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**Chapter 2
Defending Western Values in Iran: The Shah**

The case of Iran supplies a clear illustration of the profit-oriented nature of Western foreign policy and its consistent opposition to basic humanitarian principles, primarily because during the era in which the West retained close ties to the country it was governed by a brutal dictator. During this period in the 1970s, Iran was under the reign of a monarchy ruled by the renowned Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlevi. The Shah had been directly installed by the Western powers in a covert operation masterminded by the American CIA and British MI6 through a military coup.⁵⁰

The Shah's installation had replaced the democratically elected Iranian leader, Mussadeq, whose policies were unfavourable to Western interests (Mussadeq had, for instance, planned on nationalizing oil operations in Iran, i.e., employing the domestic resources for the benefit of the indigenous population, rather than the control and benefit of foreign investors). The Federation of American Scientists provides a lucid description of this process: 'Shah-an-Shah [King of Kings] Mohammad Reza Pahlevi was restored to the Peacock Throne of Iran with the assistance of the Central Intelligence Agency in 1953' as well as British intelligence. 'The CIA mounted a coup against the left-leaning government of Dr Mohammad Mussadeq, which had planned to nationalize Iran's oil industry' and 'subsequently provided organizational and training assistance for the establishment of an intelligence organization for the Shah. With training focused on domestic security and interrogation, the primary purpose of the intelligence unit, headed by General Teymur Bakhtiar, was to eliminate threats to the Shah from the indigenous population.'⁵¹

This entire episode took place during the cold war. Accordingly, it was legitimized under the guise of the fight against Communism, supposedly to prevent Communist elements within Iran from taking power.⁵² The fact of the matter, however, was that there was negligible danger of a Communist takeover. Indeed, this was privately recognized by the United States and the United Kingdom as is clear from now declassified secret documents unearthed by Mark Curtis. For example, the UK ambassador had observed in September 1952 that: '... [T]he Communists have ... played a largely passive role, content to let matters take their course with only general encouragement from the sidelines ... they have not been a major factor in the development of the Mussadeq brand of nationalism.'⁵³ Similarly, the US embassy noted in March 1953 that 'there was little evidence that in recent months the Tudeh [the Communist Party of Iran, which had close contacts with the Soviet Union] had gained in popular strength'.⁵⁴ As for the possibility of a successful Tudeh-sponsored Communist coup that the West could have feared, the US State Department itself dismissed this idea, noting in a January 1953 intelligence report that 'an open Tudeh move for power ... would probably unite independents and non-Communists of all political leanings and would result ... in energetic efforts to destroy the Tudeh by force'.⁵⁵

Thus, the Western-sponsored coup was actually a bid to eliminate 'the Mussadeq brand of nationalism' that had included the plan to nationalize Iranian oil, bringing it and the rest of Iran's resources out of the grip of Western, particularly British and American, investors. Once the Shah — a pliant Western puppet — was installed, the normal policies of plundering Iranian resources could resume. In a candid report, the *New York Times* revealed the US/Western elite sentiments towards the Shah's violent restoration: 'Underdeveloped countries with rich resources now have an object lesson in the heavy cost that must be paid by one of their number which goes berserk with fanatical nationalism' with the view to bring 'rich resources' out of Western control, so that the general population may benefit. 'It is perhaps too much to hope that Iran's experience will prevent the rise of Mussadeqs in other countries,' who may similarly wish to eliminate massive poverty, 'but that experience may at least strengthen the hands of more reasonable and more far-seeing

leaders', who will henceforth keep to their subservient role of repressing their people, while providing cheap labour and resources to the Western powers.⁵⁶

The Shah implemented economic policies in accordance with the interests of Western investors, thus ensuring that political repression resulted in the siphoning of the country's wealth to a minority elite. Astute observers note that the Shah's reforms favoured the rich, concentrated on city dwellers, and ignored peasantry. The profits derived from oil and natural gas were not used efficiently but were spent on showy projects and the latest in military technology.' The result was that 'an even greater gulf yawned between the Westernized rich and the traditional poor'.⁵⁷ Mark Curtis, a former Research Fellow at London's Royal Institute for International Affairs, reports that an agreement was signed the year following the coup establishing a new oil consortium in which the US and the UK both had a 40 per cent interest. The consortium controlled the production, pricing and export of Iranian oil. Though Britain's share was reduced from the level of complete control it had prior to Mussadeq, it was nevertheless far greater than it would have been under the latter's nationalization plans. However, the US had achieved the greater substantial economic stake and political influence in the country, including a significant share in oil.⁵⁸

American investors and the Iranian elite alike both profited immensely from the Shah's 'White Revolution'. Yet while Western investors thus enriched themselves on Iranian resources, the country's own population suffered horrendously. As the state had grown richer, the people had grown poorer. British historian and religious affairs commentator Karen Armstrong reports that:

There was rampant consumerism in the upper echelons of society, and corruption and deprivation among the petty bourgeoisie and the urban poor. After the oil price increase in 1973-4, there was tremendous inflation, owing to lack of investment opportunity for all but the very wealthy. A million people were unemployed, many of the smaller merchants had been ruined by the influx of foreign goods, and by 1977 inflation had even begun to affect the rich ... During these years the Shah's regime became more tyrannical and autocratic than ever.⁵⁹

Twenty years after the Western-backed coup the top 20 per cent of households accounted for nearly half of all consumption expenditure, whilst the bottom 40 per cent accounted for 15 per cent of consumption expenditure and less than 12 per cent of total income. Mark Curtis comments: 'Some of those who failed to benefit from the "extreme concentration of wealth" in Iran — for example, the poor migrants and squatters in Tehran — were forced to engage regularly in a "desperate contest for shelter and land", in a system that was in large part the result of the considered actions and priorities of Anglo-American power.'⁶⁰

John Foran, assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of California, similarly elaborates in his award-winning study *Fragile Resistance*:

The system was replete with officially sanctioned corruption, bribe-taking, and greed, from the Shah to his sister Ashraf to the minister of court Assadullah 'Alam on down through the officer corps and economic elite, with each maintaining a mini-court of his or her own, surrounding themselves with clients and attaching a portion of all major contracts in the economy.⁶¹

The extent of the deepening poverty within Iran as a result of the Shah's regime, propped up by the Western powers, can be discerned from the heartfelt observation of a young Iranian peasant:

Yes, we need schools and doctors, but they are just for the rich. I wish I didn't even know doctors existed. Before, we were ignorant, but now we know that pills and shots can help us. But we can't buy them, so we watch our children die from sickness as well as hunger. Before, the elders said if a child died, it was from the will of God (*dasti khudda*), but now I think it is the fault of the government (*dasti-dowlat*).⁶²

Naturally then, the Shah's socio-economic policies were deeply unpopular among the Iranian population. For the Shah to maintain power, he had to control an increasingly agitated and

resentful populace, and this implied pursuing policies of brutal repression — policies that were supported and, indeed, directed by the American and British governments. According to Amnesty International (AI), the Shah's regime succeeded in slaughtering over 10,000 Iranians, estimating that there were between 25-100,000 political prisoners in 1976. AI thus observed that: '[The] Shah of Iran retains his benevolent image despite the highest rate of death penalties in the world, no valid system of civilian courts and a history of torture which is beyond belief. No country in the world has a worse record in human rights than Iran.'⁶³ Barry Rubin noted that 'prisoners were subjected to horrendous torture, equal to the worst ever devised', in a system in which 'the entire population was subjected to a constant, all-pervasive terror'.⁶⁴ Not only did this fail to cause any concern to the Western powers, it in fact became a cause of closeness between the Shah and the West. As US Iran specialist Eric Hooglund reports: 'The more dictatorial his [the Shah's] regime became, the closer the US-Iran relationship became.'⁵

The United States and United Kingdom, however, were directly responsible for the repression committed under the Shah's regime — not merely for establishing his power while encouraging and consenting to his policies, but also for creating and guiding the SAVAK secret police under the Shah's command which perpetrated the aforementioned atrocities. SAVAK, created by the United States and trained primarily by Israel with significant British input, was even instructed in torture techniques by the CIA. The British SAS was also responsible for training the Shah's Special Forces.⁶⁶ The Federation of American Scientists reports that SAVAK, formed 'under the guidance of United States and Israeli intelligence officers in 1957', 'developed into an effective secret agency', its job being to ensure the effective subjugation of the Iranian population to the rule of the Shah.

An elaborate system was created to monitor all facets of political life. For example, a censorship office was established to monitor journalists, literary figures, and academics throughout the country; it took appropriate measures against those who fell out of line. Universities, labour unions, and peasant organizations, among others, were all subjected to intense surveillance by SAVAK agents and paid informants. The agency was also active abroad, especially in monitoring Iranian students who publicly opposed Pahlavi rule.

The agency's 'torture methods' passed on to it from its US, Israeli and British masters, 'included electric shock, whipping, beating, inserting broken glass and pouring boiling water into the rectum, tying weight to the testicles, and the extraction of teeth and nails'. The extent of its terrorization of the indigenous population is clear from the fact that it even had 'at least 13 full-time case officers running a network of informers and infiltration covering 30,000 Iranian students on United States college campuses ... The head of the SAVAK agents in the United States operated under the cover of an attache at the Iranian Mission to the United Nations, with the FBI, CIA, and State Department fully aware of these activities.'⁶⁷ Iranian scholar Reza Baraheni observes that SAVAK's aim was to 'spread a deep sense of fear, suspicion, disbelief and apathy throughout the country'.⁶⁸ This objective was successfully attained. The Shah's regime of torture and intimidation, made people feel that they were held prisoner in their own country, with the connivance of Israel and the United States'.⁶⁹

The Western powers were very pleased with their creation's brutal activities. Former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, for instance, referred to the Shah as 'that rarest of leaders, an unconditional ally'.⁷⁰ Kissinger also described the tyrant as 'a pillar of stability in a turbulent and vital region', a 'dedicated reformer' with the most 'noble aspirations'. 'The least we owe him is not retrospectively to vilify the actions that eight American Presidents — including the present incumbent — gratefully welcomed', namely, the institutionalization of mass poverty, torture, murder and corruption.⁷¹ At a ceremonial dinner hosting the Shah in November 1973 President Jimmy Carter delivered a moving address in which he described the Iranian regime as 'an island of stability in a turbulent corner of the world'.⁷² In a report submitted to President Eisenhower's National Security Council in 1953, US policymakers summed up their approval of the dictatorship:

Over the long run, the most effective instrument for maintaining Iran's orientation towards the West is the [Shah's] monarchy, which in turn has the army as its only real source of power. US military aid serves to improve army morale, cement army loyalty to the Shah, and thus consolidate the present regime and provide some assurance that Iran's current orientation towards the West will be perpetual.⁷³

In 1958, the US National Security Council reiterated its approval of the Shah's regime. 'Since 1953,' it noted, 'Iran has been regarded in the area as the symbol of US influence' in the Middle East, particularly due to its 'strategic location between the USSR and the Persian Gulf and 'its great oil reserves', all of which made the regime 'critically important to the United States'.⁷⁴

The Western powers exploit other countries in the Middle East, and other areas of the world, in much the same way, developing close political ties and using those to secure economic relations that are favourable to the West and to the Eastern dictators with whom they are working — relations which also happen to be highly detrimental to the masses who live under the grip of these regimes (most of which are creatures of the colonial empire). Countries that have been regularly subject to such counter-democratic Western procedures include Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Bahrain, among numerous others.⁷⁵ Their goal, as we have seen for instance from the official declassified documentary record, is to further Anglo-American/Western domination of the Middle East and to secure control over the price and flow of oil, which inevitably results in huge profits as well as effective control of the world economy. 'Mutual Anglo-American support,' Curtis explains, 'in ordering the affairs of key nations and regions, often with violence, to their design has been a consistent feature of the era that followed the Second World War.'⁷⁶

It is clear that the purpose of such policies lies in the fact that the main Western interest in the Middle East is to ensure that there is no development of what the West describes as 'radical nationalism' — a technical term meaning nationalist forces that refuse to obey Western orders — with the view to protect the major Western interest in the region: control of the Middle East's energy resources which are currently the largest and cheapest in the world. As Noam Chomsky has astutely noted, in earlier years the West was able to intervene directly to ensure such control. However, as the world has become more complex and Western capacity to intervene directly has reduced, the West has turned to surrogates. This strategy of utilizing regional surrogate regimes to play a subservient role within a wider matrix of Western interests was formalized in the Nixon-Kissinger doctrine. According to this doctrine, the United States, now leading the Western powers, would be committed to maintaining what US statesman Henry Kissinger called the 'overall framework of order'. Regional powers would pursue particular goals within this overall framework. With regard to the extremely crucial Middle East region — primarily the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula, where most of the oil is — the broad plan was that Israel and Iran under the Shah would play the role of 'guardians of the Gulf,' i.e., the principal surrogates appointed to guard regional US interests.

