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From Major General J D Shaw CBE



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General,

BACKGROUND BRIEF - MULTINATIONAL DIVISION (SOUTH EAST)

"The longer I am in Afghanistan, the more I look at how you British ruled India for so long with so few people. You worked with the forces in society, not against them." LTG Vines, Bagram, Sep 03.

"Blood ties provide the human context. It explains why in Arab society the personal is so much more prominent than the institutional.... Family, clan and tribe provide identity." Mark Allen 'Arabs'

"Better the Arabs do it tolerably than you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not win it for them.... It may take them longer and it may not be as good as you think, but if it is theirs, it will be better." T E Lawrence, 1917.

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INTRODUCTION

I look forward to your visit on Thursday. During the briefs, we will focus on our approach to achieving success but I thought it might be useful to give you my views on the overall situation down here before you arrived, by way of background. MND (SE)'s specifics can sometimes get lost in the overwhelming noise of Baghdad.

The paper focuses on the social and political conditions that pertain in the AO, for both historic and current reasons. Against this context, the assumptions underlying our mission are spelt out and the nature of a pragmatic stability described. Each Province is then described ending with the main problem of Basrah, and a basis for cohesion suggested.

pragmatic stability

LEGACY

Iraq, and particularly Basrah, has a mixed political legacy. Its antiquity gives its people an aspirant pride yet, from its geography as so often at the edge of an invading empire, the

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what she wants self-leadership

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legacy is one of neglect, of immature political institutions and of the habitual dis-regard by the population of a far away capital; Basrah wants to run itself, it has never liked being run from Baghdad ([redacted] 1.4b). In the case of the Ottoman Empire, Basra existed as an independently minded *vilayet* for centuries. Geographically, this encompassed what is now Kuwait and large areas of what is now SW [redacted] 1.4b (which is still ethnically Arab not Persian) but the tribal and familial links extended even further. The lines Britain drew on the map in 1920 have done little to alter the familial, economic and religious links across the area, notwithstanding the bloodshed of the Iran-Iraq war.

The period since 1920 has seen the semblance of an official state created on recognisable, originally British, lines running in parallel with a unofficial state based on ancient Arab culture, an awkward marriage that proved tense at best and, frequently, violent at worst. The political legacy of Iraqi government since 1920 up to the overthrow of Saddam I have summarised, from Charles Tripp's *History of Iraq*, as follows: no representation of the people; no accountability by the rulers to the people - conspiracy, loyalty, patronage are the currencies of power; the state is an instrument of power; the narrative is dominated by those privileged with close association with the centre of the state; the exemplary use of and rapid resort to, violence. This is the culture into which we have tried to plant western, liberal democracy.

The effect of the 2003 invasion, de-Baathification and the disbandment of the Army and the police was to strip away the last vestiges of the old official state already undermined by sanctions, and open the field to the unofficial state. The elections since 2003 have legitimised the unofficial state's control over the official state; all power is now sectional. By granting PIC to Al Muthanna and Dhi Qar, MNF has, wittingly or not, reinforced the legitimacy of this arrangement.

For ease of future reference it is worth splitting the loci of power into four illustrative groupings that co-exist in MND(SE) today.

- The official state comprises the formal structures that we have imposed: Governors, Provincial Councils, security committees, official political parties, the ISF, etc etc. The lack of a strong political class, plus the cultural low loyalty attracted by institutions, makes this the weakest locus of power.
- The traditional state is that of blood/tribes and religion/*Mujtahids*. All have blood links to a tribe. Traditionally, this was the key to an Arab's identity and hence attracted the most loyalty. How much attention they now pay to this primary loyalty varies across the AO and is, as will be seen, a key determinant of societal stability. Shi'ism dominates. Sistani exercises a restraint on intra-Shia violence with his appeal for a united Shia front.
- The shadow state is composed of the militia, banned by CPA but not officially illegal under Iraqi law - JAM and Badr being the most prominent in this AO.
- The dark state is defined by the activity of individuals - death squads, MJAM etc. Membership of the shadow and dark states is voluntary, motivated by rootlessness (decline in tribal influence?), status, fear, greed and sometimes ideology.

can't fight the soil

no pragmatic stability - for Ba'ath movement

official state imposed by MNF - weak

tribe - determining influence

militia

death squads

4 loci of power

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Some individuals are members of all four at the same time, indicating the potential transience of membership of the dark state. Linkages between these loci can be fluid but, as will be seen, these linkages are of the utmost significance to the AO's future.

