

# Issue Four: International Security

## The Search For Peace

**P**reservation of peaceful relations among nations is an important issue for the world community. Yet, in the 20th century, in two successive world wars, countries around the world suffered enormous devastation after regional conflicts erupted into wide-spread, global conflicts. Resolving existing regional conflicts or preventing their spread remains one of mankind's most difficult challenges and most urgent tasks. Regional conflicts dot the globe, and some of the nations involved possess nuclear weapons. Regional conflicts that have the potential to become worldwide include the Taiwan Strait, the Korean Peninsula, the Middle East, and South Asia, to name only a few.

The 2001 bombing of the World Trade Center demonstrates that a conflict as far away for Americans as the Middle East and Central Asia can become part of our daily conversation in only a few days. With American troops in Iraq, disputes in these regions become an increasingly important part of all nations' concerns about security.

Moreover, the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks on September 11, 2001 brought terrorism from the margins of international dialogue to the center. A world that has seen an increase in the globalization of finance, trade, popular culture and media, has also now witnessed the internationalization of terrorism. And, as we see in the American response to the 9/11 attacks, terrorism can combine with a regional conflict to create a volatile and dangerous situation for which there are no precedents.

As nations take steps to establish security for themselves, those very steps may seem threatening to other nations. Economic, ethnic and religious factors make negotiating a secure environment on a regional basis a terribly complex and daunting task. Now, with the added element of international terrorism, nations must build on previous methods and institutions to find new solutions to complex threats to international security.

## INTERNATIONAL SECURITY: REGIONAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

**H**istorically, countries have pursued several strategies and arrangements to increase their security and reduce the possibility of unwanted conflict. Over the centuries, these have ranged from simple agreements between neighboring countries to complex alliances made of many countries.

The world's first real attempt to establish international order after WWI was the League of Nations. It was intended as the world's first global forum. However, it lacked any power of enforcement and was not effective at managing or preventing conflicts. Following World War II, the United Nations (UN) was established as a new global forum. It had far greater powers, including the ability to deploy armed peacekeepers.

Moreover, the UN has extended its efforts to humanitarian activities that bear directly on preventing

### QUESTIONS FOR NEGOTIATIONS

#### Guiding Question

1. How can nations work together to ensure security for all countries?

#### Related Questions

2. What actions can a government take to increase its own security?
3. What can a country do to assure its neighbors that it is not a threat to them?
4. What role do treaties play in preserving peace?
5. Once conflicts have begun, what can be done to stop them from spreading?

conflicts by helping to stabilize conditions of general welfare in countries throughout the world. Although the peace keeping record of the UN is far from perfect, no conflict of a global nature has erupted since its founding.

### ESSENTIAL BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

The methods or arrangements a country adopts to increase its security depends on its existing security environment. That is to say, a country's potential military capacity depends on its economic health, technological achievement, internal political stability and geography. Also, the military strength or aggressiveness of neighboring countries will contribute significantly to a nation's perception of its security needs.

#### Treaties & Agreements

Beyond the UN, countries have turned to treaties and agreements, particularly with potential adversaries, to bring stability to their relationships and to prevent escalating military buildups. The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I, SALT II), the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty (ABM), and critical nuclear test ban treaties contributed to international stability during and after the Cold War. Treaties controlling weapons of mass destruction have also been negotiated. Although international acceptance of these treaties is one of the questions the world is struggling with now, such agreements have significantly contributed to both regional and international security.

#### Alliances

Many countries seek security by joining alliances, hoping to find safety in numbers. This can be appealing to smaller countries, which may feel especially vulnerable to larger or more aggressive nations. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the former Warsaw Pact are prominent examples. One disadvantage of such alliances is that they can be hard to manage. They can also lock groups of countries into hostile positions or suspicious relationships that may be difficult to change.

