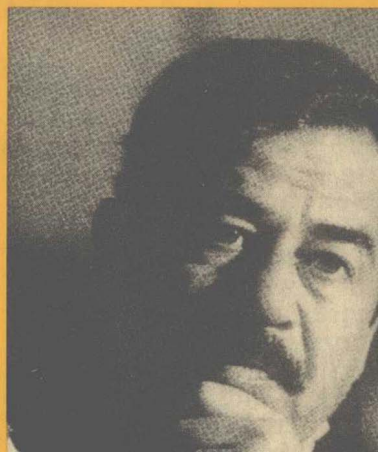
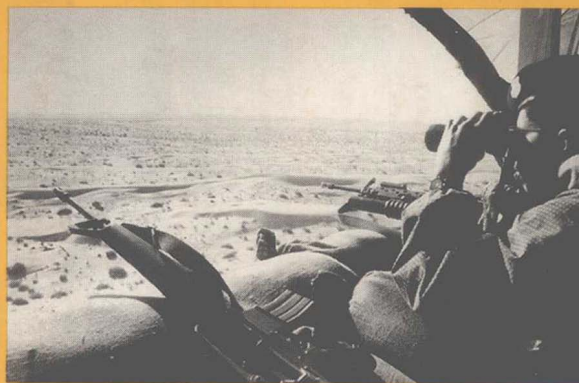




# Triumph *of the* Image

## The Media's War in the Persian Gulf— A Global Perspective

*edited by*  
*Hamid Mowlana, George Gerbner,*  
*and Herbert I. Schiller*



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**Westview Press**  
*Boulder • San Francisco • Oxford*

*Critical Studies in Communication and in the Cultural Industries*

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Copyright © 1992 by Westview Press, Inc.

Published in 1992 in the United States of America by Westview Press, Inc., 5500 Central Avenue, Boulder, Colorado 80301-2877, and in the United Kingdom by Westview Press, 36 Lonsdale Road, Summertown, Oxford OX2 7EW

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Triumph of the image : the media's war in the Persian Gulf—a global perspective / edited by Hamid Mowlana, George Gerbner, Herbert I. Schiller.

p. cm. — (Critical studies in communication and in the cultural industries)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-8133-1532-8 — ISBN 0-8133-1610-3 (pbk.)

1. Persian Gulf War, 1991—Journalists—Public opinion.

2. Persian Gulf War, 1991—Public opinion. 3. Public opinion—history—20th century. 4. Press—History—20th century.

I. Mowlana, Hamid, 1937– . II. Gerbner, George, 1919– . III. Schiller, Herbert I., 1919– . IV. Series.

DS79.739.T75 1992

956.704'3—dc20

92-7254  
CIP

Printed and bound in the United States of America



The paper used in this publication meets the requirements of the American National Standard for Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials Z39.48-1984. Printed on recycled paper.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

# **Triumph of the Image**



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## Preface

THE TRIUMPH OF IMAGE over reality and reason is the theme of this book. New communication technologies made it possible to transport images and words about the war in the Persian Gulf in real time to hundreds of millions of people around the world. But the studies in this book show that what was in fact witnessed was media imagery successfully orchestrated to convey a sense of triumph and thus to realize results that reality and reason could never have achieved.

Part One explores the social, political, and economic context of that orchestration. Part Two shifts the focus to the international scene; studies from many nations document the domination of one image and the struggle for alternative perspectives. Part Three probes the dynamics of image making and poses some challenges for the future.

These studies, essays, and media samplings provide a unique glimpse at how the world outside the United States as well as many people in the United States viewed the war in the Persian Gulf. There are thirty-four authors and eighteen countries represented. Most of them are critical of the images conveyed by the dominant media and of the conduct of the war itself. This book should, in some small measure, balance the triumphalist image of what happened in the Gulf and how it was represented to the world at large.

The Persian Gulf War should settle any argument about the near-total Western control of news about international conflict. Typical is P. Sainath's comment that despite a good number of Indian publications editorially taking a position against the war, the *content* of the news columns that were published in the same papers, almost without exception, were the reports of Western news agencies and journalists. In the case of India, there was an additional obstacle to obtaining alternative views: Indian reporters were excluded from the conflict region. And so papers were compelled to carry Western accounts, regardless of their own editorial opinions.

