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**The Persian Gulf TV War**

Chapter 2

**The "Crisis in the Gulf" and the Mainstream Media**

In early August 1990, the "crisis in the Gulf" threatened the political economy and order of the Middle East and the United States quickly responded with the threat of military force. In this chapter, I discuss how the mainstream media constructed "the crisis in the Gulf" through analysis of the primary frames, images, and discourse by which the crisis was presented to the public; I put the phrase in parentheses to highlight that the crisis was a media construct, as was "Saddam Hussein," "Iraq," "Arabs," and "the Middle East." That is, most people had no direct experience or knowledge of these phenomena so their pictures of the Gulf crisis was a product of the Bush administration discourse and the media frames through which the crisis was constructed. My argument is that the mainstream media helped promote the military solution through its framing of the crisis, through its omissions, and through the ways that they were manipulated and controlled by the Bush administration and Pentagon to manufacture consent to its policies.

2.1 The Media and Hegemony

Ruling elites use the mainstream media to promote their own agendas and to advance their own interests. I explored a classic case of media manipulation in section 1.1 whereby the Bush administration leaked disinformation to the press to legitimate sending U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia and to mobilize public support for this action. Once the Bush administration announced that it had sent a huge number of troops to Saudi Arabia on August 7, the mainstream media applauded these actions and became a conduit for mobilizing support for U.S. policy. For weeks, only a few dissenting voices were heard in the mainstream media, and no significant debate took place over the validity and dangerous consequences of the initial U.S. military response to the Iraqi invasion. During the first three months of the crisis, TV coverage, in particular, favorably portrayed all U.S. policy actions, presented the U.S. military intervention in an extremely positive light, and privileged those voices seeking a military solution to the conflict.

As the U.S. military juggernaut occupied Saudi Arabia, television commentators spoke of the inevitability of war and of the necessity for a military solution. For example, on ABC's "Nightline" on August 20, correspondent Forrest Sawyer indicated that he believed that the United States was moving toward a military resolution of the crisis. ABC reported on August 21, after citing a 75 percent approval rating for Bush, that "Americans appear to be rallying around the president and to support military action"; later in the same broadcast ABC cited French President Mitterrand claiming that "Saddam Hussein has led the world to a war mentality from which it will be hard to get out." On August 23, NBC Pentagon correspondent Fred Francis reported that the Pentagon had promised the Saudis that they would not leave Saudi Arabia and allow Saddam Hussein to remain in place and that unless he pulled out of Kuwait immediately, there would be war in three to six weeks.

When the Iraqis began floating diplomatic initiatives on August 12, they were shot down one by one by the Bush administration, which was inexorably orchestrating the march to war (see 1.2).

The media rarely criticized the Bush administration's failure to negotiate a diplomatic settlement to the crisis in the Gulf and served to cover over their relentless progress toward a military solution. In fact, the mainstream media consistently privileged whatever strategy the Bush administration favored and were little more than public relations managers for the White House and Pentagon. On the other hand, there was eventually some debate precisely because of differences in ruling circles and the public concerning the advisability of a war in the Middle East. Many members of the political establishment had grave doubts concerning the wisdom of getting involved in the turbulent politics of the region and there were many economic sectors that were concerned that a war in the Gulf would harm their interests. From the early days of the crisis, there were frequent and intense discussions in the mainstream media concerning the impact on the economy of a Gulf war and many sectors of the economy were indeed harmed by the crisis and war, including the travel industry, the automobile industry, retail and consumer goods industries, and the housing industry. Many economists feared that the rising oil prices and uncertainty concerning war would induce a recession, which eventually occurred, and the stock and commodity markets were jittery and erratic throughout the crisis and war.

In addition, there was great concern in the public over the wisdom of getting involved in a Middle East war. Memories of the Vietnam debacle were still strong and there was a reluctance among sectors of the public to support a military solution to the crisis. There was also a strong peace movement that organized during the crisis which consisted of veterans of the 1960s antiwar movement, members of the antinuclear, environmental, feminist, and other social movements opposed to war, and members of a younger generation who themselves did not want to be involved in war. While this antiwar movement was rarely seen or heard from in the mainstream media, it was well-organized, large, and vocal and had at least some influence on public opinion (see Paley 1991 and Cagan 1992).

In view of the division of opinion over the proper response to the crisis in the Gulf, I believe that it is better to utilize a hegemony model of the media which explains media discourse as articulating positions within or against an established hegemony, or as an attempt to establish hegemony within society. Thus, rather than seeing the media as instruments of the state or business which are merely used to manipulate individuals to support the state or the established economic system, it is better to analyze how the media function within varying struggles for hegemony. Different groups and social forces are constantly struggling for hegemony within society in order to control the direction, policies, and future of the society. During the 1950s, a conservative hegemony formed in the United States during the cold war and a period of relative affluence and social conformity. This hegemony was challenged by Kennedy liberalism in the 1960s and then by a variety of countercultural and social movements the same decade. The 1970s was a period of contestation between liberal and conservative forces with the marginalization of more radical forces. The elimination of Nixon during the Watergate affair and 1976 victory of Jimmie Carter suggested an uneasy liberal hegemony during the era.

From the 1980s to the present, however, a conservative hegemony has been in place, though it has been and continues to be contested (see 10.5 on the latter point and for the historical analysis of hegemony in the U.S. presented here see Kellner 1990 and Kellner and Ryan 1988; Ferguson and Rogers [1984] analyze which particular corporate forces, groups, and institutions supported the opposing political factions during the 1970s and early 1980s). Yet U.S. society continues to be

divided, contested, and full of contradictions which makes possible the space for critical discourse and oppositional politics. The advantages of a hegemony model over an instrumental model are that it recognizes contradictions within ruling elites, between ruling groups and the public, between professional journalistic ethics and serving the interests of corporate elites, and between genuine information and mere propaganda (see Kellner 1990, pp. 16-20 and Chapter 3). The hegemony model also represents society and culture as a contested terrain and depicts various social groups and movements struggling for power, rather than seeing society merely as a site of manipulation and domination (though, as this book will document, such manipulation of the public does obviously occur).

From this perspective, the Gulf war was a hegemonic project organized around the use of military force to resolve political conflicts and to assert U.S. interests in a "New World Order" with the U.S. as the world's sole superpower. Such a project would highlight the importance of the military for U.S. foreign policy in which the U.S. would use its military might to become the policeman of the world. This project was supported by Bush, Scowcroft, Gates, and many in the U.S. military and would promote the continuation of a National Security State (see 1.3). Bush's Gulf war policies were able to enlist the support of old Cold Warriors looking for new enemies, as well as military-industrial complex interests, big oil, banking and finance, and other interests directly served by a strong U.S. role in the Middle East and other hot spots of the world. Since an aggressive interventionist policy and war in the Gulf was opposed by powerful forces, it was crucial that the Bush administration enlist mainstream media support in establishing a Gulf war as a hegemonic project and, as I argue in this chapter, they were on the whole successful.

Not all mainstream media voices supported without reservation the Bush administration policies, however, and critical discourses that appeared during the crisis in the Gulf can be explained through conflicts within society over the viability of a military solution. There were structural reasons concerning the ownership and nature of the corporate media which help explain why the mainstream media tended to support the military solution. As Scott Henson argued, the interlocking connections between the military and television networks are striking: General Electric (GE), which owns NBC, derived \$9 billion of its \$54.5 billion in revenues from military contracts in 1989 (while NBC only provided \$3.4 billion in revenue). Lee and Solomon (1991, p. xvii) pointed out that GE "designed, manufactured or supplied parts or maintenance for nearly every major weapon system employed by the U.S. during the Gulf war—including the Patriot and Tomahawk Cruise missiles, the Stealth bomber, the B-52 bomber, the AWACS plane and the NAVSTAR spy satellite system. In other words, when correspondents and paid consultants on NBC television praised the performance of U.S. weapons, they were extolling equipment made by GE, the corporation that pays their salary."

Many GE board members sit on the boards of other corporate media like the Washington Post and are connected with U.S. government agencies and oil corporations as well. ABC's board of directors is involved with oil companies and the defense industries, and CBS also has connections with big oil and the defense industries (see Henson 1991 and the charts compiled by Doug Henwood in Kellner 1990, pp. 83-87). Hence, there were strong corporate forces connected to the "Big Three" TV networks which would benefit from a war in the Middle East. Consequently, when the networks were boosting military technology, a military solution to the crisis, and U.S. intervention to promote corporate interests, they were acting in the interests of the corporate elite who

controlled the networks. Indeed, we shall see that there were many examples of blatant bias in favor of corporate interests during the coverage of the Gulf war that have once again compromised the mainstream media's functions of providing accurate and unbiased information to make a working democracy possible.

In addition, the mainstream media tend to support administrations whose political policies and agendas correspond to their own interests. During the Reagan administration, the networks were extremely uncritical of Reagan and his policies in part because they supported his tax program, his deregulation, and his lax enforcement of antitrust policies which allowed the networks to merge with big corporations and which tremendously benefitted them economically (see Kellner 1990 for documentation). For similar reasons, the corporate sector has largely supported Bush, though if his economic policies fail and a viable alternative emerges, they may abandon him (see 10.5).

Furthermore, the discourses of the state are usually privileged by television news in particular, especially in times of crisis. The press and broadcast media journalists regularly get their news and information from official sources and thus attempt to maintain good personal relations with their sources. Thomas Friedman of the New York Times plays tennis with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, receives frequent leaks of information and briefings from high State Department officials, and is considered an important source of State Department thinking on various issues. George Bush invites reporters to go jogging or walking with him and plays tennis with ABC White House correspondent Britt Hume; Bush and his staff often favor sympathetic reporters like Hume with information or interviews. John McWethy of ABC news has had close links with the Reagan and Bush administrations and all of the Pentagon correspondents depend on inside connections for information and perspective, and thus are easily manipulated by their sources.

If reporters turn on their sources, or are too critical of official policies, they disrupt their connections and lose important conduits of information. Furthermore, as a matter of convention, the mainstream news media usually always include views from the current administration and present administration positions as fully and sympathetically as possible. During times of crisis, especially with late-breaking stories, the media are especially dependent on official sources which are thus able to manipulate and control the agenda. If the public, as in the case of the crisis in the Gulf, tends to support official policy, this is another incentive for the mainstream media to privilege the views of the administration in power, for going against popular policies could lead to loss of audience and revenue. Conversely, if administration policies are unpopular, the media may gain audiences (and thus revenues) by criticizing these policies, which provides structural economic reasons for occasional critical discourse.

In fact, it is another convention of mainstream media coverage that they usually cite the opinion of leaders of the opposing political party. If the Democratic leadership agrees with Republican policies, as frequently happened during the past decade, then the hegemonic policies or ideas are strengthened. Yet if there is significant establishment opposition to administration policies, there is usually someone in a high position who on or off record will provide information or critical opinions to journalists who may choose to go with oppositional views and information embarrassing to the established administration. In the highly competitive world of the mainstream media, there are also rewards for breaking stories and for presenting novel or challenging views as well as official ones. While on the whole the ethos of investigative and oppositional reporting, which

had a brief vogue even within the mainstream media during the 1970s, has been on the decline, there are still some journalists who follow the ethic of balance, objectivity, presenting various sides of a story, and even articulating views or information that may oppose official policies and spokespeople.

Hegemony thus involves conflict, opposition, and shifting configurations of power and ideology. The media do not construct hegemony through imposing a one-dimensional, dominant, shared set of ideas which are then absorbed by a passive public. U.S. society itself is divided into competing groups, ideologies, and political agendas which play themselves out in the media. Hegemony is constructed when a coalition of social groups imposes its agenda on the public and it attains dominance. Since most people get their ideas and opinions through the mainstream media it is a crucial site of hegemony. But hegemony is usually contested and hegemony shifts, develops, and mobilizes opinion according to the vicissitudes of the situation.

During the crisis in the Gulf and the Gulf war, the Bush administration achieved hegemony by successfully carrying out its war policy and selling it to the public. Although there was opposition to Bush administration policies, this opposition was marginalized in the mainstream media and ultimately silenced. In the following sections, I analyze how the Bush administration constructed hegemony for its military adventure by shaping the discourses, frames, and images through which the crisis was interpreted and ultimately accepted by the public. The media aided in the construction of Bush administration and Pentagon hegemony through transmitting its positions and discourses and through omission of what issues it did not discuss and what alternatives to the war policy it did not pose. I argue that during this fateful episode of world history, the mainstream media in the United States failed to serve the public by providing a wide range of opinion on issues of great importance during the crisis in the Gulf. In particular, they failed to inform the public concerning what was at stake in the crisis, what the consequences of war would be, what alternatives there were to a military solution to the crisis, and who would primarily benefit from a Gulf war (see 1.4 below for further discussion). Yet the fact that there was occasional questioning of Bush administration and Pentagon policies within the mainstream media, which I draw on in this book, indicates that there were divisions within the policy establishment and public over the wisdom of U.S. Gulf policy. However, as I shall indicate in the following sections, the mainstream media framed their coverage of the crisis in ways that supported Bush administration policies and that thus helped mobilize support for the Gulf war.

