

appear invulnerable and the more the war would appear as a war against the Iraqi people. That would be a high “cost.”

According to the rational actor model, countries act naturally in their own best interests—preserving their assets, that is, their own populations, their infrastructures, their wealth, their weaponry, and so on. That is what the United States did in the Gulf War and what it is doing now. But Saddam Hussein, in the Gulf War, did not fit our government’s rational actor model. He had goals like preserving his power in Iraq and being an Arab hero just for standing up to the Great Satan. Though such goals might have their own rationality, they are “irrational” from the model’s perspective.

One of the most frequent uses of the Nation as a Person metaphor comes in the almost daily attempts to justify the war metaphorically as a “just war.” The basic idea of a just war uses the Nation as a Person metaphor, plus two narratives that have the structure of classical fairy tales: the self-defense story and the rescue story.

In each story there is a hero, a crime, a victim, and a villain. In the self-defense story the hero and the victim are the same. In both stories the villain is inherently evil and irrational: The hero can’t reason with the villain; he has to fight him and defeat or kill him. In both, the victim must be innocent and beyond reproach. In both, there is an initial crime by the villain, and the hero balances the moral books by defeating him. If all the parties are nation-persons, then self-defense and rescue stories become forms of a just war for the hero-nation.

In the Gulf War, George H. W. Bush tried out a self-defense story: Saddam was “threatening our oil lifeline.” The American people didn’t buy it. Then he found a winning story, a rescue story: the “rape” of Kuwait. It sold well, and is still the most popular account of that war.

In the Iraq War, George W. Bush is pushing different versions of the same two story types, and this explains a great deal of what is going on in the American press and in speeches by Bush and Powell. If they can show that Saddam Hussein equals Al-Qaeda—that he is helping or harboring Al-Qaeda—then they can make a case for the self-defense scenario, and hence for a just war. Or if weapons of mass destruction ready to be deployed are found,