

The Persian Gulf TV War Revisited

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The 1991 war against Iraq was one of the first televised events of the global village in which the entire world watched a military spectacle unfold via global TV satellite networks.¹ In retrospect, the Bush administration and the Pentagon carried out one of the most successful public relations campaigns in the history of modern politics in its use of the media to mobilize support for the war. The mainstream media in the United States and elsewhere tended to be a compliant vehicle for the government strategy to manipulate the public, imperiling democracy which requires informed citizens, checks and balances against excessive government power, and a free and vigorous critical media (see Kellner 1990 and 1992). Indeed, if the media do not adequately inform citizens, provide a check against excessive government power and corruption, and adequately debate the key issues of the day, democracy is undermined.

Moreover, the U.S. media, especially CNN, completely dominated global coverage of the event. CNN had cameras and reporters in Baghdad throughout the war, a large crew in Israel, and live coverage of all U.S. military and government press conferences. Thus its images, discourses, and material tended to shape global coverage of the event. This meant that the Bush administration and Pentagon was able to control the flow of images and discourses and thus to manage the TV spectacle of the Gulf War.²

In this chapter, I first discuss the production of the text of the "crisis in the Gulf" and then "the Gulf war." This will involve analysis of disinformation and propaganda campaigns by the Bush administration, the Pentagon, and their allies, as well as dissection of the constraints produced by the so-called pool system. I also indicate how the political economy of the media in the United States facilitated the manufacturing of consent for U.S. government policies. Then I analyze the meanings embedded in the text of the war against Iraq and the reception of the text/event by the audience. The latter process will involve some speculation on why the Gulf war was popular with its audiences and how the Bush administration and Pentagon mobilized public support for the war.

Disinformation and Propaganda

The 1991 Gulf War can be read as a text produced by the Bush administration, the Pentagon, and the media that propagated images and discourse of the crisis and then the war to mobilize consent and support for the U.S. military intervention. Unpacking the text of the "crisis in the Gulf" and then the "Gulf war" requires analysis of the process of the production of news and information, including analysis of sources, gate-keeping and censorship, codes and practices of "normal" journalism, the sociology of news production, and processes of disinformation and propaganda. This dimension of cultural studies has been downplayed and I believe that this is highly unfortunate because analysis of the production of news and information, as well as entertainment, sheds important light on the origins and context of the emergence of cultural texts which contributes to understanding their meaning and effects.

Analysis of the text of the "crisis in the Gulf" indicates that from the beginning the

mainstream news institutions followed the lines of the Bush administration and Pentagon.³ Mainstream media in the U.S. are commercial media, subject to intense competition for audiences and profits. Consequently, mainstream television, newspapers, and news magazines do not want to alienate consumers, and thus are extremely cautious in going against public opinion and the official government line. The mainstream media also favor official government sources for their stories, especially in times of crisis. Thus, they tend to be conduits for U.S. government policies and actions, though there are significant exceptions (see Kellner 1990).

In response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in early August 1990, the U.S. government began immediately, first, to build consensus for the U.S. military intervention and, then, to promote a military solution to the crisis, and the mainstream media were compliant accomplices. When the Bush administration sent a massive troop deployment to the region, the mainstream media applauded these actions and became a conduit for mobilizing support for U.S. policy. For weeks, few dissenting voices were heard in the mainstream media and TV reports, commentary, and discussion strongly privileged a military solution to the crisis, serving as a propaganda vehicle for the U.S. military and national security apparatus which was facing severe budget cutbacks on the very eve of the invasion. No significant TV debate took place over the dangerous consequences of the massive U.S. military response to the Iraqi invasion, or over the interests and policies which the military intervention served. Critics of U.S. policy were largely absent from the mainstream media coverage of the crisis, and little analysis was presented which departed from issues presented by the Bush administration.

The Bush administration controlled the media discourse in part through disinformation and propaganda, and in part by means of control of the press via the pool system. A military pool system was set up which restricted media access to soldiers and the battlefield; members representing different media like the press, radio, and television were organized into "pools" and taken to chosen sites. They were accompanied at all times by military personnel, called "minders," who restricted their access and tightly controlled their movements. The reports were then sent to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, where a Joint Information Bureau censored the reports which then became common material available to those media outlets who had joined the pool. This was the tightest control over the press in any war in U.S. history and assured that positive images and reporting of the war would take place.⁴

In the early days of "the crisis of the Gulf," the Bush administration carried through a highly successful disinformation campaign by means of their control and manipulation of sources that legitimated the U.S. military deployment in Saudi Arabia on August 8, 1990. During the first days of the crisis, the U.S. government constantly claimed that the Iraqis were mobilizing troops on the border of Saudi Arabia, poised to invade the oil-rich kingdom. This was sheer disinformation and later studies revealed that Iraq had no intention of invading Saudi Arabia and did not have large number of troops on the Saudi border in a threatening posture.⁵

The disinformation campaign that legitimated the U.S. sending troops to Saudi Arabia began working through the Washington Post on August 7, 1990, the same day Bush announced that he was sending U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia. In a front page story by Patrick Tyler, the Post claimed that in a previous day's meeting between the U.S. chargé d'affaires, Joseph Wilson, and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi leader was highly belligerent, claiming that Kuwait was part of Iraq, that no negotiation was possible, that he would invade Saudi Arabia if they cut off the oil pipes

which delivered Iraqi oil across Saudi territory to the Gulf, and that American blood would flow in the sand if the U.S. sent troops to the region.

A later transcript of the Wilson-Hussein meeting revealed, however, that Hussein was cordial, indicated a willingness to negotiate, insisted that he had no intention of invading Saudi Arabia, and opened the doors for a diplomatic solution to the crisis. The Post, story, however, was taken up by the television networks, wire services, and press, producing an image that there was no possibility of a diplomatic solution and that decisive action was needed to protect Saudi Arabia from the aggressive Iraqis. Such a story line legitimated the sending of U.S. troops to the Gulf and provided a perfect justification for Bush's intervention in the region.

Editorial columns in the Washington Post the same day supported the imminent Bush administration deployment. Mary McGrory published a column titled "The Beast of Baghdad," which also assumed that Iraq was set to invade Saudi Arabia and which called upon Bush to bomb Baghdad! Precisely the same line appeared in an op-ed piece by the Post's associate editor and chief foreign correspondent Jim Hoagland who kicked in with a column: "Force Hussein to Withdraw" (p. A19). As certain as McGrory of Iraq's imminent invasion of Saudi Arabia, Hoagland opened by proclaiming that "Saddam Hussein has gone to war to gain control of the oil fields of Kuwait and ultimately of Saudi Arabia. The United States must now use convincing military force against the Iraqi dictator to save the oil fields and to preserve American influence in the Middle East." According to Hoagland, Saddam Hussein "respects only force and will respond to nothing else."

The rest of the article consisted of false analysis, questionable analogies, and bellicose banality. Hoagland claimed that the "Iraqi dictator's base of support is too narrow and too shaky to withstand a sharp, telling blow." Yet some six weeks of the most intense bombing in history were unable to dislodge Hussein whose support, or staying power, was obviously much stronger than Hoagland could imagine. Hoagland also believed that "he [Hussein] is so hated at home that his defeat, even by foreign forces, will be greeted as deliverance by his own nation and by much of the Arab world." As it turned out, both Iraq and the Arab world were deeply divided over Hussein and the sweeping generalities that Hoagland proclaimed were totally off the mark.⁶

Hoagland also claimed that Ronald Reagan's decision to bomb Libya was the right model for Bush to follow. This example was revealing because Moammar Gadhafi preceded Saddam Hussein as a symbolically constructed enemy upon which national hatred could be projected, and thus served as an object lesson for Third World countries that refused to submit to domination by the neoimperialist superpowers.⁷ Moreover, it is far from certain that the terrorist incident for which Gadhafi was "punished" (i.e., the bombing of a Berlin disco) was carried out by groups affiliated with Libya. But facts have little relevance in an ideologue's brief for bombing.

In his opinion piece, Hoagland lectured George Bush on why he must take urgent and forceful action to save his presidency and, like McGrory, urged military action against Iraq. Hoagland assumed both that Iraq planned to invade Saudi Arabia and that only a military blow from George Bush could save the day. In fact, there were important Arab diplomatic initiatives underway, blocked by the United States, but these efforts were ignored by the war-mongering Hoagland.⁸ Letting his reactionary beliefs slip through, Hoagland interpreted Iraq's invasion of Kuwait as a challenge to "the legitimacy of all remaining monarchies in the Arabian Peninsula, where Britain established most existing boundaries and political systems in the colonial era." Hoagland thus defined the principles at stake as the legitimacy of some of the most reactionary monarchies in the

world, with borders drawn by British colonialists who deliberately deprived Iraq of a viable seaport and robbed national groups like the Palestinians and the Kurds of their homelands.

Hoagland's article manifests what Edward Said (1978) described as an "Orientalist" mentality in which white Westerners establish their superiority by vacuous generalizations about people in the Arab world. Hoagland characterized Arabs as understanding only force and incapable of defending themselves and solving their own problems. For him, the Gulf crisis is thus the locus of "a rare case where the United States would be unwise not to use force." Analyzing such intellectually bankrupt pleas for a military strike against Iraq would not be worth the time and energy except that Bush administration officials paid close attention to Hoagland's columns. Further, his poorly written, badly argued, and banal punditry was highly acclaimed in political circles; indeed, he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize "for searching and prescient columns on events leading up to the Gulf war." In addition, his and McGrory's columns are significant because they were published in the Washington Post, supposedly a bastion of liberal enlightenment, and read by U.S. policymakers. Further, McGrory's demonization of Hussein was retooled and republished in Newsweek (Sept. 3, 1990), part of the Washington Post Company.

