

Transcript of Episode 14, “Iraq, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the Cheater’s Dilemma”

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[Note: This is a rough transcript of the audio recording, based on digital transcription and human review.]

[00:00:00] **Music:** One, two, three, go.

Morgan Kaplan: [00:00:18] Hello, and welcome to *International Security Off the Page*. On today's episode, we are talking about the run-up to the Iraq War and how states respond to international pressure to eliminate weapons of mass destruction programs. I'm Morgan Kaplan, the executive editor of *International Security*. And, we'll be speaking with Dr. Målfrid Braut-Hegghammer, the author of a recent *IS* article, “Cheater's Dilemma: Iraq, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the Path to War,” and a little later we'll go off the page with Dr. Kori Schake, who is the Director of Foreign and Defense Policy Studies at the American Enterprise Institute and who previously served in government at the U.S. State Department, U.S. Department of Defense, and the National Security Council.

[00:01:00] **Benn Craig:** Belfercenter.org/offthepage is where you can find past episodes as well as supplemental reading materials. It is also where you can subscribe to Off the Page on your favorite podcast platform.

Morgan: Målfrid Braut-Hegghammer is a professor of Political Science at the University of Oslo, where she also directs the Oslo Nuclear Project. Joining us now we have Dr. Målfrid Braut-Hegghammer, who is here to talk to us about her exciting new article in *International Security*, “Cheater's Dilemma: Iraq, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the Path to War.” Målfrid, welcome to the show.

Målfrid Braut-Hegghammer: [00:01:39] Very nice to be here.

Morgan: [00:01:39] So tell us a little bit about your article.

Målfrid: My article is about the cheater’s dilemma. So the cheater's dilemma is a dilemma that a cheater faces once the cheater has been caught. So the dilemma is how much should the cheater reveal about its past misbehavior when the cheater isn't really sure that such disclosures will be [00:02:00] rewarded and they may well be punished. So the dilemma is, do you reveal information or do you keep quiet thinking that the problem will go away?

Which is the basic problem Iraq faced between 1991 and 2003. Which was that with each new revelation about the weapons of mass destruction Iraq had developed and secretly destroyed, other states became convinced that it was still deceiving them. And, that became a problem because at some point, Iraq who wanted to convince other states it wasn't deceiving them, but that turned out to be very difficult to do.

Morgan: [00:02:33] Now, of course we know in hindsight, that it didn't seem clear that the Iraqi regime was trying to come clean. So, what happened? How did the cheater's dilemma unfold and how come the Iraqis seemed unable to send a clear signal?

Målfrid: [00:02:49] So the fundamental mistake that the Iraqi leadership made, or perhaps the original sin in this story was that in the spring of '91, the Security Council [00:03:00] wanted Iraq to disarm completely and verifiably of all of its weapons of mass destruction. And instead of doing that, the Iraqi leadership denied much in terms of what it had of programs and capabilities, and even tried to get rid of the evidence by secretly destroying its chemical and biological weapons. And that secret destruction really was what I think of as the original sin in this story. Iraq did this in secret and it didn't admit to this until at least a year later, and at that point it became impossible to prove to the UN inspectors and the international community, how much Iraq had actually distorted at that point. So that remained an unsolved question that lingered all the way until 2003. So this is the foundation of a problem that Iraq tried to cover up what it had, and did so in a way that it couldn't fully come clean later on.

Morgan: [00:03:54] And so, what was that process like of Saddam trying to come clean and how come [00:04:00] it didn't, it didn't succeed very well?

Målfrid: [00:04:01] Well, I think trying is, is the key word here because the Iraqis did reveal more information slowly and painfully and ultimately not in a very convincing way. So what I show in the article is how they started to admit to more and more as the UN inspectors detected more information that made it clear that Iraq was hiding information and concealing items as well.

But when Iraq tried to come clean, it did so in a way that just didn't seem that convincing. First of all, because it gave very small admissions, but also because it withheld supporting information. So, for example, at certain points, Iraq would admit to certain things, but it wouldn't provide any supporting documentation.

