Rethinking the War against Iraq

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Abstract: A conventional view of contemporary Iraq suggests that there were two short wars in 1991 and 2003 between Iraq and a US led cohort of countries separated by an interval of relative peace. This article proposes an alternate view, arguing that the war against Iraq was one continuous war that began in 1991 and ended in 2003. An expanded concept of violence bridging two divergent literatures—the anthropology of war and the ethnography of violence—is used as a lens to see the war with greater definition. The concept of violence put forward identifies the substance of war and is comprised of three conceptual constellations: direct/physical violence, structural/economic violence and cultural/symbolic violence. Each conceptual constellation is illustrated with examples from the war against Iraq drawn from my experience of living in the country and extensive historical research.

Keywords: violence, war, Iraq, theory, conflict, Middle East

Résumé : Une vision conventionnelle de l'Iraq contemporaine suggère qu'il y a eu, entre l'Iraq et une cohorte de pays menée par les États-Unis, deux courtes guerres en 1991 et en 2003, entrecoupées d'une période de paix relative. Le présent article propose une vision voulant que la guerre contre l'Iraq représente, en fait, une seule et même guerre qui a commencé en 1991 et pris fin en 2003. Une conception élargie de la violence reliant deux corpus divergents – la littérature sur l'anthropologie de la guerre et l'ethnographie de la violence – sert ici de lentille afin d'observer la guerre avec plus de précision. Cette conception de la violence identifie les fondements de la guerre et se décline en trois constellations conceptuelles : la violence directe/physique, la violence structurelle/économique et la violence culturelle/symbolique. Chacune de ces constellations conceptuelles est illustrée par des exemples puisés à même mon expérience alors que je vivais en Iraq ou issus de recherches historiques approfondies.

Mots-clés : violence, guerre, Iraq, conflit, Moyen-Orient

Introduction

A question that had dogged me for years prior to living in Iraq in 2000 came into sharp focus while sitting in the shade of a tree in the courtyard of the Al-Hamra Hotel, located in a suburb of Baghdad.[1] According to mainstream public discourse in Canada, and in places where I travelled in the United States in the years following my first two visits to Iraq in 1991, the country was no longer experiencing war. "The Gulf War," according to this discourse, had ended in 1991. Yet in the years following 1991 everything I knew about the unfolding situation in Iraq suggested neither resolution nor a return to normalcy. While living in Iraq nine years later, I saw and experienced evidence of a country under severe duress. The continuing economic, social and physical devastation of the country, the air raid sirens and the sound of bombs exploding that I heard in the north and south of Iraq, all spoke to a violence that smacked of war. I was disturbed by the disjuncture between my own observations, experiences and perceptions—gained by years of critically reading reports generated by observers and researchers on the ground, as well as by speaking with a constant stream of people returning from the region—and the mainstream understanding of "the Gulf War" as a past event. Sitting in Baghdad under the tree at the Al-Hamra Hotel, I asked: "Why did we stop calling this a war?"

Upon returning to Canada in May 2001, I reread Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989). In its opening pages he tells the story of how he searched sociological literature in vain for anything that would elucidate the Holocaust, which had for him a deeply personal significance. He writes:

> Such sociological studies as have been completed so far show beyond reasonable doubt that the Holocaust has more to say about the state of sociology than sociology in its present shape is able to add to our knowledge of the Holocaust. This alarming fact has not yet been

> faced (much less responded to) by the sociologists. (Bauman 1989: 3)

While I do not equate the Holocaust with the tragedy of the war against Iraq, this passage did strike a chord with me. First, in a similar vein I am concerned to understand the war against Iraq—not the highly manufactured event that people call "the Gulf War" or later "the Iraq War"; but rather, the war that I came to know over the course of a decade and a half of direct involvement with it.

Secondly, although I found some anthropological literature useful in my efforts to understand the war against Iraq (Bringa 1995; Nordstrom 1997; Nordstrom 2004b; Scheper-Hughes 1992; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004) overall, the *anthropology of war* contributed very little to my effort. "With a few notable exceptions," one anthropologist observes in a review of anthropology and war, "anthropologists have barely studied modern wars, and when modern war is treated as a subject, it is the why behind the fighting and the aftermath of it—not the how or the process—that receives most attention" (Simons 1999: 74). It is notable that this same reviewer throughout her paper draws attention to numerous wars in the decade prior to her article, but the war against Iraq in any form is barely mentioned in passing (1999: 83n9, 84). Indeed, the war against Iraq is rarely mentioned, let alone analyzed; an oversight which can be seen in numerous collections of essays and review articles published by anthropologists on the subject of war and violence between 1990 and 2003 (e.g., Ferguson 2003b; Nordstrom and Robben 1995; Schmidt and Schröder 2001; Stewart and Strathern 2002). A few anthropologists have addressed this startling lacuna, although they have always framed it with other concerns such as racism, globalization, environmental degradation or "the war against terror," and never with attention to definitional and theoretical problems raised by the war against Iraq as a subject itself (Aziz 1997; Feldman 1994; González 2004; Nordstrom 2004a). Nordstrom identifies the core problem, however, when she observes:

> Being in the USA and trying to understand the [spring 2003] war was perplexing: I could not find the war. I don't mean the constant barrage of news coverage on "the war," the political mud-slinging among people of opposing views, or the video clips of military advancements. I mean the way war smells, feels, tastes, looks, and acts. (Nordstrom 2004a: 247)

Perhaps at this juncture the war against Iraq has more to say about anthropology than anthropology has to say about it?

Like Bauman, I have been "alarmed" by the lack of analytical discourse that has characterized the response of anthropologists to a major world event. How is it possible to reframe the question of Iraq so that the discipline centrally concerned with the study of *anthropos* can address one of the most significant wars since World War II?

