Transatlantic Relations, the United Nations, and the Iraq Crisis

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ABSTRACT

This article assesses the Blair administration's attempts to convince the Bush administration to pursue diplomacy in the 2002-2003 Iraq crisis. I argue that the Blair administration emphasized diplomacy partially for domestic political reasons but also because they believed that diplomacy was legally necessary, crucial for restraining American unilateralism, and vital for bolstering the UN and the transatlantic alliance. The Blair administration was partially successful in convincing the U.S. to work more multilaterally. However, in exchange, they committed to supporting the U.S. use of force against Iraq if diplomacy failed, thereby losing much of their leverage over U.S. policy.

INTRODUCTION

The United States and Great Britain's case for war against Saddam Hussein from 2001 to 2003 generally focused on the same points. Both the Bush and Blair administrations feared that Saddam was developing weapons of mass destruction (WMD), that he supported terrorist groups like al-Qaeda, and that he might supply a terrorist group with WMD to use against the U.S. or Europe. The British and Americans also thought that deposing Saddam would positively change Iraq and the region, although the Americans held far more optimistic views than the British of the likely impact of toppling Saddam. These arguments were particularly urgent and compelling in the aftermath of al-Qaeda's attacks on the U.S. World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 (9/11). The Bush administration embraced these views much earlier and less critically than the Blair administration, but both nations agreed on this basic rationale for war.[1]

However, there was significant tension between these allies as to how to disarm Saddam. The Americans put far less stock in diplomatic means of averting war such as working through the United Nations (UN) to reinsert weapons inspectors into Iraq and increase pressure on Saddam to give up his WMD programs.[2] From an early date, possibly as early as the spring of 2002, the Bush administration believed that working through the UN would be ineffective and would simply allow Saddam to "cheat and retreat," or manipulate the cumbersome UN process while furtively expanding his

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[1] For a good example of Blair's general agreement with the Bush administration's case for war, see Tony Blair, "Full Text of Tony Blair's Speech in Texas" (Speech, Crawford, Texas, April 8, 2002), *The Guardian*, http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2002/apr/08/foreignpolicy.iraq [Accessed September 20, 2014].

[2] The UN and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had installed weapons inspectors in Iraq after the 1990-1991 Gulf War as part of UN Security Council Resolution 687. The inspectors found extensive evidence of Saddam's. In the face of increasing Iraqi non-compliance with the inspections and hostility to the inspectors, the UN withdrew the inspectors in 1998.

weapons programs.[3] Consequently, the Bush administration generally believed that war

with Iraq was unavoidable if the U.S. wanted to disarm the Baathist regime.[4]

Starting in the spring of 2002, the British made a concerted effort to convince the

Bush administration to exhaust the diplomatic process at the UN and seek a multilateral

coalition to address the Iraqi threat. By September 2002, the Bush administration had

begun to work with the UN, marking a partial success for the Blair administration. From

September until March 2003, the Blair administration endeavored to get the Americans to

commit to the diplomatic process and tried to mediate between the U.S. and opponents of

war such as France and Germany. This paper will focus on the reasons behind the Blair

administration's attempts to convince the U.S. to pursue a more diplomatic and

multilateral track. It will try to answer the following questions: How genuine was the

Blair administration's emphasis on pursuing a diplomatic solution to the Iraq crisis from

the spring of 2002 up until Bush's call for a UN resolution on Iraq in September of 2002?

Additionally, from September until the start of the war, how and why did the Blair

government continue to try to build an international coalition against Iraq and push the

U.S. to stick to the diplomatic track even as war became increasingly likely?

While the Blair administration had several ulterior motives for working through

the UN to resolve the Iraq crisis, they ultimately saw the diplomatic process as an

intrinsically valuable and potentially effective means of disarming Saddam and avoiding

war. They did not share the deep pessimism of the Bush administration about the

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[3] Richard Cheney, "Speech at Veterans of Foreign Wars 103rd National Convention,
Nashville, Tennessee, August 26, 2002," in *The Iraq Papers,* ed. John Ehrenberg, J. Patrice McSherry, Jose
Ramon Sanchez, and Caroleen Marji Sayej (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 75-80.
[4] The Baath Party was the nationalist regime that dominated Iraq from 1963 to 2003. Saddam Hussein
became the leader of the Baath Party and President of Iraq in 1979. For more information on how the Baath
Party came to power and governed Iraq, see Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 2007), and Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq* (Berkeley: The
University of California Press, 1989).

efficacy of diplomacy and the UN. Rather, the Blair administration tried to get the U.S. to pursue the diplomatic track because, while they wanted strong action on Iraq, they did not want to take actions that would undermine the UN, weaken the transatlantic alliance system, and inhibit progress on other issues like the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP).[5] On the other hand, the Blair administration pursed the diplomatic track for domestic political reasons. Blair knew that he would face massive opposition from the public and his own Labor Party if they saw him rushing to war without fully trying for a peaceful resolution. Thus, the Blair administration's emphasis on diplomacy and the UN was partially genuine in that they believed diplomatic action could disarm and contain Iraq, thereby obviating the need for an invasion.

RUMORS OF WAR: JANUARY TO APRIL 2002

Throughout early 2002, the British government became increasingly suspicious that the U.S. was going to intensify a push for war with Iraq without pursuing diplomatic options or building a multinational coalition. Bush had already declared that Iraq was part of the "axis of evil" in the 2002 State of the Union Address in January, in which he also asserted that Iraq was seeking WMD and had links to terrorist groups.[6] Blair and Bush planned to meet in Crawford, Texas, in April to discuss further steps in the War on Terror. On March 8, 2002, the British Overseas and Defense Secretariat Cabinet Office reported to the Prime Minister as part of his preparation for the Crawford meeting:

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[5] The British were key players in the negotiations between Israel and Palestine in the 1990's and early 2000's. They hoped to take serious diplomatic action in order to end the Second Intifada, a major Palestinian uprising against Israel from 2000 to 2005 that caused thousands of casualties on both sides.
[6] George Bush, "President Delivers State of the Union Address" (Speech, Washington, DC, January 29, 2002) *White House Archives*, http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html [Accessed September 18, 2014].

The U.S. has lost confidence in containment. Some in government want Saddam removed. The success of Operation Enduring Freedom, distrust of UN sanctions and inspection regimes, and unfinished business from 1991 are all factors. Washington believes that the legal basis for an attack on Iraq already exists. Nor will it necessarily be governed by wider political factors. The U.S. may be willing to work with a much smaller coalition than we think desirable.[7]

This excerpt shows the main British anxieties about the growing U.S. push for war, including the American conviction that containment had failed, their distrust of the UN, and their unwillingness to build a multilateral coalition to deal with Saddam patiently. According to Christopher Meyer, the British Ambassador to the U.S. from 1997 to 2003, Blair had already voiced similar concerns about American unilateralism in 2001 as Britain prepared to help the U.S. in Afghanistan: "Blair had this belief, rightly or wrongly, that if you didn't do this and left America out on its own at a time of great crisis like 9/11, then it would revert to the kind of isolationism which we had seen in the U.S., for example, in the 1920's and 1930's."[8]

In a meeting between National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice and Blair's Foreign Policy Advisor David Manning on March 14, 2002, the British began their push to convince the Americans to pursue diplomacy before going to war. Manning told Rice that if the U.S. wanted British support for an invasion, the U.S. would have to work through the UN first. Manning later wrote to Blair: "I told Condi that we realized that the Administration could go it alone if it chose. But if it wanted company, it would have to take account of the concerns of its potential coalition partners. In particular: the UN

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[7] United Kingdom Overseas and Defense Secretariat Cabinet Office, "Iraq: Options Paper," March 8, 2002, in *The Secret Way to War: The Downing Street Memo and the Iraq War's Buried History,* ed. Mark Danner (New York: New York Review of Books, 2006), 103.
[8] "Interview with Christopher Meyer," *PBS Frontline*, December 20, 2007, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/bushswar/interviews/meyer.html [Accessed September 20, 2014].

dimension."[9] The British and other nations could not simply back the American rush to war without trying for a diplomatic solution because of the political and popular opposition such rashness would cause. Manning told Blair that Bush wanted British support, which meant that putting conditions on British support could influence the route the U.S. chose for dealing with Iraq. Still, public and private statements from the Bush administration continued to worry the Blair administration, including Bush's blanket statement just before the Crawford meeting: "I've made up my mind that Saddam needs to go."[10] Vice President Richard Cheney further stoked British fears of American unilateralism by telling British officials that a coalition "would be nice" but was "not essential."[11]

The British objective for the Crawford meeting was to get Bush to commit to building a multilateral coalition and to go to the UN before starting military action. The Blair administration's belief was that the U.S. would not be able to create a coalition unless the potential partners were convinced that diplomacy, inspections, and UN resolutions had been thoroughly exhausted. British anxiety about the U.S. strategy on Iraq should not be confused with fundamental disagreement about goals, even though the Bush administration was significantly more committed to the overthrow of Saddam and sanguine about the consequences.