Thus, the Bush administration and Washington Post disinformation and propaganda concerning the Iraqis' readiness to invade Saudi Arabia worked effectively to shape media discourse and public perception of the crisis and to legitimate Bush's sending U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia. In particular, Patrick Tyler's front-page story concerning Hussein's meeting with Joe Wilson and Iraq's alleged refusal to negotiate a solution or leave Kuwait provided the crucial media frame through which debate over the advisability of sending U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia was debated.⁹ On an August 7, PBS McNeil-Lehrer discussion of the proper U.S. response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, co-anchor Judy Woodruff stated: "Iraq's leader Saddam Hussein was quoted today [in the Post story -- D.K.] as saying the invasion of Kuwait was irreversible and permanent." Later on the same show, former national security adviser (and Iran/Contra felon) Robert McFarlane quoted the story as evidence that Hussein was not going to leave Kuwait, and that therefore U.S. military intervention in Saudi Arabia was necessary. And in a discussion with Arab-American leaders as to whether a U.S. military intervention was justified, Woodruff interjected: "the U.S. charge in Baghdad did have a two hour meeting with Saddam Hussein yesterday which by all accounts was very unsatisfactory as Saddam Hussein insisted that he was going to stay in Kuwait and made what were reported to be veiled threats against other nations in the area" -- all disinformation that Bush administration officials fed to the Post, which was then disseminated by other mainstream media.

In his early morning television speech on August 8, which announced and defended sending U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia, Bush claimed that "the Saudi government requested our help, and I responded to that request by ordering U.S. air and ground forces to deploy to the kingdom of Saudi Arabia." This was false as accounts of the Saudi-U.S. negotiations later indicated that the United States pressured the Saudis to allow U.S. military intervention into their country (Woodward 1991: 241ff and Salinger and Laurent 1991: 110ff). Bush repeated the dubious claim that "Iraq has massed an enormous war machine on the Saudi border," and his administration emphasized this theme in discussion with the media, which obediently reproduced the argument. At 9:24 a.m. on August 8, for instance, Bob Zelnick, ABC's Pentagon correspondent, dutifully reported that the Pentagon informed him that Iraqi troop presence had doubled since the invasion of Kuwait, that there were now more than 200,000 Iraqi troops in Kuwait with a large force poised to invade Saudi Arabia.

Yet it is not at all certain how many troops Iraq actually deployed in Kuwait during the first weeks of the crisis. All pre-invasion reports produced by the Bush administration indicated that Iraq had amassed over 100,000 troops on the border of Kuwait. Initial reports during the first few days after the invasion suggested that Iraq actually had between 80,000 and 100,000 troops in Kuwait, more than enough for an occupation, as the Bush administration liked to point out and as the mainstream media diligently reported; once the U.S. forces were on their way to Saudi Arabia, the Iraqi forces suddenly doubled and reports claimed that there were at least 100,000 Iraqi troops amassed on the border of Saudi Arabia. But these figures invariably came from Bush administration or Pentagon sources, and sources critical of the U.S. claims concerning the number of Iraqi troops deployed revealed a quite different figure.

St. Petersburg Times reporter Jean Heller published two stories (Nov. 30 and Jan. 6) suggesting that satellite photos indicated far fewer Iraqi troops in Saudi Arabia than the Bush administration claimed (the Jan. 6 story was republished in In These Times, Feb. 27, 1991: 1-2). Heller's suspicions were roused when she saw a Newsweek "Periscope" item that ABC's "Prime Time Live" had never used several satellite photos of occupied Kuwait City and southern Kuwait taken in early September. Purchased by ABC from the Soviet commercial satellite agency Soyuz-Karta, the photos were expected to reveal the presence of a massive Iraqi troop deployment in Kuwait, but failed to disclose anything near the number of troops claimed by the Bush administration. ABC declined to use them and Heller got her newspaper to purchase the satellite photos of Kuwait from August 8 and September 13 and of Saudi Arabia from September 11. Two satellite experts who had formerly worked for the U.S. government failed to find evidence of the alleged buildup. "The Pentagon kept saying the bad guys were there, but we don't see anything to indicate an Iraqi force in Kuwait of even 20 percent the size the administration claimed," said Peter Zimmerman, who served with the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency during the Reagan administration" (Heller, In These Times, Feb. 27: 2).

Both satellite photos taken on August 8 and September 13 showed a sand cover on the roads, suggesting that there were few Iraqi troops on the Saudi border where the Bush administration claimed that they were massed, threatening to invade Saudi Arabia. Pictures of the main Kuwaiti airport showed no Iraqi planes in sight, though large numbers of U.S. planes were visible in Saudi Arabia. The Pentagon refused to comment on the satellite photos, but to suggestions advanced by ABC (which refused to show the photos) that the pictures were not high enough quality to detect the Iraqi troops, Heller responded that the photograph of the north of Saudi Arabia showed all the roads swept clean of sand and clearly depicted the U.S. troop buildup in the area. By September, the Pentagon was claiming that there were 265,000 Iraqi troops and 2,200 tanks, deployed in Kuwait, which posed a threat to Saudi Arabia. But the photographs reveal nowhere near this number and, so far, the U.S. government has refused to release its satellite photographs.

Indeed, Woodward (1991) noted that the Saudis had sent scouts across the border into Kuwait after the Iraqi invasion to see if they could detect the Iraqi troops that the United States claimed were massed for a possible invasion of their country. "The scouts had come back reporting nothing. There was no trace of the Iraqi troops heading toward the kingdom" (Woodward 1991: 258-259). Soon after, the U.S. team arrived with photos of the Iraqi troops allegedly massed on the Saudi border, and General Norman Schwarzkopf explained to the Saudis that the Iraqis had sent small command-and-control units ahead of the mass of troops, which would explain why the Saudi scouts

failed to see them (Woodward 1991: 268). Former CIA officer Ralph McGehee told journalist Joel Bleifuss: "There has been no hesitation in the past to use doctored satellite photographs to support the policy position that the U.S. wants supported" (In These Times, Sept. 19, 1990: 5). Indeed, Emery (1991) reported that King Hussein of Jordan was also sent pictures of tanks moving along roads near the Saudi/Kuwaiti border which had been shown to the Saudis, and that the King Hussein claimed that the Saudis had "pressed the panic button" when they saw the photographs. King Hussein was skeptical and "argued that if Saddam Hussein had wanted to invade the Saudis, he would have moved immediately, when the only thing between him and the Saudi capital was a tiny and untested -- if expensively equipped -- Saudi army" (Emery 1991: 15).

And so here's how the disinformation campaign worked to legitimate U.S. deployment of troops in Saudi Arabia: high Bush administration officials called in journalists who would serve as conduits for stories that Iraq refused to negotiate a withdrawal from Kuwait and that they had troops stationed on the borders of Saudi Arabia, threatening to invade the oil-rich kingdom. The Pentagon and Bush administrations also released information at press conferences concerning the Iraqi threat to Saudi Arabia and unwillingness to negotiate, and these "official" pronouncements supplemented the unofficial briefings of reporters. In turn, editorial writers and commentators on TV networks took up these claims, which they used to bolster arguments concerning why it was necessary for the U.S. to send troops to Saudi Arabia.

Hence, disinformation stories are planted and then reproduced and circulated, producing the effect desired. Indeed, as noted, there are reasons to believe that the Bush administration may have exaggerated the number of Iraqi troops in Kuwait and the threat to Saudi Arabia to scare the Saudis into accepting the U.S. troops and to justify its own troop buildup in the region and eventual military action. The mainstream media reproduced the U.S. claims and figures as facts with newspapers like the Washington Post and the television networks serving as conduits for Bush administration disinformation. In addition, Post editorial writers and columnists actively promoted a military solution, urging an attack on Baghdad even before Bush announced that he was sending troops to Saudi Arabia, thus becoming doubly complicit in legitimating Bush's policies.

Moreover, the major newspapers, news magazines, and television networks did not criticize Bush's deployment or debate whether it was wise to send so many U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia in the first place. Peace activists and the alternative press argued against the deployment and for a UN peace-keeping force to be sent to the area, rather than a massive U.S. military force, but this position got no hearing in the mainstream media (FAIR, Press Release, January 1991). Furthermore, the leaders of the Democratic party also failed to criticize the U.S. military deployment and the press tended to neglect those congressional and other voices that opposed the deployment, especially during its first weeks. Indeed, there were many oppositional voices to the Bush administration's policies that were simply excluded from the mainstream media, thus precluding serious debate over the proper U.S. response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. But the mainstream media only draw on an extremely limited repertoire of voices and privilege the same administration officials and top Democratic party leaders, thus freezing significant views out of public policy debates and contributing to the crisis of democracy which is now a central aspect of political life in the United States (Kellner 1990).

The Hill and Knowlton Propaganda Campaign

And so we see that a successful disinformation campaign was undertaken by the Bush administration and Pentagon to legitimate sending U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia. Beginning in early October, a sustained propaganda campaign was underway that legitimated the U.S. use of military power to force Iraq out of Kuwait. This propaganda offensive involved demonization of the Iraqis for their "rape of Kuwait" and the demonization of Saddam Hussein as "another Hitler" and the incarnation of evil.¹⁰ This campaign was inspired by a British campaign during World War I, repeated by the U.S. when it entered the war, on the "rape of Belgium" which demonized the Germans as rapists and murderers of innocent children -- charges later proven to be false.

The demonization of Hussein and the Iraqis was important because if they were absolutely evil and a threat on a par with Hitler and the Nazis, no negotiation could be possible and a diplomatic solution to the crisis was excluded. To help demonize the Iraqis, a Kuwaiti government group financed a propaganda campaign, undertaken by the U.S. public relations firm Hill & Knowlton, which invented Iraqi atrocities in Kuwait, such as the killing of premature babies who were allegedly taken out of incubators and left to die on the floor. In October 1990 a tearful teenage girl testified to the House of Representatives Human Rights Caucus that she had seen Iraqi soldiers remove fifteen babies from incubators and leave them to die on the floor of the hospital. The girl's identity was not revealed, supposedly to protect her family from reprisals. This story helped mobilize support for U.S. military action, much as Bush's Willie Horton ads had helped him win the presidency by playing on primal emotions. Bush mentioned the story six times in one month and eight times in forty-four days; Vice-President Dan Quayle referred to it frequently, as did General Norman Schwarzkopf and other military spokespersons. Seven U.S. senators cited the story in speeches supporting the January 12 resolution authorizing war.