So, this is part of what was so strange about Iraqi behavior that was puzzling to the UN inspectors on the ground that interacted with Iraqi officials for years. And of course, to external [00:05:00] observers as well, why Iraq would only admit to things at a very late stage, and why when it did so it didn't really have a convincing story about why it wanted to admit this and why it hadn't done so earlier.

So the picture that emerged was of a state that was in this game of cheat and retreat. And that impression really set in in the early 1990s when you saw this dynamic play out over and over and over again. And the big change came in early 1995 when Iraq still hadn't admitted to producing biological weapons and the UN inspectors found information that clearly showed that there was something going on, or that had gone on that Iraq couldn't feasibly deny.

And so in the article, I look at this conversation between the senior Iraqi decision-makers where they talk about, can they continue to deny this? Should they admit to this? And what are the reputational costs of admitting to yet another thing that they had hidden and denied

for [00:06:00] so long? And I think that this conversation is really fascinating and revealing because it does show that this basic problem of a cheater's dilemma weighed very heavily on their mind because they didn't see it as just a matter of admitting another thing, they saw it as, well, if we admit to this now, no one will ever want to trust us again or take our word for anything, and they will reopen all the files in all these areas and we will essentially be stuck with sanctions and inspections forever.

Morgan: [00:06:27] So how does this narrative challenge the conventional wisdom on how Iraq was behaving during this time?

Målfrid: [00:06:34] I think it profoundly challenges the conventional wisdom because the conventional wisdom has argued that the Iraqi leadership engaged in this strategic ambiguity, that the reason why they wouldn't come clean was to encourage sort of uncertainty and achieve a kind of deterrent effect amongst regional adversaries at a time when, of course Iraqi capabilities were extremely weak on eroding under the [00:07:00] sanctions regime. In other words, that this was an intended policy that informed Iraq's disclosures and Iraq's behavior more broadly. Whereas what I show is that there, there was a reputational dilemma ultimately going on here, where Iraq's admissions were limited by the leadership's concerns about others just taking this as confirmation that they were cheaters and would always be cheaters.

So I would say that there's quite a significant difference in terms of how I characterize the fundamental dilemma that drove Iraqi decision-making and Iraqi debates within the senior leadership. And also, I think there's a significant difference in terms of how the intentions trickled down into actual behavior, because I showed that there were profound problems, what we can call principal agent problems. That meant that the regime's decisions didn't necessarily guide the behavior of their agents in a straightforward way. So there was noise creeping in because of these problems over time that made Iraq's behavior even more [00:08:00] difficult to assess from the outside.

Morgan: [00:08:02] Right. And so what do you think is a big policy implication of understanding the cheater's dilemma? I mean, obviously I think many would agree that unpacking more about what happened in the run-up to the Iraq war is itself a very valuable contribution, but we're obviously in a context where you can imagine cheater's dilemmas operating elsewhere, particularly among countries that may be proliferating for seeking to proliferate in the future. So what is the big lesson learned here?

Målfrid: [00:08:26] I think that a key lesson learned is that this is a real dilemma. And, when I talked to inspectors and officials that have dealt with verification challenges relating to disarmament, or non-proliferation in states like Syria and I think certainly when it comes to Iran, I think that they see this dilemma play out in a lot of different ways.

And I think the key point is to realize that states want to withhold information about, especially cover up some past violations, not only because it's embarrassing, but because it reveals something [00:09:00] that can lead to a confirmation bias. So the old saying that "once a cheater, always a cheater" is something that states worry about.

Another important implication is that there is a tendency to look at states, like Iraq under Saddam Hussein, and assume that they are very much controlled by the leadership and that every small interaction reflects the leadership's intentions. But, what I find in my research is that this is a misleading assumption and that there are great informational problems and misunderstandings and mistakes in these systems, precisely because they have a very unclear sense of what their leadership wants and over time they themselves can become caught up in this dynamic of assuming that past behavior is the most reliable indicator of, of what the regime wants. And that is a profound problem in contexts where states claim they have changed behavior if external and internal observers just look at their past behavior to make judgments about what they're likely to do next.

