Introduction and Overview

Martin Luther King Jr.’s concise and memorable statement describes the choice we face as human beings: “We must learn to live together as brothers, or perish together as fools.”

A great deal of twentieth-century history, and early evidence from this century, suggests that as a species we are choosing the second option. And we seem to be making this choice unconsciously, almost completely unaware that we are even involved in a process of choosing. We see the consequences of our choice but fail to recognize them as such, and fail to understand where they are taking us.

Personally I prefer the first option as described by King, which I will refer to throughout this book as “Option A” — learning to live together as human beings. When the term “Option A” appears in the text, you can remember it as the advantageous option. I will refer to King’s second option as “Option B.” You can remember it as the bad option.

Option A and Option B will be expressed in various ways in the pages that follow. In this book, “perishing” is taken to mean not only the extinction of human beings as a species (which might not
The *ABCs* of Human Survival

happen for a long time to come), but also (and more importantly for my purposes) the extinction of human options that would give us a much healthier global community than we now have. In that sense, we have been perishing as fools for centuries.

This book is about a way of thinking — a paradigm — to enable progress toward Option A. I propose here *a way of thinking about world affairs, personal well-being, and the interdependence of the two*. The paradigm is new in the sense that it is not the currently dominant way of thinking about world affairs or about personal well-being. In the conventional view, these two domains are largely disconnected. We tend to think of our personal well-being (self-interest and the pursuit of happiness) as isolated from world affairs, unless we happen to be living in some part of the world where this conventional paradigm is challenged by local realities.

Our thinking about personal well-being is often characterized by cynicism (self-interest in a narrow sense of that term). A cynic can be defined as “a person who believes that only selfishness motivates human actions and who disbelieves in or minimizes selfless acts or disinterested points of view” (Random House Dictionary of the English Language). In contrast to cynicism is the view that a very large measure of self-reliance is essential to healthy psychology at the individual level, and self-reliant individuals are best able to contribute to their communities. Human society depends upon interactive support systems involving all its members. Enlightened self-interest recognizes the importance of a healthy society, and therefore the responsibility of each member to contribute to the common good. Narrow self-interest (selfishness) is likely to overlook such aspects of reality. When a culture becomes too tolerant of narrow self-interest, it makes the community weaker than it otherwise would be.

In our culture, fraught with consumerism, we are inclined toward narrow self-interest, particularly when it comes to world affairs. Lack of attention to civic responsibility is a critical failure in our society. We pursue our careers, provide for our families, plan
our futures, insure our houses, and perhaps contribute to some activities in the local community. We may vote and we probably pay taxes, but world affairs are left to our “leaders” and the “experts” who advise them. Our political leaders and the experts who advise them serve in political and cultural institutions rooted in the paradigm of nationalism.

**The pathology of nationalism**

Pathology is malfunction, caused by the inadequacy or loss of normal control mechanisms. For example, cell division (controlled proliferation) is essential for a healthy organism, but when the controls of cell division are inadequate to keep cell proliferation in check, the result is cancer, which can kill the organism.

The term *nationalism* is used in various contexts, including *civic nationalism*, in which the nation is thought of as an inclusive political entity with equal rights for all its citizens. This contrasts with *ethnic nationalism*, in which rights are chiefly recognized for a particular ethnic group.

Civic nationalism can be the cultural and political basis of a healthy society. However, when any form of nationalism breaks out of the constraints of law, it becomes malignant. The tendency for nation-states to break out of the constraints of law remains characteristic of nationalism today, particularly in militarily powerful states. Throughout this book, I refer to this kind of nationalism as militant nationalism or as malignant nationalism, or simply as nationalism, since, because it characterizes the behavior of the most powerful states, it is the dominant form of nationalism today.

As such, nationalism is the dominant paradigm for thinking about world affairs. It is the paradigm that led to World Wars I and II, and the box within which foreign policy analysts and political leaders do their thinking. Nationalism is also the box within which large parts of the general public think about world affairs.
Nationalism is an us-versus-them ideology in which it is acceptable for one state to invade another state and overthrow its government, killing tens of thousands of people in the process — provided, of course, that it is “us” or one of our allies who are carrying out the invasion against an adversary and not the other way around. Nationalism is pervasive in our culture: “We support our troops” is a currently popular assertion of nationalist sentiment.

