



# The Gulf War Did Not Take Place

*Jean Baudrillard , Paul Patton (Translator)*

Download now

Read Online ➞

# The Gulf War Did Not Take Place

*Jean Baudrillard , Paul Patton (Translator)*

**The Gulf War Did Not Take Place** Jean Baudrillard , Paul Patton (Translator)

In a provocative analysis written during the unfolding drama of 1992, Baudrillard draws on his concepts of simulation and the hyperreal to argue that the Gulf War did not take place but was a carefully scripted media event a "virtual" war.

Patton s introduction argues that Baudrillard, more than any other critic of the Gulf War, correctly identified the stakes involved in the gestation of the New World Order."

## The Gulf War Did Not Take Place Details

Date : Published October 22nd 1995 by Indiana University Press (first published September 23rd 1991)

ISBN : 9780253210036

Author : Jean Baudrillard , Paul Patton (Translator)

Format : Paperback 96 pages

Genre : Philosophy, Politics, Nonfiction, Theory, War, Cultural, France, History

 [Download The Gulf War Did Not Take Place ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Gulf War Did Not Take Place ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online The Gulf War Did Not Take Place Jean Baudrillard , Paul Patton (Translator)**

---

# From Reader Review The Gulf War Did Not Take Place for online ebook

## Tash says

I understood all these words separately but together not so much

---

## David says

The Emperor has no clothes. If you boil off the seemingly non-sensical claims (like, y'know, the title) the book's alleged insights are, while not wrong, deeply and utterly banal.

---

## Spoust1 says

Three essays: "The Gulf War Will Not Take Place," "The Gulf War Is Not Taking Place," "The Gulf War Did Not Take Place." Baudrillard argues that the First Gulf War was a media construction - not that it did not take place, exactly, but that it did not exist for us at all except through the media, which packaged it to us falsely, depicting it as a "war." What happened was a travesty, simple imperialist brutality, masquerading as a war - that is what he's saying. Baudrillard's argument is coldly ironic, never making use of a humanistic lexicon. This is intentional: his dry tone is accusatory. His tone forces us to confront the terrifying fact that an attitude of utter indifference to something such as "the Gulf War" is absolutely possible for those of us in the post-industrial, wealthiest sectors of the world. That is our isolation, our alienation. The scariest line in the book:

"A simple calculation shows that, of the 500,000 American soldiers involved during the seven months of operations in the Gulf, three times as many would have died from road accidents alone had they stayed in civilian life. Should we consider multiplying clean wars in order to reduce the murderous death toll of peacetime?"

---

## Joe Mecham says

I may just be easy to please, as I haven't read much philosophy, but Baudrillard just does not leave me disappointed. His almost poetic writing style is the perfect form of delivery for this type of novel, as it is articulate and clear, yet ironic and suspenseful.

My favorite quote:

"Saddam the hysteric. Interminable shit kicker. The hysteric cannot be crushed: he is reborn from his symptoms as though from his ashes. Confronted by a hysteric, the other becomes paranoid, he deploys a massive apparatus of protection and mistrust. He suspects the hysteric of bad faith, of ruse and dissimulation. He wants to constrain him to the truth and to transparency. The hysteric is irreducible. He means are decoys and the overturning of alliances. Confronted with this lubricity, this duplicity, the paranoid can only become more rigid, more obsessional. The most violent reproach addresses to Saddam Hussein by Bush is that of

being a liar, a traitor, a bad player, a trickster. Lying son of a bitch!

Saddam, like a good hysteric, has never given birth to his own war: for him, it is only a phantom pregnancy. By contrast, he has until now succeeded in preventing Bush from giving birth to his. And, with the complicity of Gorbachev, he almost succeeded in fucking him up the ass. But the hysteric is not suicidal, this is the advantageous other side to Saddam. He is neither mad nor suicidal, perhaps he should be treated by hypnosis?"

---

## **Sid Nuncius says**

I thought this book was largely (but not quite entirely) provocative nonsense. There is some decent sociological analysis in it, but there is also a very large amount of utter drivel.

In spite of the title, Baudrillard accepts that military events took place in the Gulf and that people suffered and died during them, but he maintains that what took place was not a war, and the version of events we saw on TV and in other media was not what really happened. Plainly, the title is intended to attract attention (and it's a clever reference to Jean Giraudoux's play), but Baudrillard simply fails to make any sort of case to support it. He argues that the war we were presented with on TV and through government propaganda isn't the same as the war as it happened. This is true, but hardly profound or original; "In war, truth is the first casualty" has been attributed to Aeschylus two and a half millennia ago, and although he gives some modern analysis of this, Baudrillard doesn't get far beyond it.