My overall objective in this essay is to demarcate the war against Iraq. No existing anthropological model accommodates my main thesis that there was a single ongoing war waged against Iraq from 1991 to 2003. It is vitally important to have a model which allows us to understand how war was waged there continuously for over a decade. My purpose is to establish an alternative set of theoretical and practical questions that will enable us to see the war against Iraq from a different vantage point. I suggest that we start our analysis of war with the concept of "violence" for, although it is a contested concept, it provides multiple lenses through which to *see* the war against Iraq. This essay develops three conceptual constellations—physical/direct violence, economic/structural violence and symbolic/cultural violence—to elucidate the war. Each conceptual constellation is illustrated with examples from my experience of the war against Iraq and extensive historical research. I close the essay by asking, "Why does it matter?"

Reframing the Question

Prior to 1990, Iraq was on the periphery of most people's vision, at least in North America. If known at all, it was commonly known as the country that was at war with the then "evil" Iranian government. The 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War is considered to be amongst the most significant inter-state wars in the latter part of the 20th century (Chubin and Tripp 1988; Hiro 1989; Pelletiere 1992; Workman 1994). With its attempt to exert control over Kuwait in 1990, Iraq was catapulted into the centre of both controversy and attention on the world stage. The attention, like the controversy, ebbed and flowed over the next decade and a half. At the time of doing final revisions for this essay, there is no indication that the interest will fade in the near future.

Four elements comprise a mainstream conventional view of the war against Iraq:

1. There is an unquestioned belief that what has been labelled "the Gulf War " and "the Iraq War" captures both symbolically and historically the totality of an event understood to be two short wars between "Iraq" (a highly condensed and reified symbol) and an "Allied Coalition," or "Coalition of the Willing" (both politically motivated constructions that need to be deconstructed).

2. The central academic debate arising from "the Gulf War," bolstered by a vast literature (see Arnove 2000; Cordesman 1999; Cordesman and Hashim 1997; Cortright and Lopez 1995; Cortright and Lopez 2000; Doxey 1997; Graham-Brown 1999), concerns the political utility and moral defensibility of economic sanctions as a tool for making peace.
3. Oil and the desire to control it is the primary driving force behind the war against Iraq.
4. An academic discourse primarily informed by the language of political science and strategic studies (including military history) provides an adequate paradigm for understanding "the Gulf War" and "the Iraq War."[2]

These four elements reinforce the perception of a "received wisdom," namely, that these were temporally "limited wars" separated by an extended interval of sanctions, and with minimal "collateral damage." In my experience and analysis this view serves to veil the actual lived experience of men, women and children in Iraq.

In an already large (and repetitive) literature on the subject of Iraq[3] there are only a few writers who make reference to the idea that the war against Iraq did not end in 1991. Unfortunately none of them provides a justification for their view, nor do they systematically apply it to the problem, or develop the implications of it. Both Naseer Aruri (2003) and Christopher Hitchens (2003), for example, assume this argument in general but do not provide a clear rationale and analysis for their use of it. In another example Arundhati Roy explicitly says that "what many do not know is that the war did not end [in 1991]" (Roy 2003: 65). Within the same paragraph she then writes about "the decade of economic sanctions that followed the war [*sic*]," (ibid.) which illustrates how difficult it is to consistently write against the conventional view. Perhaps the most promising of these examples is the work of the Research Unit on Political Economy where the idea is introduced but limited to the economic dimension (Research Unit for Political Economy 2003). These few examples indicate that there are others who see a problem with the conventional conceptualization of what has happened in Iraq. This essay provides a theoretical justification for the argument that the war against Iraq began in 1991 and ended in 2003.

In his pithy analysis of training for conflict transformation across cultures, John Paul Lederach suggests that a critical examination of "whose knowledge, under what package, delivered through what mechanism, and received by what populations are all legitimate and necessary questions for investigation and study" (Lederach 1995: 6). Following his suggestion, I propose that the most effective way to engage the question of Iraq is to move beyond a discourse rooted in political science and military history, that is for the most part still mired in the idea of the sovereign state, to an examination of the local consequences and the social construction of war. To restate the overall purpose in the present essay, my intent is to introduce an informed account of the war against Iraq that has intellectual integrity grounded in experience. It takes as its point of departure the axiom that war is a subset of violence.

The Problem of Violence and War in Anthropology

The subject of war has been a growth industry in anthropology[4] particularly since the initial buildup to the war against Iraq in the late 1980s.[5] A significant benchmark was established when Brian Ferguson and Leslie Farragher published a thorough bibliography of work related to the anthropology of conflict, violence and war (Ferguson and Farragher 1988). Several collections of essays helped to establish the parameters of the subject into the mid-1990s (Ferguson 1984b; Ferguson 1989; Ferguson and Whitehead 1992; Nordstrom and Martin 1992b; Nordstrom and Robben 1995; Reyna and Downs 1994; Sponsel and Gregor 1994; Warren 1993). One of the significant debates that emerged in that literature—I shall return to one subtle effort to address it presently—was found in the differing approaches of an etic, "materialist" view of war (represented by Ferguson 1995a; Ferguson 1995b; Ferguson 2000; Ferguson 2001; Ferguson 2003b) and an emic, "postmodernist" view of violence (represented by Nordstrom 1997; Nordstrom 2004b; Nordstrom and Martin 1992b; Robben and Nordstrom 1995). In brief, what the cultural materialist perspective takes as absolutely essential—scientific rigour, theoretical precision and methodological uniformity (Murphy and Margolis 1995)—the postmodernist view of violence takes as both dangerous and misguided (Nordstrom and Martin 1992b; Nordstrom and Robben 1995).