### Frames, Images, and the Construction of the Enemy

The media mobilize public opinion according to frames through which they present events and individuals. The frames utilized to present possible U.S. military intervention or war involved producing an image of the enemy. As Sam Keen puts it, "In the beginning we create the enemy. Before the weapon comes the image. We think others to death and then invent the battle-axe or the ballistic missiles with which to actually kill them. Propaganda precedes technology" (1986, p. 10). From the outset of the crisis in the Gulf, the media employed the frame of popular culture that portrays conflict as a battle between good and evil.<sup>1</sup> Saddam Hussein quickly became the villain in this scenario with the media vilifying the Iraqi leader as a madman, a Hitler, and worse, while whipping up anti-Iraqi war fever. Saddam was described by Mary McGrory (see 1.1 above) as a "beast" (Washington Post, Aug. 7, 1990) and a "monster" that "Bush may have to destroy"

(Newsweek Oct. 20, 1990, and Sept. 3, 1990). George Will called Saddam "more virulent" than Mussolini and then increased Hussein's evil by using the Saddam-as-Hitler metaphor in his syndicated columns. New York Times editorialist A. M. Rosenthal regularly attacked Hussein as "barbarous" and "an evil dreamer of death" (Aug 9, 1990). The New York Post described Hussein as "a bloodthirsty megalomaniac" and headlined tabloid fashion the epithet "UP YOURS!" when word emerged on August 7 that Bush was sending troops to Saudi Arabia. The New Republic doctored a Time Magazine cover photo on Saddam to make him appear more like Hitler by shortening his mustache. The Saddam-as-Hitler metaphor, of course, would be one of the dominant images of the crisis and war. According to a study by the Gannett Foundation, there were 1,170 examples in the print media and television of linking Saddam Hussein with Hitler (see LaMay, et al. 1991, p. 42).<sup>2</sup>

Cartoonists had a field day presenting images of a demonized Saddam Hussein and television resorted to cartoon techniques itself as when a NBC "war game" simulation on August 8, 1990, had a U.S. colonel pretending to be Hussein and threatening "I'll hang a hostage every day!" The media eagerly reported all of Hussein's alleged and actual crimes (suddenly focusing on actions and events that had gone unreported when Saddam was a U.S. ally, such as his use of chemical weapons against Kurdish rebels in his own country). There was even speculation on Iraq's plans for future terrorism when no current atrocities were on hand (see Christian Science Monitor, September 21, 1990) and countless TV segments on Iraqi terrorism, which, along with chemical weapons, were oft-repeated threats that never materialized.

Saddam's negative image was forged by a combination of rhetoric, popular culture demonology, and Manichean metaphysics that presented the Gulf crisis as a struggle between good and evil. The "naked aggression" of the Iraqi leader was continually denounced by the Bush administration, and from the beginning Bush demonized Hussein and personalized and simplified the conflict as that between the "good" U.S.-led coalition and "evil" Iraqis. In Michael Rogin's view, the United States regularly constructs political enemies "by the inflation, stigmatization, and demonization of political foes" (1987, p. xiii). The effect of the demonization of Saddam Hussein was to promote a climate in which the necessity to take decisive military action to eliminate him was privileged. The mainstream media endlessly repeated stories of Hussein's brutality and made countless reports on Iraqi chemical weapons, its potential nuclear capacity, and its ability to mobilize terrorist attacks on the United States and its allies. TV networks broadcast news segments about radio stations playing records that simulated rock classics with new lyrics vilifying Saddam and about T-shirts with vicious images of Saddam Hussein and the Iraqis. It is as if U.S. popular and political culture needed demonized enemies to ensure its sense of its own goodness and the media responded with the demonology of the Iraqi dictator.

Generally speaking, the United States is perpetually "in search of enemies," to use John Stockwell's phrase,<sup>3</sup> and constructs enemies with propaganda campaigns that paint some leaders, or countries, as absolute villains, while painting other leaders, who may be just as bad, or worse, as "allies." Indeed, the attack on Hussein was especially hypocritical as the United States and other "allied" powers had built up Hussein's military machine with almost unlimited military equipment and sided with him in the Iran/Iraq war. The caricature of Hussein and the Iraqis, however, was one-sided and hyperbolic, substituting cliché and image for analysis and debate. Hussein is a brutal dictator, but he is also a pragmatist with a history of cutting deals with the West. His Baath party

did torture and murder its opponents, but it also produced one of the best welfare states in the Middle East, was one of the few states in the region to give rights to women, and utilized its oil resources to provide social programs as well as weapons. Some Iraqis tortured and murdered Kuwaitis, but many were themselves drafted into the military and opposed the regime and invasion of Kuwait--as would be perfectly clear at the end of the war by scrutinizing the pitiful, surrendering Iraqi conscripts.

The Bush administration and media personalized the crisis as the result of the actions of one man, Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi president who was identified with his country throughout the war. Richard Keeble (forthcoming) points out that during the Iran/Iraq war, the media invariably referred to "Baghdad" and "Iraq" as the agents in the war, but during the Gulf crisis and war the dominant mode of reference was to "Saddam Hussein," who was presented as the sole agent of all Iraqi actions, thus collapsing Iraq into Saddam. This was misleading and dishonest as the Iraqi people were themselves victims of Saddam Hussein and his regime, but the media images of the evil Hussein reduced the Iraqis to an evil essence embodied in the Iraqi leader. Yet constructing Saddam Hussein as an absolute villain, as a demon who is so threatening and violent that he must be destroyed and eradicated, precluded negotiations and a diplomatic solution. One could not sensibly talk with such a villain or seek common ground or a diplomatic solution. Instead, one must exterminate such evil to restore stability and order in the universe. This vision appears in Hollywood movies and popular television entertainment and structured the political discourses and dominant media frames of the U.S. intervention into the complex politics of the Middle East.

Mainstream media coverage of the crisis in the Gulf tended to personalize the crisis as a conflict between George Bush and Saddam Hussein. Although Hussein was presented in purely negative terms, Bush's actions, by contrast, were praised as "decisive," "brilliant," and "masterly." On August 7, CBS correspondent Leslie Stahl spoke of Bush's "unique" diplomatic style, and the same day in the New York Times Maureen Dowd flatteringly portrayed Bush as a man of decisive action. A few days later, the Times dubbed Bush "the leader of all countries" (Aug 12, 1991, editorial). U.S. motives were described as good and pure, as when the Times pontificated that U.S. politicians "appeal to high moral values and the lessons of history....[D]eep down the United States understands that many of its partners are in the coalition only because of a coincidence of interests, not because they share a common sense of moral purpose" (Sept. 23, 1990). Few questions were raised concerning more base U.S. motives like the desire to control the flow of oil and petrodollars, to establish a permanent military presence in the area, to discipline Third World countries that refuse to submit to U.S. hegemony, or the domestic political motivations of Bush and the military (see 1.3 and 2.5). Instead, the United States was presented as the good protector of small countries against vicious bullies, while countries like Germany and Japan, which had reservations about pursuing a military solution to the crisis, were presented as weak and lacking in resolve.

Although the Iraqis were portrayed as brutish bullies, Bush and the United States were presented as strong and honorable defenders of international law and order. Newsweek proclaimed that "the president's grand plan for the post-cold war world can be summed up simply: Stop International Bullies" (Sept. 3, 1990). Many newspapers and TV commentators praised the United States as the only superpower able to stand up against aggression and enforce international law. Such fulsome praise overlooked the fact that Bush and the United States recently violated international law during the Panama invasion. Moreover, U.S. allies in the multinational coalition

included Syria, which seized parts of Lebanon in the 1980s; Turkey, which invaded Cyprus, seizing half of the island; Morocco, which invaded Somalia; and, on the sidelines, Israel, which held Arab lands seized in several wars. Double standards, however, were necessary to frame the conflict as a simple struggle between good and evil.

In sexual terms, the narrative of the Gulf war was that Saddam/Iraq were raping Kuwait, refused to pull out, and must be destroyed, with the United States threatening to "cut it off and kill it," to employ General Powell's brutal but accurate phrase. The Bush administration and media also played on sexual and racial fears in constructing their image of Saddam Hussein. The rhetoric of Iraqi "rape" and "penetration" was employed from the beginning of the crisis throughout the war.<sup>4</sup> The media demonized Saddam's Big Gun and chemical weapons, as well as his missiles that could hit Cairo and Tel Aviv. His very name was mispronounced as Sad-dam, evoking sadism and damnation, and Sod-dom, evoking sodomy. Bush constantly referred to Hussein as "Saad'm"--a mispronunciation evoking Satan, damnation, and Sodom. Using both racist and sexual rhetoric, Bush claimed that the United States went to war against the "dark chaos" of a "brutal dictator" who followed the "law of the jungle" and "systematically raped" a "peaceful neighbor" (quoted in Joel Bleifuss, "The First Stone," In These Times, March 20-26, 1991, p. 4). Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz asked rhetorically if you would "let a man like that get his hands on what are essentially the world's vital organs?" (Bleifuss 1991, p. 4).

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

The demonization of Hussein and the Iraqis was also orchestrated by their alleged possession of exotic weapons (none of which actually materialized in the Gulf war). There was perhaps as much coverage of Iraqi chemical weapons as any single topic during the crisis and war. On August 8, the television networks reported that the Iraqis were loading chemical weapons onto planes en route to Kuwait and that there would thus be Iraqi chemical weapons in the field. Henceforth, there were countless segments on Iraqi chemical weapons, the need for protective gear and antidotes, and the absolutely evil nature of the weapons. As it turned out, the Iraqis never used these weapons, in part because they did not have adequate protection against them and in part because they feared U.S. retaliation with even worse weapons. In fact, the Iraqis had never used chemical weapons in close combat with an opposing army, yet the military and the media constantly emphasized the danger from an Iraqi chemical weapons attack. Such constant evocation of Iraqi threats and atrocities intensified the demonization of the "enemy" and produced a fearful mood which prepared the public for war and ultimately the destruction of the Iraqis.

When the Iraqis began holding foreign nationals in Iraq and Kuwait as hostages in the middle of August, this story became the major focus of the crisis for some months. The Gannett

Foundation found that the term "human shields" was referred to 2,588 times in broadcast and print media from August 1, 1990, to February 28, 1991, second only to Vietnam with 7,279 mentions (LaMay, et al., p. 42). Almost every night television networks broadcast ritualistic reports depicting the plight of the hostages, negotiations for their release, the suffering of hostages' relatives, and the happy homecoming of those released. The nightly horror stories of returning "hostages" tearfully describing the barbaric actions inflicted on foreigners in Kuwait by the Iraqis provided images of innocent Americans suffering at the hands of the savage Arabs. The hostage stories personalized the crisis and provided figures of identification for U.S. audiences. Hostages were featured guests on talk shows and were interviewed in some depth for the TV news presentations. The hostage dramas presented morality tales depicting the Iraqis as evil hostage takers and the Americans and other foreign hostages as innocent victims. This scenario also replayed the primal captivity drama, one of the mainstays of U.S. popular literature that began with Indian captivity narratives and continued through media coverage of the Iran hostage crisis (see Slotkin 1973 on the captivity narrative).

### The Baby Incubator Atrocity and the Hill and Knowlton PR Campaign

But perhaps the most outrageous propaganda ploy by the Bush administration and the Kuwaiti government concerned fallacious stories about Iraqi atrocities in Kuwait. In October 1990, a tearful teenage girl testified to the House Human Rights Caucus that she had witnessed Iraqi soldiers remove fifteen babies from incubators and had seen them left to die on the floor of the hospital. The girl's identity was not revealed, supposedly to protect her family from reprisals. This baby-killing story helped mobilize support for U.S. military action, much as Bush's Willie Horton ads had helped him win the presidency by playing on primal emotions. Bush mentioned the story six times in one month alone and eight times in forty-four days; Vice-President Dan Quayle frequently referred to it, as did Schwarzkopf and other military spokespeople. Seven U.S. Senators cited the story in speeches supporting the January 12 resolution authorizing war.

In a January 6, 1992, Op-Ed piece in the New York Times, however, John MacArthur, the publisher of Harper's magazine, revealed that the unidentified congressional witness was the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the U.S. The girl had been brought to testify to Congress by the PR firm Hill and Knowlton, who had coached her and helped organize the Congressional Human Rights hearings. In addition, Craig Fuller, Bush's former chief of staff when he was vice-president and a Bush loyalist, was president of Hill and Knowlton and was involved with the PR campaign. In addition, Robert Gray, who had served as co-chair of Reagan's inaugural committee in 1981, worked on the Free Kuwait account (Miller 1992). Thus it is likely that together the U.S. and Kuwaiti government developed a propaganda campaign to manipulate the American people into accepting the Gulf war. According to reports, the Kuwaiti account was one of the most expensive PR campaigns in history, costing \$5.6 million from the period from August 20 to November 10; eventually it was estimated that the total account was \$11 million (see Ruffini 1991, p. 22, and Rowse 1991, p. 20). Hill and Knowlton organized a photo exhibition of Iraqi atrocities displayed at the UN and the U.S. Congress and widely shown on television; assisted Kuwaiti refugees in telling stories of torture; lobbied Congress; and prepared video and print material for the media. There were also reportedly six other U.S. PR firms working for the Kuwaitis (Rowse, 1991).

On January 17, 1992, ABC's "20/20" disclosed that a "doctor" who testified that he had "buried fourteen newborn babies that had been taken from their incubators by the soldiers" was also

lying. The doctor was a dentist who later admitted that he had never examined the babies and had no way of knowing how they died, nor did Amnesty International which published a report based on this testimony (Amnesty International later retracted the report, that had been frequently cited by Bush and other members of his administration). ABC also disclosed that Hill and Knowlton had commissioned a "focus group" survey, which gathers groups of people together to find out what stirs or angers them. The focus group responded strongly to the Iraqi baby atrocity stories and so Hill and Knowlton featured this in their PR campaigns for the Free Kuwait group.

Furthermore, reporter Morgan Strong revealed that Hill and Knowlton also used the wife of Kuwait's Minister of Planning who was "herself a well-known TV personality in Kuwait" in the UN hearings (TV Guide, Feb. 22, 1992, p. 12). The woman, Fatima Fahed, appeared just as the UN was debating the use of force to expel Iraq from Kuwait and she provided "harrowing details of Iraqi atrocities inside her country." Fahed claimed that her information was firsthand, stating, "Such stories...I personally have experienced." But Strong claims that when the woman was interviewed before the UN appearance, "she told me that she had no firsthand knowledge of the events she was describing" (1992, p. 13). After her Hill and Knowlton coaching, however, her story changed.

