

Douglas Kellner
The Persian Gulf TV War

Chapter 10

Aftermath

On February 26, after Iraqi troops had already fled the country, coalition forces entered Kuwait City, where they were met by a jubilant crowd. They were accompanied, of course, by television crews and soon live satellite feeds from Kuwait City were broadcast by CBS, CNN, ABC, and finally NBC. CBS's Dan Rather, his eyes moist with tears, vigorously shook the hand of an American officer, saying, "Congratulations for a job well done." The media had well served the Pentagon during the war and enthusiastically participated in the ecstasy of victory. The March 11 Newsweek had a laughing Norman Schwarzkopf on its cover with the triumphant inscription "VICTORY!" while U.S. News and World Report scripted "KNOCKOUT!" above the pictures of a moving tank (see Figure 10.1).

Excited Kuwaitis greeted the troops and media crews as conquering heroes, and Kuwaiti citizens, resistance fighters, and foreign citizens who had been trapped in the city all had their fifteen minutes of media celebrity. Atrocity stories were told, hatred of the Iraqis was expressed repeatedly, and Kuwaitis happily waved pictures of the emir. Kuwaitis also chanted the name of George Bush, whose country eventually won billions of dollars worth of contracts to rebuild the country. Of course, Bush could have easily liberated Kuwait as early as August through pursuing a diplomatic settlement, and could have pursued the Iraqi or Soviet peace initiatives of the past weeks, saving the country and environment much destruction. The "liberation" of Kuwait was as phony and hypocritical as the Gulf war itself.

On February 27, George Bush appeared on television to halt the U.S.-led extermination of Iraqi troops. He declared Kuwait liberated and Iraq defeated. In the mode of control characteristic of technowar, Bush dictated stiff terms for a full cease-fire and so was able to impose his will on the defeated and massively overpowered Iraqis. The Gulf war was a great triumph for George Bush, establishing him as the leader of the Neoimperialist World Order. In the aftermath of the Gulf war, however, there was a brief revelation of the U.S. atrocities against the fleeing Iraqis during the last two days of the war (10.2). But the liberation of Kuwait and revelation of Iraqi atrocities against Kuwaitis during the occupation (10.1) conveniently pushed U.S. atrocities out of the news and produced a climate in which Bush could bask in the warm glow of victory and win the highest approval ratings for a U.S. president in modern history. The war thus ended with a series of propaganda victories in addition to the military victory.

The ecological consequences of the war, however, were impossible to control completely (10.3), as were the turbulent passions unleashed by the Pandora's box of the Persian Gulf war (10.4). Consequently, unpleasant news continued to emanate from Kuwait and Iraq for some time after military hostilities ceased. Uprisings by rebel forces in southern Iraq and Kurdish forces in northern Iraq were violently suppressed by Saddam Hussein and his military, which was not rendered as ineffectual as Schwarzkopf had claimed. Moreover, eventually the popularity of George Bush and the war would fade and people would see that the U.S. military adventure really produced little of value for the people of the United States and the Middle East (10.5).

As the days and months went by, Hussein seemed as firmly in control as ever. Moreover, suspicions emerged in July 1991, concerning whether the U.S.-led coalition had destroyed his nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons programs to the extent previously asserted by Schwarzkopf and his minions. Reports also began surfacing of the horrible suffering of the Iraqi people caused by the U.S.-led coalition bombing as epidemics, lack of medical care, and malnutrition threatened to take hundreds of thousands more lives in addition to the civilian and military casualties already inflicted. The Kuwaiti oil fires threatened the health and environment of the region and many forecasted a "nuclear winter" effect, if the fires were not extinguished and if the smoke blocked out the sun and disrupted weather patterns across the planet. Hence, the people and environment of the region continued to suffer the violence of the war long after the euphoria of the U.S. victory had subsided.

In this chapter, I shall argue that the aftermath of the Gulf war reveals that little of value was gained by this human and environmental holocaust for the United States or the people of the region. Time magazine posed the question "Was It Worth It?" on its August 5, 1991, cover. The aftermath of the war left Saddam Hussein in power and many people concluded that the affair had produced nothing but new regional instability, the slaughter of tens of thousands of Iraqis, and "near apocalyptic conditions" in Iraq, as well as one of the worst environmental disasters in history. Millions of people had been displaced by the crisis and war, Kuwait was in ruin and chaos, and the whole episode wasted hundreds of billions of dollars (see Note 2 in the Preface for figures). In addition, the Gulf war brutalized U.S. culture and created the conditions for a resurgence of militarism that deflected attention from pressing social and economic problems (10.5). The experience also brutalized Kuwait and the aftermath of its "liberation" was extremely unpleasant, as we shall see in the next section.

10.1 Torture and Other Atrocities

During the period from the eve of the ground war through the end of the war, a propaganda campaign circulated stories concerning Iraqi atrocities against Kuwaitis. On February 23, the day that the ground war began, Gen. Butch Neal continued to lie dutifully for his country, claiming that "[t]here seems to be a systematic campaign of execution, particularly people that they [the Iraqis] may have tortured previously. They're sort of destroying the evidence, I guess, for lack of a better term." Robert Gates, Bush's deputy national security adviser, and current head of the CIA, said in a February 24 interview on CNN that there were "large scale executions and torture, mutilation" and other atrocities being committed in Kuwait: "we are hearing that they may be setting fire to Kuwait City itself, large sections of the city are in flames. This is a sort of a medieval practice."¹

Continuing the propaganda campaign, Saudi Gen. Khalid reported on February 25 that Iraqis in Kuwait were committing "unspeakable acts," including smashing heads in with axes, rape, and dismembering Kuwaitis and hanging their parts in public places. General Schwarzkopf also spoke in his briefing of February 27 of "unspeakable atrocities" that reporters would discover in Kuwait City and claimed that the Iraqis had taken "up to 40,000 [hostages]." The television networks circulated these stories without much skepticism. CNN was particularly guilty and CBS's Dan Rather once had to remind correspondent Eric Engberg that one should not always accept such stories at face value as Engberg was enthusiastically rattling off a list of recent Iraqi horrors fed to him by his military handlers.

More skeptically, the New York Times of February 26 cited Andrew Whitley, director of Middle

East Watch, an independent human-rights group, who warned about "the self-interested nature of the sources and the timing of their announcements" (p. A10). The Times also cited refugees from Kuwait who had just arrived at the Jordanian border and "said they saw no evidence of the widescale atrocities alleged by Kuwaiti exile groups and some American officials." One refugee, Ghazi Hijazi, a businessman, said that, "Iraqi troops are treating people well. They are not bothering them" (p. A10). National Public Radio's John Hockenberry interviewed refugees from Kuwait City in Amman, Jordan, on February 26 who said that they had not seen the alleged burning buildings and murdered civilians. Some Iraqi atrocities were documented when coalition troops entered the city, but it was discovered that the atrocity stories were greatly exaggerated,² though the TV networks continued to circulate them daily, falling prey to another Kuwaiti/U.S. disinformation campaign (see 2.1 for discussion of the earlier campaigns during the crisis in the Gulf).

On February 28, ABC's "Nightline" had a segment on the Iraqi atrocities against Kuwaitis. Host Ted Koppel recalled an episode after the Iraqi invasion in September when a young woman called him from Kuwait to tell of the atrocities being committed against the Kuwaiti people. Koppel claimed that he had reason to believe that this woman was captured, tortured, and killed by the Iraqis. After playing a tape of his earlier telephone interview with the woman, Koppel brought on a Kuwaiti "doctor," who was allegedly a resistance fighter, to detail her fate which the "doctor" described as "the worst I've seen all through the last six-and-a-half months."³ The "doctor" then depicted in detail her torture, her mutilation, with her head cut by an axe into three pieces, and the depositing of her body in front of her house.

The doctor's face was concealed with the gutras, a Kuwaiti headdress, wrapped around it and when asked why he was hiding his identity, he replied that Kuwait City was still not completely safe. This claim was suspicious because everyone else in Kuwait City seemed eager to tell his or her story of the Iraqi occupation directly to the camera. Finally, the "doctor" provided details of other Iraqi torture and execution of Kuwaitis illustrated by pictures that the doctor had allegedly taken himself in hospitals and the morgue, to document the atrocities. The pictures looked suspiciously like the ones used by the Free Kuwait and Hill and Knowlton cabal at the UN and Congressional exhibitions of Iraqi atrocities.

It appears that the Kuwaiti doctor may have been part of a propaganda campaign, first, because he was quick to tell Ted Koppel exactly the story about the young Kuwaiti resistance fighter that fit into Koppel's videotape of her call to his show earlier when she revealed the Iraqi atrocities in Kuwait City. Moreover, the "doctor's" example of atrocities was suspicious in that the Iraqis splitting a head into three pieces with an axe was precisely the grisly example referred to by Gen. Khalid at the Saudi briefing a few days before. The "doctor's" hiding of his identity was also suspicious, repeating the ploy of the "doctor" who had earlier told the much-publicized and then discredited story of the Iraqis killing premature babies by robbing their incubators. His pictures of Kuwaitis tortured by Iraqis appeared quite similar to the ones presented at the UN and Congress by the Kuwaiti exile movement (see 2.1). It was therefore entirely possible that the "doctor" was part of a Kuwaiti-U.S. propaganda campaign to dramatize atrocities for a world ready to believe anything about the demonized Iraqis.⁴

The "doctor" recounted additional horror stories and said that tortured and executed victims numbered in the hundreds and those who were tortured, imprisoned, and released totaled in the thousands. When asked if Kuwaitis wanted to exact revenge from the Iraqis who were imprisoned in Kuwait, he answered that they were treating the Iraqi prisoners humanely and even giving them medical treatment,

precisely the Kuwaiti government line of the moment. Within a few days, however, it was revealed that Kuwaitis were at that very moment systematically killing Iraqis and Palestinians suspected of being collaborators in extremely brutal ways, so the "doctor" here might have been producing propaganda to deflect attention from Kuwaiti atrocities to Iraqi ones.

Furthermore, the "doctor" claimed that the health conditions for the Kuwaiti people were currently very poor because of the Iraqi destruction of the water desalination plant (earlier said to have been destroyed by the oil spill), but that water was being brought in and in general they were overall "in good shape" (again, the line being advanced by the Kuwaiti government). The "doctor" appeared the next morning on ABC's "Good Morning America" where he was interviewed, still hiding his identity, about Iraqi crimes during the occupation. This episode raises questions concerning the responsibilities of TV networks in serving as conduits for propaganda of the U.S. or foreign governments and the precautions that they should take. Did ABC attempt to discover if the woman resistance fighter actually existed or whether she was an invention of a Kuwaiti exile propaganda group? What efforts did ABC take to check into the identity of the "doctor" and what evidence did they have that his testimony was genuine? Instead of exhibiting any skepticism, Koppel and ABC presented the "doctor" simply as an objective authority, eyewitness to the truth concerning Iraqi brutality. They raised no questions concerning his authenticity and the accuracy of these reports and simply conveyed his assertions as facts, thus potentially falling prey to a Kuwaiti propaganda campaign. ABC also failed to note the similarity of the pictures of Kuwaiti torture victims that the "doctor" allegedly took to the ones displayed in Washington and New York during the congressional and UN hearings when the Free Kuwait group submitted evidence of Iraqi atrocities.

Thus, it appears that ABC became part of a highly orchestrated propaganda campaign to circulate stories of Iraqi atrocities, as did other television networks, which were also quick to circulate such stories without checking their veracity or raising any questions concerning their authenticity. Charles Jaco of CNN, closely connected to the Kuwaiti resistance throughout the war, was especially susceptible to Kuwaiti propaganda stories concerning the Iraqis. In his reports from "liberated" Kuwait City, he presented the stories of his sources, who recounted Iraqi atrocities simply as fact, thus becoming a vehicle for the positions that the Kuwaiti government wanted circulated.

