

11-20-1998

Trends. Straight Talk on Why Saddam Hussein Can't Go Straight

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Recommended Citation

Editor (1998) "Trends. Straight Talk on Why Saddam Hussein Can't Go Straight," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*: Vol. 5 : Iss. 21 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol5/iss21/5>

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International Bulletin of Political Psychology

Title: Trends. Straight Talk on Why Saddam Hussein Can't Go Straight

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Volume: 5

Issue: 21

Date: 1998-11-20

Keywords: Iraq, Kim Jong-il, North Korea, Political Power, Saddam Hussein, United Nations

As with Kim Jong-Il of North Korea who is confronted with multilateral pressure to give up nuclear weapons development, Saddam Hussein can't comply with United Nations (U.N.) resolutions--regardless of the pressure. Without activities viewed as threatening to the security interests of other countries, neither leader can maintain political power--the sine qua non of leadership. Efforts to make the cost of noncompliance so high that compliance must follow are doomed for the only cost high enough to change behavior is the very one that motivates against behavioral change.

In Saddam's case, political power entails the ability and motivation to maintain control at home and to continuously covet assets of his proximal international neighbors. These two aspects of power are synergistic. Weapons of mass destruction are the foundation of synergy.

Given Saddam's all-or-non stance on political power, common rationales on how and why a multilateral military attack on Iraq should be effected in the face of noncompliance with sanctions miss the mark. First, an attack would not substantially destroy the means and ends of weapons production. The attack would also terminate any significant probability that UN inspections could continue--inspections that have done more to decrease the Iraqi threat from weapons of mass destruction than the military attacks of the Gulf War. Second, an attack would not subvert the twin aspects of Saddam's power but strengthen them by coalescing domestic political opposition against the attackers. Third, plans for an attack may seek to minimize civilian casualties and maximize military destruction, but to Saddam the distinction is moot--all life and materiel is relevant and dear only in so far as they support political power. Attacks focused more on one than the other only differentially protect power assets of Saddam. Fourth, Iraqi attacks on Israel in response to a multilateral attack on Iraq would be a significant vehicle to turn the political noxiousness of multilateral attacks against the attackers. If Israel responded militarily, the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), and, perhaps, a few other countries might well find themselves quickly alone in maintaining pressure on Iraq. If the US, the UK, and others responded for Israel, the same might well occur. Fifth, it is not lost among many leaders throughout the Mideast and elsewhere that there have been no military attacks by the West against at least one country that surely has developed weapons of mass destruction--Israel. This observation too easily can be employed to subvert the publicly advocated moral and political righteousness of the West.

Like Kim Jong-IL, Saddam Hussein can't go straight. As importantly, opponents are acting to ensure that not going straight is the straight route to maintaining power. (See Beauvois, J-L, Bungert, M., & Mariette, P. (1995). Forced compliance: Commitment to compliance and commitment activity. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 24, 17-26; Girandola, F. (1997). Double forced compliance and cognitive dissonance theory. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 137, 594-605; Jacobsen, T., & Miller, L.J. (1998). Compulsive compliance in a young maltreated child. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 37, 462-463; Mastroski, S.D., Snipes, J.B., & Supina, A.E. (1996). Compliance on demand: the public's response to specific police requests. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 33, 269-305; Sanger, D.E. (August 17, 1998). North Korea site an A-bomb plant, U.S. agencies say. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Yardstick for action against Iraq. (November 13, 1998). (Keywords: Iraq, Kim Jong-il, North Korea, Political Power, Saddam Hussein, United Nations.)