors once again left Iraq. The next day Operation Iraqi Freedom began.

II. The Clinton administration and UN inspections in Iraq

Four Clinton Administration policy objectives need first to be recognized to understand US-UNSCOM dynamics: preventing further Iraqi aggression, preventing regional instability, ending Iraq's nuclear, biological and chemical program, and removing Hussein from power. The early focus of the Clinton administration was the first two objectives because the consensus was that Hussein would be overthrown in short time because Iraq's failures at war with Iran and the US-led coalition and internal unhappiness.¹³ However, Hussein remained in power, which, when combined with domestic pressures and frustration with France, Russia and China, led the US to a more aggressive approach with Iraq.

If the US believed that Hussein would shortly fall from power without any more external intervention then the US policy of containment was logical. Let a coup d'etat do your dirty work for you. The US strongly preferred a coup to a power vacuum in order to avoid groups vying for power which could foster regional instability or perhaps allow Iranian influenced Shiites to take control, both of which were undesirable scenarios to Washington.¹⁴ To allow for these conditions favourable to a coup to ferment, the US would simply need to support inspections that Baghdad would not comply with allowing for sanctions to be in effect. The sanctions in turn would create internal unhappiness with Hussein, eventually leading to his demise. However, UN sanctions were

¹³ Byman.

¹⁴ Ibid.

technically supposed to be lifted once Baghdad complied and disarmed. Supporting inspections then would theoretically see sanctions lifted and leave Hussein in power. Rather, the US wanted the situation of 'sanctions without end'.

As time passed, however, Hussein was not usurped from power and Iraq concealed things from UNSCOM inspectors. Some instances of Iraqi non-compliance include July 1992 when UNSCOM inspectors were refused access to the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture where documents pertaining to Iraq's WMD program were believed to be or June 1997 when Iraq interfered with the operation of UNSCOM helicopters.¹⁵ These are only two documented examples of the many incidents of non-compliance. Iraq eventually achieved a victory for its concealment efforts when the 1998 memorandum of understanding was reached between Baghdad and the UN. The agreement tied the inspectors' hands behind their backs by restricting access to Presidential sites.

Letting Iraq achieve this demonstrated a lack of support for inspections. In late 1997 and early 1998 while Iraq was refusing access to Presidential sites, the US military presence in the Persian Gulf increased with the deployment of an additional two aircraft carriers, aircraft, and troops for a total of 30,000 soldiers. The Pentagon was ready to attack.¹⁶ With this military presence the US had the ability to punish Iraq for its non-compliance. However, the UN made a deal on terms favourable to Baghdad. This incident spoke to a lack of US resolve to go it alone if necessary to enforce UN inspections irregardless of the potential objections from other Security Council members such as China, France, and Russia. It also spoke to the larger picture of a lack of willingness on the part of the Security Council to enforce inspections, a criticism often

¹⁵ United Nations Special Commission on Iraq.

¹⁶ Byman.

voiced by UNSCOM inspector Scott Ritter. If the US and the Security Council had been willing to enforce inspections they would have punished Iraq for its non-compliance.

Primarily, the US launched strikes against Iraq when aggression against other nations appeared to be on the horizon, such as incursions into the no-fly zone. Instances of this include when Iraq crossed into the Southern no-fly zone and Iraqi troops made incursions into Kuwait in January 1993. In Operation Desert Strike, in September 1996, the US attacked targets in Southern Iraq after Iraqi incursions into the Northern no-fly zone. These instances point out the US was not willing to tolerate Iraqi aggression or allow for regional instability - the first two objectives of US policy - but were willing to accept Iraqi defiance of UN inspections. These actions fit perfectly into the US policy of keeping Hussein contained within his borders and preventing further Iraqi acts of aggression against its neighbours. These actions were probably also the best they could do given the constraints of other members of the Security Council. These strikes were justified primarily on the basis of protecting other countries from Iraqi aggression or protecting ethnic groups who were originally meant to be protected with the no-fly zones. Even Russia and China would have a hard time opposing these acts of protection, regardless of how unhappy they may have actually been. The actions of the US, however, furthered the underlying tensions on the council which would later, in part, cause France to move to the Russia-Sino side. The division would later be highlighted in Resolution 1284. The fractures on the SC also allowed Iraq to continue to be non-compliant because it had the support of three members of the P5. The fractures also allowed a four year gap in inspections causing uncertainty about Iraq's WMD capability.

Hussein maintained his rule over Iraq. Attempted plots were foiled in large part because the Iraq opposition movement was incapable of mounting a regime change.¹⁷ His regime was able to profit from sanctions and used them as propaganda to blame the United States for internal problems, such as the reported death of 500,000 children due to shortages caused by sanctions.¹⁸

If the Clinton administration had supported aggressive inspections and was willing to enforce compliance – not just to deter acts of aggression - Iraq may have continued to disarm. Under UNSCOM armaments destroyed included, but were not limited to, 690 tonnes of chemical weapons and three million tons of CW material, and an entire biological weapons facility at al-Hakam¹⁹. Although UNSCOM could never verify that Iraq had destroyed all of its WMD, the amounts destroyed demonstrate that UNSCOM inspections yielded significant results. More importantly, these results indicate that had UNSCOM been supported and allowed to finish its mandate, Iraq may have come closer to fully disarming and possibly preventing the 2003 war.

Another problem that plagued UNSCOM was credibility. Iraq alleged that US operatives were placed within the inspection teams. According to inspector Scott Ritter, the Central Intelligence Agency did place operatives in the inspection teams to gather intelligence on Iraqi weapons capabilities²⁰. A second credibility issue was US influence exerted on the inspection teams. Ritter alleged that certain National Security Council members exerted pressure on him to say that Iraq was in “material breach” of prior

¹⁷ F. Gregory Gause III, “Getting It Backward on Iraq” *Foreign Affairs* vol. 78 no.3 (May 1999) <http://web26.epnet.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/citation.asp> [5 March 2006], 63

¹⁸ Gause, 58.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 57.

²⁰ Scott Ritter, *Endgame: Solving the Iraq Problem Once and for All* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 137.

Security Council resolutions²¹. He also alleged that UNSCOM Executive Chairman Richard Butler had a close relationship with Washington. This relationship was so close that it got to the point of coordinating events with US military air strikes on Iraq.²² These credibility issues gave Iraq a legitimate reason not to comply with inspections. Had the US not unduly influenced the inspection process, it would have been harder for Iraq to not comply with inspections and thus the inspectors would have been able to possibly continue their work. Furthermore, when the US diminished the credibility of inspections they angered the French, Russians and Chinese who were more sympathetic towards Iraq. This furthered divided the Security Council which was another reason why inspectors were not in Iraq from 1998 to 2002 leaving unanswered questions.

