In 2003 military forces from the United States and the United Kingdom invaded Iraq. By the time of that invasion, the economic sanctions, which had been imposed on Iraq more than a decade earlier, were already estimated to have cost the lives of more than half a million Iraqis, many of them children under the age of five. On May 12, 1996, Madeleine Albright, speaking as a U.S. government official on the television show 60 Minutes, expressed the view that the cost of several hundred thousand deaths among Iraqi children had been “worth it.”

The invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the events it precipitated, had by late 2004 caused tens of thousands of additional deaths among Iraqi civilians. In the first year of the invasion and occupation, most of those deaths were directly caused by the invading military forces, and since that time most have been caused directly or indirectly by the occupation. More than a million Iraqi lives have been extinguished or devastated beyond hope of repair since January 1, 1991. For none of those lives can the perpetrators of that catastrophe provide even a remotely adequate answer to the
question: What has the world lost because of what you have done? These are facts, but whether these things are good or bad, or of any importance whatever, is not an empirical question. In the old paradigm, these deaths are acceptable because they are leading toward a “noble goal.” In that way of thinking, the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom are not a threat to international peace.

The map is not the territory. How we think about the case of Iraq will not encompass that part of reality, whether we use old-paradigm or new-paradigm ways of thinking. But it will certainly influence the reality of the world a century from now. How you choose to think about the case of Iraq will be part of that process. We choose our maps, those maps influence our action (and our inaction), and our action (or inaction) changes the course of history.

The axioms and principles presented in the foregoing chapters could be illustrated with any armed conflict, particularly one in which any of the most powerful states are directly involved in the violence. The case of Iraq is chosen for reasons indicated earlier: it directly involved the world’s military superpower; the conceptual framework used to rationalize Western policies will be familiar to most readers; and as citizens of the United States or Canada or both, we have a more direct responsibility for what the government of the United States did to Iraq (with the collaboration of various governments including Canada’s) than we have for, say, what the government of Sudan is doing in Darfur.

But a study of this or any conflict does not merely illustrate the concepts. When each case is studied within the framework of the new paradigm, it points to further basic principles or corollaries. It produces basic as well as particular new learning, which can then be applied to understanding other cases and to responding to events constructively (toward Option A). Study of a conflict or any epoch in history cannot illuminate reality in this way if the conflict, the conditions, and the events are perceived only within the conceptual
framework of the old paradigm. The lessons of history are limited by the paradigm within which the case is studied.

The following synopsis is intended as an illustration of concepts presented in other parts of this book. As a guide to what has happened in Iraq, it cannot possibly substitute for the excellent and ongoing work of others: Robert Fisk, Phyllis Bennis, Dilip Hiro, Naomi Klein, Paul William Roberts, and many others who have through the years contributed to the necessary paradigm shift. References to works by several of these authors are included in the section on Further Reading.

Under ten headings, the synopsis presents a new-paradigm way of thinking about the case of Iraq. The old-paradigm map will be more familiar to most readers, and will receive attention only for comparative purposes here.

**Saddam Hussein and the U.S. government before and after August 1990**

Old-paradigm maps use at least two basic approaches to recruit support for Option B. The first is the “political realist” approach, which assumes that the violent contests for power are inevitable and therefore we have no choice but to play the game to win. It focuses on power relationships, game theory concepts, and the like. It prides itself in being “objective,” meaning that it will not be much bothered by Saddam Hussein’s nationalism and will often support his atrocities if they happen to advance the cleverly conceived goals of our own nationalism.

The second old-paradigm method of persuasion could be referred to as the “crusader” approach, which assumes that there is a battle between good and evil in the world and that “our” violence is essential to ensure the victory of good over evil.

A common solution to the problem of justifying one’s aggression is to depict the enemy as evil. If your enemies
The abcs of Human Survival

are pure evil, there is little need for additional explanations of why you want to fight against them. Hence, the more thoroughly one can assimilate the enemy into the myth of pure evil, the less one needs to provide valid reasons for one’s aggression. (Baumeister 1997, 85)

The slightly more liberal versions of the crusader approach are a little less self-righteous and a little more inhibited than fundamentalist versions, but otherwise generally similar. The deaths of tens or hundreds of thousands of Iraqis or Japanese or Europeans or Americans are the price we must all be willing to pay in the battle of good against evil.

Prior to August 1990, the political realist approach dominated the representations of Saddam Hussein in the Western media. Hussein’s atrocities were generally accepted as part of the inevitable struggles for power in the world, and relatively little attention was devoted to them in the news. With few exceptions, media representations reflected U.S. government policies toward Iraq, which were essentially devoid of the hostility that emerged after August 1990.

After the 1979 revolution in Iran, in which the Shah was overthrown and a theocratic regime under Ayatollah Khomeini assumed power, Saddam Hussein’s importance as a potential U.S. ally increased in the calculations of political realists. Khomeini’s militant nationalist/theocratic regime was hostile to the secular dictatorship in Iraq, as well as to the Islamic family dictatorships in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The United States and other governments supported Saddam Hussein during the 1980s. It was in that decade that Hussein’s threat to international peace and his savage violations of human rights were at their peak as Iraq carried out a long war against Iran, subsequently meting out savage retaliation against Iraqi Kurds for their collusion with Iran during the war. The threat and the violations would not have been possible without support from the United States, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and others.
The Case of Iraq

Chemical weapons were used against Iran and against the Iraqi Kurds. This was well known to the U.S. government and was largely irrelevant in the maps of political realism — maps that ignore, obscure, or marginalize humanitarian considerations. Therefore, it scarcely made a ripple in the mainstream print or broadcast media.

With Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait (a U.S. client state) in August 1990, the U.S. policy priorities shifted again. It is now clear that the U.S. policy objective from that date forward was to replace Saddam Hussein’s government with a more compliant regime. For several reasons, this could not be accomplished immediately. Regime change was obviously illegal, and the conduct of operations ejecting Iraq from Kuwait had been conducted under UN auspices, with a good deal of public relations fanfare about a “new era of promise for the UN Charter.” Furthermore, the coalition of states that had provided some support for the U.S. forces had been recruited within that framework of a UN initiative, with the limited objective of reversing Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. This context placed constraints on what the United States could do in 1991. There were also other regional strategic considerations at stake in the calculations of the U.S. administration. President George H. W. Bush not only called a halt to the forward movement of U.S. forces, leaving Saddam Hussein in power in Iraq; he also refused to allow U.S. support for a subsequent uprising against Saddam Hussein in southern Iraq. The United States was well aware that Iran was a greater regional power than Iraq. If the Ba’ath government had been toppled in Iraq, the regional influence of Iran might well have expanded and become far more of a challenge to U.S. “national interest” than a chastened and hobbled Saddam Hussein. Based on purely cynical considerations of power politics and public relations, the time was not propitious in 1991 for an immediate removal of Saddam from power. The government of the United States would have to bide its time.

But the maps representing Saddam Hussein shifted instantly in
The ABCs of Human Survival

the Western media. From August 1990 onward, they were dominated by the crusader approach, which was perceived as more effective in propaganda for war. The old-paradigm maps about Saddam Hussein are familiar to everyone who followed the news in the 1990s: Saddam Hussein was a brutal dictator, a madman, another Hitler, a threat to international peace, and a violator of international law.

The new-paradigm map accommodates the factual information from the old into a more comprehensive representation of reality. Saddam Hussein was a brutal dictator and a militant nationalist, and the two aspects of his political profile were closely related.

The brutal internal security apparatus of Saddam Hussein was designed exactly to prevent what had happened in Chile in 1973, in Guatemala in 1954, and in Iran in 1953. In each of those cases, a more open government had been overthrown with the help of the U.S. CIA and replaced by a murderous dictatorship, which then enjoyed U.S. government support for years. Those in Iraq who had supported Saddam Hussein’s dictatorship no doubt saw it as necessary to protect Iraq from internal conspiracies supported by foreign enemies. Internal repression tends to increase as external and internal threats increase. Militant nationalism tends to push governments toward internal repression.

Saddam Hussein used a carrot-and-stick approach to pursue the goal of an independent and unified Iraq. Iraq was to become strong enough to protect its “national interests” in the region, to counter threats from the hostile states that surround Iraq, and to discourage the armed Kurdish insurgency and other internal threats to Iraq’s security.