By the latter part of the 1990s and into the new century those disagreements began to give way to attempts to find more common ground where anthropologists can work collegially on this most pressing of human problems. A significant number of scholars began to bridge the gap with works that tried to take into account a multitude of variables and processes of war and violence (Aijmer and Abbink 2000; Daniel 1996; Ferguson 2003a; Nordstrom 1997; Nordstrom 2004b; Scheper-Hughes 2002; Schmidt and Schröder 2001; Shapiro 1997; Stewart and Strathern 2002). At the same time there was a broadening of the subject to focus on particular forms of mass violence involving ethnicity and identity, genocide, terror, and "suffering"

as an overarching category (Das et al. 2000; Eller 1999; Hinton 2002; Kelly 2000; Kleinman, et al. 1997; Mahmood 2000; Sluka 2000). These efforts run parallel to a burgeoning interest in understanding the transforming dynamics of war and violence in a world characterized by global processes, as evidenced by an expanding catalogue of works on the subject from across the political and disciplinary spectrum (Bertell 2000; Duffield 2000; Enloe 1993; Fisk and Schellenberg 2000; Gilligan 1996; Gray 1997; Homer-Dixon 1999; Ignatieff 2000; Kaldor 1999; Keane 1996; Lutz and Nonini 1999; Maalouf 2000; Norman 1995). This essay participates in the effort to develop models through which we can better grasp the complexities and subtleties of the violence and war that we anthropologists experience and study in a wide variety of settings.

One of the central problems which arises from this literature at a theoretical level and which forms the backdrop for my analysis is the contested nature of the role of "experience" in the study of violence and war. A great deal hangs on this question within the discipline as a whole—professional careers, research dollars and political influence, being a few examples—even if the divide is less sharp than it appears at first blush. Two examples serve to highlight the problem.

In an essay that attempts to bridge some of the differences that appear in the violence and war literature, Schröder and Schmidt (2001: 17) suggest that there are three broad theoretical perspectives currently being used to study the subject.

1. The *operational* approach "links violence to general properties of human nature and rationality and to general concepts of social adaptation to material conditions. It aims to explain violent action by comparing structural conditions as causes affecting specific historical conditions" (ibid.: 17).

2. The *cognitive* approach "portrays violence as first of all culturally constructed, as a representation of cultural values, a fact that accounts for its efficacy on both the discursive and the practical level. Thus, violence is seen as contingent on its cultural meaning and its form of representation. It should be approached with careful attention to the socio-cultural specificity of the historical context" (ibid.: 17).

3. The *experiential* approach, for Schröder and Schmidt "focuses on the subjective qualities of violence. It views violence as something which has a basic impact on life that can only be grasped through its reflections in individual experience. Violence, here, is highly contingent on individual subjectivities, and its meaning unfolds mainly through the individual's perception of a violent situation" (ibid.: 17). They conclude their overview of these three theoretical views with the suggestion that their "degree of compatibility...decreases from the first to the third" (ibid.: 17) of these perspectives:

> While the operational perspective looks for parameters transcending cultural specificity and the boundedness of violent events in time, space and society, the cognitive perspective derives its parameters from the social construction of the world by a collectivity bounded in time and space—which, after all, contains elements well suited for comparison. The experimental [*sic*][6] perspective tends to neglect cultural generality in favour of pure fragmented subjectivity....[T]he extreme proponents of this post-modernist view subscribe to a randomising view of violent events that negate the possibility and usefulness of anthropological comparison. (Schröder and Schmidt 2001: 17-18)

Although Schröder and Schmidt say in passing that all three of these perspectives are necessary to gain a full picture of violence and war, it is clear that when push comes to shove "an anthropological approach should [*sic*] adopt an analytical, comparative perspective in order to contribute to the understanding and explanation of violence" (2001: 18). The not-so-subtle criticism embedded here is that the experiential perspective, characterized as "fragmented subjectivity" generating a "randomising view of violent events," has little to contribute to the understanding of violence and war because it has "abandoned an analytical approach in favour of a subjectivist focus on the impact violence has on the everyday life of individuals (including the researchers themselves)" (2001: 7). Moreover, this perspective may "interfere [*sic*] with any effort to view one specific violent confrontation from a historical or comparative perspective" (2001: 7). Those who hold to what has here been called an experiential "postmodern" view, not surprisingly, have a different view of the matter.[7]

"Violence," according to Nordstrom and Martin, "is not a socioculturally fragmented phenomenon that occurs 'outside' the arena of everyday life for those affected" (Nordstrom and Martin 1992a: 13-14). If we are to understand it, then it is "to people themselves, to the social dynamics and cultural phenomena that inform them, that we must turn" (ibid.). They recognize that this "stands at odds with traditional studies of sociopolitical violence that have long focussed on the formal institutions credited with defining, waging, and resolving aggression: political, (para)military, security, and legal" (ibid.). Within those formal institutions "warfare is viewed as a contest between opponents who consciously, if not rationally, com-

pete for control of resources, employ strategies and develop weapon systems" (Nordstrom and Martin 1992a: 14). In a core passage they explain that:

> It is not only naïve to assume that conflict takes place within an arena demarcated by the formal institutions designated as responsible for waging and controlling aggression. It is dangerous. On average, 90 percent of all war-related deaths now occur among civilian populations. What ethnographic voice conveys the social reality of these unarmed victims of aggression...if researchers focus on the politicomilitary systems whose members may declare war, but certainly do not bear the brunt of it? Worse, who gives resonance to those repressed, tortured, and disappeared in undeclared wars? Violence starts and stops with people that constitute a society; it takes place in society and as a social reality; it is a product and a manifestation of culture. Violence is not inherent to power, to politics, or to human nature. The only biological reality of violence is that wounds bleed and people die. (Nordstrom and Martin 1992a: 14)

In contrast to Schröder and Schmidt's suggestion that this view has "abandoned" an analytical approach, these scholars argue that an experiential approach is the only way to arrive at a theoretically valid model. In her studies of Mozambique, Nordstrom illustrates that "distance from the enactment of violence has a good deal to do with the way we theorize about it. The space between violence and theory has enabled researchers to ascribe a reasonableness to warfare that belies the civilian experience" (Nordstrom and Martin 1992a: 13). Nordstrom and Martin propose that the direction of their work, and that of their colleagues, represents, in fact, "an initial step in designating theoretical frameworks for studying violence that elucidate field realities that enhance knowledge of conflict processes and human(e) dynamics with a more critical and global perspective" (1992a: 15).