MISSION SUCCESS

For the mission two- and one-up, the end-state is political; MNC operations are a supporting LOO; Iraqis and the GOI are the supported players in the political LOO. What will a sustainable Iraqi political end-state look like? In answering that key question, the following assumptions are key: 1. No UNSCR beyond 2007. 2. PIC for all Provinces by end Nov 2007. 3. [1.4b, 1.4d] a given, [1.4b, 1.4d] the variable. 4. Declining domestic political appetite for MNF in Iraq. 5. Rising Iraqi appetite for self-rule. From this, I conclude that MNF has to work with the forces within Iraqi society. By the above analysis, the best realistic goal is a stable linkage between various loci of power; in short, an accommodation. An outright victory for one side is likely to prove a goad to revenge within a culture of 'blood feuds'; an accommodation that gives honour to all reconcilable sides is likely to prove more enduring. The aim should be for a score draw not a zero/sum victory.

accommodation

How this accommodation is arrived at will differ across Iraq, depending on local social and political conditions; how stability will be arrived at it will differ in both form and timeframe. In the MND(SE) AO, instability is caused by the competition for power and resources between competing Shia, across all four loci of power. Of the four conflicts identified by SecDef Gates in Iraq (insurgency, sectarian, GWOT/AQ(I) and Shia vs Shia) only the latter applies in this AO, but I would add that [1.4b, 1.4d] acts as a significant accelerant to the Shia on Shia power struggle and also stokes the anti-MNF campaign. Against this background, the four provinces are moving/have moved at different speeds to their own particular form of stability.

Stability

PROVINCIAL STABILITY

Stability is dependent upon the extent to which society is harmoniously balanced between and within government, people and ISF; it is the state of the government and people that dictate the state of the ISF. In Al Muthanna and Dhi Qar, the political landscape is dominated by Badr/SCIRI, the social landscape by strong tribal influences. In both, deals have been struck between the social and political forces and stability is the result. The (Badr dominated) IPS have both the political and societal support to confront competing interests; the result is a coherent collusion of the official, tribal and shadow loci of power that creates the monopoly of power to produce stability. Together, they suppress the dark state. This situation is many miles from western liberal democracy but it represents an Iraqi compromise between ancient and modern structures. In Maysaan, this compromise is harder to achieve. OMS/JAM and tribal influences are dominant but, because of the more fractured natures of both OMS/JAM and the Maysaan tribes, the influence of [1.4b] and the weak yet competing Badr/SCIRI interests in the IPS, any deal is likely to be less stable. Currently one seems to be holding.¹

Achieving a deal in Basrah is the real challenge. [1.4b] is pervasive (much of it benign and inevitable). Tribal influences are weak: the displaced marsh Arabs that occupy

¹ PIC has been delayed by a month as a result of the MOI's assessment that the IPS need more equipment to recover from the autumn incident; true, they do - but a less benign interpretation is that this is the Badr/SCIRI IPS being re-armed by the Badr-dominated MOI to dispute the power balance post PIC/at some future date. With no FoM into Al Amarah, reading Maysan for PIC is hard and very much in the hands of the Iraqis.

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the *banlieu* are rootless, disenfranchised and guns for hire. Political power is divided and unrepresentative (OMS did not stand). Government and people are divided within and between themselves; neither is sufficiently coherently organised for deals to be made. This lack of an accommodation manifests itself in weak political and official institutions (Provincial Council, IA and IPS), strong dark state influence and violence.²

There are two themes of Violence in the AO (mainly Basrah): intra-Shia, and anti-MNF. Intra-Shia violence is motivated by power politics and gangsterism. It is statistically low as a percentage of overall AO reported violence but politically significant. Death squad activity corrupts and intimidates the political process, creating a mafia society. Anti-MNF violence dominates the statistics for the overall AO but the figures are still slight when compared to overall incident statistics across Iraq, even when just IDF are compared. (IDF on Basra Palace receive a disproportionate US interest due to the REO's hot line to State thence to Force and Corps.) Motivation for attacks on MNF include money, youthful exuberance, MJAM pursuing the post-Coalition laurels of 'victory', and Iranian-sponsored disruption related to wider regional and nuclear issues. This poses particular challenges for MNF. Statistically, it is clear that MNF are the major part of the problem. The major part of the solution lies within Iraqi society (without MNF presence, the problems would be those more of Palermo than Beirut). The challenge for the Division is to apply its force in a way that contributes to this fundamentally political problem.

Handwritten notes:
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UNIFYING THEMES FOR STABILITY

So much for the situation in MND(SE), and particularly the problem in Basrah. Stability is not the absence of conflict; it is also (and over-ridingly) the willingness of parties to resolve their differences without recourse to violence (as has already occurred in two Provinces). For this to work, there needs to be a sufficient area of common interests for all parties to seek common cause. And some unifying themes are emerging: desire for PIC, greed (very few attacks on the infrastructure), fear of 1.4b and fear of the abyss when MNF leave. To use these interests to leverage Basrah and Maysaan to stability will take all the organs of power at our disposal; the Comprehensive Approach is the key to success. The brief on Thursday will focus on this Comprehensive Approach, including the military contribution to it. The style will be discursive and participatory.

Handwritten notes:
account. key to
stability
leverage

Sir, we look forward to your visit.

Handwritten signatures:
Chris ...
John ...

Approved for Release

² (It is true but unhelpful to describe the Basrah IPS as 'bad'; lacking a protective society to live amongst and the political top-cover to work to, an individual's primary motive becomes to survive. This explains the contrast with Al Muthanna IPS. Both have received broadly the same training and equipment (the physical component) and Basrah IPS will shortly achieve PIC-compliant TRA levels. Yet the differences in the moral component explain the comparative robustness of the Al Muthanna police (eg. 22 Dec 06 defeat of JAM in As Samawah) and the divided loyalties and criminality of Basrah IPS.)

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