Nationalism creates a morality…. It lays down that loyalty to the nation — and in established States, the State — ought to take priority over all other loyalties, including that to the family, and that the crime of disloyalty is treason, the punishment for which is frequently death…. National interest also allows a member to disregard moral principles in defence of the nation — it is permissible to lie, to steal and to murder. (Harris 1990, 16)

Prominent intellectuals (many of them political “realists”) often tell us that there is no other choice. It is a mark of sophistication to be able to expound on the necessities, if not the virtues, of nationalist competition for power and of its (particularly malignant) outcome, warfare. In other words, the choice posed by Martin Luther King Jr. is a delusion: Option B is the only option.

Choosing the future

The notion that we have no choice but to continue toward Option B is factually incorrect. For example, although the history of nationalist conflict between France and Germany is indeed long, and its costs incalculable, the fact that France and Germany have since World War II moved away from their militant nationalism, and from Option B, is clear enough. In The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People, Jonathan Schell
provides a detailed refutation of the idea that we have no choice. Schell’s book is one of many resources on the topic, a few of which will be mentioned in this book or listed in the section on Further Reading.

Whether we can move toward Option A at any given time or place is an empirical question. Like the question, “Can we find a cure for cancer?” the question “Can we find a cure for nationalism?” can only be answered through serious, sustained, and constantly renewed efforts to find the cure. And a thousand failures do not answer the question. The question can be answered definitively only when the cure is found, and then the answer is yes. As it happens, there is abundant and growing evidence that prevention and cure are achievable.

In the old way of thinking, any discovery of prevention or cure would have to come from our political leaders and experts. Ordinary citizens are not experts in world affairs and foreign policy, so they should mind their own business, go shopping, pursue their careers, advance their knowledge and expertise in their professional fields, and otherwise follow their own “self-interest.” This is old-paradigm thinking, and it dominates the thoughts, the discourse, and the patterns of behavior in our culture.

It has been said that life is like a mirror, reflecting back at us what our thoughts project into it. And so it is with history. If we are unable to think of paths toward Option A, if we are unable to even imagine what Option A might be like, then history will reflect this void in our imagination.

If we wish to move toward Option A, then we will have to abandon the cynicism and nationalism that currently dominate our culture. The reason is simple and familiar: we cannot solve the major problems we face by using the same patterns of thinking that created the problems in the first place.

Because we are making definitive choices about our future within the confines of cynicism and the nationalist paradigm, we are in effect choosing Option B. We are perishing as fools, and in
this century or the next, the perishing may drive us to extinction as a species.

The direction in which our choices are leading us is extinguishing hope for the future as well as options for the here and now. The nationalist paradigm does not permit us to envision anything better than the darkness and pessimism of perpetual violent conflict, and the squandering of public resources to sustain it. This pessimism exerts a pervasive negative effect on our society. In military families, it is associated with suicide, domestic violence, and depression. More widely, it creates a cancerous social malaise related to the idea that human life is cheap and of very limited significance. It is postponing, perhaps forever, the pursuit of options that are much more life-affirming. Pessimism obscures even the awareness that a healthier global community and greater self-fulfillment are possible.

This book calls for a paradigm shift. I refer to nationalism and the ideology of us-versus-them as the “old paradigm” because it is the established way of thinking about world affairs, the one in which we have been indoctrinated. It is characteristic of the old paradigm in its present-day form to insist that state power, not international law, is the necessary basis for advances in human rights. Proponents of the old paradigm may become quite strident about this, especially as they carry out their violations of international law.

Today, this way of thinking faces a challenge from a different one that recognizes the necessity of international law for reliable progress in human rights. In this book I refer to this way of thinking, which prioritizes human well-being, as “the new paradigm.” In various forms, however, this “new paradigm” has challenged the old paradigm again and again throughout history, as I explain in the section below entitled “The Personal is Political.”

The new paradigm abandons the nationalist delusion that we are first of all Americans or Canadians or Germans or Japanese, Jews or Christians or Muslims, or members of some other subgroup.
Introduction and Overview

It abandons the cynical delusion that we are first of all consumers or professionals or some other socio-economic entity. The new paradigm recognizes a more basic aspect of reality: we are first of all human beings and members of a global community.

The new paradigm is a conceptual guideline toward Option A. Human well-being is the priority. The old paradigm is a conceptual guideline toward Option B. Political power is the priority.

In the conceptual framework of the new paradigm, patterns of human thinking and behavior can be evaluated in terms of their effects on human well-being and on the chances of human survival. Such considerations are viewed as alien or marginalized in the conceptual framework of the old paradigm.