While I concur with Schröder and Schmidt that a social constructionist (cognitive) view is to a greater or lesser extent useful to both a materialist (operational) perspective and a postmodern (experiential) perspective, the weight of the argument goes against their conclusion that the social constructionist view better aligns itself with the materialist perspective. Due to a common interest in an elicitive methodology that operates within a socially constructed field reality, the social constructionist theoretical perspective actually aligns itself better with an experiential approach to violence and war. In this paper, my theoretical contribution is to integrate "experience" into a model (a concern common to all of these perspectives) that can potentially be used in a comparative fashion.

The result of my theoretical exploration leads me to look at the relationship of war and violence. In the next section I use an expanded concept of violence as *a lens through which to see war.* Those who provide leadership and justification for war-making regularly avoid the subject of violence, preferring to talk about things like political ends (such as security concerns), weapon systems and "collateral damage." Using violence itself as a lens, the central reality of war becomes unavoidable. Through this *lens,* then, we can see war from the perspective of people who are directly affected in their day-to-day lives. The concern to *see* war is captured by Brian Fawcett, who 20 years ago in his study of Cambodia, said, "The ugly truths of our time are neither dark nor silent" (1986: 14). He goes on to say that they "have been rendered opaque by full-frequency light that admits neither definition nor shadows, and they are protected from the voices of the suffering and the disaffected by an accompanying wall of white noise" (ibid.: 14). In what follows I propose a model that will allow us to set the contrast knob to produce more definition and less white noise. It will serve to highlight the multifaceted impacts of war on those who have lived with it in Iraq for a very long time.

Bridging Violence and War with Conceptual Constellations

As a starting point for this discussion, I accept widely held base definitions of both war and violence. A standard textbook definition of war—"War is large-scale violent conflict between organized groups that are governments or that aim to establish governments" (Glossop 1994: 9)—- sufficiently delineates this human activity from other group activities to make it a viable base from which to work (for an early but still useful overview, see van der Dennen 1981). The same is true of violence. A benchmark was reached recently when the World Health Organization (WHO) identified violence as a global health problem. They define violence as the "intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (Krug et al. 2002: 5). This serves as a solid base definition. I understand both of these descriptions as *initial* reference points for our study, i.e., they are not "theoretical models"; but rather, *definitions* with which to work as we move towards explanatory models.

Putting these two definitions side-by-side in the same paragraph serves to highlight the core problem of the relationship between war and violence. What is the connection between these two concepts, both of which try to

capture field realities? Does it matter theoretically that all war is violent, but not all violence is war? While the movement in anthropology to focus on violence as an overarching concept is appropriate (Aijmer and Abbink 2000; Schmidt and Schröder 2001; Stewart and Strathern 2002), it is important that an equally clear focus on war as a concept that reflects a particular slice of human life is not sacrificed. There are two reasons for my concern. First, as omnipresent as violence is in both North America and globally, as a word/concept/symbol it carries significantly different (not worse or better) emotive connotations from the word/concept/symbol war. Elizabeth Colson correctly identifies "war" as a key symbol (à la Ortner 1973) in North American culture (Colson 1992: 281). Second, in my experience of war and in my conversations with those who have lived with it on a daily basis in Iraq, the word "war" resonates with interlocutors in ways different from "violence." To ask how they are different and interconnected moves us to a more nuanced and global understanding of violence and a more particular and meaningful understanding of war.

The following section outlines an *expanded* concept of violence consisting of three conceptual constellations. Conceptual constellations are clusters of sufficiently similar juxtaposed ideas that when taken together create what anthropologist Richard Preston calls a "feeling-tone" that greatly enhances our perception without sacrificing too much precision of definition.[8] The cluster of ideas that are juxtaposed in this section come from Pierre Bourdieu and Johan Galtung (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu 1990 (1983); Bourdieu 1994 (1977); Galtung 1969; Galtung 1990; Galtung 1996). The three constellations include: direct/physical violence, structural/economic violence and cultural/symbolic violence. When Bourdieu and Galtung developed their ideas it appears that they did not intend to use them as lenses to understand war.[9] Bourdieu tends to emphasize processes of domination and hegemonic power and Galtung places greater emphasis on structures and their role in maintaining order. For Bourdieu, a significant part of the point is to explain unequal distribution of capital; while Galtung is intent on understanding the deep structure of peace. To understand the war against Iraq both of their violence models are applicable. Together they constitute a constellation of ideas that embody significant explanatory power. My purpose in bringing them together is not to analyze each with the intent of creating a grand synthesis, but rather, to allow them to interact with each other to generate a fresh way of seeing war.

There are two reasons to expand the definition of violence. First, people who experience suffering at the hands of "invisible forces" understand that invisible force to be violence and name it as such (cf. Nordstrom 2004b: 64). In this I concur with Martin and Nordstrom's observation that expanded definitions of violence "have been useful in giving a voice to systems of violence no less powerful by virtue of their intangibility" (Nordstrom and Martin 1992a: 8). Secondly, a narrow understanding of violence often supports politically motivated decisions that attempt to mask harm inflicted upon civilian populations. By bracketing any violence that is not strictly an overt form of physical force that injures and kills specific people, government policies that do great harm by cutting across a wide swath of social reality can be masked to such a degree that aspects of war can be made to look like peace.

Conceptual Constellations and the War against Iraq (1991-2003)

In this part of my analysis I shall introduce each conceptual constellation and then use it to examine an aspect of the war against Iraq. Although I begin with direct/physical violence, move to structural/economic violence, and finally examine examples of cultural/symbolic violence, the order is not important. It would be best to think of these three forms of violence as mutually reinforcing and reciprocating processes. Together, wherever we choose to start the analysis, these three conceptual constellations constitute a triad of violence. As I use them in what follows, each constellation serves as a "violence lens" through which we can examine a different dimension of war. I postulate that to wage war requires the enactment of all three violence constellations. In other words, together they serve to define the *process* and *substance* of war.