### Security Arrangements During The Cold War

From the late 1940s through the early 1990s, the superpower rivalry of the United States and the Soviet Union (known as the Cold War) was the most significant international security issue. Most countries, during this period, were either active participants in Cold War alliances such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact, or were client states of one side or the other, usually receiving arms and other military aid for their allegiance. Even many non-aligned nations had to weigh the superpower rivalry heavily in their strategic thinking. Often these non-aligned nations actively leaned toward one side or the other without officially joining alliances. India had warmer relations with the Soviet Union, for example, and Pakistan leaned toward the US, although no formal alliance was created.

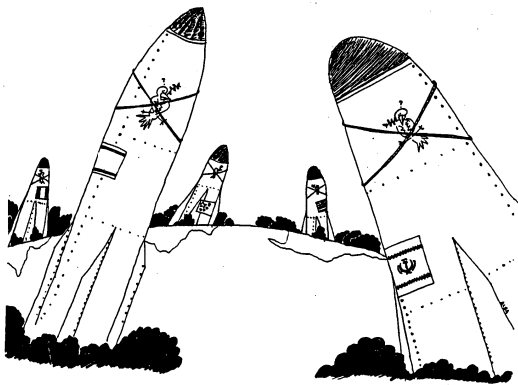
#### The Post Cold War World: The Reemergence of Old Challenges

The end of the Cold War (1989-91) saw the breakup of the Soviet Union and the reemergence of problems that had been held in check by the rivalry of the superpowers during the Cold War period. The 1990s saw a diminishing number of conflicts based on political ideology and, especially, a rising number of ethnic and religious conflicts. In addition, both Russia and the United States withdrew support from nations that had lost strategic importance after the Cold War ended, leaving those states severely weakened. US client states, including Pakistan, Indonesia and the Congo have experienced internal instability that threatens their entire regions. Former Soviet client states, including North Korea and Afghanistan, are in similar situations. In addition, the break-up of the Soviet Union opened the door for ethnic conflict between former Soviet Republics Armenia and Azerbaijan, and in Chechnya within Russia itself.

### INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES TO REGIONAL CONFLICT

#### Preventing Conflict

Many countries still rely on alliances and treaties to safeguard their security. Some agreements and institutions from the Cold War era, such as SALT I and SALT II remain in force. Several agreements, such as the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), have grown more



vibrant, reflecting the economic and political growth of Asia since the Cold War's end. Other agreements have become weaker or are undergoing change. NATO, for example, has grown larger, but its purpose has come into question. It now includes some of the former Warsaw Pact countries against which it was supposed to defend Western Europe, the US and Canada.

Nuclear non-proliferation is an example of an area in which the international community's systems of control may be outdated. As first-person accounts of WWII's bombing of Hiroshima are disappearing, the importance of deterrence may be fading along with them. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the International Atomic Energy Agency seem to be losing their ability to control nuclear power. India and Pakistan defiantly tested nuclear weapons in 1998, the first open declarations of nuclear weapons since Chinese tests in 1964. International sanctions and condemnation from the US and the UN failed to force either India or Pakistan to the bargaining table. In addition, a Pakistani scientist sold nuclear weapons technology to North Korea and perhaps others. As for the "Axis of Evil," Iran is thought to be illegally using technology from either Russia or Pakistan for its nuclear weapon program. If North Korea is allowed to continue building a nuclear weapon arsenal, Japan and South Korea may be tempted to develop defensive stockpiles of nuclear weapons themselves. Finally, there are the original nuclear weapon creators the US and the Soviet Union. The break-up of the Soviet Union has made the oversight of its stockpiles harder to manage. And in the US, the Bush administration wants to develop a new type of nuclear weapon—the "bunker buster." Such a weapon would burrow underground and destroy weapons hidden in caves, such as on the mountainous border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. But if the US uses nuclear weapons, this will: 1) remove the inhibitions of other nations who want to pursue

weapons programs, and 2) no longer allow the US to be "leading by example"—showing the world how to function without the use of nuclear weapons.