In a January 6, 1992, Op-Ed piece in the New York Times, John MacArthur, the publisher of Harper's magazine, revealed that the unidentified congressional witness was the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the U.S. The girl had been brought to Congress by Hill & Knowlton, which had coached her and helped organize the congressional human rights hearings. In addition, Craig Fuller, Bush's former chief of staff when he was vice-president and a Bush loyalist, was president of Hill & Knowlton and was involved with the PR campaign, as were several other former officials for the Reagan administration, who had close relations with the Bush administration.

Thus, the Kuwaiti government developed a propaganda campaign to manipulate the American people into accepting the Gulf war and the Bush administration used this campaign to promote their goals. Hill & Knowlton organized a photo exhibition of Iraqi atrocities displayed at the United Nations and the U.S. Congress and widely shown on television. They also assisted Kuwaiti refugees in telling stories of torture, lobbied Congress, and prepared video and print material for the media.

On January 17, 1992, ABC's "20/20" disclosed that a "doctor" who testified that he had "buried fourteen newborn babies that had been taken from their incubators by the soldiers" was also lying. The "doctor" was actually a dentist and later admitted to ABC that he had never examined the babies and had no way of knowing how they had died. The same was true of Amnesty International, which published a report based on this testimony. (Amnesty International later retracted the report, which had been cited frequently by Bush and other members of his administration). ABC also

disclosed that Hill & Knowlton had commissioned a "focus group" survey, which brings groups of people together to find out what stirs or angers them. The focus group responded strongly to the Iraqi baby atrocity stories, and so Hill & Knowlton featured them in its PR campaigns for the Free Kuwait group.

The effect of the demonization of Saddam Hussein was to promote a climate in which the necessity to take decisive military action to eliminate him was privileged. Countless stories were endlessly repeated throughout the mainstream media of his brutality, often reproducing uncritically the Hill and Knowlton stories. Moreover, there was report after report on Iraqi chemical weapons, its potential nuclear capacity, and its ability to mobilize terrorist attacks on the U.S. and its allies -- stories promoted by Bush administration officials to demonize the Iraqis. TV broadcast stories about radio stations playing records that simulated rock classics with new lyrics vilifying Saddam. T-shirts appeared with vicious images of Saddam Hussein and the Iraqis. Tabloid magazines published sensational stories detailing his alleged sexual crimes and perversions (Rifas 1994) It is as if U.S. popular and political culture needs evil demons to assure its sense of its own goodness and the media responded with the demonology of the Iraqi dictator.

Consequently, the extremely negative framing of Hussein and the Iraqis ruled out a diplomatic solution to the crisis. In addition, the constant war talk created a climate in which only military action could resolve the crisis. The media presentation of the confrontation as a struggle between good and evil, with the evil Hussein unwilling to negotiate and threatening the allies, produced tension and the need for a resolution that war could best provide. The rhetoric of Iraqi "rape" and "penetration" was deployed from the beginning of the crisis throughout the war. The media demonized Saddam's Big Gun and chemical weapons, as well as his missiles that could hit Cairo and Tel Aviv. His very name was mispronounced as Sad-dam, evoking sadism and damnation, and Sod-dom, evoking sodomy. Deploying both racist and sexual rhetoric, Bush claimed that the U.S. went to war against the "dark chaos" of a "brutal dictator" who followed the "law of the jungle" and "systematically raped" a "peaceful neighbor" (quoted in Joel Bleifuss, "The First Stone," In These Times, March 20-26, 1991: 4). Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz was cited in the same article, rhetorically asking if you would "let a man like that [Hussein] get his hands on what are essentially the world's vital organs?"

Throughout American history, vengeance for rape -- especially the rape of white women by people of color -- has been used to legitimate political and military action against colored people. Captivity drama narratives of white women captured and raped by Native Americans were a standard genre of colonial literature and during the Spanish-American war, the Hearst newspapers popularized the story of the Spanish kidnapping of an upper-class and light-skinned Cuban woman as a pretext for U.S. intervention. John Gottlieb wrote in The Progressive that: "Bush not only used rape as a justification for the war against Iraq, but also...cited the sexual assault of an American officer's wife by a Panamanian soldier as a reason for invading that country, and...used the rape of a white woman by black convict Willie Horton to attack Michael Dukakis in 1988" (April 1991: 39).

In addition to carrying out a massive propaganda campaign, the U.S. government also instituted a sustained effort to control information and images through the pool system (see above) and few of the U.S. broadcasting networks sought out critical or alternative views. Few significant antiwar voices were heard in the mainstream media during the first months of the troop buildup in Saudi Arabia. A study by the media watchdog group FAIR reported that during the first five

months of TV coverage of the crisis, ABC devoted only 0.7 percent of its Gulf coverage to opposition to the military buildup. CBS allowed 0.8 percent, while NBC devoted 1.5 percent, or 13.3 minutes for all stories about protests, antiwar organizations, conscientious objectors, and religious dissenters. Consequently, of the 2,855 minutes of TV coverage of the crisis from August 8 to January 3, FAIR found that only 29 minutes, or roughly 1 percent, dealt with popular opposition to the U.S. military intervention in the Gulf (FAIR, Press Release, January 1991).

The small amount of images of anti-war demonstrators in the U.S. that appeared during the crisis in the Gulf often juxtaposed anti-American demonstrations in Arab countries that frequently burned U.S. flags with images of U.S. demonstrations. Such a juxtaposition coded anti-war demonstrators as Arabs, as irrational opponents of U.S. policies. U.S. demonstrators were portrayed as an unruly mob, as long-haired outsiders; their discourse was rarely cited and coverage focused instead on the chanting of slogans, or images of marching crowds, with media voice-overs supplying the context and interpretation. Major newspapers and newsmagazines also failed to cover the burgeoning new anti-war movement. Thus, just as the media symbolically constructed a negative image in the 1960s of anti-war protestors as irrational, anti-American, and unruly, so too did the networks present the emerging anti-war movement of the 1990s in predominantly negative frames.

Not only was the discourse of the antiwar movement ignored, but "none of the foreign policy experts associated with the peace movement -- such as Edward Said, Noam Chomsky or the scholars of the Institute for Policy Studies -- appeared on any nightly news program" (FAIR Press Release, January 1991). A Times-Mirror Poll, however, that was recorded in September 1990 and January 1991 discovered "pluralities of the public saying they wished to hear more about the views of Americans who oppose sending forces to the Gulf" (Special Times-Mirror News Interest Index, January 31, 1991). Furthermore, soldiers who were alarmed at their deployment in the Saudi desert and objected to the primitive living conditions there were silenced, in part by Pentagon restrictions on press coverage and in part by a press corps unwilling to search for dissenting opinions.

And yet on the eve of the war, more than 50% of the American public opposed a military solution to the crisis. Perhaps images of families being separated and young troops being sent to the Saudi desert produced a negative response to the possibility of a war in the region that could take many U.S. lives. Perhaps, despite the lack of critical discourse on the media, many individuals could still think for themselves and produce antiwar opinions against the grain of the dominant pro-military solution government and media discourse. Perhaps the memory of Vietnam and U.S. military misadventures produced apprehensions over a war in the Persian Gulf. But the disinformation and propaganda campaigns were successful in that they persuaded the majority of nations in the UN and the U.S. Congress to support a declaration legitimating the use of force to expel Iraq from Kuwait. And once the war began, the Bush administration was quickly able to mobilize support for its positions.

The Media Propaganda War

When the U.S. began military action against Iraq on January 16, 1991, the mainstream media became a conduit for Bush administration and Pentagon policies and rarely allowed criticism of its positions, disinformation, and atrocities during the war. Television served primarily as a propaganda apparatus for the multinational forces arrayed against the Iraqis and as a cheerleader for their every

victory. Anchors like Dan Rather of CBS and Tom Brokaw of NBC went to Saudi Arabia and, along with the network correspondents there, seemed to totally identify with the military point of view. Whenever peace proposals were floated by the Iraqis, Arab states, or the Soviet Union, the networks quickly shot them down and presented the Bush administration and Pentagon positions on every aspect of the war (see note 8).

The media framed the war as an exciting narrative, providing a nightly mini-series with a dramatic conflict, action and adventure, danger to allied troops and civilians, evil perpetuated by villainous Iraqis, and heroics performed by American military planners, technology, and troops. Both CBS and ABC used the logo "Showdown in the Gulf" during the opening hours of the war, and CBS continued to utilize the logo throughout the war, coding the event as a battle between good and evil. Indeed, the Gulf war was presented as a war movie with beginning, middle, and end. The dramatic bombing of Baghdad during the opening night and exciting Scud wars of the next days enthralled a large TV audience and the following weeks provided plenty of excitement, ups and downs, surprises, and complex plot devices. The threats of chemical weapons, terrorism, and a bloody Iraqi ground offensive seemed to produce great fear in the TV audiences and helped to mobilize support against the villainous Iraqis (see discussion below for documentation). The ground war in particular produced a surge of dramatic action and a quick resolution and happy ending to the war (at least for those rooting for the U.S.-led coalition).

Television also presented the war visually with dramatic techno-images, playing repeatedly the videos of hi-tech precision bombing and the aerial war over Baghdad and the Patriot/Scud wars over Saudi Arabia and Israel. The effects of the war on American families was a constant theme, and patriotism and support for the troops was a constant refrain of the commentators. The military released video-tapes of hi-tech precision bombing which were replayed repeatedly, similar to replays of heroics in a sports event. Indeed, sports metaphors were constantly used and the pro-war demonstrators who chanted "USA! USA!" rooted for the American side as sports fans, as if the Gulf war were the Super Bowl of wars. The military and media kept daily tally of the score of Iraqi tanks and equipment eliminated, though the sanitized war coverage contained no "body count" figures and images of wounded or dead soldiers were strictly forbidden. The winnability and justification for the war were stressed and the narrative was oriented toward a successful conclusion that was presented as a stunning victory.