[00:10:00] **Morgan:** [00:09:59] Fantastic. Well, Målfrid, I only have one more question for you and that is, are you ready?

Målfrid: Ready for?

Music: [00:10:06]

Morgan: To go off the page.

Målfrid: [00:10:09] Let's find out.

Benn: [00:10:14] If you enjoy listening to Off the Page, you'll enjoy reading our quarterly journal *International Security*, which is edited and sponsored by the Belfer Center at Harvard Kennedy school and published by the MIT press. To learn more about the journal, please check out Belfercenter.org/is.

Morgan: [00:10:32] Kori Schake is the Director of Foreign and Defense Policy Studies at the American Enterprise Institute. Dr. Schake has had a distinguished career in government, working at the U.S. State Department, Department of Defense, and the National Security Council at the White House. Joining us now, we're lucky to have Dr. Kori Schake with us. Kori, welcome to the show.

Kori Schake: Thank you so much.

Morgan: So we wanted to start off by asking you for your general impressions of this manuscript, especially given your extensive [00:11:00] experience in the practitioner space on these issues.

Kori: [00:11:03] So I love this article. There's so much I didn't know about Iraqi decision-making and just in awe of the research that Målfrid did for it.

This is an absolute treasure. And we almost never get that detailed, kind of direct testimony from policy makers, especially not on something about which they are lying to each other and to the international community. I love the way she framed it, which is that Iraq did disarm, but because they had been lying about when and how, and because they didn't trust each other and because the first stage of document and weapons destruction was so haphazard, they actually failed to convince other states of the fact that they [00:12:00] had disarmed, with tragic consequences.

Morgan: [00:12:02] What parts of the story did you find most surprising or counter-intuitive? Does anything, in particular, jump out to you as something that shocked you?

Kori: [00:12:12] Oh, a dozen things. I'll try and limit it to five or six. But you know, a box of highly sensitive information about the nuclear weapons program being misplaced, and then being discovered by the inspectors in September of 1991. You know, I always think about authoritarian governments as good at record keeping.

Right. It's part of why disbanding the Iraqi army, so haphazardly in 2003 seemed crazy, right? Because the Iraqi government had records. You could find these guys and offer them jobs and that, you know, with everything on the line and their strategic objective, being the end of the sanctions against them, they couldn't keep [00:13:00] track of their own information.

So that was one thing. The second thing that shocked me about it was the admission that you could unify the Security Council against Iraq, General Rashid noted, because the regime had deceived not only the inspectors, but also Iraq's allies, France and Russia, concerning its former WMD capabilities and disarmament.

So I was on the NSC at the time doing defense policy and I remember bitterly resenting that the French were acting like Saddam Hussein's ally in all of this, but that Iraq considered France and Russia, their allies. That was a revelation to me. Let's see what else? And I love the way Målfrid draws out the irony that the Iraqi regime disclosed much more in an effort to preempt revelations than they feared that Kamil would make in [00:14:00] his defection and testimony to the West.

Målfrid: [00:14:03] Perhaps I can jump in here quickly to say a couple of things about some of the surprises that, you know, that shocked me when I was going through these sources.

Because there were many surprises. For example, I was quite surprised at how much Saddam Hussein knew himself, when he was discussing with the senior officials about what the UN resolutions obliged, Iraq to disclose and what was sort of beyond what they had to disclose and how he's yelling at them for disclosing the super gun, for example.

Another thing that surprised me about the sort of internal regime dynamic was that Saddam was corrected by Tariq Aziz in front of others, a few times and accepted this. That surprised me given the sort of view that I came into this research with about what the Iraqi regime was like. And furthermore, the sort of repeated laughs that they have about all the implementation problems they had when they handed over disclosures that they didn't [00:15:00] really intend to someone made a mistake, someone reported something they shouldn't have to the UN inspectors. There are so many of these examples that show how pervasive these implementation problems were in this regime. But also that the senior leadership realized this and sort of threw their hands up and it just accepted as part of their governance.