Little information has come to light on the Crawford, Texas, meeting from April 5 to April 7, but the basic British pitch was, according to Blair aide Jonathan Powell:

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[9] Memorandum from David Manning to Prime Minister Tony Blair, March 14, 2002, in *The Secret Way to War: The Downing Street Memo and the Iraq War's Buried History,* ed. Mark Danner (New York: New York Review of Books, 2006), 131.

[10] Todd S. Purdum and David E. Sanger, "Bush is Said to Expect Israel to Pull Out 'Without Delay," *New York Times,* April 6, 2002, Academic OneFile.

[11] John Prados and Christopher Ames, "The Iraq War-Part II: Was There Even a Decision?", October 1, 2010, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 328, http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB328/index.htm [Accessed September 22, 2014].

"Don't rush into anything. Move at a deliberate pace and, above all, build a coalition.

Talk to people, go the UN route. Don't just rush into unilateral action."[12] Bush and Blair

ultimately agreed that they would pursue diplomatic action before considering military

action. An internal memo in the Blair administration concluded: "The Prime Minister

and President Bush agreed that action in the UN was the priority."[13] Blair assured Bush

that Britain would support U.S. military action against Iraq, but only if the U.S. met

certain conditions first. An internal memo later detailed British terms:

> When the Prime Minister discussed Iraq with President Bush at Crawford in April he said that the UK would support military action to bring about regime change, provided that certain conditions were met: efforts had been made to construct a coalition/shape public opinion, the Israel-Palestine Crisis was quiescent, and the options for action to eliminate Iraq's WMD through the UN weapons inspectors had been exhausted.[14]

> Publically, Blair and Bush declared that they were on the same page on Iraq after

Crawford. At a press conference following the summit, they assured the public that

diplomacy would be the approach for now, but they also asserted that the status quo was

untenable and that force was still an option. Blair explained that:

> A situation where [Saddam] continues to be in breach of all the United Nations resolutions, refusing to allow us to assess, as the international community have demanded, whether and how he is developing these weapons of mass destruction. Doing nothing in those circumstances is not an option. So we consider all the options available… You cannot have a situation in which he carries on being in breach of the UN resolutions.[15]

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[12] Prados and Ames, "The Iraq War-Part II: Was There Even a Decision?", National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 328.

[13] United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "Circular Cable Diptel 73, 101727Z," April 10, 2002. *National Security Archives*, http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB328/II-Doc07.pdf [Accessed September 22, 2014].

[14] United Kingdom, Cabinet Office Options Paper, "Iraq: Conditions for Military Action (A Note by Officials)," July 21, 2002, *National Security Archives*, http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB328/index.htm [Accessed September 22, 2014].

[15] "Allies Discuss Terrorism and the Middle East: Bush and Blair on Policy," *New York Times,* April 7, 2002. Academic OneFile.

Bush followed up Blair by stating: "Maybe I should be a little less direct and a little more nuanced and say we support regime change."[16] Despite some lingual confusion, Bush was asserting that he and Blair were committed to regime change. The real British position, however, was much more conditional than Bush's formulation. The Americans would not hear blanket endorsements of regime change from the British for some time. In the aftermath of Crawford, the British publically distanced themselves from the American talk of regime change by focusing on narrower and less controversial objectives such as disarmament and the reinstating of weapons inspectors. One British official stated in July: "We believe that regime change is desirable, but ending the threat of weapons of mass destruction is our objective—getting the inspectors back in."[17]

This meeting seemed to assuage British anxieties for the time. Blair left Texas convinced that the U.S. was slowing down their rush to war, as an internal memo concluded: "There was no question of precipitate action."[18] Still, an anonymous British official present at Crawford doubted that the U.S. would genuinely pursue the diplomatic track and asserted that the U.S. was fixated on military action as the only viable solution. This official said there was a "whiff of inevitability" among the Americans at Crawford and that "removal of the Iraqi dictator had been hardwired into American thinking."[19]

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[16] Ibid.
[17] Patrick Tyler, "Europeans Split with U.S. on Need for Iraq Attack, Citing Mideast as Priority," *New York Times,* July 22, 2002. Academic OneFile.
[18] UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "Circular Cable Diptel 73," April 10, 2002.
[19] Prados and Ames, "The Iraq War-Part II: Was There Even a Decision?", National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 328.

WHAT CRAWFORD SAYS ABOUT BRITISH DIPLOMACY

It is important to note at this point that the Blair administration generally agreed that regime change was a desirable goal and so was prepared to use force against Iraq under the correct circumstances. Earlier in March, Blair met with Cheney and agreed that Saddam should be removed because his overthrow would be the best way of addressing his threat to international security.[20] On March 9, Blair spoke in resolute terms on Iraq to the House of Commons: "Iraq is plainly in breach of the United Nations Security Council resolution in relation to the accumulation of weapons of mass destruction and we have to deal with it."[21] Moreover, Foreign Secretary Jack Straw wrote in the *London Times* in March 2002 about Britain's willingness to use force in the face of Saddam's intransigence: "As long as he refuses, we can only suspect the worst—and this obliges us to look at other ways of limiting his capability. We cannot allow Saddam to hold a gun to the heads of his own people, his neighbors, and the world forever."[22]

Nevertheless, the Blair administration believed that force must only be used as a last resort, and they wanted to make sure that the U.S. did not rush into a conflict without multilateral assistance or without fully exhausting peaceful means. They also did not want U.S. actions and statements to ignore or weaken the UN and the transatlantic alliance, which they saw as crucial tools for addressing a wide range of international security problems. They therefore downplayed questions of war and regime change and focused on working with the U.S. on a diplomatic campaign against Iraq.

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[20] Michael Gordon, "Cheney, in London, Receives Strong Support from Blair on Tough Stance Against Iraq," *New York Times,* March 12, 2002. Academic OneFile.

[21] Warren Hoge "Blair Support of Bush on Iraq is Criticized in His Own Party," *New York Times,* March 9, 2002. Academic OneFile.

[22] Jack Straw, "Removing the Threat of Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction," *London Times*, Federation of American Scientists, March 5, 2002, http://fas.org/news/iraq/2002/030502iraq.htm [Accessed September 19, 2014].

Blair's speech at Crawford after the summit demonstrates that the British believed that diplomacy could resolve the Iraq crisis and that their push to convince the U.S. to pursue the UN track was not just a way to work around popular and Parliamentary demands. Blair's speech focused heavily on the theme of an interdependent world and tried to entwine the Iraq crisis with other international issues. He claimed that the 9/11 attacks had starkly revealed the interdependence of the U.S. and Europe and that the response would be most effective if it came from a united international community. He further asserted: "The world works better when the U.S. and the EU work together" on a wide range of global issues, including terrorism and Iraq.[23] He called for an "integrated approach" to international issues based on common values and common threats.

The Blair administration feared that if the U.S. rushed to war without building a multinational coalition, they would undermine the legitimacy of the UN and disrupt the transatlantic alliance system. Ambassador Meyer confirmed Blair's belief that the integrity of the UN must be upheld:

> The UN was more central to Blair's decision to support the war: So he was pretty determined to go all the way with President Bush, not because he's sort of hanging on to this relationship for dear life, but because, and I really believe this, from talking to the prime minister and observing him over many years, he truly believed, as he does today, that Iraq and Saddam Hussein was an offense to the integrity of the UN and the Security Council on which so much depends.[24]

The British also feared that the broad international support for the U.S. after 9/11 would evaporate in the face of such "cowboy" behavior, leaving the U.S. isolated in the War on Terror. These concerns help explain why the British consistently tried to pin the U.S. to the diplomatic process and tie a broader set of international issues to the Iraq Crisis,

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[23] Blair, "Speech in Texas," April 8, 2002.