It was obviously in the TV network's interests to attract the audience to their programming and competition revolved around presenting the most patriotic, exciting, and compelling coverage. To properly explicate this dimension of the text of the Gulf war, one needs to focus on the production of the text within the framework of the political economy of commercial television. First, the sources of the news on the mainstream media were severely limited to the Bush administration and the military. This was partly the result of the pool system that restricted media access to the theater of battle and that exercised censorship over every image and report filed. Yet the networks themselves also restricted the range of voices that appeared. A survey by FAIR of the TV coverage of the first two weeks of the war revealed that of the 878 news sources used by the three major commercial networks, only 1.5% were identified as antiwar protestors -- roughly equivalent to the amount of people asked to comment on how the Gulf war disrupted their travel plans. In the 42 nightly news broadcasts, only one leader of a peace organization was interviewed, while 7 Super Bowl players were asked their views of the war.¹¹

On the other hand, in report after report, television portrayed pro-war rallies, yellow ribbons, and the wave of patriotism apparently sweeping the country. The networks also personalized the U.S. troops and their families, thus bonding the public to the troops in the desert, helping manufacture support for the U.S. military policies. In these ways, the audience was mobilized to support every move of the Bush administration and Pentagon and as the war went well and relatively fast, the country was swept along in a victory euphoria, as if it was winning the Super Bowl of wars and was thus number one in the world. Such imagery and discourse helped create support for a war that barely 50% of the public and Congress desired on the eve of Bush's bombing of Baghdad.

Furthermore, the audience was terrorized into support for the U.S. troops by a series of propaganda campaigns, masterfully orchestrated by the Bush administration and Pentagon. Early in the crisis, reports were leaked that Iraqi chemical weapons were being brought to the field of battle, and throughout the war there were many reports of the threat of Iraqi chemical weapons. In addition, there were almost daily reports on the threats of terrorism manipulated by the Iraqis. When the Iraqis paraded U.S. POWs on TV, there were claims that they were torturing coalition troops. Such reports created a mass hysteria in sectors of the audience, which were positively bonding with the troops. Moreover, after the Iraqi Scud attacks on Israel and Saudi Arabia, there were reports of thousands of people buying gas masks and vignettes of families producing sealed rooms in their home in the case of chemical attack. Obviously, such hysteria helped mobilize people against the Iraqis and desire their military defeat and punishment.

On the whole, television and the mainstream media arguably served as propaganda arms for U.S. government policy. The media endlessly repeated Bush administration "big lies," such as its alleged efforts to negotiate a settlement with the Iraqis when it was actively undermining the possibility of a diplomatic settlement. And the media repeated every propaganda line of the day, amplifying Bush administration claims concerning alleged torture and mistreatment of U.S. POWs (later revealed to be highly exaggerated), that an Iraqi infant formula milk factory destroyed by U.S. bombing was really a military installation producing chemical/biological weapons, that a civilian sleeping shelter was really a military command and control center, or that Iraqi "environmental terrorism" was responsible for the Persian Gulf oil spill and other ecological devastation.¹²

The U.S. mainstream media projected the image of the war most desired by the Pentagon and Bush administration; i.e. that it was fighting an eminently clean and successful hi-tech war. From the beginning, the bombing of Iraq was portrayed as efficient and humane, targeting only military facilities. Over and over, despite pictures from Iraq which revealed the contrary, the Pentagon and Bush administration stressed the accuracy of their bombing strategies and the oft-repeated images of the precision bombs, with video-cameras built-into their heads, presented an image of pin-point accurate bombing. Likewise, the frequent pictures of Patriot missiles apparently knocking out Iraqi Scud missiles created the impressions of a highly effective hi-tech war. Later, the Pentagon itself admitted that only 7 percent of the bombs used were so-called "smart bombs" and admitted that over 70% of its munitions missed their targets, but the dominant images of a hi-tech war presented an impression of a highly efficient technowar. It was also later revealed that a large percentage of U.S. casualties resulted from "friendly fire," from the bombing of one's own troops.

Although the U.S. corporate media served as propaganda conduits for the U.S. government and military, the media are not primarily propaganda instruments per se for the state as some argue

(Herman and Chomsky 1988 and Chomsky 1989). Rather, one should see the major commercial networks primarily as money machines seeking ratings and profits. If the war is popular, then in pursuit of ratings the networks will provide a positive picture of the war, eliminating discordant voices, as happened in the Gulf War of 1991. Moreover, General Electric and RCA, which own NBC, are major military contractors who will benefit tremendously from a successful war, and NBC dutifully served as a Pentagon propaganda organ from beginning to end of the war. It was claimed that GE produced parts of every major weapon system used in the war, so that the file footage of U.S. weapons and the gushingly positive reports of their technological wonder were in effect free advertisements for products produced by GE/NBC -- indeed, desire to promote U.S. weapons for sale was one of the major purposes of the war in the first place.

But it was "liberal" Dan Rather of "liberal" CBS who served as the biggest booster and cheerleader of the military. During the first days of the war, Rather was the most skeptical and critical network reporter. But Rather's ratings were falling and his job was on the line and so he went to Saudi Arabia to report the war directly. Henceforth, he celebrated the military and became the most fervent supporter of the ground war, exulting in the "blow out" and "magnificent" and "brilliant" military action which slaughtered the hapless Iraqis, totally demoralized after 40 days of bombing and without the technology to fight a hi-tech, U.S.-led, multinational coalition military machine.

The lack of significant critical voices in the mainstream media during the crisis in the Gulf and then the Gulf war also can be explained by reflection on the political economy of the media and the system of media production in the United States. The broadcast media are afraid to go against a perceived popular consensus, to alienate people, and to take unpopular stands because they are afraid of losing audience shares and thus profits. Because U.S. military actions have characteristically been supported by the majority of the people, at least in their early stages, television is extremely reluctant to criticize what might turn out to be popular military actions.¹³

The broadcast media also characteristically rely on a narrow range of established and safe commentators and are not likely to reach out to new and controversial voices in a period of national crisis. The media generally wait until a major political figure or established "expert" speaks against a specific policy and that view gains a certain credibility as marked by opinion polls or publication in "respected" newspapers or journals. Unfortunately, the crisis of democracy in the United States is such that the Democratic party has largely supported the conservative policies of the past decade and the party leaders are extremely cautious and slow to criticize foreign policy actions, especially potentially popular military actions. The crisis of liberalism is so deep in the U.S. that establishment liberals are afraid of being called "wimps" or "soft" on foreign aggression, and thus often support policies that their better instincts should lead them to oppose.

Consequently, the only criticisms of a major U.S. military intervention that appeared in the mainstream media during the first weeks of the U.S. intervention came from hawks like Zbigniew Brzezinski, and even some far right conservatives like Pat Buchanan, while Democrats and liberals tended to go along with the initial military build-up, until Bush doubled the U.S. forces after the November 1990 election. Then the Democrats supported the policy of sanctions (rather than calling for a negotiated settlement) and once the war began, for the most part supported the Bush administration policies, pointing again to the crisis of liberalism in the U.S.

In addition, the commercial nature of the broadcast media also helped intensify the

propagandistic effects of Gulf war coverage. The big ad agencies were extremely nervous concerning the perceived negative impact of having their products associated with controversial and perhaps depressing events like war.¹⁴ Yet as the war proceeded, many corporations tailored their ads to the growing patriotism, sprinkling their ads with flags, praises of troops, and patriotic slogans. Red, white and blue merchandise boutiques appeared in Bloomingdale's and Neiman Marcus's department stores and in their ads. Ralph Lauren robes, bathing trunks, and other objects appeared embroidered with the flag. Britches ads spouted "Rugged Patriotism" fashion, while Ross-Simon ads displayed "Fashionable Patriotism" (McAllister 1993: 224). Advertising discourse shifted from "you" to "our" appeals, binding together the product and nation with "our troops." Golf balls appeared with Saddam Hussein's face on them, a T-shirt was marked with a drawing of Hussein fleeing a missile with the caption: YOU CAN RUN BUT YOU CANT HIDE." Another ad featured a Saddam Condom with "DIRECTIONS: USE THIS CONDOM TO HELP PREVENT UNWANTED MISTAKES LIKE SADDAM HUSSEIN, and a storm of other Desert Storm paraphnelia was marketed (McAllister 1993).

The result of the propaganda blitz and war hysteria was a warrior nation that turned many in the TV audience into fanatic supporters of the Bush administration war policy.

Warrior Nation

Part of the reason why people supported the Gulf war has to do with what might be called "territorial herd instincts." When a country is at war and in danger people tend to support their government and pull together.¹⁵ It could be argued, however, that during the Gulf war the country was not really in danger, that a diplomatic rather than a military solution could best serve the national interests, and that support of the troops required bringing them home as soon as possible. Moreover, the country was genuinely divided at the start of the war and there was a large antiwar movement in place before Bush began the military hostilities with Iraq. Furthermore, Kolko (1991: 25) points out that public opinion since 1969 has been increasingly anti-interventionist and that every Rand Corporation poll had indicated that U.S. military intervention would not receive adequate public support. Yet during the Gulf war, the public was mobilized to support Bush's interventionist policies, in part at least, because of the media support for the war.

The pro-war consensus was mobilized through a variety of ways in which the public identified with the troops. TV presented direct images of the troops to the public through "desert dispatches" which produced very sympathetic images of young American men and women, "in harms way" and serving their country. TV news segments on families of the troops also provided mechanisms of identification, especially because many of the troops were reservists, forced to leave their jobs and families, making them sympathetic objects of empathy and identification for those able to envisage themselves in a similar situation. There were also frequent TV news stories on how church groups, schools, and others adopted U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia as pen pals, thus more intimately binding those at home to the soldiers abroad. People were also bound to troops through rituals of display of yellow ribbons, chanting and waving flags in pro-war demonstrations, and entering into various pro-war support groups.