The New York Times on February 28 did deflate the Iraqi atrocity story favored by George Bush, Dan Quayle, and several high-ranking generals who repeated incessantly the story of how Iraq entered a hospital after the war and took premature babies out of incubators, throwing them on the floor and leaving them to die, so that the incubators could be used in Iraq (see 2.1). The Times reported: "Some of the atrocities that had been reported, such as the killing of infants in the main hospitals shortly after the invasion, are untrue or have been exaggerated, Kuwaitis said. Hospital officials, for instance, said that stories circulated about the killing of 300 children were incorrect" (Feb. 28, 1991, p. A6). ABC's John Martin did a follow-up on the story on March 15, interviewing doctors in the hospitals where the alleged Iraqi crimes took place. One doctor showed Martin the incubators which hospital officials had hidden during the Iraqi occupation and other doctors indicated that there were "no nurses to take care of these babies and that's why they died."⁵

Martin also revealed in his ABC report that reports of Iraqi hostage taking were exaggerated. While General Schwarzkopf claimed in his February 27 briefing that 40,000 Kuwaitis were taken prisoner, Kuwaiti authorities later stated that the numbers were more like 1,500-3,000. On the other hand, the figure

of 4,000 hostages cited by the BBC continued to circulate and Susan Sachs reported on July 28, 1991 that, "The whereabouts of some 4,000 Kuwaitis arrested by Iraqi occupation troops are still unknown" (Newsday, p. 39). Hence, Kuwaiti authorities might have wanted to play down the number of Kuwaitis taken hostage by the fleeing Iraqis and quite probably slaughtered with the Iraqi army and those fleeing Kuwait (see 10.2). Finally, Martin claimed that the reports of thousands of Kuwaitis executed by Iraqi soldiers, circulated by U.S., Saudi, and other authorities, were also exaggerated and that the "real number" is "something around a little bit over 300."

Reporters found that the claims of Robert Gates and others concerning widespread damage to the city were also highly exaggerated. There was extensive damage to the city, but much of it could be attributed to coalition bombing or the Kuwaiti resistance.⁶ A Post reporter observed that, "Throughout the city, destruction was spotty. Windows of some stores, such as jewelry and watch shops, were smashed and the contents looted. Many others were left untouched. Gaping holes yawned in the sides of several posh hotels....Overall, however, most buildings throughout the city remained undisturbed" (Febr. 28, 1991). By March 1, gas was available and the Kuwaiti interior minister stated on March 4 that electricity and water could be restored to the city in a few days. Newsweek reported that the airport was functional, roads and water system were basically in good shape, and that backup electrical generators were available to restore power. One military official told the magazine a week after the ceasefire that, "[t]he bottom line is that damage is not as extensive as had been thought" (March 11, 1991, p. 33).

On March 4, the first member of the Royal Family returned to Kuwait; Crown Prince Sheik Saad al-Abdullah al-Sabah kissed the ground and declared a return to the official rule by his family. CNN's Tom Mintier reported that the Kuwaiti resistance movement announced that it was turning in its weapons. According to Mintier (and this is pure disinformation), the resistance forces were planning to officially disband and give power back to the former government. And then, in an episode on March 4 that suggested more propaganda, an alleged member of the resistance came on camera, his face shrouded with his shawl and thick glasses. The "resistance fighter" proclaimed that the Kuwaiti resistance was giving up its weapons and "will have democracy peacefully and without guns." Obviously, the Kuwaiti government wanted the resistance to give up their guns and it used the bait of promised democracy to get them to surrender their weapons and dissolve the resistance organizations, which constituted a threat to the autocratic policies of the al-Sabah family.⁷

The genuine Kuwaiti resistance fighters that surfaced immediately after the liberation of Kuwait were magnificent, as fighters against oppression usually are. The early pictures of the resistance fighters showed courageous and heroic young men and women, armed, fighting for the liberation of their country, arresting Iraqis, and policing the area, while protecting its citizens. During the occupation, they had provided food, medical aid, security, and hope to the Kuwaitis who suffered the Iraqi occupation. They were organized in small, well-disciplined cells and risked their lives to preserve their country and people while the rich Kuwaiti exiles frolicked in Monte Carlo, London, or other comfortable locales.

The resistance members were now, however, an impediment to the Kuwaiti Royal Family, who wished to reestablish its autocratic rule. The resistance was experienced in the art of self-government; many were genuine champions of democracy who took responsibility for the well-being and survival of their people in an incredibly difficult situation. They were freedom fighters who were prepared to die for their independence. They were also armed and seasoned fighters who wanted democracy and who had the

prestige and the military skills to demand it. The resistance fighters thus posed a significant challenge to the ruling family, which had already announced that it would impose martial law for three months and would not recall the Kuwaiti parliament or give women rights, as they had promised earlier, "until things are better." The former Kuwaiti regime thus had the interest of first disarming and then marginalizing the Kuwaiti resistance forces so as to secure their own continued authoritarian rule; the U.S. media, with some exceptions, were furthering this goal.

Indeed, the U.S. government was siding, as conservative governments usually do, with the Kuwaiti ruling family. The U.S. government was keenly interested in securing lucrative contracts (estimated at \$100 to \$200 billion) for U.S. firms to help rebuild Kuwait, and early estimates indicated that U.S. corporations received over 70 percent of the initial contracts.⁸ The U.S. government and its corporations could best do business with the former Kuwaiti ruling circles and were probably not particularly interested in democracy and the fate of the Kuwaiti resistance. U.S. officials pay lip service to democracy, but do business with the autocrats. Indeed, while the United States pretends to be committed to democracy, the primary national allegiance, particularly of the Bush administration, is to capitalism (see Kellner 1990). Therefore, the U.S. corporations and the capitalist state were eager to do business with the ruling elite with whom U.S. business interests already had relations and who could be counted on to provide lucrative deals.

In helping promote the Kuwaiti government line that the resistance should surrender their arms and submit to the al-Sabah's rule, the media were thus promoting the interests of the U.S. government and those firms seeking to do business with the Royal Family. However, on March 4 and 5, there were some TV stories critical of the al-Sabah family, and some positive stories on the Kuwaiti resistance and its demands for democratization aired. ABC's "Nightline" of March 4 featured an interview with a prominent Kuwaiti businessman who accused the al-Sabah family of hiring assassination squads to murder members of the Kuwaiti resistance. Host Ted Koppel also interviewed a leading member of the prodemocracy movement who had been shot by a Kuwaiti in his house and was now paralyzed. As Koppel held his hand in a hospital-bed interview, the Kuwaiti democrat told him that the shooting was deliberate, though he hesitated to name his assassin.

The Kuwaiti UN ambassador, a member of the al-Sabah family, vehemently denied that his family was involved in political assassinations. He claimed that members of his family had stayed in Kuwait and struggled in the resistance, attempting to undermine the distinction being made by resistance members between those who stayed and struggled and those who left the country. The ambassador defended the three-month imposition of martial law and then promised that there would be democratization, though by spring 1992 no democratic reforms had yet materialized.⁹

Early in the morning on March 5, CNN featured stories of prodemocracy Kuwaiti resistance forces, who did not want to surrender their guns and were calling for democratization. A male professor urged more democracy and a female resistance fighter argued for equal rights for women, who had served heroically in the resistance. The episode also showed resistance members continuing to police streets, "often meting out their own justice," which involved assassination of Iraqi secret police, Palestinian collaborators, and those involved in atrocities against Kuwaitis, as the mainstream media was beginning to report. Both members of the resistance movement and Kuwaiti troops who were now occupying the city were carrying out vigilante actions, which the U.S. media noted but did not investigate.

However, CNN continued to circulate daily Iraqi atrocity stories, including the incubator story, which had been thoroughly discredited. On both March 5 and 6, CNN ran a story about grave-diggers in Kuwait who allegedly buried over forty victims of the incubator atrocity in mass graves. This was somewhat astonishing in the light of the exposure of the story and showed the extent to which CNN was manipulated by Kuwaiti disinformation campaigns.

In any case, Kuwait was now "liberated" and the old ruling powers returned to consolidate their autocratic rule. The country suffered under martial law and a primitive form of "justice" in which those who were suspected of collaboration with the Iraqis were summarily executed. Robert Fisk, a reporter for the British Independent, told of U.S. Special Forces troops looking on as Kuwaitis brutalized Iraqis and Palestinians. When Fisk and an associate tried to intervene when three Kuwaiti soldier were beating up a Palestinian boy, the U.S. troops pushed him aside, telling him, "This is martial law, boy. Fuck off." Then, smiling, the U.S. soldier told him to "have a nice day" (The Independent, March 4, 1991). Undeniably, there was a rash of vigilante executions of Iraqis and those suspected of collaborating with the Iraqi regime during the occupation in the days after the liberation.¹⁰ Mass graves, holding up to fifty-four "unidentified bodies" of people who appeared to have died since March, indicated organized and "official" mass murder by Kuwaiti authorities. Kenneth Roth, deputy director of Human Rights Watch, stated in a New York Times Op-Ed piece that other documented "post-liberation killings of people in police and military custody substantiates this view" (June 11, 1991).

The return of Kuwaiti "legal" institutions did not help matters much. During a series of well-publicized "trials" in June 1991, individuals were sentenced to long prison terms and sometimes death on the word of informers. Those charged with collaboration were denied access to lawyers and one young man was sentenced to twenty years imprisonment for wearing a T-shirt embroidered with the figure of Saddam Hussein; he claimed that he had owned it before the war and merely slept in it occasionally. Women employed as servants of Kuwaitis complained of a dramatic increase in rape, often by Kuwaiti soldiers. Seven entertainers were sentenced to life in prison for "taking part in an Iraqi-established union for artists" and for "propagandizing" in their profession. The government seemed incapable of getting the country running again, and pollution from oil fires rendered the country virtually unlivable (10.3). Talk of democratic reform subsided and U.S. corporations greedily competed for contracts.

In a speech to Congress on March 6, George Bush orated that we will "forge a future that should never again be held hostage to the darker side of human nature.... A world in which freedom and respect for human rights find a home among all nations. The Gulf war put this new world to its first test, and, my fellow Americans, we passed the test." At the time of his speech, mass arrests, street executions, torture, and rape were the order of the day in "liberated" Kuwait. Oppression continued and Bush supported the nondemocratic government forces by stating during a July 1, 1991, press conference in response to a reporter's question about repression in Kuwait, "The war was not fought about democracy in Kuwait....I think we're expecting a little much if we're asking the people of Kuwait to take kindly to those that had spied on their countrymen that were left there, that had brutalized their families there and things of that nature." Showing their appreciation, the Kuwaiti government daily Sawt al-Kuwan ran these comments on its front page July 3, 1991: "Bush declares his understanding of Kuwait's attitude towards collaborators" (Middle East Watch 1991). Business had returned to usual--but worse.

Kuwait refused to let many of its citizens back in the country after its liberation, including many

who were visiting Iraq, in some cases, visiting relatives taken hostage during the crisis. Kuwait refused to let many foreign workers return, including Egyptians and workers from other members of the coalition. Susan Sachs reported on June 9, 1991 that, "Miffed at the gulf states' ambivalence about keeping wartime promises of jobs and financial aid, Egypt and Syria are withdrawing troops that were supposed to form the core of a new gulf security force.... An underlying theme is that Kuwaitis are ungrateful" (Newsday, p. 13). And greedy: "Recent advertisements by landlords in Kuwait, including one member of the ruling al-Sabah family, warn displaced tenants to pay rent for the months of Iraqi occupation in five days or lose the belongings left in their Kuwait apartments" (Newsday, p. 13).

10.2 High-Tech Massacre

Meanwhile, as the hoards of reporters invaded Kuwait, images began to emerge of the extent of massacre of Iraqis by the U.S.-led coalition forces. Few scenes shown of actual fighting in the Kuwaiti and Iraqi theaters of death appeared during the last several days of the war. The pool system had assured that the military would control what images would be shown of the combat. Although there were a few images of wounded U.S. troops, there were no images of the slaughter of Iraqis by the U.S.-led coalition. There was also little discussion of the extent of Iraqi casualties in the mainstream media. Schwarzkopf and other coalition military leaders refused to speculate on the number of Iraqi dead, and there were few mainstream media inquiries into the topic.

