

PROLOGUE

SCENE 1: An interview for Al-Jazeera. Washington DC. October 2001.

A TV studio. The usual faffing as microphones are rigged and so on. As much as possible the stage should appear as though it is in fact a TV studio, and the audience is a studio audience. To this end the space can be in the process of being lit, and technicians can be getting things sorted even as the audience enters. Eventually, the INTERVIEWER and CONDOLEEZZA RICE enter and the interview begins. The full interview is also filmed and shown on a screen at the rear of the stage. The audience is encouraged to applaud as the interviewee enters.

INTERVIEWER: Dr Rice, we would like to thank you very much for this opportunity that you give to Al-Jazeera and to our audience in the Arab and Muslim world.

DR RICE: Thank you very much for the opportunity to be with you.

INTERVIEWER: Since we have a limited time, let me start first with the latest development; the military action beginning last week in Iraq. We see from polls and from demonstrations in the street that while some governments support the US, the public on the streets in the Arab and Muslim world do not. Do you think that there is a problem because the US only relies on the support of governments, regardless of what the people think?

DR RICE: We, of course, have very good relations with a number of governments in the Middle East. But we care very much also about the people of the Middle East, the Arab populations. And the United States is a place to which many Arabs have looked as a place — we have a number of Arab immigrants in the United States. We think that the United States is a place in which religious tolerance and a belief that all people should live together in peace is a message that would resonate with populations in the region.

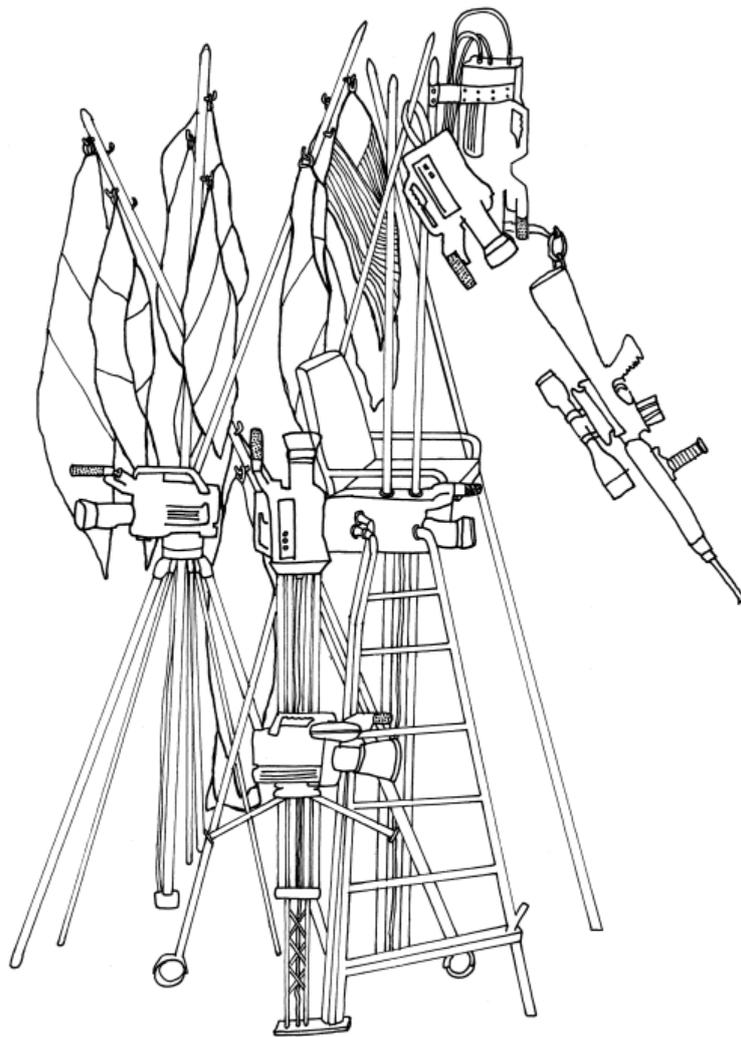
INTERVIEWER: So is it a problem of perception, an image of the US only, or is it policies that are perceived to be double standards and we need to review the US policies in the Middle East?

DR RICE: No, we believe that the policies that the United States is pursuing are ones that are good for the Middle East as a whole.

