MINORITY REPORT.

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On the eve of Desert Storm, George Herbert Walker Bush not only dismissed a multinational appeal, sponsored by the French government, for an international conference on the Middle East, he also ignored a letter sent to U.N. Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar by the leaders of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and the Russian Federation. That letter, issued on January 13 and entirely unreported in the United States as far as I can tell, asked for an international conference on the Baltic States. Vytautas Landsbergis, Boris Yeltsin and their colleagues then went on to ask Pérez de Cuéllar "to extend the deadline for U.N. Resolution No. 678 of November 29, 1990, relating to the Persian Gulf crisis." It closed with the words "We hope we will be understood." How could it be understood by a President who has become a monomaniac?

George Herbert Walker Bush prepared to carpet-bomb a country because he suddenly discovered it has a nuclear potential, and prepared to run the risk of hitting nuclear reactors, while simultaneously instructing his delegates to the international nuclear test ban conference to veto a proposed treaty that would prohibit further testing. But he is against "linkage."

George Herbert Walker Bush successfully offered Saudi money to the government of Syria in order to broaden his "coalition" and has shut up about Syria's partition of Lebanon. But he is against "linkage."

George Herbert Walker Bush unsuccessfully offered money to the government of Yemen in order to broaden his "coalition" and, having been rebuffed, has been silent on the forcible expulsion of the entire Yemeni labor force from Saudi Arabia. But he is against "linkage."

George Herbert Walker Bush received the decrepit oligarchs of Beijing and solicited their support for his "coalition" and, having been successful in this, abandoned even the residual reservations that he expressed at the throttling of China's democracy movement. But he is against "linkage."

George Herbert Walker Bush made opportunistic admonitions to the state of Israel, counting it out of his "coalition" for political purposes while counting it in for military and intelligence purposes. But he is against "linkage."

George Herbert Walker Bush sent his Secretary of State on a mendicant tour of the Persian Gulf seeking promissory notes from monarchs to cover his undischarged debts and pledging support to the monarchs in return. But he is against "linkage."

George Herbert Walker Bush canceled Egypt's multibillion dollar military debt in return for future arms sales and current support for his "coalition." But he is against "linkage."

George Herbert Walker Bush allowed the Saudi Arabian royal house to circumscribe the religious, political and civil liberties of American servicemen and women, and of American journalists, in return for a military understanding and a financial subsidy. But he is against "linkage."

Moreover:

George Herbert Walker Bush played the central part in a deal known as "the quid pro quo," whereby the armed forces and government of Honduras received aid and preferential treatment in return for a surreptitious policy of support for the *contras*. Yet, to him, "linkage" is a filthy word.

George Herbert Walker Bush sat in a Jerusalem hotel room with Amiram Nir, then head of Israeli "counterterrorism," and discussed the exchange of American heavy weapons for American hostages in the Middle East. But, to him, the concept of "linkage" is an alien one.

George Herbert Walker Bush was Director of Central Intelligence at a time when a covert action program exploiting the Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq was being wound up so as to oblige both the Shah of Iran and Saddam Hussein. But "linkage" strikes him as a dangerous novelty.

George Herbert Walker Bush scorned Congressional calls for sanctions against Iraq before August 2, 1990, on the ground that Iraq was a crucial customer for U.S. grain and weaponry. Yet he repudiates "linkage."

George Herbert Walker Bush sent a Thanksgiving message to Oliver North in 1985 commending him for his "dedication and tireless work with the hostage thing and with Central America." But the very notion of "linkage" makes him furrow his brow.

George Herbert Walker Bush waited less than fourteen weeks before recasting the "Desert Shield" expedition as the prelude to "Desert Storm." He made this change, and the concomitant doubling of forces, right after the election and without consulting Congress. Can this be explained by his evident distaste for "linkage"?

"Only connect," wrote E.M. Forster, giving an obvious but essential precept to the government of human and social and political affairs. "Only disconnect," snaps George Herbert Walker Bush, whose only hope lies in the atomization and dissociation of commonly affiliated ideas and comprehensions. Reared in the art of the deal and the ineffable practice of mutual gratification, and schooled in the horse-trading and back-scratching worlds of Nixon's CREEP and Langley, Virginia, he still pretends not to see what stares him in the face: that the modern Middle East is an agonizingly balanced nexus of crude and subtle linkages.

Well before Saddam Hussein's exorbitant move last August, the United States was officially committed to an overall settlement of the region's distress. And even if that commitment was usually verbal and cosmetic, it certainly included a careful weighing of the results of the previous gulf war (in which the Reagan-Bush administrations promiscuously armed both sides) and of the essential, central, defining question of Palestine. It also meant some solemn talk about the price of oil and the related, or, if you prefer, linked, question of America's energy policy.

Well, goodbye to all that. We are now right back to the brainless discourse of "face" and "credibility," the very discourse that impelled George Herbert Walker Bush to make some of the criminal and unconstitutional linkages cited above. In monitoring his transformation of a local dispute into a global confrontation, at hectic speed and with reckless disregard, we get a glimpse of the "face" in question and see the ghastly, vacant features of a weak king.