Towards the end of 1998 the US began to take on a more hawkish posture with Iraq. The more aggressive approach towards Iraq needs to be understood within the context of trying to achieve regime change. However, three reasons can be identified as causing this aggression. These were: a failure after seven years of disarmament and containment to depose Hussein; increased domestic pressure on Clinton; and a lack of cooperation from France, Russian and China which made the US decide to go around the Security Council to a limited degree.

In 1998, seven years after the end of the Gulf War, Hussein was still in power. The strategy of containment and disarmament had failed to achieve its objective. Nineteen-ninety eight also brought on a more hawkish Congress which favoured a more aggressive approach with Iraq. They passed the *Iraq Liberation Act* in 1998, which

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid, 187.

made the removal of Saddam Hussein from power a US foreign policy objective.²³ Shortly after the act was passed, the US and the UK launched Operation Desert Fox, an intense four-day bombing campaign of Iraq, the strongest US strike on Iraq since the Gulf War. This also was a divergence from US policy as Desert Fox was launched in a response to a report by UNSCOM Executive Chairman Richard Butler that Iraq was in non-compliance, not in response to Iraqi aggression.²⁴

In 1999, Congress authorized a supplemental package to the *Iraq Liberation Act* in which millions of dollars was committed in addition to the \$97 million promised in 1998.²⁵ These funds were direct assistance for Iraqi opposition groups to help them continue their fight against the Hussein regime. One group receiving support was the Iraqi National Accord, which unsuccessfully tried to overthrow Hussein.²⁶ There was also the Iraqi National Congress led by future Deputy Prime Minister Achmed Chalabi. The CIA also had bases in Northern Iraq to assist the Kurds who wanted to overthrow Hussein.²⁷ In total, the *Iraq Liberation Act* authorized \$97 million in funds to support these groups, some of which was used to purchase military equipment.²⁸ Congress also issued a bipartisan letter to President Clinton criticizing US policy on Iraq, and expressing “dismay over the continued drift in US policy toward Iraq.” The letter said more support had to be given to Iraqi opposition groups, and rewards should not be given for Baghdad’s compliance with UN resolutions, but rather punishments for non-compliance.²⁹

²³ Micah L. Sifry and Christopher Cerf, ed., *The Iraq War Reader*. (New York: Touchstone, 2003), 457.

²⁴ United Nations Special Commission on Iraq.

²⁵ Byman

²⁶ Ritter, 144.

²⁷ Ritter, 134.

²⁸ Byman.

²⁹ Bipartisan Congressional Leadership Letter to President Clinton, 11 August 1999.

This pressure from congress must be understood also within the context of the Lewinsky scandal. This scandal had greatly weakened Clinton's credibility and Congress gained leverage to pursue its own agenda. The non-partisan letter shows the pressure was coming from both the Republicans and Democrats which gave their case some added credibility. Iraq's lack of compliance, and expected future lack of compliance, with inspections was viewed as a justification for war; a preview for Resolution 1441. Despite the tough stance, the threats lacked any real teeth which ultimately would lead to the failure of the new US approach at the end of the Clinton administration. One can also view Clinton's approach as an attempt to help Vice-President Al Gore's run for President in 2000. Removing Hussein from power would give Al Gore a foreign policy accomplishment which he could run on in his campaign.

Despite a tougher stance from Washington, Hussein rejected compliance primarily for two reasons. One was that the US and its allies had shown themselves averse to the commitment of ground forces. Thus it was reasonable to assume the US and UK would limit themselves to air strikes in an attempt to enforce compliance. The second reason is that Hussein knew he could exploit the division in the Security Council and that France, Russia and China would not support any military action against Iraq meaning that US and the UK actions would not have the credibility of Security Council's approval. This could act as a constraint on their actions because Clinton and Blair had shown themselves more favourable towards the UN.

Lastly, US actions need be understood within the context of the Security Council. By 1998 and 1999 a considerable divide had developed on the Security Council. In the seven to eight years prior a cycle of US action and P3 disapproval had developed. The

US would engage in a military strike on Iraq or enforce the no-fly zones, of which Russia and China disapproved. This in turn would anger the P3, although initially France had supported the no-fly zones. They would then be less supportive of the inspection process allowing Baghdad to further exploit the division angering the US which would lead to more military strikes. Additionally, US influence on the inspection teams angered the French, Russians and Chinese further dividing the Security Council. The divided and dysfunctional Security Council ultimately became too frustrating for the Americans who then decided to take a more aggressive approach. This approach, combined with French, Russian and Chinese motives divided the Security Council and meant that inspection team would be absent from Iraq from 1998 to 2002.

Had the US been more pragmatic, realizing P3 interests in Iraq, and more supportive of inspections, clear benchmarks could have been set. This would have given the US justification and credibility for military action against Iraq for not non-compliance. Had the P3 not been willing to compromise then the US would also have justification for pushing its own Iraq agenda.

The unanswered questions left in the final UNSCOM and IAEA reports resulted from the Security Council's lack of ability to reach an agreement on weapon inspections in Iraq. The initial US containment strategy meant inspections were suppose to go without end so that sanctions would be kept in place which would lead to Hussein's down fall. Finally domestic factors and divisions on the Security Council lead to the US to take a more aggressive approach sidelining the inspection process completely which in the end left uncertainties to be dealt with by the next administration.

III. Iraq and the George W. Bush administration

President George W. Bush's administration was overt in its disdain for UN weapons inspections. The Bush administration held a much different approach on Iraq than Clinton. They favored a more aggressive approach, seeing military action as the only viable means of removing the Hussein regime. This was understandable given the failure of eight years of Clinton's policies to remove Hussein. If Bush had not taken on this approach and instead supported UNMOVIC and its inspectors, it is most likely that no WMD would have been found, and the case for war would have been severely weakened.

Even before Bush was elected President in November 2000, several people who would later serve in high level positions in the Bush administration were intent on removing Hussein. In 1998, the Project for a New American Century, a neo-conservative think-tank, published a letter to President Clinton. In the letter, the removal of Hussein by military force was called for. The letter criticized US policy and its shortcomings. It said that coalition partners could no longer be relied upon to enforce sanctions and inspections in Iraq. They questioned the utility of inspections and called for the removal of Saddam by force, which they said was already legitimized by previous UN resolutions- a common phrase later used by the administration. This was signed by people who would later have important positions in the Bush Administration including Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz, Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton, and Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage.³⁰ All of these men were high level American officials in the period leading up to the Iraq War playing key roles

³⁰ Geoff Simons, *Future Iraq: US Policy in Reshaping the Middle East* (London: Saqi Books, 2003), 248.

advising the President. If their minds had been made up five years before the invasion, it is unlikely that they actually cared about the outcome of inspections. They did not see the Clinton policy of containment as successful and thus called for a change in US policy, to depose Hussein by force.