Conceptual Constellation #1: Direct/Physical Violence

This constellation is primarily concerned with conveying the idea of violence mediated directly through force that is applied to persons in the singular or collective. It is the form of violence most narrow in scope but immediate in effect. Bourdieu understands this to be an aspect of overt violence: there is nothing hidden about it. And it is physical in the sense that it impacts directly (and sometimes via the destruction of property) on our corporeal bodies. This is true whether it is actualized through a knife blade entering a rib cage or a stealth bomber dropping a cluster bomb on a village. In either case the harm that is done to persons is immediate and visible. The imaginaries of war, to borrow Schröder and Schmidt's (2001) word, most readily bring this form of violence to mind. Its effects are generally seen and felt for decades in both scarred bodies and scorched earth (cf. Webster 1996). When we see

this form of violence, we see what we do not want to experience ourselves. There is nothing euphemistic about it. And soldiers, who in war are responsible for deploying this form of violence, must go through extensive training to perpetrate it (Grossman 1995) and many pay dearly for it both during and after the fact (Shay 1994).

Examples from the War against Iraq

Direct/physical violence was evident throughout the war against Iraq. While many will recall the technologically enhanced displays of so-called "shock and awe" at the beginning and end of the war in 1991 and 2003, what was masked for the duration of the war was the constant nature of the direct/physical violence. A constant bombing campaign and a consequent effort by the Iraqis to target the airplanes doing the bombing were a permanent feature of the war. While living in Iraq I experienced this bombing campaign in the field.

On an excursion to the city of Nasariyah, a small city to the south of Baghdad, I visited a famous archeological site (Ur) about eight kilometres from the city. While walking through the site I was brought up short by the unmistakable sound of a rocket igniting and the sound of it winging its way skyward. I was quick enough to turn and see the briefest glint of sunlight on its metal casing as it disappeared into the sky. This was followed by the sound of air raid sirens in Nasariyah coming across the desert, a tragic counterpoint to the beautiful sounds that come from the minarets each day. About five minutes later the "ka-thump, ka-thump" of bombs could be heard falling in the near distance. The sound waves rolled over the desert.

This direct experience of bombing in Iraq was not unusual. Internal UN documents produced by the Office of the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq in Baghdad, clearly showed that intrusive sorties and bombing runs were made over Iraq on a daily basis for the duration of the war. One report analyzed 46 of 143 bombing runs conducted during 1999. It records 110 civilian casualties, 350 serious injuries, over 60 houses destroyed and over 400 livestock killed. Livestock, of course, are a significant source of food and income. There was some acknowledgment of these facts in both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* (Myers 1999; Suro 1999).

The exchanges of bombs and missiles ebbed and flowed over the years, as is true in all wars. In his well-researched book, Dilip Hiro records high-times in 1991, 1993 (twice), 1996, 1998 and 2000 when the armies of Iraq and the armies of the United States and Britain exchanged bombs and missiles, the intensity of which could not be hidden (Hiro 2002: 6). In between these high tides of direct/physical violence, there was a constant engagement of military force. In an essay called, "Paying the Price," John Pilger documents one period of the military activity, which gives some indication of its extent:

> During the eighteen months to January 14, 1999, American air force and navy aircraft flew 36 000 sorties over Iraq, including 24 000 combat missions. During 1999, American and British aircraft dropped more than 1800 bombs and hit 450 targets. The cost to British tax-payers is more than £800 million. There is bombing almost every day: it is the largest Anglo-American aerial campaign since the Second World War; yet it is mostly ignored by the American and British media. (Pilger 2002: 76)

Aid workers recounted personal stories about the direct engagement of physical force. Carmen Pauls, who worked and lived in Baghdad for a non-governmental organization at the time, recorded one such incident. "At 6pm, Sunday, July 18th, 1999, a plane dropped a bomb on the main road between Najaf, a city 170 kilometres south of Baghdad, and Monathera city. This highway is lined with homes and mechanics' shops. A second bomb fell near a grain storage silo. Fourteen civilians were killed and 18 wounded, including women and children and labourers on their way home from work" (Pauls 1999). Later in her biweekly report she says that since her earlier report, "an additional 18 persons have been killed and 54 wounded in similar attacks" (1999). In one incident, on May 12, air strikes hit shepherds in their pastures near Mosul, leaving 14 persons dead and 22 wounded.[10]

In the many times that I travelled to the north or south of Iraq between June 2000 and April 2001, I always experienced air raid sirens wailing in the cities I visited. There is no shortage of direct empirical evidence that the bombing was happening and that the Iraqi army was attempting to reply. UN officials consistently filed reports about their experience of being in the vicinity of bombing. It is perhaps worth noting that the weapons being used were not so-called precision guided munitions. In February 2001, well before the invasion of Iraq began, they were cluster bombs. As William Arkin notes, commenting on this particular attack, these are weapons "that have no real aimpoint and that kill and wound innocent civilians for years to come" (Arkin 2001).

Conceptual Constellation #2: Structural/Economic Violence

Although he may not have coined the term, Galtung's name is closely associated with the idea of structural violence (MacQueen 1992: viii). In my travels in India, Palestine and Iraq I have heard the word used with varying

shades of meaning and sophistication. Generally speaking, persons using the phrase "structural violence" are attempting to describe a situation wherein, to use Galtung's definition, "their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations" (Galtung 1969: 110-111). Unlike direct/physical violence this conceptual constellation operates at arms length. As global processes come to the fore, structural/economic violence is often mediated by economic mechanisms like trade policies and sanctions, promoting forceful, often unwanted, change in human collectives. The violence of these economic engines is often resisted and even transformed (Ferguson 1990a; Scott 1985), but still, those who experience it, often in the so-called developing world, recognize it as violence. Social structures work hand-in-hand with economic processes to wreak havoc on civilian populations in war-zones.

A narrow focus on "structural" violence is insufficient for capturing the contours of this form of violence. There is clear evidence that economic processes now dominate the global system of exchange, whether it is an exchange of material or information (here I am influenced by Castells 1996; Castells 1997; Castells 1998). By including explicitly the economic dimension in this constellation, a form of violence not all that new when thought of in terms of the ancient art of the siege, I highlight the central role these processes play in contemporary warfare in a global environment. In the case of Iraq, the combination of structures supporting economic processes led to very tangible impacts on the civilian population.

