

NO TIME FOR DESPAIR OR RETREAT!

A Peace Policy for the U.S.

by Seymour Melman and John E. Ullmann

1. The Gulf crisis contains both the danger of a vastly destructive war and of derailing the development of American domestic and foreign policy to take the country beyond the Cold War. The American people, apart from the political and corporate managers of war-making institutions, have a major stake in supporting a political and not a military resolution of the Gulf crisis. For what is at issue is not only the avoidance of a major war — that could be provoked by accident or intent — but also the chance to set in motion the demilitarization of the American economy and the use of a growing peace dividend.

2. President Bush has disregarded constitution, law and the elected Congress in his hasty deployment of U.S. forces in the Middle East.

3. America's political and corporate chiefs are propelling American society toward a new war. They have no post-Cold War program for the United States, no international policies apart from wielding armed force, no national economic program apart from presiding over further economic decay at home, and no policy in the Middle East that is not based on direct use of U.S. armed force, military proxies, and massive arms transfers. These only produce more war, more instability and less security for all peoples involved. Now, as part of such counterproductive and dangerous policies in the Gulf, the United States government proposes to reduce even the small cuts in military spending which it had proposed.

4. Every reason for rejecting the Iraqi seizure of Kuwait applies equally to rejecting the Cold War policy system that armed Iraq for this aggression in the first place. Throughout the long Cold War the Soviet Union and the United States, with important collaboration by France, Brazil, China, West Germany and others, participated in the arming of Iraq to its present status — each supplier attempting to score a military and political advantage during the Cold War contest. This competition in turn led to toleration of the internal and external excesses of Third World regimes like Iraq that took advantage of Cold War rivalries. By repression at home these regimes enforced a national consensus that using these weapons was a reasonable way to realize national ambitions. Only the end of the Cold War permitted the current collective international response to Iraq. Its earlier aggressions against Iran and the poison gas attacks on its own Kurdish minority rated hardly a ripple of protest in the United Nations.

5. That is why the Gulf crisis must be dealt with not only in its particular context but also with an eye to the other possible aftershocks from the Cold War rivalry. Political and allied efforts to settle the Gulf crisis

should be designed to set a powerful precedent for resolving similar crises. This will require giving new, major strength to United Nations' dispute-resolving and military peacekeeping institutions. Though well concealed by top government officials, there are means for resolving a set of Middle East crisis points by methods that also would further the task of post-Cold War rebuilding of American society, as well as promoting international demilitarization.

6. A political assembly designed to address the Iraq-Kuwait issue should develop a consensus on a set of principles and procedures that could be applied in various ways for other dispute settlements in the Middle East and elsewhere. These could include territorial demilitarization, compensation for affected people, the phasing in and out of U.N. peacekeeping forces, etc. Consensus on such ideas will make it more feasible to negotiate and execute the territorial and other concessions required. Other Middle East disputes that lend themselves to such an approach include: Lebanon, with its Syrian and Israeli occupations; Israel, with its West Bank and Gaza claims from the Palestinians; the Golan Heights, in dispute between Syria and Israel; the Kurdish territories of Iraq, Turkey and Iran, whose populations have been ruthlessly suppressed.

7. This approach to the Gulf crisis is not only a way of resolving that issue, but also of making its resolution an opportunity for strengthening the durable dispute-settling and peacekeeping institutions of the United Nations. It is vital that the United Nations acquire the full resources necessary for these tasks. This is where the government of the United States has a special responsibility. By being \$500 million in arrears in its regular United Nations payments and by failing to pay its share of U.N. peacekeeping expenses, the U.S. has played a major part in restricting the capability of the United Nations for dispute-resolution and peacekeeping tasks.

8. The government of the United States, as a by-product of its long Cold War contest, has participated in creating in the present government of Iraq a Frankenstein's monster that has run amok. Therefore a key issue is the nature of the U.S. policy system that equips governments to carry out wars of aggression.

9. Going beyond the Cold War requires a systematic approach to internationally agreed disarmament with parallel reduction of military budgets. Within such a framework it becomes possible to damp down and finally terminate the international traffic in arms.

10. To prepare for international agreements for demilitarization, the government of the United States must have a systematic economic conversion policy. This will also make possible a serious peace dividend for the repair of underdevelopment in the United States, and for supporting U.S. aid to populations of the earth who are too impoverished to help themselves.

11. Americans need to recognize how the Soviet economy was ruined by the using up of civilian industry in the service of its war economy. There is a clear signal for the U.S. from this: we are on the same track of civilian industrial and infrastructure decay that is propelled by a long-enduring war economy — a few stations behind the U.S.S.R. A peace dividend for economic reconstruction is now an American responsibility that we dare not evade with fear-mongering about the Iraqi war machine.

12. The United States has a further responsibility. It must develop and implement a domestic energy policy to make this country less of an oil glutton, and thereby less dependent on the importation of petroleum from the Middle East or any other place. A competent U.S. response to the petroleum price shock would be a deliberate effort to make the U.S. vastly more energy efficient, by methods that include energy conservation and co-generation, energy from renewable fuel (like ethyl alcohol from biomass and waste paper), direct solar energy application, and electrified public transportation.

13. Americans must be alerted to the hazardous moral, political and economic consequences of maintaining a war economy now directed toward armed conflict in Third World areas. We should also be aware of the constructive and life serving possibilities that can be obtained from following the Cold War not with a new set of military adventures, but with demilitarization and economic reconstruction.

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