Once Bush was in office the rhetoric continued, and US policy on Iraq seemed to dictate that invasion was in the cards well before March 2003. In July 2001 National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice stated the situation quite well when she said that “Saddam Hussein is on the radar screen for the Administration.”³¹

The push to deal with the Iraq portfolio really did not come to the forefront in Washington until September 11, 2001. After 9/11 the push was on to prevent another terrorist attack, with measures including the Patriot Act, and increased airport security. Part of the post-9/11 mentality was to take the fight to the enemy. The US developed a policy of preemptive action to strike against states that harbor and support terrorism. After the invasion of Afghanistan the case against Iraq was beginning to be formed by the administration; Iraq possessed the capability to make WMD that would eventually be used. In large part the ability of the US to make their case that Iraq still possessed WMD was because UNSCOM never was able to oversee and confirm the destruction of all of Iraq’s WMD, as noted in the final UNSCOM report to the Security Council in January 1999.

In January 2002 President Bush, in his State of the Union address, described Iraq, Iran and North Korea as an axis of evil. Remarks such as this only further dissuaded Iraq from accepting inspections. It signaled the US had drawn its conclusions and that they were going to bring back Theodore Roosevelt’s policeman with a big stick.

³¹ Ryan J. Doppler, ed., *Iraq Revisited* (New York: Nova Science Publishers Inc., 2003), 8.

Categorizing Iraq as part of this axis also drew a parallel between it and the Axis Powers of World War II. In World War II, the Allies would settle for nothing less than unconditional surrender by the Axis Powers. This was something Hussein loathed to do, given his defiance against Iran, Operation Desert Storm, UNSCOM and Desert Fox.

These sentiments were representative of a larger feeling in the administration which was skeptical of inspections. As noted above, the Project for a New American Century letter to President Clinton stated the preference of some high level US officials for the removal of Hussein by force. Even Vice-President Dick Cheney in August 2002, three months before inspections resumed, stated that “[a] return of inspectors would provide no assurance whatsoever of his [Hussein’s] compliance with U.N. resolutions....”³²

One of few less Hawkish people in the Administration appeared to have been Secretary of State Colin Powell. In the First Gulf War he urged for prolonged use of sanctions, and in Bosnia he was also against military intervention. He also had a strong affinity for multilateralism. He appeared to have been won over by the hawks in early 2003 evidenced by his remarks that “Iraq’s time for choosing peaceful disarmament is fasting coming to an end” and also that “inspections will not work.”³³ However, these were made within the context of French and German remarks that war could never be justified against Iraq, a rebuke to Powell who was one of the few people in the Bush administration striving for a multilateral solution.³⁴

³² Hans Blix, *Disarming Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 20.

³³ “The Powell Doctrine Revisited.” *Economist*, 36 (2003). <<http://search2.scholarsportal.info.proxy.library.carleton.ca>> [31 December 2006], 31.

³⁴ “The Powell Doctrine Revisited”

Towards the end of 2002 Congress signed onto the use of force against Iraq, indicating that they, like the executive branch, had little faith in inspections. In October 2002 the Congress passed the *Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002*, which gave Bush authorization to use military force against Iraq.³⁵ This authorization gave him the domestic legitimization needed. These actions also suggest a link between the Congress of 1998 and of 2002. Four years is not a long time and it most likely many of those in favour of using against Iraq were still around and felt that because of that lack of uncertainty regarding Hussein's WMD, war was needed to resolve the issue.

The domestic authorization for war also reveals why the US bothered to go the UN in the fall of 2002 with Resolution 1441 given the hawkish view of many within the administration who both expected and wanted to use force against Iraq. Going through the UN would provide legitimacy and justification for an invasion of Iraq. The hawks expected Hussein would obfuscate the inspection process and then the US would have justification for war or, the smoking gun would be found also providing justification for war. The lack of support for true aggressive inspections from the US was because the inspectors were only useful in so far as to provide justification for war.

There were reasons to believe the smoking gun could be found. Allegations of WMD possession were even occurring within the Iraqi government. However the issue was not that simple. Testimony by Dr. David Kay, former head of the Iraq Survey Group, to Congress in 2004 indicated that post-1998, scientists lied to Hussein about his advanced weapons programs and that Hussein wanted to benefit from regional states

³⁵ Doppler, 26.

thinking he had WMD.³⁶ However, Ali Hassan Al-Majid more famously known as “Chemical Ali” claimed many in the government believed Iraq possessed WMD.³⁷ Ambiguity about Iraq’s WMD program is probably best summarized by Chemical Ali’s story that Hussein “was asked about the weapons during a meeting with members of the Revolutionary Command Council. He replied that Iraq did not have WMD but flatly rejected a suggestion that the regime remove all doubts to the contrary, going on to explain that such a declaration might encourage the Israelis to attack.”³⁸ This analysis by Ali is logical given that most dictators live in a constant of suspicion their enemies, and Hussein felt the need to portray Iraq as having weapons to deter Israel and Iran from committing acts of aggression against Iraq.

To help build the US case for war in February 2003 Colin Powell made a presentation to the Security Council in which he outlined evidence to corroborate claims Iraq maintained a WMD program. He cited intercepted communications between Iraqi’s, saying “[w]e evacuated everything. We don’t have anything left”³⁹, using this to prove that Iraqi units had been given orders to clean up traces of weapons programs. He also mentioned Iraq’s attempts to rebuild its nuclear program, with the possession of centrifuge tubes and the attempt to obtain other technology for a nuclear program.⁴⁰ US hopes that this presentation, similar to Adlai Stevenson’s during the Cuban Missile Crisis, would provide the irrefutable evidence for the world were not achieved despite Powell’s reputation for integrity and moderation. France, Russia and China wanted to

³⁶ George Washington University, National Security Archive, *Hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee* (28 January 2004). <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB80/kaytestimony.pdf>> [24 March 2006], 20.

³⁷ Kevin Woods, et al. “Saddam’s Delusions: The View from the Inside” *Foreign Affairs* vol. 85 no. 3 (2006) [20 December 2006].

³⁸ Woods

³⁹ Sifry, 466

⁴⁰ Ibid, 474

give the inspectors more time and said the US would need a second resolution to use force against Iraq, which they would veto.