September 11 has forever changed the way the US government views terrorism, and the potential harm it can cause. Thus the Bush Administration desires a more proactive conflict prevention mechanism than treaties may allow. In 2002, the US government announced a new policy of pre-emption to prevent regional conflicts from escalating. This pre-emption doctrine provides justification for the US to strike militarily any place in the world, before actual conflicts occur when certain conditions are met. First, when evidence is available that international stability or US national interests are seriously endangered. Second, when the threat to stability or these interests is considered to be sufficiently imminent. Third, when diplomatic efforts to reduce or eliminate the threat demonstrates that resorting to military action is the only remaining viable option. This new doctrine has been introduced as the justification for military intervention in Iraq. Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi leader, had been accused of developing weapons of mass destruction. As a result of US determination, UN WMD inspectors returned to Iraq for the first time since 1998. There was agreement within the UN Security Council to insist on the return of the inspectors. But there was no clear agreement on the length of time to allow or next steps in this pre-emptive process. Thus the US, frustrated with Hussein's ability to stall the UN, invaded Iraq without clear-cut Security Council authorization. (See the Addendum following this section for a more complete discussion of why Iraq was invaded.)

### Containing Conflict

**R**egional conflicts have continued, of course, since the end of the Cold War, and by some measures they have increased. The use of UN peacekeepers and monitors has been a growing trend beginning in the 1990s and there are now peacekeepers in 17 countries. An international peace-keeping presence has been a stabilizing force in, for example, Bosnia, the Golan Heights, and Cambodia. But it was ineffective at preventing the genocide in Rwanda or maintaining order in Somalia.

Although economic and military sanctions are sometimes imposed on warring parties, the great powers have been reluctant to stop regional conflicts

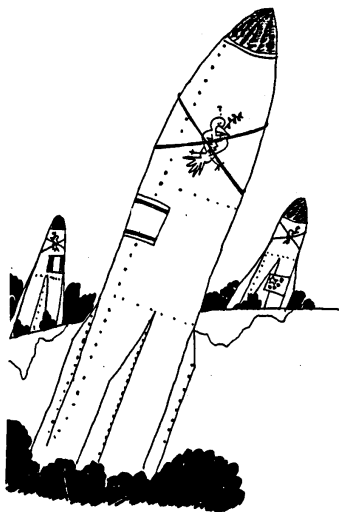
## Security

as long as their vital interests are not threatened. The developed countries were content to remain disengaged during the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, but a western alliance acted swiftly when Iraq's invasion of Kuwait threatened world oil supplies.

Similarly, concern that fighting in the former Yugoslavia (Bosnia, Kosovo, etc.) would become a wider Balkan conflict played a significant role in NATO's decision to intervene in the former Yugoslavia. The possibility that NATO members, Greece and Turkey, could be drawn in on opposite sides of this conflict especially alarmed western leaders. New tensions on the Korean peninsula and in South Asia (India and Pakistan) are being watched closely by the great powers for their ability to impact their regions in Asia. However, conflicts between Ethiopia and Eritrea and within the Congo received little attention from leading countries, since these conflicts are seen as having little affect on the interests of the great powers.

### Resolving Conflict

The end of the Cold War means that there are no longer two world powers threatening each other with nuclear annihilation. Loosened from their ideological constraints, the American and Russian dialogue is evolving. These changes have made peace somewhat easier to attain in some areas. But it has caused an increase in conflict in other areas. Nicaragua has returned to peace after a nine year civil war in the 1980s. Progress has been made toward peace in Bosnia, Northern Ireland and Rwanda. But, the



potential for conflict and instability in the international community seems more imminent now that it has since the end of the Cold War. North Korea appears to be threatening East Asia as it restarts its nuclear reactor and expands its nuclear weapons production. The US and the UN are actively trying to prevent Iran from

### SUGGESTED WEBSITES

The United Nations  
<http://www.un.org/english/>

How Stuff Works: NATO  
<http://www.howstuffworks.com/nato.htm>

North Atlantic Treaty Organization  
<http://www.nato.int/home.htm>

US Department of State  
<http://www.america.gov/>

Council for a Livable World  
<http://livableworld.org/>

Global Security  
[www.globalsecurity.org](http://www.globalsecurity.org)

enriching uranium, the element that can be used for nuclear bombs.