[24] "Interview with Christopher Meyer by Frontline," *PBS Frontline*, March 18, 2003, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/blair/interviews/meyer.html [Accessed September 20, 2014].

which they thought the Americans were viewing in isolation. One example of this dynamic is the consistent British emphasis on the connections between the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) and the Iraq Crisis.

Virtually every speech from a high-level Blair administration foreign policy official from 2002 to early 2003 mentions the MEPP in connection to the Iraq Crisis. Blair contended at Crawford that addressing the Israeli-Palestinian issue was also crucial for "regional stability" by helping stem the "contagion" of radicalism.[25] In a meeting in March 2002, Manning told Rice: "The Israel/Palestine issue was critical; it was not optional extra."[26] Blair's Press Chief, Alistair Campbell, also tied Iraq to the MEPP, even in the face of American skepticism: "The Americans claimed to be conscious of the importance of the Middle East Peace Plan but we were not really sure they got it."[27] Progress on the MEPP was also one of the clear conditions for British support for military action reiterated to the Bush administration throughout 2002 and 2003.

The Blair administration believed that in order to garner the support of Arab nations for an invasion of Iraq, the international community had to make some progress on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The support of Arab nations for an invasion of Iraq was important in a military sense because Coalition forces would need a staging ground for the invasion and logistical routes into Iraq. Furthermore, the British saw that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict fanned anti-Western sentiment in the Middle East and that this antipathy would most likely increase in reaction to an American-led invasion. Therefore,

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[25] Blair, "Speech in Texas," April 8, 2002.

[26] House of Commons—The Iraq Inquiry, (2009), *Testimony of Sir David Manning to the Iraq Inquiry*, November 30, 2009, p. 12. Available at http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/40459/20091130pm-final.pdf [Accessed September 24, 2014].

[27] Alistair Campbell, *The Blair Years: The Alistair Campbell Diaries* (New York: Knopf Publishing, 2007), 609.

progress on the MEPP was needed to "reduce Arab antipathy to military action against Saddam Hussein" and decrease radicalization.[28]

In their unique position as a bridge between Europe and the U.S., the British could also see that the U.S. would struggle to garner European support for action against Iraq unless they demonstrated serious intent in forwarding the MEPP. The Blair administration understood that most European nations, including France and Germany, thought that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was a bigger threat to regional stability and more of a boon to terrorism than Iraq. Consequently, many European governments were concerned with the growing American push on Iraq and inattention to the MEPP. German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder voiced this tension: "There is a tremendous amount of concern about anything that would destabilize the situation in the Middle East. Things are bad enough now and we don't need to worsen them."[29] Great Britain would press for American leadership on the MEPP because they saw that a multilateral coalition would be improbable until the U.S. and Great Britain had allayed allied concerns on the MEPP.

The British also pushed the Americans towards the UN process because they doubted from an early date that there was a viable legal justification for war. One memo designed to prepare Blair for the Crawford summit claimed that because the British Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) had found no evidence of Iraq's connections to al-Qaeda or 9/11, the U.S. and Britain could not justify war with Iraq on the basis of self-defense

[28] Cabinet Office Options Paper, "Iraq: Conditions for Military Action," July 21, 2002, p. 3.
[29] Tyler, "Europeans Split with U.S. on Need for Iraq Attack, Citing Mideast as Priority," *New York Times,* July 22, 2002. Academic OneFile.

under Article 51 of the UN charter.[30] A different March 2002 memo from legal experts

in the British Foreign Office concluded that humanitarian intervention was not a viable

justification at the time because no "overwhelming humanitarian catastrophe" existed in

Iraq.[31] The Foreign Office posited that the U.S. and Britain could rely instead on the

revival argument. This viewpoint asserts that Saddam had broken the terms of the

ceasefire agreement from the Gulf War by restarting his WMD program, thereby

reactivating the original authorization of the use of force in United Nations Security

Council (UNSC) resolution 678 from 1990.[32]

However, Foreign Office legal experts also described the revival argument as

"controversial" and "unlikely to receive any support."[33] They advised that the best route

would be to get a new UNSC resolution that would reinsert UN weapons inspectors and

then seek the authorization of force if Saddam continued his intransigence. The fact that

the Blair administration pushed the U.S. towards exhausting the UN process and gaining

an explicit UNSC authorization shows that they took this legal advice seriously. They

believed this path was the only potentially legal justification for war and the only one

likely to garner broad international support.

The British strategy in 2002 was to link British support for an invasion to a set of

international institutions and issues in order to compel the Americans to earnestly pursue

diplomacy and multilateralism on Iraq and on a broader range of problems. At the same

time, the British wanted to position Iraq, in the words of Foreign Office political director

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[30] United Kingdom Overseas and Defense Secretariat Cabinet Office, "Iraq: Options Paper," March 8, 2002, p. 112.
[31] United Kingdom Foreign Office, "Iraq: Legal Background," March 8, 2002, in *The Secret Way to War: The Downing Street Memo and the Iraq War's Buried History,* ed. Mark Danner (New York: New York Review of Books, 2006), 122.
[32] Ibid., 118-120.
[33] United Kingdom Foreign Office, "Iraq: Legal Background," March 8, 2002, p. 120.

Peter Ricketts, as "a problem for the international community as a whole, not just for the U.S."[34] They saw their role as uniting the Americans and Europeans by committing the Americans to multilateral action and convincing key European nations like France and Germany that the Americans would not ignore their concerns. The broader the coalition became, the more effective it would be and the easier it would be for individual leaders to justify increasingly intense measures against Iraq. A British memo from the summer of 2002 outlined this multilateral approach:

> We need to persuade the UN and the international community that this situation cannot be allowed to continue ad infinitum. We need to set a deadline, leading to an ultimatum. It would be preferable to obtain backing of the UNSCR for any ultimatum… In the absence of UN authorization, there will be problems in securing the support of NATO and EU partners.[35]

This approach fit nicely with Blair's argument at Crawford for an interdependent, united, multilateral coalition designed to address a wide range of issues, including Iraq. Britain's role as a bridge between the U.S. and Europe would strengthen institutions like the UN, bolster the transatlantic alliance, and still effectively address the Iraq crisis. If the Iraq crisis required the use of force, there would be a broader coalition of nations backing the U.S. in a more legitimate and effective enforcement of international law and security.

AFTER CRAWFORD: SUMMER AND FALL 2002

To the great consternation of the Blair administration, Bush made no effort towards UN action through the spring and summer of 2002 despite his agreement with

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[34] Peter Ricketts, "Iraq: Advice for the Prime Minister," March 22, 2002, in *The Secret Way to War: The Downing Street Memo and the Iraq War's Buried History,* ed. Mark Danner (New York: New York Review of Books, 2006), 141.
[35] United Kingdom, Cabinet Office Options Paper, "Iraq: Conditions for Military Action (A Note by Officials)," July 21, 2002.

Blair at Crawford. Within the Bush administration, a dispute raged over whether the U.S. should actually pursue a diplomatic solution through the UN. Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld strongly opposed diplomatic action because they believed that it would drag the U.S. into an endless process of debate, bureaucracy, and ineffectual resolutions. They essentially saw military action as the only way to depose Saddam and eliminate the threat of his WMD program, making diplomatic action a dangerous sideshow that would only give Saddam more time to arm himself.