The New York Times published an article on March 1 which minimized Iraqi casualties. A front-page story by John H. Cushman, Jr., was headlined: "Military Experts See a Death Toll of 25,000 to 50,000 Iraqi troops."¹¹ Note that Iraqi casualties went down already from the 85,000-100,000 casualty figures cited by the Saudis the day before, suggesting that a sanitizing process was underway. Cushman's sources were "military experts," probably the most vacuous sources imaginable. The story then cited several other estimates, with the largest being the 85,000-100,000 Saudi estimate. But there was no discussion of how these estimates were reached. Cushman did quote General Schwarzkopf who said that there would be no official counting of Iraqi casualties, which he contrasted with a report that President Bush had ordered General Powell to undertake an analysis of the number of Iraqis killed as the war progressed. If the process will be similar to the report undertaken of casualties during the Panama invasion, one could expect more lies and another cover-up.¹²

At the afternoon Pentagon briefing on March 1, Gen. Thomas Kelly said bluntly that the United States was not in the game of counting casualties and when pushed said that they had "killed an entire army."¹³ Details of the magnitude of the systematic annihilation of the Iraqis emerged, however, when reporters journeyed up the highway leading from Kuwait City to Iraq, and about twenty miles from the city found evidence of a tremendous slaughter of Iraqis who were fleeing from Kuwait. The first report on what became known as "the Highway of Death" was broadcast on CNN during the morning of March 1, which showed pictures of the road from Kuwait City to the Iraqi border. According to CNN correspondent Tom Mintier, video had just surfaced of a scene outside of Kuwait City depicting "vehicles who were going nowhere." The fleeing Iraqis took any vehicles that they could find to drive to Iraq and when they got outside of the city the allies put a pincer movement on them. They were hit by allied aircraft and artillery in place along the highway, producing a massive traffic jam and subsequent slaughter. The vehicles included civilian cars, buses, trucks, tanks, fire engines, and armored vehicles, some of which burned together as they caught fire and then exploded, producing a conflagration from which no few, if

any, escaped. There were hundreds of victims, Mintier reported, and charred bodies, burned beyond recognition, were evident inside and around the vehicles.

The video showed pictures of a highway littered with civilian and military vehicles that had been destroyed in one of the most massive slaughters by air power in history. There were images of one vehicle after another, mile after mile, piled upon each other, evoking a picture of a giant traffic jam in which planes bombed and destroyed anything below themselves. Mintier stated that there may have been heavy civilian casualties, and it was not certain if the victims were Iraqis, their Kuwaiti hostages, or fleeing Palestinians.

CNN then cut to a piece on the opening of the U.S. embassy in Kuwait and next to a story of Iraqi atrocities in Kuwait, as if to justify the slaughter. As the story was developed through the day, more legitimations of the systematic killing were produced by CNN and the other television networks. A CNN report cut to a U.S. soldier on the highway who laughed and smiled, saying, "This is absolute chaos. This is ridiculous." He indicated that all of the vehicles were stolen and that the cars were full of military gear and stolen consumer goods, such as television sets and other items. Thereafter, the official U.S. military pushed the line that the corpses littering the highway or burned in their vehicles were thieves fleeing the city in stolen vehicles full of contraband goods.

For the rest of the day the theme of the looters getting their due punishment was privileged by the networks; one soldier remarked: "They're just looters, not fighters" and this quote was repeated endlessly by CNN and the other networks. All of the major network evening news accounts covered the story, though none featured it and they all tended to play it down.¹⁴ The segment was generally framed by stories of Iraqi atrocities, which presented the Iraqis as subhuman monsters and thus seemingly excused the slaughter as just punishment. While there were, no doubt, torturers and even killers among the fleeing crowd, there were also young Iraqi conscripts who were in Kuwait against their will, as well as Kuwaitis, Palestinians, and civilian forces in the masses of fleeing people consumed in an apocalyptic fireball.

The CBS reporting was especially apologetic. On March 1, CBS reported that the pictures of mile after mile of wreckage were "evidence of the panic of a fleeing army." The report then focused on Kuwaitis who were venturing back onto the road: Some came to see the wreckage, while others came to see the dead soldiers. "They got what they deserved. They are not human beings," a Kuwaiti said on camera. The CBS report concluded that the area was still a "dangerous place" with munitions and artillery pointed at Kuwait City (which subliminally suggested that the slaughtered individuals were engaged in a military operation against Kuwait City and thus deserved to die). The report quickly cut back to Kuwait City with mobs of people surrounding the news crew to joyfully chant "U.S.A! U.S.A!"

On March 2, CBS ran an even more appalling justification for the Highway of Death. A report by Eric Engberg featured Gen. Walter Boomer who justified the slaughter on the Highway of Death: "In addition to being thoroughly incompetent, they were thieves as well as murderers." A blonde crew-cut soldier stated: "Seeing all the damage that we did to these guys, it almost made it worth while for all the time we spent here." This disgusting report shows the mechanisms of denial and projection at work, in which the U.S. military and their complicit media accomplices deny coalition crimes and project all evil on the Iraqis. CBS's effort to justify the unjustifiable in this segment shows the depth of complicity of the media in covering over and justifying U.S. crimes.

Mainstream newspapers tended to downplay the story. The March 2 New York Times inserted a couple of brief paragraphs concerning what was arguably one of the major stories of the war in the middle of an article by R.A. Apple, who tersely described the basic facts and, like the TV reporters, stressed the "looters" angle (p. 6A).¹⁵ The mainstream media in Britain, however, were more critical of the desert slaughter. A BBC report mentioned that the vehicles taken out of Kuwait City were mostly civilian vehicles and that there were very few tanks or artillery on the Highway of Death, raising the question whether the fleeing Iraqis with their hostages were a legitimate military target. The BBC's Stephen Sackur also discerned evidence of cluster bombs, antipersonnel weapons that are designed to break up into hundreds of little bomblets to maximize damage to both humans and machines. Sackur wrote: "It was the scale of the American attack that took my breath away. Was it necessary to bomb the entire convoy? What threat could these pathetic remnants of Saddam Hussein's beaten army have posed? Wasn't it obvious that the people of the convoy would have given themselves up willingly without the application of such ferocious weaponry?" (in MacArthur 1991, p. 265).

On the March 3, "This Week With David Brinkley" program, correspondent Sam Donaldson had the bad manners to ask Bush's national security adviser, Brent Scowcroft, a question concerning what he described as the "annihilation" of the fleeing Iraqis north of Kuwait City. Scowcroft, showing no remorse and offering no real explanation, answered that "our objective was not to kill people but to destroy the offensive capability of Iraq." Donaldson made the point, forgotten in the other media stories, that thousands of Kuwaiti civilians were fleeing with the Iraqis, taken as hostages. Scowcroft's stunning answer was that U.S. bombing was unlike any other bombing in any previous conflict, because it was precision bombing.¹⁶ Because it was impossible to justify the slaughter of innocents, Scowcroft conveniently fell back into the Big Lie of precision bombing. But here it was utterly inappropriate because it appeared that the bombing was systematic and rather precise during the last days of the war, in which Scowcroft's warriors brutally wiped out everything in their kill zones with methodical precision (though some Brits, Kuwaitis, and coalition "friendly" were accidentally killed as well). But in the case of the Highway of Death there was ample evidence that the Iraqis were taking Kuwaiti hostages with them, though that didn't stop the U.S. military and government from ordering and condoning the massacre.

Donaldson let Scowcroft get away with his hypocritical nonsequitur answer and conservative ideologue George Will quickly changed the subject.¹⁷ Scowcroft relaxed, knowing that all he had to do was equivocate and the question would be dropped. Watching Brent Scowcroft answer, or rather evade, Donaldson's question, allowed one to see the cold demeanor of an individual whose sense of national security is military security and who all of the insider accounts of the genesis of the Gulf war suggest was, along with Bush, the most resolute in pushing the war option and refusing all diplomatic solutions (see 1.3).

There was very little media discussion or commentary on the full scope of the high-tech massacre, and almost no criticism of the operation. One report observed that Marine Gen. Walter Boomer passed along a message to his commanders from Norman Schwarzkopf "not to let anybody or anything out of Kuwait" (Bill Gannon, Newark Star-Ledger, Feb. 27, 1991), but this report was not picked up by the mainstream media. The Highway of Death was briefly featured but there were few reports on the other killing fields of the ground war. The other major route out of Kuwait to Iraq was a coastal route running north to the Iraqi border city of Umm Qasr and according to an Army officer on the scene there was "nothing but shit strewn everywhere, five to seven miles of just solid bombed-out vehicles. The U.S. Air

Force, he said, 'had been given the word to work over that entire area, to find anything that was moving and take it out' (Michael Kelly, The New Republic, April 1, 1991, p. 12). A Navy A-6 pilot noted that the convoy consisted of "a 20-mile nose-to-tail jam" (Mike Gaines, Flight International, March 6-12, p. 8).

A powerful account of the carnage on the road to Umm Qasr, Kuwait, was found in the Los Angeles Times in a story by Bob Drogn (March 10, 1991) which contained much graphic detail.

For 60 miles, hundreds of Iraqi tanks and armored cars, howitzers and anti-aircraft guns, ammunition trucks and ambulances were strafed, smashed and burned beyond belief. Scores of soldiers lie in and around the vehicles, mangled and bloated in the drifting desert sands.... Every truck is riddled with shrapnel. No looting by the dead soldiers was evident. No survivors are known or likely.... At one spot, snarling wild dogs have reduced two corpses to bare ribs. Giant carrion birds claw and pick at another; only a boot-clad foot and eyeless skull are recognizable (p. A1). [See also the graphic account by Michael Kelly in The New Republic, April 1, 1991).

During the high-tech massacre, U.S. air activity was frenzied and air controllers were worried about collisions in the air. A report was dispatched from the USS Ranger by Randall Richard of the Providence Journal that: "Air strikes against Iraqi troops retreating from Kuwait were being launched so feverishly from this carrier today that pilots said they took whatever bombs happened to be closest to the flight deck. The crews, working to the strains of the Lone Ranger theme, often passed up the projectile of choice... because it took too long to load." A BBC radio report indicated that U.S. fighter planes were lining up to take off from their aircraft carriers to the strains of the William Tell Overture over the loudspeakers to go on what they called "The Turkey Shoot." British military officials were quick to point out that they did not participate in the Desert Slaughter and were perhaps embarrassed by the excesses of their U.S. comrades-in-arms. Indeed, the metaphor of the hunt was appropriate for the massacre. One pilot said that it "was like shooting fish in a barrel," and Squadron leader Cmdr. Frank Sweigert said that their human targets were "basically just sitting ducks" (Washington Post, Feb. 27, 1991).

C-SPAN broadcast an interview with two F-10 pilots, "Fish" and "Karl," on February 27, taken from military pool footage.¹⁸ They described their pleasure in killing tank after tank, with Fish exploding in wargasmic ecstasy when he described what it was like to see his target explode. From the ground, the sight was not so pretty. London Independent reporter Richard Dowden stated in a televised interview, "The lorries further down the line would have tried to crash off the motorway and just get away, just get off the road and [the coalition pilots] would have chased them, and you saw them in the desert, and then you would see bodies going from those lorries so they'd actually hunted down people who were just running away" (PeaceNet, mideast.gulf, Feb. 27, 1991). The highway was literally awash with blood, with one reporter writing, "As we drove slowly through the wreckage, our armored personnel carrier's tracks splashed through great pools of bloody water. We passed dead soldiers lying, as if resting, without a mark on them. We found others cut up so badly, a pair of legs in its trousers would be 50 yards from the top half of the body. Four soldiers had died under a truck where they had sought protection" (Newsweek, March 11, 1991, p. 25).

In the days following the end of the war, there were isolated reports of other massive slaughters of fleeing Iraqi troops throughout northern Kuwait and southern Iraq. On March 1, a convoy of Iraqi troops allegedly fired at U.S. troops and the valiant warriors destroyed hundreds of Iraqi tanks and vehicles, while slaughtering over 2,000 Iraqi soldiers, two days after Bush had called a halt to military activities. In a report published in the May 8, 1991, Newsday, Patrick Sloyan claimed that Schwarzkopf had ordered the massacre, described as "the biggest clash of the gulf war's ground campaign," even though fighting had ceased. Although the U.S. military briefer had claimed that day that U.S. forces were using loudspeakers "to tell the Iraqis that a ceasefire had occurred," no loudspeakers were used in this specific postwar massacre. Apache helicopters armed with laser-guided Hellfire missiles slaughtered the Iraqi troops and the army footage of the fight obtained by Newsday recorded one U.S. soldier joking, "Say hello to Allah" as he fired a hellfire missile.