It was the hope of many nations at the end of WWII to put a system in place that would make world wars obsolete. Complicating this lofty goal is the fact that the global security landscape is in a constant state of change and evolution. For example, America's greatest enemies from WWII, Japan and Germany, are now two of its greatest allies. The world's nations, particularly the leading powers, are facing some difficult choices. Post-9/11, the new American policy of pre-emption is a more aggressive policy than many countries would like. Agreement among the great powers may be harder to achieve, for many nations fear that pre-emption will make the world's problems worse instead of better. What is true is that once warring parties decide to stop fighting, the system developed for international peacekeepers and monitors make it much more likely that the peace can be kept.

### INTERNATIONAL SECURITY: TERRORISM

Although terrorism is not new, there are several reasons why the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States by the al Qaeda terrorist organization are of particular importance. First, they were by far the most destructive single terrorist attacks in history, and they convincingly displayed the ability

## QUESTIONS FOR NEGOTIATIONS

### Guiding Question

1. How can the international community respond more effectively to terrorism?

### Related Questions

2. What is the definition of “terrorist?” Who decides?
3. What are the underlying causes of terrorism?
4. To what extent should countries restrict civil liberties to increase protection against terrorists?
5. Do terrorists mostly seek attention or destruction?

and desire of terrorists to cause large numbers of casualties and enormous economic losses. Second, they were widely seen as an attack on the expanding international economic system. Indeed, the economic fallout from 9/11 continues to be felt in countries around the world. Third, the attacks were committed against the US directly, which had two consequences. First, it showed that the world’s only superpower is vulnerable, suggesting the vulnerability of all governments. Second, the United States has brought its considerable diplomatic, political and military pressure to the problem, pushing the issue to the center of international attention. The Bush administration’s response has been to institute a new policy of pre-emption, attempting to prevent terrorist acts before they occur. The recent collaborative efforts of many countries to arrest al Qaeda members before they carry out future attacks have been unprecedented. But there is not a consensus in the international community on the question of how far prevention should be taken.

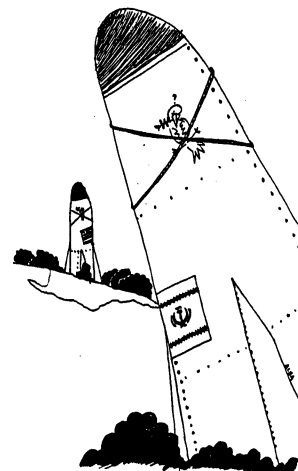
### Challenges: Terms & Tactics

**T**here are several significant barriers to international cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Perhaps the most significant one concerns the label itself. The term “terrorist” can be a highly charged and political issue. A group of militants

may be seen as terrorists by some but as freedom fighters by others. Or if a nation chooses to give safe haven to a terrorist organization, that country’s government can now be attacked along with the terrorists, which is what happened in Afghanistan (the ruling Taliban government gave safe haven to al Qaeda members). When a country is attacked, some innocent civilians may be caught in the fighting and killed. Though there is some international consensus against targeting civilians, there is also wide disagreement about what constitutes a “civilian.” It can be noted that most revolutionary individuals were at one time or another called terrorists, and that these same individuals went on to become national heroes. Finding a widely accepted definition of “terrorists” and “terrorism” is an important step in efforts to increase international cooperation around this issue. A second and connected challenge is how best to deal with terrorism once it occurs. Many nations refuse to negotiate with terrorists, citing a concern that this will only encourage further terrorism. Harsh crackdowns may only inflame popular resentment that led to the terrorism in the first place. No one solution is likely to be appropriate in every instance. The international community still has much to learn about how to best approach this increasingly important challenge.