Strong also tells of how a tape from inside Kuwait, edited by Hill and Knowlton, "purported to show peaceful Kuwaiti demonstrators being fired upon by the occupying Iraqi troops." But Strong had interviewed a Kuwaiti refugee who was present at the demonstration who "said that no demonstrators were injured, and that gunshots captured on tape were, in fact, those of Iraqi troops firing on nearby resistance fighters, who had fired first at the Iraqis" (Strong 1992, p. 13). So video too was manipulated by the PR firm working with the Kuwaiti government, Bush Administration, and Congress. Hill and Knowlton's behavior led some members of the industry to complain that, "There's a wide-spread feeling within the industry that Hill and Knowlton has brought some discredit on our industry." The firm is also under investigation for its role in covering over the criminal activities of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (see the discussion in Gary Emmons, "Did PR firm invent Gulf War stories?" In These Times, Jan. 22, 1992, p. 2).

In addition, MacArthur revealed that Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), co-chairperson of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, has a close relation with Hill and Knowlton who provide low-rent office space for the Caucus and contribute money to a foundation that fronts for the Caucus and to Lantos' election campaign. Moreover, Citizens for a Free Kuwait, largely funded by the Kuwaiti government, gave \$50,000 to Lantos' foundation. Hill and Knowlton also represent Turkey and Indonesia, two countries with dismal human rights records, and they "were notably absent from the foundation's 1991 list of human rights concerns" (MacArthur, 1991, p. A17). Lantos defended concealing the identity of the witnesses and his financial arrangements with Hill and Knowlton and Citizens for a Free Kuwait, though in an editorial shortly thereafter the New York Times said that Lantos' "behavior warrants a searching inquiry by the House Ethics Committee" (Jan. 17, 1992, p. A20).

At the time of the Hill and Knowlton Kuwaiti propaganda campaign, the majority of the public in the United States was against a military intervention in the Middle East and Congress was also tending against the military option. Hill and Knowlton's campaign, however, helped turn things around, mobilizing public opinion in favor of the use of military force against Iraq. Two of the primal images employed by the campaign were the Iraqi "rape" of Kuwait and the baby atrocity

story. Rape and the murder of babies are two primal images of evil, that have often been employed in propaganda campaigns. For instance, World War I propaganda campaigns often featured stories or images of German rape and murder of babies (see Figure 2.2). In particular, British and U.S. propaganda teams produced copious atrocity stories of the dasdardly deeds of German "Huns" against innocent Belgiums during World War I; these atrocity stories helped mobilize an indifferent and isolationist American public to support U.S. entry into the war against Germany (Jowett and O'Donnell 1992 and Miller 1992).

Following the model of the World War I "rape of Belgium" campaign, Hill and Knowlton discerned that the rape metaphor was powerful and carried through a "rape of Kuwait" campaign replete with a book (Sasson 1991), newspaper articles, packaged videos, pictures, press releases, news conferences, and demonstrations. There were frequent media events such as National Free Kuwait Day, National Prayer Day (for Kuwait's liberation), and National Student Information Day; local events were also organized (see Miller 1992 for a detailed account of the campaign).

Bush, Schwarzkopf, and the media pundits used the rape metaphor continually and also repeatedly disseminated the baby atrocity story. On November 28, for instance, the television networks transmitted images of the UN testimony and focused on the killing of premature babies by the Iraqis who had allegedly taken away their incubators (the incubators were found in Kuwaiti hospitals after the war and medical personnel there denied that the Iraqis had killed the premature babies; see 10.1 for further details). The UN "testimony" was accompanied by a photo exhibition of torture victims and other exhibits staged just before the UN was to vote on whether to legitimate the use of military force if Iraq did not withdraw from Kuwait by January 15; the exhibition was set up again for the benefit of the House Foreign Affairs Committee on January 8 as it prepared to vote on Bush's request to Congress for a resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq.

This baby atrocity story was, therefore, a classic propaganda campaign to manufacture consent for the Bush administration policies. It was part of an elaborate web of deception, disinformation, and Big Lies to sell the war to the public. It revealed the U.S. president and vice-president and the top U.S. military leaders to be propagandists who did not hesitate to repeat Big Lies over and over in order to win support for the war effort. The media which repeated these lies without skepticism or inquiry also revealed itself to be a shameless instrument of U.S. propaganda. Such lying polluted political discourse and continued the trend toward the politics of lying that has been a recurrent feature of U.S. politics in recent years.

### Technology, Troops, Race, and Gender

In their coverage of the largest U.S. military intervention since Vietnam, the mainstream corporate media concentrated much of their focus on the logistics of the operation and its impact on families at the home front rather than on whether or not the deployment was a good idea and where it might lead. For the first weeks of the deployment, there was almost no discussion of whether Iraq really planned to invade Saudi Arabia, whether the situation required the massive U.S. troop deployment to stop Iraqi aggression, or, crucially, whether the U.S. force was primarily a defensive or an offensive force. In general, the media repeated endlessly the rationalizations offered by the Bush administration for its successive military deployments. In the early days of the crisis, the mainstream media dramatized the Iraqi threats to Saudi Arabian and other Gulf State oil fields, which

legitimated the U.S. military presence and the economic blockade of Iraq. Instead of analyzing what was at stake in the U.S. troop deployment, night after night the details of the U.S. military deployment were discussed. TV reports centered on desert maneuvers and the depiction of shiny and powerful new high-tech weapons. These positive images of the U.S. deployment were contrasted with frequent news reports warning against Iraqi chemical weapons and the one million strong, experienced, well-armed, and highly trained Iraqi military forces. The numerous military experts and media commentators never questioned these figures, though now there are good reasons to doubt these claims concerning the Iraqi military (see 9.3).

Against the "evil" Hussein and threatening Iraqis, the media thus posed images of the "good" American soldier and powerful U.S. technology. In the nightly repetition of these positive images of U.S. troops valiantly protecting a foreign country from aggression, the need for a strong military was repeatedly pounded into the public's psyche. "Desert dispatches" from troops in the front allowed young men and women to send greetings home. These images of wholesome young Americans in the desert to fight an evil and dangerous enemy bonded the American people with the troops and helped create positive feelings about the patriotic troops in the field. The audience was also able to identify with the plight of the troops through the frequent episodes on TV news which dealt with the calling up of reservists to serve in the Gulf, ranging from working class, to middle class, to professional groups with whom the audience could identify and empathize.

Likewise, the frequent images of planes, tanks, artillery, and more exotic high-tech items provided splendid images of U.S. military technology. In this context, it should be noted that the U.S. intervention took place in the context of debate over the cutting back of the budget of the military and CIA, and defenders of these institutions used the crisis in the Gulf to support their arguments against military cutbacks. For instance, Congress killed the B-2 bomber before the invasion; within days, Congress reinstated the funding (sanity ultimately reigned, however, and the aircraft was canceled in January 1992). The images of the military hardware and troop deployment thus functioned as advertisements for a strong military and prepared the public for the rigors of all-out war while building support for the U.S. intervention and Middle East policies. The U.S. military could not have asked for better advertisements or PR. While the military prepared for war in the Middle East, urged on by hawks like Henry Kissinger, William Safire, and columnists and editorialists in The Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, The New York Times, and National Review, the media built up a consensus for Bush administration positions, no matter how dangerous and potentially catastrophic.

In addition to the promilitary rhetoric, television provided racist imagery and discourses to position the public against the Iraqis.<sup>6</sup> Repeated images of Saddam Hussein, of mobs of Arabs demonstrating and shouting anti-U.S. slogans, and repeated associations of rich, corrupt Arabs with oil – and other Arab leaders with terrorism – provided a negative set of Arab images. Television coverage of the frequent Arab conferences during September and October, which sought Arab solutions to the problem, almost always focused on the more radical Arab leaders and featured scenes of Arab anti-American demonstrations where U.S. flags were ritualistically burned. When Secretary of State Baker visited Syria, for instance, to recruit Syrian support and troops for the anti-Iraq mobilization, the television networks stressed the links between Syria and terrorism and employed negative stereotypes of Arabs.

Although the United States was presumably intervening on behalf of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and included Arab allies in its coalition, TV coverage frequently associated Arabs with terrorism, anti-American flag burning demonstrations, and oil. Other images portrayed Arabs as premodern nomads, wandering about in the vast Middle East deserts, and thus as utterly different from "civilized" Westerners. Throughout the crisis, the dichotomy between foreign and uncivilized Arabs and civilized Westerners was drawn upon, thus replicating the racist discourse analyzed by Edward Said (1978), which founded western ideology on a distinction between the civilized and rational West and the barbaric and irrational Orient.

To be sure, there were also several TV news reports dealing with racist stereotypes of Arabs and anti-Arab images in the United States, but these segments invariably featured Hollywood film images of Arabs and neglected analysis of the range of standard TV images of Arabs, how they were framed, and with what they were associated on TV news and entertainment. Consequently, while television pointed to the perniciousness of anti-Arab violence in the United States and elsewhere during the crisis in the Gulf and then the ground war, it never disclosed its own complicity in anti-Arab racist imagery.

The presentation of race and U.S. troops was highly delicate as a large percentage of the U.S. forces serving in the Gulf were people of color; 23 percent of the U.S. military as of June 1990 were black, while the total minority percentage was 32.3 percent (Ronald Brownstein, Los Angeles Times, Dec. 6, 1990, pp. 1 and 3). It was later reported by the New York Times that 33 percent of enlisted military women and 21 percent of enlisted men serving in the Gulf were black while 47 percent of active-duty enlisted personnel were black women and 29 percent were black men; it was also estimated that 30-35 percent of those on the frontline, who would be the first to be killed, were non-Caucasian. Although some black opponents of the war made this point, generally television avoided the question of the military and race. The media mainstream ignored discussing, however, the hypocrisy of the Bush administration, which attempted to remove federal scholarship programs based on race and vetoes a civil rights bill at a time when a disproportionate amount of people of color were risking their lives for their country in the deserts of Saudi Arabia.

TV images of the military and their families pointed to the cohabitation of traditionalist images of gender and the family with more liberal images (which also, as we shall see, had an ideological function).<sup>7</sup> On one hand, the construction of gender of U.S. military families was extremely conventional, with the male soldiers going off to war, while the wife and children stayed behind. This frame reproduced the conservative division between the public sphere as the domain of male activity with the private sphere reserved for women. The frame also privileged the sexist picture of men as active and virile and women as passive and helpless. Constant pictures of wives breaking into tears as their men marched stoically to war reinforced this traditional picture, as did the juxtapositions of the men active in the desert while the women at home sought help from psychiatric counselors or support groups. As Enloe pointed out (1990), the fusion of images of "women and children" as released hostages or domestic victims on the home front reinforced images of women as helpless and dependent.

Yet the media also fixated on the new "women warriors" sent to the Gulf. Newsweek featured a September 10, 1990 cover story on women and the military, as did People magazine (September 10, 1990). As the crisis proceeded, images of women troops appeared ever more

frequently in the TV news coverage. These images also helped with military recruitment by presenting exciting images of work in a foreign country. The images of women in the military also replicate the images of women warriors, which have been popularized in film and television since the volunteer army allowed women to join. In addition, images of U.S. women in the desert were often juxtaposed with pictures of Arab women in veils, thus presenting pictures of "modern," "progressive" customs contrasted to "backward," "reactionary" regimes that continue to oppress women. Such a juxtaposition legitimated U.S. intervention in the region as a progressive force. This contrast was highlighted in mid-November, when Saudi women protested a ban on their driving automobiles with a "drive-in" during which they defiantly drove autos in Saudi cities. The Saudi women were harshly criticized by the regime and in some cases fired from their jobs; the U.S. media focused on the story for several days, contrasting the plight of Saudi women with U.S. women soldiers driving jeeps and participating actively in military life--presenting the message that the United States was bringing a progressive "modern" influence into backward Saudi Arabia.

The whole television coverage of the Persian Gulf war was detrimental to women through the constant bombardment of images of male culture and masculine values. Supporters of the war, from George Bush and Norman Schwarzkopf to troops in the desert and their supporters at home, constantly talked about "kicking ass," and when the war started, rarely has brute violence been so positively portrayed. Feminists argue that war culture helps validate brutality, which ultimately promotes violence against women (Roach 1991) and, one might add, people of color. Pilots watched porn movies before their bombing runs, thus fusing sex and violence. Throughout the Gulf war, military images and discourse totally dominated television programming and in general promoted a war culture that is primarily a male culture, thus devaluing women. Women were positioned as either devoted wives, serving as cheerleaders for the military, or women warriors--hardly an attractive array of gender ideals. Although many women actively opposed the war, they were for the most part excluded from media discourse (see Roach 1991 and Paley 1991 for documentation).

Consequently, war culture simultaneously promotes sexism and militarism. War culture devalues women, but by legitimating violence it brutalizes the whole culture, thus contributing to the militarization of U.S. society (see 10.5). The Gulf war was thus an important and dangerous cultural event, as well as a military one, promoting a military culture that had been discredited since Vietnam and had been on the defensive. Indeed, the project of winning a decisive war and the validation of the military as an important part of U.S. society was part of what the Gulf war was all about, and TV was decisive in producing precisely the images and discourses that would promote the military after a long period in which they had been discredited and on the sidelines of U.S. society.

### The Absence of Critical Voices

During the first days of the U.S. intervention in early August, there were some critical voices in the press. Conservative columnists Roland Evans and Robert Novak attacked the rhetorical "Overkill on Saddam" in the August 8, 1990, Washington Post and cited Bush's lack of outrage when his "old Chinese friends" murdered students in Tiananmen Square. The August 9 Washington Post carried a critical overview of the media demonization of "Saddam Hussein: Monster in the Making" by Marjorie Williams. The Los Angeles Times ran a critique of Bush's war policy by radical Alexander Cockburn on August 6 and by conservative Tom Bethell on August 8. The "CBS Evening News" broadcast reports from Jordan on August 6 and 7 that ran interviews providing the Arab

point of view--earning them an attack by warmongering Washington Post columnist Jim Hoagland on August 8. Four Arab-Americans were allowed on the "MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour" on August 7, though the next night the guests were almost all pro-Bush administration conservatives.