To cover over the carnage, Saudi "mortuary platoons" quickly moved to bury the bodies without ascertaining whether the bodies were Iraqi, Kuwaiti, Palestinian, or Asian guest-workers.¹⁹ An episode shown on CNN on March 11 depicted the digging of mass graves for the massacred Iraqi troops, reduced to burnt-out corpses. But the mainstream media did little after the initial reports to investigate the Desert Slaughter, ranging from the bombing of Iraqis fleeing north to Baghdad or Basra, to those caught on the Highway of Death and other killing fields in Kuwait. No discussion took place either concerning who was responsible for the desert slaughter. Schwarzkopf had ordered at the start of the ground war "not to let anybody or anything out of Kuwait City" (Newark Star-Ledger, Feb. 27, 1991) and after the war Air Force General Merrill McPeak (1991) stated: "I think we have tried to disarm the Iraqi Army as humanely as possible." But then he then admitted that: "It's during this phase that the true fruits of victory are achieved from combat, when the enemy's disorganized" (1991). Yet what military "fruits" were realized in these senseless slaughters?

Reports indicated that many of those retreating from Kuwait City had put white flags on their vehicles which were visible to U.S. pilots (Rowan Scarborough, "Pool Report Aboard the USS Blue Ridge," Washington Times, Feb. 27, 1991) and, as noted, there were many reports that Kuwaitis, Palestinians, and other civilians were massacred by U.S. forces. Consequently, there were claims that the slaughter of retreating Iraqis and others constituted a war crime, violating "the Geneva Conventions of 1949, Common Article III, which outlaws the killing of soldiers who are out of combat" (Joyce Chediac, "The Massacre of Withdrawing Soldiers on 'The Highway of Death,'" in Clark et al. 1992, p. 91). The Bush administration claimed that the Iraqi troops were retreating to regroup and were thus in "fighting retreat," but, in fact, they were a "fleeing rabble," as the Pentagon would eventually admit.

Thus the high-tech massacre of the fleeing Iraqis stands as an example of systematic extermination and is the perfect expression of technocratic war, of systematically annihilating the enemy by wiping out anything that moves. This was the fruit of U.S. technowar: the massive production of death and extermination of the Iraqi military and whoever happened to be in the way of the U.S. Armada of Winged Death. The Highway of Death thus served as the most dramatic demonstration of U.S. killing power and provided a fitting and necessary ending to a war dedicated from the beginning to the destruction of the Iraqi military. The Desert Slaughter clearly demonstrated that (1) war is hell; (2) war is not a viable solution to political conflicts; and (3) thus war is obsolete as a mode of contemporary conflict resolution. The Gulf war vividly demonstrated the lethality of high-tech weapons systems and the tremendous damage that they are capable of inflicting on the social-industrial infrastructure of a system, the environment, and

human life. While the claims for precision and cleanness of the high-tech weapons systems were surely exaggerated, in fact the U.S. proved that it could systematically slaughter a fleeing army and destroy the economic and social infrastructure of a country. The Gulf war also clearly discloses the tremendous environmental damage which high-tech weapons systems inflict on the environment, suggesting that modern warfare is a form of environmental terrorism and even ecocide.

10.3 Environmental Holocaust

In addition to the human holocaust produced by the massacre of Iraqis by the U.S.-led coalition and the systematic destruction of Iraq's infrastructure, the Gulf war also produced an environmental holocaust. It resulted from the U.S.-led coalition bombing of oil wells and oil tankers in Iraq and Kuwait, Iraq's torching of oil wells and deliberate pouring of oil into the Gulf, and coalition bombing of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons facilities in Iraq. Every day, during the last week of the war and for weeks thereafter, there were TV images of the pollution of the Gulf and, especially, images of the polluted air from the burning oil wells.

On a March 1 CNN report, Reid Collins noted that Iraq had set explosives on all 900 oil fields in Kuwait and that allied bombings had set some of them off, causing a portion of the oil fires. He cited Kuwaiti government officials who claimed that even though the Iraqis had torched many of the wells as they were leaving the country, if the coalition forces had acted sooner they could have saved some of them. This story, however, of Kuwaitis criticizing the U.S. prosecution of the war, was quick to disappear and did not surface in the New York Times or most other mainstream media sources.

In retrospect, if Bush had chosen to negotiate a diplomatic settlement to end the war, most of the oil fires could have been prevented. In fact, the entire environmental holocaust was directly a result of Bush's decision to pursue a military solution to the crisis in the Gulf by launching an air war and ground war, and to refuse any negotiated settlement. At major environmental conferences before the war began, it was argued that if war broke out in such an ecologically sensitive area, there was sure to be an environmental catastrophe and this was undeniably what resulted. Furthermore, had Bush not insisted on the ground war, a settlement could have been negotiated that would have saved the Kuwaiti oil wells and the Gulf environment from the ensuing holocaust. George Bush and Saddam Hussein thus emerge from the Gulf war as two of the greatest environmental terrorists in history.

News reports of March 1 contained disturbing new details concerning the ecological holocaust caused by the Gulf war.²⁰ CNN reported through the day that the black, sooty smoke and toxic acid rain from the burning oil wells caused concern about the health of children, the aged, and those vulnerable to pollution in what one ecologist called: "A very, very difficult and perhaps dangerous situation." Other reports described the plumes of black acrid smoke filled with sulphur that made day look like night and made it hard to breath in some places in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The pollution was already producing acid rain throughout the area, with smoke rising to 10,000 feet, but the real danger would appear if the smoke rose to 30,000 feet, where it could hit the jet stream and travel around the earth. Substantial fear existed that warmer weather in the summer would make this possible, which could bring falling temperatures and acid rain that could destroy rice crops and other agriculture in India and Southeast Asia. Another expert saw the effects of the fires limited to the area; he didn't see the pollution effecting India or Southeast Asia. Work was soon to begin on dealing with the oil fires as three Texas firms were contracted

to put them out, a process that could have taken from one to six years.

As it turned out, the Kuwaiti government initially gave contracts to extinguish the oil fires only to U.S. firms and put Bechtel corporation in charge of hiring companies to squelch the fires. Various Australian, German, Japanese and other companies wanted to participate in the process, but the Kuwaiti government and their American friends prevented them from sharing in the activity.²¹ This obstacle obviously inhibited and delayed the extinction of the fires, and reports began to circulate of pollution from the fires ranging from India to China to Germany. By September 1991 there were reports that the pollution from the oil fires, combined with volcanic ash from Mt. Pinatubo in the Philippines, had circled the earth in a sooty haze and threatened to create a nuclear winter, lowering the temperature of the earth and perhaps producing an environmental catastrophe of cataclysmic proportions.²²

Although the oil fires were reportedly extinguished by November 1991, concerns continued to mount concerning the large number of uncapped high-pressure wells still spewing fountains of oil into the air, producing rivers and lakes of oil throughout Kuwait, up to a mile long (Tokar 1991). The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration chief scientist, Dr. John Robinson, "announced at a September [1991] briefing that there are an almost unbelievable 175 million barrels worth of oil (over seven billion gallons of oil at 42 gallons per barrel) lying on the ground in Kuwait. Oil is still pouring out of the ruptured underground casings of many of the extinguished wells. The Hawaiian wildlife protection group Earthtrust reports that migrating birds often mistake the oil lakes for water, facing almost certain death once they come into contact with the toxic pools" (Tokar 1991, p. 58). The British journal *New Scientist* reported (November 9, 1991) on the danger that the deluge of oil might wash into the Gulf and there was also dangers of the oil polluting the water supply and invisible poisonous vapors emanating from evaporating oil (see Vials 1991). These sources indicate that the lakes of oil make it difficult to stem the flow of oil from the high-pressure wells, and it is thus still uncertain to what extent the out-of-control Kuwait oil wells will destroy the environment of Kuwait and the surrounding Gulf.

There was also the question of environmental contamination by coalition bombing of Iraqi oil refineries, factories, and their nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons industries (see 5.3). On March 2, C-SPAN cablecast a press conference with the Worldwide Institute where two environmentalists answered questions on the environmental implications of the Persian Gulf war. Christopher Flavin noted that it was certain that there would be significant contamination of the immediate environment through the bombing of these facilities. The key questions, however, concerned the extent of the contamination and its nature. Obviously, the water supply could be threatened by potential contamination, and agriculture might also be affected. Yet as of this writing, although there has been a significant UN effort to inspect whether Iraq is continuing its biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons programs, there have been no official reports released on environmental contamination by the coalition bombing.

As it turned out, Iraq had moved much of the crucial nuclear material which escaped the allied bombing so that the bombing of Iraq's nuclear facilities merely risked an environmental holocaust with little benefit. Obviously, nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons are a menace, but it is arguable that the issue could be better dealt with through negotiations calling for dismantlement of unconventional weapons programs and through UN-imposed restrictions on nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons production throughout the world. In this way, there could be an international boycott imposed against supplying Iraq's and other nuclear, biological and chemical weapons programs, with strict inspection to guarantee

compliance. The U.S., by contrast, dropped tons of bombs on Iraq's weapons facilities, causing a level of environmental contamination that is still unascertained, while falsely claiming that the bombing had eliminated Iraq's unconventional weapons capacities. Further, George Bush has yet to support limiting military sales to the Middle East, raising suspicions that part of the motivation for the Gulf war was precisely to increase U.S. arms sales to the region.

Discussion began after the war concerning the need to develop stricter environmental laws during wartime and the need to have something like a Geneva Convention for environmental crimes by ecoterrorists.²³ The Gulf war revealed once again that the imperialist and militarist mind, has no environmental consciousness. Technowar utilizes advanced informational and military technology to carry out systematic destruction of enemy troops and to dominate the battlefield. Technowar is the latest project in what the Frankfurt school called the domination of nature, a project that inexorably results in social domination and ecological destruction of the environment (Kellner 1989a). Technowar disregards the environment in its war plans and does not concern itself with ecological issues except as they impinge on warfare and politics. The military perspective does not recognize embeddedness in nature but, like modern science and technology, is concerned with the sovereignty of the subject over nature. The Other, be it people or the environment, is conceived as the stuff of domination, mere matter to be controlled or destroyed. The madness of this project was clearly revealed in the Gulf war in the wanton destruction of the environment by both sides.

Thus, the devastation of the Persian Gulf shows the need to avoid wars, which in an era of high-tech warfare constitute a form of environmental terrorism. I have noted that early in the war Bush removed all environmental restraints on the Pentagon and to the present has blocked government agencies from revealing information concerning the environmental effects of the Gulf war. Thus, we see in retrospect, and too late, that "untying the hands" of the Pentagon meant in practice giving them unrestricted power to wreak maximum destruction on the environment and human beings. The Gulf war showed once again the disregard for the environment within the military and political establishments in the United States and elsewhere, as well as the need to abolish war in the contemporary era as a mode of conflict resolution.

10.4 Iraq Explodes/Saddam Hangs On

While George Bush won tremendous acclaim for his "victory" in the Gulf war,²⁴ Saddam Hussein was forced to struggle for his very survival. Hussein faced a relentless propaganda war against him in the West and internal unrest and eventually upheaval at home. At the end of the war, all the TV networks featured talk shows on what to do about Saddam. One of the favorite topics was whether war crimes trials should be instituted against him, and the advisability of assassinating him was also discussed. Another preferred genre was commentary on the fate of fallen tyrants, although such obituaries were somewhat premature because--to the present at least--Hussein has managed to hold onto power. On February 28, for instance, CNN raised the question "what's next for Saddam Hussein?" CNN described him as joining "a long list of dictators who were brought down" and offered a CNN perspective by Bill Moyers.

Moyers intoned that it was good that the world was rid of another dictator who the United States supported and then had to be taken down--Batista, Somoza, Marcos, the shah of Iran, and Noriega. Saddam is next, Moyers opined, one more Frankenstein monster rampaging out of the laboratory who had to be hunted down. Moyers recalled that Reagan and Bush supported Saddam during the Iraq/Iran war, as

did "armchair warriors" Sen. Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.) and Rep. Stephen Solarz (D-NY.) who gained political capital in attacking Saddam Hussein during the Persian Gulf war, but who earlier groveled in his presence when he was "just our bad guy." They armed him and allowed him to become the neighborhood bully, Moyers explained.

Although Moyers's portrait of the fallen dictator was premature, his Frankenstein metaphor was apt because it implied that there were creators of the Iraqi military machine who should be held responsible (though one could question whether monster metaphors promote intelligent political discourse). Moyers then pointed out that the Gulf war was not an even match: Iraq is about the size of Texas and has about as many people. Its military was exhausted by the Iran/Iraq war and it had no air force willing to fight. Its front-line troops were dragged off the streets of Baghdad and put in the desert with ill-fitted uniforms and no training, and, as for his doomsday weapons, "the better grandma to fool you." The truth, Moyers argued, was that Iraq was a Third World country with a fifth-rate economy. After this accurate analysis, Moyers then called Saddam Hussein "a world class psychopath" who "could play Rambo against Kuwait, but in confronting the allied military, he was just the mouse that roared." The sooner he's gone the better, Moyers concluded, though many of those now chasing him had encouraged him in the first place.