Iraq’s oil wealth provided resources for a fairly impressive carrot, including social programs such as free education and health care, and a secular political agenda, advancing the role of women in public life, that had been perceived by many as a model for Arab states. For the Kurds, the carrot included an accord of March 1970, which by regional standards was remarkably progressive: Kurdish
was recognized as one of Iraq’s national languages, a Kurdish university would be established, and representation of the Kurds in the central government was assured. Edmund Ghareeb’s book *The Kurdish Question in Iraq* (1981) is a useful source on this subject.

That was the carrot. The stick included savage retaliation for Kurdish treason during the Iran-Iraq war and a murderous internal security apparatus designed to prevent overthrow of the Iraqi government. Saddam Hussein’s nationalism, and the support for it among other nationalists in Iraq, made the government of Iraq both a murderous violator of human rights internally and a threat to international peace externally.

Saddam Hussein had a remarkable combination of cleverness, nationalist enthusiasm, addiction to power, and grotesque ignorance of the value of human life. An account of the tyranny of fear even for “friends” of Saddam is given by Zainab Salbi, whose family “enjoyed” a personal relationship with the great leader.

I hate all wars…. Still, I think the day I learned Saddam Hussein had been removed from power was the happiest day of my life. (Salbi and Becklund 2005, 272)

Saddam Hussein inspired not only fear but also intense hatred, which is easy to detect in the works of various writers about his regime. A vendetta against Saddam is evident in various works published in the West after 1990. Pursuit of that vendetta has already cost hundreds of billions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of lives. The costs are still coming in, with no end in sight.

Militant nationalism creates the conditions under which such poisonous personalities rise to power. Saddam Hussein was a murderer and torturer, but the CIA and Iraqi nationalists each thought at one time or another that he was their murderer and torturer, and at one time or another each was right.

U.S. government support for Saddam Hussein, like its hostility to Saddam Hussein, was based on militant nationalism rather than
any deep concern for the people of Iraq, Iran, or the United States, either before or after August 1990. Henry Kissinger understood the concept. What he said about covert action applies also to militant nationalism: it should not be confused with missionary work. Or, in other words, never let humanitarian rhetoric deceive you about power politics.

The militant nationalists on both sides of the Iraq conflict thought that somehow they were doing something good. Saddam was moving Iraq, and with it all Arabs, toward a glorious new era in their history. And surely that would have been good if the powers of “evil” — led by the government of the United States — had not extinguished the vision. The presidents of the United States and all their minions were leaders, first in support and then in repudiation, of a murderous dictatorship. But even when the United States supports murderous dictators, can anyone doubt that the United States has done great good in the world?

All of them were murderous violators of the law of nations, which is designed to protect human beings from these hideous contests for power. Their militant nationalism has extinguished hundreds of thousands of lives and darkened the prospects for human survival. Not one of them has the faintest idea of what they have destroyed. From the ethically neutral perspective of political realism, the US-Iraq conflict is normal; in the crusader version, it is an illustration of how a savage dictator was defeated, the triumph of good over evil. These are two versions of old-paradigm maps. In the map presented here, the US-Iraq conflict is an illustration of the pathology that human beings inflict on one another, an affliction that as human beings we should try to bring under control.
The Case of Iraq

The U.S. invasion of Panama, Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, and the 1991 Gulf War

The reader can supply an old-paradigm map as well as I can: The invasion of Kuwait was an unprovoked act of naked aggression. Iraq, on the verge of invading Saudi Arabia, was prevented in the nick of time by Operation Desert Shield. The international response to Iraq’s aggression was a rare example of implementing the UN Charter to address a breach of international peace. Iraq refused to withdraw from Kuwait. The ejection of Iraq from Kuwait under the UN banner demonstrated the use of force within the framework of international law.

The U.S. aggression against Panama eight months earlier would be largely irrelevant in old-paradigm maps of Iraq’s aggression against Kuwait. However, it is relevant to the issue of establishing a rule of international law, and therefore it is important in the conceptual framework of the new paradigm. The U.S. government was effectively unchallenged when it violated the law in Panama. When Iraq violated the same law, it was destroyed. If implementation of law is inequitable, there can be no rule of law.

Was Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait unprovoked?

In 1990, Kuwait was overproducing oil by the standards of OPEC (the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) and causing a fall in world oil prices. This was severely damaging the Iraqi economy, undermining Iraq’s efforts to recover from its misadventures with Iran. Iraq’s economy was more narrowly based on oil than was Kuwait’s or Saudi Arabia’s. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia had a broad portfolio of investments, many of which saw increasing profits as world oil prices fell. Iraq didn’t have the portfolio, so it was hemorrhaging economic power. Kuwait had also been slant drilling at the Iraq-Kuwait border, siphoning off Iraqi oil. Iraq saw its own sacrifices in the Iran-Iraq war as a defense of Arab governments, including Kuwait’s. From the Iraqi government perspective, Kuwait’s actions were intentional
provocations that almost certainly had U.S. backing. None of that in the least contravenes the fact that Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait was an act of aggression and a fundamental violation of international law, but the invasion was hardly unprovoked.

Was Iraq on the verge of invading Saudi Arabia?

The evidence for this is essentially zero, and the evidence against it is compelling. But it was temporarily useful as pretext for getting U.S. troops into Saudi Arabia. A sense of the towering hostility among some Saudis to the presence of foreign troops in their country is conveyed by the attacks ten years later on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon by a group of men from Saudi Arabia. It would have taken a good part of those ten years to conceive, plan, prepare, and execute the attacks of September 11, 2001. Militant nationalism killed several thousand civilians in the United States on that day. Iraq’s militant nationalism triggered U.S. militant nationalism, which triggered a renegade form of militant nationalism based in Saudi Arabia, illustrating the concept that violence begets violence. In 1990, the subterfuge that Iraq was about to invade Saudi Arabia served as disinformation used to overcome the Saudi resistance to a U.S. military presence. And that disinformation helped maintain the cycles of violence, which included attacks on U.S. territory a decade later.

The events unfolding after Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait can best be understood as a conflict between two militant nationalisms, one of a government (Iraq) at a middle level of power by regional standards and the other of a government (the U.S.) with global reach and the ability to subvert international legal institutions to serve its militant nationalism.

It is true and important that chapter VII of the UN Charter was initially invoked as a legitimate response to Iraq’s act of aggression in August 1990. The implementation was deeply flawed but even so was pushing events toward a peaceful resolution of the crisis. That process was blocked by the U.S. government under then-President George H. W. Bush. These points will be elaborated in the paragraphs below.
A few months before Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait and violation of the very cornerstone of the UN Charter, the U.S. government had violated the same law. In December 1989, George H. W. Bush ordered the U.S. invasion of Panama and the kidnapping of its head of state, Manuel Noriega. A UN Security Council resolution condemning that violation was precluded by the U.S. veto. *The law must be applied equitably.* If there is a law against aggression but that law is not applied when a powerful state commits aggression, there can be no rule of law.

But it was not the inequitable application of the law that has chiefly discredited the UN Security Council in the case of Iraq. It was the fact that the UN Security Council allowed the Charter to be used as pretext for a massive escalation of violence after the invasion of Kuwait, and subsequently to conduct an economic siege of Iraq for the covert purpose of regime change. *The law must be applied consistently in accord with its most fundamental purposes and principles.* When the law against aggression is invoked as pretext for a massive escalation of violence, instead of pursuing an opportunity for peaceful reversal of the aggression, it repudiates the international legal system’s most fundamental purposes and principles. There can be no rule of law until treachery of this kind is ended.

Was a peaceful resolution of the crisis available? Iraq had refused the U.S. demand for an unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait. It was actively seeking a negotiated peaceful withdrawal from Kuwait. Iraq’s efforts were predictable under the circumstances and were exactly what mechanisms in the UN Charter were designed to elicit: a resolution of the crisis in a way that reduces the violence and mitigates the conflict. A series of Iraqi offers, conducted behind the scenes, culminated in this one of late December 1990, reported in a Long Island newspaper by Knut Royce:

> Iraq has offered to withdraw from Kuwait if the United States pledges not to attack as soldiers are pulled out, if
foreign troops leave the region, and if there is agreement on the Palestinian problem and on the banning of all weapons of mass destruction, U.S. officials disclosed yesterday…. The White House immediately dismissed the proposal as inadequate since it contains preconditions for a pullout…. A State Department expert described the proposal as a “serious prenegotiation position.” (Royce 1991)

Iraq was calling for negotiations to arrange a peaceful resolution of the confrontation, hardly surprising under the circumstances. To test the seriousness of that call, it was necessary to enter into the negotiations. The response of President George H. W. Bush was “There will be no negotiations.” The UN Security Council had effectively abdicated its decision-making authority to the U.S. president. By January 1991 the Security Council had for several months been responding as a militant nationalist instrument of U.S. foreign policy.