The US was not the only one who believed that Iraq possessed WMD. The UK had given the US the now discredited dossier with information on Iraq's nuclear program. Also, both French and German intelligence had indicated that Iraq possessed WMD.⁴¹ This was a similar conclusion reached by the UNSCOM and, to a lesser extent, IAEA final reports in 1998 and in the UNMOVIC cluster document which raised concerns about unaccounted for WMD and OMV efforts. When UNMOVIC released the Cluster Document, both the pro-inspection side and hawks got something they were looking for. For the pro-inspection side the Cluster Document represented findings which could be used to create clear benchmarks for Iraqi disarmament which, when met, would avoid a confrontation. For the Hawks it provided them with the proof that Iraq was indeed not forthcoming with UNMOVIC, and thus an invasion of Iraq was now justified under previous UN resolutions.

Intelligence became the cornerstone of the US case for war against Iraq. When the inspections failed to turn up any significant evidence Iraq possessed stockpiles of WMD, the US pointed to intelligence to tell the world that the reason inspectors were not finding anything was because Hussein was back at his games of deception with inspectors and therefore there is a need to invade Iraq.

However, intelligence was not the only thing guiding US policy, so were Middle Eastern issues. The first issue was anti-US sentiment which runs deep in the Middle East. The 1998 embassy bombings, the 2000 attack on the USS Cole, 1983 bombing of

⁴¹ George Washington University, National Security Archive, *Hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee* (28 January 2004). <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB80/kaytestimony.pdf> [24 March 2006], 43.

the Marine barracks in Lebanon, and attacks on US citizens in Saudi Arabia in 1995 and 1996 all serve as examples of anti-US attitudes. In Saudi Arabia the ruling House of Saud faces many threats from within its borders who want to overthrow the government. Many of these groups include radicals who are also hostile towards the United States and resent Saudi Arabia's relationship with the US.⁴² One method to counter the rise of these radicals is a US pull-out from Saudi Arabia. The installation of a US-friendly government in Baghdad would allow for US bases to be built in Iraq - pre-invasion the Bush administration said the US would be welcomed as liberators- allowing for US bases in Saudi Arabia to be closed. Bases in Iraq would also allow the US to maintain its influence in the Middle East. Assuming the US wants to maintain hegemonic power, it would be logical to keep a Middle Eastern influence to keep the Russians and Chinese in check and also to deal with future problems which may arise in the Middle East.

Instability in Saudi Arabia, leading to a new anti-US government could affect oil supply and price stability; something looked after by Saudi Arabia. After 9/11 Saudi Arabia increased oil shipments to the US to prevent panic buying from affecting oil prices, and before the US invasion in 2003 Saudi Arabia increased supply to help calm a market anxious about the war and turmoil in Venezuela.⁴³ Saudi Arabia's stabilization could be done or supplemented with a US-friendly government in Iraq, which would have free reign over oil production instead of the amounts stipulated by the oil-for-food program.

Another factor was Iraq's past history of aggression against its neighbours, which indicated that Iraq could potentially be a threat to regional oil supplies. First there was

⁴² Clifford Chanin and F. Gregory Gause III, "U.S. - Saudi Relations: Bump In The Road Or End Of The Road," *Middle East Policy* vol. 10 no. 4. (Winter 2003). <<http://illumina.scholarsportal.info.proxy.library.carleton.ca>> [29 March 2006], 124.

⁴³ Chanin, 122.

Iraq-Iran war. Next was the Gulf War when Iraq invaded Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia feared it may be next. The wars themselves caused regional instability and disrupted oil production and caused panic and rising oil prices. When Iraq occupied Kuwait it compounded its invasion with the burning of Kuwaiti oil fields, and the dumping of Kuwaiti oil into the Persian Gulf.⁴⁴ Even in the post-Gulf War era Iraq had still shown itself a threat to Kuwait. In December 1992 Iraq made movements into both the Southern no-fly zone, and into Kuwait to seize items which they claimed belonged to Iraq. In October 1994 Iraq deployed two Republican Guard armoured divisions near the Iraq-Kuwait border and threatened Kuwait. This prompted a buildup of US forces in the Persian Gulf, after this Iraq backed down recognized Kuwaiti independence.⁴⁵ Despite this recognition of Kuwait by Baghdad, the US had no reason to believe Iraq and leave Kuwait, because Iraq had shown itself numerous times to have no respect for the no-fly zones and a willingness to defy the US and the UN, especially in 1998 when Iraq did not re-admit inspectors after Desert Fox.

US concerns about the Middle East could not be addressed by inspections. Although Iraq still had a conventional force no where near the level of the US it could still create chaos and threaten Middle Eastern stability. Inspections also could not help to make the US more popular in Saudi Arabia. Only the US leaving Saudi Arabia could help its image, however the US needs bases to maintain influence in the Middle East. Invading Iraq and being welcomed as liberators - as they thought they would be - would allow the US to build bases in Iraq similar to post-World War II Europe. Supporting long

⁴⁴ Sifry, 81.

⁴⁵ Byman.

and thorough inspections of Iraq did not help the US accomplish its Middle Eastern objectives.

As time ticked by, American hopes for easy justification for war evaporated. The smoking gun was not found. UNMOVIC only found minor pieces of evidence such as the Al Samoud 2 missile which was found to exceed the allowable 150km range limit⁴⁶ and empty 122mm chemical warheads⁴⁷. Hussein also did not prove himself to be the menace to UNMOVIC that he was to UNSCOM.⁴⁸ When the US hopes for an easy time in the Security Council vanished, Washington pressed their case for war based on intelligence. However, many looked at this intelligence with suspicion. US patience had finally reached its limits and Washington declared its intentions to circumvent the Security Council and act without a second resolution claiming Resolution 1441 and prior UN resolutions gave it the authority to attack Iraq for what it alleged to be its continued deception. Much to the chagrin of fellow Security Council members, the US made good on its word and began Operation Iraqi Freedom. Had the US supported UNMOVIC and agreed to let the inspectors fully inspect Iraq, the smoking gun would not have been found and Washington's justification for war lost.

IV. US Allies

During the Gulf War the UK was a steadfast ally of the US, and continued to support the US throughout the 1990s with various military strikes against Iraq in addition to patrolling the no-fly zones. Much of the UK support for the US in both the 1990s and

⁴⁶Trevor Findlay and Ben Mines, *UNMOVIC in Iraq: Opportunity Lost* (2003).

http://www.vertic.org/assets/YB03/VY03_Mines.pdf [5 Feb 2006], 56

⁴⁷ Findlay, 57.

⁴⁸ Findlay, 54.

2002/2003 period can be attributed to the “special relationship” between the two countries and attempts for the UK to gain influence, and rightly so. However, UK support had influence on the direction of US policy towards Iraq and consequently the inspection process.