In contrast, Rice and Secretary of State Colin Powell believed that exhausting the UN process was the only way to build a multinational coalition to help the U.S. if war became necessary. They were far more concerned with the potential problems of an invasion, including regional destabilization, the difficulty of implanting a democracy in a country that had never had one, and the famous Pottery Barn Rule. As a result, they were more supportive of diplomatic pressure and multinational coalitions than hawks like Cheney and Rumsfeld.[36]

Minutes from a British Cabinet meeting on July 23 reveal continued British anxiety about U.S. hesitance to work with the UN and their seemingly unshakeable belief that only war could resolve the Iraq crisis. Richard Dearlove, the head of MI6, reported after high level talks in Washington: "Military action was now seen as inevitable. Bush wanted to remove Saddam, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD…The NSC [National Security Council] had no patience with the UN route."[37] Public

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[36] Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 150-157, 177-179. Powell's Pottery Barn Rule states, "You break it, you own it." He meant that if the U.S. invaded Iraq and toppled the Baathist regime, they would be responsible for governing the country for a considerable period of time.
[37] Matthew Rycroft, "The Downing Street Memo-Iraq: Prime Minister's Meeting, 23 July," July 23, 2002, in *The Secret Way to War: The Downing Street Memo and the Iraq War's Buried History,* ed. Mark Danner (New York: New York Review of Books, 2006), 89. MI6 is the shorthand name for the British Secret Intelligence Service, Great Britain's main intelligence agency.

statements by the Bush administration further vexed the British. Most notably, Cheney openly excoriated the UN for failing to disarm Saddam, unambiguously declared that Saddam had WMD, and asserted that further UN inspections or resolutions would be useless.[38]

In the face of such mixed messages from the Americans, it was a top priority for Blair to solidify American support for diplomacy in his meetings with Bush at Camp David in early September 2002. Blair reiterated to Bush and Cheney that public opinion and Labor Party opposition would not allow him to support military action unless they thoroughly attempted diplomatic options. Britain's public opinion was far more divided than American public opinion on the issue of war with Iraq, with 47 percent in favor of using force to remove Saddam and 47 percent opposed by the end of 2002. Moreover, public support in Britain for the use of force was contingent upon the full exhaustion of diplomacy.[39] Blair also had to counter constant domestic accusations that he was Bush's "poodle" who supported the U.S. simply out of deference to a stronger nation. Blair reiterated throughout the Iraq Crisis that he was pursuing a tough policy because he thought it was right and necessary. For instance, in September 2002 he asserted: "The reason why our place is beside them in addressing the issue is not because of some misplaced allegiance or because of blind loyalty—it's because it's the right thing to do."[40] This statement was most likely true, but it was also true that Blair's desire to influence American policy and bolster the transatlantic alliance also motivated his

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[38] Cheney, "Speech at Veterans of Foreign Wars," August 26, 2002.
[39] "What the World Thinks in 2002," Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, December 4, 2002, http://www.pewglobal.org/2002/12/04/what-the-world-thinks-in-2002/ [Accessed September 24, 2014].
[40] Sarah Lyall, "Blair Defends U.S. on Iraq, Reaffirming His Support," *New York Times*, September 4, 2002. Academic OneFile.

support for U.S. policy, including the potential use of force.[41] As an illustration, Blair

told the BBC in September:

> What is important though is that at moments of crisis they [the U.S.] don't need to
> know that you are giving general expressions of support and sympathy. That is
> easy, frankly. They need to know, 'Are you prepared to commit, are you prepared
> to be there when the shooting starts?[42]

At Camp David, Bush reiterated his promise to pursue the UN track, but in turn

he pressured Blair for a clear promise for military support if diplomacy failed. Blair

replied, "I'm with you," giving Bush the unambiguous assurance he had been seeking for

months from Great Britain.[43] It seems that Bush agreed to pursue the UN route due to

pressures from his allies and within his Cabinet. Powell was the main figure in

convincing Bush to pursue diplomacy. Powell told Bush that pursuing diplomacy at the

UN might actually work in peacefully disarming Saddam, which meant that there would

not be a war. He told the President: "If you take it to the UN, you've got to recognize

that they might be able to solve it. In which case there's no war."[44] Powell's comment

clarifies why figures like Cheney and Rumsfeld adamantly opposed the UN route given

their belief that military action was the only viable solution for disarming Iraq. Powell

also convinced Bush that it was in the American national interest to work with the UN in

order to build a broader international consensus for war with Iraq.

Although Powell's arguments were probably the main factor in Bush's decision to

work with the UN on Iraq, Bush also understood that Britain could not help the U.S.

militarily without first attempting diplomacy. He stated that "Blair's got to deal with his

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[41] Ibid.
[42] "Britain Will Pay 'Blood Price' — Blair", *BBC News*, September 6, 2002,
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/2239887.stm [Accessed October 2, 2015].
[43] Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 178.
[44] Ibid., 151.

own Parliament, his own people, but he has to deal with the French-British relationship as well, and its context within Europe."[45] Bush seriously wanted British help in dealing with Iraq, so the British argument for a diplomatic effort had a real impact on his decision to go to the UN. Bush later recalled that "Blair had a lot to do with it," as did conversations with Australian Prime Minister John Howard and Spanish President José Aznar.[46]

On September 12, 2002, Bush spoke before the UN General Assembly and pledged that the U.S. would work with the UNSC to pass a resolution on Iraq that would reinsert UN weapons inspectors. Bush laced this call for a UNSC resolution with implicit criticism of the UN. He asked the audience: "Are Security Council resolutions to be honored and enforced, or cast aside without consequence? Will the United Nations serve the purpose of its founding, or will it be irrelevant?"[47] These questions reflected the deep ambivalence among top American officials and for Bush himself about the UN process. The speech was both an appeal to the UN for action against Iraq and a challenge to the UN for its failure to disarm Saddam. Reflecting this skepticism of the UN, the U.S. continued to assert a right to act unilaterally throughout the diplomatic action in the fall and winter of 2002 and 2003.[48] Nevertheless, the British and their allies within the Bush administration had won a considerable if temporary victory in directing a typically unilateral administration towards diplomacy and multilateralism.

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[45] Ibid., 297.
[46] Ibid., 183.
[47] "President's Remarks at the United Nations General Assembly," *White House Archives,* September 12, 2002, http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020912-1.html [Accessed September 20, 2002].
[48] Warren Hoge, "Tony Blair's Role: Statesman, or Poodle?" *New York Times,* September 26, 2002. Academic OneFile.

ATTEMPTING DIPLOMACY: WINTER 2002-2003

The resolution that resulted from this process was UNSC Resolution 1441, passed on November 8, 2002. The resolution declared that Iraq was in "material breach" of numerous previous resolutions and had "a final opportunity to comply" with UN weapons inspections or face "serious consequences."[49] Iraq would have to provide inspectors with a full account of its weapons program and grant "immediate, unimpeded, unconditional, and unrestricted access" to any weapons or weapons production sites.[50] The resolution set a high bar for Iraqi compliance in stating that any failure at any point to "cooperate fully with the implementation of this resolution should constitute a further material breach."[51] The Iraqi government accepted Resolution 1441 and allowed UNMOVIC and IAEA inspectors into Iraq later in November.

The remainder of the international debate on Iraq from Resolution 1441 to the start of the war in March 2003 was about whether Saddam was complying with Resolution 1441, whether his ostensible failure to do so automatically authorized the use of force against Iraq, and whether the U.S. should attempt to achieve a second UNSC resolution that would explicitly authorize the use of force to disarm Iraq. The key question for the second half of this paper is what role the Blair administration played in the transatlantic debate that pitted the skeptical French and Germans against the far more bellicose Americans. The British would continue to push the Americans to build a multilateral coalition, have patience with inspections, and work to acquire a second UNSC resolution authorizing force against Iraq. They would simultaneously pressure

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[49] *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1441* (November 8, 2002), in *The Iraq Papers* ed. John Ehrenberg, J. Patrice McSherry, Jose Ramon Sanchez, and Caroleen Marji Sayej (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 96, 99.
[50] Ibid., 97
[51] Ibid., 97.

France and Germany to commit to stronger action against Iraq even to the point of accusing them of weakening the transatlantic alliance and the UN.

The controversy over inspections and Resolution 1441 took place in the context of a broader crisis in the transatlantic alliance over Iraq. Much of this crisis related to differing interpretations of the meaning of Resolution 1441. Bush portrayed the resolution as a "final test" of Saddam's willingness to cooperate, claiming that "any act of delay or defiance will be an additional breach of Iraq's international obligations, and a clear signal that the Iraqi regime has once again abandoned the path of voluntary compliance."[52] Privately, the Bush Cabinet remained wary that diplomacy would entangle them in inaction. Christopher Meyer later told *Frontline*: "There was much greater impatience on the American side to get this sorted out one way or another, and the UN was intrinsically slow and cumbersome. There was immense frustration in Washington over the slowness that it took to get Resolution 1441 through."[53] Now that he had committed to weapons inspections, Bush and his team temporarily toned down the rhetoric of regime change and instead hewed closer to the British focus on disarmament. They now had to stifle their doubts about the diplomatic track in public, although they remained skeptical of the entire process. Nevertheless, they still believed that the resolution essentially authorized force in the event of Iraqi noncompliance. They also adhered to the revival argument that reactivated UN authorizations of force from the early 1990s.