The few criticisms voiced on the television networks during the first weeks of the deployment concerned the timing of Bush's intervention; families of hostages wished he'd given them time to get out before sending in U.S. troops. For the most part, the only critical voices allowed on television specifically concerning the deployment were Arabs in the United States, Egypt, Jordan, and other countries where television networks stationed crews--and their criticisms were sometimes framed, or perceived, as "anti-American" hostility rather than rational arguments. One of the few critiques of Bush's military response from a major political source on the television networks during the first several weeks involved ABC reporter Cokie Roberts citing former UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick's questioning of whether the magnitude of the U.S. response was in line with the degree of U.S. interests ("Sunday Morning with David Brinkley," August 26, 1990); soon after, however, Kirkpatrick reverted to her usual militarism and by November was calling for a military solution.

During the early weeks of the crisis, the dominant debate in the media concerned whether the United States should begin bombing Iraq immediately to destroy their military and eliminate Saddam Hussein or continue with the UN-sanctioned economic blockade, which might produce a long deadlock and indefinite deployment of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia. On August 19, for instance, in a syndicated column, Henry Kissinger argued that it would be a disaster to get U.S. troops bogged down in the Middle East desert and urged a "surgical strike" against Iraq -- a position that he repeated on an August 24 CNN panel and continued to defend in the following months. Similar military solutions were urged on August 27 in a New York Times Op-Ed piece by William Safire and this was the line advocated by editorialists in the Wall Street Journal and National Review, and by many Israelis, military "experts," and pundits who appeared on talk shows and wrote editorial "opinion" pieces.

Zbigniew Brzezinski argued on television and in the August 16 Washington Post and August 27 Newsweek for the economic blockade strategy, "to slowly strangle them." He wrote: "My greatest fear about the ongoing crisis is that it could get out of hand. The way it has been played in the media, and even by some officials, will create a mass hysteria." Brzezinski was almost alone in advocating a "moderate" approach during the first several weeks of coverage, against those who wanted to begin the bombing. By late August, however, the war hysteria subsided somewhat and finally talk of possible negotiated settlement to the crisis, or of a long-term stalemate, began appearing during the weekend of August 25-26 -- a moderate discourse denounced by Safire in the New York Times as the "new pacificism" (Aug 27, 1990 Op-Ed column).

Thus, the major debate visible on television during the first month of the crisis was between the "stranglers" (who advocated sanctions) and the "butchers" (who advocated immediate military action), thus ignoring the question of whether it was a good idea for the United States to send so many troops to the region in the first place. There were, to be sure, Op-Ed pieces in the major newspapers warning about the dangers of the U.S. intervention and a Gulf war, but these views rarely appeared on television. Moreover, the dominant critical discourse found in the corporate media in the early weeks of the crisis was from the right. In addition to Brzezinski's and

Kirkpatrick's misgivings, conservative columnists Evans and Novak warned against portraying "Saddam Hussein as a Hitlerite madman thirsting for world conquest [which] endows the Iraqi strongman with powers he does not possess" rather than presenting him as a rational individual with whom the United States must and can deal. Patrick Buchanan and other right-wing commentators on CNN warned against the costs of war and criticized those who promoted the military solution.<sup>8</sup>

The right-wing critique of the U.S. military buildup provided further evidence of splits within the Right in the United States. While Kissinger, some core spokespeople for the military-industrial complex, and key members of the Bush administration urged a military solution, other conservatives argued that the benefit would not equal the costs. This split replicated the division between traditionalist isolationist conservatives and more interventionist ones. The isolationists represented sectors whose interests would be harmed by war and the potentially higher oil prices if the war dragged on, which would fuel inflation, while the interventionists tended to represent military-industrial and other interests that would benefit from war (though some interventionists were also, no doubt, primarily hardcore macho militarists who represented no specific economic interests but incarnated a military mentality).

No significant antiwar voices were allowed on the mainstream media during the first months of the troop build-up in Saudi Arabia and there was almost no criticism of Bush's deployment by the supine Democrats, pointing once again to the profound crisis of liberalism in the United States (Kellner 1990). The few images of antiwar demonstrators in the U.S. that appeared during the first months of the U.S. intervention utilized similar frames, coding antiwar demonstrators as Arabs, as irrational opponents of U.S. policies. U.S. demonstrators were portrayed as an unruly mob of long-haired outsiders; their discourse was rarely allowed and coverage focused instead on slogans, or images of marching crowds, with media voice-overs supplying the context. Major newspapers and newsmagazines also failed to cover the burgeoning antiwar movement. Thus, just as the media constructed a negative image in the 1960s of antiwar protestors as irrational, anti-American, and unruly, so too did the networks frame the emerging antiwar movement of the 1990s in predominantly negative terms.

There was consequently little significant debate in the mainstream media from the time that Bush first sent troops to Saudi Arabia on August 8, 1990, and little criticism of his policies. A study by the media watchdog group FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting) indicated that during the first five months of TV coverage of the crisis in the Gulf, ABC devoted only 0.7 percent of its total gulf coverage to opposition to the military buildup. CBS allowed 0.8 percent, while NBC devoted 1.5 percent, a hearty 13.3 minutes to all stories about protests, antiwar organizations, conscientious objectors, religious dissenters, and the like. Consequently, of the 2,855 minutes of TV coverage of the Gulf crisis from August 8 to January 3, FAIR claimed that only 29 minutes, roughly 1 percent, dealt with popular opposition to the U.S. military intervention in the Gulf.<sup>9</sup>

Not only was the large antiwar movement ignored, but "[n]one of the foreign policy experts associated with the peace movement--such as Edward Said, Noam Chomsky, or the scholars of the Institute for Policy Studies--appeared on any nightly news program" (FAIR 1991, press release). Instead media "experts" came from conservative think tanks like the American Enterprise Institute and the Center for Strategic and International Studies, with the centrist Brookings Institute providing "the 'left' boundary of debate." Moreover, not only were most TV commentators conservative and

pro-Pentagon, but they were overwhelmingly white and male. FAIR indicated that caucasians made up 98 percent of "Nightline's" guests and 87 percent of "MacNeil/Lehrer's"; the proportion of women was the same proportion as people of color. A Times-Mirror poll, however, that was recorded in September 1990 and January 1991 discovered "pluralities of the public saying they wished to hear more about the views of Americans who oppose sending forces to the Gulf" (Special Times-Mirror News Interest Index, January 31, 1991). Furthermore, the voices of troops who were alarmed at their deployment in the Saudi desert and who objected to primitive living conditions there were silenced, in part by Pentagon restrictions on press coverage, in part by a press corps unable or unwilling to search for dissenting voices.

Thus, the TV debate on the crisis of the Gulf was marked by an absence of critical voices and vigorous debate. While the country at large was deeply divided and serious debates went on all over the country, this debate was largely absent in the mainstream media, especially television. Indeed, TV failed to adhere to even the most basic journalistic standards and provided by and large a one-sided, highly biased range of voices that favored the Bush administration's war policy. Once again, television failed to vigorously debate issues of national importance and thus contributed to the continuing decline of democracy in the United States.

## 2.2 Media Pools and Pentagon Control

From the beginning of the U.S. deployment, the press was prohibited from having direct access to the troops. Journalists were instead organized by the military into pools that were taken to sites selected by the military itself, and then reporters were allowed only to interview troops with their military "mindes" present.<sup>10</sup> Laird Anderson, a journalism professor with experience in both the press and military, stated: "These rules are terribly restrictive. If I were a reporter in Saudi Arabia, I would not want to be in the hands of an Army public information officer. They are conservative by nature and their answer to any request will be 'No.' As the old saying goes, truth will be the first casualty" (cited in Contra Costa Times, Jan. 18, 1991). Press and video coverage were also subject to censorship, so that, in effect, the military tightly controlled press coverage of the U.S. military deployment in the Gulf and then the action in the Gulf war.

Consequently, no independent access to the troops was allowed and reporters were only able to visit troops when escorted by public affairs officers. The president of CBS News, Eric Ober, wrote in the Wall Street Journal (Jan. 17, 1991): "As journalists, we need to seek out the story and relay it to the public. If we interview a soldier, we want to obtain frank, unpackaged responses that give people a better feel for the story at the front. But if Bob Simon, CBS News' veteran war correspondent, interviews the soldier with a military escort by his side, will the soldier really tell the truth? Will we really find out what is happening in the desert? I have to conclude that the answer is no." Yet CBS and the other mainstream media submitted to the pool system, encouraging William Kovach, curator of Harvard's Nieman Foundation, to note: "Since 1970, the military has worked on plans [to control the press during a war]. I blame the press for not making as careful plans as the military" (cited in Nan Levinson, Index on Censorship, April/May 1991, p. 27).

Reporters without escort who ventured out on their own were detained or told to leave upon arrival at bases some were even roughed up (see Fialka 1992). During the war, credentials were lifted if reporters broke the rules of the pool system; New York Times reporter Chris Hedges had his

credentials temporarily lifted for interviewing Saudi shopkeepers fifty miles from the Kuwaiti border (Schanberg 1991). Reporters were not allowed to forward their material until it had been subjected to "security review," in other words, military censorship.

Such control of press coverage was unprecedented in the history of U.S. warfare. Historically, journalists have been allowed direct access to combat troops and sites, and frontline reporting was distinguished during World War II and Vietnam (see Knightly 1975). The military organized the pool system, however, because they perceived that reporting had been too critical in Vietnam, and they blamed the press for helping erode public support for the war. Following the example of British censorship of the press during the Falkland Islands/Malvinas war, the United States controlled press access during the Grenada invasion and instituted the pool system during the Panama invasion. The pool system allowed the U.S. military to keep the press completely away from the battle action in Panama during the decisive first day of the invasion and to keep most of the press interned on a U.S. military base during the next days. Because the press was prevented from discerning the extent of civilian deaths and the destructiveness of the invasion, the military used this strategy of information management as the model employed during the Gulf war.

Although the press was unable to adequately cover the Panama invasion, failing to get any pictures of U.S. destruction of Panamanian barrios that purportedly supported Noriega or of the Panamanians killed by the invasion, they generally went along with the restrictions and capitulated as well to the pool system during the crisis in the Gulf and then the Gulf war. On January 10, a New York-based public law firm, the Center for Constitutional Rights, filed a federal lawsuit against the Pentagon in an effort to overturn press restrictions. Filed on behalf of The Nation, The Village Voice, The Progressive, and other alternative media and progressive journalists, the suit claimed that military "escorts engaged in arbitrary censorship of interviews, photography, and altered the activities of soldiers when reporters come into their presence, not for security reasons, but to ensure favorable coverage of their military presence" (cited in Anderson 1991, p. 23). In addition to First Amendment arguments, the suit held that the press pools organized and controlled by the military provided preferential treatment of select news organizations; indeed, the New York Times was only assigned one reporter to the pools while the military newspaper Stars and Stripes was awarded several. The military paid travel expenses and facilitated visa arrangements for some correspondents, "anticipated to favor the U.S. military," while the French were excluded completely from the pools, leading to a protest and threatened lawsuit from Agence Presse de France.

The major media outlets, however, neither joined the suit, nor adequately covered it, and the war started and finished without any real challenge to the pool system. After the war, U.S. District Judge Leonard Sand dismissed the suit on April 17, claiming that the issues were "too abstract and conjectural" and that the suit was irrelevant because the war was over. As we shall see in the following chapters, the pool system worked to manage the news flow during the Gulf war and to ensure support for the Bush administration policies.

When the Pentagon suggested giving the major news organizations more time in the field in October, General Schwarzkopf vetoed the suggestion (New York Times, May 5, 1991, p. A8) and the military tightly controlled both access and content of the news in one of the most thoroughgoing exercises in news management and the manufacture of public opinion in U.S. history. During the crisis in the Gulf, there were thus few reports of dissenting soldiers or critics of the war. An article

in the December 9, 1990, Washington Post, however, suggested that a large number of troops expressed "reservations over U.S. involvement in what they see as an internal Arab conflict." When President Bush visited the troops in Saudi Arabia on Thanksgiving Day, "a truckload of soldiers drove past television cameras and shouted to reporters, 'We're not supposed to be here! This isn't our war! Why are we over here?'" An Army lieutenant told the Post that "this is not worth one American losing his life. If they [Iraqis] were threatening us, I'd be ready to lay down my life in a minute--but this is different."

Consequently, although there was a pointed debate among the U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia concerning the wisdom of their deployment, the U.S. public was not allowed to hear this debate. Any information that might have raised questions concerning Bush administration policy was considered off limits. Reporters critical of the deployment were not given access to top military brass or allowed to join the pools, while compliant reporters were rewarded with pool assignments and interviews. In particular, the Pentagon favored local reporters sympathetic to the military, allowing them access to troops from their region to write puff pieces that positively portrayed the troop deployment (see the Progressive, Feb. 1991, pp. 25ff). As the New York Times put it: "The military, assuming that correspondents from the small-town press would write sympathetic articles, provided free transportation to Saudi Arabia and special access to servicemen and women from their areas. Aides also analyzed articles written by other reporters to determine their interests and to screen out interview requests from those likely to focus on mistakes by the military" (May 5, 1991, p. A8).

Clearly the military was concerned primarily with its image and with avoiding criticism rather than with legitimate national security concerns. Thus, reporters who were critical of U.S. policy found themselves without access to sources or sites. For two months, New York Times reporter James LeMoyne requested an interview with General Schwarzkopf, but his request was denied because his articles "were not 'liked'" by the U.S. military (New York Times, Feb. 17, 1991). Lemoyne had written a story that included quotes from soldiers who criticized President Bush and "emotionally questioned the purpose of their being sent to fight and perhaps die in Saudi Arabia." LeMoyne was later told that "all hell broke loose" after the article was published, and senior commanders chastised the soldiers who had expressed critical views. After the LeMoyne story, for "six weeks almost all print news reporters were denied visits to Army units," though television personalities like NBC weatherman Willard Scott and sports announcer O. J. Simpson were given free access to the troops because they did not "cause problems" (New York Times, Feb. 17, 1991).

Some television reporters also found themselves blacklisted. ABC's John Laurence was refused access to the troops after he had helped produce a segment detailing heat and sand problems with equipment in the desert and describing ammunition shortages. Laurence had previously angered the military in Vietnam when "CBS Reports" aired his footage of soldiers refusing orders in 1970. Cutting off access to critical reporters obviously has the effect of inhibiting reporters to criticize the military, knowing that henceforth their access will be restricted.