All day on March 1, the networks floated a story published in France's prestigious paper Le Monde that Saddam Hussein was going to flee to Algeria and that the Algerian government was cutting a deal for his escape. Even after the Algerian ambassador to the U.S. and the Bush administration denied the story, CNN and the other networks continued running it. For the next week, stories of domestic opposition to Saddam were highlighted in the U.S. media. It was hard to distinguish disinformation from genuine rebellion, but the flood of refugees from Basra and southern Iraq gave credence to stories that there was significant opposition to Hussein's rule (obviously, one could not trust anything that the U.S. military or Bush administration might say about Hussein or Iraq). There were repeated stories that rebellions were exploding: in the North of Iraq by Kurds and in the south by disgruntled military, townspeople who had suffered during the war, and fundamentalist Shiite Moslems, encouraged by Iran, who opposed Hussein's Baath party and Sunni Moslem regime.²⁵ Some of these stories were clear exaggeration, mixing information with disinformation: CNN and the other TV networks reported that the Kurds completely controlled the north of Iraq, that Hussein's son was killed in Basra along with other leaders of his regime, that oppositional forces controlled cities throughout southern Iraq, and that Hussein had been assassinated. In fact, Hussein's son was not killed and although rebel forces were in control of large amounts of the country, Hussein's forces were able to regain the initiative—thanks largely to the inactivity of Bush who failed to support the rebellions he had called for.²⁶

The recurrent stories of fighting in the south of Iraq indicated that there was genuine insurrectionary turmoil in Iraq, and its decision to eject all foreign journalists on March 6 suggested that Iraq was preparing to deal with this turmoil violently—as they did. Reuters reported that the Republican Guards were on patrol in the streets of Baghdad and that road blocks had been put up on the approaches to the city in order to tighten security and to prevent rebellion from breaking out in the capital. CNN also reported on March 6 that Saddam Hussein had appointed his cousin as internal security minister. Hussein's relative, Ali Hassan al-Majid, had brutally suppressed Kurdish rebellions in the 1980s and was in charge of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait during a period of many atrocities.

Commentators saw these moves as a show of force, indicating that Saddam Hussein was acting decisively to maintain his regime. Many commented that while Hussein was obviously unable to successfully fight tremendously superior U.S.-led coalition forces, he was able to maintain order and power in his own country. Thus the New York Times reported on March 7: "Despite Western assessments of the Republican Guard's disarray, Western officials in Saudi Arabia said loyalist troops had apparently put down an Islamic revolt in Basra, Iraq's second largest city, where rebellious Shiites claimed to have control over the weekend" (p. A8). In fact, it was later reported that the elite Republican Guard was "virtually intact" after the ceasefire and that reports of its destruction were greatly exaggerated (Newsday, July 7, 1991, p. 7).

For the first time, Iraqi and Kurdish oppositional leaders were shown on U.S. TV. Although they repeated the standard attacks on Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi opposition seemed to have had no coherent program, no unity among their ranks, and no organized movement inside or outside Iraq. They continued to bicker among themselves and no viable Iraqi opposition emerged to replace Hussein and his regime. The U.S. had apparently done nothing to try to help organize a democratic opposition to Hussein and never made the democratization of Iraq a war aim.

Yet during the war, the Bush administration had urged the Iraqis to overthrow Saddam Hussein and in the aftermath CIA and covert forces were urging them to do so.²⁷ Thus, it appeared that systematic efforts were underway throughout Iraq to topple Hussein's regime. But the Bush administration backed off in their campaign against Hussein precisely when these rebellions appeared potentially able to eliminate the Iraqi government. While Bush and his team had repeatedly urged Hussein's overthrow, they were not taking any public position on the unrest in Iraq and did nothing to publicly encourage oppositional forces. Perhaps they could find no cohesive oppositional forces to support and perhaps they simply did not have a coherent policy to deal with Iraq after the war. No doubt, the Bush administration worried about Shiite forces taking over southern Iraq and pursuing a fundamentalist Islamic revolution in the Iranian mode. Although one could do business with a Saddam Hussein, buying his oil and selling him arms, it was not certain that Islamic revolution in the Gulf would serve U.S. interests.

After putting down the rebellions in the south, Hussein sent his forces north to crush Kurdish rebellions. The Kurds were driven out of their homeland and sought refuge in the harsh mountain region near the border with Turkey and a desolate border region near Iran. Bush's failure to respond to the suffering of the Kurds, Shiites, and other forces rebelling against the regime of Saddam Hussein exposed the phoniness of his highly touted New World Order. To those who hoped that henceforth the superpowers would promote justice, democracy, and the cause of oppressed peoples against brutal domination, Bush clearly demonstrated that for him the New World Order was merely an order of Realpolitik, of selfishly following his own perceived interests with little concern for the suffering or just causes of others.

Kuwait was of concern to the Bush administration because of the economic and geopolitical interests involved, as well as the benefits that Bush, the Pentagon, and the military-industrial complex would reap from a successful war. But the fate of the Kurds and the Iraqi people obviously meant nothing to Bush who seemed not have an idealistic impulse in his personality. When Bush appealed to lofty moral principles during the Gulf crisis and war, this was sheer hypocrisy for there is little or no evidence that George Bush has ever exhibited a consistent adherence to moral principles. He is the paradigm of the narrow, opportunistic, and insincere politician who solely follows his own interests and those of his class

while caring nothing for the unfortunate and oppressed. His lack of concern for principle was clearly evident on television during March and April. When he went on vacation in April, TV juxtaposed images of fleeing and dying Kurds with pictures of Bush playing golf and "recreating" in his upper-class life-style. Images of Bush joggin', fishin', and playin' tennis juxtaposed with images of thousands of Kurdish refugees freezing, starving, and dying on the Turkish and Iranian border area was truly repellent. Consequently, many commentators saw Bush's inaction as moral bankruptcy and political failure of nerve. As Doug Ireland put it:

If, as Bush claimed, Saddam really was the "new Hitler," and the need to emasculate him the most important moral issue since World War II, the logic of the administration's policy would have dictated some form of intervention at the first signs of revolt, when it could have aided those who responded to America's call with a minimum of direct military involvement--keeping Saddam's air arms from the skies, for example, while offering weapons, training, military counsel, and food and medical aid to the rebel coalition, through client states if necessary (a long-standing U.S. practice around the world in other, less urgent circumstances). Bush's failure to do so reveals that the administration's rationale for his bloody war--with its hundred of thousands of casualties, most of them morally innocent conscripts or civilians--was a lie from the gitgo" (The Village Voice, April 16, 1991, p. 8).

This raises the question of why Bush chose to end the war when he did and why he did not go further in destroying the Iraqi military and overthrowing Saddam Hussein. In a March 27 interview with David Frost on PBS, General Schwarzkopf said that he personally wanted to continue fighting, to pursue a "war of annihilation."²⁸ A right wing critique of the end of the war has emerged, presented by U.S. News and World Report in their book Triumph Without Victory (1992) that criticizes the premature ending of the war. The team that produced the book claimed that the war had been originally planned for 144 hours, but was halted after 100 hours, primarily because of pressure by Arab coalition partners who did not want to see Iraq dismembered and a radical Shiite regime emerge in the south and autonomous Kurdish republic emerge in the north (1992, pp. 395ff). This led to a failure of nerve on Bush's account and a "tragic conclusion" to the Gulf war (1992, p. 400).

Arab pressure on Bush to end the war and U.S. and Arab aversion to seeing a radical Shiite regime emerge might have been part of the reason for Bush ending the war, but, like the causes of the war, the conclusion too is overdetermined and requires a multi-causal analysis (see 1.3). Bulloch (1991) argues that Bush had won an adequate victory with minimum losses and did not want to risk losing further troops in a battle for Baghdad or the annihilation of the Iraqi army; consequently, many Iraqi divisions survived intact. On a 1992 Discovery Channel documentary organized by the American Enterprise Institute, Assistant Secretary of State Paul Wolfowitz said that reports of the slaughter of the fleeing Iraqis had produced revulsion in the Pentagon and Powell called the operation to a halt, not wanting to produce the appearance of the U.S. forces "piling on," to use Wolfowitz's football metaphor. Others claim that the U.S. had faulty intelligence that led them to believe that the Iraqis would definitely overthrow Saddam Hussein and end his regime (interview with Garth Jowett who cited discussions with U.S. government sources, Houston, March 9, 1992).

No doubt at least some of these considerations influenced the decision to end the war, but there might have also been a cunning and cynical calculation that Saddam Hussein's continuation in power might be useful. The survival of Saddam Hussein provided an enemy and bogeyman in the area to legitimate keeping U.S. military forces in the Middle East and to help keep up the military budget to deal with such villainous threats to U.S. interests. In addition, a threatening Hussein could help promote the sale of U.S. arms to the region. Perhaps Saddam Hussein was more useful to George Bush alive than dead or disposed of.²⁹ If Bush fell behind in the 1992 election, he could always mount a strike against Hussein and mobilize popular support for the action. If he won the presidency and found the economy in a slump and his popularity slumping, he could mount a war against Iraq to generate public support.

Whatever Bush's motivations for ending the war when he did, Hussein's military slaughtered rebels by the scores in southern Iraq, often within kilometers of U.S. military forces, while the United States sat back and allowed the slaughter to take place. Eventually, the TV coverage of the plight of the Kurds, however, was so heart-wrenching that U.S. forces were sent to northern Iraq so that the Kurds, starving and freezing in inhospitable refuges in Turkey and Iran, could return home under the protection of the U.S.-led coalition forces.³⁰ Obviously, at any time Bush could have ordered U.S. troops to create a buffer zone to protect the Kurds from the Iraqi army and his failure to do so clearly revealed his lack of moral fiber. Indeed, even some of his strongest defenders in the Gulf war such as William Safire and Jim Hoagland severely criticized Bush's inaction.

But during the summer of 1991, the U.S. troops pulled out of northern and southern Iraq and Saddam Hussein continued to rule the country. Consequently, the Gulf war produced nothing for Iraq but incredible misery. A UN team described the appalling conditions in most of the country, with massive disease, malnutrition, lack of adequate medical care, and primitive conditions:

Nothing that we had seen or read had quite prepared us for the particular form of devastation which has now befallen the country. The recent conflict has wrought near-apocalyptic results upon the economic infrastructure of what had been, until January 1991, a rather highly urbanized and mechanized society. Now most means of modern life support have been destroyed or rendered tenuous. Iraq has, for some time to come, been relegated to a pre-industrial age, but with all the disabilities of post-industrial dependency on an intensive use of energy and technology (Ahtisaari in Clark et. al 1992, pp. 237-238).

During the rest of 1991, reports continued to circulate of growing health problems, starvation, economic collapse, and hopelessness in Iraq.³¹ The U.S. policy of "bomb now, die later" produced for the Iraqi people epidemics of cholera, typhoid, and other deadly diseases and the lack of medicine and medical equipment to deal with even minor problems. Iraqi children were dying of starvation and disease, and Bush continued to insist on an economic boycott of Iraq. Saddam Hussein built up Baghdad and strengthened his military and security apparatus. The Gulf war had brought nothing but incredible suffering to the Iraqi people while failing to destroy the regime of Saddam Hussein or to bring peace and stability to the region.

10.5 The Militarization of U.S. Culture and Society

In retrospect, only George Bush, the U.S. military, and the military-industrial complex benefited from the Gulf war. Kotz and Larudee (1991) noted: "After years of lackluster performance, eight of the leading U.S. arms contractors saw their stock value rise by \$5.3 billion in the month after the war began" (p. 17). Moreover, White House Budget Director Richard Darman said that arms inventories would be restored to their level before the war, leading Sen. Tom Harkins (D-Ia.) to complain that the Pentagon planned to buy 500 more Patriot missiles although only 160 were fired (p. 17). The Wall Street Journal reported on February 27, 1991, that the Bush administration wanted to place the \$54.5 billion pledged by coalition allies to underwrite the U.S. Gulf war effort, along with \$15 billion in U.S. funds, into an account that it could spend without pesky congressional oversight.