The media generated support for the war, first, by upbeat appraisals of U.S. successes and then by demonizing the Iraqis that made people fervently want a coalition victory. Initial support

was won for the war effort through the media-generated euphoria that the war would be over quickly, with a decisive and easy victory for the U.S.-led coalition. Then, the audience got into the drama of the war through experiencing the excitement of the Scud wars and the thrills of technowar war with its laser-guided bombs and missiles and videotapes of its successes. The POW issue, the oil spills and fires, and intense propaganda campaigns by both sides also involved the audience in the highly emotional experience of a TV war. The drama of the war was genuinely exciting and the public immersed itself in the sights, sounds, and language of war.

The media images of the hi-tech precision bombing, (seeming) victories of Patriot over Scud missiles, bombing of Iraq, and military hardware and troops helped to mobilize positive feelings for the U.S. military effort in much of the audience. Military language helped normalize the war, propaganda and disinformation campaigns mobilized pro-war discourse, and the negative images and discourses against the Iraqis helped mobilize hatred against Iraq and Saddam Hussein. Polls during the first weeks of the war revealed growing support for the war effort, displaying a wide-spread propensity to believe whatever the media and military were saying. A Times-Mirror survey of January 31, 1991, indicated that 78 percent of the public believed that the military was basically telling the truth, not hiding anything embarrassing about its conduct of the war, and providing all of the information it prudently could. Seventy-two percent called the press coverage objective and sixty-one percent called it for the most part accurate. Eight out of ten said the press did an excellent job. Fifty percent claimed to be addicted to TV watching and said that they could not stop watching coverage of the war. Fifty-eight percent of adults under 30 called themselves "war news addicts" and twenty-one percent of these "addicts" say they have trouble concentrating on their jobs or normal activities, while eighteen percent say they are suffering insomnia.

It was, however, the total media and social environment that was most responsible for mobilizing support for the U.S. war policies. From morning to evening, the nation was bombarded with images of military experts, vignettes of soldiers at home and abroad, military families, former POWs, and others associated with the military. Military figures, images, and discourse dominated the morning talk shows, the network news, discussion programs, and the twenty-four-hour-a-day CNN war coverage, as well as saturation coverage on C-Span and many other cable networks. On home satellite dishes, the channels were saturated with live transmissions concerning the war, as the networks prepared or presented their reports from the field, and one satellite transponder provided hours per day of live military pool footage from Saudi Arabia for use by the networks -- propaganda provided by the military free of charge. TV news preempted regular programs for weeks. The result was a militarization of consciousness and an environment dominated by military images and discourses.

I have already noted how the audience was terrorized into identification with the U.S. war policy and there is much evidence that war hysteria indeed swept through the nation. TV news featured frequent reports on the tremendous increase in sales of Army surplus war merchandise. Segments showed stockbrokers buying gas masks to take to work because they feared a terrorist attack on the New York subways. Stores all over the country sold out their gas masks after the dramatization of the Scud attacks on Israel and an announcement that President Bush's bodyguards were carrying gas masks at all times. One TV news episode featured a saleswoman who told of how a frantic mother came in the store that day to buy a plastic covering for her child's crib "like they have in Israel." On January 29, NBC featured a woman buying a gas mask, telling how her child had

been waking up in terror at night, fearing an attack, and that she is buying a gas mask for the child to comfort her. On February 3, CNN broadcast a segment that showed an Atlanta family buying gas masks and constructing "safe rooms" in their house in case of a terrorist attack.

It is difficult to determine the degree of fear, and, in particular, fear of terrorism, evident in the American public during the Gulf war. In his analysis of the symbolic culture of violence in the United States, George Gerbner and his colleagues in the Annenberg School of Communication argued for years that the culture of TV violence produced a "mean world" syndrome whereby people who watched heavy doses of TV violence were highly fearful and tended to submit to conservative leaders who offered to alleviate their fear (Gerbner and Gross 1976). During the crisis in the Gulf, Gerbner and his associates (1992) did research that indicated that the amount of violence in film culture was accelerating significantly; the number of episodes of violence in sequels to popular films like Robocop, Die Hard, and Young Guns doubled or tripled in comparison to the original, showing that a culture nurtured on violence needed ever heavier doses to get their fix. Such heavy doses of violence from popular culture, however, created dispositions toward fear that led the public to seek refuge in authoritarian leaders like George Bush or General Schwarzkopf.

The war hysteria in the United States produced an infantilization of U.S. society, which was especially evident in the fetishism of yellow ribbons and the pro-war demonstrations. Yellow ribbons had been broadly displayed during the Iranian hostage crisis in which militant Iranians held U.S. hostages in the late 1970s. The yellow ribbons go back to the Civil War and Indian wars in which the families of soldiers displayed yellow ribbons when their loved ones were away at war and held in captivity (recall John Ford's John Wayne vehicle She Wore a Yellow Ribbon and the popular song "Tie a Yellow Ribbon 'Round the Old Oak Tree"). The ribbons reappeared when the Iraqis in Iraq and Kuwait held U.S. citizens captive during the crisis in the Gulf.

The yellow ribbon symbolism in the Gulf war combined the hostage and soldiers-in-harm's-way connotation, with a popular discourse portraying the U.S. troops as the hostages of "Sad-dam In-sane." Curiously, the symbolism of the ribbons was transferred from hostages to soldiers; initially, the ribbons were displayed to commemorate the situation of the hostages but were soon transferred to the soldiers. This symbolic transference suggested that the U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia were hostages, held against their will in the desert because of the presence of an evil which had to be surgically removed (actually the troops and the entire world were the hostages of the respective Iraqi and U.S. political and military establishments which produced the war). The symbolism implied that innocent Americans abroad were victims of foreign aggression and linked the soldiers with their supporters on the domestic front.

Displaying yellow ribbons provided talismans, good luck charms, and signs of social conformity all at once. It enlisted those who displayed yellow ribbons in the war effort, making them part of the adventure. Drawing on mythological resonances, tying ribbons to trees connected culture with nature, naturalizing the solidarity and community of Gulf war supporters. The ribbons symbolically tied together the community into a unified whole, bound together by its support for the troops.¹⁶ The ribbons thus signified that one supported the troops, that one was a loyal member of the patriotic community, that one was a team player, and a good American. They also signified, however, that one was ready to give up one's faculties of critical thought and to submit to whatever policies and adventures the Bush administration might attempt.

Indeed, the sight of yellow ribbons mesmerized the media, scared Congress, and demoralized

antiwar protestors. Yellow ribbons appeared everywhere in some neighborhoods and regions of the country and some individuals who refused to put yellow ribbons on their homes were threatened by their neighbors. This mode of forced conformity reveals a quasi-fascist hysteria unleashed by the Gulf war and a disturbing massification of the public. There were indeed many examples of protofascist behavior among the U.S. population during the Gulf war. An Italian basketball player at Seton Hall University was thrown off the team when he refused to wear a U.S. flag on his uniform and eventually returned to Italy after harassment by "patriots." After Prof. Barbara Scott, at a campus rally at the State University of New York, New Paltz, urged U.S. military personnel not to kill innocent people, she was dubbed "Baghdad Barbara," accused of treason by a state senator, and subjected to hate mail and a letter campaign aimed at the university president and Governor Mario Cuomo, urging them to fire her. In Kutztown Pennsylvania, a newspaper editor was fired for his editorial titled "How about a little peace?" and an editor was fired from a Round Rock, Texas paper for publishing an interview with a Palestinian-American expressing antiwar views.¹⁷

Arab-Americans were victims of government harassment and intimidation since the beginning of the crisis. Neal Saad described how Arab-Americans were visited by the FBI in their homes, places of business, and neighborhoods and were questioned concerning attitudes to U.S. policy in the Middle East, the PLO, Arab-American political activities, and terrorism (in Clark et al. 1992, pp. 188ff.). During the war harassment intensified and Pan American Airlines actually decided not to allow Arab passengers on their planes! Identifying ethnic members of a country with "the enemy" itself promotes oppression of minorities who belong to these groups. This identification happened in World War II with Japanese-Americans who were interned in concentration camps and began in the crisis in the Gulf with FBI investigations of Arab-Americans. The result was a resurgence of racism against Arabs and acts of violence against them.

Anti-Arab racism proliferated within U.S. popular culture. For years, Arabs had regularly been villainized in Hollywood films and American television entertainment,¹⁸ and during the Gulf war anti-Arab sentiments were mobilized against Iraqis. The words "Bomb Iraq" were superimposed on the lyrics of the Beach Boy song "Barbara Ann." A radio show in Georgia proclaimed, "towelhead weekend," telling callers to phone-in when they heard the traditional Islamic call to prayer; a disk jockey in Toledo, Ohio solicited funds from listeners to buy a ticket to Iraq for an Iraqi-American professor who was critical of the war. Jennie Anderson wrote: "In the United States, anti-Arab propaganda is a hot commercial item. A widely disseminated T-shirt pictures a U.S. Marine pointing a rifle at an Arab on the ground, with the caption, HOW MUCH IS OIL NOW? Another briskly selling T-shirt shows military planes attacking an Arab on a camel, with the caption, I'D FLY 10,000 MILES TO SMOKE A CAMEL," (*The Progressive*, Feb. 1991: 28-29). Another T-Shirt read: "JOIN THE ARMY, SEE INTERESTING PLACES, MEET NEW PEOPLE, AND KILL THEM."

In addition, there was much violence against Arab-Americans in the United States during the Gulf war.¹⁹ Even before the war began, businesses owned by Arab-Americans were bombed, an Arab-American businessman was beaten by a white supremacist mob in Toledo, a Palestinian family riding in a car was shot at in Kansas City, and an Arab-American who appeared on a Pennsylvania television program received seven death threats. Later, Edward Said and other Arab-American activists received death threats, and during the Gulf war itself violence against Arab-Americans accelerated. The United States had demonized Arabs for years in the figures of the Yasar Arafat,

Muammar Qadhafi, and images of Arab terrorists. The demonization of Saddam Hussein and the Iraqis heated up racist passions that exploded into violence against Arab-Americans.