### ESSENTIAL BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

While the fight against terrorism has gained newfound urgency in the last several years, terrorism is as ancient as nations themselves. Many countries around the world have fought terrorist groups for decades. Some of these countries have seen the threat recede over time; others have seen the problem grow worse. Historically, terrorism has generally been a domestic concern, but terrorists’ acts can have great international consequences; the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, which led to WWI, could be considered a terrorist act, for instance. Experts on terrorism have debated whether the primary interest of



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Tehran  
IRAN



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terrorists was attention or destruction. The consensus, until very recently, was that terrorists did not intend to harm large numbers of people. Yet, while different terrorists can have different goals, 9/11 has changed the view on the possible size and scope of terrorism. The al Qaeda terrorist organization is a well-financed Islamic fundamentalist group. The target of al Qaeda's terrorist campaign is modern Western society and its organizing principles. In targeting Western society, al Qaeda has made it's primary objective to destroy the embodiment of modern Western society—the US and its allies. Thus as terrorism expands in nature, the world is seeing an increase in terrorist activity.

### INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES TO TERRORISM

**A**pproaches to terrorism by individual countries can be roughly divided into three kind of stages. The first is preventing terrorists' acts. The second, reducing the number or effectiveness of terrorists' acts on their territory. The third, resolving the causes of the terrorists' acts. All three responses are becoming more international in nature.

### Prevention

**N**ations attempt to prevent terrorism by increasing their domestic or "homeland" security. Steps include improving customs and border controls, granting increased powers to police and intelligence agencies and strengthening immigration laws and procedures. Internationally, nations attempt to increase intelligence sharing with other countries as well as cooperation in extraditing suspects. For example, over 100 countries have been cooperated in the hunt for al Qaeda suspects after 9/11. Arrests were made in many different countries, preventing some terrorist acts from being carried out. But prevention also carries risks. First, prevention is not easy. If it were, there would be no crime, for law enforcement would arrest people while they are committing crimes rather than after the crime has been committed. Second, prevention sometimes casts too wide a net for it is based on speculation more than hard evidence. This means there is a danger that the innocent can be wrongly accused. For example, Americans were suspicious of men of Arab descent flying on airplanes with them shortly after 9/11, because all of the hijackers were airline passengers of Arab descent.

### Reduction

**C**ountries that have a serious terrorism problem may try improved domestic security and other measures in their efforts to reduce terrorism. However, countries taking strong measures against terrorists within their borders often end up driving terrorism elsewhere. They may successfully reduce terrorism in their own country but spread it to other countries. In addition, some countries in the past have allowed terrorists to operate freely within their own borders as long as the targets of these terrorists remain other countries.

### Resolution

**I**t is widely believed that the resolution of terrorism can be achieved by either eliminating the terrorists and their networks or by eliminating the underlying causes of terrorism, although both of these strategies may be difficult to achieve. Resolution can sometimes be achieved through negotiations or by unilateral actions that reduce the grievances of the terrorists. In the long term, the elimination of terrorism can best be

accomplished through combinations of apprehending terrorists and addressing their legitimate issues which may help build popular support for their cause.

### Terrorism: A Global Challenge

September 11 has brought terrorism into sharp focus, especially in the US, which has been jolted awake to a reality that is all too familiar in many other countries. A world that has seen an increase in the globalization of finance, trade, popular culture and media, has also now witnessed the internationalization of terrorism and its causes. Responding effectively is a challenge. Political borders have no meaning to such individuals, but they do affect law enforcement agencies trying to track them down. However, the very scale of the recent terrorist attacks and their global character have helped to mobilize international cooperation beyond what might have been expected.

After 9/11, arrests of al Qaeda took place in several countries in Europe and in Pakistan. Thus evidence is mounting that international law enforcement agencies can work together effectively to identify and apprehend terrorists in far-flung parts of the world.

Stateless terrorism involves loyalty to a specific group or ideology instead of to a place or particular country. Thus, its existence is not dependent or controlled by a particular government. Such terrorism has given rise to new concerns about rogue or belligerent nations and

the potential dangerous relationship between terrorists and such countries. Some governments, including the US, fear that stateless terrorists may gain access to weapons of mass destruction that are currently under the control of nations such as North Korea or Iran. Without societies or sovereign territories of their own to protect, it is feared that stateless terrorists would show little restraint in using such weapons.