Each component of the Iraqi proposal for a peaceful withdrawal deserves emphasis. A pledge not to attack military forces that have withdrawn from fortified positions will be understood as an essential element of any legitimate arrangement for peaceful withdrawal. Such an attack would have violated international law, and such an attack was conducted subsequently against an Iraqi convoy retreating from Kuwait, in an infamous violation of humanitarian law by U.S. forces known as the “Highway of Death.”

Had foreign troops left the region as called for by Iraq, it would have included the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Saudi Arabia. Had that been done in 1991, it is highly likely that the World Trade Center would not have been attacked ten years later by Saudi terrorists bent on forcing a U.S. withdrawal from their country.

An agreement on the Palestinian problem could have been negotiated, as the State Department expert surely understood when he described the Iraqi proposal as a “serious prenegotiation

[146]
position.” Such an agreement was negotiated subsequently and could almost certainly have been negotiated in January 1991 to resolve the Kuwait crisis peacefully. That option was rejected by the Bush administration, in favor of more bloodshed.

The banning of all weapons of mass destruction (WMD) sounds like a bit of a stretch, conceivably a trick put into the proposal by the Iraqis. But that’s not likely. What is likely is that Iraq’s focus on WMD was driven partly by the Israeli nuclear threat, and it was absolutely essential to put a reference to WMD into their prenegotiating proposal for peaceful withdrawal. Israeli nuclear weapons were threatening the security of other states in the region, and Israel had attacked Iraq in 1981 to abort the Iraqi nuclear development program. It is difficult to imagine that Iraq would not call attention to the WMD issue in its proposal for withdrawal from Kuwait. Legitimate arms control measures take into account the legitimate security needs of all parties affected by the arrangement. A negotiator aiming for a peaceful resolution of the crisis could have gone into the negotiations with a viable counterproposal on this fourth point: for example, to postpone discussions of the regional WMD issues until a set date following the withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Assuming that the Iraqi government was seeking a face-saving way of resolving the confrontation, such a counterproposal would likely have been successful.

It is therefore highly likely that Iraq would have withdrawn peacefully from Kuwait under an easily negotiated arrangement. Hundreds of thousands of people, many of them children, would have lived. The environmental damage, the discrediting of international law and its institutions, the burgeoning hatred toward the United States for its atrocities and lawlessness — all of this could probably have been avoided. Instead, the possibility of negotiation was rejected, and the scourge of war was imposed on Iraq under the banner of the United Nations.

The conduct of the 1991 assault on Iraq repeatedly violated
humanitarian law in several ways, including the use of force disproportionate to any justifiable military advantage and the destruction of civilian infrastructure such as the capacity to provide potable water. For an analysis of these violations by the United States in its conduct of the 1991 assault on Iraq, see Simons (1998, 194-205).

Violence begets violence; militant nationalism sustains the cycle. Militant nationalism is associated with contempt for law and for human life.

*Communication, scholars, the media, and propaganda for war*

From August 1990 onward, propaganda for war against Iraq was pervasive in the Western media. The covers of *Newsweek* between August 1990 and April 1991 provided particularly graphic examples of propaganda for war, using standard devices of the war propaganda poster: demonization of the targeted enemy, glorification of war, and framing questions in a way that promoted violent outcomes. But *Newsweek* was only a small part of the propaganda effort. News reports were set in the framework of this propaganda, which continued throughout the 1990s. Published works of Western intellectuals include, years later, Christopher Hitchens’ *A Long Short War: The Postponed Liberation of Iraqi* (2002), which supported the impending invasion of Iraq. The U.S. government was driving the propaganda effort. The Canadian government and Western cultural institutions played supporting roles. It was exactly against such incitements to violence that Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1966, was directed. Paragraph 1 of the Covenant reads as follows:

1. Any propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law.
Western propaganda for war was largely successful in recruiting public support for the destruction of Iraq, played out over more than a decade and culminating in the invasion of 2003 and the current occupation and ongoing violence. The death toll is estimated now at more than a million. And as always, the death toll is just the tip of the iceberg.

In Rwanda in early 1994, one in a series of waves of violence was cresting. This history of violence was related to the country’s environmental degradation, population pressures on available land, and colonial and precolonial versions of militant nationalism. These were incredibly intense pressures, and a mere spark could set the country ablaze. The spark was provided by explicit, publicly broadcast incitement to violence of Hutu against Tutsi. It led to one of the century’s major atrocities, the Rwandan genocide. The death toll alone was estimated at 800,000. It was exactly against such incitements to violence that Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights had been directed. Paragraph 2 of the Covenant reads as follows:

2. Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights places Article 20 in the context of rights to freedom of expression (Article 19), which the Covenant recognizes must be practiced responsibly.

Canada and the United States have ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights but have failed to live up to its requirements. Warfare and massacres depend utterly on the ideas that promote them. In Rwanda in 1994, it was radio broadcasts that drove events toward the genocide. In North America from August 1990 onward, it was both print and broadcast media that cultivated the public support for what was done to Iraq. Powerful states (and certain very dysfunctional weaker states) develop
The ABCs of Human Survival

ideological systems and maps that promote militant nationalism. Propaganda for war is part of that process.

Facts and comparisons such as these are largely excluded from old-paradigm maps. In a contemporary version of those maps, we might emphasize our freedom of speech and freedom of the press. These points of emphasis are both true and important as far as they go. By our advances over the lack of freedom of the press to be found in states such as Saudi Arabia, Nazi Germany, or Saddam’s Iraq, we have created opportunities for the next advance.

It is exactly because of the generally greater freedom and access to information that we have the opportunity to advance the necessary paradigm shift. But that freedom of the press and of speech, the advances we have achieved, have not been sufficiently effective against propaganda for war and incitement to violence. Freedom of speech and freedom of the press do not include the right to libel and deliberate propagation of lies.

The old-paradigm maps are confronting a growing skepticism and challenge thanks to the work of authors such as Noam Chomsky, Ed Herman, Norman Solomon, John MacArthur, and Sheldon Rampton; websites such as Truthout, Commondreams, and Counterpunch; and organizations such as Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting and the Center for Media and Democracy, among many others. Excellent books on issues relevant to Iraq have become available; some of these are listed in the section on Further Reading. Yet such books are exceptional; many cultural institutions in North America have been slow to understand the pathology.

Policies imposed by the U.S. and allied governments restricted the flow of information to and from Iraq. Communication between North Americans and citizens of Iraq was sharply limited by those policies. My brother-in-law, a physician from Iraq, was unable to send medicine to his sister in Baghdad during her last months of leukemia, or to reach her by telephone for weeks before she died. That is but one molecule in the iron curtain effect of nationalism on the ability of people to communicate.
The Case of Iraq

Despite such restrictions, many kept the lines open on Iraq, not only journalists but others: organizations such as Voices in the Wilderness, or the group of physicians who surveyed the effects of the Persian Gulf war on infant and child mortality in Iraq (Asherio et al. 1992), and many others. There is considerable freedom of the press in Canada and the United States when compared to states such as Iraq or Saudi Arabia. Those of us who were paying close attention to the conflict benefited from that advantage and have put it to good use.

Economic sanctions and weapons of mass destruction

Any state that possesses nuclear weapons, attacks other states, and kills tens of thousands of people is by definition a threat to international peace. Under international law, mechanisms are prescribed to reduce the violence and threats, not to destroy the state that has perpetrated them. International law does not prescribe the destruction of states that have been threats to international peace, such as Iraq, the United States, or other members of the UN Security Council.

In practice, because of the veto power of its permanent members, the UN Security Council is very limited in its ability to respond when the threats to international peace come from a permanent member of the Council. That makes it all the more important to respond to other threats to international peace in strict accord with the principles and purposes of the UN Charter — that is, not to permit destruction of the offending state under auspices of the United Nations.

That’s international law, and a new-paradigm way of responding to threats to the peace. Militant nationalism and old-paradigm thinking have a different approach: It’s quite alright to destroy a country that threatens international peace if that country is a targeted adversary of “our” government. It’s not alright to destroy us, or even challenge us, if our government is a threat to international
peace. In the old paradigm, it is unthinkable to challenge our own government because it is threatening international peace.

