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Abstract of paper to be presented at the conference.

For details of the conference programme go to www.iraqistudies.org

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Title: A Complex Systems View of America's Misadventure in Iraq

Abstract

This paper will address the so-called Iraq project; a project that was predictably stillborn, from an entirely new angle. It will argue that war is a linear system that is reasonably predictable, has clear beginnings and ends, and one that is amenable to command-and-control. Peace, nation-building, or whatever the post-war period is called is a complex system that behaves differently. This ongoing task demands different management methods for which local actors must take unfettered responsibility. Iraq's future, like other nations, depends on what Iraqis do. This is not a nationalist sentiment but a scientific, and inescapable, fact.

Decision-makers in the US did not appreciate the difference between the two systems and caused havoc for everyone. Current Iraqi decision-makers seem unable, or unwilling, to understand the difference either. Under present conditions no sustainable progress could be made.