Indeed, the essential components of this strategy were explicitly confirmed in May 1973 by the late Senator Henry Jackson, an acknowledged expert on national security and energy who was Chairman of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, member of the Select Committee on Intelligence and the Governmental Affairs Committee, as well as ranking member of the Armed Services Committee. Jackson stressed the necessity of 'the strength and Western orientation of Israel on the Mediterranean and Iran [under the Shah] on the Persian Gulf. Israel and Iran were 'reliable friends of the United States' who, along with Saudi Arabia, 'have served to inhibit and contain those irresponsible and radical elements in certain Arab states ... who, were they free to do so, would pose a grave threat indeed to our principle sources of petroleum in the Persian Gulf,' which are needed primarily as a reserve and a lever for control of the global economy.⁷⁷

The Iranian Revolution

In the 1960s, open opposition to the Shah's regime began to grow tremendously. More and more students were attending the course in Islamic ethics by the late Ayatollah Khomeini at the Fayziyah Madrasah in Qum. He would often sit on the floor beside his students and openly criticize

the government. In 1963, Khomeini spoke from his pulpit in his official capacity against the Shah's regime. Karen Armstrong records that:

At a time when nobody else dared to speak out against the regime, Khomeini protested against the cruelty and injustice of the Shah's rule, his unconstitutional dismissal of the Majlis, the torture, the wicked suppression of all opposition, the Shah's craven subservience to the United States, and his support of Israel, which had deprived Palestinians of their homes. He was particularly concerned about the plight of the poor: the Shah should leave his splendid palace and go and look at the shanty towns in south Tehran ... Reprisals were swift and inevitable. On 22 March 1963 ... SAVAK forces surrounded the madrasah, and attacked it, killing a number of students. Khomeini was arrested and taken into custody.⁷⁸

Some naive commentators attribute the unfolding Islamic movement within Iran spearheaded by Ayatollah Khomeini as well as many other religious scholars, intellectuals and writers to an insincere desire to gain power and establish an autocratic Islamic regime. This view arises from a failure to account for the complex developments within Iran at that time, particularly the new ideas and visions of political Islam being explored even by Western-educated Iranian philosophers such as Dr Ali Shariati (1933-77).⁷⁹ Of course, there is little doubt that many elements of the unfolding revolution — including elements of its leadership — were keen to exploit its momentum to secure their own power for its own sake. However, while this may go some way in explaining the social and political turmoil within Iran in the aftermath of the revolution — accompanied as it is by the regime's often repressive policies — this does not explain the essential causes and character of the revolution and its main early pioneers. Indeed, Khomeini's outspoken opposition to the Shah's regime almost led to his death. He only narrowly escaped execution because a senior mujtahid, Ayatollah Muhammad Kazim Shariatmadari (1904-85), saved him from this fate by promoting him to the rank of Grand Ayatollah, making it too risky for the regime to kill him without provoking massive protests.⁸⁰ His radical and controversial thesis on Islamic government was thus not written to legitimize his own rise to power, but rather to provide an Islamic political alternative that was relevant and meaningful to the Muslim masses of Iran. When he first wrote his landmark book *Hokumat-e-eslami* (Islamic government), he had not anticipated an imminent revolution. On the contrary, he thought that it would be another two hundred years before Iran would be capable of implementing such a system.⁸¹

In fact, the revolution occurred much earlier, entering a new stage on 9 January 1978, when four thousand students poured onto the streets of Qum, demanding a return to the 1906 constitution, freedom of speech, the release of political prisoners, the reopening of Fayziyyah Madrasah, and permission for Khomeini, who had been exiled since 1964, to return to Iran. The Shah's police opened fire into the crowds of unarmed protestors, killing 70 students.⁸² For the Shah, this was the beginning of the end. Millions of Iranians responded to the massacre with outrage, and the uprising against his regime escalated. In different subsequent marches hundreds of demonstrators were killed in the following months as the Iranian people protested against his reign. In one gathering at Jaleh Square of around 20,000 people on Friday, 8 September, martial law was declared and all large gatherings were banned. The demonstrators had no knowledge of the ban which was declared at 6 a.m. that day. The Shah's soldiers responded to their refusal to disperse with rifle-fire, resulting in the killing of as many as 900 civilians. The massacre only inflamed the anger of the Iranian people further as crowds began raging through the streets in protest while the Shah's forces continued to fire at them from tanks.⁸³

The US response to such events is instructive. At 8 a.m. on 10 September, President Jimmy Carter called the Shah from Camp David to reassure him of US support. Several hours later, the White House officially confirmed the conversation and affirmed the ongoing 'special relationship' between the US and Iran. The White House added that despite the President's regret for the loss of life, he had expressed hope that the campaign of political liberalization just begun by the Shah would continue.⁸⁴ A clearer statement of support for state terrorism can barely be imagined. Highly relevant in regard to the US role is an astute series of *Washington Post* reports by American journalist Scott Armstrong, which is based in part on government documents. According to

Armstrong, US National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski continually urged the Shah to employ military force to crush the mounting popular opposition against his dictatorship. US State Department sources indicate that Brzezinski even drafted a letter to the Shah 'which unambiguously urged him to use force to put down the demonstrations', despite the fact that State Department officials recognized that this would lead to the deaths of tens of thousands of Iranians. After the September 1978 massacre of demonstrators on 'Black Friday', 'American policy-makers viewed the Shah's willingness to use force as a good sign', reports Armstrong. US admiration for the sort of brutal, dictatorial and anti-humanitarian policies habitually employed by military juntas to enforce regional US hegemony was reconfirmed by then US Ambassador William H. Sullivan who objected when the Shah's forces reduced the repression of the Iranian people. He found that 'the Shah's new directives to his security forces, such as instructions to desist from torture ... are disorienting' — clearly because the practice of torture by US client-regimes serves well to subjugate the masses and is therefore 'orienting'. Sullivan resented the command to refrain from torture, because it meant that the Shah's security forces were 'being prevented from using the time-honored methods of arrest, long imprisonment and manhandling — if not worse — to get at the threat' (report of 1 June 1978). Indeed, the US clearly played a role that was unequivocally supportive of human rights abuses. US General Robert Huyser, for instance, was dispatched to Tehran to urge Iranian generals 'that the military should be pushed into action', and should employ military force to capture the oilfields.⁸⁵

By mid-January, the revolution had succeeded. The Shah had fled and his appointed prime minister Shahpour Bhaktiar was forced by the massive protests to allow Khomeini to return. From here onwards, a complex new process of political development and turmoil began, and Khomeini was voted in as Iran's new leader almost unanimously by the Iranian population in democratic elections whose authenticity, like the entire revolution, shocked the Western powers. As Karen Armstrong observes, 'Western people were also forced to note that Khomeini never lost the love of the masses of Iranians, especially the bazaaris, the madrasah students, the less-eminent ulema, and the poor.'⁸⁶

Indeed, for this reason the economic hardships suffered by the new regime in the early years were embarrassing, especially since 'for religious reasons', the government had 'put social welfare at the top of its original agenda on coming to power

Khomeini did his best for the poor. He set up the Foundation for the Downtrodden to relieve the distress of those who had suffered most under the Pahlavis. Islamic associations in the factories and workshops provided workers with interest-free loans. In the rural areas, Construction Jihad employed young people in building new houses for the peasants, and in agricultural, public health, and welfare projects, especially in the war zones ... In 1981, the Majlis had proposed some important land.reforms, which would ensure a fairer distribution of resources.

Unfortunately, these socio-economic efforts made during the regime's early years had been 'offset by the war with Iraq, which had not been of Khomeini's own making'.⁸⁷ During and after that war, internal political turmoil affecting the regime's leadership — and consequently policies — further circumvented such early efforts; nevertheless the Iran-Iraq War had a particularly devastating economic impact on Iran. That war had been to a significant extent created by the US Government. The context of doing so undoubtedly lay in the policy reiterated by then President Carter in January 1980, apparently influenced by the huge oil spikes resulting from the regional political unrest throughout that decade (particularly in 1973, 74 and 79), where an oil embargo by OPEC members in October 1973 disrupted oil supplies and elevated prices to unprecedented levels: 'Let our position be absolutely clear. An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.'⁸⁸ This policy, later known as the Carter Doctrine, was supported by the creation of the Rapid Deployment Force, a military unit able to rush several thousand US troops to the Persian Gulf in a crisis.

Chapter 3

The Iran-Iraq War: Still Defending Western Values

The Western powers were horrified by the 1979 revolution regardless of its domestic popularity. It implicated their expulsion from Iranian territory and the subsequent insecurity of elite interests in that region, including America's strategic designation of Iran as a 'guardian of the Gulf subordinate to US orders. The Islamic character adopted by the revolution gave the West further reason to fear. The Western powers anticipated that the events in Iran might pose a model for other Muslim nations in the region whose people suffered similarly under Western-backed dictatorships. In this respect, the Iranian revolution bore the potential to severely damage US hegemony in the Middle East. As noted by John Keane, Professor of Politics and founder of the Centre for the Study of Democracy at the University of Westminster:

To the surprise of most observers Islam did the unthinkable. It showed that a late twentieth-century tyrant, armed to the teeth and backed by Western investors and governments, could be toppled by popular pressure, and that the new Islamic regime installed by such pressure could stand politically between the two superpowers without being committed to either.⁸⁹

The solution was to crush the Iranian revolution before it bore fruit in order to illustrate to other countries in the region what is liable to happen to those who attempt to pursue an independent course. The very same Iraqi regime that is ruthlessly condemned today was built up and pushed into a devastating confrontation with Iran that would cripple the newly formed Islamic republic. With the fall of the Shah's repressive US-friendly regime, a 'pillar' of US policy was lost. Therefore, a new 'guardian of the Gulf' was required to keep Middle East oil 'in American hands'. Iraq represented many possibilities in this regard. There was the possibility of infiltrating Iraq; of overthrowing the new government of Iran; of Iraq becoming a replacement for the former Iranian 'guardian of the Gulf; and of course the lucrative opportunities for investment. Once Saddam's Iraq was removed from the terrorism list, the new US plan could begin actualization. Throughout this period, the disregard for human rights, democracy and peace consistently manifested itself in the traditional manner. *The Guardian* reports that the war 'which Saddam Hussein started' continued with 'encouragement from the Americans, who wanted him to destroy their great foe, Ayatollah Khomeini. When it was over, at least a million lives had been lost in the cause of nothing, fuelled by the arms industries of Britain and the rest of Europe, the Soviet Union and the United States.'⁹⁰

Befriending Tyranny

Before the inception of the Iran-Iraq war, the US Government had extended the hand of friendly relations to the Iraqi regime under the rule of Saddam Hussein. In a television interview, then National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski stated: 'We see no fundamental incompatibility of interests between the United States and Iraq.' He emphasized that: 'We do not feel that American-Iraqi relations need to be frozen in antagonism.'⁹¹ On 22 September 1980, Saddam Hussein initiated his offensive against Iran with US consent. Referring to the tacit US influence in this connection, former National Security Council aide Gary Sick reports that there was a strategy of 'letting Saddam assume there was a US green light because there was no explicit red light'.⁹² Other reports are even more revealing, referring to US involvement in a covert operation for a 'blitzkrieg' against Iran, launched from Iraq. This was to be led by several of the Shah's ex-generals 'to form a provisional government [in Iran] under Iraqi tutelage'.⁹³ On 26 February 1982, the US-Iraq special relationship was officially sealed — Iraq was removed from the US terrorism list. As was later admitted by the leading Defense Department counter-terrorism official, 'no one had any doubts about his [Saddam's] continued involvement with terrorism ... The real reason [for taking Iraq off the terrorism list] was to help them succeed in the war against Iran.'