And I think that's an important observation as well, but more broadly, I was really struck by some of these individuals. General Amer being, being one of them who really spoke truth to power at key moments. So, that not only showed that he was comfortable doing that, but it

also showed that they had not provided this information to Saddam Hussein earlier, which is equally significant.

So, for me too, there were a number of revelations. And so I'm really delighted to hear that others also found this as surprising and perhaps counterintuitive as, as I did.

Kori: [00:15:56] Yeah, it actually made me wonder whether [00:16:00] Saddam had the authority adequate to create discipline. Right. We tend to think of authoritarian governments as efficient and oh my God, that's absolutely not what's happening here. If they had a strategy, two thirds of the people involved didn't know it, didn't trust each other enough to share crucial information, and so they keep stumbling into revelations to the UN that they clearly don't want to make. It really caused me to rethink how much authority Saddam Hussein actually had in the system.

What do you think of that Målfrid?

Målfrid: [00:16:40] I think that's an absolutely crucial observation that, that also surprised me. And I think for me, it made me rethink the kind of authority and the kind of governance that was going on here. It was striking for example, that Hussein Kamel leaving meetings with Saddam would tell his subordinates, [00:17:00] "nevermind what Saddam just said, just stick with me and stick with my approach." And furthermore, that Saddam Hussein clearly admits to not knowing everything in meetings with other senior elites and seems comfortable admitting that.

So, I agree with you, the authority he had worked in different ways than what I had expected, and that's where I sort of benefited from this theoretical framework of highlighting ambiguity as a great tool for authoritarian leaders who want to stay in power for as long as possible, because if they are not completely clear about what they want and what they know, it gives them more options. And under, let's say normal circumstances, that is probably a terrific approach to long-term survival. As we know, authoritarian and personalist leaders, they don't tend to survive that long, but Saddam did, but these are not normal circumstances at all.

And as we see in this article, it creates a number of pathologies and information problems [00:18:00] where, like you said, these revelations that they don't want to make suddenly they make them. And then other revelations that would help them and support their case, they can't make. So it's a really fascinating look into life, sort of behind the scenes. And as you mentioned, this material, the sources really give us a lot of insights that it would be amazing to have into various other states, but we don't yet. And maybe we never will, but there's a lot we can draw from this material I think in terms of our assumptions about authority and governance and what regimes like this can and cannot do when their back is against the wall.

Morgan: [00:18:36] I think it's a fantastic point you're both raising about our assumptions about authoritarian leaders and I'll admit, it was also something for me that jumped out as extremely counterintuitive.

I mean, especially in the realm of authoritarian leaders, Saddam Hussein, right, you assume to be someone with such incredible control. And so what's interesting about it is had we known or had people know that maybe Saddam did not [00:19:00] have the type of control we thought he had in this process, how would it have affected policy thinking? Would it have affected policy thinking?

You know, Kori, I'm super interested to hear your perspective on this as someone who was in the National Security Council during this time. Was it, was it known that Saddam maybe did not have the type of control he had and would it really have affected anything had we known, kind of, these new truths?

Kori: [00:19:23] It's such an interesting question, Morgan. So I was absolutely gleeful when I read the passage where, where Målfrid writes, "the concern voiced by Qusay was that scientists would lie to secure U.S. visas for themselves and their families." And I love using the tools of free societies to protect and advance free societies.

And so, the magnetism of potential immigration to the United States, we missed that trick. Or at least, we didn't turn it as adroitly as we have the [00:20:00] ability to. When I was going through the initial explanations, so Målfrid at the start of this terrific article talks about the different explanations, right, the alternative explanations, the deterrence bluff, information problems, regime security, deception, and principal agent. I think, at least at my level in, you know, third oarsman on the left of the galley ship, uh, in the Bush White House, that I didn't have enough information to be able to understand which of those were happening.