Whatever the challenges to human survival, we will meet them more effectively using evidence-based thinking directed toward Option A. Our choice of paradigms has historically had consequences of life-and-death importance. It has defined the limits of what we can learn from history as well as the limits of our current options.

The necessity of democracy and law

Just as the market can provide, from countless sources, information essential for economic decisions, an effective democracy can provide information essential for wise political decisions. Political power isolated from democratic constraints inevitably succumbs to the pathology of power.

Power must also be constrained by law. Democracy and law are in fact interdependent. Increasingly, as the fact of global community becomes a part of common sense and universal awareness, law means international law.

International law encodes these new-paradigm concepts, making them a universally accessible and assessable set of standards. International human rights law articulates the basis for a healthy global community: the civil, political, social, economic, and cultural
The abcs of Human Survival

standards essential to human well-being. International humanitarian law specifies the responsibilities of belligerent and neutral states, as well as individual combatants, in time of warfare. Their actions and the consequences of those actions, as they involve each other as well as involve non-combatants and protected persons — chiefly the civilian population — are subject to international humanitarian law. Together, these standards of international law provide a framework for measuring the human security performance of governments. This body of law includes the law of non-aggression and the UN Charter. Warfare is the most basic of all human rights violations, for in war the necessary conditions of all human rights are undermined.

Nationalism has a well-documented contempt for law:

The illegal we do immediately; the unconstitutional takes a little longer. (Henry Kissinger, quoted in Kraft 1973)

The choice between international law and nationalism is the choice between Option A and Option B.

The personal is political

The new paradigm aligns with healthy human and social psychology. It is more basic and more realistic than the old paradigm. Human endeavor — even warfare — depends on the health of community to support it. It depends on trust and human well-being. The old paradigm and the warfare system it sustains undermine the health of communities, trust, and human well-being. For this reason, the old paradigm is self-contradictory and unrealistic. Even in the most powerful state, old-paradigm thinking gradually erodes personal well-being, social cohesion, human security, public resources, and confidence in the future. New-paradigm thinking enables sustainable development in all those domains.
New-paradigm awareness emerges in the work of social psychologists and writers such as Erich Fromm, in a wide range of work by contemporary authors, in the visionary work of countless individuals and non-governmental and non-profit organizations (civil society), and in the principles and purposes of modern international human rights and humanitarian law.

New-paradigm thinking is also at the core of the world’s major spiritual traditions. In those traditions we find profound insights into sound human and social psychology. A fresh and irresistible way of seeing that human and social well-being are connected, and depend on something much more basic than any political authority, constitutes a potential threat to the existing political power structure.

Thus each of the major spiritual traditions conveys a new paradigm, a fresh way of seeing the world and experiencing life. As such, these spiritual traditions have threatened established, old orders and the old paradigm that served the political power structure of the times. Predictably, the new paradigm has been attacked again and again, and later subverted and corrupted by old-paradigm thinking.

Christianity, for example, was initially a threat to the existing authorities, whose attacks and efforts at suppression failed to destroy it. Step by step it was simply subverted and corrupted, and that process has had a very long-lasting success. At its origin, we see the Sermon on the Mount (new paradigm, Option A). Centuries later, we see the Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition (old paradigm, Option B). Today many of the people who call themselves “Christians” are locked into the same destructive old-paradigm, Option B patterns of thought and behavior.

For centuries there have been Option A Christians, Option A Jews, and Option A Muslims. For centuries there have been Option B Christians, Option B Jews, and Option B Muslims. That distinction between affirmation of life and subservience to power, between Option A and Option B, is far more important than the
label of Christian or Jew or Muslim. But only those who have eyes can see the difference.

This book is not about something so grandiose and remote as a clash of civilizations, but about another kind of conflict, more subtle, pervasive, and personal: a clash of convictions about the value of human life. Like a person uncertain of her own worth and considering suicide, the global human community is wrestling with the possibility of extinction. Within each of us, that conflict between self-doubt and self-affirmation is playing itself out, day by day.

Ignorance of the value of a human life and lack of empathy for other human beings leads to violence in world affairs. It is closely associated with ignorance of and lack of reverence for our own worth as individuals.

**War is a disease: The case of Vietnam**

War is a disease in the same sense that HIV/AIDS and cancer are diseases. Warfare kills people, devastates lives, and blots out the gift that each person afflicted with the disease might have brought to the world. The cause of warfare is to be found in patterns of human thinking and behavior. If we can change the patterns, we can eliminate the disease.