During the 1990s the UK assisted, and to certain extent, encouraged actions circumventing the Security Council. Fearing a massive humanitarian crisis after the Gulf War, they convinced the Americans to support the creation of safe havens for Kurdish refugees in April 1991, which led to the creation of the Northern no-fly zone.⁴⁹ This was followed in 1992 with the creation of the Southern no-fly zone.⁵⁰ In both instances, justification was derived from the enforcement of Resolution 688, even though the resolution did not include any provisions for enforcement.⁵¹ The UK also participated in military strikes against Iraq such January 1993 when they joined American and French forces in air strikes in response to Hussein provocations along the Kuwaiti border⁵², and of course they also participated in Operation Desert Fox and in Operations Northern and Southern Watch patrolling the no-fly zones.

These actions, circumventing the Security Council, ultimately drove a wedge deeper and deeper between the Security Council members and culminated in the inspection deadlock of the late 1990s. Although some of the unilateral actions were taken for the right reasons, the actions were too much for France, Russia and China who became frustrated with the US and the UK constantly skirting around the Security Council. In a post-Vietnam mindset it is unlikely the US would have gone to the lengths

⁴⁹ James Cockayne & David Malone, “Creeping unilateralism,” *Security Dialogue*. vol. 37 no. 1 (March 2006). <http://sdi.sagepub.com> [10 May 2007], 127.

⁵⁰ Cockayne, 128

⁵¹ Cockayne, 126

⁵² Byman

it did to protect the Kurd's and the Shi'ites without the influence of the UK which was evident through initial US reluctance to become involved in protecting the Kurd's. President Bush Sr. had said, "[w]e're not going to get sucked into this by sending precious American lives into this battle."⁵³ Vice-President Dan Quayle made remarks to the same effect saying the US would stay out of an Iraqi civil war.⁵⁴ As a result of the UK influence, the wedge eventually became so deep in the Security Council it created a divide which contributed to French, Russian and Chinese anger. This in turn led these three states to not fully support the inspection process, leading to inspectors not being in Iraq from 1998 to 2002 causing uncertainties about Iraq's WMD leaving ambiguity and thus justification for war.

Throughout the period leading up to the Iraq War, the UK was still the US' staunchest ally. After 9/11, Prime Minister Tony Blair committed fully to supporting the War on Terror. This full commitment included supporting the US on whatever course of action it decided to use on Iraq.⁵⁵ Blair's support for the US and its action against Iraq however was not without self-interest. The UK was trying to maintain its importance on the world stage.⁵⁶

After the end of the Second World War, the UK's empire eroded during massive decolonization. In addition, the UK was broken after almost six years of war and lost its superpower status. The Suez Canal crisis, in which the UK took directives from the US,

⁵³ Cockayne, 127

⁵⁴ Cockayne, 127

⁵⁵ Paul Hoggett, "Iraq: Blair's Mission Impossible," *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*. vol. 7 issue 3 (August 2005). <<http://illumina.scholarsportal.info.proxy.library.carleton.ca>> [10 March 2006], 418.

⁵⁶ Sameul Azubuike, "Still Buying Insurance? The Realism Behind Tony Blair's Post September 11 Evangelization," *Review of International Affairs* vol. 3 issue 1 (Autumn 2003). <<http://search.epnet.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/login.aspx?>> [10 March 2006], 71.

demonstrated that the US had surpassed the UK in terms of world power.⁵⁷ However, the UK still wanted its seat at the superpower table. To this end, the UK decided to take sides with the world's superpower, the US, as a means of boosting its power and influence in international affairs.⁵⁸ This alignment continued into the 21st century, seen in UK support for the US-led invasion of Iraq, where some observers believe London made the decision to support Washington's course of action on Iraq whatever it was in spring 2002, well before Resolution 1441.⁵⁹

UK influence can be seen in the path used by the US leading up to the war. Despite the intrinsic belief by many in the administration that inspections were useless, the US still went through the motions of going to the Security Council. In part, the US took this path to gain legitimacy for the invasion in hopes that Hussein would either not cooperate or the smoking gun would be found. It could also be attributed to Blair who had more affinity for international cooperation and multilateralism. After the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, Blair placed UK troops in-country to head the International Security Assistance Force rather than have them under US command.⁶⁰ Additionally, the UK worked to get the UN-approved government of Hamid Karzai started in Afghanistan.⁶¹ Later in 2003, according to Hans Blix, the UK worked with other countries to secure a second resolution which would define benchmarks for Iraq disarmament. Given Blair's previous actions it is likely that he played a role in convincing the US to take the UN route, despite Washington's skepticism about the UN.

⁵⁷ Azubuike, 72.

⁵⁸ Azubuike, 71.

⁵⁹ Hoggett, 418.

⁶⁰ Azubuike, 66.

⁶¹ Azubuike, 76

On the Israel-Palestine portfolio, Blair thought he had an agreement from the US to reach a peace agreement. The 'Road Map for Peace' did emerge but the US was reluctant to be objective in the issue and often sided with the Israelis. London also believed after the Belfast summit that the UN would play a role in post-war Iraq. This turned out not to be the case as the US largely snubbed the UN in post-war Iraq.⁶² Blair's belief that he would get a voice in US foreign policy meant he had stay alongside the US in whatever course of the action was taken with Iraq. In hindsight Blair may have been naïve to think he could influence a strong-minded US administration but after Blair's excellent relationship with Clinton, he probably believed something similar would happen with Bush.⁶³

Although it manifestly appears the UK became merely a client state of the US, its support was needed. The idioms "multilateralism" and "unilateralism" were constantly mentioned in the period leading up to the Iraq War, with the latter being used to describe US policy towards Iraq. Yet, describing US actions with respect to Iraq as unilateral is misleading. The US had the political support of around forty states in the "coalition of the willing", which in itself was merely a list of countries most of whom only gave rhetorical support. However, whatever the "coalition" lacked in a real, hard sense was made up by its symbolic value for the US, who used it to show that they were not alone in their desire to see Hussein removed from power. They also had hard support in the form of troops from other nations such as Australia, Poland and Spain. The largest contribution came from the UK which contributed thousands of soldiers.

⁶² Hoggett, 421.

⁶³ Hoggett, 420-421.

This soft and hard support was needed for the US case for war. It gave the US legitimacy and showed that it was not acting unilaterally despite its circumvention of the Security Council. The contribution of troops by some members of the coalition illustrated their support for the US with more than just words.

These allies emboldened the US to go around the Security Council and not give UNMOVIC full support. Had the US not had this support, the mission would not have been legitimate in the eyes of the world and without hard support, the US might have been more reluctant to go to war because it would have to bear the full burden. Additionally, without support the US might have supported the inspection process in order to drag it out longer so that more states would eventually come onside with the invasion, a possibility since they believed either WMD would be found or Hussein would slip up with inspections. Then when these nations signed on the US would gain legitimacy, and if the troops were offered they would lighten the burden on US forces. When the UK signed on to the Iraq mission it may have only given a marginal amount of extra legitimacy in the eyes of the world but it did encourage the US.