Howell Raines, the bureau chief of the New York Times in Washington, claimed: "The Bush administration managed to prevent us from doing our jobs to an unprecedented extent." He claimed that the military betrayed the media, promising that the restrictions would be temporary and then keeping them in effect throughout the war. "We were had!" Raines exclaimed. "In our discussions

with the administration we went over everything from a practical point of view--visas, transport, etc. The pools were not going to be more than a temporary measure. Everything was steeped in the atmosphere of a 'gentleman's agreement.'" But just before Christmas, he wrote, the Pentagon sent out a seven-page list of restrictions about which the press's representatives had not been consulted. They protested, some changes were made, but in January, the media were faced with a new document, presented as an ultimatum. "My colleagues and I discussed the idea of a legal action against the Pentagon," Raines noted. "Then, all of a sudden, the war began" (cited in Chantal de Rudder, Le Nouvel Observateur, No. 1387, June 6, 1991).

Hence, the military was ultimately able to control the flow of information coming from the press in the field by allowing access only to those favorable to the military and by exercising a security review of reports and video produced by the pools. This latter practice amounted to blatant censorship that attempted to block all critical commentary coming out of Saudi Arabia. A "Nightline" episode on press control showed public affairs escorts breaking in and cutting off discussion between the press and the soldiers on the front when topics were broached that the military did not want to see discussed. When an Air Force reservist from Michigan, Sgt. Dick Runels, sent his local paper letters detailing the poor living and sanitary conditions in the desert and questioning the U.S. mission in the Middle East, Bay Voice editor Tom Stanton said that military authorities found out about the letters and reprimanded Runels, saying that his letters would be censored in the future (United Press International, Nov. 30, 1990). During the war itself, as I shall report later, there were many other examples of press censorship by the military.

In addition, television controlled and censored antiwar advertisements. Alex Molnar, a University of Wisconsin professor and father of a twenty-one-year old stationed in Saudi Arabia, founded a Military Families Support Network. Molnar's poignant letter, protesting the troop buildup, was published in the New York Times on August 23 on the Op-Ed page, but CNN and all three networks turned down a thirty-second commercial paid for by Molnar's group. CNN and ABC and CBS affiliates also turned down a paid antiwar ad produced by the Los Angeles chapter of the Physicians for Social Responsibility, although some NBC stations and smaller affiliates ran the ad. However, pro-war commercials, sponsored by the Coalition for America at Risk and Free Kuwait group, were shown on many local stations (Clarkson, In These Times, Jan. 30, 1991, and Ruffini 1991, p. 22).

The lack of any critical voices in the mainstream media during the first weeks of the crisis disclosed the timidity, narrowness, and fundamental subservience of the mainstream media, especially the television networks, in the United States. The broadcast media are afraid to go against a perceived popular consensus, to alienate people, or to take unpopular stands because they are afraid of losing viewers and thus profits. Because U.S. military actions have characteristically been supported by the majority of the people, at least in their early stages, television is extremely reluctant to criticize potentially popular military actions. The broadcast media also rely on a narrow range of established and safe commentators and are not likely to reach out to new and controversial voices in a period of national crisis.

The TV networks usually wait until a major political figure or established "expert" speaks against a specific policy and that view gains certain credibility as marked by opinion polls or publication in "respected" newspapers or journals. Unfortunately, the crisis of democracy in the

United States is such that the leadership of the Democratic party has largely supported the conservative policies of the past decade and so the party leaders are extremely cautious and slow to criticize foreign policy actions, especially potentially popular military actions. The crisis of liberalism is so deep in the United States that establishment liberals are afraid of being called "wimps," or "soft" on foreign aggression and thus often support policies that their better instincts should lead them to oppose. Consequently, the only criticisms of a major U.S. military intervention that appeared on network television during the first weeks of the Gulf crisis came from hawks like Kirkpatrick and Brzezinski. On the other hand, it is not certain if no mainstream opposition was to be found<sup>11</sup> or whether television simply ignored any voices that would interrupt the manufacture of public support for the U.S. intervention.

In any case, promilitary discourse dominated the corporate media during the first crucial weeks of the U.S. build-up and many media voices subtly or not urged military solutions to the crisis: Some of the hawks argued that only an all-out war against Iraq would solve the crisis, while others suggested that it would be a long-term disaster if Saddam Hussein was allowed to survive, thus implying that the only real solution to the crisis was to remove him from power. The media privileging of military solutions and whipping up of war fever was so extreme that even some of its own representatives began noticing it. On an August 26 "David Brinkley Show," for example, Sam Donaldson complained of war hysteria in the media, the repeated emphasis on the inevitability of war, and the failure to stress the need for negotiation and peaceful settlement. The next day on "Nightline," however, Donaldson announced that the "war psychosis that was gripping Washington has eased." Thus, from late August into the following weeks of the crisis, some media voices began indicating that the economic blockade of Iraq, international pressure, and negotiations might be able to get Iraq out of Kuwait and that it would not be necessary to fight a war to resolve the crisis.

### 2.3 CNN's "Crisis in the Gulf"

Yet, in some quarters aggressive militarism continued to be the norm. A new nightly program appeared, CNN's "Crisis in the Gulf," which quickly became the most jingoistic and militarist program during the first months of the confrontation. The Gulf war brought CNN into international prominence, producing higher name recognition, ratings, and advertising revenues. CNN, the creation of Atlanta entrepreneur Ted Turner, began service ten years before as the first cable news channel on the air twenty-four hours per day. Within a decade, it had developed the largest news operation in the world with a staff of 125, compared to 60 to 80 in the major networks, and with news bureaus throughout the world. In particular, CNN had established itself in the Middle East with news bureaus and broadcast outlets connected to the United States via satellite feed and was thus well-positioned to provide coverage of the crisis in the Gulf and then the Gulf war.

CNN's "Crisis in the Gulf" program began as a half-hour segment on August 13 and four days later was expanded to an hour, preempting CNN's prime-time news program for news on the Middle East crisis and its domestic and international ramifications. Although, at first, coanchors Bernard Shaw in Washington and Jonathan Mann in Cairo offered more perspectives on the Gulf crisis than the "Big Three" networks, the program soon degenerated into outright military propaganda. By September, the program opened with dramatic musical chimes and titles showing pictures of U.S. troops marching across the desert, following by images of Saddam Hussein and George Bush, the two archetypical enemies, and then images of Arabs, the desert, and oil, the

symbols of the Middle East. These iconic images personalized the conflict as a confrontation between Bush and Hussein, projected clichéd images of Arabs and the Middle East (oil, camels, desert--an exotic Otherness to the West), and glorified the U.S. troops as the martial music chimed in the background to dramatize the U.S. military intervention as the good U.S. warriors marched in to solve the crisis.

The news segments featured the key events of the day concerning the crisis, celebratory stories of U.S. troops in the Middle East, martial music between segments, and statistical tidbits before and after the advertising breaks posing trivia questions concerning the military intervention or citing statistics like the number of foreign nationals being held hostage within Iraq or Kuwait. The military images, music, statistics, and news stories were punctuated with discussions, usually dominated by hard-line right-wingers, on such issues as U.S. military responses, the possibilities of terrorism, and other predominantly military elements of the crisis. The program often closed with images of Saddam Hussein and Iraqi soldiers marching to military music, leaving the spectator with a notion of the threat to "the American way of life" posed by the Iraqi army.

But it was the constant flow of positive military images on CNN's "Crisis in the Gulf" and the extremely positive images of the U.S. troop deployment that was most supportive of the military option to the crisis. Night after night, CNN, and the other networks as well, broadcast an incessant flow of pictures of troops, airplanes, ships, tanks, and military equipment, with interview after interview of the troops and their military spokespeople. Footage of the U.S. military was frequently supplemented on CNN by footage from the British and other allies' military establishments, resulting in seemingly endless images of military hardware and personnel. Interviews with the U.S. soldiers "humanized" the coverage, picturing "our boys" (and some military women as well) as innocent and heroic protectors against Arab greed and aggression. And the segments of families of the troops on the home front, suffering from divided families, or economic hardship (especially for reservists), created bonds and sympathy between the military families and the public that ultimately was an important component of the construction of public support for the U.S. policies during the war itself.

Lee and Solomon (1991) have discussed the propensity of the mainstream media to use "we" in such a way to identify the media spokesperson with the government or military and both this form of discourse and the use of "our" ("our troops," "our country") were very frequent in the crisis in the Gulf and Gulf war TV coverage. The military "experts" almost always used the term "we" to describe U.S. military policies or action, and this was perfectly appropriate as they actually identified totally with the military and were no more than propaganda experts speaking on behalf of the Pentagon. TV "journalists" such as Barbara Walters, Tom Brokaw, and Dan Rather also used "we" and "our" to bind themselves to the military and the nation. "We" and "our" also binds the audience into an intimate relation with the troops and nurtures a sense of shared national purpose (and dangers, once the war started). In this way, the military was identified with the nation and the TV audience was fused into a unitary bond with the United States and its (our) troops. The media thus became propaganda organs for the military state to ensure that "we" support "our" troops--and consequently submit to the policies of the Bush administration and Pentagon.

Further, the audience was prepared daily throughout the crisis for the rigors of war. From September through January, there were frequent TV network presentations of possible scenarios for

a U.S. invasion of Iraq and all-out war in the region. During the weekend of September 15-16, there were reports on Air Force General Michael Dugan's claim that only an aggressive air war against Iraq would succeed in getting Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. Time magazine published a report in the same period citing a State Department official saying: "If we are serious about going beyond getting Saddam out of Kuwait—and we are damn serious about it—then war is just about inevitable" (cited in In These Times, Sept. 26, 1990, p. 4). Dugan was fired for telling reporters that Saddam Hussein's government and key Iraqi installations were targeted for bombing--all of which turned out to be true.

Yet General Dugan merely said in public what administration officials were saying in private and even ultrahawk Pat Buchanan attacked the "clowns" who were calling for bombing Iraq (CNN "Crossfire," Sept. 13, 1990). Two weeks later, an aide of Defense Secretary Dick Cheney indicated that the United States was planning a massive invasion of Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein and that casualties were estimated to be over 20,000 U.S. troops and hundreds of thousands of Arabs (International Herald Tribune, Sept. 28, 1990, p. 1). Other estimates indicated that the casualties would be even higher, but there was little discussion of the extent of the casualties in the mainstream media or speculation of what would really happen in an all-out war (see the analysis by James Bennet in Sifrey and Cerf 1991, pp. 355-367).

War scenarios, however, continued to be leaked to the media, and CNN and the other networks willingly broadcast them: During the weekend of September 22-23, there were reports, with diagrams, charting the course of a U.S. invasion and all-out war. Such reports possibly created the impression that war was inevitable and helped prepare the public for the coming campaign against Iraq. Indeed, the constant projection of war scenarios could have created a desire for war to resolve the situation or to relieve the tension built up by the frenzied reporting which, especially in CNN's "Crisis in the Gulf," merged reports, military statistics, speculation, music, and images of war into a nightly spectacle that normalized, and perhaps created a desire for, war.

Thus, CNN's nightly "Crisis in the Gulf" report was especially hawkish, privileging promilitary discourses and imagery. The main emphasis of the coverage was on U.S. troop deployment, and military spokespeople were the most frequent commentators. Although some exmilitary officials warned against the dangers of war and urged a peaceful solution, the overall tone of the nightly report was highly militaristic and chauvinist. Although Ted Turner used his Turner broadcasting networks during the cold war with the Soviet Union to plead the case of détente, friendly relations with the U.S.S.R., world peace, nuclear disarmament, environmental protection, and other worthy issues, during the Gulf crisis CNN was little more than a propaganda organ for the military, promoting almost without exception U.S. military intervention in the Middle East and a military solution to the crisis.

Yet CNN also presented more Arab points of view and a broader range of commentary than the other networks, in part because they had opened bureaus throughout the Middle East and in part because they had so much air time to fill, as their twenty-four hour news operation focused almost exclusively on the Gulf crisis and war from early August through mid-March. Exceptions to the hegemonic military discourse in the CNN nightly broadcast included appearances by former Attorney General Ramsey Clark and a conservative opposing the U.S. intervention on CNN's "Crossfire" on September 13, though the "liberal" Michael Kingsley replied in response to Clark's alleged "pacifism" that on this one he was in agreement with rightist Pat Buchanan. The other

break with militarist discourse during the first two months of the CNN "Crisis in the Gulf" came on September 27-28 when a two-part program "Waging Peace" brought together individuals to discuss possible peaceful resolutions to the crisis. By October, the coverage was somewhat more balanced and on October 25, "Special Assignment: The Invasion Files" featured military experts discussing the difficulties of desert warfare and in some cases arguing against the military option.

#### 2.4 Omissions, Silences, and Unasked Questions

When the U.S. policy turned from a defensive posture to an aggressive one, after Bush doubled the number of troops sent to the Gulf in mid-November, the media dramatized Iraqi brutality toward Kuwait and alleged mistreatment of U.S. and foreign hostages. On the other hand, there was for the first time a debate over U.S. Gulf policy after Bush, arguably, turned the Desert Shield into a Desert Sword aimed at Saddam Hussein and Iraq. From November through January, coverage veered back and forth from discourses suggesting the inevitability of war or positively urging an immediate military solution to cautionary warnings about the dangers of war and the desirability of a diplomatic solution. Efforts of Mitterrand and Soviet leaders to mediate the crisis and to seek a diplomatic solution were widely covered, as were continuing hawk discourses and arguments that only a military intervention could get Iraq out of Kuwait. Members of the U.S. Congress began speaking out against the administration policy and Congress held hearings on the war that were usually televised in their entirety by the congressional C-SPAN channels and covered by CNN and more sporadically by the three mainstream networks. The Big Three TV networks failed, however, to present any special reports on the hearings or to interrupt their daily commercial programming as they often did during the Vietnam war in the 1960s and the Watergate hearings in the 1970s.