The case of Vietnam was the wake-up call for a generation of North Americans. Something was rotten in the state, and many of us began to look for some way of thinking that could account for the pathology. Governments and cultural institutions rooted in the old paradigm were not going to help much with that process. Instead, they would obstruct the paths of discovery. Predictably, the old-paradigm institutions have made a sustained, well-funded effort to use Vietnam in restoring the pathology of the warfare system. “This will not be another Vietnam!” became one of the catchphrases used in recruiting support for the next invasion, the next war, and the next, and the next.
Introduction and Overview

The evil that is in the world always comes of ignorance, and good intentions may do as much harm as mal-
volence, if they lack understanding. On the whole, men are more good than bad; that, however, isn’t the point. Men are more or less ignorant, and it is this that we call vice or virtue; the most incorrigible vice being that of an ignorance that fancies it knows everything and therefore claims for itself the right to kill. (Camus 1947, 131)

Occasionally this insight expressed by Albert Camus in The Plague dawns on someone who has suffered from that kind of ignorance and who makes the effort to understand what went so disastrously wrong. The following excerpts are from Robert McNamara’s book Argument Without End: In Search of Answers to the Vietnam Tragedy (McNamara et al. 1999).

McNamara, who had been Secretary of Defense during the Vietnam War era, went through personal agonies over that catastrophe and the part he had played in it. His book is based on a project he led involving scholars and former government officials from the United States and their counterparts from Vietnam in a series of dialogues held in Hanoi between November 1995 and February 1998. Although the book does not completely escape from the old paradigm or envision the new, it expresses a passionate awareness of the problem. The honesty and introspection of the author can be used to intelligent advantage for our future, if readers pay close attention.

In fact, the dialogues themselves reveal what seems to have been one of the central failures — perhaps the central failure — in both the United States and North Vietnam: a failure of empathy. Each side fundamentally misread the mindset of its enemy. The fact that they became and remained bitter enemies for a quarter-century is testament to the depth of the misreading, the
utter inability of leaders in Washington and Hanoi to
penetrate the thoughts, perspectives, and emotions of
those on the other side….

... In every way, American ignorance of the history,
language, and culture of Vietnam was immense. The
chapters in this book are filled with illustrations of that
ignorance. (McNamara et al. 1999, 376–77, 397)

Ignorance and lack of empathy are major causal factors in the
disease of warfare, and they can be overcome.

*The practice of medicine and
the practice of citizenship*

In many parts of this book, I will use concepts or analogies drawn
from the field of medicine. Analogies are not very useful as proofs,
but they can clarify intended meaning, accentuate important
issues, and serve as a source of ideas for solving problems.

For example, in considering the qualities important for
responsible, effective citizenship, I can ask myself what qualities I
would expect in a highly effective physician. These qualities would
certainly include personal well-being: a physician preoccupied
with personal problems or hobbled by pessimism or depression
will tend to be less effective than a physician who does not have
these impediments. A highly effective physician would also have
empathy and respect for others, not only patients but also the
people she interacts with in everyday life. She would have a sound
basis in the principles of medicine and experience in applying
those principles in case after case of challenging problems.
Identifying problems and seeking solutions would have become
second nature to an effective physician, and optimism would be a
pragmatic necessity.

Such an inquiry can be used to identify analogous qualities
of responsible, effective citizenship. Responsible, effective global
citizens are at work in every society; the range and genius of their work are astounding. Civil society worldwide has in effect assumed the role of physician to the global community. Because civil society is much less hobbled by the old paradigm than established institutions, it can move with much greater speed and adaptive intelligence in identifying and solving major problems.

This book has a bias, essentially identical to the bias of medicine: human well-being and the conditions of global community necessary to foster that well-being take priority over support for any particular government in its contests for power. I am a human being before I am a citizen of this or that state, and I have a responsibility to other human beings that is more basic than my responsibility to any government. The pathology that threatens human well-being can be identified in the violations of international law by governments, particularly by militarily powerful governments and their allies.

When my government or one of its allies violates international law by committing an act of aggression or by threatening another government, it is thereby placing the global community at risk. Since I am part of the global community, those violations of law are threatening me. As a citizen, I am expected to obey the law; as a citizen, I expect that same standard of behavior from my government. That is my bias. The ideas I present here as fundamentals of responsible global citizenship serve that bias.