In contrast, the French and Germans held that inspections must be completed, inspectors must report back to the UN confirming Saddam's noncompliance, and the

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[52] Patrick Tyler, "Security Council Votes, 15-0, for Tough Iraq Resolution," *New York Times,* November 9, 2002. Academic OneFile.
[53] "Interview with Christopher Meyer," *PBS Frontline*, December 20, 2007.

UNSC must then vote for another resolution explicitly sanctioning the use of force.[54]

Beneath these legal arguments lay far more important disagreements about the use of force against Iraq. The French, Germans, and other opponents of war fundamentally disagreed with a number of key elements of American policy towards Iraq. These included the doctrine of preemptive war, the efficacy of containment, the connections between Iraq and al-Qaeda, the size and advancement of Saddam's WMD program, the imminence of the threat, and the likelihood of force resolving the Iraq Crisis without causing larger problems.

Britain's position was somewhere between these parties, albeit probably closer to the American position. The British made statements designed to satisfy both the proponents and opponents of war with Iraq. For example, shortly after the passage of Resolution 1441, Blair stated: "Saddam must now make his choice. My message to him is this: disarm or you face force."[55] This statement reassured the Bush administration of Blair's promise at Crawford and Camp David that he would be willing to support military action if the diplomatic track failed. Even so, the Blair administration was closer to France and Germany's position that a second resolution was desirable for political, legal, and practical reasons. Blair continually asserted that the use of force was a last resort and that disarmament was the British objective. He also praised Resolution 1441 as a product of multilateral cooperation and a sign that the international community could resolve a wide range of international issues, including economic development and the MEPP. For instance, he said on November 11, 2002:

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[54] Philip H. Gordon and Jeremy Shapiro, *Allies at War: America, Europe, and the Crisis over Iraq* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 114.
[55] Tyler, "Security Council Votes, 15-0, for Tough Iraq Resolution," *New York Times,* November 9, 2002. Academic OneFile.

If a unified international community is the surest way to defeat these new dangers, then we need to construct the broadest agenda around which unity can coalesce. The UN resolution on Iraq was a vital step in this direction: a willingness to act matched by a willingness to act together.[56]

On December 7, 2002, Iraq released a 12,000-page report to the UN that did not account for chemical and biological weapons that inspectors had already documented.[57] Both sides of the transatlantic divide agreed that the report was incomplete and suspicious, but they disagreed about the proper response. The Americans believed that this inadequate report was a "material breach" of Resolution 1441 that authorized the use of force. France, Germany, and even Great Britain disagreed and contended that the lack of clarity made it even more vital to continue the inspections in order to find out exactly what weapons Saddam had before war was declared.

The Blair administration remained optimistic that the crisis could be resolved diplomatically, with Foreign Secretary Jack Straw stating in early January that a diplomatic solution had "60-40" odds over military action.[58] Blair added that as long as inspectors were in Iraq, Saddam probably could not continue WMD production. He called for "space and time" for the inspections to continue. Other British diplomats wondered if the war could not be postponed until August to give inspectors ample time to proceed, giving us a rough sense of what the British timeline might have been without American pressure to act sooner.[59] The Blair administration seemed to believe that the inspections, the military buildup in the Persian Gulf, and the diplomatic pressure had Saddam in a vise in which he could not make too much trouble in the short term. Later in

[56] "Full Text of Tony Blair's Speech at the Lord Mayor's Banquet," November 11, 2002, *The Guardian*, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/nov/13/september11.usa1 [Accessed September 20, 2014].
[57] Gordon and Shapiro, *Allies at War,* 115.
[58] Gordon and Shapiro, *Allies at War,* 118.
[59] Julia Preston, "A Question of Timing: Go Slow or Fast on Iraq?" *New York Times*, January 13, 2003. Academic OneFile.

January of 2002, Blair told Parliament: "As a result of the military buildup and as a result of the determination to see this thing through, the regime in Iraq and Saddam are weakening…They are rattled, they are weakening…and we have to keep up the pressure."[60] The Blair administration knew that the U.S. did not want to act militarily without them and tried to use this leverage to moderate American impatience and assert that diplomacy was working reasonably well.

On the other hand, the British could detect the growing belief in the White House that inspections were not working and that an invasion was inevitable. For hawks like Cheney and Rumsfeld, this was a self-evident truth that they had never doubted. Rumsfeld, for instance, said on January 22, 2003, that diplomatic means had basically been exhausted, despite the fact that UN weapons inspectors had not yet reported their findings to the UN.[61] More willing diplomats like Powell and Rice fought an uphill battle against these Cabinet hawks to convince the President to persevere on the diplomatic track. After a meeting with American officials at the Ministry of Defense on January 15, 2003, Blair's Communications Director Alistair Campbell summed up the British impression of American planning: "It was pretty clear as we got into the cars and headed back to Number 10 that the Americans were going for this and TB [Tony Blair] had looked more nervous."[62] The Blair administration was right to be nervous because Bush had already made several private statements to his Cabinet that inspections were not working and that war was probably their only option.[63] The creeping sense of inevitable

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[60] Warren Hoge, "Blair Sees Iraq Weakening as France Resists Early War," *New York Times*, January 22, 2003. Academic OneFile.
[61] James Dao and Richard Stevenson, "Bush Says Iraqis Are Still Resisting Demand to Disarm," *New York Times,* January 22nd, 2003. Academic OneFile.
[62] Campbell, *The Blair Years,* 656.
[63] Woodward, *Plan of Attack,* 270-273.

war made it all the more vital for the British to push the Americans to stick with the diplomatic track.

On January 22, 2003, the transatlantic alliance was strained further when France and Germany announced their intention to work together to block military action against Iraq.[64] Just two days earlier, French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin had exclaimed that "Nothing! Nothing!" would justify war against Iraq.[65] This declaration frustrated most members of the Bush administration, who pointed to French and German opposition as another reason why the diplomatic track would not work. The most notable public response was Rumsfeld's dismissal of France and Germany as "old Europe."[66] Even Powell, the Bush administration's greatest advocate for the diplomatic track, remarked in frustration: "There are some nations in the world who would like simply to turn away from this problem, pretend it isn't there."[67]

The Blair administration moved closer to the American position after the testimony of weapons inspectors Hans Blix and Mohammed ElBaradei on January 28. Blix suggested that Iraq was not in compliance with Resolution 1441: "Iraq appears not to have come to a genuine acceptance—not even today—of the disarmament, which was demanded of it."[68] Although ElBaradei claimed that there was no evidence that Saddam had restarted his nuclear program, Blix reported evidence of VX nerve gas, anthrax

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[64] "EU Allies Unite Against Iraq War," January 22, 2003, *BBC News*, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2683409.stm [Accessed October 1, 2014].

[65] Christopher Hitchens, "Powell Valediction," November 1, 2004, *Foreign Policy Magazine*, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2004/11/01/powell_valediction [Accessed September 21, 2014].

[66] "Outrage at 'Old Europe' Remarks," January 23, 2003, *BBC News*, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2687403.stm [Accessed October 1, 2014].

[67] Shapiro and Gordon, *Allies at War,* 128.