The real trouble begins when Baudrillard attempts to describe "reality," because in using the word "reality" to mean "one person's subjective truth" postmodernists like Baudrillard muddle the distinction between fact and interpretation, and sometimes use the muddle dishonestly. For example, Baudrillard laments the lack of a declaration of war, then says "Since it never began, this war is therefore interminable". Now, if he'd said "The lack of a clearly defined declaration makes a clearly defined end very difficult, and the successors to Saddam's regime will have to deal with insurgents for a very long time" he'd have made a good point and been proved right by recent events. But he doesn't do anything of the sort. He claims that the war never began, which is simply not the case. This is simply denying facts, not commenting on perceptions of them. And to use the phrase ".....is therefore interminable" implies some logical imperative which just isn't there. It certainly won't go on for ever, which is a very long time indeed.

In another example, he asserts that we TV watchers were submitted to "the same violence" as Saddam's prisoners, tortured into "repenting" in public. I accept a parallel in the distortions of the truth by the two sides, but to maintain that I, as a TV watcher at home, was somehow subjected to "the same violence" as some of Saddam's most brutally abused victims is an obscene thing to say. He's not writing poetry or a novel here. The aim is to give clear insights into an analysis of what is really happening. The words "the same" have a specific meaning here, and it is facts, not interpretation, which are being denied.

Let me repeat, some of his political and sociological stuff is actually rather interesting. For example: "One of the two adversaries is a rug salesman, the other an arms salesman: they have neither the same logic nor the same strategy, even though they are both crooks. There is not enough communication between them to make war upon each other. Saddam will never fight, while the Americans will fight against a fictive double on a screen." It's overstated, of course, but thought-provoking and a pretty good analysis of the two sides' differing approaches to the war. But what *are* we supposed to make of a passage like this, about the video archive which will be studied by future historians of the war:

"The archive also belongs to virtual time; it is the complement of the event 'in real time', of that instantaneity

of the event and its diffusion. Moreover, rather than the 'revolution' of real time of which Virilio speaks, we should speak of an involution in real time; of an involution of the event in the instantaneity of everything at once, and of its vanishing in information itself. If we take note of the speed of light and the temporal short-circuit of pure war (the nanosecond), we see that this involution precipitates us precisely into the virtuality of war and not into its reality, it precipitates us into the absence of war. Must we denounce the speed of light?"

Now, there really are limits and this exceeds all bounds. If he's saying that the video footage isn't the real war, fair enough. It isn't, as Magritte cleverly pointed out. But "the temporal short circuit of pure war (the nanosecond)"? I'm very sorry, but three words, the first and last of which are "oh" and "off" come inexorably to mind. And as for "Must we denounce the speed of light?" - well, words simply fail me. I genuinely cannot remember ever having had to read such abject tosh, and I have studied psychology in my time so it's up against some pretty stiff competition.

I'm sorry this is so long. I feel better now, anyway. I've given this two stars because there's the odd interesting idea, but overall I'd recommend giving it a wide berth and reading something - almost anything - else instead.

---

### **Ben Flanagan says**

Can't wait for the movie.

---

### **Justin Gerhardstein says**

I don't know whether this piece by crazy French theorist Jean Baudrillard (Died recently) is faulty in its logic or if I am just not capable of comprehending what the hell he is trying to say. He wrote 3 lengthy articles for a French publication and a few years later they were translated by a University of Wisconsin professor and compiled into a 100 page book. Obviously, the title assumes something that is just not so, meaning, the gulf war DID take place. When a Kuwaiti friend of mine saw the book in my room he commented "ohh really, thats not what I thought when I lived in Kuwait during the war." However, Baudrillard is not arguing that there was no conflict, but that American media portrayed a "clean" war that was over with in a few days, when in reality there were many atrocities that went under the radar because a blind-eye was turned to them from the media that preferred showing footage that was more like a Hollywood movie (which is funny because scripts for Hollywood adaptations of the Gulf War were already in the process of being written while the war was still going on). The title is just for shock value, and if you are already known as a crazy theorist, and French for that matter, I guess you can get away with that. What he is really saying is that The Gulf War was interpreted differently by the rest of the world because of American media's misrepresentation of it. I guess that title didn't fly. This compilation is probably the most confusing piece of writing I have ever encountered because it is translated, Baudrillard is crazy, and I don't know much about the Gulf War. I don't recommend this to anyone that doesn't enjoy academic reading as a puzzle that you have to tinker with for hours on end....I like it more as a challenge...therefore I found this book not very beneficial.