This was followed by intensive support of Iraq during its devastating war with Iran, including the use of chemical and biological — and other — weapons of mass destruction, military training and instruction, and the provision of intelligence. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, 'the United States turned a blind eye when Iraq used American intelligence for operations against Iran that made rampant use of chemical weapons and ballistic missiles, according to senior administration and former intelligence officials', while the 'combination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and American intelligence eventually helped turn the tide of the eight-year war in Baghdad's favour'. A former US intelligence official familiar with the American role admitted US awareness that Iraq 'used chemicals in any major campaign ... Although we publicly opposed the use of chemical weapons anywhere in the world we knew the intelligence we gave the Iraqis would be used to develop their own operational plans for chemical weapons.' Another administration official stated: They [the Americans] built this guy up and let him do whatever it took to win. And that included the use of chemical weapons and ballistic missiles.' US intelligence sources went so far as to provide data to Iraq on Iran's equipment and troop strength. Former intelligence officials have stated clearly that Washington was well aware that Iraq began using chemical weapons in 1983 and intensified their use in 1986. By 1988, Iraq's use of gases had also repeatedly been documented by UN specialists.⁹⁵

According to another former US intelligence official: 'It was all done with a wink and a nod ... We knew exactly where this stuff was going, although we bent over backwards to look the other way.' Washington knew Iraq was 'dumping boatloads' of chemical weapons on Iranian positions, he added. Policy at the time, according to another former Reagan official, recognized that: 'Hussein is a bastard. But at the time, he was our bastard.' In 1986, as the Iran-Iraq War began to turn decisively in Iran's favour the pace of US intelligence information to Iraq escalated as part of a bid to restore Iraq's edge. The United States was not alone in this endeavour. In advance of the Faw counter offensive, France, Egypt and Jordan provided help in reorganizing and retraining the Iraqi military.⁹⁶

The United Kingdom was also heavily involved. Throughout the devastating eight-year war, the British Government assured its public that it was not selling lethal equipment' to either side. However, evidence given to the inquiry by Lord Justice Scott into arms sales to Iraq has revealed that this alleged policy was for the purpose of public deception only. In reality, Britain was one of the 26 countries — including the United States, France and other Western nations along with their Middle East client-regimes — which sold the greater bulk of arms to Saddam's genocidal regime.⁹⁷ American arms specialist William D. Hartung, Senior Fellow at the World Policy Institute, observes that despite recent efforts by the US defence industry and the Clinton administration to argue that the United States did not arm Iraq in the period leading up to the 1991 Persian Gulf War, there is ample documentation (some of which shall be discussed here) demonstrating that the Reagan and Bush administrations supplied critical military technologies that were put directly to use in the construction of the Iraqi war machine. Further strong evidence discussed by Hartung indicates that the 'executive branch's failure to crack down on illegal weapons traffickers or keep track of third party transfers of US weaponry allowed a substantial flow of US-origin military equipment and military components to make their way to Iraq'.⁹⁸

Arming Iraq

Leading American analyst Bruce Jentleson, Director of the Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy, Professor of Public Policy and Political Science, and formerly of the US State Department Policy Planning Staff as Special Assistant to the Director, reports that huge amounts of military aid were poured into Iraq.⁹⁹ With Iraq off the terrorism list and export controls on dual-use technologies (i.e., with both civilian and military applications) therefore less restrictive, 60 Hughes MD-500 'Defender' helicopters, and then ten Bell Helicopters — models which were widely employed in the invasion of Vietnam — were sold to Saddam's regime. Other helicopter sales followed, such as 48 that were said to be for 'recreation' purposes. These were subsequently employed to bomb and gas Kurdish civilians.¹⁰⁰

A total of 241 licences were approved for dual-use exports to Iraq in the last two years of Reagan's administration; only six were denied. The nature of these exports was conspicuously such that they could be put to military use. Bruce Jentleson notes, for instance, that precision tools for 'general military repair' ended up being used to upgrade SCUD missiles for longer-range firing. Quartz crystals and frequency synthesizers as 'components in a ground radar system' were used for missile guidance systems. Fuel air explosive technology was exported, although it was capable of producing bombs ten times more lethal than conventional bombs. Indeed, exports 'were knowingly sent to Iraqi nuclear installations', according to a former White House official.¹⁰¹

The Iraqi Ministry of Industry and Military Industrialization (MIMI) was a notorious example of this. Having been created in April 1988 to bring together civilian and military projects, the United States was fully aware that MIMI was linked to nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programs. Yet it was regularly inundated with dozens of dual-use technologies, licensed for export by the US.¹⁰² Another typical example was NASSR (Nassr State Establishment for Mechanical Industries), which from the 1970s onwards was well known to be an important military installation. By 1987, the United States knew of a ballistic missiles program in operation there. Yet the Department of Commerce continued to license exports for dual-use technologies to this installation.¹⁰³ Dual-use technologies supplied to military installations such as MIMI, Sa'ad 16, and others, as well as directly to the Iraqi military, included: equipment for the Arab Company for Detergent Chemicals (a front for chemical weapons); bacteria samples to the Iraqi Atomic Energy Commission and University of Baghdad (both linked to 'biological warfare support and numerous other military activities' by the CIA); communications and tracking agreement for Sa'ad 16; helicopter guidance, helicopters, engines and flight equipment for the Iraqi airforce; computers to the Iraqi navy; and so on.¹⁰⁴

Douglas Frantz and Murray Waas of the *Los Angeles Times* report that in 410 of 526 cases with potential nuclear applications, export licences were approved. According to US Congressman Henry Gonzalez, two of every seven US non-agricultural exports to Iraq between 1985 and 1990 accrued to its expanding military-industrial complex.¹⁰⁵ The United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) on Iraq and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspection teams confirmed that US technology was used by Iraq in its weapons program — not a surprise considering that dual-use US technologies were being systematically and knowingly licensed to military installations undertaking exactly these kinds of programs. According to the head UN/IAEA inspector: 'The simple answer to the question of whether US-produced equipment and technology has been found to be part of the Iraqi nuclear weapons program is yes.'¹⁰⁶ Examples of this include the equipment discovered by UNSCOM from 11 American companies in Iraqi missiles and chemical weapons plants. Some of the 17 bacterial and viral cultures licensed by the US were also found at the Salman Pak site that was party to 'a major military research program ... concentrating on anthrax and botulism'.¹⁰⁷

As the torrent of military and financial assistance continued to pour into Iraq, Saddam was busy applying this aid — which came to him not only from the US, but from France, Germany, Britain, among others — in systematic human rights abuses. According to former US Secretary of State Shultz, the first reports of Iraq's use of chemical weapons against Iran 'drifted in'.¹⁰⁸ As was the case with Saddam's other flagrant violations of the 1925 Geneva Protocol Banning the Use of Chemical Weapons in War, his use of chemical weapons against Iran was extensively documented by the UN.¹⁰⁹ The UN found evidence that Saddam had used chemical weapons four times during the Iran-Iraq War. The other three were in April 1985, February-March 1986 and April-May 1987. Saddam was also busy violently oppressing his own people, cracking down particularly on the Kurds of northern Iraq — including, for instance, according to Amnesty International, the abduction and torture of about three hundred children from Kurdish families.¹¹⁰ In 1987, a US Senate staff delegation to Kurdistan discovered the ravaging effects of Saddam's policy towards the Kurds in Iraq, reporting 'hundreds of villages levelled'; the countryside was described as having 'an eerie quality to it. Fruit trees, graveyards and cemeteries stand as reminders of the absent people and livestock'.¹¹¹

In February 1988, Saddam instigated an even more massive campaign against the Kurds. His troops employed the traditional methods of destruction. By 16 March 1988, the Iraqi air force was strafing Halabja with mustard gas and nerve toxins. 'Entire families were wiped out and the streets were littered with the corpses of men, women and children,' reported the *Washington Post*. 'Other forms of life in and around the city — horses, house cats, cattle — perished as well.'¹¹² An estimated 5000 people were massacred. As Professor Jentleson observes, this death toll is proportionate to over a half million deaths in a city the size of New York. The US response to all the above is instructive. Such atrocities did not suffice for the United States and its Western allies to cease military assistance to the Ba'athist regime. Even the Halabja atrocities only led to the token tightening of a few export controls related to chemical weapons manufacture and the production of what amounted to an effectively meaningless condemnatory resolution in the UN Security Council. These gestures were apparently propagandistic in purpose, since they unfortunately did not amount to any significant reduction in US/Western military assistance to Saddam's regime.¹¹³

Indeed, the possibility of sanctions being imposed on Iraq due to the massacres was deliberately blocked by the US administration, because they would 'undermine relations and reduce US influence on a country that has emerged from the Persian Gulf War as one of the most powerful Arab nations'.¹¹⁴ Rather than impose sanctions, the very opposite was done. Bruce Jentleson observes that after the Halabja massacres, the US was granting new licences for dual-use technology exports at a rate *more than 50 per cent greater* than before Saddam's gassing of the Kurds. Between September and December 1988, 65 licences were granted for dual-use technology exports, this averages out as an annual rate of 260 licences, more than double the rate between January and August 1988 (which involved the granting of 85 licences, amounting as Jentleson notes to a 128 annual rate).¹¹⁵ The tremendous escalation of exports occurred in spite of the fact that inspectors of the US Customs Service had 'detected a marked increase in the activity levels of Iraq's procurement networks. These increased levels of activity were particularly noticeable in the areas of missile technology, chemical-biological warfare and fuse technology.'¹¹⁶

In January 1988, reports of Iraqi germ warfare capabilities in the specialized press emerged. According to a respected American analyst, 'there were growing indications in late 1988 that Iraq was producing a botulin toxin in military quantities, or some similar agent'. A US government official was more forthcoming: 'Everybody knows the Iraqis are trying to develop biological weapons.'¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, during 1985-9, 17 licences were approved for exports of bacterial and fungal cultures to Iraqi government agencies.¹¹⁸ This occurred in spite of a human rights appeal to the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, issued by Amnesty International, pointing clearly to the 'grave fears that in the aftermath of the [Iran-Iraq] War a further significant deterioration in human rights could occur in Iraq'. Amnesty noted that Saddam's regime was conducting 'a systematic and deliberate policy ... to eliminate large numbers of Kurdish civilians'.¹¹⁹ This AI report was issued just three days before the Iran-Iraq cease-fire of 20 August 1988. Further domestic chemical attacks on an unprecedented scale were initiated by Saddam only a few days later. Yet as noted above, the aftermath of these attacks did not result in a reduction in US licensed exports of dual-use technologies, but on the contrary resulted in their *increase*.