**A personal journey**

I am a citizen of the United States. I served for two years as a captain in the U.S. Army Medical Corps. The Vietnam War was ravaging lives in Southeast Asia, but I was stationed with the Second Infantry Division just south of the “demilitarized zone” in Korea. It was remarkably quiet. I had time to read and think about causes and consequences of current events. By the time I was discharged from the army, I had pieced together my own way of understanding
The ABCs of Human Survival

the war. Soldiers often figure out the most important things for themselves, although usually much too late. Their governments will not help them with that kind of enlightenment, for reasons I have already mentioned.

I am a physician, currently a professor in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Calgary in western Canada. I am a citizen of Canada, and the widower of a woman from Iraq, Irma Parhad, with whom I shared my life and work. She was born in Mosul and attended high school in Baghdad and college and medical school in Chicago. We met during our neurology residency years in Albany, New York, served on the faculty at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, Maryland, and moved to Canada in 1984 to establish a neuroscience research program. She made countless contributions to the lives of people in southern Alberta. When she died of cancer in 1994, the part of the world that she had illuminated went dark forever. That is what happens when a human life is extinguished.

Since Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, I have been on a long search for answers to questions. The questions presented themselves to me as they did because I was the person I was. The same events must have had very different effects on others, and for some, perhaps they raised no questions at all. As the months and years went by, leading to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, my questions and answers became a journey, and it was the road as much as the destination that commanded my attention. Each question and what it revealed, each point along the journey, led to other questions, the next part of the road.

I was looking for a basic and comprehensive way of thinking about the case of Iraq and similar catastrophes that were extinguishing human lives and wasting resources. I wanted something pragmatic to help guide my own decisions and actions as a citizen. I read countless books and articles by intelligent and articulate observers, with some emphasis on works by “neoconservatives” and “neoliberals,” with whom (I assumed) I would disagree. I found a great deal that was important and informative. I also found much that
was astonishingly shallow, incoherent, even dishonest. Among the sources I read, I did not find the pragmatic conceptual framework I was seeking. What I learned on the road provided it.

**About this book**

I needed something like a text on principles of medicine. Principles of medicine facilitate the physician’s interpretation of data for a specific purpose: to contribute as effectively as possible to the health of the patient. I needed a basic and comprehensive text that would facilitate interpretation of world events for a similar purpose: to contribute as effectively as possible to human well-being. Because I did not find a text of this kind, I have had to write it myself.

The approach I use has evolved over more than a decade and a half. Its conceptual basis is somewhat different from that of the peace movement although I find important synergies with that movement. The world in which human beings are inflicting pathology on other human beings presents to me a challenge somewhat like what a physician would face in the midst of a plague. It calls for an active process of questioning complacent assumptions, identifying and defining problems, and testing potential solutions. And so I have chosen the analogy of medicine to clarify the concept of global citizenship presented in this book. The process, which is ongoing, also involves healing myself, which is sometimes the most difficult part of the work. In this process I have experienced personal growth in a way I had never known before I began it.

This is not intended as a scholarly tome. It is intended as a conceptual framework for a life of action and transformation — or at least for understanding why we human beings keep driving ourselves toward catastrophe. Historical details are sometimes mentioned, particularly in the case study of Iraq in chapter 5. However, most such details are beyond the scope of this text. The book is intended to be easy for the general reader to follow. The
practice of responsible global citizenship does not require academic credentials, which may even be an obstacle. The investment that some scholars have made in their many years of old-paradigm scholarship may undermine their ability even to consider the concepts put forward here. Nonetheless, the book carries a message intended for scholars as well as the general reader.

The reader may notice my repetition of concepts. A concept that appears in the introduction and in chapter 1 may reappear in one or more of the subsequent chapters in a different context. The introduction and overview is designed to give the reader an extended synopsis of the text; chapter 1 sets the background for subsequent chapters, particularly for the thirty principles that appear in chapters 4 and 6; and chapter 5 provides a more detailed case study illustrating the Principles of Global Community. Hence some redundancy is inherent in the design of the book.

The reader will notice in some parts of the text my impatience, even irritation, with “the establishment” — old-paradigm intellectuals, elected and appointed officials, and others. If that edge makes the text more persuasive, then I am satisfied that it remain. If it has the opposite effect, consider it due to my own shortcomings and move on. Don’t let it deter you from optimal use of other parts of this book.

The manuscript for the book was initially submitted in October 2008, and I have been urged to provide updates, particularly with regard to developments since Barack Obama took office as president of the United States. I will do that here briefly, and at occasional points in other parts of the book.