What I noticed in policy-making is you're always operating on imperfect information. And so, you're constantly thinking, does this prove or disprove? Does this support or chip away at what we think is happening? And at the time, I don't think I could have distinguished between any of those explanations. That it did look like Saddam Hussein was trying to [00:21:00] persuade us he had the weapons we thought he had. And the why of that, all of us were grasping around for – I at least didn't know. And one of the things that I think we don't often hold in the center of our mind, as policymakers, is that we know the American government's a big, sloppy mess, and most theories of it make it so much more elegant than any of our experience of it would suggest is appropriate. But we weren't thinking that about Iraq, right? So much of what Målfrid turns over in this, I'm not sure it would have had us come to any different conclusion, with the exception of, stop thinking that this is sleek and purposeful, nobody knows what's going on, it's a big mess.

And as a policy maker, that leaves enormous opportunities for subterfuge, for turning people against each other, for all [00:22:00] of the political warfare that, perhaps, if we had been more adroit about, we wouldn't have felt the need to go all the way to the use of military force.

Målfrid: [00:22:09] I think that's a number of important points that you make, both about the challenges of incomplete information and how difficult it is really to distinguish between these different mechanisms or strategies, if you like, when they're, when you don't have a full or a better or more complete picture of the information.

Something that has struck me in my research, having talked to weapons inspectors, both those going to Iraq, also going to Iran and Libya, is that among weapons inspectors and perhaps, especially Western, U.S., British ones, there is a general tendency to assume that personalist leaders really have full control of what's happening.

And, I've heard senior weapons inspectors say about Gaddafi, for example, that, well, once he made up his mind, it was easy for him to make sure that they handed over [00:23:00] everything, which is actually not the case when you look more closely. There were lots of things that the Libyans didn't hand over either.

And, from the little that I know about the Libyan case, it seems that there too, there were a number of information problems that were built into the system, perhaps in similar ways as in the Iraqi one. So perhaps that is one takeaway for me, is that there is a tendency to assume that these regimes are very efficient machines, but as we can clearly see from some of this material, that's, that's an assumption perhaps to rethink.

And another striking finding for me in some of the sources was that the Iraqis themselves, the senior technical elites, were trying to signal this to, especially the UN inspectors. Where they're saying at certain crucial turning points that they themselves are sort of going out on the limb to try and increase cooperation, that there are competing factions in the regime who don't want to do this, and that they need to get some sort of [00:24:00] tangible benefit out of this to convince everyone else in the regime to continue with cooperating.

So there are a number of ways to sort of look at that as perhaps the strategic move or something else, but it, it does indicate that it's not a coherent view necessarily within the system either, what to do and that sometimes some individuals, some groups want to collaborate more than others. And perhaps this is a bit of a part of the way the system works in these regimes.

Morgan: [00:24:26] What I think is interesting is as we're talking about all of this, I can't help but think of contemporary applications of how to think about the cheater's dilemma. I'm curious, what do you both think about how we can apply the cheater's dilemma to current cases of non-proliferation or counter-proliferation attempts? You know, I'm thinking particularly Iran here, but potentially also North Korea, which of course has already proliferated. How does understanding the cheater's dilemma help us think about these contemporary cases?

Kori: [00:24:56] So I love the cheater's dilemma. [00:25:00] And one of the things, you know, we think all the time about, how are they going to credibly signal to us that they're disarming? And we don't think nearly often enough, how do we credibly signal, they are going to get the promised benefit? And that was conceptually for me, the most interesting and important idea that comes out of this excellent article. And if you think about Iran, you know, the promise of the Obama administration, that sanctions would be relaxed in return for the nuclear deal, and then you get this Senator Cotton letter, and then you get not just American companies, but global companies too scared to risk American sanctions, because the United States, even the Secretary of State over and over again, saying you won't be

prosecuted. The Obama administration couldn't credibly signal it because they didn't have a congressionally ratified strategy or treaty.

[00:26:00] So it really struck home to me how difficult the problems are for the United States to credibly signal benefit. And, how important the public conversation and legislation that enables because again, as the last two administrations have shown executive orders are seesaws for American foreign policy.

And it's a real challenge to think about how do we credibly signal? And Iran is the most egregious example, but if I were the North Koreans, I wouldn't believe us either.

