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DATE: 4 March 2003

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Secretary of State

FRANCE AND THE SECURITY COUNCIL

1. The fortunes of a second resolution on Iraq will depend to a considerable extent on the attitude of France.
2. As always, it pays to examine the historical record. Below you will find a record of the use of the veto by the five permanent members of the Security Council since the establishment of the United Nations in 1945.

Period	China	France	Britain	US	USSR/ Russia	Total
Total	5	18	32	76	120	251

3. France's record is interesting in several aspects. In the first place it has used the veto sparingly - only eighteen times - less than any other Security Council member other than China. Secondly, when the historical record is further examined, France has used its veto usually in the company of the United States or the UK or both.

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4. What is most striking is that France has made sole use of the veto on only two occasions in more than half a century. The first time was in 1947 when France blocked a resolution criticising the Netherlands for military action against the infant Indonesian Republic. It did so because France itself was fighting its own ugly colonial war in Vietnam which ended in its defeat in 1954. Secondly, in 1976 it rejected a Security Council resolution criticising the holding of a referendum in its Indian Ocean territory of Mayotte. In effect, France wanted to integrate Mayotte and separate it from the newly independent Comoros.
5. In other words France has only used its veto on its own when direct national interests seemed at stake and has not done so for more than quarter of a century. Moreover, under President de Gaulle from 1958 to 1969 France never once used its veto.
6. There is one example which is of particular interest. In 1956 France and the UK acted together in jointly vetoing a Security Council resolution which commanded support from the US and Soviet Union condemning the UK/French military attack on Egypt over the Suez Canal dispute. France, and Britain, paid a heavy price for that veto having within weeks to undertake a humiliating climbdown and withdrew their forces from Egypt. Both countries were burnt and never subsequently used a veto in opposition to the US.
7. From the historical record, therefore, one could reasonably deduce that France, in the last resort, would be unlikely to use its veto on a second resolution over Iraq. Without the support of other Security Council members, in this case Russia and China, it is highly unlikely. We can be almost 100% certain of Chinese abstention. Detachment of Russia from France on the question of a second resolution is therefore of paramount strategic importance. France might draw some comfort from German company but Germany, of course, is not a permanent member of the Security Council.
8. We can, as I suggest, draw some comfort from the French historical record. If France were to veto on its own a US-UK resolution it would have no historical precedent. This said, it would seem to me we have no reason for complacency. President Chirac is not President de Gaulle. Gaullism had its place in history at a time when there was a bipolar balance of terror between the two superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union. Even then the General never used his veto in outright opposition to the United States. As his memoirs made clear he remembered the lesson of Suez in 1956.
9. Despite the historical record there is a danger, some would say a serious danger, that Chirac could make a dangerous miscalculation of the sort that no previous French President has. A veto exercised by France would have incalculable consequences for transatlantic relations and place the UK in an invidious position. It would be likely to lead quickly to an early reassessment by the US of the value of NATO, re-examination of

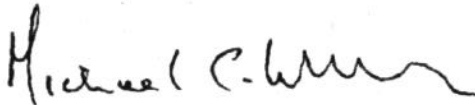
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US force deployments in Europe and, most seriously of all, a potential rejection by the US of the United Nations and the multilateral path. In the United States itself a veto would be likely to ignite a political firestorm in Congress and the media hardening the Administration's position.

10. France is quite capable, and perhaps most likely, if the yes votes creep up to nine and beyond, to back down and say it accepts a majority verdict. We cannot rely on this, however, and Chirac's state visit to Algeria seems to have lulled him further into believing he now stands for the Arab world. We need a strategy that reminds France of the danger and the consequences of its present course of action. This will need the Prime Minister's engagement to try and steer France from a course of action which, if it culminates in a veto, will lead almost certainly to the greatest crisis in transatlantic relations since World War II.

11. France will not, in my opinion, veto on its own. If it believes it has Russian support and Moscow will veto, the second resolution will be lost.



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