Friendly Relations

The US not only provided Saddam's regime with military aid, but also with financial aid, huge investment and abundant trade. For example, American CCC credits had grown to exceed \$1 billion per year.¹²⁰ The US had become a major customer for Iraqi oil, importing by 1987 30 million barrels. This was still minimal in comparison to later imports. In 1988 — the year of the most conspicuous domestic atrocities instigated by Saddam's forces — US imports of Iraqi oil had rocketed to 126 million barrels. This figure should be compared to the 1981 figures when the US had not imported even a single barrel of Iraqi oil. The disparity constituted a momentous increase of over 400 per cent, with US purchases bringing in \$ 1.6 billion. The US was essentially

purchasing one out of every four barrels of Iraqi oil exports.¹²¹ Jentleson points out that American oil companies also began receiving a discount of \$1 per barrel below the prices being charged to European oil companies. This amounted to approximately \$37 million in the last quarter of 1988 and another \$123 million through the first three-quarters of 1989. The per-barrel discount was later increased to \$1.24 in January 1990, resulting in savings of another hefty \$241 million on imports (the US was so enthusiastic about these that they continued for over a month after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait).¹²²

Iraq became the twelfth largest market for American agricultural exports in the 1980s; for some crops (e.g. rice) the country became the number one export market. Iraq was, in fact, second only to Mexico as a beneficiary of CCC export credit guarantees. In addition to the \$1.1 billion the previous year and \$3.4 billion cumulative since fiscal year 1983, another \$1.1 billion in guarantees were scheduled for the fiscal year about to begin. The US Agricultural Department was unsurprisingly optimistic about 'Iraq's enormous market potential for US agricultural exports'.¹²³ As has already been seen, business was also flourishing on the manufacturing and dual-use technology export front. Jentleson reports that in sectors such as petroleum, electricity generation, petrochemicals, steel and transportation, billions of dollars in contracts were being fervently signed.¹²⁴

One of the groups which was particularly active in ensuring that the US did not impose sanctions on Iraq was the US-Iraq Business Forum, established in 1985, whose president Marshall Wiley was a lawyer and former US Ambassador to Oman as well as former ranking US diplomat in Baghdad.¹²⁵ According to Bruce Jentleson, companies that were members of this group whose influence was crucial in preventing sanctions (providing yet another example of the preference of Western governments for elite interests as opposed to human rights) included those involved in importing discounted Iraqi oil (Amoco, Mobil, Exxon, Texaco, Occidental), defence contractors (Lockheed, Bell Helicopter-Textron, United Technologies) and others (AT&T, General Motors, Bechtel, Caterpillar).¹²⁶ This clearly illustrates that the United States is influenced most significantly in its policies by the interests of corporate elites — the military-industrial complex and multinational corporations — at the expense of the human rights and decisions of the masses throughout the world. These elite sectors possess the most powerful leverage over policy; and the results, as is now quite evident, are globally catastrophic.

Fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies, Phyllis Bennis, a Middle East expert based in Washington DC, describes the anti-humanitarian nature of the US-Iraq alliance while Saddam Hussein was in power, an alliance based solely on strategic and economic interests:

Long before the invasion of Kuwait, one might have wondered about the US-Iraq alliance. Certainly it was partly tactical, aimed at preventing outright victory for the ascendant Islamic Republic of Iran in the Iran-Iraq War. Certainly it reflected the three longstanding goals of US policy in the Middle East: protection of Israel, control of access to oil, and stability. One might have wondered why US officials willingly, if not eagerly, turned a blind eye to the Iraqi regime's crimes. It wasn't as if they didn't know of Iraq's repressive rule, its Anfal campaign to depopulate Kurdish villages and its use of internationally outlawed poison gas against both civilians and Iranian soldiers. Human rights violations are common throughout the region — arbitrary arrests and detention, torture, house demolitions, repression of dissidents, persecution of Communists — and Iraq's government was right up there with the best. Washington knew of Iraq's violations, but expressed little official concern.¹²⁷

During the period of the Iran-Iraq War, apart from the flagrant manipulation of both sides to secure US interests, the US attempted to increase its military occupation of the region. Carter's Rapid Deployment Force was transformed into a new US military command authority, the US Central Command, overseeing not only the Persian Gulf but also the surrounding region from eastern Africa to Afghanistan. Under an anti-Soviet 'strategic consensus', the US sold billions of dollars' worth of arms to regional surrogates including Turkey, Israel and Saudi Arabia. In 1987,

operation Joint Task Force-Middle East, consisting of over 40 aircraft carriers, battleships and cruisers, was established by the US Navy to protect Gulf oil tankers.¹²⁸

US/Western policy then is simply not premised on concern for human rights or democracy. On the contrary, Western strategic and economic interests are the driving force of foreign policies that are systematically anti-humanitarian and counter-democratic, consisting of support for terrorism, conflict and repression. This explains why US military intelligence was instrumental in violently installing the Ba'athist regime to be later led by Saddam Hussein despite the devastating ramifications of such an operation for the Iraqi people.

Chapter 4

Protecting Order in the Gulf: The Creation of Saddam Hussein

London-based historian and journalist Said K. Aburish, one of the world's leading authorities on Arab affairs, has documented in his study of Western-Middle East relations how the CIA masterminded the 8 February 1963 military coup that brought the Ba'athist regime — and eventually Saddam Hussein — to power. Then Iraqi president Abdul Karim Kassim, who was overthrown in the 1963 coup, had been a prime target for US intervention. After taking power in 1958, he ensured that Iraq pulled out of the Baghdad Pact, the US-backed anti-Soviet alliance in the Middle East. By 1961, he challenged US-led Western interests again by nationalizing part of the concession of the British-controlled Iraq Petroleum company. He also declared that Iraq had a legitimate historical claim to the oil-rich Western client-regime Kuwait.¹²⁹

These multiple policies, which threatened Western control over Iraqi resources, made President Kassim an extremely unsavoury character as far as Western interests in the Middle East were concerned. The change in attitude on the part of the US regarding Kassim has been candidly described by the *New York Times*:

From 1958 to 1960, despite Kassim's harsh repression, the Eisenhower administration abided him as a counter to Washington's Arab nemesis of the era, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt — much as Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush aid Saddam Hussein in the 1980s against the common foe of Iran ... By 1961, the Kassim regime had grown more assertive. Seeking new arms rivalling Israel's arsenal, threatening Western oil interests, resuming his country's old quarrel with Kuwait, talking openly of challenging the dominance of America in the Middle East — all steps Saddam Hussein was to repeat in some form — Kassem was regarded by Washington as a dangerous leader who must be removed.¹³⁰

Consequently, plans were laid to overthrow him enlisting the assistance of Iraqi elements hostile to Kassim's administration, with the CIA at the helm. 'In Cairo, Damascus, Tehran and Baghdad, American agents marshalled opponents of the Iraqi regime,' notes the *New York Times*. 'Washington set up a base of operations in Kuwait, intercepting Iraqi communications and radioing orders to rebels. The United States armed Kurdish insurgents.' Former Ba'athist leader Hani Fkaiki has confirmed that Saddam Hussein — then a 25-year-old who had fled to Cairo after attempting to assassinate Kassim in 1958 — was colluding with the CIA at this time.¹³¹ Aburish collects together official documents and testimony showing that the CIA had even supplied the lists of people to be eliminated once power was secured. Approximately 5000 people were killed in the 1963 coup, including doctors, teachers, lawyers and professors, resulting in the decimation of much of the country's educated class. Iraqi exiles such as Saddam assisted in the compilation of the lists in CIA stations throughout the Middle East. The longest list, however, was produced by an American intelligence agent, William McHale. None were spared from the subsequent butchery, including pregnant women and elderly men. Some were tortured in front of their children. Saddam himself 'had rushed back to Iraq from exile in Cairo to join the victors [and] was personally involved in the torture of leftists in the separate detention centres for fellaheen [peasants] and the Muthaqafeen or educated classes'.¹³²

US intelligence was integrally involved in planning the details of the operation. According to the CIA's royal collaborator: 'Many meetings were held between the Ba'ath party and American intelligence — the most critical ones in Kuwait.' Although Saddam's Ba'ath party was then only a minor nationalist movement, the party was chosen by the CIA due to the group's close relations with the Iraqi army. Aburish reports that the Ba'ath party leaders had agreed to 'undertake a cleansing program to get rid of the Communists and their leftist allies' in return for CIA support. He cites one Ba'ath party leader, Hani Fkaiki, confessing that the principal orchestrator of the coup was William Lakeland, the US assistant military attache in Baghdad.¹³³

In 1968, another coup granted Ba'athist general Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr control of Iraq, bringing to the threshold of power his kinsman, Saddam Hussein. The violent coup was also supported by the CIA. Roger Morris, formerly of the US National Security Council under Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon in the late 1960s, recalls that he had 'often heard CIA officers — including Archibald Roosevelt, grandson of Theodore Roosevelt and a ranking CIA official for the Near East and Africa at the time — speak openly about their close relations with the Iraqi Baathists'.¹³⁴ Thus, two gruesome CIA military coups brought the genocidal Ba'ath party, and with it Saddam Hussein, to power, in order to protect US strategic and economic interests.

A declassified National Security directive issued by then President Bush Snr in October 1989 prioritized the provision of funds and technology to Saddam's regime, described as the 'West's policeman in the region'.¹³⁵ This, of course, was part and parcel of a decades-long special relationship between the brutal Iraqi dictatorship and the United States. This state of affairs, however, was destined to reverse: in order to protect the very same array of regional interests in maintaining 'order' — unimpeded access to oil and other resources — in the Persian Gulf.

The Domestic Scene in the US

Contrary to conventional opinion, there exists considerable evidence to indicate that the first Gulf War had not only been anticipated by the United States, but fell well within its political, strategic and economic interests. A variety of factors, both within the US and the Middle East, appear to support the conclusion that Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was deliberately engineered by die US to provide a pretext for a much-needed war.¹³⁶

Prior to the Gulf War, the United States was facing massive cutbacks in military expenditure. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US had lost its old cold war foe, leaving its military institutions such as NATO with nothing left to do — or at least no credible pretext on which to do it. Consequently, a political conflict had begun within the US over the issue of the necessity of defence spending. As William Blum has documented, with the cold war over, many outside the US military establishment naturally called for the reduction of military expenditure. In February 1990, the Washington Post reported that 'the administration and Congress are expecting the most acrimonious, hard-fought defence budget battle in recent history'.¹³⁷ By June, the Post reported that 'tensions have escalated' between the Congress and the Pentagon, 'as Congress prepares to draft one of the most pivotal defence budgets in the past two decades'.¹³⁸ By July, due to the vote of a Senate Armed Services subcommittee calling for cuts in military manpower almost three times that of Bush's recommendations, it appeared that the Pentagon was losing the battle for military spending. The Los Angeles Times reported: The size and direction of the [military] cuts indicate that President Bush is losing his-battle on how to manage reductions in military spending.¹³⁹ Being Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, former CIA Director, and a former investor in Texas oil, then President Bush Snr was instrumental in fighting against such reductions. Yet while he was drastically failing to secure high US military spending, his domestic popularity was also drastically decreasing. Although in January 1990 he had an approval rating of 80 per cent having emerged victorious from the US war in Panama, towards the end of July his ratings had steadily dropped to 60, and were set to drop further.¹⁴⁰ Thus, President Bush and the corporate-military interests he was supporting were searching for a way to boost military spending and generate renewed public popularity.

The background for Bush Snr's campaign to maintain high levels of military spending was rooted in the prospects for a US military presence in the Middle East, particularly the Persian Gulf region. When the Iran-Iraq War ended in 1988, US contingency plans for war in the Gulf region posed Iraq as the enemy.¹⁴¹ In January 1990, CIA Director William Webster acknowledged the West's increasing dependency on Middle East oil in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee.¹⁴² One month later, General Schwarzkopf advised the Committee to increase the US military presence in the Middle East, describing new plans to intervene in a regional conflict. The principal vehicle of this operation would be the US Central Command (CENTCOM), formerly the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, which had been covertly expanding a network of US military-intelligence bases in Saudi Arabia.¹⁴³ Notably, CENTCOM's War Plan 1002, which was designed during the inception of the Reagan administration to implement the Carter Doctrine of confronting any challenge to US access to Middle East oil by military force, was revised in 1989 and renamed War Plan 1002-90, the last two digits, of course, standing for 1990. In the updated plan, Iraq replaced the Soviet Union as the principal enemy.¹⁴⁴

Blum reveals that it is in this crucial context that CENTCOM, under the direction of General Schwarzkopf, began devising war simulations directed at Iraq. At least four such simulations were conducted in 1990, some of which hypothesized an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait long before the actual invasion occurred. One of the first of these, dubbed 'Internal Look', occurred in January. In May 1990, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a Washington-based think-tank affiliated to Georgetown University, completed a two-year study predicting the outcome of a US war with Iraq. The study explored the future of conventional warfare, and concluded that the war most likely to occur requiring US military intervention was between Iraq and Kuwait or Saudi Arabia. The study was widely circulated among Pentagon officials, members of Congress, and military contractors.¹⁴⁵ By July, the Pentagon's computerized command post exercise (CPX), initiated in late 1989 to explore possible responses to 'the Iraqi threat', was in full swing, focusing on simulations of an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait or Saudi Arabia or both.¹⁴⁶ The Naval War College in Newport, RI, ran programs in which participants were asked to determine effective US responses to a hypothetical invasion of Kuwait by Iraq.¹⁴⁷

Indeed, according to Professor of International Law at the University of Illinois, Francis Boyle — who is on the Board of Directors of Amnesty International USA, and who worked with the International Commission of Inquiry into United States war crimes committed during the Persian Gulf War headed by former US Attorney-General Ramsey Clark — the US had been planning an assault on Iraq for some time. Reviewing the year-by-year process of intensification of war plans, Professor Boyle records that:

Sometime after the termination of the Iraq-Iran War in the summer of 1988, the Pentagon proceeded to revise its outstanding war plans for US military intervention into the Persian Gulf region in order to destroy Iraq. Schwarzkopf was put in charge of this revision. For example, in early 1990, Schwarzkopf informed the Senate Armed Services Committee of this new military strategy in the Gulf allegedly designed to protect US access to and control over Gulf oil in the event of regional conflicts. In October 1990, [General] Powell referred to the new military plan developed in 1989. After the war, Schwarzkopf referred to 18 months of planning for the campaign.