INTERVIEWER: You are personally perceived as one of the people in the administration who wanted to enlarge the war in terrorism to include Iraq. Correct me, please.

DR RICE: Iraq has been a problem not just for US policy, but for policy in the region, as well. This is a country that has threatened its neighbours, that has been harmful to its own people. And we believe that our policies toward Iraq simply are to protect the region and to protect Iraq's people and neighbours.

Now, we understood when we came to power here in Washington that we had a problem, for instance, on Iraqi sanctions; that people believed, or that Saddam Hussein was claiming that the sanctions that were in place were



somehow harming the Iraqi people. We do not believe that they were harming the Iraqi people. But that said, we wanted to change the sanctions. We wanted to change the sanctions so that they are aimed at the regime, which is a danger to its neighbours, not at the people.

The President has made very clear that the war on terrorism is a broad war on terrorism. You can't be for terrorism in one part of the world and against it in another part of the world. We worry about Saddam Hussein. We worry about his weapons of mass destruction that he's trying to achieve.

INTERVIEWER: How about Syria?

DR RICE: We have had some discussions with Syria. The President, in his speech to the Joint Session, said: those who continue to harbour terrorists. That's an invitation to countries to stop the practice of harbouring terrorism.

INTERVIEWER: So if Syria does not cooperate against people who are from Jihad or Hamas or Hizbollah, they should be targeted also?

DR RICE: You can't say there are good terrorists and there are bad terrorists. But the means that we use with different countries to get them to stop harbouring terrorists may be very broad. And there are many means at our disposal. You cannot be neutral in this fight; you either are for terrorism or against it.

INTERVIEWER: Overall, how do you perceive Al-Jazeera as a credible or independent media?

DR RICE: Well, if I did not have respect for Al-Jazeera, I would not be doing this interview. The United States

believes that the press is one of the most fundamental bases for democracy and for individuals to have the kind of dignity that human beings should have. And so I'm delighted to be here on Al-Jazeera. I know that you're going to have many of my colleagues on in the future, and I look forward to being back with you.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you. And I leave you at the end just with a statement from you without my interference, to our audience in the Arab and Muslim world, whatever you would like to tell them.

DR RICE: I would like to say to the Arab and Muslim world the following. I would like to say that America is a country that respects religious difference. America is a country that has many people of different religions within it. The fastest-growing religion in America is the Muslim faith.

This is a war against the evil of terrorism. The President of the United States understands Islam to be a faith of peace, a faith that protects innocents, and the policy of the United States is to do the same.

Thank you very much.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you, Dr Rice.

ACT ONE

SCENE 2: A press briefing. Baghdad, 3 April 2004.

As with the first scene, we are in a situation familiar to us from broadcast news – the press briefing with an anchorwoman present. Also as with the first scene, what we see is also screened. It is important that the camera angles and video quality accurately mimic those of, say, CNN. The date and location are displayed prominently on the screens. The AMBASSADOR is flanked by military top brass.

SASHA (*to camera*): Since the first assault on the city last year Fallujah has been at the sensitive heart of the US presence in Iraq. Violent and determined opposition to the occupation has been at its most intense in the city, and for six months coalition forces have been placed in an increasingly difficult position in the face of such committed resistance. The discovery of the burned, brutalized and mutilated bodies of four American civilian contractors, working for Blackwater Security, can only intensify the already volatile situation.

AMBASSADOR (*to assembled journalists*): The deaths of these four men outside Fallujah and their despicable mutilation will not derail the march toward stability and democracy in Iraq. The attacks will not go unpunished. The US will respond at the time and place of our choosing.

SASHA: Mr Ambassador, will this affect the June 30th handover?

AMBASSADOR: We have problems, there's no hiding that. But basically Iraq is on track to realize the kind of Iraq that Americans want – and that Iraqis want – which is a democratic Iraq. Thank you. (*He leaves.*)

SASHA: General, can you tell us a little of your plans in response to these murders? Do you know who is responsible?

US GENERAL: We are going to hunt down the people responsible for this bestial act. It will be at a time and a place of our choosing. We are not going to do a pell-mell rush into the city. It will be deliberate, it will be precise and it will be overwhelming. We will not rush in to make things worse. We will plan our way through this and we will re-establish control of that city and we will pacify that city. Good day.

SASHA: General, if I could...

US GENERAL: I'm afraid that's all for today. Thank you.