These fears have given new urgency to the issue of nuclear non-proliferation. There is a renewed emphasis on creating effective guidelines and enforcement procedures for weapons of mass destruction as a tool in the anti-terrorism struggle. But treaties like the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty were already struggling with new nuclear power countries like India and Pakistan. It remains to be seen how effective these particular treaties can be. Indeed, a central aspect of terrorism is that it exists outside international order. Terrorists do not sign treaties and agreements. Whether the international community will modify existing arrangements or create new ones in its struggle with terrorism is a question that is still too early to answer.

#### Addendum:

### North Korea and Iran

To emphasize the threat of nuclear weapons in the wrong hands, the world needs only to look at the situations in North Korea and Iran. North Korea may have two or three nuclear weapons already. It has admitted to developing enriched uranium in a secret location and restarting a nuclear fuels facility in violation of UN resolutions. The country appears to be engaging in nuclear blackmail with the US. and its neighbors in exchange for security guarantees and development aid for its impoverished country. As for Iran, the International Atomic Energy Agency concluded that it is accelerating a program to develop nuclear fuel that can be used to develop nuclear weapons. The Iranian government has stated it needs the program for energy needs. Many find this reasoning puzzling, since Iran is one of the world's largest oil producing countries.

#### SUGGESTED WEBSITES

<http://www.howstuffworks.com/>

The Terrorism Research Center  
<http://www.terrorism.com/index.php>

UN Action against terrorism  
<http://www.un.org/terrorism/>

CIA  
<https://www.cia.gov/>

The Center for Defense Information:  
Terrorism  
<http://www.cdi.org/terrorism/>

## Iraq: The Lead Up to War

As a condition of Iraq's surrender in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the United Nations required Iraq to disarm totally and completely. An international inspection team authorized by UN resolutions immediately began to locate and destroy all of Iraq's offensive weapons and stockpiles of chemical and biological agents that could be found. However, despite multiple UN resolutions attempting to have Saddam Hussein comply with the terms of its surrender, Iraqi resistance to the inspections increased sharply as inspectors ventured close to Iraq's most sensitive weapons. Finally, international support for the inspection process eroded to the point that Iraq was able to force the inspection team to leave in 1998. Several US and UK air strikes failed to reverse this decision.

As a result of 9/11, the Bush administration has adopted a more aggressive approach to terrorist groups like al Qaeda. The administration has adopted a new policy of pre-emption when dealing with terrorism. This doctrine allows the US to act unilaterally, if need be, to anticipate or prevent dangerous situations from spiraling out of control. It provides justification for the US to strike militarily any place in the world before actual conflict occurs, when certain key conditions exist. Thus in August 2002, the US applied this policy of pre-emption to Iraq. The US government alleged that Iraq had refused to comply with the UN terms of its Gulf War surrender, to disarm unilaterally, and to stop development of its weapons of mass destruction.

At that time, it was the US position that prior UN resolutions and 12 years of Iraqi non-compliance gave enough authority for the US and its allies to set a final deadline for compliance and to act militarily to disarm Iraq if the country did not disarm voluntarily. However, President Bush was persuaded by world leaders and moderate voices in his administration to give diplomacy a further chance. As a result, the US submitted a proposal to the UN seeking Security Council approval for a resolution that would require Iraq to disarm, once and for all. The resolution included the provision that "serious consequences" (understood to mean military intervention), would occur if Iraq failed to disarm voluntarily. Following extended debates in the world community, unanimous Security Council approval was

obtained in November 2002 for Resolution 1441, which reinstated a weapons inspection team to verify Iraq's compliance with all previous resolutions to disarm.

From the outset, however, this consensus represented a compromise that masked deep differences in perspective among the 15 Security Council members—five permanent members with veto authority (US, Britain, Russia, China, and France) and 10 rotating members. Those differences widened and became increasingly visible as the inspection team conducted its work and made periodic reports to the Security Council through mid-March, 2003.

The US and the UK, its principal ally, were skeptical about voluntary disarmament. But they had hoped that united worldwide pressure, backed up by the imminent threat of invasion, would be enough to persuade Saddam Hussein to disarm voluntarily. Another choice for Hussein would have been to go into exile in a friendly country, with family members and key Iraqi leaders. The US and UK had begun assembling weaponry and troops in the region.