The asymmetry of old-paradigm thinking should be informative for any rational observer: we should be able to get away with murder but our enemies should be destroyed for committing the same crime.

During the 1990s, economic sanctions were used as the primary means to ravage Iraqi society and thereby effect regime change. That strategy ultimately failed, and was replaced by a military invasion in 2003. An old-paradigm map on economic sanctions and WMD in Iraq saturated the North American media and scholarly publications during the 1990s, but not without challenge from the new paradigm. In essence, the old-paradigm map held that Iraq was a threat to international peace and that the economic sanctions on Iraq were therefore legal and necessary.

Iraq’s programs to develop weapons of mass destruction were an endlessly repeated detail in the North American propaganda for war after 1991. Those programs were very real before 1991, when they were supported by states such as France, the United States, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and others. That support was given in part because of concerns from those states about Iranian power and influence in the region. The WMD programs in Iraq after 1991 were hypothetical; there was little evidence to support the idea that they continuing, and a great deal of evidence that they had effectively been stopped. The old-paradigm map made strenuous efforts to obscure the “hypothetical” part. Evidence that they had been stopped was marginalized; evidence that they might be continuing was magnified and manufactured.

The new-paradigm map readily incorporates the factual parts of the old-paradigm map but places them in a more comprehensive representation of reality. The UN Security Council is empowered under the UN Charter to identify threats to international peace, but the Council is required by the Charter to conduct its affairs in accord with the Charter’s purposes and principles. Insofar as it
The Case of Iraq

fails in this, it violates the Charter, which is its source of legitimacy. Law must be interpreted reasonably and applied equitably for any hope of moving toward Option A. Iraq’s threat to international peace was effectively nullified by late 1991 because the international support for that threat had been withdrawn. The maintenance of economic sanctions on Iraq and the subsequent invasion were contrary to the law of the UN Charter. Unless the law is interpreted and applied in accord with its most fundamental purposes and principles, there can be no rule of law.

In the 1990s, the old-paradigm map of Iraq’s threat to international peace had a clear but unstated purpose: propaganda for regime change in Iraq. That purpose was in violation of the very cornerstone of international law, the law of non-aggression, which is designed to promote international peace. The old-paradigm map emphasized Iraq’s WMD because it was assumed this would best serve the purpose of regime change, while maintaining a façade of promoting peace.

Tim Trevan was an inspector with the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) team in Iraq. By the time I met him in Geneva in 1998, he was saying that the inspections had outlived their usefulness and it was time to overthrow the Iraqi government. We were both on a panel at a UN conference on biological weapons, and he asked to speak after me because by then we had had several conversations about Iraq and UNSCOM and he wanted to have the last word.

In his book *Saddam’s Secrets: The Hunt for Iraq’s Hidden Weapons* (1999), Trevan repeated his call for regime change. Close reading of the book confirms that UNSCOM had found no active program for development of WMD. So Trevan came to the following conclusion:

The threat to international peace and security comes not from the dual-purpose materials and equipment in Iraq, or even from its military capabilities. It comes from the ambitions of the regime, embodied in the person of
Saddam Hussein. The threat to international peace and security will not be removed until the regime’s ambitions have been removed or changed.

The obvious and only real solution is for the international community to take concerted action to remove the regime of Saddam Hussein. This would not be an illegal action, inconsistent with the UN Charter’s injunction not to interfere in the internal affairs of member states. Saddam, by his actions and ambitions, is a threat to international security and hence forgoes the protection of that injunction. (1999, 389–90)

In other words, the fact that Iraq had discontinued its program for WMD was for Tim Trevan largely irrelevant. And presumably he did not consider the ambitions of the U.S. government — including regime change in Iraq, which his book endorses — a threat to international peace and security. His imaginative interpretation of the UN Charter is a vintage old-paradigm usage of international law.

This and other evidence indicate that UNSCOM included team members who favored overthrow of the Iraqi government. For any Iraqi official interacting with UNSCOM, that bias would potentially be a deadly threat. Such Iraqi officials would have been terminally naïve not to be on their guard against UNSCOM inspections. The “lack of cooperation” by Iraqi officials had exactly this quality of distrust about motives in the UNSCOM team, and, whatever Trevan’s intentions, a careful reading of his book conveys exactly that impression.

In the 1980s, Iraq’s threat to international peace was supported by other governments, resulting in close to a million deaths in Iran and in Iraq. That support vanished in August 1990. The Iran-Iraq war demonstrated the sharp limitations on Iraq’s power even when its military capabilities were at their peak. The subsequent voluminous journalism and scholarship on Iraq’s “threat to inter-
national peace” was itself largely propaganda for war.

The transparency of this propaganda is evident in an article published in the Globe and Mail on November 13, 1998. The title was “Hussein arsenal still impressive” and the subtitle: “Although a mere shadow of 1990s armament, significant threat exists.” In the text, retired U.S. Army General Binford Peay is cited as the source of the following insight:

Mr. Hussein has been gradually improving the quality of his forces. Although he has not managed to even approximate the armament and manpower he wielded when his troops invaded Kuwait in 1990, he still poses a significant threat to U.S. pilots who might bomb Iraq.

(emphasis added)

In fact, U.S. attacks on Iraqi territory were stepped up the following month, December 1998. To belabor the point: Iraq’s “threat to the peace” was its residual capacity to defend itself. Readers familiar with Article 51 of the UN Charter will know that the right of every state to defend itself is recognized under international law.

Legitimate arms control measures take into account the legitimate security needs of all parties to the arrangement. Forcing one state to disarm while leaving other states free to attack it is not a legitimate arms control measure. And when the government imposing the disarmament itself carries out repeated military assaults on the state forced to disarm, the measure becomes an obscenity.

There is no substantive evidence of a program to develop WMD in Iraq after 1991. And yet the death rate from waterborne diseases among Iraqi children increased dramatically in the decade of the 1990s, as if biological weapons were actually being used in the country. Odd, isn’t it?
The *abc's* of Human Survival

The irony is that in contrast to [weapons of mass destruction], this device — economic sanctions — is deployed frequently, by large states rather than small ones, and may have contributed to more deaths during the post-Cold War era than all weapons of mass destruction throughout history. Comparing the record of these various threats to human well-being is an instructive exercise — and one that casts U.S. policy toward Iraq, which levies sanctions to impede WMD programs, in a new and disturbing light. (Mueller and Mueller 1999)

The UN sanctions on Iraq are believed to have contributed to the deaths of several hundred thousand Iraqi civilians between 1990 and 1996, most of them children under the age of five. The toll was in part related to the additive effect of the 1991 assault on Iraq’s civilian infrastructure, particularly its capacity to provide potable water, and the economic sanctions that for years after the 1991 assault continued to hobble Iraq’s ability to restore its public health system.

Madeleine Albright’s response to the question of whether the deaths of about half a million Iraqi children had been “worth it” has become infamous (*60 Minutes*, May 12, 1996). Two UN officials who had been in charge of the Oil for Food program, Denis Halliday and Hans von Sponeck, resigned over the effects of the sanctions on the civilian population of Iraq. Each of them became a vocal critic of the sanctions. In a critical review of various economic sanctions regimes and criteria for their legality under international law, Belgian jurist Marc Bossuyt came to this conclusion:

The sanctions regime against Iraq is unequivocally illegal under existing international humanitarian law and human rights law…. Once clear evidence was available that thousands of civilians were dying and that hundreds of thousands would die in the future as the Security
Council continued the sanctions, the deaths were no longer an unintended side effect — the Security Council was responsible for all known consequences of its actions. (2000)

In 2000 I was one of a group of Canadians making a presentation to the Canadian Parliament’s Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade (SCFAIT). We presented evidence of the destructive effects of economic sanctions on the civilian population of Iraq and on the illegality and blindness of the policies underlying the sanctions. As a result of our testimony, SCFAIT unanimously adopted a report recommending that the government of Canada work to bring the sanctions to an early end, and restore diplomatic relations with the government of Iraq. The Canadian government rejected the recommendations.

Militant nationalism, which has been driving all of us down the Option B road, has contempt for international law. The goal of the sanctions was regime change. In old-paradigm thinking, the deaths of a few hundred thousand Iraqi children and the economic destruction of Iraq was not too high a price to pay to achieve the goal. Militant nationalism has contempt for human life.

