



# Independent Diplomat

a diplomatic service for those who need it most

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Carne Ross, Director of Independent Diplomat, was invited by Channel 4 News on Monday 25 June to send a televised “memo” to Gordon Brown, Britain’s next Prime Minister, on British foreign policy. The memo can be viewed on Channel 4’s website here:

## [Memo to Gordon](#)

The full text of Carne’s memo is as follows (not all of this was broadcast):

*Memo to: Prime Minister-to-be Gordon Brown*

*From: Carne Ross*

British foreign policy is a mess. Not for a long time have British fingers been trapped in so many foreign mangles. But here’s some things you *can* do, and some things you shouldn’t:

1. DO trust your diplomats. You have smart people in the FO. But they have been demoralised by years of sofa-government and stuffy hierarchicalism. Ask officials to say what they *really* think not what they think you think.
2. DON’T take “British interests” – in quotes – as your starting point in policy-making. These are the invention of politicians and bureaucrats who think they can decide what British people want without asking them.
3. Instead DO have public debates about our foreign policy – heaven forbid, even some parliamentary debates. Improve parliamentary scrutiny and you will improve trust in and the practice of foreign policy. Replace the toothless foreign affairs committee with something with bite.
4. DO get busy with the following urgent crises: Afghanistan: under current strategy, an unwinnable war. Either send a lot more troops and get NATO to do so too. Or find a tolerable accommodation with the Taliban.
5. DON’T ever call it the Global War on Terror again. Call terrorists criminals, treat them according to the law, and stop the disastrous them-and-us law-be-hanged Bush rhetoric that we have sadly aped.
6. DO reform the UN. Thanks in part to us, its authority is broken; oppressed people from Darfur to Burma need it fixed. As a permanent member, Britain can introduce radical reform of the Security Council: sacrifice our veto for a better system.
7. DO demand an EU-led international conference to resolve the most corrosive issue still - the Israel-Palestine dispute. Fix that and much good follows.
8. DO apologise for the mistakes of the Iraq invasion, and with that, build a new international coalition,

including Iran, to support Iraqi democracy. Encourage US-Iran contact to build a regional non-aggression/non-interference pact: the right way to stop Iran going nuclear.

9. Finally, when making foreign policy, DO something truly radical: consult the people actually affected – Afghans, Israelis, Iraqis, Zimbabweans. They can usually tell you what's going on better than most embassies. Don't rely on lofty assessments and intelligence reports – we know where *that* can lead you.
10. DO all this together and you will have innovated something genuinely new and radical. Not an ethical foreign policy, but a new *way* of doing foreign policy. Not British interests, or British values – who can say really what these are – but the suffering of others as your guide.
11. Finally, DO something extra: resolve the Western Sahara dispute: the Western Where? A forgotten injustice, 150,000 refugees in desert camps, an international disgrace. Ask me how and show that you have a truly disinterested and progressive foreign policy.