Examples from the War against Iraq

The application of structural/economic violence in times of war happens through numerous channels. This form of violence is a constitutive part of the cumulative process of war-making. In the war against Iraq, conducted in a globalized environment, it is possible to show that this realm of violence now plays a key role in war. Although sanctions are the clearest example of this violence, the process can take many directions. If an adult experiences malnutrition, for example, there are direct impacts on the family and the nation, according to the biologist, George Sorger. Drawing on his research in El Salvador, he explains that "if you're malnourished and you're sick a lot of the time your potential is low and you will not be able to earn enough wages to feed your family. You will not be competitive with other people who are well-nourished and, therefore, your children will also be malnourished, and you will perpetuate a cycle of malnutrition. That's not only true of families, however, it is also true of whole societies and nations" (Sorger 1992: 72). For the men, women and children of Iraq, who experienced over a decade of deprivation at all levels, the full impact of this violence may not be visible for decades to come. But the voice of an Iraqi nurse with whom I was sitting in a small office in 1991 remains clear. She asked, "Why does your country support policies that are killing our children?"

Electrical grid systems were targeted early in the war. During my first visit to Iraq in March of 1991 I saw Baghdad and Karbala which had been without electricity for many weeks. I recorded in a report from that trip that all means of communication were destroyed, water purification and sewage systems were not functioning and public transportation was at a standstill. The entire city of Baghdad was silent (recorded in Bertell 2000: 37-40). Daniel Kuehl, a military strategist, published an article analyzing "Electrical Power as a Target for Strategic Air Operations" in which he documents that "The first week's attacks cut Iraq's generating capacity by approximately 75 per cent, and follow-on attacks extended that even further so that by war's end the system had been reduced to only about 15 per cent of its prewar capacity" (Kuehl 1995: 254). The destruction of this vital power grid inevitably led to the breakdown of the water and sewage treatment facilities. In an important piece of research, Thomas Nagy uncovered US government reports done in 1991 that predicted widespread disease in the civilian population as a result of this breakdown (Nagy 2001).

The negative impact of sanctions on the civilian population of Iraq was carefully documented over the course of the war. A constant stream of reports from the United Nations, NGOs and independent study teams were published at the beginning, during the middle and towards the end of the war against Iraq. They sounded a consistent, and virtually unanimous, tone marked by urgency.

Based on infant mortality rates, the United Nation's Food and Agricultural (FAO) study team members produced a controversial report that concluded that by December of 1995 567 000 Iraqi children had died in the first five years of sanctions (Clark and The UN Food and Agriculture Organization 1996). Their study did not include vulnerable groups like the elderly and homeless. Richard Garfield later produced a study that significantly lowered this figure to about 250 000 (Garfield 1999), also controversially. In either case, the impact on Iraqi families was significant. Nuha al-Radi records in her diary this report from a woman friend in 1994:

> Her daughter said that a lot of kids have stopped going to school, the parents can't afford to buy exercise books and pencils. A friend of hers who lives in Mansur told her that her thirteen-year-old daughter had locked

> herself in her room crying because she wanted to walk down the main shopping street and her mother said no. "I can't afford to let her," she said. "Everything costs in the thousands. I can barely afford to give them a sandwich to take to school." This is a middle class family living in a good neighbourhood, and reasonably well off. (Al-Radi 1998: 65)

The impact of sanctions extended from school age children up to university professors. An Iraqi university student writes of this in December 2002: "I appreciate the role these sanctions had in making a country full of riches so poor. I appreciate watching my professors having to sell their whole personal libraries to survive, and seeing their books being bought by UN staff who take them home as souvenirs. I have so much appreciation it is flowing out of my ears" he says (Pax 2003: 50). Few people in North America have an appreciation for the large quantity of personal possessions that were sold to make ends meet. The extent of it will likely never be known.

The accounts of personal experiences were supported by "official" reports along the way. These reports came up with findings that repeated the *same* findings on a regular basis for those following the issue beginning in 1991: The March Special Report to the UN by Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, the Harvard Study Team's careful analysis in May, two months later the Special Report to the UN by Sadruddin Aga Khan, and then the comprehensive study completed by the International Study Team in October. There were also reports by UNICEF, the WHO and numerous first-hand accounts by those who visited the region. Ahtisaari, a Special Rapporteur to the Secretary-General of the UN at the time, invoked in his first postwar report the now familiar metaphor of the apocalypse:

> The recent conflict has wrought near-apocalyptic results upon the economic infrastructure of what had been, until January 1991, a rather highly urbanized and mechanized society. Now, most means of modern life support have been destroyed or rendered tenuous. Iraq has, for some time to come, been relegated to a pre-industrial age, but with all the disabilities of post-industrial dependency on an intensive use of energy and technology. (Ahtisaari 1991: 5)

The Harvard and International Study Teams gave clear warning of the impending disastrous situation for children of Iraq (Ascherio, et al. 1992; Harvard Study Team 1991a; Harvard Study Team 1991b; International Study Team 1991). All indicated a four-fold rise in infant mortality rates and suggested that it would remain stable at that high rate, while health conditions in general would deteriorate further. As noted above, the destruction of the infrastructure had incapacitated water and sewage treatment, resulting in widespread water-borne diseases. Diarrhoea, for example, became a major cause of death (see also Bloom, Miller, Warner and Winkler 1994; Dreze and Gazdar 1991; Middle East Watch 1991). The Center for Economic and Social Rights, UNICEF and the World Health Organization produced similar reports. The WHO closed its 1996 report with this warning:

> The vast majority of the country's population has been on a semi-starvation diet for years. This tragic situation has tremendous implications on the health status of the population and on their quality of life, not only for the present generation, but for the future generation as well....[T]he world community should seriously consider the implications of an entire generation of children growing up with such traumatized mental handicaps, if they survive at all. (World Health Organization 1996: 16-17)