The U.S.-UK invasion of Iraq, March 2003

An old-paradigm version of the March 2003 invasion is that it was an act of liberation, thus comparable to the liberation of France in 1944. But France had been occupied by a foreign power (Germany), whereas the invasion of Iraq in 2003 imposed a foreign occupation on the country. There are several other differences between the liberation of France and the invasion and occupation of Iraq, which any well-informed high school student will be able to identify.

It is a fact that the invasion and occupation of Iraq ended a brutal dictatorship; therefore, the concept that it was an act of
liberation has some legitimacy. If Zainab Salbi, whose family were friends of Saddam Hussein, can celebrate the end of his regime as the happiest day of her life, consider what hundreds of thousands of others who suffered under that tyranny saw in the termination of that dictatorship.

But the policies behind the invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 were driven by the same paradigm and the same conditions that gave rise to the dictatorship in the first place. The invasion and occupation on the one hand, and the regime they displaced on the other, were rationalized reciprocally in perpetuating the ideology of militant nationalism. The violence of the dictatorship was rationalized by its perpetrators as a defense against regime change; the violence used to displace the regime was rationalized by its perpetrators as a way of solving the problem of dictatorship. These reciprocally reinforcing rationalizations serve to perpetuate the violence.

The concept that the invasion and occupation of Iraq was an act of liberation is an old-paradigm map, serving as propaganda for war to support the invasion. The point of this book is to make the choice process more conscious and better informed. Choose your map, but be aware of your purpose before you decide. Also be aware of the predictable consequences of the choice, consequences for which you share in the responsibility.

When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, it violated the most fundamental requirement of international law. The death toll that resulted directly from Iraq’s invasion and occupation of Kuwait is estimated at three to five thousand. When the United States and the United Kingdom invaded Iraq in 2003, they too violated the most fundamental requirement of international law. Within a year, the death toll resulting directly from the invasion and occupation of Iraq was estimated to have been several tens of thousands.

Iraq’s violation was formally condemned by the UN Security Council and chapter VII proceedings were initiated, which might well have resolved the crisis peacefully had they been conducted
in accord with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. Instead the law was used as pretext for a massive escalation of violence and the imposition of the scourge of war, including economic warfare, on Iraq.

The U.S.-UK violation was handled somewhat differently. The UN Security Council is an old-paradigm institution whose legitimacy derives from a new-paradigm Charter. The Council is therefore one place to watch for evidence of the paradigm shift. Old-paradigm thinking still dominates the Council. Hence the U.S. government had reason to believe even in 2002 that the Council might endorse the invasion.

By 2002, however, the U.S. government had lost much of its credibility. The savaging of Iraq from 1991 onward, under UN Security Council auspices, and the worldwide reaction against it, had made the Council’s membership more resistant to U.S. pressures. Even during the Kosovo crisis in 1998-99, the Council was no longer so easy to recruit to U.S. militant nationalism.

UN Security Council Resolution 1441 of 2002 used ambiguous language about consequences if Iraq failed to comply with weapons inspections, and clearly did not authorize a U.S. invasion. That did not prevent old-paradigm legal experts from arguing that the invasion of Iraq was legal (see, for example, Taft and Buchwald 2003, and Yoo 2003).

What is little understood is that even if the UN Security Council had endorsed it, the invasion and occupation of Iraq would still have been a violation of the UN Charter. This may be somewhat difficult for old-paradigm international legal experts to grasp, but the UN Security Council’s legitimacy derives from the UN Charter, and the Charter requires the Council to act in accord with the Charter’s purposes and principles. Endorsing an act of aggression is contrary to those purposes and principles. The effort to gain the endorsement failed, and at least the UN Security Council should be commended for that. That may seem faint praise, and it is so intended.
Iraq’s violation of the law (the invasion of Kuwait) was used as pretext for the destruction of Iraq; the U.S.-UK violation (the invasion of Iraq) was ignored or tacitly supported. The UN Security Council is radically in violation of the UN Charter on both counts. There can be no rule of law until the law is applied equitably and consistently in accord with its fundamental purposes and principles.

Apparently the policy planners involved had hoped that the devastation of Iraq in the 1991 war, and the continuation of war by other means with economic sanctions, would eventually lead to the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, and that the entire process could be carried out behind a façade of international law. When that failed, the much cruder instrument of overt military aggression was used to accomplish the goal. The aggression easily accomplished the goal of regime change, of course, but the outcome surprised its perpetrators, because their concepts of what would happen were old-paradigm concepts, and the old paradigm makes its prisoners very poor students of reality.

Democracy, the occupation, and the ongoing violence in Iraq

By late 2004, several more tens of thousands of Iraqi citizens had been killed as a result of the invasion and occupation. The invasion and occupation were superimposed on years of military attacks on radar and defense installations, which degraded Iraq’s ability to defend itself, as they were intended to do, and killed quite a few human beings, which was irrelevant to the purpose of the attacks. Economic sanctions had killed hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and destroyed the economic life of the country. The sanctions had been superimposed on the war of 1991, and the damage they caused to the country’s infrastructure had never been adequately repaired. The environmental damage and the ongoing consequences to human health in Iraq caused by the policies
of the U.S. government and its allies will never be adequately reckoned. Every phase of this history included major violations of international law by the United States and its allies against Iraq, under the banner of the United Nations.

Chief among the given reasons (part of the old-paradigm map) for this criminality and carnage had been that Iraq was developing WMD and was a threat to international peace. When no trace of the hypothetical weapons could be found even after the invasion and occupation, the old-paradigm mapmakers shifted their emphasis: it had all been done for the good of the people of Iraq.

At the same time, political realist versions of old-paradigm maps began to reappear. These realists readily acknowledged that the invasion and occupation were illegal, but they also argued that the illegality was now irrelevant. States seek security (or power) by the threat and use of force; it is unrealistic to try to change this, and warfare is not a disease to be cured but a normal form of human behavior, and so on and so forth.

The fact that Iraq had no remaining WMD programs was largely irrelevant to the purpose of regime change. Even so, exposure of the fraud on which the economic sanctions and the invasion had been based at least called for some public relations damage control. In principle, this should be easy to do. An invasion, however repugnant and criminal, always produces some advantages for some part of the population in the invaded country. The maps produced to support the invasion need only emphasize that aspect of reality and ignore, obscure, or rationalize the rest. With the end of a dictatorship, there would be little trouble in producing the necessary old-paradigm maps.

Several versions of the damage control have appeared, each with the same ephemeral quality of other masks for militant nationalism. “Making the world safe for democracy” was a standard mask (map) in the mid-twentieth century when the CIA helped overthrow the elected governments of Iran, Guatemala, and Chile, and establish oppressive dictatorships in their stead. The overthrow of a regime
The *The ABCs of Human Survival*

such as Saddam Hussein’s made it much easier to use democracy as a mask:

Then comes America, not just proclaiming democratic liberation as its overriding foreign policy principle but sacrificing blood and treasure in the service of precisely that principle.

It was not people power that set this in motion. It was American power. (Krauthammer 2005)

Krauthammer also expresses the hope that American power will contribute to democracy and “modernity” for the entire Middle East, citing elections in various states as evidence that this is happening, including two (Afghanistan and Iraq) that had been targets of U.S. military attacks. He cites elections in Palestine and Saudi Arabia, and democratic progress in Egypt and Lebanon, all by inference somehow due to American power and not to people power, in Krauthammer’s map of reality.

Iraq’s oil reserves may also have something to do with the invasion and occupation. Some would argue that the deaths related to the invasion (recently revised upward to more than six hundred thousand) were more about gaining access to Iraq’s resources than about bringing democracy to Iraq. A detailed analysis of economic motivations for the invasion of Iraq is beyond the scope of this book but can be found in a publication by the Research Unit for Political Economy entitled *Behind the Invasion of Iraq* (Monthly Review Press, 2003).

On December 12, 1974 a Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States was passed in the UN General Assembly. The preamble of the Charter calls for the attainment of wider prosperity among all countries and of higher standards of living for all peoples; the promotion by the entire international community of the economic and social progress of all countries, especially developing countries; and the protection, preservation, and
enhancement of the environment. In chapter 1 of the Charter, certain fundamental principles of international economic relations are specified, including the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of states; non-aggression; peaceful coexistence; peaceful settlement of disputes; respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; no attempt to seek hegemony and spheres of influence; promotion of international social justice; and international cooperation for development.