Målfrid: [00:26:33] I think that's a very important point. One thing that actually surprises me a little bit, looking at the Iraqi regime discussions is how long they kept trying to get the reward, surprisingly long, I would say given the feedback that they were getting, especially from the American side, suggesting it would be very unlikely, indeed, that sanctions would be lifted as long as Saddam Hussein remained in power. The turning point [00:27:00] in this regard of course, is, is Madeleine Albright's 97 speech at Georgetown, where she makes it clear that it doesn't matter what Iraq does as long as Saddam remains in power, sanctions will remain.

And after that, you know, it was clear to the Iraqi leadership that, you know, they could have sanctions with inspections or sanctions without inspections, as they put it. So, in many ways it surprises me how long they kept trying, but ultimately of course they concluded they wouldn't be rewarded, which led to the collapse of that inspection in late 1998.

So I think it's fundamentally important to think about the kinds of rewards that are promised, at least when they are a promise. To not keep that promise becomes a real problem. And of course, we think of these states as sort of working on their own, but they're looking at each other and learning from each other's experiences.

And I think that, I think that Kori is exactly right. The conclusion that many states would draw from Iraq's example is "don't reveal and don't cooperate, try [00:28:00] and try and avoid ending up in the kind of situation that Iraq did. Another really big question, I think, that came up in the, in the Iraqi context that also comes up in the Iranian context, is how much do we need to know about the past in order to verify disarmament or ongoing monitoring of behavior?

Iraq was a, was a context where the Security Council imposed a very broad demand in terms of disclosures that Iraq had to reveal information about the history of their programs and so on. Information about intentions effectively that are of course, very sensitive, especially for a state, such as Iraq that was, was disarming and under sanctions.

And so, I think this is a big question, both in the Iranian context, perhaps in the North Korean context at a future point. And I think it's, it's a really challenging one and it's not clear to me that we do need a complete picture, but I know that there are many different perspectives on this. So I [00:29:00] think it's, it's a question that lingers.

Kori: [00:29:02] So I would argue as a policy issue, that you may not always need it, but in the case of a government that's used those weapons I think that argues for very complete, like, I would want a different standard for Syria than I would want for a country that hasn't used chemical weapons on its own population.

So I think you can differentiate in order to penalize more greatly states that have a record of use rather than just development. I very often think about, Målfrid I loved your reference to Tom Schelling in the article, and I remember a conversation with Tom about Iran, where he argued that we have the wrong approach, that we are trying to prevent proliferation.

Whereas, the taboo we should really care about its use. And I think that's probably shaping my thinking a whole bunch on this. [00:30:00] If a state has proven use, we are going to treat their behavior with much greater suspicion, given how strong that taboo against WMD uses.

Målfrid: [00:30:10] Yeah. I think that's important and it makes, makes a lot of sense.

And it also strikes me as interesting just how sensitive it is for a leader like Saddam or Gaddafi as well, to admit to what they have done and to admit to what the whole world knows that they allowed to happen. For example, the use of chemical weapons, certainly in the Iraqi case and it is argued in the Libyan case as well, there is a very strong reluctance to accept personal responsibility.

And there's a real fear of being put on trial for war crimes. And it's me just how strong that fear is and how high costs some of these leaders are willing to accept, to sort of avoid taking that personal responsibility.

Morgan: [00:30:54] Yeah, I mean what's fascinating about this conversation is, I'll admit prior to us talking this out, I was thinking of [00:31:00] how to apply the cheater's dilemma to other very like scenarios thinking, particularly in terms of WMD proliferation.

But as we're talking about this more, the cheater's dilemma really is applicable to any context in which any state is conducting a behavior that is reprehensible to the international community. And so, for me, that's itself a really interesting insight that I think comes out of this.

Kori: [00:31:23] Yes, absolutely.

I, too, hadn't thought about the much broader applications of the cheater's dilemma until we three were thinking it through together, as we're talking about it. And it occurs to me that, you know, in the ideological competition between authoritarianism and free societies, this is a huge advantage for free societies because our leaders have to operate under the belief that if they're lying, they're going to get caught, right?