In the Senate hearings on U.S. Middle East policy in late November, Sam Nunn, chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee holding the hearings, noted in his opening statement: "The question is whether military action is wise at this time and in our own national interest. Is it in our vital interest to liberate Kuwait through military action by a largely American military force?" (New York Times, Nov. 28, 1990, p. A8). A number of witnesses from previous administrations advised against military action in the immediate future but did not raise many of the crucial economic, ecological, political, and military questions concerning what would actually happen in a Middle East war. Although the witnesses and senators made some good arguments about the dangers of a war in the Middle East, they failed to ask many of the key and hard questions concerning the dangers of the military option that I shall pose in this section.

Furthermore, the mainstream media failed to adequately cover the hearings and debate the key issues of war and peace. A study by Malek and Leidig (1991) concluded that the week of November 25 to December 1 "saw coverage of congressional dissent in the press largely replaced or overshadowed by news which supported the Administration's position. Sources from the State Department, the Defense Department, and the Central intelligence Agency led the discussion. Headlines reflecting official policy objectives dominated the scene, while editorials favored the Administration's opinion" (p. 18).

One of the key issues that a nation faces is the choice between war and peace to resolve difficult crises threatening its national interests. When a nation is confronted with a challenge to

economic interests and international law, such as Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, basically there are two ways to resolve the crisis: war or diplomacy. For the mainstream media, however, the options were reduced to waiting for sanctions to work or going to war immediately. There was never any real push for a diplomatic solution to the crisis evident in the mainstream media which sharply restricted the terms of debate; nor did key congressional leaders push for a diplomatic solution urging instead the sanctions option. Furthermore, there was never a serious debate in the media concerning precisely what U.S. interests and political principles were at stake in the crisis in the Gulf; nor was there adequate discussion of what was involved concerning the competing options for getting Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. A democratic social order would necessarily engage in intense debate concerning precisely what was at stake in the crisis in the Gulf and whether a military or a diplomatic resolution to the crisis was preferable. Reflecting on the media's failure to adequately debate the issue of war and peace, Ruffini wrote: "[D]uring the months when the Bush administration was maneuvering us relentlessly from economic sanctions and the defense of Saudi Arabia toward the crushing of Iraq's military power and probably ground warfare, the mighty American press refused a fair hearing to the case for peace. With some notable exceptions, the media chose to ignore clear and early signs that the administration was preparing for a full-scale war against Iraq--and when that prospect could not be denied, helped make it appear to be inevitable through the business-as-usual transmission of the war whoops of the administration" (1991, p. 21). Ruffini also reported: "Of the 25 largest U.S. newspapers...only one--the Rocky Mountain News in Denver--has argued for the most part against military action even as a last resort to dislodge Saddam Hussein's troops from Kuwait" (1991, p. 22).

Although before and after the outbreak of the Gulf war, it was argued repeatedly that "the use of force was inevitable," in fact, nothing in history is inevitable. Such a dubious doctrine conceals the U.S. blocking of any possibility of a negotiated settlement and its active promotion of the rush to war. The argument of the Bush administration against diplomacy was that "aggression should not be rewarded." This argument, however, was hypocritical, obtuse, and beside the point. The U.S. and its coalition had been engaging systematically in aggression for decades and to follow such a rigorous and absolutist principle in the case of Iraq, while disregarding the aggression of the United States, Israel, Syria, Turkey, or other countries in the alliance against Iraq, is hypocritical, a perfect instance of the double standard discourse that marked the Bush administration and media Gulf policy from the beginning. In fact, the phrase "we will not reward aggression" was really a code word for "we refuse any diplomatic solution" and thus lacked cognitive and moral content. Furthermore, one could have engaged in a diplomatic process that did not reward Iraq, but which made it possible for them to leave Kuwait with a bare minimum of facesaving. There is significant evidence that such a course could have worked, but it was never pursued by the Bush administration.

### The Failure of Contextualization

The media generally fail to adequately contextualize historical events, tending to simplistic explanations which omit complexity and history. Failure to adequately contextualize the Gulf crisis, I submit, contributed to the eventual military resolution of the crisis and intensified the crisis of democracy. To begin, the mainstream media did not discuss how it was that U.S. policy toward Iraq created the crisis in the first place. As noted in Chapter 1, the United States tilted toward Iraq in the Iran-Iraq war and helped build up Saddam Hussein's military machine, continuing to give Iraq economic aid and material used to build up the Iraqi military right up to the invasion of Kuwait.

There was no discussion about how failures of U.S. policy had contributed to the crisis nor how the U.S. intervention and a subsequent war would be in the interests of the Bush administration and Pentagon.

Crucially, there was a failure to contextualize the Gulf crisis within a broader Middle East frame. Obviously, the crisis in the Gulf was related to the political economy of oil in the region, the division between rich and poor Arab nations, and the complex inter-Arab relations as well as the U.S. relation to the region and the complex web of relations between the U.S., Iraq, and Kuwait. Further, the crisis in the Gulf also concerned the relations between Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Iran and their battles for hegemony in the region. In addition, relations between Israel and the Arab states, as well as the Palestinian Intifada for an independent Palestinian state, were involved. The crisis was influenced by the conflicting pan-Arab ideologies contrasted with Islamic fundamentalist ones and by combinations of these tendencies in several countries. The Middle East was thus a complex cauldron of seething rivalries with competing interests, ideologies, and power struggles (the articles in Bennis and Moushabeck 1991 and Bresheeth and Yuval-Davis 1991 help clarify this context). The situation was intensified by the vast oil resources of the region and its extreme militarization. Indeed, the U.S. contributed heavily to the arming of the Middle East, which had become one of the most militarized regions of the world (see Tilly 1991, pp. 38-40).

Instead of attempting to clarify this complexity, the media constructed a highly simplistic narrative: Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait; he wouldn't leave; and war was necessary. This narrative leaves out the crucial fact that the United States and the other Western coalition powers built up the military machine of the Iraqis; that Kuwait and Iraq had an extremely complex and conflictual relation; and that U.S. policy had long asserted its interests in controlling the flow of Gulf oil and in maintaining a military presence in the region. It failed to clarify why Saddam Hussein refused to leave Kuwait and why it was in the interests of George Bush and the U.S. military to have a war.

Thus, there was no context to understand the crisis and no Big Picture or overview of the issues involved. In some ways, what was not shown or discussed in the mainstream media was as significant as what was portrayed. There was almost nothing in the mainstream media on the geopolitical history of the Middle East region where the confrontation was occurring; there was little discussion of the history of the borders in the region or of the complex relations between colonial powers and Arab states, between Israel and the Arab states, or between the Arab states themselves. The media also avoided analysis of the history of U.S. involvement in the region, the precise nature of U.S. interests in oil production, the political economy of oil, and the relations between U.S. oil companies and the governments of the region. Nor was the question raised as to why the United States reacted so aggressively to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, while accepting the earlier Iraqi invasion of Iran, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Syrian and Israeli occupations of Lebanon, and Israeli occupation of land claimed by the Palestinians and others. Although there were many Israelis and their supporters on the media daily attacking Iraq and calling for a military solution to the crisis, there was no discussion of why Israel was promoting the military option and why it was in their interest to do so. And there was almost no discussion of the interesting parallels between the U.S. invasion of Panama and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

The only attempt to contextualize the events by the major networks during the crisis in the

Gulf was an ABC special, "A Line in the Sand" (Sept. 11, 1990). Note that the title of this program parrots Bush's own phrase denoting his resolve that U.S. forces would draw "a line in the sand" to protect U.S. interests in the region. The program glossed over the complex geopolitical history of the Middle East in moments, without addressing the issues that I posed above. Peter Jennings mentioned in passing that the borders of the states involved in the crisis were imposed by Britain earlier in the century, but he provided no real historical analysis. Jennings constantly mentioned that "geography is important" as he walked on a simulated map, from one country to another, an imperial televisual colossus of the West stomping on Middle Eastern countries, but he seemed unaware that history was also important.

Jennings ended his special, moreover, on a disturbingly hawkish note. After mentioning the spectrum of possible resolutions to the crisis, ranging from U.S. air strikes to peaceful negotiations, he claimed that the "worst option of all" might be for Saddam Hussein to withdraw intact to Iraq, preserving his military machine, chemical weapons, and potential nuclear weapons for future mischief in the area. Jennings's implication was that it would be better to take the route of eliminating Hussein completely; thus he implicitly made the argument for a U.S. military attack on Iraq.

The ABC special did present some interesting information in a historical montage of the 1990 events that led up to the Iraqi invasion and put some (no doubt warranted) blame on Bush administration officials for failing to give Saddam Hussein clear signals before his invasion that the United States would resolutely oppose his intervention into Iraq. Articles in the New York Times and some television newscasts took similar positions, pointing out that State Department officials and the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, indicated that the U.S. had no treaties with Kuwait and no position on the disputes between Iraq and Kuwait (see 1.1). The ABC program and subsequent newspaper stories suggested that the Bush administration thus might have given the green light to the Iraqis to invade Kuwait--promoting speculation that the U.S. might have suckered Saddam Hussein into invading, precisely to deploy the show of force of the U.S. military and to reassert the U.S. claim to military superpower status.<sup>12</sup>

Although the mainstream media positively presented the diplomatic moves toward a peaceful resolution of the crisis in early December, for months the corporate media failed to criticize Bush's obvious reluctance to negotiate a peaceful diplomatic solution to the crisis. It was obvious that the Bush administration was doing everything possible to block any negotiated settlement (see 1.2), but there was no major analysis of the reluctance of the Bush administration to negotiate a peaceful solution nor was there discussion of the reasons that the military option was in the interests of the Bush administration and Pentagon (see 1.3). Whereas a Newsweek poll on October 29 indicated that 69 percent of Americans thought that "President Bush should pay more attention to a diplomatic solution to the crisis," the mainstream media rarely criticized his refusal to negotiate and usually legitimized his unwillingness to directly seek a diplomatic solution with the Iraqis (see 1.2). Instead, the corporate media reproduced the Bush administration rationale for its policies and thus contributed to the march toward war.

In addition, there was little questioning of the Bush administration's claim that it was its hard line that forced Saddam Hussein to accept proposed negotiations between the countries and Iraq's subsequent agreement to release all foreign hostages in early December. There are, however, strong

arguments that it was precisely the growing opposition to his bellicose Middle East Policy by the U.S. public that forced Bush to agree to negotiations. In light of the later public support for the war it is useful to recall that before and after the November 29 UN resolution that legitimized force as a potential resolution to the crisis, Bush's approval rating for his handling of the crisis was falling dramatically. This drop was in part due to the emerging antiwar movement that television finally recognized by December and presented some sympathetic reports of the opposition to administration policies. The release of foreign hostages by the Iraqis in December shifted the network focus from military to diplomatic solutions, but during the stalemate in the talks during December and January, the networks swung back and forth between military and diplomatic solutions to the crisis.

And yet the anti-Iraq propaganda was so developed in the mainstream media that even Saddam Hussein's stated willingness to negotiate with the United States and his surprising offer to release all foreign hostages was portrayed negatively. The December 1 NBC newscast used soldiers and a mother of a soldier about to go to the Middle East to express skepticism whether Saddam Hussein could be trusted and whether one could negotiate with him. Sgt. Brian Callum stated: "I'm skeptical if Saddam Hussein will budge an inch." Interestingly, the identical clip was aired the same night on the CNN "Crisis in the Gulf" report, raising questions if the U.S. military was staging seemingly spontaneous soldier-in-the-field reactions. On the other hand, such response did not need to be rehearsed because the media had created such a negative image of Saddam Hussein that people naturally and spontaneously thought the worst of him and mistrusted all gestures, however promising. Both the NBC and CNN reports on December 1, however, continued to present Bush's moves favorably and failed to ask why Bush had taken so long to consider diplomatic negotiations with Iraq (which, in retrospect, appear as a smokescreen to appease domestic fears of war and antiwar public opinion).

#### The Nuclear Threat, Congressional Debate, and Media Blindspots

During the weeks preceding the war itself, the Bush administration attempted to deflect attention from the growing concern about the advisability of war by producing stronger reasons why war might be necessary. "Focus group" interviews and a New York Times poll indicated that U.S. citizens were most disturbed by reports that Iraq might possess a nuclear weapons capacity. During Bush's Thanksgiving visit to the U.S. troops in the Saudi desert, he dramatized the dangers of Saddam Hussein having a nuclear capacity as a justification to fight and eliminate him. This argument was repeated over the Thanksgiving weekend by Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and national security adviser Brent Scowcroft. According to them, recent intelligence information revealed that Saddam Hussein might have a nuclear capacity within one year, dramatizing again the dangers of the Iraqi president and implicitly supporting the need to totally eliminate him and his military capacity through decisive military action.

For some days, the television networks failed to question the claim advanced by the Bush administration concerning Iraq's nuclear capability. Despite a New York Times Op-Ed piece on November 27 by Richard Rhodes concerning "Bush's Atomic Red Herring," which stated that "[e]xpert estimates put Iraqi acquisition of a limited nuclear arsenal at least 10 years away,"<sup>13</sup> and despite reports from experts at the International Atomic Energy Agency that the small amount of nuclear fuel possessed was not being used in a nuclear weapons program (New York Times, Nov.

28, 1990), the television networks and other mainstream media outlets continued to use the argument that Iraq's possession of a nuclear weapons capacity was a compelling argument to destroy Saddam Hussein immediately in an all-out military invasion. This argument was suggested by William Safire in a November 26, 1990, New York Times Op-Ed column, was repeated by Wolf Blitzer in a November 27 CNN report, and frequently appeared as a rationale for war expressed by those on talk shows or "person in the street" interview segments. When the reports questioning Iraq's nuclear capability started gaining attention, the Bush administration put out a statement saying that the International Atomic Agency report that doubted such a capacity was false and that doubt was aired on CNN on November 28, 1990.

Eventually, some media critique appeared that addressed the Bush administration's claim that Iraq was close to producing a nuclear bomb. The December 1 "Larry King Live" program featured a discussion between nuclear weapons expert Richard Rhodes, who argued that the nuclear threat was a red herring, and a prowar advocate from the Heritage Foundation, David Silverstein, who argued that the Iraqi nuclear threat was immediate and real. Silverstein violently attacked Saddam Hussein, the Soviet Union, and Palestinians, disclosing the venom and aggression that the media was unleashing. The "MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour" and "Nightline" also had shows during the first week of December that questioned whether Iraq could develop a nuclear capability in the immediate future. In the face of this questioning the Bush administration backed away from this rationale, at least for the moment.