The Charter was passed by a vote of 120 in favor, six against, and ten abstentions. Of the six states voting against the resolution that contained the Charter, two (the United States and the United Kingdom) became the major invading and occupying powers in Iraq. In the old paradigm that dominates the ideology of power, ideas such as those expressed in the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States are considered “a letter to Santa Claus.”

At the time Krauthammer’s commentary appeared, people feared for their lives in modern, democratized Iraq. Saddam Hussein’s tyranny was gone, and there can be no doubt that there are some very good things about that change. But that is only one aspect of reality. The Ba’ath government had imposed the same sort of “stability” maintained by fear that was imposed by the Chilean dictatorship after 1973 and by the Guatemalan dictatorship after 1954, but with the addition in Iraq of strong social programs, advances for women in the workforce, and other aspects of a project to end the tyranny of the West over the Arab world. Saddam Hussein had a nationalist vision for Iraq of unity, independence, and strength. Iraq had oil reserves that could have been used to achieve that nationalist vision. The vision has now been extinguished as Iraq stumbles toward an uncertain future. Internally at least, militant nationalism is the lesser of two evils when placed in the dock beside a state that is disintegrating or tearing itself apart from within.

Saddam’s tyranny and nationalist vision have been replaced with the violent factionalism of a state teetering on the brink of ruin. The road to this disaster began decades ago, and we have

[163]
The *ABCs* of Human Survival

been driven along it by militant nationalism. At every point, international law offered a roadmap for the alternative, toward Option A: support for regional pacts of non-aggression, refusal to support governments such as Iraq’s or Kuwait’s when their policies violated international law, substantive work to achieve a peaceful withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait, and specifying an endpoint to economic sanctions in accord with international law and then lifting the sanctions in accord with reasonable interpretation of international law.

As political realists will understand, both Iraq and the United States would have remained under the constraints of international power relationships; Iran and other states in the region represent quite formidable limitations on Iraq’s militant nationalist options, and those constraints would have remained if international law had been followed and Saddam Hussein had remained in power. Major differences would have been that hundreds of thousands of Iraqis would not only have lived but would have found much more productive lives, and the United States and its allies would not have lost the credibility and the resources they have squandered on their pursuit of Option B.

Again and again such options were rejected by governments. Citizens calling for Option A were stiff-armed, and old-paradigm intellectuals such as Charles Krauthammer, Michael Glennon, and Christopher Hitchens gave us their old-paradigm maps of the road we traveled and continue to travel toward Option B.

The sources of violence in Iraq today remain directly or indirectly related to the illegal invasion and occupation. They include direct violence inflicted by the occupying military forces and violence directed against the military forces of the occupation; violence and threats against Iraqis, perceived as collaborators, who work for or with the occupying forces; sectarian violence that has grown out of that same perception of collaboration; and random violence that the Iraqi police force is unable to control. The police force’s authority is undermined by the occupying military
forces, for whom the prevention of rape and armed robbery, and alleviation of general fear in the civilian population are not operational priorities. The force’s solidarity is also being destroyed by the same factors promoting sectarian violence.

From this analysis, a rational observer would conclude (and would years ago have concluded) that prompt withdrawal of the occupying military forces is an absolutely essential step toward diminishing the violence in Iraq. It is exactly the invasion and protracted occupation that have escalated the violence and have made the restoration of human security in Iraq increasingly remote and difficult. This analysis and the conclusion to which it leads are supported by all the available evidence.

In 2004 I wrote a working paper on Iraq and presented it to a citizens’ organization with which I was associated: CANDIL (Canada, Democracy and International Law). The paper was posted on the CANDIL website and is still available at www.candil.org. The individuals in that organization, with others across Canada, had long called for the lifting of sanctions against Iraq and had insisted on the absolute necessity of international law as a standard for any constructive approach to the government of Iraq and the situation in that part of the world. The standards of international law enabled us as concerned citizens to see very early and with great clarity the self-defeating direction of policy being generated by the U.S. government and its allies. The new paradigm enabled a powerful and prescient analysis of the course of events. Within the old paradigm, such an analysis is not possible, and the conclusions are incomprehensible. That is why government officials are so incompetent in the arena of world affairs.

Once the disaster of a militant nationalist adventure becomes too obvious to ignore, it is standard practice for the erstwhile supporters to plead incompetence: Our intentions were good, but we did not realize… In Retrospect, Robert McNamara’s 1995 assessment of the Vietnam War, lists a series of “lessons learned.”
The abc’s of Human Survival

They include several that an intelligent high school student not confined by old-paradigm thinking could have explained to the U.S. government administrations responsible for that particular era of carnage and waste of public resources. That is why democracy is so important. Responsible, active, informed citizens can think outside the box.

Throughout the decade of the 1990s, such citizens were calling for a change of direction in policy on Iraq. But militant nationalism has contempt for democracy. The calls were rejected by the U.S. government, and by the Canadian government. Only in the late stages of the destruction of Iraq, just before the 2003 invasion, was the Canadian government partially brought to its senses and refused full-fledged participation in that particular violation of international law. The destruction of Iraq illuminates the failure of democracy in North America.

Terrorism and the destruction of Iraq

For those who, like Zbigniew Brzezinski, believe that U.S. power is “uniquely central to world peace,” without which the world would plunge “almost immediately into a politically chaotic crisis” (2004, 17), it should be instructive to recall the sustained rise of violence in Iraq after the arrival of U.S. forces in that country. In October 2006 alone, the death toll among Iraqi civilians was reportedly 3,706, much of it related to sectarian violence.

Conditions promoted in the global community by the militant nationalism of powerful states are the conditions that give rise to tyranny and terrorism. The CIA has promoted terrorism as part of its covert operations, so it does have some understanding of conditions that activate political violence within a state. It is not surprising that the CIA realized that the invasion and occupation of Iraq were likely to increase the risk of terrorism.

Violence begets violence. From its previous status as a militant
nationalist state with publicly funded health care and education systems, and as a secular Arab state advancing the role of women in public life, Iraq has descended into violence and disintegration. The dictatorship and state terrorism under Saddam Hussein were a murderous response to the murderous geopolitical conditions in which they arose.

The standard definition of terrorism draws no distinction between state and non-state actors. The former Iraqi regime did not allow competing forms of terrorism on its turf. The violent displacement of that violent regime and the violent presence of the occupation forces have exacerbated various forms of terrorism. All this has emphasized how powerful the United States is, and teaching adversaries that lesson is in the “national interest” of the United States. In the old paradigm, the national interest is a more important consideration than the lives of human beings.

Promoting this pestilence in the global community raises the chances of its outbreak in North America. Iraq is a canary in the mineshaft of the coming century. If the priority of national interest over human life prevails, there are very dark times ahead.

**Responsibility for the destruction of Iraq**

An old-paradigm map held Saddam Hussein and his regime alone responsible for the destruction of Iraq. The purpose of that way of thinking is clear enough, though it borders on psychotic ideation. Responsibility for the destruction of Iraq is widely shared but includes at a minimum the government of Iraq, the government of the United States and its allies, and the UN Security Council.

Militant nationalism works to the short- or long-term destruction of the state that promotes it. Hitler’s militant nationalism provoked militant nationalism in response. Saddam Hussein’s militant nationalism made Iraq vulnerable to the militant nationalism of states much more powerful than Iraq. Those states too are in the process of self-destruction. In the United States, there is a hemorrhage of public
resources into the military sector of the economy, concomitant with pervasive social disintegration related to the pathology of power and contempt for human life.

This is blindly self-destructive behavior that should instantly and forcefully call our attention to the choice put forward by Albert Camus: it is up to us not to be on the side of the pestilence. To believe in the inevitability of warfare and the impossibility of a rule of law is to be on the side of the pestilence.

When the government of Iraq attacks Iran or Kuwait, or slaughters its Kurdish population, it threatens the global community of which I am a part. The government of Iraq threatened me, and people like me, when it did these things. When the United States corrupts the UN Security Council, carries out the economic strangulation of Iraq for purposes of regime change, and then invades and occupies Iraq with murderous consequences for hundreds of thousands of people, it threatens the global community of which I am a part. The government of the United States threatens me, and people like me when it does this. The national interest is contrary to the public interest.

