

IRAQ

A. THE POLITICS

We are agreed on the strategy: hands-on; to form a unity Government; with a competent team in charge, especially of MOI and MOD. How?

- (i) US/UK political teams to be highly active - this is clearly happening.
- (ii) Maintain Sunni outreach, so that they know, whatever their complaints about the election, we are the guarantors that they won't be cut out. Another meeting in early January should be held with key players.
- (iii) Allawi needs to be bound in to a role. I will see him in Jordan on 2nd January. But he should see this as a four-year Assembly, but not necessarily a four-year Government. Meantime he should accept a portfolio, preferably MOI.
- (iv) The Arab neighbours need to weigh in with the Sunnis. I will see
A contact group in Iraq would be sensible.
- (v) The Kurds must be told to use their power properly. I will try to see Talabani. Ann Clwyd should speak to them all. They need a quite firm, if not heavy, message.

(vi) Sistani is worried (rightly) about a too rapid withdrawal of the MNF. We should tell him bluntly the price of our staying is a "unity Government".

(vii) We should also outreach to MAS. I have authorised direct contact with him. He needs to be kept in contact with, at least so as not to have misunderstandings.

(viii) We must check out systematically the leading figures. I
(too close to SCIRI and Iran). But if not him,
who? We can't afford another mistake.

(ix) We need to work hard on Fadila, the non-Iranian part of UIA. They could be swing votes either now or later.

(x) The UN have a real role to play at the margins. I will speak to Kofi. They should endorse the general approach to a "unity Government" and provide cover for our insistence on it. A contact group of neighbours in Iraq could have the UN as part of it.

All of this needs to be tracked and reported on by US/UK, weekly.

I came back convinced, more than ever, that this is "make or break", with Iraqis basically wanting unity but lacking the guidance to get there. We should be the guides.

B. IRAQUISATION

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I was surprised people were more upbeat than I expected (and most important, the ordinary soldiers working alongside Iraqis). The two clear messages were: the vital nature of leadership in MOI and MOD; and 2006 being the year of the police. There may also be equipment issues with the military and the police.

C. FORWARD VISION

Part of the whole business is about communication. The bad news is still the massive level of misunderstanding about us, our motives, and the fact that we want the same as them: a free Iraq, with no need of the MNF. The good news is that, increasingly, we are communicating with them and Iraqi politics is becoming more familiar as normal politics.

I propose that, as soon as possible after a new Government is formed, we publish a roadmap or forward vision that is the joint work of the Iraqis and the MNF and endorsed by the UN. This should set out:

- a) a programme for completing Iraqi security capability;
- b) a phased draw-down of the MNF, with possible time lines (though conditional);
- c) a programme of reconstruction;
- d) a set of political goals.

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This should be an all-encompassing vision of the future, possibly then endorsed by the UN so that we draw in more support and establish incontrovertible legitimacy.

This would both settle Iraqis with a view of the future and our own public anxious to see or at least comprehend the end-game.

Of course, it all depends on getting a good Government!

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