Boyle reports that in late 1989 or early 1990, these war plans for 'destroying Iraq and stealing Persian Gulf oilfields were put into motion'. Accordingly, General Schwarzkopf 'was named the Commander of the so-called US Central Command — which was the renamed version of the Rapid Deployment Force — for the purpose of carrying out the war plan that he had personally developed and supervised. During January of 1990, massive quantities of United States weapons, equipment, and supplies were sent to Saudi Arabia in order to prepare for the war against Iraq.¹⁴⁸ The US, it thus seems, had begun conducting intense planning for a possible war with Iraq as early as 1988 through to 1990.¹⁴⁹

The International Scene

By the end of the 1980s, the United States was facing significant obstacles to its domination of the Persian Gulf, which had effectively reached an impasse. In general, the Gulf States refused to allow a permanent US presence on their soil. Specifically, although Saudi Arabia — a crucial US client-regime — continued to maintain a close relationship with the US, it nevertheless had begun diversifying its commercial and military ties. As former US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Chas Freeman observed, by the end of the 1980s: 'The United States was being supplanted even in commercial terms by the British, the French, even the Chinese.' In this vein, the US had fallen as far as fourth place among arms suppliers. Thus, US domination of the region had not only reached an impasse, it was being steadily challenged by other powers.¹⁵⁰

It is against this backdrop of a gradual waning of US regional influence that conflict began to brew between Iraq and Kuwait. The historical context of Iraq-Kuwait conflict lies in the fact that Kuwait was once a district of Iraq during Ottoman rule, before the British carved it off to form an independent state. This had never been accepted by Iraq as a legitimate division, thus establishing a context of political tension between the two entities. Yet the main cause of Iraq-Kuwait tension just prior to the Persian Gulf War was far more contemporary, originating in the policies of Kuwait. Iraq was incensed at Kuwait for three reasons: during the Iran-Iraq War, Kuwait was apparently stealing \$2.4 billion worth of oil from the Rumaila oilfield beneath the Iraq-Kuwait border; Kuwait had built various structures, including military structures, on Iraqi territory; after the Iran-Iraq War, Kuwait had been colluding with the United Arab Emirates to exceed the production quotas fixed by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), resulting in the reduction of oil prices.

Kuwait decided to drastically increase oil production on 8 August 1988, only one day after Iran agreed to a cease-fire with Iraq.¹⁵¹ Stable oil prices were essential to finance post-war reconstruction at this critical time. Yet Kuwait's violation of OPEC agreements sent crude oil prices plummeting from \$21 to \$11 a barrel. Consequently Iraq was losing \$14 billion a year.¹⁵² This was only the beginning. In March 1989, Kuwait demanded a 50 per cent increase in the OPEC quotas it was already flagrantly violating. Although OPEC rejected the demand in a June 1989 conference, Kuwait's oil minister declared that Kuwait would not be bound by any quota at all. Kuwait then went on to double production to over a million barrels per day.¹⁵³

Furthermore, as Pierre Salinger recorded, Kuwait 'intended to extract more from the oilfields at Rumaila, which lie on the disputed Iraq-Kuwait border.'¹⁵⁴ During the Iran-Iraq War, Kuwait had illegally extended its border northward, thus grabbing hold of 900 square miles of the Rumaila oilfield. US-supplied slant drilling technology allowed Kuwait to steal oil from the part of Rumaila that was clearly within Iraq's borders. Additionally, Kuwait's rulers had lent Iraq \$30 billion during its war with Iran, and were now demanding that Iraq recompense them. Yet Kuwait's own behaviour towards Iraq had made this impossible. The Iran-Iraq War had already cost Iraq over \$80 billion. With oil prices plummeting thanks to Kuwaiti intransigence, it became impossible for Iraq to generate the necessary funds to recompense Kuwait. Iraq's response between 1988 and 1990 was to endeavour to resolve these problems through diplomatic means. Yet all attempts at negotiation were rebuffed. One senior US official in Bush's administration remarked: 'Kuwait was overproducing, and when the Iraqis came and said, 'Can't you do something about it?' the Kuwaitis said, 'Sit on it.' And they didn't even say it nicely. They were nasty about it. They were stupid. They were arrogant. They were terrible.'¹⁵⁶

Director of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Henry M. Schuler described these policies as 'economic warfare' against Iraq.¹⁵⁷ Iraq complained that Kuwait's policies were 'tantamount to military aggression'.¹⁵⁸ By now Iraq was losing a billion dollars a year for each reduction of one dollar in the oil price. By 1990, these policies had decimated Iraq's economy to such an extent that it was in worse condition than during its war with Iran, with inflation at 40 per cent and its currency plummeting.¹⁵⁹ Considering that Iraq had always espoused a historical claim to Kuwait, Saddam's reaction to Kuwait's policies is notable. Rather than

immediately utilizing the crisis as a pretext for acquiring Kuwaiti territory by force, Iraq appeared to be anxious to resolve the situation swiftly and peacefully. The late King Hussein of Jordan, a friend of the Western powers particularly admired by the United States and Israel, found Kuwait's response perplexing. He testified to the *San Francisco Chronicle*:

He [Saddam Hussein] told me how anxious he was to ensure that the situation be resolved as soon as possible. So he initiated contact with the Kuwaitis ... this didn't work from the beginning. There were meetings but nothing happened ... this was really puzzling. It was in the Kuwaitis' interest to solve the problem. I know how there wasn't a definite border, how there was a feeling that Kuwait was part of Iraq.¹⁶⁰

Indeed, after having fought for eight devastating years with Iran, war was the last thing on Saddam's mind. A study by the Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College, issued in early 1990, found that:

Baghdad should not be expected to deliberately provoke military confrontations with anyone. Its interests are best served now and in the immediate future by peace ... Revenues from oil sales could put it in the front ranks of nations economically. A stable Middle East is conducive to selling oil; disruption has a long-range adverse effect on the oil market which would hurt Iraq ... Force is only likely if the Iraqis feel seriously threatened. It is our belief that Iraq is basically committed to a nonaggressive strategy, and that it will, over the course of the next few years, considerably reduce the size of its military. Economic conditions practically mandate such action ... There seems no doubt that Iraq would like to demobilize now that the war has ended.¹⁶¹

Yet Kuwait's provocative — and for Iraq devastating — behaviour, continued to generate increasing tension between the two countries. The international community ignored the growing tension. By July 1990, Kuwait had continued to ignore Iraq's territorial and economic demands — including its OPEC-assigned quota. Subsequently, Iraq prepared for a military venture, amassing large numbers of troops along the border. A significant indication of the US role in this can be discerned from a crucial discovery that occurred after the invasion, when the Iraqis found a confidential memorandum in a Kuwaiti intelligence file. The document (dated 22 November 1989) was a top secret report to the Kuwaiti Minister of the Interior by his Director General of State Security, informing him of a meeting with the Director of the CIA in Washington, William Webster. The document stated:

We agreed with the American side that it was important to take advantage of the deteriorating economic situation in Iraq in order to put pressure on that country's government to delineate our common border. The Central Intelligence Agency gave us its view of appropriate means of pressure, saying that broad cooperation should be initiated between us on condition that such activities be coordinated at a high level.¹⁶²

In response, the CIA accused Iraq of forging the memo. Yet the *Los Angeles Times* disagrees with the CIA allegation, pointing out that: The memo is not an obvious forgery, particularly since if Iraqi officials had written it themselves, they almost certainly would have made it far more damaging to US and Kuwaiti credibility.¹⁶³ There is convincing circumstantial evidence demonstrating the memo's authenticity. When the Iraqi foreign minister confronted his Kuwaiti counterpart with the document at an Arab summit meeting in mid-August, his Kuwaiti colleague found it so sufficiently authentic — and indeed damaging — that he fainted.¹⁶⁴ And as noted by Ramsey Clark, former US Attorney-General under the Lyndon Johnson administration, 'many experts affirm that it is genuine. It is telling evidence, documenting the economic warfare waged against Iraq by Kuwait and the United States.'¹⁶⁵

There are further reasons to believe that the US encouraged Kuwait not to come to a peaceful compromise with Iraq. Indeed, this is what has been asserted by the head of the Palestine Authority, Yasser Arafat, in relation to the events at an Arab summit in May. Arafat stated that the

US pressured Kuwait to refuse any deal when Saddam offered to negotiate a mutually acceptable border with Kuwait at the summit to resolve the issue. The US was encouraging Kuwait not to offer any compromise which meant that there could be no negotiated solution to avoid the Persian Gulf crisis.¹⁶⁶ Astute observers have noted that Kuwait's behaviour was plainly irrational and could not have been conducted without external encouragement from a more powerful ally. Dr Mussama al-Mubarak, Professor in Political Science at Kuwait University, for instance, commented: 'I don't know what the [Kuwaiti] Government was thinking, but it adopted an extremely hard line, which makes me think that the decisions were not Kuwait's alone. It is my assumption that, as a matter of course, Kuwait would have consulted on such matters with Saudi Arabia and Britain, as well as the United States.'¹⁶⁷

The testimony of King Hussein of Jordan, who had been an intermediary in negotiations between Iraq, Kuwait and other Arab states at that time, confirms the US role. American investigative journalist Dr Michael Emery, using King Hussein as his pre-eminent source, found that:

Parties to the Arab negotiations say the Kuwaitis ... had enthusiastically participated in a behind-the-scenes economic campaign inspired by Western intelligence agencies against Iraqi interests. The Kuwaities even went so far as to dump oil for less than the agreed upon OPEC price ... which undercut the oil revenues essential to cash hungry Baghdad. The evidence shows that President George Bush, British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, and other Arab leaders secretly cooperated on a number of occasions, beginning August 1988, to deny Saddam Hussein the economic help he demanded for the reconstruction of his nation ... However, Washington and London encouraged the Kuwaitis in their intransigent insistence.¹⁶⁸

As a consequence, Kuwait adopted a hard-line policy of no-compromise with Iraq, refusing to negotiate and intransigent in the face of Iraq's threat of using military means to put a stop to Kuwait's policies. According to senior Kuwaiti officials, this was because the US had already promised to intervene in case of an Iraqi attack. The Kuwaiti foreign minister, who is also brother of the ruling Emir, declared just before the Iraqi invasion: 'We are not going to respond to [Iraq] ... if they don't like it, let them occupy our territory ... we are going to bring in the Americans.' According to King Hussein, the Kuwaiti Emir commanded his senior military officers to hold off the Iraqis for 24 hours in the event of an invasion, by which time 'American and foreign forces would land in Kuwait and expel them'.¹⁶⁹

Middle East expert Milton Viorst interviewed both US and Kuwaiti officials for a report in the *New Yorker*. He was informed by Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem al-Sabah that General Schwarzkopf was a regular visitor to Kuwait after the Iran-Iraq War: 'Schwarzkopf came here a few times and met with the Crown Prince and Minister of Defense. These became routine visits to discuss military cooperation, and by the time the crisis with Iraq began last year, we knew we could rely on the Americans.'¹⁷⁰ Schwarzkopf's role has been corroborated by other sources, particularly the testimony of a US official in Kuwait who stated: 'Schwarzkopf was here on visits before the war, maybe a few times a year. He was a political general, and that was unusual in itself. He kept a personally high profile and was on a first-name basis with all the ministers in Kuwait.'¹⁷¹ The American-Kuwaiti plot was also confirmed after the Gulf War. The Kuwaiti Minister of Oil and Finance stated: 'But we knew that the United States would not let us be overrun. I spent too much time in Washington to make that mistake, and received a constant stream of visitors here. The American policy was clear. Only Saddam didn't understand it.'¹⁷² As Professor Francis Boyle thus notes, reviewing this sequence of events, the United States encouraged Kuwait in 'Violating OPEC oil production agreements to undercut the price of oil to debilitate Iraq's economy'; 'extracting excessive and illegal amounts of oil from pools it shared with Iraq'; 'demanding immediate repayment of loans Kuwait had made to Iraq during the Iraq-Iran War'; and 'breaking off negotiations with Iraq over these disputes'. In doing so, the US 'intended to provoke Iraq into aggressive military actions against Kuwait that they knew could be used to justify US military

intervention into the Persian Gulf for the purpose of destroying Iraq and taking over Arab oilfields'.¹⁷³

When Iraq began preparing for a military incursion into Kuwait, the US did not publicize its official position of willingness to intervene on behalf of Kuwait. Instead the United States presented a green light to Saddam Hussein by consistently asserting a position of neutrality on the issue, contrary to its actual policy. On 25 July, while Saddam's troops were amassed on Kuwait's border in preparation to attack, after hearing the Iraqi dictator inform her that Kuwait's borders were drawn in the colonial era April Glaspie, US Ambassador to Iraq, told Saddam:

We studied history at school. They taught us to say freedom or death. I think you know well that we ... have our experience with the colonialists. We have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait... [Secretary of State] James Baker has directed our official spokesmen to emphasize this instruction.