At various times during this period, the US focused on additional goals for this campaign in Iraq. Included was the requirement that even if Iraq were disarmed, voluntarily or through use of force, a "regime change" would be needed. Saddam Hussein and Iraq's key leaders loyal to Hussein would need to give up their power. Another key goal was the creation of a democratic government in Iraq, involving the participation of the many diverse ethnic and religious communities in the country. This was seen as a way to showcase more open, participatory government throughout the region. In general, the US and its allies tended to emphasize the goals of disarmament, regime change, and a democratic successor government.

By contrast, other Security Council member countries, especially France, Germany, and Russia, became increasingly opposed to military intervention, especially on the schedule envisioned by the US and the UK. They argued that unless conclusive proof of Iraqi violations was presented, inspections should continue under two conditions. First, as long as there was adequate evidence that Iraq was cooperating with the inspection team. Second, that some steady progress was being made in discovering and eliminating the prohibited weapons even without full Iraqi cooperation.

In general, the arguments of diplomats representing these opposing nations have tended to focus on the negative consequences of war for the region and the world. These arguments have been strongly supported by worldwide opinion.

Those nations that advocated for expanded inspections and more time focused on a number of key factors. Among others, these included:

1. The casualties and the physical destruction that would be suffered by the country and people of Iraq and possibly neighboring countries.
  2. The challenges of uniting the fractious ethnic and religious communities in Iraq after a change of government.
  3. The likely growth of terrorism throughout the world as a reaction to intervention by Western powers.
  4. The growth of US power and influence in the South Asian and Middle Eastern region.
  5. The stability of moderate, but fragile Arab governments in the region.
  6. The worry that the US would manage the oil resources of Iraq for its own benefit.
  7. The disruption of the world economy through interference with worldwide supplies of oil.
  8. The potential for triggering additional wars in the region involving Turkey, Iraq, and Iran.
  9. The other unanticipated and unintended consequences of war.
3. On the legality in international law of continuing to war without full Security Council authorization.
  4. On the precedence these decisions would have on future cases possibly involving North Korea and Iran.
  5. The effectiveness of postwar reconstruction and development of Iraq without broad international support and participation.
  6. On the impact on the United Nations and the worldwide community should the US, Britain, and other allied nations go to war without formal UN approval.

The US and its allies contended that Iraq has been given more than enough time to disarm. They pointed to the danger of current Iraqi weapons, as well as future, potential destructiveness if an irresponsible ruler acquires nuclear weapons and the means of delivering them abroad. They pointed to evidence that Saddam Hussein had already used such weapons on neighboring countries and even his own people.

As mid-March approached, the Security Council members were locked in a debate, deeply divided about what course to take. Intense negotiations focused on:

1. Proposed schedules for declaring Iraq finally in non-compliance.
2. On new evidence of previously concealed and undeclared Iraqi weapons.

While the standoff in the UN Security Council was very divisive, it is not the first time the Security Council has been in such a situation. As recently as 1999, former President Clinton faced a Russian veto when he wanted to go into Kosovo to stop Serbian aggression. In that situation, the US sidestepped the UN and used NATO to form an alliance to rescue the Albanians. Kosovo is an example of the ambiguous authority the UN has had since it was founded. The truth is that there have been nearly 100 instances in the past four decades where Security Council resolutions have been violated with little in the way of sanctions or punishment. In fact, what has made the current situation different is that the US is pushing for a Security Council vote even though it will probably lose.

What is disputed is whether this ambiguous authority of the Security Council is a strength or a weakness. The UN carries considerable moral and political weight, but no legal weight. Many would argue that this is what has allowed the UN to survive the occasions when its dictates were roundly ignored. If the world is looking for international legitimacy, the UN, even with all its flaws, is still the best thing it has.

The US-led coalition saved the UN from making this tough decision. It invaded Iraq in March 2003 with Security Council authority. Saddam Hussein and some of his deputies were caught, found guilty, and hung. But other victories have been harder to find. After five gruelling years of an idea that began with some good although idealistic intentions, it has become clear that the concept of installing democracy is much harder than anticipated.