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From: Matthew Rycroft
Date: 18 November 2002

PRIME MINISTER

per mail
M. 4/11

cc: Jonathan Powell
David Manning
Anna Wechsberg
Daniel Pruce

IRAQ: SEMINAR WITH ACADEMICS, TUESDAY

You have a session with academic experts on Iraq from 2.30 to 4.00 on Tuesday. We have subcontracted much of the organisation to Lawry Freedman, to keep it deniable. You should remind the participants again of the need for confidentiality. You should also give a disclaimer at the start: this session is not about Iraq policy directly, the fact that we are having it does not mean anything about our policy, and any discussion of post-Saddam Iraq does not mean that our policy is regime change.

The following academics will attend: Lawrie Freedman (Kings College London), Charles Tripp (SOAS), Toby Dodge (Chatham House), Michael Clarke (Kings College London) and Steve Simon (American, ex-NSC, now at IISS). Jack Straw will also be there.

Toby Dodge has just got back from Iraq. So you could start with him. (He has a political agenda – anti-war - but he is under instructions not to let that colour his contribution! See attached Guardian article.) You could then bring in Charles Tripp (another Iraq expert, who has written a history of Iraq. See the attached summary of his views). You could then broaden out to Steve Simon who is good on the Middle East and the war on terrorism. Finally bring in Lawrie Freedman and Michael Clarke who are generalists.

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We have given out a set of questions as an agenda – attached, and in bold below. The non-bold points are annotations for you only. The purpose of this agenda is not to adhere to it religiously but to use it to spark off an informal, free-flowing discussion. We do not want every academic to speak on every question.

1. Can Iraq only be ruled by a strong authoritarian regime? Are other models possible? Why have they not worked in the past? Is regional devolution a starter? The future governance of Iraq would depend in part on how/when the regime fell. To avoid getting in to a policy discussion on that, we should keep this part of the seminar academic/historical: What are the Iraqi people like? What models of government have they traditionally had? Why/how did Saddam emerge? How popular is he now? Splits in the regime?

2. Can the different communities work together? What are the aspirations of the Shia and the Kurds? What relations do the Iraqi Shia have with Iran? This is crucial for post-Saddam stability. In the absence of true democracy (which would lead to the majority Shia controlling the government) will a federation work? What sort of powers could be devolved to the Shia and Kurds? Will Turkey play along given their views on the Kurds?

3. What role does Islam play in Iraqi political life? How strong is Iraqi secularism? Would it survive the fall of the Ba'ath? The purpose of this part of the discussion is to explore the role of religion in Iraq and help find ways to frame the dispute with Iraq in a way that shows it is not a war on Islam.

4. **What links does Iraq have to terrorism these days?** The academics will probably know less than we do on this, so it may be best to skip over this.
5. **Post-Saddam, how quickly would the Iraqi economy revive? Who would control the oil etc?** BP and others are fretting that they will lose out in the carve-up of contracts after any military action, as the UK did after the Gulf War. BP think prospects in Iraq could be as promising as in Saudi Arabia. We don't need to get into detail on this, but we need to know what the main economic constraints would be in rebuilding Iraq and how economic issues would drive the model of governance chosen.
6. **What is the future of Iraqi relations with Iran? Can they cooperate or are they condemned to remain rivals for power at the north of the Gulf?** (Iran expert Fred Halliday was due to attend but is ill. If he is not replaced, we can keep this short.)
7. **Is there a prospect that Iraq can cooperate with the other Gulf Arab states or will Baghdad, as the historical centre of power and most populous Arab state in the region, always try to dominate? What are the possible models for security and stability in the Gulf region in the future? Can Iraq ever work with the GCC? We want an Iraq at peace with its neighbours. Is this realistic? Which neighbours should we be talking to about Iraq's future?**
8. **Would change in Iraq destabilise other states like Syria (further undermining the credibility of the Ba'ath there) or Jordan? Is there really a prospect that change in Iraq could unlock movement on the MEPP? This is meant as a way of exploring more deeply than usual the linkages between Iraq**

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and Arab/Israel, and the wider consequences for the region. We also need to explore the Turkish angle, if this has not come up under questions 2 or 7.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Matthew', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

MATTHEW RYCROFT

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8. Would change in Iraq destabilise other states like Syria (further undermining the credibility of the Ba'ath there) or Jordan? Is there really a prospect that change in Iraq could unlock movement on the MEPP?

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