[68] "Raw Data: Hans Blix's Report to the U.N.," January 28, 2003, *Fox News*, http://www.foxnews.com/story/2003/01/28/raw-data-hans-blix-report-to-un/ [Accessed September 22, 2014].

stores, and medium-range missiles.[69] The U.S. immediately used Blix's report to assert

that Saddam had no intention of complying with Resolution 1441. The U.S. Ambassador

to the UN, John Negroponte, said: "There is nothing in either presentation that would

give us hope that Iraq has ever intended to fully comply."[70]

The Blair administration concurred with the American position, although they

maintained that war was not yet inevitable. Jack Straw declared that Iraq was in

"material breach" of Resolution 1441. He added that military action was on the table if

Saddam continued his intransigence: "Iraq has to understand that time is running out and

if it does not comply with the requirements of the international community, which are

now shown to be fully justified, then serious consequences will follow. Serious

consequences means the use of force."[71] In contrast to the Anglo-American position,

Chirac said that France would only use force as a last resort and Schroeder rejected war

completely.[72]

On January 31, 2003, Britain and seven other European nations made a joint

statement of support for the U.S. that sought to convince the U.S. to remain patient with

diplomacy. The statement praised the transatlantic alliance system as the "guarantee of

our freedom" while expressing concern that the Iraq Crisis might erode that crucial

alliance: "The trans-Atlantic relationship must not become a casualty of the current Iraqi

regime's persistent attempts to threaten world security." These nations argued against the

current of American unilateralism by stressing the utility of the transatlantic alliance

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[69] Julia Preston, "U.N. Inspector Says Iraq Falls Short on Cooperation," *New York Times,* January 28, 2003. Academic OneFile.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Alan Cowell, "Britain Accuses Baghdad, Deepening Rift in Europe," *New York Times,* January 29, 2003. Academic OneFile.
[72] Richard Stevenson, "Bush Warns Iraq It Has Only Weeks to Yield Weapons," *New York Times,* January 31, 2003. Academic OneFile.

system: "We must remain united in insisting that his regime be disarmed. The solidarity, cohesion, and determination of the international community are our best hope of achieving this peacefully."[73]

These nations further said that their goal was to disarm Saddam, but they wanted to pursue the "UN route" completely before using force. They also declared that Resolution 1441 was Iraq's last chance to disarm peacefully before facing a "greater confrontation," implying that these nations were willing to support the U.S. in forcibly disarming Iraq once diplomacy had been exhausted.[74] In this document, Britain and other European nations showed that they were willing to support the use of force, but also hinted that this support would be contingent on America's commitment to the UN process.

The Blair administration further demonstrated their genuine commitment to multilateralism and diplomacy by continuing to tie Iraq to the MEPP and pressing the U.S. to address that crisis. Blair believed that the appearance of ignoring the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would undermine the legitimacy of the campaign against Iraq in the Arab world. In December 2002, Blair invited Palestinian leaders to London to work on reforming the Palestinian Authority (PA) and advance MEPP efforts.[75] Throughout early 2003, he repeatedly pressed President Bush for leadership on the MEPP, which the U.S. had largely overlooked during the Iraq crisis. Bush angered Blair on March 9 by announcing that the U.S. would not lay out a plan to address the Israeli-Palestinian

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[73]"Leaders' Statement on Iraq: Full Text," *BBC News,* January 30, 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2708877.stm. [Accessed September 19, 2014]. The other countries were Spain, Portugal, Italy, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Denmark.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Warren Hoge, "Britain Organizing Conference on the Mideast," *New York Times*, December 17, 2002. Academic OneFile. One of Blair's major goals in the Middle East Peace Process was to help resolve infighting among different factions in the Palestinian Authority, a government established in the 1993 Oslo Accords for the Palestinian territories of Gaza and the West Bank.

conflict until after the Iraq crisis.[76] Blair understood that most European nations saw the Israel-Palestinian issue as the bigger problem, meaning that Bush's postponing of the MEPP would only make it harder to rally support for action on Iraq. Blair told Bush that American action on the MEPP would help him weather domestic criticism, leading Bush to announce a new plan to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on March 14.[77] In this episode, Blair demonstrated that he viewed Iraq as one of a series of issues in the Middle East that needed to be tackled in tandem. Moreover, he showed that his support for U.S. policy gave him some leverage over the Bush administration, which did not want him to back out of supporting the war because of domestic criticism.

FEBRUARY-MARCH 2003: THE COLLAPSE OF DIPLOMACY

After the Blix and ElBaradei reports, the U.S. and Great Britain had roughly come to the consensus that Iraq had violated Resolution 1441. However, they were not on the same page on how to respond, particularly in regards to the need for a second resolution. The idea behind a second resolution was that Resolution 1441 had not explicitly authorized military action against Iraq but only "serious consequences" if Iraq breached the resolution's demands. Most supporters of the resolution believed that if Saddam breached the resolution, the U.S. should go back to the UNSC to pass a second resolution that would set a short-time limit for full Iraqi compliance and then authorize military action to disarm Iraq. Staunch opponents of war like France, Germany, and Russia opposed the idea of a second resolution because they did not want to authorize the use of

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[76] Stephen Weisman, "Bush, in Rebuff to Partners, Freezes Mideast Peace Plan," *New York Times*, March 9, 2003. Academic OneFile.
[77] Ibid.

force against Iraq and they thought that Resolution 1441 and the inspections still needed time to play out.[78]

The Bush administration believed that the inspections reports created a justification for war and that a second resolution was unnecessary. They seemed ready to end diplomacy and prepare for military action.[79] The situation for the Blair administration was more complicated because they were less willing to abandon peaceful means of disarming Iraq, less certain of the current legal justification for war, and under more domestic political pressure. Blair's approval rating on his handling of Iraq had fallen from 40 percent in September 2002 to 26 percent by December.[80] He promised his nation in December 2002 that he would only go to war with UN approval or if one nation, such as France, was unreasonably vetoing the use of force in the UNSC. He therefore needed a second resolution to avoid a political crisis that might preclude him from supporting a U.S. invasion.

Bush and Blair met in Washington on January 31, 2003, to discuss Iraq. Blair told Bush that he absolutely needed a second resolution. Blair's motivations were varied, but in this meeting he focused on the need to address domestic political criticism by building a broader international coalition.[81] Christopher Meyer summed up how Blair appealed to Bush:

> Blair made it perfectly clear that for all those who wished to be with the United States in disarming Saddam Hussein—Britain, Turkey, Australia, Spain, Italy…all saying that, more for political than any legal reason, they needed to

[78] Patrick Tyler, "A Gamble for a Friend: Going Back to UN to Help Blair at Home, Bush Risks Losing a Round of Diplomacy," *New York Times,* February 25, 2003. Academic OneFile
[79] Woodward, *Plan of Attack,* 293-294.
[80] Gordon and Shapiro, *Allies at War,* 144.
[81] Woodward, *Plan of Attack,* 296-297.

make a best effort to get a second resolution. That was the heart of the case made to Bush.[82]

The entire Bush Cabinet was hesitant to pursue a second resolution given how difficult it was to pass Resolution 1441 and how adamantly France and Germany were set against a second resolution. Nevertheless, Bush understood the political pressure on Blair and agreed to push for a second resolution that would explicitly authorize the use of force. He saw that Blair needed to show his people that he had tried to get a second resolution in order to rally public support for military action.[83]

The varied motivations of the Blair administration in pushing the U.S. to support a campaign for a second UNSC resolution are worth considering in depth. The political pressure on Blair was immense and constantly growing, but he and his team remained optimistic that the diplomatic track might still work if enough support could be rallied around a second resolution. In a press conference with Bush after the January 31 meeting, Blair laid out the reasoning behind his call for a second resolution:

> We said very clearly that Saddam had what we said was the final opportunity to disarm and that he had to cooperate fully, in every respect, with the UN weapons inspectors.   As Dr. Blix said in his report to the Security Council earlier this week, he's not doing that. And therefore, what is important is that the international community comes together again and makes it absolutely clear that this is unacceptable…So this is a test for the international community. It's not just a test for the United States or for Britain.[84]

Notice that Blair framed the issue as an international problem that required a multilateral coalition to address. Entries from Alastair Campbell's diary confirm that Blair was not just faking support for multilateralism in public. Campbell wrote on February 4: "I said surely the best thing for Bush was to get Saddam out without a war.

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[82] "Interview with Christopher Meyer," *PBS Frontline*, December 20, 2007.

[83] Woodward, *Plan of Attack,* 297.

[84] "Full Transcript: Facing 'Common Enemy,' Terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction," *New York Times,* February 1, 2003. Academic OneFile.