Yet wars also divide countries between those who do and do not support the official war policies and the Gulf war produced such division and conflict in the country. It polarized individuals into pro- and antiwar groups, it alienated people from those who did not share their views, it ruptured families, friendships, and the vestiges of communities that have survived the onslaught of television and the consumer society. Although TV portrayed the division clearly in the case of Arcata, California, a town torn between pro and antiwar citizens (i.e., on a CBS news segment on January 24 and an NBC segment on February 3), one rarely saw the genuine divisions in the country over the Gulf war, or the antiwar voices as the war ground on.

During the Gulf war individuals were not merely passive spectators of the media war, but there were active pro and antiwar demonstrations and organizing. Indeed, the Bush administration promoted the line that one was either pro-war and a good citizen, or antiwar and thus not a good citizen, not a patriotic American. Call-in radio and television shows featured rabid and aggressive attacks on the antiwar demonstrators, and more and more pro-war demonstrations and violent opposition to the antiwar demonstrators appeared on television. On January 17 at a basketball game in Missoula, Montana, as antiwar protesters were being dragged off the courts by police, the crowd pelted the protestors with potatoes and began chanting "USA USA" In fact, one began seeing pro-war demonstrations almost every day on television, with crowds waving the flag and chanting. Revealingly, these usually small demonstrations got increasingly more coverage than the larger antiwar demonstrations. The networks quickly shifted, on cue from the Bush administration, to segments covering the "new patriotism" and love of the flag. News reports featured yellow ribbons and flags with many stories on flag factories where the managers indicated that they could barely keep up with the demand.

Divisions in the country and the quasi-hysteria involved in those who supported the war was evident on talk radio. The talk radio shows overwhelmingly supported the war and most callers supported the lines of the mostly pro-war talk show hosts (Nimmo and Hovind in Denton 1993). Callers frequently wanted to "nuke" Iraq and attacked anti-war protestors, calling them "looney tunes," traitors and worse. Many callers attacked CNN's Peter Arnett, the sole Western correspondent remaining in Baghdad, as supportive of Saddam Hussein and many talk show hosts and callers claimed that CNN owner Ted Turner was sympathetic to Iraq (Nimmo and Hovind 1993: 95). One caller labeled ABC anchor Peter Jennings "a jerk" for an ABC report on the bombing of the Iraqi sleeping shelter that the U.S. was claiming was a command and control center; the talk show host agreed, noting that "Jennings isn't an American anyway" (he is, in fact, a Canadian; cited in Nimmo and Hovind 1993: 95).²⁰

Carl Boggs (1991) argued that the intense nationalism, racism, glorification of violence, and militarism evident during the Gulf war was a response to growing powerlessness and insecurity, and was similar to the situation in Nazi Germany analyzed by Erich Fromm in Escape From Freedom (1941). The pro-war demonstrations seemed to offer mechanisms through which individuals could escape their powerlessness and overcome (temporarily) their insecurities. The flagwaving and chanting pointed to individuals immersing themselves in masses and exhibiting collectivist, conformist behavior. It appeared that powerless individuals felt themselves part of something greater than themselves when they chanted and waved flags. "Human flag" phenomena began to

appear: in San Diego, 30,000 people appeared in red, white, and blue T-shirts on January 25 to form the world's largest human flag photographed from a blimp and dutifully broadcast by the television networks. On February 2, an even larger human flag was formed in Virginia Beach, Virginia, with 40,000 people chanting "USA, USA" as they became one with their country and flag. On February 15, CNN featured a story on the new patriotism in which flags were shown flying en masse throughout the country and TV images linked the flags to portraits of George Bush, accompanied by the 1988 Republican campaign song as background music.

All over the country, whenever there was a pro-war demonstration, crowds chanted "USA USA." The lack of specific content in the chant in favor of empty patriotism contrasted with the antiwar chants and slogans that always had a specific content--attacking the war, calling for the troops to come home now, or affirming specific values like peace. Yet the masses of pro-war demonstrators who chanted "USA" every time they were given the occasion were not articulating any particular values or reasons for their pro-war and pro-America stance. Rather, they were simply immersing themselves in a crowd and expressing primal patriotism, national narcissism, and aggressive threats against anyone who was different. The "USA!" chant thus expressed loyalty to the home team in the Super Bowl championship of contemporary war and bound together the pro-war constituency into a national community of those identifying with the U.S. war policy, becoming part of something bigger than themselves through participation.

In addition, the pro-war demonstrations seemed to make people feel good through providing experiences of community and empowerment denied them in everyday life. Those who were usually powerless were able to feel powerful, identifying themselves as part of the nation proudly asserting itself in the war. Losers in everyday life, the pro-war demonstrators could experience themselves as part of the winning team in the Gulf war. Participating in the pro-war rituals thus gave individuals new and attractive identities that provided them a renewed sense of participation in a great national adventure. Like sports events and rock concerts, the pro-war demonstrations thus endowed the participants with at least a fleeting sense of community, denied them in the privatized temples of consumption, serialized media watching, and isolated "life styles."

For almost 100 years, sociologists have studied crowd behavior and analyzed the mechanisms through which individuals dissolve themselves in mass behavior. During the Gulf war the phenomenon of individuals immersing themselves in mass behavior was a daily feature of the TV war. Usually, American community in the Age of the Media is a simulated TV community, whereby one becomes one with the others by watching the same images and participating in the same ritualized experience of events like the Super Bowl or Gulf war. Yet one could participate in the ritual of the Gulf war more fully by leaving one's home and joining into pro-war demonstrations, in which one could become more vitally integrated into the patriotic community.

The flag-waving and chanting also provided a new form of participatory experience that enabled individuals to be part of an aesthetic spectacle. The pro-war flag wavers and chanters had been immersed for years in the aesthetic of consumer culture: viewing seductive commodities in advertisements; fascinated by images of luxury, eroticism, and power in the images of popular entertainment; tempted by the dazzling display of the commodity world in malls and stores; and gratified by whatever items they could afford to buy in their everyday lives (i.e., cars, clothes, electronics, etc.). The Gulf war was packaged as an aesthetic spectacle, with CNN utilizing powerful drum music to introduce their news segments, superimposing images of the U.S. flag over

American troops, and employing up-beat martial music between breaks. The audience was thus invited to participate in a dazzling war spectacle by its media presentation.

But pro-war demonstrators were able to overcome the usual privatization and passivity of TV culture by more actively participating in the public celebrations of the war. Many individuals of the TV war audience were normally isolated, disempowered, and able to feel that they belonged in the consumer society only if they could afford to buy the icons and totems of social prestige. A pro-war demonstration and flag waving, however, is a cheap thrill, offering anyone the opportunity to become part of an aesthetic spectacle of a sea of flags, rousing music, and enthusiastic chanting. Although individuals at home watching television are passive and isolated, in pro-war demonstrations the participants were active and socially bonded.

Indeed, the pro-war constituency rooted for the U.S. team as if it were a sports event and from the beginning there was a close relation between war and football. During a break in a nationally televised football bowl game from El Paso shown on New Years eve, an announcer greeted U.S. soldiers in the stands who were there courtesy of the John Hancock insurance company. Then, as Haynes Johnson put it, "while the cameras panned rows of cheering, waving soldiers, the sportscaster pointed to a mural painted across the stadium wall. Depicted was an eagle swooping down on prey. Helpful as ever, while the cameras slowly played across the mural, the sportscaster read aloud the message spelled out there: 'Go Desert Shield, Beat Iraq'" (Washington Post, Jan. 4, 1991: A2).

There are, in fact, interesting connections between war and football, patriotism and sports in the American imagination. Both activities involve teamwork, coordination, and game plans, and both activities are highly competitive and violent. In both, squadrons of helmeted men seek to gain territory and try to drive their enemy back, while throwing balls, bombs, or bullets downfield. Both stress the values of discipline, training, hitting the opposition hard, and, above all, winning. On December 19, Lt. Gen. Calvin Waller told the press, "I'm like a football coach. I want everything I can possibly get and have at my side of the field when I get ready to go into the Super Bowl" (United Press International, Dec. 20, 1990). On a news segment on the CBS morning show on January 25, a sports fan stated that he liked Buffalo in the bowl because "it's an impressive unit with powerful weapons." A U.S. soldier in a January 23 report on CNN said that "Saddam Hussein doesn't have much of a team; in comparison with football he'd be the Cleveland Browns." Army Chief Warrant Officer Ron Moring stated on the eve of the war: "It's time to quit the pre-game show. We're a lot more serious about what we're doing. There's a lot more excitement in the air."²¹

Football metaphors were also employed in war rhetoric when Bush said that Tariq Aziz gave them a "stiff arm" after the unsuccessful Geneva meeting at the eve of the war. A U.S. pilot returning from the first night's bombing raid said that "it was just like a football game where the other team didn't show up." Helen Thomas asked Bush in a January 18 press briefing if the Gorbachev peace initiative was perceived as an "end run" [around Bush's desire to start and win the war]. A Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) Radio headline indicated that the Canadian armed forces in the Gulf were given "the green light to tackle the Iraqis." ABC's "Nightline" (Jan. 17, 1991), quoted fliers just back from the first missions of the war, enthusing: "It's just like a football game once you get airborne and you get the jet under you and you start feeling good, then you just start working- working your game plan." Another pilot exclaimed: "It's like being a professional athlete and never playing a game. Today was the first game and the enemy didn't show up, the

opponent didn't show up. We went out there and ran our first play and it worked great, scored a touchdown, there was nobody home."

In addition, the military planners talked of making an "end run" around the Iraqi troops massed on the Kuwaiti border. Scud missiles were "intercepted" by Patriots and Col. Ray Davies described the U.S. air team as "like the Dallas Cowboys football team. They weren't a real emotional team. That's exactly what it's like with these pilots out here. They know exactly what they've got to do" (Washington Post, Jan. 19: C1). Furthermore, the audience processed the Gulf war as a football game. A Jesuit professor wrote in the National Catholic Reporter that, "A resident adviser in one of our college dorms tells me his students watched the CNN live war and cheered and took bets as if they were watching a football game. Small wonder. A sports mind-set has revved us up for the war. Some weeks ago, TV's most disconcerting image was of Defense Secretary Dick Cheney whipping the cheering troops into a fighting frenzy as if he were a coach at halftime in a locker room" (Feb. 1, 1991: 1). And so the Gulf war became a game in which the U.S. emerged victorious in the Super Bowl of wars.