Throughout the intervening years of the war well-researched, credible reports were tabled. In 1995, 1996, 1997 and 2000 UNICEF presented findings that echoed earlier reports. In his October 1996 press release, Philippe Heffinck, then UNICEF representative for Iraq, said: "The situation is disastrous for children. Many are living on the very margin of survival." He added that "around 4500 children under the age of five are dying here every month from hunger and disease." UNICEF's November 1997 report continues to see an alarming situation in Iraq "with 32 percent of children under the age of five, some 960 000 children, chronically malnourished." UNICEF observes that "chronic malnutrition has long term implications on a child's physical and mental development. After a child reaches two or three, chronic malnutrition is difficult to reverse and damage on the child's development is likely to be permanent."[11] The 2000 UNICEF report continued to indicate high levels of infant mortality rates and malnutrition. The report asserted that,

> Iraq begins the new millennium with high child mortality rates (131 per 1000 live births in the south and centre of Iraq) and more than 20% of Iraq's 3.5 million children are suffering from various degrees of malnutrition. The situation is made worse by the lack of progress in arresting the rapid decline in essential social infrastructure. The limitations of the SCR 986 programme prior to SCR 1330 did not allow the Government to plan for the comprehensive rehabilitation of the primary health care system, primary education system, or the water and sanitation systems. These

> essential public services have continued to suffer from a lack of maintenance and therefore decreasing capacity, a lack of electricity which further cuts capacity and efficiency, particularly in the water and sanitation sector and rapidly increasing demand through population growth.

The report went on to say that "child malnutrition has remained entrenched" and "diarrhoea leading to death from dehydration, and acute respiratory infections (ARI) together account for 70% of child deaths" (UNICEF Iraq 2000: 6-7).

My brief overview of structural/economic violence demonstrates that between 1990 and 2003 there was significant harm done to the population of Iraq by policies enacted through several large administrative bodies including national governments and the United Nations. Although it would be difficult to hold any one person responsible for this violence, (following Galtung), it cannot be denied that people in Iraq experienced it as a part of the war.

Conceptual Constellation #3: Cultural/Symbolic Violence

The idea of symbolization helps to narrow the use of the word culture in this constellation. By cultural violence Galtung means, "those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence—exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics)—that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence" (Galtung 1990: 291). Culture as I use the term cannot be violent; people are violent. Humans have the capacity to create symbols and rituals that call into being a sense of a person or people to whom some other person or persons want to do harm. In order to facilitate that harm a negative construction of the "Other" is necessary. The negative construction of the "Other" is a dynamic process that goes much deeper than an us/them dichotomy and strikes at the core of another person's "humanness" in a process of dehumanization. Bourdieu's comments on symbolic violence reveal other facets of this idea cluster. He writes,

> Symbolic violence...is a violence exercised, so to speak, in formal terms, and paying due respect to forms. Paying due respect to forms means giving an action or a discourse the form which is recognized as suitable, legitimate, approved, that is, a form of a kind that allows the open production, in public view, of a wish or a practice that, if presented in any other way, would be unacceptable (this is the function of the euphemism). The force of the form...is that properly symbolic force which allows force to be fully exercised while disguising its true nature as force and gaining recognition, approval and acceptance by dint of the fact that it can present itself under the appearances of universality—that of reason or morality. (Bourdieu 1990 (1983): 84-85)

The purpose of this form of violence, then, is primarily to mask what would otherwise be unacceptable. Subsumed in this constellation is the idea of epistemic violence, which I derive from a reading of Gayatri Spivak (1988). Epistemic violence refers to the deliberate attempt to undermine and destroy entire systems of knowledge. Nordstrom, again, helps to clarify this form of violence. "If we accept the premise that reality is socially constructed," drawing on Schutz, Berger and Luckman (Berger and Luckman 1984 (1966); Schutz and Luckman 1973), "then the disruption of the basis of social relations and the shared epistemological truths on which it rests necessarily imperils people's ability to continue to construct a significant reality" (Nordstrom 1992: 268).

> Since culture and epistemology are...naturally regenerating phenomena, the disabling of cultural knowledge per se does not represent irreconcilable devastation. There is a danger in this process, however.
>
> Schutz and Luckman (1973) have postulated that life-worlds—socially constructed knowledge systems so essential to cultural viability they are taken to represent reality in its most fundamental sense—ground human endeavor, conceptual and actual. While knowledge systems are not inherently consummate, the reality of the life-world(s) resting on them depends on the illusion that their integrity remains unchallenged. When the viability of the life-world is challenged, the sense of reality itself is simultaneously challenged....
>
> But during a war—when families are scattered, communities destroyed, and valued life-world traditions have been bankrupt by difficulty, terror, and need—epistemological systems that would normally provide the raw material for repairing impoverished frameworks of knowledge and meaning are being seriously undermined by the viciousness of the widespread violence. (Nordstrom 1992: 268-269)

This cluster of ideas conveys a sense of the intangible, but absolutely necessary process of generating enemies in times of war. When this form of violence works well, "the victims themselves become the template on which power-loaded scripts are inscribed" (Nordstrom 1992: 266). We have all experienced this process either as symbol bearers or as witnesses to the violence perpetrated in its name. At times the culture within which we live demeans the epistemological systems that support the ability of others to survive the more direct forms of violence. Moreover, collectives, as is well-known, studied and illustrated in the

next section, can be led to believe, through the manipulation of symbol and ritual, in blatant falsehoods.

Examples from the War against Iraq

Perhaps the clearest example of the process of negatively constructing the "Other" was the quick identification of Saddam Hussein with Hitler, a powerful symbol of "evil." This image of Saddam Hussein was laid out in prominent media sources under the banner of "this generation's Hitler" (Safire 1991: 211). He certainly was never granted the status of a "President." By reducing and reifying the person called Saddam to an "evil madman" the work of culturally constructing the enemy was well under way. This same process was engaged in Iraq. I recall distinctly stepping around the inlaid mosaic representation of George Bush's face on the floor at the entrance of the now famous Al-Rachid Hotel.