In January, the Senate resumed hearings in which a series of expert witnesses urged restraint and the continuation of sanctions rather than the use of military force to resolve the crisis. Two former heads of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and seven former secretaries of defense argued in the hearings that it would be preferable to pursue the policy of sanctions rather than exert the military option. Henry Kissinger and other die-hard militarists who continued to call for a military solution were the exceptions. The media finally began circulating these antiwar discourses, and Bush acted quickly to stem criticism and to help deflate the increasing questioning of his policies by promising negotiations. He announced a meeting between James Baker and Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz in Geneva on January 9.

Yet, despite rising opposition to Bush's war policy and signs of peace negotiations in December and January, no peaceful solution to the crisis resulted. The negotiations had stalled by mid-December and the Bush administration never really seriously engaged in direct diplomacy with Iraq to seek a peaceful resolution to the crisis. Although Ted Koppel's "Nightline" had planned to air a "town meeting" on December 7, with an impressive array of antiwar speakers, the program was "postponed" after Bush proclaimed a willingness to negotiate with the Iraqis. No negotiations resulted, though the Bush administration continued to insist that it had "gone the extra mile" to seek a negotiated settlement, that it had "left no stone unturned" in the search for peace, and that the Iraqis simply refused to negotiate. In fact, the Bush administration did everything possible to undermine serious negotiations, leading some in the alternative media to speculate that they actively sought the military option.<sup>14</sup>

In any case, the television networks and mainstream media simultaneously failed to adequately discuss why the United States had committed so many troops and resources to the Gulf, and transmitted little serious criticism of the Bush administration policy. There was inadequate

analysis of the enormous expenses incurred by the U.S. military intervention and the impact of this spending on a faltering U.S. economy, which might not have been able to stand such excessive strain on its resources. There was little or no analysis questioning the timing of Bush's intervention during an era when the federal deficit, the savings and loan scandal, and possible collapse of the financial system, linked with growing recession, might require a scapegoat and diversion from the economic woes that threatened to become greater as time went on. Nor were the immediate political advantages to Bush and the Republican party from a military intervention discussed (i.e., the inevitable rush of patriotism that boosted the president's popularity ratings, the advantages to incumbents and hawks in the 1992 election if Bush was able to triumph in a Gulf war, and the downplaying of domestic issues, potentially damaging to Bush and the Republicans, in favor of focus on foreign politics and a Gulf war).

Consequently, the media failed completely to offer anything like an analysis of why it was in Bush's immediate political interests to undertake a vast military adventure which would certainly unleash political turmoil throughout the region, disrupting the political ecology of the Middle East, just as it was certain to wreak havoc on the environment. Nor did the mainstream media point out that Bush was a longtime champion of the military-industrial complex and National Security State, and that his actions during the crisis strongly promoted the interests of these institutions.

Indeed, the Gulf intervention by the United States was primarily in the interests of those groups whose representatives were crucial in encouraging Bush to undertake such a risky adventure. Bush's national security adviser Brent Scowcroft, his assistant, ex-CIA Deputy Director Robert Gates (now CIA director), Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, and others in Bush's war team were all ardent defenders of the military-industrial complex and argued consistently for a military solution to the crisis in the Gulf. But the mainstream media failed to discuss how it was the military-industrial complex that would benefit enormously by the Gulf crisis and war, providing the defense industries the possibility of gleefully looking forward to immense profits just when they feared sharp cutbacks.<sup>15</sup> On August 6, the Los Angeles Times reported that "in a single stroke, Saddam Hussein's foray of tanks and troops has blunted the momentum in Congress toward making deep cuts in the American military establishment and has redrawn the debate about the shape and size of the nation's future military force. Since Iraq's troops marched into Kuwait City, Saddam Hussein's actions saved the B-2 on the Senate floor and rescued a pair of Navy battleships from going into mothballs." On the eve of the crisis of the Gulf, there was intense pressure to cut back the military budget to produce a "peace dividend" for increased domestic programs that would cut into the profits of the military-industrial establishment. In fact, a former member of Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers was told in mid-October, "We owe Saddam a favor. He saved us from the peace dividend" (New York Times, Oct. 16, 1990).

Yet there was little analysis in the mainstream media of the specific political and economic interests in the United States who would benefit from and which were promoting such expensive and dangerous involvement in the region. Oil corporations benefitted tremendously from the crisis; Lewis Lapham told of a Texas oilman buying bottles of champagne in a restaurant and reading aloud a telegram that he'd just sent to Saddam Hussein: "Warm congratulations on your well-earned victory. Every good wish for your continued success" (in Sifrey and Cerf 1991, p. 460). Bush and his family had oil interests in the region, and Brent Scowcroft was connected with both oil and defense interests.<sup>16</sup> Although there was discussion of the role of oil in motivating the U.S. troop

deployment, there was little in the corporate media on the history of U.S. dependency on Middle East oil. The mainstream media ignored the fact that during the Carter administration, the U.S. drastically reduced dependency and attempted to develop a coherent energy policy, but under Reagan and Bush the United States increased dependency on foreign oil supplies and ceased developing an energy policy. There was little analysis of how the Republican administrations first sought cheap oil prices at the expense of oil dependency, leaving price and supply to the "magic of the marketplace," and then sought higher oil prices to benefit the U.S. oil industry (see Cleaver 1991). Nor was there much discussion of the fact that by 1990 the United States exported about 25 percent of its oil from the Middle East or that the dependency figure had been down to about 7 percent by the end of the Carter Presidency.

There was also inadequate discussion pointing out that it is mostly Western Europe and Japan that were directly dependent on Iraqi and Kuwaiti oil (the United States was only receiving about 5 percent of its oil from these two countries), or that the U.S. has been reduced to a mercenary force supplying troops and weapons to intervene on behalf of its capitalist allies. There was almost nothing in the mainstream media on the need to develop sane energy alternatives, and what discussion of this issue there was focused on the need to rethink the nuclear energy option and to loosen restrictions on oil drilling in environmentally sensitive areas (rather than on the need to develop solar energy or renewable and ecologically safe energy alternatives). Instead, the corporate media took advantage of the crisis to promote the failing nuclear energy industry and also urged the loosening of environmental restrictions on oil production.<sup>17</sup>

Other blindspots in the media and Congress concerned the actual consequences of a Middle East war and the few speculations were rather tentative and limited. In a New York Times article on "Iraq's Aim: High Toll for G.I.s," Patrick Tyler outlined some of Iraq's military strategy (Nov. 27, 1990, p. A8) but failed to analyze what might actually happen in a war. A New York Times Op-Ed piece by Anthony Lewis took on the rightist arguments that democracy was hindering Bush in his attempt to intimidate Saddam Hussein into unilaterally withdrawing from Kuwait (Nov. 26, 1990). Lewis asked: "How would a war be fought? How many American casualties could be expected? What vital U.S. interests would be vindicated? What would be the consequences of a war? How stable would pro-Western Arab governments prove to be? Might Israel be threatened?" Although Lewis raised these questions, little effort was exerted in the mainstream media to seriously discuss them.

Crucially, almost nothing was explored on the political and ecological effects on the region if there actually was a war. There was little discussion of the economic consequences and potential environmental holocaust that would ensue if the Kuwaiti, Iraqi, or Saudi oil fields were bombed or set on fire. The Iraqis claimed that they had mined the Kuwaiti oil fields and would set them on fire if attacked, thus causing an environmental disaster--an event that came to pass, though, as we shall see, its origins were more complex than the media let on (see 5.3). Environmentalists argued before the war that such fires would be difficult to put out and that pollution from the burning oil would be extremely lethal and would cause tremendous environmental damage. Although there was an international environmental conference in London to discuss the environmental effects of a Gulf war in early January, CNN only managed a brief report on the conference, which suggested that there might be an ecological catastrophe from the soot and smoke resulting from a thousand burning oil wells in Kuwait and that the fires might produce a "nuclear winter" effect, blocking out the sun,

lowering temperatures, and wreaking havoc with global weather patterns. It was also suggested that oil spills in the Gulf would be many times worse than the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska. However, The New York Times and most mainstream news sources neglected this story completely.<sup>18</sup>

The political instability of the Middle East that might result after an all-out war was rarely discussed. Although there was some criticism of Secretary of State James Baker's visit with Syria's President Assad and some speculation that Syria might invade and take over parts of Iraq after a Gulf war, little attention was given to the turmoil that might emerge in the region during the eruption of major warfare--upheaval evident in Iraq immediately after the end of the ground war. There was almost nothing on a possible Israeli response to a U.S.-led war against Iraq. Would Israel enter the war with its chemical and nuclear weapons against Iraq, and might Iraq attack Israel? If so, how would Israel respond and what impact would Israel's response have on the U.S.-led coalition? Would Israel utilize the confusion to produce a final solution to the Palestinian question and use the state of emergency to drive Palestinians and Arabs out of the West Bank and out of Israel entirely? Would Syria or Iran attack their enemy Iraq and seize territory? How would the various Arab regimes survive such chaos? Might there not be a reaction against the regimes that sided with the United States, resulting in mass upheaval and the overthrow of regimes involved in the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq? How would U.S. interests be served in such turmoil?

Furthermore, given the absence of critical Arab voices in the mainstream media, there was no discussion of how Arabs perceived the coming war and how it would impact on the Arab world. Obviously, the crisis had divided the Arab world and some sectors wanted the U.S.-led coalition to forcibly expel Iraq from Kuwait. Many other Arabs, however, feared that a war would seriously disrupt the political ecology of the region and would be a disaster for the Arab world--as it arguably was. In fact, neither the Bush administration nor voices in the media really articulated any vision for a post-war Iraq or what would happen to the region after the war during the crisis in the Gulf. It was not clear how the United States envisaged driving the Iraqis out of Kuwait. It was not certain if the Iraqis would flee if attacked, as happened, or if it would be a bloodbath with house-to-house fighting in Kuwait City. If the U.S.-led coalition succeeded in driving the Iraqis out of Kuwait, it was unclear if the goal was to eliminate Saddam Hussein and his regime or merely a large part of his army. The U.S. had not publicly connected with any Iraqi opposition groups and if Saddam Hussein was overthrown or eliminated by U.S. military action, there was no indication of which forces in Iraq could form a government. Indeed, both the Bush administration and the media neglected the democratic Iraqi opposition, failing to discuss the positions of oppositional Iraqi forces on the issues of war, peace, and democratization in Iraq (Chomsky 1991).

Thus, it was not clear what sort of societies could be created out of the rubble if an all-out war destroyed most of the oil, cities, industrial capacity, people, and resources of Iraq and Kuwait. Consequently, neither the Bush administration nor anyone urging military action expressed what sort of a postwar order they envisaged in the Middle East. Although some (i.e., Admiral William Crowe in the November 28 Senate hearing) speculated that anti-American backlash throughout the region might haunt and threaten U.S. interests in the region for decades, there was little discussion of how the United States would guarantee oil supplies, maintain peace and order, and provide stability to a region that has been wracked with instability and seemingly unsolvable problems for decades.

It was not TV alone that failed to adequately discuss the issues of war and peace. Although the December 10, 1990, Time magazine cover story was titled "What Would War Be Like," the story itself did not raise the questions concerning the impact of a war on oil supplies, the potential ecological crisis, and the question of a postwar order in the region. Newsweek, in its December 10, 1990, issue, also featured a discussion of Bush's "Plan for All-Out War," but failed as well to raise the key questions. Furthermore, Time's coverage omitted even a mention of the Senate Armed Service Committee hearings that overwhelmingly warned against the military option; because this event was of crucial importance, Time's failure to cover it provides a clear indication of the extent to which key corporate media privileged the military discourse.

Even when important congressional hearings took place during the last weeks of the crisis, the networks for the most part ignored these debates, taking at most a snippet from the day's testimony in their evening news programs. There were almost no in-depth discussions concerning the hearings on talk shows, no news specials to highlight their importance, and no extended analysis of the hearings in the weekly newsmagazines. By contrast, interviews with released hostages during the same period were a frequent feature of the mainstream media. This preference clearly indicated the extent to which human interest stories are privileged over political debate in commercial corporate media, which are primarily dedicated to ratings, profits, and promoting the interests of the corporate class.

Finally, there was little discussion of the ways that the United States manipulated the UN to sanction the use of force against Iraq.<sup>19</sup> In mobilizing support for its resolution, the U.S. bribed, bullied, and coerced members of the Security Council to support the use of force and publicly punished those who refused to submit to its will. The U.S. paid off all the countries who had key votes in the Security Council with massive loans or debt forgiveness, threatening punishment for those who did not go along. When Yemen, for instance, refused to support the U.S. resolution authorizing the use of military force against Iraq, its Ambassador was informed that this would be "the most expensive 'no' vote you ever cast." Three days later, the U.S. eliminated its \$70 million aid package to Yemen, "one of the poorest countries in the region" (Bennis 1991, p. 7). This action violated the charter and spirit of the UN which was supposed to be dedicated to peacefully resolving conflicts, to using diplomacy to resolve conflicts.

Many key issues were therefore not posed or adequately discussed before the war broke out and one could argue that inadequate debate of the issues of war and peace in the mainstream media might have been decisive in pushing the country into the Gulf war. The lack of an adequate critical discussion in the media regarding its Gulf policy enabled the Bush administration to prepare for eventual war and triumph by giving it time to slowly but inexorably build up the U.S. war machine and military strategy. The mainstream media aided Bush by employing the forms of popular culture to demonize Saddam Hussein and the Iraqis, by glorifying U.S. troops and technology, and by submitting to the pool system that allowed the military to control images and information. Saddam Hussein was presented so negatively and the massive U.S. troop deployment so positively that the only logical solution to the crisis was decisive military action and unquestioning support for the U.S. troops. The nightly images of the U.S. troops in the desert bonded viewers to the soldiers and created a basis of support. One could also argue that the use of the Saddam-as-Hitler theme and the demonization of the Iraqis especially prejudiced the public against a negotiated, diplomatic solution. Obviously, one cannot negotiate with a Hitler who is such a threat to the peace of the world that he

must be destroyed.