Barack Obama seems to me wiser and more emotionally mature than most of his predecessors in that office, and certainly I have great respect for him as a human being. Many of his statements and initiatives since taking office are commendable and important. From the perspective of this book, he may well be providing openings for democratic renewal that are unprecedented, and if we neglect those openings the fault is ours, not his.
Introduction and Overview

However, Obama faces largely the same constraints in the office of president that you or I would face if we held that office. He cannot escape the gravitational field of the old paradigm, and his actions since taking office give abundant evidence of that constraint. The bottom line: his genius and wisdom will be wasted if we fail to live up to our responsibilities as citizens. This book is not so much about criticizing the failures of elected officials as about how to take up our own responsibilities and fulfill our own potential in contributing to a healthier global community.

The foreign military presence in Afghanistan and the extension of its violence into Pakistan are contrary to the principles and purposes expressed in this book. The U.S. attack on Afghanistan has been from its inception a violation of international law. Article 51 of the UN Charter gives states the right to self-defence. The UN Charter, including Article 51, is intended to control cycles of violence; responses to an attack must be proportionate and limited. It does not permit the destruction of a state that supports terrorism; if it did, it would be a license to destroy (for example) each of the states that hold a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Agents of terrorism have long been supported by Russia, the United States, and other militant nationalist states. There is nothing in international law that permits the destruction of such states.

Under international law, the lives of human beings matter, and not just the lives of citizens of powerful states. Governments must comply with law in their responses to political violence; otherwise they will perpetuate the cycles of violence against human beings, as they have done in Afghanistan. That’s Option B.

This book is a contribution to and not a substitute for the excellent work of others. Some of the many books from which I have benefited are included in the section on Further Reading. Lists of websites are provided in some of those books. Search engines and the Internet have changed the way books are written. For this reason, I mention the names of authors and books in various
The abc's of Human Survival

parts of the text to enable the reader to search for more from that source. The resources available for the practice of responsible, effective global citizenship are endless; those who engage in this practice will continue to find their own resources as their lives and experiences unfold.

Those who have the most to contribute to the community are often the busiest and may not find the time to read a book from cover to cover. If you read and understand this introduction and overview, you will have a general idea of the concepts in the book.

Chapter 1 (“Choosing the Future”) draws attention to the process of choice whereby we determine the course of human history and develops related themes such as pragmatic realism and the relationships between personal well-being and a healthy global community.

Axioms are basic concepts, self-evident and requiring no proof, on which a larger conceptual system can be built. An example from plane geometry is: “The shortest distance between two points is a straight line.” Chapter 2 (“Axioms”) specifies five axioms that I consider important for the discussion of world affairs. These are concepts so basic that they could be used to test a person’s contact with reality.

This introduction has given a glimpse of an old and a new paradigm, and has called for a paradigm shift. Chapter 3 (“Paradigm Shift”) explores the tenacity of the old paradigm and the power of the new paradigm, develops new-paradigm themes, and suggests some ways to make the shift.

A synoptic list of thirty principles is included in this Introduction and Overview. The first twenty of these are designated “Principles of Global Community” and are developed in chapter 4. Chapter 5 (“The Case of Iraq”) illustrates some of the principles of global community using the example of Iraq. Chapter 6 (“Principles of Global Citizenship”) develops principles 21 to 30, which are intended to facilitate effective, responsible engagement in public life.

Chapter 7 (“Practicing Citizenship”) deals with the experience
Introduction and Overview

of practicing citizenship as I know it, including the importance of the imagination in opening paths for exploration. It describes the background and evolution of two related projects with which I have been involved here in Calgary: one aiming to revitalize local communities and the other to connect communities globally while enabling individuals and local communities to realize a little more of their full potential.

This book is not much concerned with predictions of doom but with the pragmatics of hope. Chapter 8 (“Prognosis”) emphasizes the difference.

What I present here is not intended as some sort of edict or “final word.” As with a text on principles of medicine, it is intended as an articulation of some basic concepts to be examined critically, used appropriately, and modified as indicated by experience.

Above all, it is intended to prompt readers to use their creative and responsible imaginations and to engage in redirecting the course of world events. The familiar concept that “imagination is more important than knowledge” should at least emphasize the importance of the imagination in determining the course of history. Our ability to co-operatively imagine optimal conditions for the global community and to implement what we imagine can be used to enormous advantage at both personal and global levels.
The ABCs of Human Survival

PRINCIPLES OF GLOBAL COMMUNITY
AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP
A synopsis

1. **We are in the process of choosing between a healthy global community under a rule of international law (Option A) or ongoing violent contests for power driven by militant nationalism (Option B).** The choices resulting from this process have largely determined both the course of world events in the past and the current conditions of human security. The process of choosing diminishes or expands our ability to envision possibilities and to explore the farther reaches of the human spirit. It creates opportunities or challenges for the generations who will follow us. The choices we make will continue to determine the course of world events, the conditions of human existence, and the chances of human survival in the future. Outcomes are likely to be better if we become more conscious of the choices available to us and better informed about alternatives for the future than we have been in the past.