V. France, Russia and China

By 2003 France, Russia and China had become Iraq's largest and most vocal apologists on the Security Council. All three dragged their feet on US efforts to get Security Council backing for an attack against Iraq, threatening to veto any resolution put forward to that effect. They denied US claims that they had the authorization to attack Iraq based on prior UN resolutions. Had these three countries exerted influence on Iraq to accept inspections, the US and UK unilateral actions would have no

justification and inspectors could have kept Baghdad accountable preventing unanswered questions to remain in 2002 and 2003.

Early in UNSCOM inspections France was on board with the US, which was somewhat of a surprise in itself. Since Charles de Gaulle's criticisms of Israel in 1967, France had been anti-Israel and pro-Arab states. In addition France had strong business ties with Iraq.⁶⁴ France had been a member of the US-led coalition in the 1991 Gulf War, and in January 1993 participated in the US and UK air raids in response to Iraqi aggression.⁶⁵ It appears that not too long after these events France began to shift back to more friendly terms with Iraq. Iraqi Prime Minister Tarik Aziz made three visits to Paris from October 1993 to January 1995. The election of Jacques Chirac, who had positive relations with Baghdad since the 1970s, seemed to be the tipping point. In May 1995 Baghdad happily welcomed his election. Slightly over a year later, the US launched a unilateral missile strike without consulting France. This led to the French ending their participation in patrolling the Northern no-fly zone, and scaling back their participation in the Southern no-fly zone.⁶⁶ Chirac's dealings with Iraq appear to have been an attempt aimed primarily at removing sanctions and restoring Iraqi-French business relations to pre-Gulf War status.

Relations between Iraq and the Soviet Union started in 1958, and developed to \$2 billion dollars in trade by 1989. There were contracts for pipeline to be constructed from Nasiriya to Baghdad, and electric power stations in Yusifiya, Nasiriya, Kharta, and Nadjibia, as well as oil extraction in southern Iraq. Facing pressure from within his

⁶⁴ David Styan, "Jacques Chirac 'non': France, Iraq and the United Nations, 1991-2003," *Modern & Contemporary France* vol. 12 no. 3(2004). <<http://search.epnet.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca>> [27 December 2006], 373-74.

⁶⁵ United Nations Special Commission.

⁶⁶ Styan, 376.

government, President Mikhail Gorbachev condemned Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Before the start of Operation Desert Storm the USSR tried to remain friendly to Iraq acting as intermediary in attempt to avoid a war, a role which Russia would continue to play in post-Gulf War era. After the start of oil-for-food Russian companies had about 40 percent of all Iraqi oil exports, and trade annually reached \$1.5 billion.⁶⁷

Baghdad's relations with Beijing were not as prominent as they were with Paris or Moscow,. None the less the relations still existed. China and Iraq established formal relations in 1958 when Iraq became a republic. From 1979-1990 there were 662 labor service contracts signed with Iraq which came close to \$2 billion dollars. Under oil-for-food China continued its relations with Iraq through oil imports.⁶⁸ A possible explanation for China's subdued relations with Iraq relative to France and Russia's is because of China's positive relations with Iran⁶⁹, and Israel⁷⁰.

When the US and UK launched Operation Desert Fox, Russia, France and China were not happy with the decision. France ended its participation in the southern no-fly zone⁷¹. In Russia, Boris Yeltsin and the Duma were highly critical of the decision, and the Duma refused to ratify the START-II treaty with the US⁷². China, based on its opposition to military intervention, wanted to keep the issue in the UN domain⁷³. Operation Desert Fox, however, was only the straw that broke the camel's back. The anger of the French, Russians and Chinese was a culmination of anger over US and UK

⁶⁷ Nikolai Zlobin, "Iraq in the Context of Post-Soviet Foreign Policy," *Mediterranean Quarterly* vol. 15 issue 2 (2004). <http://muse.jhu.edu> [31 December 2006], 9.

⁶⁸ Jin Liangxing, "China and the Middle East: Energy First," *Middle East Quarterly* vol. 12 issue 2 (2005). <http://search.epnet.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca> [31 December 2006], 4.

⁶⁹ Liangxing, 4.

⁷⁰ Liangxing, 7.

⁷¹ Styan, 379.

⁷² Zlobin, 92.

⁷³ Liangxing, 4.

unilateral enforcement actions. From the P3 point of view, the anger was completely justified. The US only would go to Security Council and demand that other countries play by the rules when it suited the US, such as the continuation of sanctions. Conversely, the US would circumvent the Security Council when it saw fit.

After the submission of the Amorim Panel's report in 1999, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1284 11-0-4. The US, UK, Gabon, Argentina, Brazil, Gambia, Bahrain, Slovenia, Canada, Namibia, Netherlands voted for the resolution, while France, China, Russia, and Malaysia abstained. France justified its abstention saying that the resolution did not ease the suffering of the Iraqi people, and added that there was a need to discuss the resumption of aviation traffic and resolve ambiguity about the lifting of sanctions. China also was concerned about sanctions and felt that a clear list of disarmament issues needed to be created so that these issues could be addressed and dealt with in order to lift sanctions. In addition China felt that the resumption of inspections and the lifting of and sanctions should be connected; immediately suspend sanctions if Iraq cooperates. Russia rationalized its abstention with complaints about sanctions and the ambiguity of "full cooperation" as a condition for Iraq. Russia went on further to say that no hard evidence proved Iraq was a security threat, and that because Russia did not veto the resolution did not mean that it was obliged to implement the resolution.⁷⁴

A common theme emerging from the abstentions of France, China and Russia was their objections to sanctions. Any attempt to lift sanctions would be vetoed in the Security Council by the US and the UK, so an abstention was about as effective these

⁷⁴ United Nations Security Council. *Security Council Establishes New Monitoring Commission For Iraq Adopting Resolution 1284 (1999) By Vote of 11-0-4* (17 Dec. 1999). <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/1999/19991217.sc6775.doc.html> [31 Jan 2006].

three nations could be in trying to get sanctions lifted. All were eager to see sanctions removed quickly because it would allow them to be “business as usual” with Iraq, and for good reason.