On 24 July, Glaspie received a cable from the US State Department directing her to reiterate to Iraqi officials that the US had 'no position' on 'Arab-Arab' conflicts.¹⁷⁴ Leading authority on US foreign policy John Stockwell — the highest-ranking CIA official to dissent and go public — has conducted an important review of Glaspie's role and its context in a wider array of US policies.¹⁷⁵ With regard to the Gulf War, he observes that 'the United States and Kuwait and Saudi Arabia lured Saddam Hussein and Iraq' into attacking Kuwait. Saddam Hussein had been 'protesting ... formally to every public body' against Kuwait's US-sponsored policies of 'economic warfare' against Iraq. There was no response from the international community. In the summer of 1990 Saddam 'called in the US Ambassador, April Glaspie, and asked her what the US position was ... on the defence of Kuwait. She did not know she was being tape-recorded, and she told him ten times in the conversation that [the US] had no defence agreement with Kuwait,' adding that 'the Secretary of State [James Baker] had ordered her to emphasize this instruction', and moreover that 'she had conferred with the President about it'. Stockwell also points out the crucial fact that then US Congressman Lee Hamilton — member of the US House Committee on International Relations, Chair of the Joint Economic Committee, and now Director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars — concluded that the United States had indeed intentionally goaded Iraq into invading Kuwait: 'Congressman Lee Hamilton concluded, from hearings on this, that [America] had deliberately given Saddam Hussein the green light to invade Kuwait.'¹⁷⁶

On 31 July, John Kelly, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, told Congress: 'We have no defence treaty relationship with any Gulf country. That is clear ... We have historically avoided taking a position on border disputes or on internal OPEC deliberations.' Representative Lee Harrison then asked that if Iraq 'charged across the border into Kuwait', would it be true to say that the United States did 'not have a treaty commitment which would obligate us to engage US forces' in the region. That is correct,' replied Kelly.⁷ Numerous official statements of similar intent were issued by US officials, while indications to the contrary were almost immediately withdrawn and corrected. Indeed, not long before the Gulf War — just after Saddam's hanging of London-based *Observer* journalist Farzad Bazoft in 1990 — a group of American senators visited Saddam in Baghdad and assured him that 'democracy is a very confusing issue — I believe that your problems lie with the Western media and not with the US Government' (US Senator Alan Simpson). Senator Howard Metzenbaum told Saddam: 'I have been sitting here and listening to you for about an hour, and I am now aware that you are a strong and intelligent man and that you want peace.'¹⁷⁸ All these statements of neutrality — and indeed appeasement of Saddam's Ba'athist regime — were clearly a misrepresentation of the actual US position. While giving Saddam a green light to invade by carefully not showing him a red light, the US covertly assured its Kuwaiti ally that in the event of an invasion, US forces would intervene and expel the Iraqi army from Kuwaiti territory.

Even the mainstream press has been forced to acknowledge how US statements of neutrality were so frequent and non-interventionist in character that they led Saddam to believe he had a green light to invade Kuwait. The *Washington Post* reported:

Since the invasion, highly classified US intelligence assessments have determined that Saddam took US statements of neutrality... as a green light from the Bush administration for an invasion. One senior Iraqi military official ... has told the [CIA] agency that Saddam seemed to be sincerely surprised by the subsequent bellicose reaction.¹⁷⁹

'State Department officials ... led Saddam Hussein to think he could get away with grabbing Kuwait,' concluded the *New York Daily News*. 'Bush and Co. gave him no reason to think otherwise.'¹⁸⁰ This was clearly the desired outcome. The former French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson has observed that: 'The Americans were determined to go to war from the start,' and Saddam Hussein 'walked into a trap.'¹⁸¹ A major piece of evidence on how the US manufactured the war with Iraq is contained in an impeachment resolution and brief in support by US Representative Henry Gonzalez presented to US Congress and printed in full in the *Congressional Record*:

As early as October 1989 the CIA representatives in Kuwait had agreed to take advantage of Iraq's deteriorating economic position to put pressure on Iraq to accede to Kuwait's demands with regard to the border dispute.

... Encouraging Kuwait to refuse to negotiate its differences with Iraq as required by the United Nations Charter, including Kuwait's failure to abide by OPEC quotas, its pumping of Iraqi oil from the Rumaila oil field and its refusal to negotiate these and other matters with Iraq.

Months prior to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the United States administration prepared a plan and practised elaborate computer war games pitting United States forces against Iraqi armoured divisions.

In testimony before Congress prior to the invasion, Assistant Secretary Kelly misleadingly assured Congress that the United States had no commitment to come to Kuwait's assistance in the event of war.

April Glaspie's reassurance to Iraq that the dispute was an Arab' matter and the US would not interfere.¹⁸²

As leading scholar of international affairs and authority on international law, former US Attorney-General Ramsey Clark — who led the Commission of Inquiry for the International War Crimes Tribunal on the Gulf War — thus concludes:

The evidence that this assault was planned for years before Iraq invaded Kuwait cannot be doubted. That a decision to provoke Iraq into an act that would justify the execution of those plans is clear beyond a reasonable doubt. It was not Iraq but powerful forces in the United States that wanted a new war in the Middle East: the Pentagon, to maintain its tremendous budget; the military-industrial complex, with its dependence on Middle East arms sales and domestic military contracts; the oil companies, which wanted more control over the price of crude oil and greater profits; and the Bush administration, which saw in the Soviet Union's disintegration its chance to establish a permanent military presence in the Middle East, securing the region and achieving vast geopolitical power into the next century through control of its oil resources.¹⁸³

This of course leads us to the question as to why the US would wish to remove Saddam Hussein from power. The answer perhaps lies in Saddam Hussein's domestic policies combined with his emerging tendencies towards independence. Although his regime was a dictatorship whose policies were exceedingly brutal against any form of opposition to the Ba'athist establishment, 'in his pre-war period', Saddam Hussein 'did more than most rulers in that part of the world to meet the basic material needs of his people in terms of housing, health care, and education,' reports Middle East expert Stephen Zunes of the University of San Francisco.

In fact, Iraq's impressive infrastructure and strongly nationalistic ideology led many Arabs to conclude that the overkill exhibited by American forces and the post-war sanctions was a deliberate effort to emphasize that any development strategy in that part of the world

must be pursued solely on terms favourable to Western interests. Saddam Hussein was also able to articulate the frustrations of the Arab masses concerning the Palestinian question, sovereignty regarding natural resources, and resistance to foreign domination. He was certainly opportunistic and manipulative in doing so, but it worked.¹⁸⁴

As similarly pointed out by Director of the Middle East Project at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington DC, Phyllis Bennis, 'the majority of Iraqi civilians enjoyed an almost First World-level standard of living, with education and health care systems that remained free, accessible to every Iraqi and among the highest quality in the developing world'.¹⁸⁵ According to the Economist Intelligence Unit's *Country Report for Iraq*, prior to the imposition of sanctions the Iraqi welfare state was 'among the most comprehensive and generous in the Arab world'. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported in December 1999 that: 'Just a decade ago, Iraq boasted one of the most modern infrastructures and highest standards of living in the Middle East,' furnishing a 'modern, complex health care system' along with 'sophisticated water-treatment and pumping facilities'.¹⁸⁷ The New York-based Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR) provides detailed elaboration:

Over 90% of the population had access to primary health-care, including laboratory diagnosis and immunizations for childhood diseases such as polio and diphtheria. During the 1970s and 80s, British and Japanese companies built scores of large, modern hospitals throughout Iraq, with advanced technologies for diagnosis, operations and treatment. Secondary and tertiary services, including surgical care and laboratory investigative support, were available to most of the Iraqi population at nominal charges. Iraqi medical and nursing schools emphasized education of women and attracted students from throughout the Middle East. A majority of Iraqi physicians were trained in Europe or the United States, and one-quarter were board-certified specialists.¹⁸⁸

This domestic development strategy was combined with a strongly nationalistic ideology that appeared to be intensifying with time. In February 1990, Saddam made a speech before an Arab summit that certainly seemed to show that his days of subservience to the West could be ending. Harshly condemning the ongoing US military presence in the Gulf, Saddam warned, 'If the Gulf people and the rest of the Arabs along with them fail to take heed, the Arab Gulf region will be ruled by American will,' and that the United States would dictate the production, distribution and price of oil, 'all on the basis of a special outlook which has to do solely with US interests and in which no consideration is given to the interests of others'.¹⁸⁹ Saddam, in other words, was openly advocating the expulsion of US influence and control in the Gulf region, particularly with regard to the flow of oil.

Saddam's demonstration of a developing propensity for independence, originating from the nationalist Ba'athist ideology, was almost certainly a crucial factor in the US decision to eventually attempt to eliminate him, or at least cut him down to size. Having developed weapons of mass destruction under US tutelage and being strategically located in the Persian Gulf, any significant moves towards independence from the West by Iraq would present a serious threat to US/Western domination of Gulf oil, and thereby a wider threat to general US hegemony in the region. When Saddam began manifesting this very propensity it was thus necessary to block that movement long before it could gain regional momentum. 'With the launch of the allied attacks, the primary showdown pitted one of the most articulate spokesmen for Arab nationalism against the West,' notes Professor Zunes. Thus, there was real concern, both in the Middle East and beyond, that the United States was using Iraq's invasion of Kuwait as an excuse to exert a long-desired military, political, and economic hegemony in the region.¹⁹⁰

This strategy has been confirmed by the Pentagon itself. A leaked Pentagon draft document stated:

In the Middle East and south-west Asia, our overall objective is to remain the predominant outside power in the region and preserve US and Western access to the

region's oil ... As demonstrated by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, it remains fundamentally important to prevent a hegemon or alignment of powers from dominating the region.¹⁹¹

In other words, the Pentagon describes US policy as being designed to maintain US/Western control over the Persian Gulf, primarily to maintain energy security, by preventing any single state or group of states from challenging in any manner this control. Saddam had demonstrated his intent to do exactly this — and thus it became essential for the US to neutralize this potential, as per official Pentagon strategy.

US Warmongering

This pre-eminent drive to protect and consolidate US control over the Persian Gulf via military intervention explains the consistent US attempts to push for war. According to conventional opinion, Saddam Hussein had not demonstrated any desire to seek a peaceful solution to the conflict with Kuwait, and the impending conflict with the United States. The truth, however, is quite the contrary. While the US had played an instrumental role in engineering a regional war crisis between Iraq and Kuwait, it had also continued to eagerly fabricate further pretexts to justify US military intervention in the Persian Gulf.