2. **We cannot be part of the solution until we understand that we are part of the problem.** Responsible global citizenship requires not only understanding that we are contributing to the problem but also an ongoing inquiry into how we are contributing to the problem. As we pursue this understanding and inquiry, we progressively enhance our ability to help solve the problem.

3. **Warfare is pathological.** Warfare ravages human beings physically and psychologically. The causes of this pathology include multiple interrelated factors: environmental, political, economic, cultural/ideological, social/psychological, and others.

4. **Militant nationalism drives the global community toward Option B.** The Option A priority is human well-being. The
Option B priority is political power, and in organized states, state power. Militant nationalist culture denies, obscures, rationalizes, or ignores the conflict between these two priorities.

5. **Power must be constrained by law.** Reliable progress in human security can be made only within a framework of international law protecting human rights, counteracting the pathology of power, and constraining violent contests for power. This is a basic requirement for progress toward Option A.

6. **A rule of law depends on respect for the inherent justice of the law and on justice in its implementation.** No police or army can long enforce a law that is self-negating. There can be no rule of law if the most powerful can violate the law with impunity or if the law is applied in ways that violate its most fundamental principles and purposes.

7. **Democracy and law are interdependent.** An effective democracy is the only reliable enforcer for international law. International law is the guarantor and guideline of effective democracy.

8. **Democracy and law are evolving.** This dynamic can be measured in terms of Option A and Option B: whether the evolution of democracy and law is moving us toward a healthier global community and improved conditions of human existence, or whether democracy and law are degenerating into false forms, carrying the names “democracy” and “law” but not their Option A reality, and so leading us toward the pathology of warfare, militant nationalism, and diminishing human security.

9. **Nationalism has both creative and destructive effects on the state itself.** An inclusive nationalism can mitigate conflicts among ethnic communities and promote cooperative effort for the public good. This potential accounts for much of the historical success of nationalism. But nationalism has a strong tendency to become malignant: to make political power (and state power) an end unto itself. This militant nationalism,
The ABCs of Human Survival

the dominant form of nationalism today, is pervasive in the culture of militarily powerful states, and it influences the culture of their allies.

10. *Every powerful state has both conveyed significant benefits and committed major atrocities.* Without exception, every powerful militant nationalist state in history has facilitated major achievements that benefited the citizens of that state. Without exception, every powerful militant nationalist state in history has been responsible for murderous atrocities.

11. *Nationalism is legitimate only when it serves human well-being within the constraints of international law.* Its limits of legitimacy are defined, for example, by international human rights law, by the law of non-aggression, and by concepts in social psychology such as those in the work of Erich Fromm and Abraham Maslow.

12. *Violence begets violence. Militant nationalism sustains that dynamic in the global community.* Warfare is intentionally sustained by a warfare system; militant nationalism is its ideology.

13. *Militant nationalism begets militant nationalism.* Militant nationalism in one state or ethnic group tends to trigger militant nationalist responses in other states and ethnic groups.

14. *The warfare system sustains and is sustained by a culture of cynicism.* In our militant nationalist culture we are taught that it’s a dog-eat-dog world. By choosing to think this way, we make it “normal” to have extremes of wealth and poverty, conspicuous consumption, cutthroat competition, and endless warfare.

15. *Militant nationalism is associated with contempt for law, democracy, and human rights. It is associated with the pathology of power.* The tendency of power to corrupt is well known. We have seen murderous examples of that tendency in our own time and in the behavior of our own governments and their
allies. This self-destructive tendency of militant nationalism is associated not just with a failure of governments to represent responsible citizens and the best interests of human beings but also with a failure even to respond to the efforts of citizens to initiate responsible behavior in governments. The contempt that powerful governments have for law is expressed in their behavior and is often even made explicit by the intellectuals who advise them.

16. **Militant nationalism has destructive effects on individuals, families, and communities.** Militant nationalism is a deeply pessimistic ideology based on the false premise that we have no choice but to continue destroying each other. This pessimism has destructive effects physically, psychologically, and socially. It leads to permanent physical and psychological disability, depression, suicide, domestic violence and dysfunction, and pervasive social malaise.

