

**NOTE ON IRAQ**

We have an opportunity to pull this back round. I remain, in the end, optimistic. But we need it to turn round quickly, and the danger is we "sort of" fix things, not really fix them properly. We can't afford that now. The next few weeks are of the essence. This is especially so because it is our last chance to move things into place before the new Government. We need as much as possible working well, or on a path to working well, so that this is an orderly withdrawal as the Iraqis take over the practical as well as the legal reins, rather than desperately trying to save the Iraqis from themselves, blamed by them if we intervene and blamed for chaos if we don't.

**1. The Handover**

The key dilemma is: Iraq needs, internally and externally, to have a genuine transfer of power; but it also needs a security force capable of holding back the elements that would pervert that power. So the political imperative indicates full sovereignty; the security imperative indicates a robust MNF presence, that might limit that sovereignty. Either way carries big risks. But in my judgment, ultimately, the risks of not appearing to transfer full sovereignty take precedence. The reality is that if there was a clash between the wishes of the IIG and the MNF, and the MNF enforced its wishes, the fall-out would be uncontrollable. So we have to recognise the inevitability of the MNF, post 30 June, being there by consent.

This will be the crucial question over the new UNSCR and, if resolved rightly, the UNSCR should be obtained. But we need a big and defining optic of what this means. I suggest the following timetable:

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In the week beginning 24 May, Brahimi announces the PM, President and Vice Presidents. Coincident with that, we brief that the UNSCR is close to being agreed. An Iraqi Electoral Commission, with a high profile and credible Chairman is simultaneously announced.

Brahimi then convenes a national roundtable in Baghdad of the requisite local figures from all parts of Iraq, which endorses his plan.

Then in the week of 31 May, the new Iraqi PM and Brahimi go to New York. There the new PM sets out his forward plan for Iraq; he is joined by the Coalition HOG in support; and then the nations in the Security Council, and the UNSCR is passed. We need this for the necessary strong visible expression of change.

At the same time, we publish with the Iraqi PM the plan for the future Iraqiisation of the security forces and the comprehensive ISF of the future.

There is then a huge media selling exercise by the Iraqi PM at home and abroad. We follow that with a post-handover international conference of donors of the sort called for by Putin.

## 2. MNF and ISF joint arrangements

We have provided a paper on this. It is difficult but not impossible. Of course neither UK nor US troops can be put in danger or be commanded by other than our own forces. But, subject to this, we need a system of co-operation, starting with an enlarged NSC, which would have the crucial Iraqi and MNF people on it. The red card would, however, have to be retained by the Iraqis ie they could, unless our

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troops were at risk of course, have the final veto on launching an operation. But there would be unity of command, by the MNF, at the operational level.

### 3. ISF itself

Self-evidently if the above is correct, the quality of the ISF becomes critical. In truth, we have assembled the quantity but not the quality. General Petraeus is a big step forward. But this work is urgent and nothing can stand in its way. I enclose a short paper done for me by my military. In particular we need:

- more international police advisers, which presently is at only 50 per cent of requirement
- rapid recruiting of more Iraqi army battalions
- fix pay, equipment and IT problems of the police and civil defence
- bringing in proper officers to lead, even if there is some Ba'ath connection.

Entirely understandably, given the security environment, the focus of the MNF has put the immediate security issues first. But this other work needs just as much leadership and attention in parallel.

We should be able, in time, to pull all this together into a comprehensive plan for the gradual phasing in of ISF and phasing out of MNF.

### 4. De-Ba'athification

It is more and more clear to me that the root of our problem was the total lack of any indigenous Iraqi leadership in a country brutalised and stripped of strong voices. As a result, there is no alternative but to advance a discriminating not indiscriminate de-Ba'athification policy. Fallujah is the classic example: the

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approach adopted there is rough and ready and has immense problems associated with it, but it ensures essential local support and calm at a critical time. We must now bring in those who can create a stratum of leadership in the Army and police, and also in the bureaucracy. For example, in Turkey, the Trade Minister told me we have in prison the former Iraqi Trade Minister who was highly capable, not really a Saddam supporter and could play a significant part in calming things. Obviously it needs to be checked out. But the point is: unless we start to bring these types of people in, the mountain is too steep to climb.

## 5. Protection of oil and power

Whatever else, we must get the oil refineries, pipelines and power plants protected. This is in the category of "whatever it takes". At present we have had 48 hour blackouts in Baghdad and a serious disruption of oil supplies. This would be good work for a new Iraqi army battalion to do. But the terrorist strategy is to cause a summer of broken down infrastructure and we can't allow that.

## 6. Intelligence

We are, again gradually building an Iraqi intelligence capability; but it needs building faster and extending to the Ministry of Defence with a proper system of MNF/MOD sharing.

## 7. Local Population

Fallujah and Najaf and other "hotspots" continue to cause real concern but one key thing is emerging. Where we have local civic buy-in and Iraqis policing, in whole or in part, its very much easier. There are all sorts of problems as the Fallujah

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Brigade shows. But the basic concept is still right. We should be replicating this and publicising it.

There are, believe it or not, also local demos against al-Sadr and the extremists in Fallujah. We need this stimulated and again, publicised in Iraq.

## 8. Media

The advent of Al-Iraqiya has made a difference. One Iraqi Minister told me it was all there was, keeping the IGC presentation of its case, afloat. But it is still not as good as it needs to be. I enclose a set of recommendations made by the former head of Murdoch's satellite TV in the UK, who went to Baghdad last week. All of these points need to be actioned.

Above all, the new PM needs a tip-top media operation himself. He needs to be the face of the new Iraq; as do his Ministers. We must put one in place for him now.

In addition, we should be commissioning constant internal polling on Iraqis and their attitudes. If our leading papers can do it in the US and UK, we can.

## 9. Iraqi civilians and detainees

It is repeated as fact that between 10-15,000 Iraqi civilians have died since "the occupation". This figure is doing a lot of damage. Yet it is (a) clearly a gross over-estimate; and (b) does not point out that the largest numbers have died through terrorism. The NGO - Iraq Body Count - estimate the number at 1500-2000 once soldiers and dead terrorists are removed from the count. But we should

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have, at least, an approximate figure of our own not just leave the high figure un rebutted.

We need also a coherent plan for the detainees post 30 June. They either have to be tried or handed over to the Iraqis: but we can't just hold them indefinitely.

## 10. Chalabi

I believe he could be, potentially a big source of trouble. He needs to be talked to and made to realise he can't hold us to ransom. We need a strategy for him or he will try to de-rail the new PM.

## 11. Syria and Iran

I think both are up for causing trouble; and need to be warned off. The report that Iran helped arm an anti CF attack; and Syria's attitude to the border are not acceptable. We need to talk to them firmly about the damage to any possibility of a different relationship if it persists.

We need to task our people, under Condi and Nigel, to work through each part of this systematically, checking it off, following it through, coming back to us to remove any obstacles. This can be done but "sort of" doing it won't work.

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