France’s financial dealings with Iraq dated back to the 1970s when Jacques Chirac was the Prime Minister of France. In the 1975 Hussein visited a French nuclear facility in Provence; France subsequently sold Iraq the Osirak reactor, which was later destroyed by Israel. This was followed in 1976 with Iraq’s purchase of French Mirage fighters. France and Iraq also signed an economic cooperation accord in 1975.⁷⁵ In the 1990s under oil-for-food France was also able to significantly profit. In 1995 after Resolution 986 was passed and agreements were finalized, Iraq-France trade increased from €685 million to €1.6 billion. When the era of post-sanction Iraq arrived Total and Elf Aquitaine had pre-agreements with the government to commence drilling operations.⁷⁶ France’s extensive economic relations in pre-Gulf War Iraq, and plans for post-sanction Iraq easily demonstrate that France had a great yearning for sanctions to end so that the arms trade and oil industry could once again profit.

Although geographically distant from Iraq, China still had important interests at stake in seeing the end of sanctions. China’s interests with Iraq, like France’s, were arms and oil. China’s arms involvement with Iraq was its sale of ballistic missiles⁷⁷. Posting large economic growth, and also a large demand for oil, China probably also wanted some of the oil assurances that France received. China’s CNPC (China National

⁷⁵ Styan, 374.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 377.

⁷⁷ Ritter, 156.

Petroleum Company) like French oil companies received agreements for post-sanction Iraq oil drilling.⁷⁸

Russia had three interests in seeing sanctions lifted. First, like the Chinese and French, the Russians were involved in the arms trade with Iraq. Once such example was an arms shipment intercepted by Jordan containing a missile guidance system⁷⁹. Another stemmed from a US complaint during the Second Gulf War about Iraqi's fighting US soldiers with Russian arms. The accusation of illegal arm deals between Moscow and Baghdad while Iraq had sanctions was vehemently denied by Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov.⁸⁰ Second were Russian oil interests in Iraq. Russian companies, like French and Chinese companies, had contracts worth billions that they did not want to lose. In 1997 Lukoil signed a deal worth \$3.7 billion for Iraq's West Qurna oil fields, of which 70% was Lukoil's investment. The project had an estimated return of \$70 billion dollars. In the larger picture Russia profited from \$7.7 billion worth of oil exports from Iraq during sanctions.⁸¹ In August 2002 Iraq announced that a ten year trade deal was going to be signed with Russia worth \$40 billion.⁸² Additionally, Lukoil also had agreements with Iraq for post-sanction already in place, like its French and Chinese counterparts.⁸³ Third debt repayments owed to Russia. The Russians were still owed \$8 billion by Iraq from the Soviet era⁸⁴. Russia itself was not financially sound, and needed money, one source being outstanding loans to Iraq. If sanctions

⁷⁸ Styan, 377.

⁷⁹ Doppler, 31.

⁸⁰ Galia Golan, "Russia and the Iraq War: was Putin's policy a failure?" *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* vol. 37 issue 4 (2004). <<http://search.epnet.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca>> [27 December 2006], 444

⁸¹ Golan, 435.

⁸² Ibid, 435-36.

⁸³ Styan, 377.

⁸⁴ Ritter, 156.

against Iraq were to be lifted then theoretically Iraq's economy would be better off and potentially able to begin to pay off its debt to Russia.

Relationships in the arms and oil industries, both present and potential, clearly demonstrate why all three states disapproved over the vagueness regarding the lifting of sanctions. They wanted sanctions lifted as quickly as possible to be able to profit from their agreements. The Clinton administration's reluctance to agree to clear benchmarks and preference for 'sanctions without end' divided the P5 which in part led to the deadlock preventing UNMOVIC from going into Iraq immediately after its creation in 1999.

When the drums of war began to beat once again in 2002, France, Russia and China quickly rallied around UNMOVIC, despite their initial displeasure over its creation. The strong likelihood of a US invasion made all three states vote in favour of Resolution 1441. As time ticked away, US patience was wearing thin, and they appeared ready to go ahead with a strike against Iraq. China believed that the inspection process was working and felt that the inspections should continue.⁸⁵ Meanwhile there was discussion going on between the UK and France, Germany and Russia about potential benchmarks for Iraq in the inspection process. Yet this suggestion seems to have died as it appeared more likely the US would go ahead with an invasion regardless.⁸⁶

France, Russia, and China abstained, registered their disapproval for Resolution 1284 and Iraq refused to accept inspections. When they voted for resolution 1441, Iraq accepted inspections. While this itself does not necessarily show a cause and effect

⁸⁵ Blix, 181.

⁸⁶ Blix, 246-249.

relationship as the circumstances in 1999 and 2002 were different, it does raise the concept of leverage. France, Russia and China were all investing large amounts in the Iraqi economy. The companies from these three countries stood to gain significantly from the deals and the Iraqi economy also stood to gain as well. This suggests that perhaps because of the potential boost to the Iraqi economy these three nations were all able to exert some leverage on Iraq to cooperate with inspections, something Baghdad may have been loathe to do given its prior willingness to defy Washington. However, the leveraging may have been a two way street. Given Iraq's dictatorial government Hussein had the power to make or break any deals firms had within Iraq. In addition, any trade deals Iraq had with other countries could be subject to Hussein's veto. Perhaps to get France, Russia and China to take Iraq's side in the Security Council and keep the US in check, Iraq would make these lucrative deals conditional on political support in the UN. This mutual leveraging could lead to a "win-win" situation for all parties involved.

Economics were not the only considerations in French, Russian, and Chinese resistance to the US. Taking the opposite stance of the US was a way for these three nations to maintain influence on the world stage. In an attack on US hegemony they used diplomacy and exercised their veto.⁸⁷ The decision, however, to use the Security Council was a pragmatic one. Realistically, diplomacy was the only way to counter US-hegemony. Sanctions and military options against the US simply were not a viable response.⁸⁸ While supporting inspections were critical to their success, the P3 believed the benefits of countering US hegemony outweighed the risks of Iraq potentially having

⁸⁷ T.V. Paul "Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy," *International Security* vol. 30 issue 1 (2005). <http://search.epnet.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca> [27 December 2006], 58-59.

⁸⁸ Golan, 431.

WMD. In hindsight, they did not have the foresight to realize future administrations could decide to take matters into their own hands.

When Iraq became bolder in its defiance of inspections, these three nations did not lend the support inspections needed at three crucial moments. First was in late 1997 to early 1998 when the UN reached the memorandum of understanding with Iraq. When these three countries did not pressure Iraq into allowing the inspection of Presidential sites, the hands of UNSCOM became tied because the memorandum greatly reduced the ability of inspectors to conduct intrusive inspections, and ensure the destruction of Iraq's WMD. The second instance was in late 1998 when Iraq once again refused to cooperate with inspections. This absence of cooperation allowed the US and the UK some justification, however contentious, in their launching of Desert Fox which in turn led to the end of UNSCOM. Third was when the Security Council passed resolution 1284. The abstentions of China, Russia and France diminished the credibility of UNMOVIC, and gave it the appearance of it being a US and UK initiative not a broadly supported concept with the backing of all the permanent members of the Security Council. In the period of late 1997 to late 2002 when inspections were either on a rocky road in Iraq, or not in Iraq at all, this allowed for the unanswered questions about Iraq's WMD programs to linger. Had inspectors been in Iraq conducting aggressive inspections they would have been able to answer remaining uncertainties raised in the March 2003 Cluster Document. This would have reduced or even eliminated US arguments that Iraq was a threat because of its WMD.

