Trends. Predicting an Iraqi Insurrection: A Contribution From Balance Theory

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Recommended Citation
Available at: https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol13/iss11/3
Title: Trends. Predicting an Iraqi Insurrection: A Contribution From Balance Theory  
Author: Editor  
Volume: 13  
Issue: 11  
Date: 2002-10-18  
Keywords: Balance Theory, Iraq, Military Strategy, Nationalism, Saddam Hussein  

Abstract: This Trends article evaluates the problematic of concept of enemies and supposed allies among supporters of a United States-led military intervention in Iraq.

Some supporters of a United States (US)-led military intervention against Iraq have asserted that “the Iraqis” might engage in much less fighting than “one might think.” One set of assertions supporting this assertion is that (according to a US congressman) “Nobody supports Saddam Hussein in Iraq. He has almost zero support among the people. They are waiting for us to help them free themselves. They are and will be friends of the United States.”

The problem with this line of thought is that an enemy of one’s enemy is not always one’s friend. For example, an enemy of one’s enemy might be viewed as potentially a greater enemy to the viewer than the latter, so that the latter becomes or can become much less of an enemy as long as the former is salient as the greater threat. This thinking in terms of balancing triads, tetrads, etc., as opposed to only dyads, is seemingly absent from some rabid supporters of US military intervention.