TB said that was his whole strategy."[85] Campbell wrote again on February 6: "TB said

we had to sort out Saddam in as peaceful a way as possible."[86]

The Blair administration was also highly skeptical of the American legal rationale

for war, showing that they wanted to deal with the Iraq Crisis in a manner consistent with

international law. In a memo to Blair in early March 2003, Attorney General Peter

Goldsmith assessed the competing legal justifications for war and the arguments about

Resolution 1441. He ruled out humanitarian intervention and self-defense as

justifications for military intervention, saying that there was no current humanitarian

catastrophe or imminent threat of attack. The one remaining rationale would be UNSC

authorization. The U.S. argued that Saddam was in material breach of UNSC Resolution

1441 and that this document's reference to "serious consequences" included the use of

force, meaning that no second resolution was necessary. According to Goldsmith, the

opposite view asserted that the UNSC "decided in resolution 1441 that in the event of

continued Iraqi non-compliance, the issue should return to the Council for a further

decision on what action should be taken at that stage."[87] This viewpoint meant that

Resolution 1441 required the UNSC to meet again to discuss the consequences of Iraq's

violation of its obligations. The opposition view also stated that "serious consequences"

did not necessarily entail the use of force.

After plunging into the details of this controversy, Goldsmith ended up declaring

a draw. He concluded that the language of Resolution 1441 was unclear and that

"arguments can be made on both sides." He hesitantly endorsed the American revival

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[85] Campbell, *The Blair Years,* 663.

[86] Ibid., 664.

[87] Memorandum from Attorney General Peter Goldsmith to Prime Minister Tony Blair, March 7, 2003, *Guardian Online Archives*, http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Guardian/documents/2005/04/28/legal.pdf [September 18, 2014].

argument, stating: "Resolution 1441 is capable in principle of reviving the authorization in 678 without a further resolution." Goldsmith reasoned that because the revival argument was so dubious, "the best course for Great Britain would be to secure the adoption of a further resolution to authorize the use of force." The Blair administration heeded the Attorney General's advice by pursuing a second resolution until a few days before the war. They only embraced the revival argument that Saddam's violation of Resolution 1441 triggered the reauthorization of force from the Persian Gulf War after it was clear that a second resolution would not pass the UNSC.[88] This behavior shows that Blair did not want to start a war that would undermine international law and the legitimacy of the UN.

The Bush administration would prove a half-hearted partner in the Anglo-American push for a second resolution. Even as Bush and Blair called for a second resolution in a press conference on February 1, 2003, Bush asserted that the U.S. did not think this resolution was necessary: "Should the United Nations decide to pass a second resolution, it would be welcomed if it is yet another signal that we're intent upon disarming Saddam Hussein. But 1441 gives us the authority to move without any second resolution."[89] Many top American officials were wary that the campaign for a second resolution would lead to further delay of a necessary war. One top official told the *New York Times*: "We're certainly not going to stand in the way, and we may even help in seeking a second resolution. But it's not going to be a process in which we get mired

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[88] Ibid.

[89] "Full Transcript: Facing 'Common Enemy,' Terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction," *New York Times,* February 1, 2003. Academic OneFile.

down."[90] Christopher Meyer recalled: "There was no enthusiasm in Washington for a second resolution."[91] Bush's statement in early March of 2003 that "we really don't need anybody's permission," particularly irritated skeptics of the war.[92] The Bush Administration's poorly concealed apathy for the process of garnering support for a second resolution undermined British efforts by further convincing skeptical nations like France and Germany that the U.S. was unshakably set on military action.

The U.S. and Great Britain introduced the draft second resolution to the UNSC on February 24, 2003, and tried to convince the undecided members of the UNSC throughout late February and early March to support a second resolution. This draft resolution declared that: "Iraq has failed to take the final opportunity afforded to it in Resolution 1441" and that the international community must uphold previous UN resolutions by enforcing "serious consequences."[93] Blair led the diplomatic effort by calling and meeting with heads of state, especially French President Jacques Chirac. In the meantime, the transatlantic crisis deepened on March 5 when France, Germany, and Russia issued a joint statement declaring that the inspections were "producing increasingly productive results" and that under "these circumstances, we will not let a resolution pass that would authorize the use of force."[94] France stonewalled any possibility of the Anglo-American draft resolution passing when Chirac declared on March 10 that France would veto the second resolution "whatever the circumstances"

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[90] Julia Preston and Richard Stevenson, "Bush Meets Blair Amid Signs of Split on U.N. War Role," *New York Times,* February 1, 2003. Academic OneFile.
[91] "Interview with Christopher Meyer," *PBS Frontline*, December 20, 2007.
[92] David Sanger, "U.S. Says U.N. Could Repeat Mistakes Errors of 90's," *New York Times,* March 11, 2003. Academic OneFile.
[93] "Draft Resolution on Iraq: Text," *BBC News,* February 24, 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2795747.stm [Accessed September 21, 2014].
[94] *Declaration of Russia, Germany, and France on War with Iraq* (March 5, 2003), in *The Iraq Papers,* 142-143.

because it believed that "there is no reason to make war to reach the objective we have given ourselves, the disarmament of Iraq."[95] Several American officials responded publically by saying that diplomacy was doomed. Powell, for instance, said on March 10: "At this point, I think there's a high likelihood that military force is what's going to disarm Saddam Hussein by changing his regime."[96] The disillusionment of the Bush administration's main advocate of diplomacy exemplified the accelerating collapse of diplomacy.

By the middle of March 2003, France, Germany, and Russia on one side and the U.S. on the other had made it clear that the second resolution was going nowhere. The diplomatic wrangling on this issue only lasted as long as it did because of the Blair administration's need to keep diplomacy afloat long enough to survive scorching political criticism. In order to justify the use of force to his own people and the Labor Party, he needed some semblance of acting with UN approval. The Bush administration remained sensitive to Blair's political plight and saw that the Blair administration might collapse. The British government was the only major contributor of military forces to the upcoming invasion besides the U.S. and a cover for the Bush administration against accusations of unilateralism. On March 9, Bush called Blair and reiterated the importance of British support for American efforts, saying: "What I want to say to you is that my last choice is to have your government go down. We don't want that to happen under any circumstances. I really mean that." Bush even offered some flexibility to Blair on his promise to aid the U.S. invasion. He said that the British could temporarily drop

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[95] Gordon and Shapiro, *Allies at War,* 152.
[96] Felicity Barringer and Stephen R. Weisman, "Urgent Diplomacy Fails to Gain U.S. 9 Votes in the U.N." *New York Times,* March 10, 2003. Academic OneFile.

out of the coalition to shore up domestic support and aid the war in Iraq later as "a second wave, peacekeepers or something."

Bush's offer in part revealed the unilateral instincts of the Bush administration and their confidence that the U.S. would easily handle the invasion alone. Nevertheless, invading Iraq without British help was clearly not Bush's preference, and he wanted to be flexible enough to help his British counterpart survive politically and still contribute to the war effort. Blair's reply was adamant: "I said I'm with you. I mean it…I absolutely believe in this too…I'm there to the very end."[97] Blair's refusal of Bush's offer to opt out of military action temporarily demonstrates his genuine conviction that Saddam was an international threat and needed to be removed, even if Blair was not finished with diplomacy. Blair stated many times throughout the winter of 2002-2003 that he believed in disarming Saddam, by force if necessary, independent of the Bush administration's policy. He told the *Guardian* on February 27: "I believe in it. I am truly committed to dealing with this, irrespective of the position of America. If the Americans were not doing this, I would be pressing for them to be doing so."[98]

Seeing that the second resolution was dying, Blair tried another diplomatic gambit on March 13, 2003, by unveiling six benchmarks on disarmament that Saddam would have to meet within a few weeks in order to avoid an invasion. These included allowing at least thirty scientists and their families to leave Iraq for interviews and turning over or proving the destruction of chemical and biological weapons and production facilities.[99] Blair hoped that Saddam's acquiescence to these demands would give the UNSC more

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[97] Woodward, *Plan of Attack,* 338.
[98] Jackie Ashley and Ewan MacAskill, "History Will Be My Judge," *The Guardian,* February 28, 2003, http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2003/mar/01/iraq.foreignpolicy [Accessed September 20, 2014].
[99] Alan Cowell, "For Blair, a Gamble to Avoid Political Disaster," *New York Times,* March 13, 2003. Academic OneFile.

time to reach a consensus. Even until the last days before the war, Blair clung to some

hope that the UN could play a productive role in the crisis, saying on March 17: "I think

it is so important that even now, at this late stage, we try to get the United Nations to be

the root of resolving this."[100] This plan, however, engendered little enthusiasm in either

the pro-war or anti-war camps and never got off the ground. Back in February, the Blair

administration had some grounds for believing that the second resolution had a chance of

building a more multilateral, legally justified movement against Iraq. By mid-March,

however, the second resolution became a shield that the Blair administration used to

weather a political crisis.