VI. Conclusions & Lessons Learned

Sixteen years have passed since UNSCOM started its inspections in Iraq, and five years since the UNMOVIC resumed inspections. UNSCOM was an attempt after a war to disarm Iraq, while UNMOVIC was an attempt to find and destroy Iraq's WMD in order to avert a war. In the period between January 1991 and March 2003 weapon inspectors in Iraq experienced periods of success and failure, caused in large part by circumstances outside their control. When they did not have the support of certain members of the Security Council, who were trying to advance their own goals, it was obvious. When they did have the support it was merely a mirage of support, superficial to accomplish an objective.

The events of 23-28 June 1991 served as an omen how the following inspections would go. During the Clinton administration the paradigm was, initially, that Hussein would eventually fall from power due to internal factors, thus constant sanctions would see his downfall. Thus, sanctions would have to be applied, compliance or no compliance with inspectors. However, Hussein's continued grip over power and other domestic factors lead to the US take a more aggressive approach which further divided the Security Council leading to the four year gap in inspections.

In the 1990s, France left the US coalition and went back to having positive relations with Iraq. French, Russian, and Chinese economic interests led them to try to lift sanctions off of Iraq. It should be noted that Iraq's agreements with companies from these three countries for post-sanction Iraq suggested Iraq expected its apologists to be successful on the diplomatic front and that Iraq was trying to use these agreements as leverage on these three to press Iraq's case in the Security Council. Their support for

Iraq however prevented them from supporting aggressive inspections in Iraq, especially during the 1998-2002 period when inspectors were not in Iraq. This allowed the US to build a case, although disputable, that there was a possibility of Iraq possessing WMD.

Under the shadows of war in 2002 Iraq's allies on the Security Council hastily rallied around UNMOVIC and resolution 1441 in an attempt to avoid a US invasion of Iraq. The US, however, seemed fixated on war, with the US "support" for inspections partly being pushed by the UK. The support was given in the hopes that the smoking gun would be found or that Hussein would not comply with inspections. Despite the lack of concrete evidence the US invasion took place.

The UNSCOM and UNMOVIC experience in Iraq, despite their inability to prevent further conflict, has yielded valuable lessons. The foremost lesson is the need for a united Security Council which fully supports the inspectors. If the belligerent state can rely on members of the Security Council to press its case, rather than leverage it to embrace inspections, it will defy inspections. France, Russia and China could be depended upon to ensure the Security Council would not authorize any actions by the US to enforce inspections. On the other hand, if states appear posed to act without regard to the outcome of inspections then belligerent states will not see a point in participating but rather will defy inspections and test the resolve of the enforcers to see if they can "put their money where their mouth is". This was the case with the Clinton and Bush administrations. Their unilateral actions proved this to Hussein. From US actions in the Gulf War, Somalia and Rwanda, it was evident the US was reluctant to engage in a long sustained commitment involving ground troops. Hussein however underestimated the second Bush administration's keenness to see his demise.

The divisions amongst the P5 were in part over the different interpretations of prior Security Council resolutions. In order to have a resolution passed and get the approval of the P5, vaguely worded resolutions are needed because if it got specific nations may never be able to agree on the details. In the long run, as evident from what happened with Iraq, having clearly worded resolutions with set benchmarks is essential. Part of the reason why UNMOVIC did not go back into Iraq immediately was because France, Russia and China disagreed with the resolutions' vaguely worded conditions for the lifting of sanctions. Whenever the US and the UK took matters into their own hands, they based it on the enforcement of prior UN resolutions. Resolutions need to set clearly defined benchmarks before the inspection process begins so that inspectors have a clear mandate and if later the belligerent state is obfuscating the inspection, clearly defined punishments exist and if the belligerent state cooperates, clearly defined rewards need to exist to act as an incentive.

The current disarmament issue centers on the remaining two members of the Axis of Evil, Iran and North Korea, and their WMD programs. The Iranian issue is currently at the IAEA and Security Council and the North Korea issue is trying to be dealt with through six-party talks. In any deals that are made, inspections are likely to become a perquisite to verify disarmament claims these countries may make. In this case the Security Council may once again find itself in the situation of authorizing an international inspection force. However, these two countries already appear to have their friends on the P5 who are willing to defend their cause. Iran has Russia and North Korea has China, both of which are against enforcement actions. Perhaps if a country obtained WMD that was not strongly aligned with any P5 member or if it was in the

interest of the P5 to see it disarm then perhaps the UN route could work. Only a fundamental shift in the policies in Russia and China in addition to a less confrontational US would allow for UN-backed inspections to be able to do its job with the full support of the P5. A less confrontational US does not mean a US unwilling to use force. Rather, it means the US should not unnecessarily provoke these countries but rather provide a credible threat for non-compliance.

If the US decides to take matters into its own hands because of Chinese and Russian obfuscations, it would be best to lay out clear benchmarks with rewards for disarmament and punishments for non-cooperation rather than posturing itself to be focused on regime change, if disarmament is its true objective. US attempts to use inspections as a means to see Hussein's downfall were sabotaged by others and Iraq thus did not cooperate. Yet, it would be just as naïve to think that the US alone could get these countries to disarm. These countries would be unlikely to accept an inspection force composed of America and its allies. Also, given constraints on the US military and backlash over the war in Iraq, launching another war, while not impossible, would be difficult.

A long term plan is also needed. Ongoing efforts are essential once a country has disarmed to ensure future compliance. Once a country has disarmed and it gets its reward, there may not be an incentive to stay disarmed. Remember Hussein's initial belief he could just lie and conceal, waiting out inspections. North Korea has already shown itself unreliable by breaking the deal it brokered with Clinton in the 1990s.

Looking at the events of UNSCOM and UNMOVIC in hindsight has obvious advantages. The repercussions of the decisions made at crucial moments lead to

outcomes that may not have been predicted. If there had been the full support of the Security Council the withdrawal of UNSCOM in 1998 could have been avoided and questions about Iraq's WMD programs in 2002 and 2003 could have been avoided. If UNMOVIC had been supported then no WMD would have been found and Washington would have no justification for war. Perhaps if a future inspection regime attempts to ensure the disarmament of a nation, the failures and success from Iraq can serve as a blueprint for these future operations which attempt to prevent the destruction of humanity.