We are in the process of deciding whether to hold all governments accountable for their atrocities or to continue making exceptions for our own governments and their allies. The government of Iraq under Saddam Hussein was responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths in the Middle East and fundamental violations of international law. The government of the United States and its allies are also responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths in the Middle East and fundamental violations of international law. If we do not hold our own and allied governments — and all governments — accountable for their atrocities, then we ensure continuation of such atrocities.
The Case of Iraq

A way forward

The patterns of waste and self-destruction that produced the catastrophe in Iraq are clear. They indicate our failure as a global community. We can ignore this failure and continue business as usual, or we can change direction by bringing our policies and practices into compliance with international law. Either way, we are responsible for the choice. This should give serious historians, and the rest of us, a useful standard for analysis of current events.

The case of Iraq illustrates basic principles for global citizenship, the subject of this book. Properly understood, those principles can facilitate much healthier approaches to the politics of the future. As in medicine, competent practice must be based on knowledge of the disease and evidence-based approaches to therapy and prevention.

We can also use the analogy of an airline disaster. Without a prompt and aggressive inquiry into the disaster, leading to insight into what caused it, the disaster is likely to be repeated. Such an inquiry should lead to recommendations for how to avoid recurrence.

Public analysis of the disaster in Iraq has, for the most part, been old-paradigm analysis, which is useless for identifying the source of the problem. Most of the recommendations that follow are taken directly from the working paper on Iraq posted in November 2004 (www.candil.org). These recommendations can contribute toward human security for all of us, whether we live in Iraq or elsewhere.

Recommendation #1: There must be public and explicit recognition of responsibility for the devastation of Iraq. That responsibility includes, first and foremost, the government of Iraq under Saddam Hussein. Militant nationalist governments are a threat to their own citizens. While we have heard endless repetition of Saddam Hussein’s responsibility since August 1990,
there has been no public recognition of the basic principle that power politics and militant nationalism are a threat to human security. This is applicable not only to the militant nationalism of Saddam Hussein but also to the militant nationalism of other actors responsible for the course of events.

Responsibility for the devastation of Iraq now rests chiefly with the governments of the United States and its allies, particularly Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Kingdom. This responsibility must be publicly acknowledged and universally recognized. Other actors responsible for the devastation of Iraq include the UN Security Council and non-state actors, including factions within Iraq. Kurdish militant nationalists in Iraq are but one example of the non-state actors involved.

The list does not end there. The mass media and intellectuals who contributed to promoting the policies that devastated Iraq share in the responsibility, as do all of us who were silent about the policies of our governments, or insufficiently active in reversing them, while we paid taxes that supported those policies. To recognize that responsibility is a necessary first step toward a healthier world for our grandchildren. Whether you take that step is obviously your choice, but your responsibility is inescapable.

There is a difference between guilt and responsibility. Feeling guilty about past failures is all too likely to be a substitute for changing the thinking and behavior that produced those failures. The point here is that responsibility must now be accepted and acknowledged if the choice is Option A.

Recommendation #2: *International law must be recognized as necessary framework for the recovery of Iraq.* International law is a *sine qua non* for the recovery and reconstruction of Iraq, and for global security. The violations and subversion of international law by the previous government of Iraq and by the international community are responsible for the devastation of Iraq and for endangering peace and security in the global
community. Reliable progress in reducing the dangers globally and in the reconstruction and recovery of Iraq can be achieved only to the extent that the spirit, purposes, and provisions of international law are implemented and followed in the process.

The invasion and occupation of Iraq are major violations of international law and major threats to our future security. The United States and all others involved in the occupation of Iraq must comply fully with the requirements of international law governing that occupation, and rapidly bring the occupation to an end.

Recommendation #3: The foreign military forces occupying Iraq must be withdrawn expeditiously and foreign military bases closed. We emphasized the necessity of a timetable for expeditious withdrawal of foreign military forces from Iraq in the working paper posted in November 2004. It is commendable that President Obama has recognized this necessity, even though the date set as endpoint (December 31, 2011) is years later than it should have been. Setting a timetable is not the same as actually withdrawing the troops and closing the foreign military bases. Watch carefully for what ensues.

Recommendation #4: Sovereignty and self-determination are inalienable rights of the people of Iraq; recognition of that right must become definitive for the policies of all governments. Foreign governments, particularly the government of the United States, must abandon all efforts to delay, manipulate, or dilute the practice of those rights by the people of Iraq.

With the exposure of false pretexts for the invasion and occupation of Iraq, some observers have attempted to justify the invasion and occupation by suggesting that the incursions may promote democracy and human rights in Iraq. But promoting democracy and human rights in Iraq cannot justify policies that violated the most fundamental provisions of international law, extinguished hundreds
of thousands of lives, and wasted incalculable human potential among Iraqis, losses that can never be recovered or adequately measured. The disaster in Iraq is a powerful illustration of the reasoning behind Louis Henkin’s point (see chapter 4) that advances in human rights must take place within the legal constraints of the UN Charter. Sweeping aside the constraints imposed by the UN Charter makes a rule of law impossible and thus renders advances in human rights transient and illusory.

Recommendation #5: The resources of Iraq must be used in accord with international human rights law, for the benefit of the people of Iraq. The resources of Iraq belong to the people of Iraq. Those resources must be used in accord with the Charter for Economic Rights and Duties of States and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. The invasion and occupation of Iraq are illegal, and any disposition of Iraqi resources arising in the context of the invasion and occupation should be kept subject to independent legal review. It is the responsibility of all governments and institutions to uphold the principles set forth in the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States. It is the responsibility of citizens to be aware of these requirements and to promote compliance with them.

Recommendation #6: All competent governments and international organizations must play a sustained and effective supporting role in the reconstruction of Iraq and facilitate interactions involving civil society in Iraq and in the international community.

Reparations for the devastation of Iraq — including the effects of economic sanctions, political isolation, and illegal acts of war against Iraq — are the particular responsibility of those governments and institutions in the international community that perpetrated and supported the sanctions and the unlawful use of force. These reparative resources must be placed under control of Iraqi institutions and an Iraqi civil society working for a strong,
independent, and inclusive Iraq, with its internal and external affairs guided by basic precepts of international law and free of interference from foreign powers. For more than ten years after its invasion of Kuwait, Iraq was illegally deprived of access to its own resources and repeatedly subjected to unjustifiable military assaults. Responsibility for restoration to Iraq of lost resources rests with the perpetrators of that injustice.

Recommendation #7: There must be a rapid devolution of power to Iraqi institutions.

Those institutions should represent all parts of Iraqi society, without prejudice against previous affiliations with the former government of Iraq, the occupying powers, or others. Proxy institutions of governance and manipulative control of Iraqi institutions and resources by the very governments responsible for the ravaging of Iraq are illegitimate. Instead, resources must be placed in the hands of Iraqi institutions, including Iraqi civil society and its non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It is essential to understand that such organizations, in collaboration with international NGOs and civil society, have long been at work in the process of healing the damage to Iraq inflicted by violence and lawlessness. It is Iraqi civil society and NGOs that represent the core of integrity and experience necessary for an effective and legitimate process of recovery of the country. Foreign governments have neither the experience nor the credibility to direct this process; their role must be to support the process driven by civil society in Iraq and in the international community.

Recommendation #8: The people of Iraq are responsible for establishing and implementing the process of reconciliation and inclusive governance.

All parts of Iraqi society face the urgent necessity to establish an explicit process of reconciliation and governance, and to implement the process without delay. Martin Luther King Jr.’s
observation, “We must learn to live together as brothers, or perish together as fools,” applies at the national and international levels. Both the international aggression of the Iraqi government under Saddam Hussein and the violent factionalism within Iraq have played major roles in the devastation of Iraqi society.

Internal factionalism in Iraq was responsible for direct self-destruction and waste of Iraq’s human and natural resources, and it also aided and abetted the violence of foreign powers directed against Iraq. The people of Iraq must end their factionalism and their support for international aggression, either by Iraq against other countries or by other countries against Iraq. Otherwise their process of self-destruction will continue, regardless of any action or inaction on the part of the international community. A house divided against itself cannot stand.

