The Nation as a Person metaphor is pervasive, powerful, and part of an elaborate metaphor system. It is part of an international community metaphor in which there are friendly nations, hostile nations, rogue states, and so on. This metaphor comes with a notion of the national interest: Just as it is in the interest of a person to be healthy and strong, so it is in the interest of a nation-person to be economically healthy and militarily strong. That is what is meant by the "national interest."

In the international community, peopled by nation-persons, there are nation-adults and nation-children, with maturity metaphorically understood as industrialization. The children are the "developing" nations of the third world, in the process of industrializing, who need to be taught how to develop properly and must be disciplined (say, by the International Monetary Fund) when they fail to follow instructions. "Backward" nations are those that are "underdeveloped." Iraq, despite being the cradle of civilization, is seen via this metaphor as a kind of defiant, armed teenage hoodlum who refuses to abide by the rules and must be taught a lesson.

The international relations community adds to the Nation as a Person metaphor what is called the rational actor model. The idea here is that it is irrational to act against your interests, and that nations act as if they were rational actors—individual people trying to maximize their gains and assets and minimize their costs and losses. In the Gulf War, the metaphor was applied so that a country's "assets" included its soldiers, matériel, and money. Since the United States lost few of those "assets" in the Gulf War, the war was reported, just afterward in the *New York Times* business section, as having been a "bargain." Because Iraqi civilians were not our assets they could not be counted among the "losses," and so there was no careful public accounting of civilian lives lost, people maimed, and children starved or made seriously ill by the war or the sanctions that followed it. Estimates vary from half a million to a million or more. However, public relations was seen to be a US asset: Excessive slaughter reported in the press would be bad PR, a possible loss. These metaphors are with us again. A short war with few US casualties would minimize costs. But the longer it goes on, the more Iraqi resistance and the more US casualties, the less the United States would