REPORTERS: General, General...

SCENE 3: RANA.

RANA and AHRAR should appear unobtrusively. In fact, they have been watching the previous scenes on television. At a suitable juncture RANA addresses us directly. There should be no acknowledgement of a fourth wall – she is talking to us.

RANA: My job is to go to these cities under siege, negotiate with the Americans, go inside and look for women and children and the wounded, and try to get them out of the

city if they want, or find them somewhere safe inside the city if we can. I work with friends using their holy passports – British, American – to get through checkpoints.

The resistance started after the peaceful protest in May at the school. The Americans shot about twenty people in the protest. So this is how it started. Fallujah is not a city with a history of resistance. You've heard that Fallujah was fighting for Saddam but it isn't true – Fallujah was the centre of the anti-Saddam coup in the nineties. Fallujah did not resist to start with. People said 'we were thinking the Americans came to help'. I was thinking 'they come to destroy Iraq'.

AHRAR: Under Saddam we'd be paid visits but they'd at least wait for us to answer the door. Under the Americans the doors are just kicked in. And now what? Go and vote and risk being blown to pieces, or followed by insurgents and murdered for cooperating with the Americans? For what? To practice democracy? Are you joking?

All I can say is that Fallujah is like it was struck by a tsunami. There weren't many families in there after the siege, but they had absolutely nothing. The suffering was beyond what you can imagine. When the Americans finally let us in people were fighting just for a blanket.

America can go to the moon. America can make weapons capable of killing from a world away. But America cannot make and replace people.

RANA turns on a small television set. The following scene is 'broadcast' on it, and on large screens on the walls. At the other side of the room, SASHA enters and watches the same footage on a different TV, which should then allow her to segue into Scene 5. NB: the basic principle here is

that everything seen on the screens or played through the sound system is seen and heard by at least some of the characters. They are props the actors interact with, as well as alternative methods of storytelling for the audience.

SCENE 4: ONSCREEN ONLY. Fallujah.

RANA (ONSCREEN): The strange thing is, during the last days of the siege some people doing some cleaning in the street, and I'm like what's that? And we see trucks removing soil and bringing water to clean the streets. And the soldiers are giving toys to the kids, the few children left. And we drove a bit further and I see the crew of CNN filming and this is the footage the Americans see back home! Soldiers cleaning the streets, giving toys to the kids!.

CUT TO:

US COLONEL (ONSCREEN): We napalmed those bridges. Unfortunately, there were people there. It's no great way to die. The generals love napalm, it has a big psychological effect.

SCENE 5: Baghdad. SASHA, a British MAJOR and a senior Christian CLERIC. Also British.

The two men pass without initially seeing the journalist; they should have entered while the scene on the screen is being played, leaving no gap at all between that and the start of this scene.

SASHA: Sir?

MAJOR: Jesus, Sasha, do you have to skulk around like that?

CLERIC: Good morning, I'm afraid I haven't had the pleasure?

MAJOR: Ah, Sasha Edmonton, the doyenne of investigative journalism. If there are skeletons or choirboys in your closet, uncover them she will. Sasha, this is the vicar of Baghdad.

SASHA: Do you have time for me to ask you a few questions?

MAJOR: OK, Sasha. Because it's you. But we can't stay long.

SASHA: Rumour has it you've just come from a meeting with al-Sadr? And with Bremer?

CLERIC: Good grief, is nothing secret any more? You're well informed.

SASHA: And?

MAJOR: Off the record?

SASHA: OK. Yes (*switches off the recorder*). Fully Chatham House. Tell me about the situation in Fallujah, please. What's your intelligence?

MAJOR: If you want to know about Fallujah, think of Londonderry in the early seventies. OK, so military intelligence used to be about finding various large bits of metal – tanks, guns, planes etc. We realized in Northern Ireland that actually it was about learning about hearts and minds. It's a change from hardware to software, if you like. In Iraq, we know where all the lumps of metal are, but not how the regime actually works. You have to remember that opening

dialogue and other equivalent talking cures are not military processes, they're governmental and political processes. Whereas, if we pitch up at a negotiation and use it as an opportunity to gather intelligence, we won't make it out of the room – or if we do, we certainly won't get back in again.

SASHA: Is that what happened with Bremer and al-Sadr?