The *Christian Science Monitor* records in detail how the first Bush administration lied repeatedly to generate support for the 1991 Persian Gulf War:

When George H. W. Bush ordered American forces to the Persian Gulf — to reverse Iraq's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait — part of the administration case was that an Iraqi juggernaut was also threatening to roll into Saudi Arabia. Citing top-secret satellite images, Pentagon officials estimated in mid-September that up to 250,000 Iraqi troops and 1500 tanks stood on the border, threatening the key US oil supplier. But when the *St Petersburg Times* in Florida acquired two commercial Soviet satellite images of the same area, taken at the same time, no Iraqi troops were visible near the Saudi border — just empty desert.

'It was a pretty serious fib,' says Jean Heller, the Times journalist who broke the story... Shortly before US strikes began in the Gulf War, for example, the *St Petersburg Times* asked two experts to examine the satellite images of the Kuwait and Saudi Arabia border area taken in mid-September 1990, a month and a half after the Iraqi invasion. The experts, including a former Defense Intelligence Agency analyst who specialized in desert warfare, pointed out the US build-up — jet fighters standing wing-tip to wing-tip at Saudi bases — but were surprised to see almost no sign of the Iraqis. That [Iraqi build-up] was the whole justification for Bush sending troops in there, and it just didn't exist,' Ms Heller says. Three times Heller contacted the office of Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney (now Vice-President) for evidence refuting Times photos or analysis — offering to hold the story if proven wrong.

The official response: 'Trust us.' To this day, the Pentagon's photographs of the Iraqi troop build-up remain classified.¹⁹²

This war-mongering attitude was accompanied by an adamant refusal to acknowledge the grievances that had led Iraq to implement its offensive in the first place. President Bush declared that the Iraqi invasion was 'without provocation' — an assertion that specifically denied the reality of Kuwait's US-inspired policies of 'economic warfare' against Iraq.⁹ Despite this, Saddam had made several crucial offers of peace that were rejected outright by the international community under US leadership, without even a feeble attempt at negotiation. According to the *New York Times*, the US wanted to 'block the diplomatic track because it might defuse the crisis at the cost of a few token gains for Iraq'.¹⁹⁴ As Stephen Zunes notes: 'Unilateral demands are not negotiations. American specialists on the negotiation process felt that the United States wanted a war, given that Washington gave the Iraqis no opportunity to save face.'¹⁹⁵

In early August 1990, and once again in October, Saddam made explicitly clear that he was willing to pull Iraqi forces out of Kuwait and allow foreigners to leave the country, in return for the following: control of the Rumaila oilfield; access to the Persian Gulf; the lifting of sanctions that had been subsequently imposed; and a resolution of the oil price problem with Kuwait.¹⁹⁶ There was

nothing particularly unreasonable about these conditions. One Bush administration official who specialized in the Middle East acknowledged that 'the terms of the proposal are serious', describing the package as 'negotiable'. *Newsday* reported that in response to the offer, 'some [US] government officials now say that they see some hope of a negotiated settlement'.¹⁹⁷ The offers were rejected. The 23 August offer, for instance, was simply dismissed by the US administration and virtually blacked out by the mass media. Indeed, at first the State Department 'categorically' denied that the offer had even been made; only later was the existence of Iraq's offer confirmed by the White House.¹⁹⁸

On 2 January 1991, Iraq proposed another peace package, offering to withdraw from Kuwait on condition that the US did not attack Iraqi soldiers as they pulled out; foreign troops left the region; there would be agreement on the Palestine issue and on the banning of weapons of mass destruction in the region. The proposal was described as 'a serious pre-negotiation position' by a State Department Middle East expert. Other US officials observed that the prospects of the offer were 'interesting'.¹⁹⁹ The proposal illustrated a clear willingness to compromise — Saddam had now dropped the previous Iraqi claims to two Kuwaiti islands and control of the Rumaila oilfield. Yet this was barely reported in the mass media.²⁰⁰ Instead, Western leaders continued to categorically dismiss the possibility of negotiations, pushing eagerly for a full-scale offensive.²⁰¹

US political analyst and CIA specialist William Blum, a former State Department official, chastises the blanket US dismissal of all possible peaceful solutions: The US military and President Bush would have their massive show of power, their super-hi-tech real war games, and no signals from Iraq or any peacenik would be allowed to spoil it.²⁰² As a consequence, the United States, with support from its Western allies, attacked Iraq and imposed a massive military presence in the Gulf region.

The whole process, notes Blum, allowed Bush Snr to maintain both US military spending and his domestic popularity.²⁰³ The Senate was led as the war proceeded to acknowledge that the Iraqi attack 'demonstrates the continuing risk of war and the need for advanced weapons'. Concerning the need for continued high military spending demonstrated by Iraqi aggression, Senator Dole remarked: 'If we needed Saddam Hussein to give us a wake-up call at least we can thank him for that.'²⁰⁴ The *Washington Post* recorded the legitimacy the war gave to the expansion of the US military-industrial complex:

Less than a year after political changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union sent the defence industry reeling under the threat of dramatic cutbacks, executives and analysts say the crisis in the Persian Gulf has provided military companies with a tiny glimmer of hope ... The possible beneficiaries of the crisis cover the spectrum of companies in the defence industry.²⁰⁵

By early October 1990 this 'tiny glimmer of hope' was transformed into a massive boost:

The political backdrop of the US military deployment in Saudi Arabia [in response to Iraq's invasion] played a significant role in limiting defence cuts in Sunday's budget agreement, halting the military spending 'free fall' that some analysts had predicted two months ago, budget aides said. Capitol Hill strategists said that Operation Desert Shield forged a major change in the political climate of the negotiations, forcing lawmakers who had been advocating deep cuts on the defensive. The defence budget compromise ... would leave not only funding for Operation Desert Shield intact but would spare much of the funding that has been spent each year to prepare for a major Soviet onslaught on Western Europe.²⁰⁶

Meanwhile, Bush Snr's approval rating had been boosted to a successful 73 per cent in October 1990. When Bush continued to contradict himself about the actual purpose of the Gulf War, this soon dropped to a meagre 56 per cent.²⁰⁷ But once the actual military onslaught against Iraq had begun, by January 1991 Bush's popularity was again soaring at 82 per cent — the highest ever during his presidency.²⁰⁸ Yet in spite of his success in duping the American public, beneath

Bush Snr's popularity there was an uneasy awareness that the war was merely an excuse to legitimize US military expansion. James Webb, former Assistant Secretary of Defense and Secretary of the Navy, observed that:

The President should be aware that, while most Americans are labouring very hard to support him, a mood of cynicism is just beneath the veneer of respect. Many are claiming that the build-up is little more than a 'Pentagon budget drill', designed to preclude cutbacks of an Army searching for a mission as bases in NATO begin to disappear.²⁰⁹

The process during the 1980s by which the United States was in some respects being supplanted by other powers was also crushed, with the US able to reinsert itself as the dominant hegemon in the region. The Persian Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia, no longer opposed a direct US military presence, which was rushed in immediately. As former US Ambassador Chas Freeman observes: 'The Gulf War put Saudi Arabia back on the map and revived a relationship that had been severely attrited.' Thus, in the ensuing decade the US sold \$43 billion worth of military assistance to Saudi Arabia, and another \$16 billion to Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. Whereas prior to 1991 the US could only 'pre-position' military supplies in Oman, the Gulf War allowed the US to conduct joint military exercises, pre-position military supplies, and place naval units and Air Force squadrons with nearly every country in the region. The US military presence in the Persian Gulf in other words increased dramatically.²¹⁰

US War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity

The US-led attack on Iraq enthusiastically employed a policy of wholesale destruction, which intentionally targeted not only Iraq's military, but also the entire civilian infrastructure. A report by the US General Accounting Office, for instance, explicitly affirms that the Desert Storm air campaign of 1991 was aimed at: 'Five basic categories of targets — command and control, industrial production, infrastructure, population will, and fielded forces.' The bombing of civilian infrastructure, including electricity, water, sanitation and other life-sustaining essentials, was intended, according to the report, to 'degrade the will of the civilian population'.²¹¹

These facts, contrary to the mainstream myth of Western 'smart' bombs hitting solely military targets, have been exhaustively documented by Middle East Watch (MEW), affiliated to the international US-based rights monitor Human Rights Watch (HRW). MEW has documented numerous cases of the intentional mass destruction of civilian buildings and areas, such as the bombing of residential areas; crowded markets; bridges while they were brimming with pedestrians and their vehicles; a busy central bus station, all of which occurred largely in broad daylight with no governmental or military structures in the vicinity.²¹²

According to its principal report on the Persian Gulf War, MEW records that 'allied attacks appear to have been indiscriminate, in that they failed to distinguish between military and civilian objects ...'

[N]umerous witnesses described incidents in which civilian structures, most typically houses in residential areas they lived in or knew well, were destroyed or damaged in areas where they believed there were no conceivable military installations or facilities nearby, including anti-aircraft artillery ... [These] accounts suggest that some civilian casualties during the war were not the product of inaccurate bombing — mere misses — but of attacks that, pending convincing justification from the allies, appear to have been indiscriminate.

A typical example of these policies is the targeting of Basra, 'which was largely off-limits to foreign reporters during the air wars, [and] appears to have suffered considerably more damage to civilian structures than Baghdad, where a small international press force was present'. MEW also dissects the pretexts for the targeting of Iraqi civilian infrastructure. Referring to the destruction of Iraq's nationwide electrical system, MEW reports:

The apparent justification for attacking almost the entire electrical system in Iraq was that the system functioned as an integrated grid, meaning that power could be shifted countrywide, including to military functions such as command-and-control centres and weapons-manufacturing facilities. But these key military targets were attacked in the opening days of the war. The direct attacks by the allies on these military targets should have obviated the need simultaneously to destroy the fixed power sources thought to have formerly supplied them. If these and other purely military targets could be attacked at will, then arguably the principle of humanity would make the wholesale destruction of Iraq's electrical-generating capability superfluous to the accomplishment of legitimate military objectives.²¹³

Indeed, the Allies embarked on purposeful destruction of almost the entirety of Iraq's civilian infrastructure. Eric Hoskins, a Canadian doctor and coordinator of a Harvard study team on Iraq, observed that the bombing 'effectively terminated everything vital to human survival in Iraq — electricity, water, sewage systems, agriculture, industry, health care. Food, warehouses, hospitals and markets were bombed. Power stations were repeatedly attacked until electricity supplies were at only 4 per cent of pre-war levels.'²¹⁴ Hoskin's team further recorded that:

The children strive to understand what they saw: planes bombing, houses collapsing, soldiers fighting, blood, mutilated and crushed bodies. The children fight to forget what they heard: people screaming, desperate voices, planes, explosions, crying people. They are haunted by the smell of gunfire, fires and burned flesh.²¹⁵

Many Iraqi civilians tried to escape the bombing by fleeing to Jordan, only to be bombarded by air attacks on the highway between Baghdad and Jordan's border. This included assaults on buses, taxis and private cars with Western cluster bombs, rockets and machine guns. The violence occurred in broad daylight, with no military structures or vehicles in sight, and with targets clearly being civilians. Busloads of passengers were literally incinerated, while civilians evacuating their vehicles fled for their lives; they too were subsequently fired at by tailing Allied planes.²¹⁶

Probably it was 13 February 1991 when the Allies first escalated their bombing strategy to terrorize the Iraqi people. Two missiles launched from a US stealth bomber hit a civilian establishment — an air raid shelter — killing 1500 civilians, many of them women and children. In response to international concern and outrage, the US claimed that the shelter was a cover for a military outpost. Yet neighborhood residents insistently pointed out the existence of constant Western aerial surveillance overhead which clearly would have observed the daily flow of women and children into the shelter,²¹⁷ and Western reporters at the site admitted that absolutely no signs of military use could be discovered.²¹⁸ People living in the vicinity informed researchers that it was simply 'unbelievable' that the US was unaware that the shelter was used primarily by women and children coming and going twice a day. Abu Kulud, who lost his wife and two daughters in the bombing, testified: 'It was impossible for them not to know there were only civilians in the shelter. Their air [communications] were everywhere.' Similar testimony came from a woman who lost her mother and two sisters: 'How could they not know? They had to know. They had the satellite over our heads 24 hours a day, as well as photographs the planes took before they bombed.'²¹⁹