Like the Washington adage, "there's never the crime, it's the coverup," is actually true. And so, that actually [00:32:00] means that you have less likelihood as the leader of a free society of getting caught in the cheater's dilemma, but it also means you probably don't think carefully enough about your authoritarian adversaries having their foot stuck in that Wolf

trap. And how do you create the conditions that produced the revelations that your policy requires?

Målfrid: [00:32:25] Something worries me a lot, is this, um, it's perhaps not a tendency, but there are some examples of like pretty implausible denials by, by some authoritarian countries, of things that they have done and there's a lot of evidence suggesting responsibility and culpability, and it does involve chemical weapons.

It does involve the kinds of capabilities we're talking about here. And, something I worry about a lot is the role of UN agencies and other international organizations, as in terms of fact-finding and the authority [00:33:00] that they have in terms of establishing certain technical truths, which is crucial in this environment.

And so I believe that this is something to think very carefully about as well, uh, when we're talking about the cheater's dilemma that let's, let's make sure it stays a dilemma that we, we don't make it too easy to just put forward an implausible denial.

Kori: [00:33:21] So you make the case so powerfully in the article about all of the decision points at which people tell risible lies, because they don't know what the penalty is, they don't know what the policy is, they don't know what anybody else knows.

Nobody knows the full extent of what's happening. And I want to quote my favorite passage from the whole article, which is, "telling even a ridiculous story was preferable to telling the truth, which would lead to potentially damaging discoveries or a more [00:34:00] carefully crafted lie, which risked accusations of further deception."

Nobody knows what's going on. Nobody knows what to say. And therefore, you get a big sloppy mess. And that's just not how we think about decision-making and policy implementation and repressive societies.

Målfrid: [00:34:20] It certainly isn't, and I really love that you picked that part because for me as well, it's perhaps the most compelling point, to me, coming out of this beyond the case of Iraq.

And it's something that I'm, I'm still thinking about the implications of that, but it also reminds me of a number of examples that the UN inspectors told me about, that not every story made it into the article, but in some cases they were so happy going to the Iraqis saying, "oh, we found either a documentation or supporting information to sort of help solve a part of the puzzle and move it closer to sanctions relief."

And the Iraqis just looked at each other [00:35:00] and shook their heads and sort of said, "no, well, we're going to stick with our earlier statement." Which left them, you know, in, in trouble. But the point is exactly this, they were worried that, "okay, if we admit to this finding, it means something else will come up, so let's just stick with this."

Morgan: [00:35:18] This has been a truly terrific conversation. I've learned a ton from it. And, you know, we have a bit of a tradition on the show here, Kori, where at the end of every episode, we love to ask our special guests, what piece of advice would they share with

our audience? And in particular, junior scholars, junior practitioners, service members, folks just getting started in their career.

Kori: [00:35:39] The advice I would offer is don't be too risk averse. I have run my ship aground several times in my career. And, not only did I learn a lot from making myself sea worthy again, but what I noticed about my students when I was teaching at Stanford, when I [00:36:00] was teaching at SAIS, was that they worry too much that they're going to make a mistake that's going to take them off track. And as a result, they don't experiment nearly as much, they don't give enough sale to opportunities, they're not serendipitous enough. And it changes the slope of the line in their thirties and forties, if they have been too cautious in their twenties.

Morgan: [00:36:25] That's fantastic advice. Well, I want to thank you both Målfrid, Kori, for a fantastic conversation. Thank you so much for joining us.

Kori: [00:36:32] Thank you for the opportunity, my friend.

Målfrid: [00:36:35] Thank you. This was wonderful.

Julie Balise: [00:36:44] Off the Page is a production of *International Security*, a quarterly journal edited and sponsored by the Belfer Center at Harvard Kennedy School and published by the MIT press. Our program is produced and edited by Morgan Kaplan, the executive editor of *International Security*. The associate producer and technical director is Benn [00:37:00] Craig, digital communications by me, Julie Balise, production support by Carly Demetre, and special thanks to Hilan Kaplan for composing our theme music

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