CLERIC: Ha! It was like an Old-Testament prophet talking to a New-Testament prophet. Not the way round you'd suppose.

SASHA:?

CLERIC: The Americans still think they can walk in and be welcomed, be trusted, because they're the chosen people. At the same time, their command aren't talking to each other. They talk to the Iraqis more than to each other, but always with a different agenda. It's chaos.

SASHA: And the religious conflict?

CLERIC: Well, in a way there isn't one. It isn't Christian v. Muslim, though the Americans almost make it such by default. Fallujah is Sunni, like the Ba'athists, like Saddam. So they're mistrusted by the Shia and by the Yanks not because they're Muslim but because they're Sunni. The Shias are like Catholics; they have centuries of tradition, a real hierarchy with Ayatollahs and a bureaucracy – mosques with affiliated schools and all that. Sunnis have none of this, they're like Protestants, relying on a purist interpretation of the Qur'an, and without an internal infrastructure. Fallujah's become their centre by default – there's nowhere else, historically. Are you going there?

SASHA: They're not letting journalists in. It's a closed door.

CLERIC: That doesn't usually stop your lot going somewhere.

SASHA: Actually, they needn't bother stopping us. No news agency will insure us or our gear in Fallujah, so my own boss has banned me. Anyway, what should the Americans be doing?

MAJOR: The solution to law and order is simple – we did it in Northern Ireland – joint patrols with the local police. People don't mind the guilty being searched. Unfortunately, we disbanded the Iraqi police a year ago. You have to remember the Pentagon is run by guys who fought in Vietnam. Their instinctive response is still 'take 'em out in an MCO...'.
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CLERIC: ...major combat operation...

MAJOR: ...*They* are at war, we are fighting a counter-insurgency operation. Plus, of course, there is little or no appetite in the Pentagon or in the White House for substantial change. They go in with immediate victory in mind, not effectual change.

SASHA: And what should they have in mind?

CLERIC: Survival! The Americans aren't just running blindly in; to some extent, the insurgents entice them. Red flags to a lot of bull. There *are* car bombs, there *are* kidnappings, there *are* suicide bombs. I've seen Mujahedin with limbs ready-tourniqueted in case of injury. Some people in Fallujah are dangerous.

MAJOR: You see, a leader is a guardian of an idea. It's a quaint notion, but a true one. Fundamentally, wars are about ideas – even if the idea is merely conquest for its own sake. And in Iraq it's a moot point whether a secular, democratic West-leaning Iraq is the right idea to be fighting for. We don't have a winning idea; democracy here is simply impossible. And this has been denied. It has led to terrible planning, and the fundamental experience of Iraqis is one of humiliation and shame. Consequently, we've managed to unite all the various anti-coalition forces against us. We've given them common cause.

SASHA: You're very candid. Thank you.

MAJOR: Well, ultimately Sasha the British aren't involved in this one. It's an American cock-up. My view is that the Americans' use of violence is not proportionate and is over-responsive to the threat they are facing. They don't see the Iraqi people the way we see them. They view them as *untermenschen*. They are not concerned about the Iraqi loss of life. As far as they are concerned Iraq is bandit country and everybody is out to kill them. It is trite, but American troops do shoot first and ask questions later. For God's sake, most Americans can't tell the difference between Iraq and Iran. Perhaps war is God's way of teaching Americans geography.

CLERIC: You have to look also at how they treat their own. In the British army, roughly 3 per cent of soldiers are leaving this war with significant psychiatric problems. In the American army, the figure is over 30 per cent. They're under-trained, under-supported, and nearly underage – their average age is 18, ours is a decade older.

SASHA: And for what?

CLERIC: Ah, the million-dollar question. I don't know. Maybe it's capitalism confronting religion; free-market democracy versus repression. Maybe it is, as has been thought, a clash of fundamentalisms. Maybe it's old-fashioned imperialism and conquest. But I think: look for the dominant idea. Remember, it's a taught process, not a thought process. Even madmen, who hear voices in the air, are usually distilling their frenzy from some defunct ideology of the past. Sooner or later it is ideas, not the vested interests that are their progeny, which are dangerous. Look for the idea.

SASHA: And so? What is happening now?

CLERIC: It's all going to hell in a handcart. Go to Fallujah. You'll see. There's a woman there you should meet, she's been acting as a witness there for months. Jo, her name is.