US officials also failed to answer a reporter's key question at a military briefing, and prevented any form of independent inquiry from taking place:

Why did they not show the video that showed military personnel going in and out of the bomb shelter? The US military refused to produce the pictures or allow an independent investigation of the incident. Within the space of 24 hours the Pentagon announced that its own internal investigation, conducted in secret, of course, was over and the case closed.²²⁰

However, the later testimony of a Pentagon official revealed the duplicity of a US cover-up. The US had known the site was a civilian shelter, but had targeted it to intentionally terrorize the Iraqi people. Brian Becker, Co-director of the Washington-based International Action Center (IAC) —

the anti-war organization founded and headed by former US Attorney-General Ramsey Clark — calls attention to the official's crucial testimony:

The US has deliberately targeted Iraqi civilians in the past. During the Persian Gulf War, for instance, the US used two precision or 'smart' bombs to destroy the Al-Amariyah bomb shelter in downtown Baghdad ... The Pentagon spokesman went on TV in February 1991 to announce that the attack on Al-Amariyah was not an accident. The US was trying to terrorize the population.²²¹

This was only one representative example of a bombing campaign that can only be described as terrorism. Francis Boyle provides an accurate summary of the campaign:

Systematic aerial and missile bombardment of Iraq was ordered to begin at 6:30 p.m. EST January 16, 1991, in order to be reported on prime time TV. The bombing continued for 42 days. It met no resistance from Iraqi aircraft and no effective anti-aircraft or anti-missile ground fire. Iraq was basically defenceless. Most of the targets were civilian facilities. The United States intentionally bombed and destroyed centres for civilian life, commercial and business districts, schools, hospitals, mosques, churches, shelters, residential areas, historical sites, private vehicles and civilian government offices. In aerial attacks, including strafing, over cities, towns, the countryside and highways, United States aircraft bombed and strafed indiscriminately. The purpose of these attacks was to destroy life and property, and generally to terrorize the civilian population of Iraq. The net effect was the summary execution and corporal punishment indiscriminately of men, women and children, young and old, rich and poor, of all nationalities and religions. As a direct result of this bombing campaign against civilian life, at least 25,000 men, women and children were killed. The Red Crescent Society of Jordan estimated 113,000 civilian dead, 60% of them children, the week before the end of the war. According to the Nuremberg Charter, this 'wanton destruction of cities, towns, or villages' is a Nuremberg War Crime.²²²

Other experts agree, including the authoritative Commission for Inquiry of the International War Crimes Tribunal initiated by former US Attorney-General Ramsey Clark, which elaborates on these horrendous war crimes and crimes against humanity:

The destruction of civilian facilities left the entire civilian population without heat, cooking fuel, refrigeration, potable water, telephones, power for radio or TV reception, public transportation and fuel for private automobiles. It also limited food supplies, closed schools, created massive unemployment, severely limited economic activity and caused hospitals and medical services to shut down. In addition, residential areas of every major city and most towns and villages were targeted and destroyed. Isolated Bedouin camps were attacked by US aircraft. In addition to deaths and injuries, the aerial assault destroyed 10-20,000 homes, apartments and other dwellings. Commercial centres with shops, retail stores, offices, hotels, restaurants and other public accommodations were targeted and thousands were destroyed. Scores of schools, hospitals, mosques and churches were damaged or destroyed. Thousands of civilian vehicles on highways, roads and parked on streets and in garages were targeted and destroyed. These included public buses, private vans and mini-buses, trucks, tractor trailers, lorries, taxi cabs and private cars. The purpose of this bombing was to terrorize the entire country, kill people, destroy property, prevent movement, demoralize the people and force the overthrow of the government.²²³

According to a United Nations inspection team in the aftermath of the war, the Western offensive had 'a near apocalyptic impact' on Iraq. The country, which 'had been until January a rather highly urbanized and mechanized society', had been bombed into a 'pre-industrial age nation'.²²⁴ It is reasonable to believe that one of the motivations for ruthlessly targeting the civilian population was to encourage desperate citizens to overthrow Saddam Hussein, and institute a new subservient regime. A US Air Force planner declared: 'Big picture, we wanted to let people know,

"Get rid of this guy and we'll be more than happy to assist in rebuilding. We're not going to tolerate Saddam Hussein or his regime." Fix that and we'll fix your electricity.²²⁵

This did not mean that the US preferred a popular democratic government to take power. On the contrary, when a popular Shi'ite and Kurdish uprising erupted in Iraq during the Gulf War after President Bush Snr had urged Iraqis to rebel against Saddam's regime, the revolt was put down by Saddam's forces with US complicity, as was revealed by a report by Peter Galbraith of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in light of a March 1991 fact-finding mission. Galbraith reported that the US administration withheld support of the uprising against Saddam Hussein. Noam Chomsky describes the revealing account provided by Galbraith and other sources on the matter:

Galbraith reported that the administration did not even respond to Saudi proposals to assist Shiite and Kurdish rebels, and that the Iraqi military did not attack until it had 'clear indication that the United States did not want the popular rebellion to succeed'. A BBC investigation found that 'several Iraqi generals made contact with the United States to sound out the likely response if they moved against Saddam', but received no support, concluding that 'Washington had no interest in supporting revolution; that it would prefer Saddam Hussein to continue his office ...' An Iraqi general who escaped to Saudi Arabia told the BBC that 'he and his men had repeatedly asked the American forces for weapons, ammunition and food to help carry on the fight against Saddam's forces', only to be refused each time. As his men fell back towards US-UK positions, the Americans blew up an Iraqi arms dump to prevent them from obtaining arms, and then 'disarmed the rebels'. Reporting from northern Iraq, ABC correspondent Charles Glass described how 'Republican Guards [Saddam's army], supported by regular army brigades, mercilessly shelled Kurdish-held areas with Katyusha multiple rocket launchers, helicopter gunships and heavy artillery', while journalists observing the slaughter listened to General Schwarzkopf boasting to his radio audience that 'we have destroyed the Republican Guard as a militarily effective force' and eliminated the military use of helicopters. Such truths are not quite the stuff of which heroes are fashioned, so the story was finessed at home, though it could not be totally ignored, particularly the attack on the Kurds, with their Aryan features and origins; the Shi'ites who appear to have suffered even worse atrocities right under the gaze of Stormin' Norman, raised fewer problems, being mere Arabs.²²⁶

Western aversion to the removal of Saddam in this case appears to have been associated with the problem of how to ensure that the Kurdish/Shi'ite rebellion would result in the installation of an appropriately subservient government. There was no guarantee in this regard — the US certainly did not want the Shi'ite Muslims to take power, as had happened in Iran. Hence, the revolt went unsupported — not because the first Bush administration wanted Saddam Hussein to remain in power, but because it was clear that an indigenous rebellion would replace Saddam only with another nationalist leadership likely to be opposed to US/Western domination of the Persian Gulf.

Western indifference to the plight of the Kurds, rooted in strategic and economic interests, has a long record worth recounting here. The contradiction between the West's professed concern for the rights of Kurds in Iraq, and Western policy towards Turkey, is one contemporary example. Human Rights Watch (HRW), for instance, reports that it 'is particularly troubled that throughout Turkey's scorched-earth campaign, US troops, aircraft and intelligence personnel have remained at their posts throughout Turkey, mingling with Turkish counter-insurgency troops and aircrews in southeastern bases such as Incirlik and Diyarbakir ...'

Some US troops are in Turkey on NATO-related duties, while others operate within the framework of Operation Provide Comfort, a no-fly zone in northern Iraq designed to defend Iraqi Kurds from Saddam Hussein's Air Force ... US military and diplomatic personnel have studiously ignored the abusive actions of their Turkish allies. It appears that in return for Turkey's support for Operation Provide Comfort, the US has agreed not to publicly criticize what Turkey does with its own Kurdish citizens, located directly across the Iraqi border from the zone protected by US warplanes ... [Elements within the US Government possess detailed knowledge of the full scope of Turkish abuses as well as the key role played by US weapons.²²⁷

This combination of hypocrisy and complicity can be located in Turkey's status as an important NATO ally and as a major base for US troops, including US intelligence units, as well as US nuclear weapons'. In other words, strategic interests far outweigh alleged humanitarian concerns.²²⁸

All this is nothing novel and remains consistent with traditional policies. For example, in the early 1970s there was a Kurdish revolt supported by Iran — then ruled by the Shah. The purpose of the revolt as far as Iran and its American masters were concerned was simply to cause trouble for Iraq in accordance with strategic considerations — Iraq was not a US ally at this time. In order to further its strategic interests the US decided to help. The Pike Committee report has made clear that both the US and its Iranian stooge of the time did not want the Kurds to win, and that the uprising was given limited support only to pressurize Iraq to settle a border issue concerning access to the Persian Gulf. Consequently, as soon as Iraq accepted Iranian demands, both Iran and the United States cancelled their support of the Kurdish uprising. A classified report by the House Select Committee on Intelligence that was leaked to the press clarified this matter, stating that US officials:

... hoped that our clients [the Kurds] would not prevail. They preferred instead that the insurgents simply continue a level of hostilities sufficient to sap [Iraqi] resources ... This policy was not imparted to our clients, who were encouraged to continue fighting. Even in the context of covert action, ours was a cynical enterprise.²²⁹

It was in 1975 that aid to the Kurds was suddenly cut off, allowing Saddam to begin slaughtering them immediately. One thousand *pesh merga* fighters who had surrendered were shot down 'in cold blood', while another five thousand Kurdish women, children and elderly men were slaughtered as they attempted to flee the country.²³⁰

Western indifference to the slaughter of Kurds and people of other ethnicities in the non-Western world is therefore a longstanding reality that continues to this day, because policy is driven not by benevolence, but by elite interests in the maximization of power and profit. The massive military presence in the Persian Gulf today, legitimized by the no-fly zones over Iraq purportedly established to monitor Saddam's treatment of his people and ensure their protection, in fact plays the role of continuing the war against the Iraqi people. As LAC Coordinator Brian Becker pointedly remarks:

The US says it is 'concerned' about the Kurds in northern Iraq and the Shi'ite population in the south. That's hogwash. Those are the people who are being killed and maimed by US bombs and missiles. The real reason is that the US wants control over these two regions because that is where Iraq's oil reserves are located. This oil constitutes 10% of the world's known reserves.

It is clear then that a fundamental purpose of attacking the civilian society of Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War was politically motivated, and performed with the view to induce a population that could be appropriately subdued into recognizing Western superiority, to support the removal of the overly independent Saddam and bring Iraq back under US sphere of influence.²³² Western objectives in Iraq were candidly outlined by Thomas Friedman, then Chief Diplomatic Correspondent of the *New York Times*. Friedman reported that the West's hope was for Iraqi generals to topple Saddam Hussein, 'and then Washington would have the best of all worlds: an iron-fisted Iraqi junta without Saddam Hussein'. In this way, the United States — civilized leader of the 'free world' — hoped to recreate the days when Saddam's pro-West 'iron-fist ... held Iraq together, much to the satisfaction of the American allies Turkey and Saudi Arabia', as well as their Western masters.²³³

This record of Western policy in the Middle East illustrates not only that the concept of Western humanitarian intervention is redundant, but also that the conventional assumptions -of mainstream political discourse — in which Western benevolence, concern for human rights and promotion of democracy are integral aspects of Western foreign policy — are without genuine empirical

foundation. Indeed, these assumptions are entirely at odds with the systematically brutal and anti-democratic nature of Western foreign policy under US leadership in the Middle East, specifically in the Persian Gulf. This has broad implications for the basic terms and foundations of our understanding of international relations. In particular, it brings into question the relevance of the concept of a global 'civil society' in understanding the structure of the current world order, which is clearly dominated by imperial values. Indeed, as we shall see, the record of Western policy in Iraq in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War only serves to clarify this stark and unsavoury reality.

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