---

### **Barney says**

a precarious argument from the onset. kept imagining baudrillard smugly grinning and patting himself on the

back as he wrote psuedo-meaningful sentences such as 'hard war and soft war go boating' - got annoyed.

---

### **Andrew Childers says**

Definitely interesting. Baudrillard made a couple of solid points in an un-solid manner; it seemed that the author of the introduction explained Baudrillard's points better than himself.

---

### **Anna says**

Baudrillard's discussion of the (first) Persian Gulf War and how, in its planning and presentation, the war was not really "real." His writing is rather poetic, perhaps at the expense of clarity, and I think I read the book from about 12 to 2 AM, which probably didn't help my comprehension. Still, some provocative ideas.

---

### **Michael Palkowski says**

What is vitally important to understand regarding Baudrillard's thesis was that it wasn't a literal denial of the war. Instead the media presented images of the war which told a very specific narrative of the events unfolding, it simulated a reality which didn't take place on the battlefield and censored the images of the actual reality which was unfolding which was the bloodshed, despair and suffering. This basically presented a clear instantiated example of hyper-reality for the events unfolding were "more real than real". His thesis is definitely something that appears truthful on the surface, especially if you reflect on the Gulf of Tonkin incident, preluding the Vietnam war, which was completely staged. His sentiment that this isn't a 'war' in the traditional sense is also true, shared by Bill Hicks at the time.

*Since this war was won in advance. we will never know what it would have been like had it existed. We will never know what an Iraqi taking part with a chance of fighting would have been like. We will never know what an American taking part with a chance of being beaten would have been like. (61)*

*"A simple calculation shows that, of the 500,000 American soldiers involved during the seven months of operations in the Gulf, three times as many would have died from road accidents alone had they stayed in civilian life" (69)*

He was also right to apply Stockholm Syndrome to war by suggesting that the winner becomes hostage to the loser, which preempted the Iraqi conflict decades later which can only be described as National Stockholm Syndrome.

Recent events with the Israeli Defense Force are even more surreal in the sense that they declared an invasion of Palestine via twitter. However with the expansive growth of social media his central thesis begins to feel antiquated now as the monopolization and control of images is not as pertinent or believable now. Twitter during recent surges of conflict was used to present activism from the ground, presenting images of the dead and testimony from those hearing and feeling the war. An alternative source of media opened up to counteract the narrative running simultaneously on the television. The media sometimes used those images in their stories and bulletins thus disavowing the control of the military apparatus. However Baudrillard writes:

*"In the past, the unemployed constituted the reserve army of Capital; today, in our enslavement to information, we constitute the reserve army of all planetary mystifications." (64)*

His thesis suggests that the flow of information is so great that only interpretation is possible with no definitive and clear analysis available. This has been suggested by other network theorists in sociology but despite the multifarious channels and saturation of images and information, our 'desensitization' hasn't led to a lack of understanding of truth but merely a skepticism involved in accepting what is true, with the need for greater and longer analysis.

It seems apparent he wasn't concerned with objectivity as he insisted that the book could be read as a science fiction novel. The preface even states that the facts openly contradict the central thesis of the book. It also bluntly states the following:

*"These are occasional essays by a writer who believes that writing should be less a representation of reality than its transfiguration and that it should pursue a "fatal strategy" of pushing things to extremes".*

This feels like capitulation to obscurantism and distorting what is self evident. Being polemical with reality is fine but denying that anything and everything that you write doesn't have to have any relationship to evidence is a horrible precedent to set.

The main thesis that Baudrillard provides is that war has evolved in a manner similar to the evolution of capital: "just as wealth is no longer measured by the ostentation of wealth but by the secret circulation of speculative capital, so war is not measured by being unleashed but by its speculative unfolding in an abstract, electronic and informational space" (56)

The problem of course is that capital and war have had these definitions for a long time. War was never merely understood as being bombardment just as capital was never assumed to be fixed on a specific relationship to ostentation, even by Marx. Reading accounts of the Second World War also give testament to war also being fought on an abstract level. If anything his thesis works better with wars that we have no footage of because they are assembled by the narrators of history. Very messy.