The contributions to this book offer abundant evidence that there were many more substantially divergent views and social movements than those conveyed by the dominating press. But those views and regions most adamant in their opposition to the U.S.-led war were the most tightly shut out of the global information networks.

The need for some balancing and plurality also derives from the disappearance of the dialectical polarity of worldviews from the world's press. Since the breakdown of the Soviet system as well as the weakening of the nonaligned movement of African, Asian, and Latin American nations, there is no longer any force to question or to contest the dominant viewpoint of a few global media conglomerates. Their accounts of what happened in the Persian Gulf, or anywhere else for that matter, are couched mostly in self-serving formulations that leave out essential information.

A critical eye focused on the activities of the global media machine is needed now more than ever because we are experiencing a monopolization of the definition and content of history. To an ever-increasing extent, what is happening is being told to us by a single narrator with a very powerful voice indeed. That narrator has long demonstrated a special talent for erasing as well as distorting history.

Already the Gulf War, despite hundreds of Pentagon-arranged and -funded victory parades and the efforts of thousands of TV and radio talk-show enthusiasts, is a distant event. How could the situation be otherwise when the war is succeeded by a never-ending preoccupation with events, trivial and important, hardly distinguished from one another, paraded across the screen (or the page), and sandwiched between omnipresent commercials? How can history coexist alongside call-in shows, sound-byte news, and pageants recreating a past that never existed—the bicentennial, Columbus's "discovery" of America, and the centenary of the Statue of Liberty?

But outside the media, history does exist, and it is not the story seen from the dominating heights. That constructed world, with its colonial stereotypes, is coming apart, but the media history machine daily works steadily, if vainly, at restoring it. In the Gulf War, there were more than a few throwbacks to this imagery. A powerful, industrialized state organized a subservient "coalition" to support its pulverization of a poor country with a relatively tiny population that had, admittedly, an unattractive and unsavory government. As Noam Chomsky points out in Chapter 4, a war requires at least two participants. But the Gulf War was, in his words, "a massacre." It was the destruction of people who were not considered fully human and therefore did not count. As if to emphasize the point, U.S. commanders pointedly mentioned their total lack of interest in how many Iraqis were killed or wounded.

Yet it was a massacre with a purpose: to send an unmistakable message to most of humanity—its poorest part in particular—that no challenge to existing privilege would be tolerated. In the following pages, we hope to offer an admittedly limited view of how this message was received in several places around the world.

The image cannot triumph indefinitely over the realities it conceals. We hope that what this book reveals about the dynamics of image making and information control will help make global communication freer to serve diverse perspectives and human cooperation instead of domination.

*Hamid Mowlana*  
*George Gerbner*  
*Herbert I. Schiller*



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## Acknowledgments

WE HAVE BEEN ASSISTED in the preparation of this book by the careful and dependable efforts of Kim Buermann, Ginger Smith, Elizabeth Fox, Danielle Vierling, and Amy Tully.

We thank them.

*H. M.*

*G. G.*

*H.I.S.*

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**P A R T   O N E**



**Image and Reality**



## CHAPTER ONE

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# **A Third-World War: A Political Economy of the Persian Gulf War and the New World Order**

Andre Gunder Frank

THE GULF WAR may be termed a Third-World War in two senses of this phrase: First, this war aligned the rich North, the rich oil emirates or kingdoms, and some bribed regional oligarchies against a poor Third World country. In that sense, the Gulf War was a Third-World War by the North against the South. It was massively so perceived throughout the Third-World South, not only in Arab and Muslim countries but also elsewhere in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Second, the Gulf War may mark the brutal beginning of the Third World War, following on the First and Second World Wars. Not only was the tonnage of bombs dropped on Iraq of world war proportions, but also the Gulf War and the new world order it was meant to launch signified the renewed recourse by a worldwide "coalition of allies" to mass destruction of infrastructure and mass annihilation of human beings. Moreover, in so doing the allies, led by the United States, clearly signaled their threat to build the new world order on repeated recourse to military

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This chapter is abridged from a much longer and more documented version published as "Third World War in the Gulf: A New World Order Political Economy," *Notebooks for Study and Research* (Amsterdam), no. 14 (June 1991); *ENDpapers* (Nottingham) 22 (Summer 1991); *Economic Review* (Colombo) 17, nos. 4-5 (July-August 1991); *Sekai* (Tokyo), no. 560 (September 1991); and *Bush imperator: Analyses de la crise de la guerre au golfe*, ed. Jean Naudin (Paris: Editions la Breche, 1991).

force and annihilation against any other recalcitrant country or peoples—as long as they are poor and weak and in the Third-World South.