Factionalism in Iraq has been exacerbated by the presence of a foreign occupation. Factional distrust and conflict will worsen and its resolution will be made more difficult to the extent that occupation is prolonged. An occupied and divided country is at an extreme disadvantage in generating the basis for self-respect, independence, and social cohesion. To develop a program of independence and national unity, it is essential that all parts of Iraqi society work together in civic institutions and throughout the structures of governance. Education, the police and armed forces, judiciary bodies, and all levels of government must have effective participation from all parts of Iraqi society and must be independent of foreign influences that tend to divide the country or marginalize parts of Iraq’s population. Exclusion of individuals and groups based on previous affiliation with the Ba’ath party or on other political or ethnic grounds will perpetuate the division of the country and vitiate efforts at reconstruction and recovery. It is of utmost importance that women’s rights and empowerment, in which Iraq had played a leading role in the Middle East, recover their pace of progress and governmental support.
The Case of Iraq

Recommendation #9: The participation of UN or other peacekeeping forces must be contingent upon request from legitimate Iraqi authorities.

After devolution of full governing authority to Iraq, and at the discretion of the legitimate Iraqi authorities, UN or other international peacekeeping forces may have a legitimate and useful role to play in maintaining peace and security in Iraq. No such legitimacy can pertain to UN or other military forces deployed in Iraq under the aegis of the current illegal occupation.

Recommendation #10: Governments of states in the region, including the government of Iraq, must conclude and implement regional agreements on non-aggression, disarmament, and cooperation.

Acts of aggression in the Middle East have had colossally destructive consequences, including Iraq’s acts of aggression against Iran and Kuwait, the U.S.-UK aggression against Iraq, and other acts of aggression perpetrated or supported by governments in the region.

International law is concerned not only with the international use of force but also with international threats. For example, the hypothetical weapons of mass destruction in Iraq were used as a reason for UN actions against Iraq after 1990. Iraq had sought to acquire weapons of mass destruction prior to 1990, but these policies were pursued in part because of perceived threats from an armed insurgency in northern Iraq and from hostile states in the region. The concept that violence begets violence can be extended to recognize that international threats and hostility tend to be self-perpetuating and mutually destructive to all parties in the process, and are a threat to the global community.

For this and other reasons, civil society throughout the world has a legitimate concern with peace in the Middle East. Any government that threatens other governments thereby becomes a threat to the global community. There are numerous obstacles
to peace and stability in the Middle East. Governments in the region bear the primary responsibility for solving the problems and moving past the obstacles. Other governments with regional influence are responsible for supporting regional processes toward binding agreements on non-aggression, disarmament, and cooperation.

Recommendation #11: Civil society throughout the world, particularly in Western democracies, is responsible for bringing policies and practices of their governments into compliance with international law and for participating in the recovery of Iraq and restoration of dynamic and constructive interactions between Iraqi civil society and the international community.

Citizens in all democratic societies, working through organizations of civil society, are responsible for bringing their government’s policies into compliance with international law and for promoting reconciliation, and cultural and social interactions, with civil society in Iraq.

A government that acts as a tyrant in its external affairs thereby jeopardizes its legitimacy. If that government is a democracy, meaning that the government’s foreign policy expresses the will of the people of that state, then the citizens of that country are responsible for the external tyranny and for the dubious legitimacy of their government. This relationship between a tyrannical foreign policy and the conditions of democracy is well expressed by Austrian jurist Hans Köchler:

"On the one hand, democracy in foreign policy grants every citizen the right to influence the international relations of [his/her] state (internal aspect). On the other hand, it means that a specific state bases its relations to other states on the principles of democracy (external aspect). Both aspects are mutually entwined. Any democracy that acts as a dictatorship externally (even though its dictatorial..."
The Case of Iraq

foreign policy may internally be sanctified by its citizens) is a contradiction in terms. Such citizens must not claim to be credible in their so-called democratic activities. (Köchler 1995, 20)

Democracy is both a right and a responsibility for citizens. John Ralston Saul makes the following point in reference to the execution of someone convicted of a serious crime — his principle applies even more forcefully in foreign policy, in which the act of a government affects thousands of people who have been convicted of no crime whatever:

Once you reach the democratic idea of legitimacy rooted in the citizenry, an execution implies that the populace not only consents, but also assumes responsibility for the decision. You, as a citizen, are no less directly responsible than a president or a judge or the jury on which you do not personally sit.

Democratic consent means that you would be prepared personally to act as executioner. Execution is not an abstract theory. It is an existential act. To be for the death penalty is to consider the convicted one by one and answer affirmatively the question: Am I personally prepared to kill that man? Consciously or unconsciously that final level of responsibility explains why Western democracies, with one exception, have ended the practice. The citizenry found themselves face to face with the combination of an ethical reality and their personal responsibility and decided that legal murder was ethically unacceptable, whatever the conditions. (2001, 89)

By these standards, citizens of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and other U.S. allies are responsible for their government's role in the destruction of Iraq. When Madeleine
The abc's of Human Survival

Albright expressed her opinion on the television show *60 Minutes* (May 12, 1996) that the deaths of about half a million children in Iraq, related to economic sanctions on that country, had been “worth it,” she indicated at once the tyranny of U.S. foreign policy, the questionable legitimacy of the government of the United States, and the failure of responsible citizenship in North America.

There had by that time been countless citizens of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and other countries who had made a sustained effort to bring their government’s policy into compliance with law and to halt the effects of economic sanctions on the people of Iraq. The efforts of these individuals and organizations represent the responsible practice of democracy. These efforts ultimately failed because they were not adequately supported by other citizens and were effectively ignored by the government. Democracy and international law are interdependent; democracy that fails to support international law is on the road to self-destruction.

With the disaster in Iraq as a sign of grave and universal danger to human security in the decades ahead, it is now imperative that citizens and civil society in Western democracies act responsibly and in cooperation with the people of Iraq to confront that danger: to bring the policies and practices of Western governments into compliance with international law, to initiate and develop dynamic and constructive interactions with civil society in Iraq, and to ensure international respect for the rights of the people of Iraq.

Recommendation #12: *It is the responsibility of civil society and of governments to facilitate reintegration of war resisters into civilian life, to abandon all retribution for resistance to the war, and to ameliorate the physical and psychological damage to all soldiers, former soldiers, and civilians affected by the U.S.-UK war on Iraq.*

For the government of Canada, this means welcoming and
The Case of Iraq

providing haven for U.S. war resisters — U.S. military personnel who have come to Canada because of their refusal to participate, or participate further, in the illegal war in Iraq — until the U.S. government has lived up to its own responsibility on this issue. The Canadian government’s position on war resisters will be one important indicator of its position on international law, and of its contribution to the future of human security.

Conclusion

The catastrophe in Iraq is a rich source for lessons of history. If we fail to learn the lessons of history, we will likely repeat them. To be effective in prevention, however, the lessons must be learned within the paradigm — the conceptual framework — that serves the purpose of prevention. That will require the paradigm shift referred to in this book.

Using the new paradigm as a frame of reference, I have here provided only a small part of the lessons we can learn from the case of Iraq. Contrary to what we have been told, responsibility for the catastrophe was never restricted to the government of Iraq under Saddam Hussein.

Militant nationalist governments have provided evidence again and again of their threat to the global community and to the chances of human survival. If the threat is recognized only as coming from a particular government and not from militant nationalism itself, then we have failed to learn the lesson and we will have to repeat it until we get it right, or until we perish as fools.

Governments, particularly those of militarily powerful states, are rooted in the old and self-destructive paradigm of militant nationalism. Those who choose to occupy political office have only a limited capacity to uproot the traditions, shift the paradigm, and change the course of history. Nonetheless, they do have a chance to move policies and practices toward compliance with international law and to promote structures that strengthen democratic process

[179]
The *abc's* of Human Survival

— essentially structures that empower civil society. To the extent that political leaders make this effort, they should be supported by civil society. To the extent they fail, civil society should persuade them to make the effort.

Civil society has become the Option A leader in world affairs. By civil society I mean those individuals and organizations that are identifying the challenges to a healthy global community and finding life-affirming ways to meet those challenges within the framework of international law. Because they are far less hobbled by the old paradigm, civil society has been able to identify problems and constructive solutions with a speed and adaptive intelligence that governments cannot match. At present, civil society represents far too small a portion of the citizenry in Western democracies.

The responsibility rests not just with government and cannot be shouldered just by civil society. The responsibility belongs to all of us. Cultural institutions — schools and universities, scholars, the media — share in the responsibility. Economic institutions also have a responsibility to bring their practices into accord with the requirements of international human rights law. Most importantly, and by definition, citizens in a democracy are responsible for the policies and practices of their government. These are terms of responsible discourse on world affairs for the foreseeable future.