The Gulf war also greatly helped promote foreign arms sales.³² The Toronto Star (Aug 12, 1991, p. A3) reported the, "U.S. [was] tops in supplying Third World weaponry" in 1990, increasing arms sales from nearly \$8 billion in 1989 to \$18.5 billion in 1990. Sales to Middle Eastern countries produced the dramatic upsurge. The success of new military technologies in the Gulf war led the Bush administration to push anew their Strategic Defense Initiative, popularly known as Star Wars. In his March 6 speech to Congress, Bush called for expansion of the program and has continued urging the development of high-tech weapons systems against congressional pressure for deeper military cuts. Tom Wicker wrote in an August 2, 1991, syndicated column that "the Pentagon still is seeking more than \$500 billion of taxpayers' money for 'about 100 major weapons-acquisitions programs.'"

And so George Bush, the U.S. military, and the military-industrial complex were the immediate beneficiaries of the Gulf War.³³ Bush was transformed from wimp to warrior and the U.S. military was able to overcome its humiliation in Vietnam and its past failures. The U.S. appeared to be the world's sole remaining superpower, a high-tech military colossus dominating Bush's New World Order.³⁴ On the whole, the military had not gotten such good press and PR since World War II. From the beginning through the aftermath of the war, nightly newscasts interviewed military spokespeople and defenders, presented positive images of military hardware and troops, and legitimated the alleged need for a strong military. The military was concerned with overcoming the "Vietnam syndrome" and restoring their credibility. Television coverage of the crisis and the war enabled the military to gain prestige lost during the Vietnam debacle and the criticisms of military spending and incompetency during the previous decade.

The military also regained dominion over the press with the success of their pool system (see 2.2), allowing them to control which members of the media gained direct access to the troops and ensuring that military officials always accompanied media representatives when they talked to the troops, thus curtailing the amount of critical discourse emanating from the front. But the mainstream media also presented incredible PR for the military, inundating the country with images of war and the new high-tech military for months, while the brutality of war was normalized and even glamorized in the uncritical media coverage. Throughout the Persian Gulf TV war, the culture of militarism became the mainstream culture after a period when war and the military were in disfavor. After Vietnam, people were sick of the military, sick of death, sick of destruction, and above all sick of war; the military was relegated to the sidelines of U.S. culture and even the doghouse. During the Persian Gulf war, the military returned to the front and center stage of the culture. Close analysis suggests that the Gulf war and its media afterlife produced a striking, albeit short-lived, militarization of the media and culture in the United States.

It became increasingly apparent during the Gulf war that the U.S. military was attempting to impose its worldview, language, and fundamental project--war--on the public in order to increase the military's social prestige and to ensure their continued domination of social wealth. The war accordingly produced a militarization of the mainstream media, especially news and information. During the Gulf war, TV news coverage was dominated by war news; discussion of war and military discourse colonized TV and radio talk shows; and, cumulatively, images and thoughts of war saturated the national consciousness.

Some intellectuals, unknown before the war, attained cult status or at least impressive influence. Tony Cordesman of ABC was obsequiously and deferentially treated by anchor Peter Jennings and widely cited by "Gulfie" commentators in the press and TV talk shows. Revealing his status as a champion of the military-industrial complex, Cordesman published an Op-Ed piece in the New York Times right after the war calling for resistance against calls for cuts in military spending (Feb. 28, 1991). Cordesman praised the U.S.'s new "combat culture" which enabled it to win a decisive victory in the Gulf war and concluded that the U.S. was the only country in the world with the force to serve as the world's "policeman." At a symposium after the war at the Brookings Institute, Cordesman said that people should not feel sorry for the suffering and murdered Iraqis because they had tolerated Saddam Hussein and thus deserved their punishment. Cordesman was established as a media celebrity. Yet during the war he said nothing that revealed any real insight and constantly harped on the motif of Iraqi chemical weapons, which were never used, while hyping the destructive capacity of the Iraqi military, which ultimately proved to be no match for the U.S.-led coalition.³⁵ Cordesman mainly served to terrorize viewers into supporting the Bush administration and Pentagon, who would protect them from the threats that Cordesman so effectively evoked.

Each network had at least two generals employed as military commentators, and CNN managed to find numerous military hacks who predictably took the military point of view and rarely provided any original insight or perspective on the war, serving instead merely to put the Pentagon spill on the events of the war. By contrast, peace groups and antiwar spokespeople almost disappeared from TV coverage after the first week of the war. As the war progressed, the media allowed fewer and fewer anti-war voices to spoil the Great Celebration. A survey by the media watch group FAIR indicated that only 1.5 percent of the voices present in the TV discourse during the first two weeks of the war articulated an antiwar position, and, as the war went on, these voices were even more infrequent. The hysterical supporters of the Gulf war, who were terrorized into an irrational war psychosis, viciously attacked the networks that portrayed antiwar demonstrations or allowed anti-war perspectives. Fearing a loss of ratings and revenues, the TV networks cut back on the antiwar and peace segments.

During the Gulf war, hysteria permeated the country (see Chapter 6), and after the war the euphoria of victory made it appear that the entire country was in the grips of rampant militarization. The euphoria concerning the military victory continued through the parades welcoming veterans of the Gulf war home and celebrating the war and its "heroes." Big and little cities all over the country prepared for celebrations to welcome back the troops and to celebrate their victory. In New York City, Washington, D.C., and smaller cities throughout the country millions of dollars were lavished on victory parades and celebrations and thousands of homeless and millions of unemployed workers were given circuses rather than bread.

In the months after the war, General Schwarzkopf addressed Congress, received high military

honors from the Queen of England, the King of Saudi Arabia, the Emir of Kuwait, and other feudal powers who seemed to admire the general's authoritarian demeanor and military achievements, and won his greatest victory of all—a \$5.5 million contract for a book. George Bush had a flutter of the heart from an overactive thyroid condition that pundits suggested might have led him to such extremes of brutality against the Iraqis. Medicine soon slowed down his heart beat and metabolism to a manageable level and it appeared certain that Bush would run for re-election in 1992.

Yet the old economic and social problems reappeared and George Bush did nothing to address them. Negative images continued to flow from the Middle East and as disillusionment with the war set in, the rampant nationalism and militarism of the spring and early summer subsided. During the summer of 1991, Bush's administration was involved in several controversies. Robert Gates, one of inner circle of Bush's war team, was nominated to head the CIA, and his confirmation was temporarily threatened because of his role in the Iran/Contra scandals, the arming of Iraq, and the CIA scandals of the Casey era. Gates had obviously doctored intelligence information to serve the political ends of his bosses and had been wrong on the Soviet Union, continuing to push the "evil empire" line at the moment when the Soviet empire was disintegrating and the Soviets were beginning to reform their society. Gates had opposed sanctions against Saddam Hussein's regime, despite its human rights record, and had been in favor of arms sales to Iraq. No matter. Bush was able once again to get his crony Gates confirmed as head of the CIA, as the Congress allowed Bush to get away once again with unconscionable political choices. Likewise, Bush's nomination for the Supreme Court, Clarence Thomas, appeared to be totally unqualified for the position and was caught up in dramatic charges of sexual harassment by one of his former employees, Anita Hill. Yet, he too was appointed after extremely divisive hearings and congressional debate.

On August 5, 1991, Congress announced that it would undertake formal inquiries into claims that the 1980 Reagan/Bush election team, including George Bush, had met with Iranians to hold U.S. hostages in Tehran until after the election, a treasonous act, which, if true, would be the greatest political scandal of the century. Gary Sick's The October Surprise, published in the Fall of 1991 documented the scandal and questions were raised concerning the role of Bush in the Reagan administration and its many scandals.

By the fall of 1992, it appeared that the U.S. "victory" was pyrrhic and short lived. Bush's popularity slowly but steadily declined and questions were raised in Congress and the press concerning the level of U.S. military spending. The collapse of the Soviet Union and waning of militarism led to some cutbacks in defense spending in 1992, including cancellation of some major weapons programs and a decision to concentrate on research and development rather than weapons production (see New York Times, Jan 2X, 1991, p. A1). The U.S. military budget was steadily reduced and new weapons systems were canceled. Further, the U.S. seemed unable to affect the course of world events after the war. There was no solution to any of the problems in the Middle East in the aftermath of the war, Japan became increasingly aggressive in asserting its own interests, and the United States seemed strangely irrelevant to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the moves toward European economic and political union. The Gulf war thus appeared to be a short-term solution to the political problems of George Bush and the U.S. military that affected no significant change in the U.S. economy or world politics.

As Bush's popularity dramatically declined and his presidency appeared threatened in the upcoming 1992 election, his Administration leaked plans to topple Saddam Hussein, with the aid of U.S. military power, and the possibility of dramatic military action to save his failing presidency was a distinct

possibility in 1992 (see the New York Times, Jan. 19, 1992, p. A1). In the February 18, 1992, New Hampshire primary Bush received the worst primary vote of any Republican President in history, with his opponent columnist Patrick Buchanan receiving 37 percent of the vote and about 20 percent write-in ballots for other candidates indicated wide-spread disgust with Bush, even in his own party. Bush's primary campaigning was lack-luster and he seemed to have no focus or message.

The U.S. economy had been gravely weakened by decades of excessive military spending and a gigantic deficit to finance it. Indeed, there are arguably two losers in the Cold war: the U.S. and the Soviet Union, whose economies were severely harmed by decades of military spending (while the two losers of World War II, Japan and Germany, have prospered). The enormous military spending in the U.S. has caused a tremendous drain of resources toward the military which has contributed to an imbalanced economy and public squalor, with a disproportionate amount of economic activity and public funds going to the military. While the Gulf war might have arguably enabled military spending to bolster the economy in the short term, the militarization of the economy has blocked desperately needed changes of budget priorities.

During the Gulf war, the U.S. proved that it could destroy the highways of Iraq, but it could have used its resources to rebuild its own system of highways. Bush showed that the U.S. military could destroy the cities of Iraq, but meanwhile cities in the United States are decaying and deteriorating. The U.S. bombing created conditions for health epidemics in Iraq, but during the same period it was painfully clear that the country could not offer adequate health care to its own people. The U.S. government attacked Iraqi treatment of Kurds, Shiites, and other minorities, but offered nothing to improve race relations in the U.S. Indeed, the "smart bombs" used in the Gulf war will not help end illiteracy in the U.S. or educate the youth. The high-tech bombing programs will not help develop software for environmental protection or urban planning. The medical experiments to develop antidotes to chemical and biological weapons will not help the fight against AIDS and cancer. The temporary jobs created to produce military equipment and supplies for the Gulf did not translate into any permanent jobs. Allowing women to serve in the Gulf did not help with child care, the feminization of poverty, and women's rights in the workplace. Controlling alcohol and drug use in Saudi Arabia did not solve the problems of drugs and alcohol abuse in the United States. Providing homes for half-a-million soldiers in the desert did not help produce homes for the homeless in the USA.

In short, the Gulf War was a temporary diversion from the acute problems facing U.S. society, problems exacerbated if not created by over a decade of the economic policies of Reagan and Bush. Despite Bush's demagogic claim to "have drawn a line in the sand" against unemployment in his State of the Union message during January 1992 and his demagogic shout that "This shall not stand!" (repeating his slogans of the Gulf crisis), in fact Bush has no policies for unemployment or to strengthen the economy and produce jobs. As Carl Boggs (1991) has argued: "While the Pentagon has devoured nearly \$8 trillion since 1950 (now more than \$300 billion annually) to support American power around the world, the social infrastructure deteriorates at an ever faster rate. The U.S. military can annihilate the Iraqi armed forces with sophisticated missiles, planes, and tanks, but the U.S. economy cannot begin to solve basic problems of education, housing, health care, the environment, and urban violence. With the economic system in decline, this imbalance has gotten so out of control that public needs are now being systematically and flagrantly neglected."

The militarization of society has drastic implications for democracy in the United States. With the concentration of so many resources and power in the military sector, what Eisenhower called "the military-industrial complex" has come to control state priorities and to render social and cultural needs of secondary importance. Military spending tends to be highly undemocratic with large budgets for secret projects and, as Melman (1991) has argued, for decades only a small number of corporations benefit in a sector that produces few jobs or public goods. Moreover, the militarization of culture has meant that the military has come to dominate ever more realms of popular culture, ranging from movies, TV shows, video and computer games, and toys to trading cards.³⁶ In addition, the military got splendid free advertising for its wares from the positive media presentation of their high-tech weapons systems and "precision" bombing.