With the conclusion of the cold war, the Third-World War is to be fought, not between East and West or West and West, but between North and South. Since the Second World War, West-West wars have been obviated, and the East-West cold war has been fought out in regional hot wars in Korea, Vietnam, Angola, Nicaragua, and other parts of the Third World. Now, West-West cold conflicts are also to be transmuted, as in the Gulf War against Iraq, into the ever-existing North-South conflict and into a Third-World War at the expense of Third World peoples on Third World soil.

This chapter examines the Gulf War and the new world order in this global context. It also concentrates on the political economic motives, actions, and their consequences of the major actors in the unfolding of this tragic drama.

### **False Western Pretexts for War in the Gulf**

The violation of international law through the invasion and occupation of Kuwait by Iraq under the presidency of Saddam Hussein is beyond dispute. But the allegation that the purpose of the Gulf War was to protect the “principle” of world order, international law, and the Charter of the United Nations from lawless might-is-right violation is a lie. Many similar aggressions and violations of both the U.N. Charter and U.N. resolutions have gone without any such response or often even without any notice. Indonesia invaded and ravaged East Timor and Irian Jaya with the world taking hardly any notice. Apartheid in South Africa, but less so South Africa’s continual aggressions against its neighboring front line states in southern Africa, led to embargoes by the United Nations and its members; but no one ever suggested going to war against South Africa. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan merited condemnation and opposition, albeit not by the Security Council; but certainly no counterinvasion of the Soviet Union was proposed. The Iraqi invasion of Iran received, but did not merit, *de facto* political and even military support by the same coalition of allies that then waged war against Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait.

Indeed, among the very same states who allied themselves in a coalition to “liberate Kuwait” from aggression, several today occupy the territory of other peoples and nations. For instance, Israel invaded and still occupies the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and the Gaza strip in violation of U.N. Resolution 242. Israel also invaded Lebanon and still exercises *de facto* military control over its southern part. Syria invaded and still exercises military control over parts of northern Lebanon. Turkey invaded Cyprus in 1974 and still occupies part of it militarily. Morocco



invaded and took over the Western Sahara. Significantly, hardly anyone except some Latin Americans—not even President Saddam Hussein and certainly not President George Bush—made the obvious linkage of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait with the U.S. one of Panama.

Unfortunately, lying cynicism is not limited to Presidents Hussein or Bush and their immediate supporters. No Security Council resolutions were passed or even proposed to protect President Bush's new world order from his own violation of the sovereignty of Panama. On the contrary, President Bush received only acquiescence or even outright support for his violation of international law and human rights in Panama. So had President Ronald Reagan when he invaded and occupied sovereign Grenada (which is still administered by the United States). Indeed, the entire European Community (EC), not to mention the United States, supported Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher when she escalated her war against Argentina and its military junta (notwithstanding that she torpedoed all efforts in Lima to defuse the situation and prevent war in the South Atlantic and that she threatened to nuke the Argentine city of Córdoba). The Falklands War was the first major war of the entire West against a single Third World country. The latter received no support from any other country in the North and only moral support, regardless of ideology, from its regional partners in Latin America.

### **Immediate Economic Reasons for War**

The most obvious economic reason for the Gulf War was oil. The real price of oil had again declined, especially with the renewed decline of the dollar. Iraq had some legitimate demands, both on its own behalf against Kuwait and on behalf of other Arab states and oil producers. In pressing these demands by resort to invasion, Saddam Hussein threatened some other oil interests, clients of the United States, and the success of the U.S. divide et impera policy.

Another economic reason for the war was to counter domestic recession or at least its political consequences at home, as Secretary of State James Baker suggested. Indeed, both Presidents Hussein and Bush started this war to manage their own domestic political economic problems in the face of a new world economic recession. The timing, however, of the U.S. response abroad was immediately related to economic needs and political conflicts at home. President Bush's failure to deliver on his electoral promise of a domestic renewal program was eating into his popularity ratings, and the oncoming recession reduced them further.

President Bush reacted with much historical precedent. Harry S. Truman's massive response in the Korean War in 1950 followed postwar demobilization and the first recession in 1949, which many feared might