Some Concluding Reflections

The analysis in the last sections suggested how the U.S. corporate media helped mobilize support for the Gulf war. The examples that I gave of Gulf war hysteria and the warrior nation were all derived from the media which in their polls, nightly news reports, and discussion shows presented the appearance that the Gulf war was wildly popular and that the nation was undergoing orgies of patriotism, as well as the irrational hysteria that I noted. But this picture might be highly misleading, replicating the very picture produced by the media themselves. Most of the people that I spoke to, ranging from my Texas neighbors and colleagues to students, were against the war and we had well-attended teach-ins every day at the University of Texas, so there was certainly an invisible antiwar public in the United States. In the months after the war, I talked to many people who said that in their travels and work in rural Kentucky, south Texas, Michigan, West Virginia, and other parts of the country there was significant opposition to the war -- much more than the polls and media let on. Before the war began, polls and media discourse revealed a divided nation, but once the war began these divisions became invisible.

Thus, the media might have produced a false picture of the degree of support for Bush administration Gulf war policy. A study in Britain revealed that support for the Gulf war was much softer and more ambivalent than the polls indicated. Martin Shaw and Roy Carr-Hill argued that "two surveys of a local population in Northern England, based on random samples of the electorate... {reveal} that while perceptions of the war closely reflected the pictures of the war provided by the media, there was a great deal of anxiety not reflected in national poll findings, and 'resistance' to media coverage -- reflected particularly in the finding that large minorities agreed that television and the popular press 'glorified the war too much'" (Shaw and Carr-Hill 1991). The authors also claim that their surveys indicated that people's attitude toward the war often varied according to what newspaper they read.

A study in the U.S. noted a distinct bias in the very mode of questioning concerning audience support for the war. Eveland, McLeod, and Signorielli (1994) noted that poll questions tended to focus on presidential job approval, or confidence in the military, rather than whether people really

supported the war and wanted it to continue. A January 17th Gallup poll indicated that when asked if respondents approved of the way Bush was handling the crisis in the Gulf, 81% said that they approved; by January 27th, Bush's approval rating (for handling the Gulf situation) went up to 84%; by February 3, approval of the way the president was handling the situation inched up to 85%, though it decreased to 79% by February 13 (Eveland, McLeod, and Signorielli, 1994).

After the successful ground war, Bush's approval ratings shot up to a high of 90%. But more detailed analysis of poll data indicated that there was not the seemingly overwhelming bipartisan support. Solop and Wonders' (1991) review of published poll data indicated that those most supportive of President Bush and his war policies were republican white males who had conservative attitudes. Females, blacks, liberals, and Democrats were less supportive. Moreover, the study by Eveland, McLeod, and Signorielli (1994), based on interviews during and after the war:

revealed that there was less overall support for the war than would be expected given the degree and type of media coverage relating to public opinion about the war.... Both during and after the war, more than 50% of the respondents said they were 'neutral' or disagreed with the statements in the 'I support the war' scale. In addition, during the war only 6.6% of the respondents said that they strongly agreed with statements describing support for the war; this figure fell to 2.8% in the survey conducted one year later (ibid).²²

Moreover, further focus on audience reception and how audiences might process the propagandistic and jingoist images of the military and the U.S. intervention suggests that television images and discourse may have contradictory effects and that audiences may resist media manipulation. Utilizing a deconstructive perspective, one might argue that the extremely ideological and propagandistic nature of the TV coverage could be read as evidence that the population did not swallow the Bush administration rationale for the war and needed to be constantly indoctrinated to assure that they accepted the official war policy. For, as noted, further research and more in-depth interviews indicated that support for the U.S. policy was "soft," and the one-sidedness, limited range of voices, and blatant propaganda could be read as signs that government and media elites knew that they needed to maintain a hard-sell propaganda campaign to manage and maintain a pro-war consensus in a public that had serious (and legitimate) doubts concerning the war.

Furthermore, although saturation television coverage was strongly propagandistic and seemed to help mobilize audience support for the war, continued coverage of turmoil in the region, especially images of the suffering of the Kurds and other Iraqis at the end of the war, soured much of the audience on the war and perhaps on military intervention, which didn't seem to have achieved promised positive results. Thus, ultimately, the media may have contributed to turning large segments of the public against military solutions to the problems of the Middle East and elsewhere and to the commitment of U.S. forces to resolve the problems of the world. It may be that the nightly images of the soldiers in the desert and then the images after the war of continued suffering and turmoil might have raised questions concerning the wisdom of U.S. military intervention.

In addition, the fact that the war was experienced by much of the audience as a dramatic spectacle meant that it could be soon forgotten, overwhelmed by Hollywood, TV, and other subsequent spectacles of the culture industry. By the summer of 1992, Bush's presidency was in

serious trouble and, as it turned out, patriotic images and discourse from the war were unable to save him in the 1992 election. Revelations of the positive and supportive Reagan/Bush policies before the war toward Iraq suggested that Bush and his cohorts had constantly miscalculated in providing aid and diplomatic support to the Iraqi regime from the early 1980s to the eve of the invasion of Kuwait (see Friedman 1993).

In 1992, in a series of articles in the Los Angeles Times, Murray Waas documented how George Bush himself actively promoted U.S. trade with Iraq and helped block attempts to criticize Iraq or impose sanctions on it from the Reagan administration until weeks before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Classified documents show that Bush, first as vice president and then as President, intervened repeatedly over a period of almost a decade to obtain special assistance for Saddam Hussein -- financial aid as well as access to hi-tech equipment that was critical to Iraq's quest for nuclear and chemical arms. In Waas's summary:

In June 1984 Vice President Bush telephoned the president of the Export-Import Bank to urge approval of a \$ 500 million loan guarantee for Iraq to build an oil pipeline. Ex-Im, which had been reluctant, approved.

In February 1987 Vice President Bush telephoned the Ex-Im president to press for \$ 200 million in loan guarantees. Economists warned the bank that Iraq could not repay the loans, but the bank approved the guarantees.

In March 1987 the Commerce Department approved export licenses for shipment to Iraq of dual-use technology, useful for scientific or military purposes. Over the next few years exports of this kind totaled \$ 600 million, and much of the equipment may have gone into aerial spying and other military uses.

In August 1988 a cease-fire ended the Iran-Iraq war. But the American tilt toward Iraq continued. Some intelligence was being provided as late as May 1990.

In 1989 Bush, now president, signed a national security order directing government agencies to improve ties with Iraq.

In October 1989 Secretary of State James A. Baker telephoned Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter and urged him to approve \$ 1 billion in new loan guarantees to Iraq despite fears that the credits were being misused. In November Yeutter approved the guarantees.

In January 1990 President Bush signed an executive order finding that it would not be "in the national interest" for the Ex-Im Bank to stop loan guarantees to Iraq.

In April and again in June 1990 the Commerce Department proposed restrictions on hi-technology exports to Iraq. interagency group chaired by

Robert M. Gates, then deputy national security adviser to Bush, rejected the proposals.

In July 1990 the Senate voted overwhelmingly to cut off loan guarantees to Iraq because of Saddam's human rights violations, including the gassing of a Kurdish village. The administration condemned the vote.

On July 31, 1990, with 100,000 Iraqi troops massed at the Kuwait border, Assistant Secretary of State John Kelly went to Capitol Hill and testified against ending loan guarantees to Iraq.

On Aug. 2, 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait.²³

Moreover, the fact that Saddam Hussein continued to rule with an iron fist in Iraq and that his neighbors continued to feel threatened after the Gulf War raised questions as to the success of Bush senior's policy and whether the war really accomplished any significant long-term goals, other than temporarily boosting Bush's ratings in the polls and producing a positive image of the U.S. military after the shame of defeat in Vietnam. In the chaotic aftermath of the U.S. intervention in which the U.S. failed to intervene to help the uprising against Hussein's regime and in the light of his reassertion of his power and domination, the extreme hyperbole of the construction of Saddam Hussein and his regime as absolute evil to some extent backfired since the Evil One was not removed from power in the aftermath of the war. Although Bush urged the Iraqis to overthrow Hussein, once the U.S. declared an end to the fighting and Iraqi rebels rebelled against Hussein's regime, the U.S. remained on the sidelines. General Schwarzkopf himself stated in a PBS TV interview on March 27, 1991, that he had preferred to continue fighting to "annihilate" completely the Iraqi military which was violently suppressing the insurgent forces against Hussein as Schwarzkopf spoke. The continuation of Saddam Hussein in power, the destructive environmental effects of the war, the so-called Gulf War syndrome that has disabled over 160,000 U.S. troops, the need for Bush junior to "finish the job," and the current chaos and instability of Iraq reveal Gulf war I to have been in retrospect a Pandora's box of evils that produced a brief euphoric high with a long hangover.²⁴

Consequently, saturation television coverage of dramatic political events is a two-edged sword: it might shape public opinion into supporting the U.S. intervention, as it obviously did during the Gulf War. But repeated images of a drawn-out stalemate, or images of death and destruction in a fighting war, or representations of protracted suffering as long-term effects of the war, could be turned against the political group and its leaders who produced such destruction. The very ubiquity of the broadcasting media and now the Internet, and the central role of the media in contemporary politics, renders media spectacle a complex and unpredictable political force (Kellner 2003a). Lust for pictures to attract audiences led the networks into a race to get into Iraq and to interview its leaders and to show its people. Images of continual and increased suffering of the Iraqi people and others in the area as a result of U.S. military interventions in the 1991 and 2003 Iraq wars have helped produce negative images of the U.S. throughout the world and might ultimately lead people to see that war is no way to solve political conflict, and that it produces overwhelming destruction, suffering, and death.