Thus the extremely negative framing of Saddam Hussein and the Iraqis helped rule out a peaceful and diplomatic solution to the crisis by conditioning significant segments of the public to support war. In addition, the constant war talk created a climate in which only military action could resolve the crisis. The media's representation of the confrontation as a struggle between good and evil, with the evil Saddam Hussein unwilling to negotiate and threatening the allies, produced tension and the need for a resolution that war itself could best provide. Consequently, the mainstream media failed to meet their democratic responsibilities of providing a wide range of opinion on issues of public importance and informing the public concerning contemporary events. Because democracy requires a separation of powers and an independent media, the combination of the Bush administration, military, and media all pushing for war undermined the democratic system of checks and balances, failed to discuss issues of key importance, did not adequately inform the public, and thus intensified the crisis of democracy in the United States.

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On November 28, the United States passed a UN resolution authorizing the use of force if the Iraqis did not unilaterally withdraw from Kuwait by January 15. On January 12, Congress narrowly approved the UN resolution authorizing force to resolve the crisis. The momentum toward military confrontation then escalated rapidly, creating a situation in which war could erupt at any minute when Iraq did not accept the U.S./UN January 15 ultimatum. Headline stories in the January 15 New York Times reported that "U.S. and Iraq Prepare for War as Tonight's Deadline Nears; Diplomacy Remains Fruitless. Early Attack Seen" [put in block boldface caps]. Other front-page stories were headlined: "Final Iraqi Preparations Indicate Hussein Wants War, Officials Say," next to a story headlined: "Iraqi Parliament Votes to Defy U.S." Another story noted in headlines on page 1: "On the Verge of War, G.I.'s Are Anxious." On Wednesday, January 16, war was indeed to come.

### Notes

1. On the Manichean frames of U.S. popular culture, see Jewett and Lawrence 1988 who describe the way that popular culture replicates the metaphysics of the ancient Manichean Christian sect that portrayed human existence as a struggle between good and evil. See also Rogin (1987) who analyzes how Reagan manipulated these frames and used political demonization to manufacture consent to his policies; political demonization involves the rhetorical construction of political opponents as demons who threaten the existing order. Both of these studies were influenced by Slotkin (1973) who analyzed the theme of regeneration through violence in American culture and the role of captivity dramas in which the capture of white women by people of color was utilized to justify extermination of colonized people--a theme utilized in the rape discourse of the Gulf war, as I shall note below.

2. To compare Hussein to Hitler and the Iraqis to Germany presupposes a false analogy in terms of the military threat to the region and the world from the Iraqi army--whose threat was hyped up from the beginning. Iraq's 17 million population can hardly compare with Germany's 70 million and its military could hardly be compared with Hitler's military machine, which was the most powerful in the world in the 1930s. Nor could Iraq, which depends on oil for over 95 percent of its exports, be compared with an industrial powerhouse like Germany. Such comparisons also

trivialize the Holocaust and Hitler's wave of aggression in Europe. The Hitler metaphor also serves to cover over the fact that the Middle East was, in fact, colonized by Western powers, which drew the borderlines of the region. Such decontextualization, hyperbolic metaphor, and sloppy argumentation would, however, characterize the discourse of the Gulf War.

3. See Stockwell 1978 and 1991 on the U.S. search for enemies to legitimate an aggressive foreign policy and national security state and Keen 1986 on the construction of political enemies. Popular biographies of Saddam Hussein were also villainizing him in hyperbolic terms; see Miller and Mylroie 1990 and Sciolino 1991. For more scholarly and balanced critical studies of Hussein, see Karsh and Rautsi 1991; Henderson 1991; and Darwish and Alexander 1991.

4. The rhetoric of "rape" was encouraged by the Free Kuwait group and their U.S. public relations firm, Hill and Knowlton, which I discuss below. One of the first books on the crisis was titled The Rape of Kuwait and was funded and distributed by the Kuwaiti government (see Sasson 1991). There was, however, a double standard operative in which the Iraqi intervention into Kuwait was characterized as "rape" and "naked aggression" (i.e., sexual crimes), whereas the U.S. military intervention into Saudi Arabia was described as a totally justified undertaking to protect U.S. interests and the "American way of life." Ann Norton noted the sexual innuendoes in the media discourse constructing Saddam Hussein in a November 26 Teach-In at the University of Texas and suggested that this discourse presented him as a sexual monster and threat, and thus as abnormal. In contrast, she continued, Bush's "incursion" into Panama was presented as "normal," as consensual intercourse whereby the territory solicited the U.S. incursion, accepting its penetration, even though several barrios were largely destroyed and much damage was suffered.

5. The initial media coverage of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and U.S. intervention in Saudi Arabia validates the argument of Herman and Chomsky (1988) that the corporate media tend to picture adversaries of the U.S. as evil while overlooking crimes of U.S. allies. Although Saddam Hussein was a U.S. ally in his war against Iran and the recipient of U.S. aid and arms sales, he was presented positively and his crimes were ignored; when he became U.S. enemy number one, his every evil deed was magnified. Likewise, when the United States invaded Panama, its actions were defended by the same corporate media that later attacked Iraq for similar aggression. See the documentation of media bias toward the Bush administration during the Panama invasion in Kellner 1990; Chomsky 1990; Lee and Solomon 1991, pp. 316-317; and Mark Cook and Jeff Cohen, "The Media Go to War: How Television Sold the Panama Invasion," Extra!, Jan./Feb. 1990.

6. For criticism of the bias against Arabs and Islam in U.S. media presentations, see Said 1981; on the anti-Arab stereotypes that dominate U.S. popular culture, see Shaheen 1984.

7. For feminist analysis of the media presentation of the Gulf crisis and war that I draw upon, see Enloe 1990 and Roach 1991.

8. Buchanan was attacked by A. M. Rosenthal in the New York Times Op-Ed page for claiming that Israel, its supporters, and U.S. hawks were leading the country to war (Sept. 14, 1990). Rosenthal accused Buchanan of anti-Semitism, which might be seen as a legitimate charge in view of Buchanan's record of defending ex-Nazis, but such an attack suppressed the issue of what the Israeli policy actually was and what influence it actually exerted on U.S. policymakers and

public opinion leaders like Rosenthal. After this controversy, Buchanan disappeared from his CNN "CrossFire" post for a brief period, but soon returned; Rosenthal went to Israel during November to make sure that he continued to accurately portray the Israeli point of view in his Op-Ed pieces.

9. Studies by FAIR (1990) document that such discussion shows as ABC's "Nightline" and the PBS's "The MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour" characteristically contain only a small range of views from establishment sources, drawing on the same small pool of white conservative males from conservative Washington "think tanks" and former government officials. FAIR also argued that PBS features only conservative talk shows, with no liberal or left alternatives. An initial FAIR study of the Gulf crisis revealed that once again "Nightline" and "MacNeil/Lehrer" drew on the usual small pool of "experts": Not one critic of the U.S. military intervention appeared on either program during the first month of the crisis; about half of the guests were current or former government officials and two-thirds of these were Republican; almost all were white males. See Extra! (Nov.-Dec. 1990), p. 4.

10. On the pool system, see the articles by Ruffini 1991; Schanberg 1991; Browne 1991; LaMay, et al., 1991; and Anderson 1991. See also the articles in the Columbia Journalism Review, Mar/Apr. 1991, pp. 23-29; Index on Censorship, Apr./May 1991; Le monde diplomatique, May 1991, pp. 11-18; and the New York Times, May 5 and 6, 1991.

11. Jesse Jackson managed to get to Iraq for an interview with Saddam Hussein, which won him a few minutes of airtime to criticize the U.S. intervention, though he later complained: "Since [the invasion of Kuwait on August 2] I have talked with Saddam Hussein for six hours, two hours on tape. Longer than any American. I met with Tariq Aziz for almost ten hours. I took the first group of journalists into Kuwait, negotiated for the release of hostages. And when we got back, there was not one serious interview by a network. A categorical rejection. Now why is there no interest in what we saw, observed, and got on tape?" (Columbia Journalism Review, Mar/Apr. 1991, p. 28). One of the few critiques by members of Congress during the first month of the crisis was that of Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez (D.-Tex) who blamed the U.S. government and banks for funding much of Hussein's military buildup and who called for immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from the Middle East (Austin American-Statesman, Aug. 4, 1990, pp. 1A and 4A). Later, during the Gulf war itself, he produced a resolution to impeach Bush, but this, too, was ignored by the mainstream media.

12. The position that the United States manipulated Iraq into thinking that it would not oppose its invasion of Kuwait is argued in Agee 1990; Emery 1991; and Frank 1991 (see 1.1). It should be noted, however, that ABC did devote more stories to diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis than the other networks. According to an analysis in the Tyndall Report, during the 45 days before the UN deadline, ABC had 23 reports on diplomacy compared to 13 for CBS and 11 for NBC; during the war itself, ABC featured 18 reports on attempted diplomatic resolutions of the war compared to 9 for CBS and 3 for the military-industrial network, NBC, which apparently favors war over peace, weapons over diplomacy.

13. Rhodes is author of The Making of the Atomic Bomb, which won a Pulitzer Prize in 1988. In the Senate hearings, James Schlesinger also stated that the Iraqis probably wouldn't have the nuclear capacity for five to ten years (New York Times, November 30, 1990, p. 1) and this view was held by others as well (see The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, March 1991, pp. 16ff.).

During the war, General Schwarzkopf and his minions would claim repeatedly that they had destroyed Iraq's nuclear capability with their bombing campaign; after the war, however, there were conflicting stories as to the extent of Iraq's nuclear capability and whether it had or had not been eliminated.

14. See Z Magazine, January 1991, pp. 3 and 56; The Nation, Sept. 10, 1990, pp. 223ff., and Dec. 24, 1990, pp. 1ff; In These Times, Nov. 21, 1990, pp. 1 and 14; and The Progressive, January 1991, pp. 8ff. The New Yorker featured a sharp analysis of how the nation was "sleep-walking toward war" in its "Talk of the Town" column of December 10, 1990, p. 43. These and other publications correctly discerned that Bush was proceeding to war, but the mainstream media either failed to note this or urged him to do so.

15. See 1.3. In September, In These Times reports, there was a meeting in Milwaukee of military contractors called by the Procurement Institute; when its cochairman Jim Roberts opened the meeting with the words: "Thank you, Saddam Hussein!" the crowd reportedly cheered (November 21, 1990, p. 5). Manfred Sadlowski, who publishes Military Technology, headlined an editorial in the October issue "Well Done, Saddam!" Villains like Saddam, he observes, have "a very useful function" in that they provide the justification for not reducing military spending "without the need for too much propaganda effort by our governments." "At the very moment," Sadlowski noted, "when too many people were beginning to label our armed forces as useless relics of the long past Cold War age, we have suddenly found...a new mission for them." (cited in the Sydney Morning Herald, Oct. 9, 1990). On August 19, the Los Angeles Times reported that the proposed sale of 24 F-15 fighter jets to Saudi Arabia could earn the McDonnell-Douglas corporation an estimated \$1.2 billion." Indeed, it was estimated that deals were cut with the Saudis in August 1990 for the purchase of over \$40 billion dollars worth of military equipment, the largest single package in history. Although there were frequent news reports about the increased defense spending and occasional discussion of the costs of the intervention, there was little or no analysis in the mainstream media of the way that this was primarily benefiting the military-industrial complex.

16. Curiously, Bush's Zapata Oil company had operated in Kuwait in the 1960s. On the Bush family oil connections in the region, see the discussion in Chapter 1 and sources in Note 26; Scowcroft was on the board of Santa Fe International, a subsidiary of the Kuwait Petroleum Company from 1984-1986 (see Extra!, May 1991, p. 16). For more on Scowcroft, see 10.2.

17. See New York Times editorial pages for August 7 and 9, which argued for reconsidering the nuclear option and loosening energy restrictions; this position was also frequently presented on NBC. Alternative media, by contrast, argued that the Persian Gulf crisis dramatized the need for energy conservation and renewable energy sources and energy independence so that the U.S. would not depend on Middle East oil to run its economy. See David Moberg, "Hussein's Moves Raise Energy Security Questions" (In These Times, August 15-28, 1990, p. 2) and Dwight Holing, "America's Energy Plan: Missing in Action" (The Amicus Journal, Winter 1991). It may be worth noting that oilman George Bush removed environmental restrictions on oil drilling and signed an executive order removing the necessity of the Pentagon to produce an environmental impact report on their actions and policies--a point that I shall draw on later. Thus Bush unleashed a war on the environment at the same time that he carried out a war against Iraq.

18. Once again it was the alternative and local press that stressed the environmental dangers from a Gulf war. See Joni Seager, "Tigris, Tigris, Burning Bright: Is the Middle Eastern Desert a Wasteland?... No, But It Will Be," Village Voice, December 25, 1990, and Glennda Chui, "Desert Wounds: The Environment Could Also Become a Casualty of War," San Jose Mercury News, January 15, 1991. On the day that Bush began bombing Baghdad, the New York Times published a story indicating that military scientists had concluded that a Gulf war would not constitute a threat to the environment of the Persian Gulf region (January 16, 1991, p. C3).

19. Likewise, during and after the war, there was little discussion of how the United States blocked calls in the United Nations for a ceasefire and a diplomatic settlement to the war. Although some argued that the passing of the UN resolutions against Iraq showed the positive potential of the organization as a force for global peace, others argued that the U.S. shamelessly manipulated it, turning an organization dedicated to peace into a body that legitimated a brutal war. For documentation of the U.S. abuse of the UN, see Phyllis Bennis, "Bush's Tool and Victim." Covert Action Information Bulletin, Number 37 (Summer 1991) and Barbara Rogers, "Wanted: A New Policy for the United Nations," in Brittain 1991, pp. 143-158.