The Gulf war dramatized the two main problems of U.S. society: militarism and excessive concentration of corporate, state, and media power. The same ruling interests came to control the state, the economy, and the media during the 1980s and 1990s with Ronald Reagan and George Bush pursuing policies that primarily benefitted the corporate elite and the military-industrial complex, while the media were taken over by giant corporate conglomerates that tended to favor the Reagan and Bush administrations and military events which promoted the interests of the arms industries. All of the Big Three TV networks were connected with the defense industry, oil corporations, big banks, and other corporate sectors which benefitted from the Gulf War and all the mainstream media promoted the war policies of the Bush administration and U.S. military technology, prowess, and achievements. The result was complicity of the media, the state, and the military in the promotion of a highly destructive war that only benefitted a few groups and individuals.

Indeed, Danny Schechter (1991) suggests that one of the reasons why the TV networks were so uncritical of the Bush administration policy and disinformation during the Gulf war was because at that time the networks were "engaged in a massive lobbying effort to change the FCC's Financial Syndication rules. Those rules passed at a time when the public airwaves were thought fit for regulation in the public interest and limited the networks' rights to own and market their own programming ostensibly to limit their power to totally monopolize the marketplace. This meant that program suppliers, not the networks, would forever make the big money when the 'Cosby Show' and others went into syndication" (p. 25). Schechter notes that one of the Federal Communications Commissioners, James Quello, who was "network point person on the issue," had "made a very public point of criticizing aggressive questioning at Pentagon Press briefings as unpatriotic in a speech to the Indiana Broadcasters Association. Schechter indicated that he spoke to a top network producer who explained that there was no way that the TV networks could debate Bush administration war policy "when the networks had such an important economic agenda under consideration in Washington. There is no way to confirm this story," Schechter notes, "but other journalists I've talked to say it 'sounds right'" (ibid).

Sounds right to me as well. In my book, Television and the Crisis of Democracy, I cited the November 1985 Mother Jones story by Mark Dowdie who noted how ABC spiked controversial stories concerning close friends of Ronald Reagan just before the 1984 election because ABC was interested in a lucrative merger it was negotiating (Kellner 1990, pp. 172-173). I also speculated that the network's interest in having the Financial Syndication rules repealed might have led the networks to favor Bush during the 1988 election, knowing that the Republican president would be more likely to support the deregulation of television carried through so aggressively during the Reagan administration (Kellner 1990,

Chapter 4). When it comes to economics, the commercial TV networks will always sacrifice journalism and favor a political status quo that supports their own interests.

Thus the crisis of democracy intensified during the Gulf war and it remains to be seen if democracy can be restored in the United States. There can be no genuine democracy without an informed public and the media has consistently failed to promote vigorous public debate concerning the policies of the Bush administration. Especially during the Gulf war, the media merely promoted the Bush administration policies and since the end of the war, the mainstream corporate media have failed to reopen a debate concerning whether the Gulf war was worth it, why the war that didn't have to be took place, what interests were served by the war, and what its consequences have been.

The mainstream media generally fails to contextualize events and to make the links between the U.S. complicity in militarizing Iraq, Bush's motivation for pursuing the Gulf war, and the new postcold war era which requires a National Security State to undertake new adventures to survive threatened cuts in its budget. The mainstream media has never explored fully Bush's links to the October Surprise, the Iran/Contra affair, Noreiga, the CIA, and the National Security State (Kellner 1990). It is no accident that there have been two wars during the first two years of Bush's presidency and that Bush and his inner circle have been desperately trying to preserve the military-industrial complex during an era when it is becoming increasingly obsolete and dangerous. Yet the same mainstream media had made George Bush a world celebrity through their puffery of the Gulf war could just as easily unmake him. Or the U.S. media could continue covering up Bush's complicity in some of the greatest scandals and crimes of the century. Time will tell.

Since 1980, conservative forces have controlled economic, political, and cultural power, using this power to promote their own agendas at the expense of the general public. Concentrating more power in the hands of conservative and militarist social forces could spell the end of American democracy and an unending cycle of wars, military interventions, social squalor, and economic depression which will make Orwell's 1984 appear as a utopia. There is the clear and present danger that George Bush, Brent Scowcroft, Dick Cheney, Robert Gates, Dan Quayle, and other representatives of the military-industrial complex and National Security State will do anything--even undertaking a potentially catastrophic war--to further their interests.

Reversing the slide toward militarism and overturning the conservative hegemony of the past years will require rethinking the cold war, the Vietnam and Gulf wars, the Reagan-Bush era, and the bitter fruits of U.S. foreign policy over the past several decades. Failure to do so and to reverse the current direction of U.S. society will certainly be a disaster. A democratic society cannot allow a small group of people to break the law, subvert the rules of politics, and engage in wars and covert actions to promote their ideological, political, and economic agendas. If democracy is to thrive in the United States, individuals and social movements must struggle to reinvigorate a democratization of society. What was once the Soviet Union has been at least attempting to democratize their society and this effort is also needed in the United States.

Notes

1. Gates's fantasy was published in the Washington Times, Feb. 25, 1991, p. 9. During the Reagan years when Gates was employed by the CIA, he constantly exaggerated the military threat of the Soviet Union, doctoring figures and facts to serve the requirements of his boss William Casey. While working for Bush, Gates continued to disseminate disinformation and lies to support the policies of the administration, revealing a total disregard for truth and accuracy. During his confirmation hearings as CIA director, critics noted his propensity to politicize information, but nonetheless he was confirmed, showing the general level of corruption and disregard for truth and integrity during the Reagan and Bush years.

2. Bruce Wallace reported that, "The extent of [Iraqi] violence is still unknown. Some Kuwaitis said that allied forces had exaggerated atrocities in order to demonize the Iraqi armed forces." Wallace also found that the Iraqi secret police, and not the military, was responsible for much of the torture and violence. See "Joy Among the Ruins," MacLean's, March 11, 1991, p. 24.

3. Recall that during the UN hearings on Iraqi atrocities against Kuwait in November 1990, another "doctor" appeared, also hiding his identity with a headdress, claiming that he had helped bury forty babies murdered by Iraqis who stole their incubators—a story that turned out to be sheer propaganda (see 2.1). Using "doctors" as witnesses provided the aura of a professional, disinterested, "expert" authority. These "doctors," however, were part of a propaganda campaign organized by Kuwaiti government forces.

4. The "doctor" also appeared to a Time magazine reporter who wrote: "A Kuwaiti doctor too nervous to give his name told arriving journalists that Iraqis often dismembered prisoners before killing them. 'Some of the bodies were missing noses,' he said. 'Some had their eyes taken out. What the Iraqis did was beyond belief'" (March 11, 1991, p. 39).

5. Alexander Cockburn had earlier questioned the veracity of the alleged Iraqi baby incubator atrocities; see The Nation, Feb. 4, 1991, p. 114. Cockburn cited a variety of Kuwaiti doctors and nurses who disputed the story, which was disseminated by Amnesty International, the mainstream media, and George Bush who referred to the story six times in one month (see 2.1).

6. Greenpeace researchers noted that from the beginning of the air war, attacks "were made on 'strategic' targets in Kuwait, including communications and transportation related facilities. A Newsweek pool reporter observed that 'several industrial plants on the outskirts of the city had been severely mauled by allied attacks including a Hyundai headquarters'" [Feb. 26, 1991]. The Washington Times wrote on 4 March that the 'city's AT&T phone system required only moderate repairs and adjustments after the air strikes of Operation Desert Storm.' The firing of 16-inch artillery rounds also had significant impact on Kuwait's civil infrastructure "(Arkin, Durrant, and Chemi 1991, pp. 54-55).

The Greenpeace team also noted that it was difficult to sort out who was responsible for some of the major damage to Kuwaiti facilities. "There were reports, for instance, that the communications ministry, 'had been heavily damaged by the Kuwaiti resistance in an effort to cut off the Iraqis' telephone-monitoring ability. Other reports are circulating within the Defense Department of

sabotage of communications facilities in Kuwait by the resistance (some of whom were assisted by US special operations forces" (1991, p. 54). Finally, they concluded that much of the damage was caused during the last week of the occupation, putting in question the lurid claims of extensive damage to Kuwait by the Iraqis from the beginning of the occupation.

7. On March 5, CNN carried a live report by Tom Mintier, who interviewed an alleged resistance fighter who also took the progovernment position that it was time for the resistance to lay down its guns, return to civilian life, and allow the government to take over all power--precisely what the Kuwaiti government was urging. Others in the Kuwaiti resistance movement, however, were urging democratic reforms, though CNN and Mintier privileged the progovernment sources during the first days after the "liberation."

8. See New York Times (Feb. 28, 1991, p. A11) and Time (March 11, 1991, pp. 42-43).

9. On February 28, 1992, "Nightline" had a one-year anniversary program on the liberation of Kuwait that was highly critical of the lack of democratic reform, the corruption in granting contracts for Kuwait's reconstruction, and the general greed and corruption of the Kuwaiti people.

10. Middle East Watch put out a report titled "A Victory Turned Sour: Human Rights in Kuwait Since Liberation," which indicated that of about 5,800 persons detained by the Kuwaiti government since the "liberation," at least 3,000 remained in detention by late 1991. Many were tortured and killed and more than 1,500 Palestinians and others were summarily deported. About half of the 180,000 Palestinians fled during the Iraqi occupation, and although this is evidence that they did not collaborate, they have not been allowed to return. Thousands of Bedouins were also stranded outside of Kuwait and have not been allowed to return. See Middle East Watch 1991 and the summary by Aryeh Neier in The Nation, Sept. 23, 1991, p. 327. See the testimony in Clark et al. concerning claims that U.S. special forces were present during the torture of Palestinians and others in Kuwait after the war (1992, pp. 125f. and pp. 140ff.).

11. It was Cushman who some days earlier had produced the story suggesting that according to military law it was perfectly appropriate for the U.S. to slaughter fleeing Iraqi soldiers, despite the fact that their government had indicated a willingness to meet all UN resolutions (see New York Times, Feb. 27, 1991, p.A8).

12. During the Panama invasion, official military reports concluded that 220 Panamanian civilians were killed, while Catholic and Episcopal churches estimate that more than 3,000 died, many of them in the barrio of El Chorillo, close to Noriega's headquarters; see Alexander Cockburn, In These Times, June 6, 1990. Cockburn points out that the Commission for the Defense of Human Rights in Central America stated in a March 1, 1990, report that "the actual death toll has been obscured through U.S. military practices, including: (1) incineration of corpses without prior identification; (2) burial of remains in common graves without identification; (3) U.S. military control of administrative offices of hospitals and morgues, permitting the removal of all registries to U.S. military bases." A "60 Minutes" episode on Sept. 30, 1990, revealed the discovery and exhuming of mass graves and estimated that approximately 4,000 Panamanians were killed in the

U.S. invasion.

13. It should be noted that it is still not certain how many Iraqi troops and civilians were killed in the war. The bloody civil war after the cessation of U.S.-led military activity and the thousands of deaths from disease and lack of adequate medical service make it difficult to estimate the deaths. Greenpeace estimates that from 100,000 to 120,000 thousand Iraqi military were killed during the air and ground war (Press Release, Aug. 13, 1991), a figure close to figures leaked by U.S. military sources. Alexander Cockburn, however, claimed that the U.S. military exaggerated the figures to hype their success and that more "plausible estimates are probably in the region of 25,000 military casualties... plus some 4,500 civilian casualties from the bombing" (Statesman and Society, Jan. 10, p. 12). Many more were killed, he noted, in the civil war afterwards and from diseases and primitive conditions caused by the bombing. Patrick Cockburn claimed that recent figures suggest that as few as 8,000-15,000 Iraqi soldiers were killed on the battlefield based on interviews in Iraq with medical personnel, Iraqi soldiers, and villagers who report far fewer deaths from their villages than were expected; The Independent, February 5, 1992, p. 11). U.S. News and World Report's Triumph Without Victory also suggests estimates of 8,000-18,000 killed, according to U.S. sources that question the previous DIA estimates of 100,000 Iraqi troops killed, which could be revised up to 50 percent in either direction (1992, p. 404 and 408). Yet all of these estimates could be disinformation, either trying to inflate the achievement of U.S. military body counts or to cover over the extent of the carnage--a cover-up that could be both in the interests of the U.S. military and Iraqi regime.