17. **A militant nationalist government is a threat to its own citizens.** Any government that violates international law by its threats against other governments thereby constitutes a threat to the global community. Since citizens of the militant nationalist state are part of the global community, every militant nationalist government is a threat to the citizens of its own state.

18. **Militant nationalism is particularly toxic to the global community when it dominates the culture and politics of a powerful state.** Powerful states are the major violators of international law and the major threats to global community and human survival. Weak or fractured states such as Colombia or the former Yugoslavia or Rwanda or Sudan have committed murderous atrocities and violations of international law, but the criminality of such states does not have the global reach of a superpower and cannot corrupt and obstruct the UN Security Council and other institutions designed to advance the purposes of international law. Only powerful states are capable
of that kind of obstruction and perversion of international law and its institutions.

19. **International power politics provoke internal repression, dictatorships, and civil wars.** Internal repression tends to increase as external threats increase. Even very powerful states with comparatively democratic traditions will sharply curtail civil liberties in times of major wars. Civil wars may arise because of unequivocal violations of basic human rights by a politically dominant group, because of militant nationalism within an ethnic group striving to establish autonomy or its own independent state, or (as is usual) because of a combination of such factors.

20. **Militant nationalism is an ideology whose time has passed.** The corruption, waste, and hypocrisy necessary to sustain militant nationalism have critically undermined its credibility. Enormous resources are currently being squandered to maintain this ideology. The sooner the resources being squandered on Option B are redirected toward Option A, the sooner we will see the light of dawn.

21. **Elected and appointed officials are limited by the paradigm of the political institutions they serve.** Those who serve in a militant nationalist government are limited by the militant nationalist way of thinking. There will be intense pressures on them to carry on “business as usual,” severely limiting their ability to move events toward Option A.

22. **Civil society has emerged as the Option A leader in world affairs.** Civil society is the non-governmental, non-corporate sector of society that is dedicated to the public interest and the common good. Civil society organizations are variously concerned with environmental or social justice issues or other challenges. Organizations and individuals in civil society have moved with an adaptive intelligence and speed, which governments cannot match, to identify problems and potential solutions of life-and-death importance to our future.
23. **The Option A responsibilities of any national government include compliance with and promotion of international humanitarian and human rights law and the law of non-aggression, as well as the promotion of mechanisms, structures, and competencies for effective democracy.** The claim of any state to be a leader in promoting human rights can be reliably assessed by that state’s record of compliance or non-compliance with international law and by its record of responsiveness or non-responsiveness to the Option A initiatives of civil society.

24. **Power is essential to fostering a healthy global community under a rule of law.** Power has interrelated political, economic, and cultural domains. The success of Option A initiatives depends on power in each of these domains. Volunteerism and a shoestring budget can accomplish a lot but cannot compete with a six hundred billion dollar-a-year military budget, or with the massive funding going into cultural and political institutions rooted in old-paradigm thinking.

25. **The pathology of powerlessness sustains the pathology of power.** The tendency of power to degenerate into pathological forms can only be averted by effective democracy and a rule of law. Uncritical deference to authority sustains dictatorships and the major violations of international law perpetrated by powerful states.

26. **Problems are there to be solved. Identifying and solving problems is essential to personal growth.** Pragmatic realism involves the ability to recognize a specific obstacle or problem, to define it in terms that evoke possible solutions, and to test the solutions. Pragmatic realism in the service of human well-being is a mark of wisdom and healthy psychology.

27. **The conditions of human existence and the chances of human survival depend largely on respect for self and others. Emotional intelligence is essential at both personal and global levels.** Responsible citizenship includes the capacity of each person to advance his or her personal well-being and to be constructively
involved in the life of local and global community. Effectively implemented, these two processes (personal growth and public engagement) are reciprocally reinforcing. Personal growth is limited in the person isolated from public life through cynicism, consumerism, or careerism. Pursuit of one’s career oblivious to personal and social relationships and to the common good makes life — even professional life — less rewarding. There is no natural barrier between the common good and the good life.

28. Citizenship is a field for innovation, achievement, and creative public life. The practice of medicine can be taken as a model for the practice of citizenship.

29. Awareness, support, and active engagement are three stages of responsible citizenship. Lack of time, interest, energy, and other resources for involvement in public life are real or perceived problems obstructing progress toward Option A. These problems have solutions, beginning with the simple understanding that awareness of the issues can itself be a powerful catalyst for change.

30. Optimism is essential; complacency is dangerous; pessimism is a waste of time.