Blair's domestic political crisis peaked on March 18-19 when Parliament debated

the government's motion to back "all means necessary" to disarm Iraq, including the use

of force.[101] Blair's approval rating on Iraq was extremely poor at this point, with 52

percent of British citizens against the war and only 29 percent in favor.[102] Three

government ministers resigned in protest of Blair's policy in the week before the war

started.[103] Nevertheless, the motion to authorize force against Iraq succeeded by a

comfortable 179-vote margin, despite 122 Labor Party opposition votes.[104] Blair spoke

forcefully in Parliament in defense of the coming war. Aside from national security, he

laid out a litany of reasons for supporting the war:

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[100] "Full Text: Azores Press Conference," *The Guardian Archives,* March 17, 2003,
http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/mar/17/iraq.politics2 [Accessed September 18, 2014].

[101] Warren Hoge, "Blair Survives a Mutiny over Joining U.S. in War," *New York Times,* March 19, 2003.
Academic OneFile.

[102] Ian Black and Alex Travis, "Blair's Popularity Plummets," *The Guardian,* February 17, 2003,
http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2003/feb/18/politics.iraq [Accessed September 18, 2014].

[103] Hoge, "Blair Survives a Mutiny over Joining U.S. in War," *New York Times,* March 19, 2003. Academic
OneFile.

[104] "UK Parliament Backs Iraq War," *BBC News,* March 19, 2003,
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2862749.stm [Accessed October 1, 2014].

To retreat now, I believe, would put at hazard all that we hold dearest. To turn the United Nations back into a talking shop; to stifle the first steps of progress in the Middle East; to leave the Iraqi people to the mercy of events over which we would have relinquished all power to influence for the better; to tell our allies that at the very moment of action, at the very moment when they need our determination, Britain faltered: I will not be party to such a course.[105]

Blair's case notably includes the need to make the UN relevant to international security and to bolster the MEPP. It also conveys Blair's commitment to the transatlantic alliance and to liberating the Iraqi people from Saddam's tyranny. This quote shows once again how the Blair administration sought to address the Iraq Crisis in a way that would not weaken international institutions nor distract from other pressing issues like the MEPP.

Blair went on to admonish France and Germany for naiveté about Iraq and the efficacy of force. While war opponents pointed to progress on weapons inspections, Blair countered that Saddam only allowed those inspectors in because of the threat of force from Britain and the U.S. He further claimed that France had no intention of ever seriously confronting Iraq and that they were using the UN process to prevent action: "The fact is that France remains utterly opposed to anything that lays down an ultimatum authorizing action in the event of non-compliance by Saddam."[106] Blair then connected his criticism of ostensibly intransigent war opponents to the importance of preserving alliances and international institutions like the UN. He proposed that unconditionally opposing the U.S. actually fed their tendency towards unilateralism rather than deterring it. He asked, "If our plea is for America to work with others, to be good as well as

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[105] House of Commons Debate, March 18, 2003, Volume No. 401, Columns 764-773.
http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmhansrd/vo030318/debtext/30318-06.htm [Accessed September 21, 2014].
[106] Ibid., Column 764.

powerful allies, will our retreat make it multilateralist, or will it not rather be the biggest impulse to unilateralism we can possibly imagine?"[107]

Rather than creating an even worse diplomatic crisis by compelling France to veto the second resolution, the U.S. and Great Britain simply decided not to put it to a vote.[108] This decision effectively ended the diplomatic process and opened the door for an invasion. On March 17, 2003, President Bush announced a 48-hour ultimatum for Saddam and his sons to leave Iraq or face military action. Three days later, the Americans and the British launched the first airstrikes of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

CONCLUSION

The passing of Resolution 1441 and the reintroduction of weapons inspectors to Iraq ultimately did not prevent war, but they were temporary victories for the Blair administration. The British managed to slow the apparent American rush to war, help convince the Americans to attempt a more multilateral and diplomatic approach, and open the possibility of solving the Iraq crisis through mostly peaceful means.

However, in convincing the Americans to pursue the diplomatic track, Blair pledged on multiple occasions to invade Iraq alongside the U.S., thereby committing Great Britain to war if the diplomatic process failed. He thereby relinquished much of the leverage he might have had if the diplomatic process faltered and the U.S. decided to invade. Ambassador Meyer summed up this problem nicely: "If you say to the United States, or to anybody, 'Whatever you choose to do, I'm with you,' in a [snaps fingers]

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[107] Ibid., Column 773.
[108] Stephen Weisman, "A Long, Winding Road to a Diplomatic Dead End," *New York Times,* March 17, 2003. Academic OneFile.

flash, your leverage is gone."[109] The Blair administration's true error was overestimating

how much effort the Americans would put into seeking a diplomatic solution and

misjudging how quickly they would say that diplomacy had failed. Hawks like Cheney,

his Chief of Staff Scooter Libby, Rumsfeld, and Undersecretary of Defense Paul

Wolfowitz had no faith in the inspections regime; believed that war with Iraq was the

only viable option; and tried to turn an already skeptical Bush against the inspections

process throughout 2002 and early 2003. An anecdote from Meyer in October 2002

demonstrates the deep animosity among the hawks towards the UN process:

> I went to see Scooter, and I said, 'What do you think of' variant whatever it was
> of the resolution, draft resolution. And he was absolutely plain. He said: 'We
> don't think there should be another resolution at all. How many more resolutions
> do we want on Iraq? We've already had 14, 15, 16 or whatever it is since 1991.
> Do we really need another resolution to demonstrate that Saddam Hussein is a bad
> man who should be removed?' So he wasn't even into discussing. And I said to
> him, 'What do you think of this text?' He said: 'I haven't looked at this text.
> Why do I want to look at this text? This whole thing is a waste of time.'[110]

President Bush himself put some credence in the UN process in public, but in

private he remained impatient and nervous that Saddam would dupe the inspectors and

get away unscathed once again. On January 13, 2003, several weeks before UNMOVIC

Chief Hans Blix had reported back to the UN on the progress of inspections, he told

Powell: "The inspections are not getting us there. I really think I'm going to have to do

this."[111] Powell, the Cabinet's biggest advocate of the diplomatic process, pledged his

support to Bush for military action on the same day despite private reservations.[112] The

diplomatic spat with Germany and France in which these allies declared almost

unconditional opposition to the use of force against Iraq further dissuaded Powell that the

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[109] "Interview with Christopher Meyer," *PBS Frontline*, December 20, 2007.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Woodward, *Plan of Attack,* 270.
[112] Ibid.*,* 271.

diplomatic process would succeed. The Germans and French may have been prescient in saying that the invasion of Iraq would have disastrous consequences. However, their unconditional opposition to the use of force and harsh rhetoric undermined Powell and Blair's attempts to foster cooperation between the U.S. and Europe and convince Bush to remain patient with diplomacy. As Powell lost faith in diplomacy, the Bush Cabinet saw its last remaining barrier to military action dissipate and the Blair administration lost its main American ally in advocating diplomacy.

Prime Minister Blair promised to go to war without receiving the proportional American promise to see the diplomatic process through, which would have meant letting the inspectors finish their work and pushing for a second resolution in the UNSC that would explicitly authorize the use of force against Iraq. However, the record shows that the Bush administration had almost no patience for diplomacy, inspections, and multilateralism. They mainly pursued diplomacy in order to further legitimize a war that they thought was inevitable and grant political breathing room to supporters like Blair. The British may have made strong efforts to convince the U.S. to pursue the UN route and act more multilaterally, but their success in these areas came at a steep cost to their freedom of action and their ability to continue shaping U.S. policy. Blair may have believed independently of American influence that war with Iraq was justified, but his prewar diplomacy severely curtailed Britain's range of options in dealing with Iraq.

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