14. U.S. television tended to sanitize the pictures of the Highway of Death by removing troubling images of burned and mutilated bodies. Moreover, photographs of the episode were pulled from distribution to try to erase the memory of the unsavory episode. An image of an Iraqi soldier burnt to a crisp in the Great Slaughter was published by the British Guardian on March 3 and created a great uproar; see the discussion in MacArthur 1992, pp. 255ff. and Figure 10.2.

15. It is symptomatic that the New York Times did not dedicate a complete story to the episode or even to the slaughter of the fleeing Iraqis throughout the theater of war. The Times frequently takes the most scandalous and explosive information that involves key figures, policies, and events concerning the U.S. political establishment and presents this information in a condensed and truncated form; this way it can salve its journalistic conscience by printing "all the news that's fit to print" while remaining a stolid and reliable pillar of the established order. Throughout the Gulf War, it buried the most explosive information in stories positioned in the middle of the paper, as when it revealed information concerning the coalition force's responsibility for much of the Gulf oil spills or as it did in the Highway of Death story. None of the mainstream media linked the desert slaughter to Bush's refusal to allow a cease-fire.

16. BBC Television News reported on March 5: "The Kuwaitis fear that many of the hostages taken from Kuwait by retreating Iraqi troops may have died in allied air attacks. Hundreds of the vehicles they used were trapped and bombed at the Mutla Gap as they poured out of Kuwait City, heading north on the main road to Basra." Reporter Michael Macmillan noted that Kuwaitis were concerned that buses like those in which the Iraqis rounded up Kuwaitis, taken as hostages the last days of the war, were found on the road to Basra. ABC "Nightline," in fact, on March 1 showed a

bus full of passengers burnt to crisp ash, but did not mention that these might be Kuwaiti hostages; a CBS News report on March 2 showed a number of buses destroyed by U.S. bombing, without mentioning that Kuwaitis might have been inside. The BBC report concluded by noting that U.S. soldiers had supervised the burial of the dead in mass graves and that the Kuwaitis feared that perhaps thousands of the five thousand Kuwaitis taken hostage in the last days of the war might be buried in those graves. Stephen Sackur of the BBC reported that among the dead on the highway were contract workers from the Indian subcontinent as well as Palestinians fleeing oppression from a "liberated" Kuwait (1991). As of the present, there is no evidence that the Kuwaiti government investigated this episode and discovered how many Kuwaitis were killed with the Iraqis and whoever else was unfortunate enough to have been on the road; no doubt the results would be too embarrassing for their U.S. "liberators."

17. During the early morning hours of January 18, 1991 on ABC, George Will urged escalating the war aims to the destruction of Saddam Hussein after barely one day of war! Yet in April, 1991, when there was pressure to intervene against Hussein on behalf of the Kurds, the opportunistic Will argued against U.S. intervention, supporting Bush's line of the moment. During the Reagan years, the bow-tied warrior called for a U.S. invasion of Nicaragua to overthrow the Sandinista government. Indeed, Will helped prep Ronald Reagan for debate in 1980 with a debate book stolen from the Carter campaign and then was allowed to comment on the debate for ABC! In any case, Will can always be counted on to support the most reactionary policies and forces at any given moment and it is incredible that ABC allows this rightwing ideologue to serve as a "commentator."

18. "Fish" was the code name for pilot Eric Salomonson whose last name was close to Salmon while "Karl" was the code name for a pilot whose last name was Marks so he became "Karl" after Karl Marx. An unnamed pilot (Fish, I think) was cited on BBC Radio 4 on February 27 saying: "I just spot the tank, it's nothing real cosmic,... lock it up, good luck, let her rip! It's the biggest Fourth of July show you've ever seen! And to see those tanks just boom! And more stuff just keeps spewing out over and the shells flying on the ground. And they just become white hot. It's wonderful!"

19. Strictly speaking, this procedure was, Middle East Watch director Aryeh Neier states, a war crime "in violation of Geneva Convention requirements that they be identified, the cause of death established, their interment conducted honorably and according to their religion, their graves marked and information provided to their families so as to permit exhumation and reburial" (The Nation, Sept. 23, 1991). All of the mass burials of Iraqi dead by U.S. forces as well as the bulldozing of Iraq troops under sand were war crimes under this convention.

20. On February 28, the previous evening, Ted Koppel told on ABC's "Nightline" how a trip by helicopter from Saudi Arabia to Kuwait City was aborted because of the intensity of the oil pollution which reduced visibility to 500 meters; his footage showed incredibly thick, dark smoke that blocked out the sun during day time.

21. See the article by Joe Vials published in The Guardian on August 21, 1991, and posted in PeaceNet, mideast.forum, August 16, 1991.

22. In several bulletin boards in PeaceNet during the summer and Fall of 1991, intense attention was focused on what might be the ultimate disaster produced by the disastrous Gulf war. It was reported that scientists in China were arguing that the oil fires were causing disastrous rains, and astronauts observed that the entire earth was circled in a haze and that parts of the earth couldn't even be seen because of the thickness of the black smoke (PeaceNet, en.climate, Aug 6, 1991). Michael Adams, a military scientist doing research on the effects of the oil fires, claimed that the U.S. government and military, with the complicity of the mainstream media, were concealing the extent of the disaster (PeaceNet, en.climate, Sept. 4). In an article in the New York Times on Oct. 19, 1991, p. A1, however, Youssef Ibrahim asserted that "a senior Kuwaiti oil executive said in a telephone interview" that there were only 87 oil wells still on fire and that all of the fires in the region would be extinguished soon. Soon after, it was claimed that all of the oil fires were extinguished. Yet, as I report below, there was fears that the oil lakes and rivers formed by wells that continued to spew forth torrents of oil also constituted a serious environmental threat. On the Gulf war environmental damage, see André Carothers, "After Desert Storm the Deluge," Greenpeace, Oct./Nov./Dec. 1991, pp. 14ff. This account is highly skeptical of U.S. government claims concerning the environmental damage. See also the Greenpeace report of the environmental damage to the Gulf put together by Arkin, Durrant, and Chemi (1991) and the January 1992 Greenpeace Report, "The Environmental Legacy of the Gulf War" (thanks to Bill Arkin for making this information available to me).

23. The New York Times reported on March 11, 1991: "Greenpeace Wants to Outlaw Making War on the Environment" (p. A7).

24. Before the war was even over, the Republican party network, NBC, presented a puff-piece on Bush on their February 24 Sunday morning show, which magnified him as a "great president" with footage and accolades that could easily be used by his 1992 reelection campaign. Maureen Dowd published a PR piece on Bush in the New York Times on March 2 titled, "War Introduces Nation to a Tougher Bush." Bush's popularity ratings soared, he was visited by major world leaders after the war, and addressed Congress on March 6, receiving tumultuous applause and a hero's welcome.

25. The media tended to reduce the southern Iraqi rebellions to Shiite fundamentalist revolts, but other sources indicated that a variety of forces in opposition to Saddam's regime were involved in the rebellions. See No. Anarchy #30, Fall 1991, pp. 4ff., which stressed the proletarian nature of the revolts.

26. During the rebellions there were stories that the U.S. blew up Iraqi munitions rather than allowing the rebels to use these weapons against Hussein's regime and that the U.S. refused the rebels all military aid. On a January 16, 1992 "ABC World News Tonight," Sheila MacVicar interviewed an Iraqi rebel officer who complained about begging for U.S. military support and being turned down. She concluded: "The American and other allied forces were under orders not to help the rebels. Days later, as Saddam Hussein moved to crush the uprising, the officer and others fled into exile." No coherent explanation has yet emerged from the Bush administration concerning why they did not give at least minimal military aid to the rebels trying to overthrow Saddam Hussein.

27. See the article on CIA encouragement for Iraqi rebel forces in the Washington Post, April 3, 1991. The New York Times also published articles indicating that a Kurdish broadcast facility calling for the overthrow of Hussein was linked to the CIA (April 6, 1991) and that another clandestine radio station that had been urging the Iraqi people to revolt against Hussein's regime was also connected to the CIA (April 16, 1991).

28. Within two days, Schwarzkopf backed off this story and the White House claimed that Schwarzkopf himself had ordered cessation to military activities and that there was no debate over whether the war should or should not end. Schwarzkopf also insisted in his interview with Frost that he had been "suckered" by the Iraqis into letting them keep their helicopters, which they used to crush the rebellions against Hussein's regime. Yet there was nothing to keep the United States from renegotiating the terms of the cessation of hostilities (the cease-fire had yet to be negotiated). Hence, Schwarzkopf's feeble excuse for nonintervention is just another example of the lies and hypocrisy that governed U.S. discourse during the Persian Gulf massacre.

29. The International Herald-Tribune reported on May 4-5, 1991, that the "U.S. Bungled Chance to Oust Hussein." According to a U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff report, rebellious Iraqi military officers had sent out feelers asking for U.S. support for a coup against Saddam Hussein in March 1990. However, the Bush Administration rebuffed them and the coup did not come off. Hence, there was a long time policy of Bush administration failure to help overthrow Saddam Hussein.

30. Daniel Schorr documents how Bush reacted to the Kurdish plight as a response to an outraged public, which was shocked by nightly images of Kurdish suffering. See "Ten Days That Shook the White House," Columbia Journalism Review, July/August 1991, pp. 21-23. On the plight of the Kurds, see the poignant accounts in MacArthur 1991, pp. 333-371; Simpson 1991, pp. 365ff; and Susan Sachs's April 1991 articles in Newsday.

31. See the reports by Hooglund and Hiltermann in Middle East Report, July/August 1991; by Cainkar in Bennis and Moushabeck; Arkin, Durrant, and Chemi; and Clark et al. 1992.

32. Kotz and Larudee (1991) report that Raytheon's order backlog of \$2.3 billion for Patriot missiles at the end of 1990 "was likely to rise to \$5 billion by the end of 1991 because of new orders from Saudi Arabia, Israel, Turkey, and Greece. Loral, maker of electronic components for missiles and aircraft, expects at least \$1.3 billion of foreign sales... Saudi Arabia has expressed interest in buying \$20 billion of U.S. weapons, including at least 24 F-15 fighter planes and 235 M-1 tanks over and above the 465 tanks previously ordered. Last September, after Turkey joined the coalition against Iraq and agreed to let the United States use its air bases, the U.S. Export-Import Bank approved a \$1.37 billion loan guarantee for Turkey to buy 200 military-type helicopters--the largest single transaction in the history of the bank" (p. 17).

33. U.S. banks also benefitted from the Gulf war. Kotz and Larudee (1991) point out that the tremendous petrodollar surpluses from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait will "flow even more heavily into American banks. The American banking system has been sorely ailing from its inability to raise

capital. A joke circulating in recent weeks said the alliance between the U.S. and Kuwait was fortuitous because Kuwait was a banking system without a country, while the U.S. was a country without a banking system. Citicorp got a taste of the benefits of this alliance when, in late 1990, Saudi Prince al Waleed bin Talal paid \$590 million to buy 4.9 percent of its common stock. This was a sizable fraction of the \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion in capital that Citicorp needed to raise" (p. 17).

34. The New York Times published excerpts from a Defense Department document that indicated that the U.S. was developing a strategy "to insure that no rival superpower is allowed to emerge in Western Europe, Asia or the territory of the former Soviet Union" (March 8, 1991, p. A1). The document rejected the strategy of collective internationalism developed after World War II and project a vision of the future with U.S. military power serving as the policeman of the world. The plan envisaged the possibility of unilateral U.S. military action against Iraq, North Korea, Pakistan, and India "to prevent the development of weapons of mass destruction." Presumably, Israel was safe from a preemptive U.S. strike.

35. On February 21, Cordesman appeared on ABC's "Nightline" and provided a harrowing and detailed account of the Iraqi military horrors assembled behind the Kuwaiti border which the coalition troops would face in a ground war. As it turned out, this was mere hyperbole and Cordesman had either fallen for U.S. military disinformation or disseminated it himself so that the slaughter of Iraqis during the ground war would appear as a brilliant military victory. After the war, Cordesman traveled for ABC to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in March 1991, and revealed his surprise that Iraqi fortifications were so primitive.

36. On November 10, 1991, ABC played a TV movie Heros of Desert Storm, which was introduced by George Bush. Many movies on the war are in the works as well. Desert Storm board games, computer and video games, trading cards, and other artifacts have become a small growth industry.