Although he offers useful concepts and tools by suggesting that real events become contaminated by "the structural unreality of images" and applications of his hyper-reality thesis, his methodology paralyzes and leaves you catatonic without any way out as he states himself:

*"the image and information are subject to no principle of truth or reality.*

Which merely leaves a social commentator without anywhere to go, it disassociates and dislocates him from anything important. Although I have deep respect for his work and enjoy engaging with it critically, he seems to stand for everything I actively loathe in this book:

*"Resist the probability of any image or information whatever. Be more virtual than the events themselves, do not seek to re-establish the truth, we do not have the means, but do not be duped, and to that end re-immense the war and all information in the virtuality from whence they came . . . Be meteorologically sensitive to stupidity"(66-7)"*

And then we have this gem of bullshit:

*"However consensual traditionalism (that of the Enlightenment, the Rights of Man, the Left in power, the repentant intellectual and sentimental humanism) is every bit as fierce as that of any tribal religion or primitive society." (79)*

The conglomeration here is stunning particularly when he then goes onto mock Salman Rushdie and the fatwa affair as merely constituting vaudeville esque symbolic theater. This is sheer ignorance and destructive.

*"If a simple fatwa, a simple death sentence can plunge the West into such depression (the vaudeville of terror on the part of writers and intellectuals on this occasion could never be portrayed cruelly enough)*

*if the West prefers to believe in this threat, it is because it is paralysed by its own power, in which it does not believe, precisely because of its enormity (the Islamic "neurosis" would be due to the excessive tension created by the disproportion of ends; the disproportion of means from which we suffer creates by contrast a serious depression, a neurosis of powerlessness)." (80)*

Key Terms deriving from the text:

## 'Soft War'

## 'Non-Event'

## 'Hyper-reality'

## 'Spectacle'

## 'Simulacra'

## 'Contamination'

## 'Speculative Turn'

## 'Simulation

## 'Virtualisation'

## ufsb says

[illegible][illegible]

?? ?? ?? ?????? ??????? - ? ????? ??????, ?????????? ?? ????? ?????????? ?????????? ?? ??-??? ?????????? ?



[illegible][illegible][illegible]

?????, ?? ???? ???? ???? ???? ? ???? ?????. "???? ? ???? - ??? ?? ???? ???? ???? ???? ?  
 ? ? ??. ? ???? ??, ?? ???? ???? ? ???? ???? ???? ? ???? ???? ?  
 ?? ???? ?????. ?? ???? ???? ???? ? ???? ? ???? ???? : ?? ???? "Event and

non-event", ????????? ? ?????????? ?????? "???? ? ?????", ????????? ????????????? ?????? Deep Dish TV ? ?????, ?????? ????????? "???? ??????????" ?, ?????????, ?????????! - ? ????????? ?????? ? ??? ???. ? ?? ??????? ?????? ?????, ???????, ?????? ? "????"; ?????? ?????? ?????????????? ?????????? ??? ? ??????; ?????????? ?????? ? ?????????????? ??????????; ?? ????? ? ?????????????? ?????????.

---

## Adam says

Thought provoking examination about what war is designed to accomplish in the post-Cold War world. Those who have no patience for letting an argument develop might have a knee jerk reaction against this book, so let me give you a reason why you ought to keep an open mind. What Baudrillard means when he says that "the Gulf War did not take place" isn't to imply that people didn't die, acts of courage did not happen or that the war didn't do any good. What he means is that whatever objective the war had and whatever sacrifices were made were overshadowed by the spectacle of war. In an age where we are increasingly divorced from reality, due in large part to technology, the spectacle of war can overshadow the actual war. This is what happened in the 1991 Gulf War, and it has become the holotype for war in an age where there are no more great wars.

---

## Mike says

The title refers to the U.S. invasion of Iraq under Bush I.

War as videogame distraction from the suffering it inflicts. Combat as a media event.

Please note, the title is not "Nobody Suffered in Iraq" or "What You Experienced in Iraq Didn't Happen". There is good reason for that.

Oddly enough I recently came across a not-too-bad, positive review of this book in the *National Review*. Go figure.

---

## goodreads says

A really really great book that went sailing straight over the head of many American critics who wondered how someone could deny that a war had taken place.

Baudrillards' thesis runs something like; a war did not take place in that, firstly there are usually two sides in a war, capable of having one. Secondly the war that did take place was completely removed from the standard notion of a war. A war as a media event, a spectacle created to support a sense of a palpable enemy and a just cause.

When read against Der Derians Virtuous War, one realizes how close to the mark Baudrillard is, especially in light of Schwarzkopfs acquisition of a war game, which became the blueprint for America. Context is important in reading this book otherwise you won't get a lot out of it. Persevere however and the practical applications are well worth it.