Hence, a multiperspectival approach that captures different aspects of a complex

phenomenon like mainstream media coverage of U.S. interventions in the Middle East should also analyze the contradictions of audience reception of the media texts and potentially contradictory images and effects, as well as analyzing media texts and their conservative, systems-maintenance effects. Although my analysis has focused primarily on the ways that U.S. media coverage of the 1991 Gulf War supported the policies of the Bush administration and Pentagon, analysis of the reception by audiences of the Middle East Crisis, the war, and its aftermath might have ultimately helped undermine Bush I and the conservative hegemony of the Reagan/Bush I years, contributing to Bush senior's defeat in 1992. Perhaps Bush went overboard in demonizing Hussein and his regime's continued rule of Iraq served to rob Bush of claims of genuine victory. Likewise, although Bush junior's administration appeared to have won a smashing military triumph in the 2003 war against Iraq, its consequences and aftermath could undo the regime of the son, as the contradictory aftermath of Gulf War I helped to undo the presidency of the father (see Kellner forthcoming).

In any case, the effects of television and the mainstream media are contradictory and may have unintended consequences. While in the spring of 1991, the Gulf war constituted a tremendous victory for the Bush administration and Pentagon, the event did not save his presidency and eventually raised questions concerning whether he was really an effective President. Its' short-term effects in temporarily boosting Bush senior's popularity and the sudden shift in public opinion concerning the war and Bush also point to the fickleness of audiences in a media-saturated society, who soon forget the big events of the previous year.²⁵

And yet the woefully one-sided coverage of the Gulf crisis and war by the mainstream media calls attention once again to the need for alternative media to provide essential information on complex events like the Gulf War. During the war, those of us who opposed it got information from computer data bases, such as PeaceNet, or progressive publications like The Nation, In These Times, The Village Voice, and Z Magazine. Locally, in addition to holding teach-ins at universities, critics of the war attempted to make use of public access television and radio to criticize the Bush administration's war policy and refusal to negotiate a diplomatic solution. Democratizing our media system will require a revitalization of public television, an increased role for public access television, the eventual development of a public satellite system, and the production of progressive computer data bases, Web-sites, list-serves, and weblogs (Kellner 1990 and 1995). Because politics are more and more acted out on media screens, without the reconstruction of television and the mass media, the prospects for democratization of the American political are dim.

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Notes

1. In this chapter, I draw on my book The Persian Gulf TV War (Kellner 1992), and later studies of the event in Kellner 1995 and Best and Kellner 2001.

² Following the publication of my Persian Gulf War TV War (Kellner 1992), I was invited all over the world to lecture on the event and interviewed officials from British, French, Belgium, German, Finnish, Swedish, and many other state television networks; all of the people I

interviewed affirmed that CNN tended to control the media flow and frames in depiction of the war. Things were quite different, however, in the 2003 war on Iraq that had many Arab television networks present in Iraq, as well as many European and other global networks that framed the event quite differently than the U.S. networks.

3. By the “mainstream media” in the United States, I mean the major national television networks, including ABC, CBS, CNN, NBC, and CBS; the national weekly news magazines Time, Newsweek and U.S. News and World Report; and national newspapers such as The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and The Washington Post. These mainstream media are corporate media, owned by an ever-shrinking and more powerful number of transnational corporations. See the contrast between mainstream and alternative media that I develop in Kellner 1990 and the analysis of corporate media in Kellner 2003a.

⁴ Following the example of British censorship of the press during the Falkland Islands/Malvinas war, the U.S. tightly controlled press access during the Grenada foray and instituted the pool system during the Panama invasion; for detailed analysis of how it worked during the Gulf War, see Kellner 1992: 80ff.

⁵ See the discussion below and Kellner 1992, pp. 17ff. for documentation of this claim.

⁶ Hoagland’s remarkable misreading of Iraq was duplicated by the Bush administration’s neo-conservatives who claimed prior to the U.S./UK war against Iraq in 2003 that Iraqis would welcome their liberators with open arms and that the U.S. would easily be able to reconstruct the country and lead it to democracy (see Kellner, forthcoming).

7. On August 6, 1954, the New York Times published an editorial celebrating the overthrow of the Mossadegh government in Iran and the restoration of the shah, accompanied by a takeover of 40% of the Iranian oil by U.S. corporations, breaking a British monopoly. The editors wrote: "Underdeveloped countries with rich resources now have an object lesson in the heavy cost that must be paid by one of their number which goes berserk with fanatical nationalism. It is perhaps too much to hope that Iran's experience will prevent the rise of Mossadeghs in other countries, but that experience may at least strengthen the hands of more reasonable and more far-seeing leaders." Namely, those who will have a clear-eyed understanding of the U.S.'s overriding priorities (thanks to Noam Chomsky for this reference). In this context, the U.S. military intervention and Gulf war was an object lesson to Third World leaders who do not follow U.S. priorities and policies.

8. From the beginning, Iraq was feverishly trying to negotiate a solution to the crisis and was cooperating with Arab efforts to mediate the crisis; there were over eight Iraqi secret missions which attempted to reach a diplomatic solution, all of which were rebuffed by the Bush administration, which obviously wanted a war; see the discussion in Kellner 1992, pp. 30ff.

9. Through data base searches, I discovered how this story was taken up by the television networks, most major newspapers, and was used in many later summaries of the story to explain why Bush had to send U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia; see the documentation in Kellner 1992.

10. A study undertaken by the Gannett foundation indicated that there were over 1,170 articles linking Hussein with Hitler (Le May, et al. 1991: 42). This comparison obviously presupposes a false analogy in terms of the military threat to the region and the world from the Iraqi army -- whose threat was hyped up from the beginning. Iraq's 17 million population can hardly compare with

Germany's 70 million and its military was significantly less threatening than Hitler's military machine, which was the most powerful in the world in the 1930s. Nor could Iraq, which depends on oil for over 95 percent of its exports, be compared with an industrial powerhouse like Germany. It is also inappropriate to compare a major imperialist superpower with a regional power, Iraq, that itself is the product of colonialization.

It might also be noted how the Bush administration and media personalized the crisis, equating Iraq with its leader. Whereas in coverage during the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq, in which the U.S. covertly supported Iraq, references were to "Baghdad" and "Iraq" during the Gulf crisis and war it was usually "Saddam Hussein" who was referred to as the actor and source of all evil (I am grateful to Richard Keeble for this insight).

¹¹ Cited in Joel Bleifuss, In These Times, March 20, 1991: 5.

¹² In fact, allied bombing was also responsible for much of the ecological damage; see the documentation in Kellner 1992 and Clark 1992.

¹³ There was also organized rightwing pressure against networks or mainstream publications that criticized the Bush administration or Pentagon; such pressure was increased in the Afghanistan and 2003 Iraq war, so that during these events the U.S. broadcasting media were even less critical of the second Bush administration and Pentagon (see Kellner, forthcoming).

14. In an otherwise illuminating article, that I draw upon in this discussion, McAllister (in Denton 1993: 212) claims that: "During the Persian Gulf War, government-produced propaganda was less prevalent than during the world wars." But McAllister apparently failed to see the propaganda campaigns that I am analysing here and that the very advertising he discusses contributed to the propaganda effects of TV war coverage.

15. In his book The Territorial Imperative (London: Fontana, 1967), Robert Ardrey tells how he was a young playwright in New York at the time of the Pearl Harbor bombing, thinking only of his career and personal life, when he was transformed overnight into a patriot when he perceived that his country was under attack.

16. As Elissa Marder argued in an unpublished paper, "Arbologies of Roland Barthes," the tying of ribbons to trees played on mythological resonances of the sort analyzed by Barthes in Mythologies (1972). The very concept of "Operation Desert Storm" is a mythology in Barthes' sense of naturalizing unnatural events, making a phenomenon of ugly history appear to be an event of nature, an inevitable desert storm bringing just retribution on the evils of Saddam Hussein.

17. The first three examples are from Winter 1991, while the last examples are documented in The Texas Observer, (Feb. 8, 1991: 8-9 and April 19, 1991: 22).

¹⁸ See Kellner and Ryan 1988 and Kellner 1995, Chapter 2.

19. The Anti-Discrimination League reported that incidences of violence against Arab-Americans reached an all-time high during 1991, with 119 hate crimes compared with 39 in 1990 (The New York Times, Feb. 22, 1991).

20. ABC Baghdad correspondent Bill Blakemore reported directly from the bombed sleeping shelter, poking holes in the U.S. account that it was a military command and control center; later, it turned out that the U.S. was lying, or had faulty information; see the account in Kellner 1992.

21. Some of these football examples are from the Greenpeace Gulf Report on Jan. 18, 1991,

Situation Report No. 2 from the PeaceNet mideast.gulf bulletin board. During the ground war, General Schwarzkopf and media reporters regularly used football metaphors to describe U.S. tactics.

²² Muller documented that within a month and a half after the Iraqi surrender, that only a small majority of 52% believed that the U.S. intervention was largely or totally successful and that by June 1991 that number fell by another 8 percent (1994, p. 277). Other polls which tracked public opinion between the end of the war and summer 1991 showed declines of 14 percent and 19 percent in support for the proposition that the war had been worth fighting (Mueller 1993, p. 214).

²³ See Murray Waas, Los Angeles Times (May 7, 1992). Another Los Angeles Times story by Murray Waas and Douglas Frantz, “Bush tied to ’86 bid to give Iraq military advice,” described how: “As vice president during the Ronald Reagan Administration, George Bush acted as an intermediary in sending strategic military advice to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein at a critical point in the Iran-Iraq war, according to sources and classified documents.”

²⁴ On the Gulf War syndrome, see Hersh 1998. See also Phil Hirschhorn and Richard Roth, “Gulf War veterans suing companies for chemical exports” (CNN, January 17, 2003) who report: “About 209,000 Gulf War veterans have filed claims with the Veterans administration, and 161,000 of them are receiving disability payments.

²⁵ David Halberstam claimed that the Gulf War “was a war without real resonance...when it was over, it was over, leaving remarkably little trace” (2001: 16). In some ways, this may be true domestically, but it helped create resentment of U.S. military power that had resonance in enraging Jihadist forces who have targeted the U.S. with terrorism attacks, and it also failed to eliminate the regime of Saddam Hussein, tempting the second Bush administration into what is now appearing as a world-historical disaster.