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[‘The other day upon the stair...’ – Blair’s leadership on Iraq](#)



**Parliament’s first Iraq debate in three years, in government time, began in a fraud and ended as farce. As such, it was probably a fair summary of UK policy on the war and the occupation.**

The debate itself was dominated by three people who weren’t there – Tony Blair, Henry Kissinger and Terry Adams. Only Blair got a mention, but it is Kissinger, and the unknown Adams, who spill the beans on the disgraceful and ultimately doomed Iraq strategy

Blair has become a cult absence figure in the debates about Iraq. The ‘trust me’ leader who plunged Britain into the war, has become the AWOL emperor with no idea of how to get the hell out.

It’s not that Blair lacks availability. He can hop on a plane to answer questions in the White House. He can give evidence to America’s Iraq Study Group. He can bang the war drum from the deck of a battleship. But one mention of a parliamentary debate and Blair was in the back of a car heading to the friendlier fire of business leaders in the CBI. In the military you would be court martialled for this, but in politics it masquerades as leadership.

In his place, Blair left a motley collection of arguments to be put by the same apologists who took us into the war in the first place. The pursuit of democracy, the creation of stability, a lasting peace, respect for the Iraq people... all are cited as reasons for remaining as the occupying powers in Iraq. It fell to Kissinger to cough out the real game plan.

Writing just a week ago in the International Herald Tribune Kissinger spelt it out with brutal clarity -

*Under present conditions, withdrawal is not an option. American forces are indispensable. They are in Iraq not as a favor to its government or as a reward for its conduct. They are there as an expression of the American national interest to prevent the Iranian combination of imperialism and fundamentalist ideology from dominating a region on which the energy supplies of the industrial democracies depend.*

So, nothing to do with democracy. Nothing to do with the wishes of the Iraqi parliament or the Iraqi people. The presence of troops is a platform from which to threaten Iran and to extract oil. This is where Britain's role emerges in its murkiest and most despicable terms.

A new Oil Law has been drafted that the Iraqi parliament is being pressed to urgently approve. The law has been drawn up by the UK and the US rather than by Iraqis. It specifies that two thirds of Iraq's oil reserves are to be transferred into the hands of multinational companies, in production-sharing contracts guaranteed for up to 20 years and allowing up to three quarters of oil profits to be siphoned out of the country.

So respectful are we of the democratic process in Iraq that Iraqi MPs who are expected to approve the Law in less than a month have not even seen the draft. For the first time in over 30 years, control of Iraq's oil would be taken out of the hands of Iraqi people.

Oil receipts account for over 70% of Iraq's GDP and 95% of its government revenue. Allowing multinational oil companies to stuff 75% of this into their own pockets is not only an abuse of the legal duties of the occupying powers in Iraq, it is also the guarantee of civil war.

These so called 'production sharing agreements' have been tried before in Latin America. Western compliant governments who signed their nation's assets into such agreements provoked their own civil uprisings and protests. Ultimately such governments were thrown out and replaced by political leaders who would re-nationalise the stolen assets.

In Iraq, this process is more likely to be driven by the militias than MPs. It will sound the death knell for the government and, sadly, represents the greatest death threat to our own soldiers. They will be asked to defend the indefensible – the legalised pillaging of Iraq's

wealth. Downing St. will never explain this to the families of the deceased, nor does it acknowledge the covert role it has played in engineering the theft itself.

Towards the end of the parliamentary debate, Foreign Office Minister, Kim Howells, came back on claims that the UK had a secret 'oil agenda', saying:

*I urge the House to reject as nonsense the notion that that support is based on our desire to get our hands on Iraqi oil. If we had wanted to do that, we could have taken part in the same shabby and illegal deals that a number of our most prominent European partners set up with Saddam and his gangsters.*

It was at this point that I tried to ask about the mysterious Terry Adams, but the Minister would have none of it. The position, however, is quite clear.

In 2004 the Foreign Office (FCO) hired Mr Adams as a consultant and oil advisor. His background was as a former executive of BP and his role was to write guidance on the framework for oil extraction in Iraq.

The draft guidance Adams produced drew heavily on oil company arguments for long term production sharing contracts and (surprise, surprise) pressed Iraq to adopt policies compatible with BP's.

In the autumn of 2004, FCO and Treasury civil servants advised oil company lobbyists on how best to get Iraq to sign up to the transfer of their oil assets. By 2006, British officials had outline proposals for production sharing agreements, and used the British Ambassador in Iraq to run them past the Iraqi Finance Minister. Meanwhile, teams in both Whitehall and the embassy were working on the draft law.

Britain has not been doing this on its own. The Bush administration has been knee deep in the process too. Only the Iraqis have been held at arms length.

When pressed, UK ministers retreat behind the blandest of claims that oil is essential to Iraq's reconstruction programme. Absolutely true. But you do not begin by stealing it. Iraq's reconstruction will depend on Iraq's continued ownership of its own oil.

Talk to Hassan Juma'a, president of the Basra Oil Workers Union and he will tell you of the confidence Iraqi workers have about working with the international community. They are happy to sell oil to major companies and to hire companies for construction work they may need. The non-negotiable presumption, however, is that Iraqi oil (and its production) will be owned by Iraq. This is the presumption Britain has been employing insurgent bureaucrats and consultants to destroy.

Each week, the Prime Minister bewails the levels of crime, theft and destruction that dominate life in Iraq. What he does not admit is how complicit he has made us in this greatest theft of all.

The mullahs of money, who stalk the world in search of rich and easy pickings, see a treasure trove in Iraqi oil. Market fundamentalists in the oil industry want to impose an ideological regime upon Iraq that is no less regressive than the Taliban's. It is shameful that Britain should be reduced to the level of running its own militia of corporate insurgents in this destructive process. Perhaps this is who the troops should be protecting Iraqis from.

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