A key to accomplishing the negative construction of "Iraq" was to tell a story that placed the blame for the deaths of innocent victims squarely on the soon-to-be enemy. Chris Hedges retells the story of how this process was started in the case of the war against Iraq. The story bears repeating in full:

> Following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, it was widely disseminated that Iraqi soldiers removed hundreds of Kuwaiti babies from incubators and left them to die on hospital floors. The story, when we arrived in Kuwait and were able to check with doctors at the hospitals, turned out to be false. But by then the tale had served its purpose. The story came from a fifteen-year-old Kuwaiti who identified herself only as "Nayirah" when she tearfully testified before the Congressional Human Rights Caucus on October 10, 1990. She said she had watched fifteen infants being taken from incubators in the Al-Adan Hospital in Kuwait city by Iraqi soldiers who "left the babies on the cold floor to die." Nayirah turned out later to be the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the United States, Saud Nasir al-Sabah. She did not grant interviews after the war and it was never established whether she was actually in the country when the invasion took place. (Hedges 2002: 144-145)

In public speaking engagements between 2001 and 2003, I was still asked frequently about the veracity of this story, even though it has been widely reported and shown to be false for over a decade. This gives some indication of the resilience of symbols brought to life in stories that create the context within which more overt forms of violence are then enacted. Those hearing "the baby story" in 1991, as Hedges indicates, became "enmeshed in the imposed language" (Hedges 2002: 145). Meanwhile, any subtlety in this constructed falsehood, a subtlety that may have been felt by those listening to the story when it was first told in 1991, becomes obvious manipulation as it was told in the context of 2003.

To reinforce the idea that Iraqi soldiers and their Commander-in-Chief were a dangerous threat to those who would war with them, it was important that they be able to physically "reach" North America and Europe, for only with the threat of reciprocal direct/physical violence would the symbol take on sufficiently deep meaning to bear the weight of ongoing war. To that end, as is now quite clear, a careful argument was made (Colin Powell's 2003 presentation to the United Nations Security Council being one of the most public enactments of this false information) over the course of the entire war beginning in 1991, that nuclear, chemical and biological weapons were virtually "in the hands" of the Iraqi government. "With remarkable unanimity," says one commentator who has reviewed the documents related to this case, "former Iraqi scientists interviewed since...[2003] about the status of the weapons programs...have all maintained that the regime did, in fact, destroy those stockpiles in the early 1990s, as it claimed" (Scheer, Scheer and Chaudhry 2003: 76). The discourse that reinforced the social construction of "weapons of mass destruction" as a symbol system is a part of the larger process of war.

Another striking example of cultural/symbolic violence came in an article by Fouad Ajami, published in the widely read journal *Foreign Affairs*. Ajami writes:

> No sooner had the Arab/Muslim world said farewell to the wrath and passion of the Ayatollah Khomeini's crusade than another contender rose in Baghdad. The new claimant was made of material different from the turbaned saviour from Qum: Saddam Hussein was not a writer of treatises in Islamic government nor a product of high learning in religious seminaries. Not for him were the drawn-out ideological struggles for the hearts and minds of the faithful. He came from a brittle land, a frontier country between Persia and Arabia, with little claim to culture and books and grand ideas. The new contender was a despot, a ruthless and skilled warden who had tamed his domain and turned it into a large prison. (Ajami 1990-91: 1)

What Ajami has done is to put the symbol/name "Saddam" in direct association with a negative assessment of cultural achievement, for example, a "brittle land" with "little claim to culture and books and grand ideas." This example exemplifies the negative construction of the "Other." In other words, Ajami is effectively disabling cultural knowledge in order to create a sense of "the Iraqi

people," a highly abstracted symbol launched through time and space, that helps to create the cultural conditions whereby direct/physical and structural/economic forms of violence can be enacted.

The trajectory of this process is clear: when "Saddam" is heard or read in this context, a host of symbolic associations are made— the creation of negative knowledge— which mask the epistemic violence that goes into the creation of an enemy. Based on my own experience, many people in North America thought of "evil mad man," "possessor of weapons of mass destruction," and "someone who is capable of attacking 'my country,'" when this symbol/name was seen or heard. Note that when the "real" Saddam Hussein was captured, he was quickly removed from the scene, for to allow him to be seen as a bedraggled soldier for too long could re-awaken the reality that he is as human as he is symbol. The perpetuation of the symbol/image requires that his presentation to the public be well prepared.

What the process of telling false stories about the killing of innocent babies, the repetition of false claims about weapons of mass destruction and the participation of academics in the construction of false knowledge has done is to mask the reality that millions of people in Iraq continue to try to go about their daily lives, in the same manner that people in Canada try to go about their daily lives. The negative construction of the "Other," operationalized through cultural/symbolic forms of violence, was highly effective in the case of the war against Iraq.

Looking Forward to a Conclusion

In this essay I have demarcated the war against Iraq. My approach has been to use an expanded understanding of violence to interrogate the theoretical and practical boundaries of the war. To that end, I proposed three conceptual constellations, each one capturing a form of violence. This model could be applied to other war zones. By doing so, we could test whether these three forms of violence exist in all cases of war. We would need to modify the model if we were to find that another conceptual constellation needed to be included. One that I did not develop here, for example, but which I think bears investigation, arises from a feminist critique of sexism and its relationship to war (Cohn 1988; Elshtain 1987; Enloe 1993; Reardon 1996 [1985]).

This analysis, whatever its shortcomings, does effectively demonstrate that the conventional paradigm used to frame the case of Iraq is but one of many possible ways to understand the war against Iraq. I would go further and contend that what I have called the conventional view of the Iraq case is an ideologically and politically motivated construction (as is this one at another level) and should be challenged by alternative perspectives. For anthropologists one primary source of those alternative views must be the experience of the men, women and children who lived with the consequences of violence on the part of *both* their own government and foreign entities.[12]

The argument I have made imposes a different structure on our understanding of the course of historical events now unfolding in the geographical region of the Middle East. In this narrative there is a series of escalating stages. A long-standing conflict between the governments of Iraq and Kuwait was escalated when the government of Iraq occupied the country of Kuwait. When a cohort of countries led by the government of the United States intervened in the occupation, the conflict escalated into a state of war. Eventually that war was ended by yet another occupation. This time, however, it was the country of Iraq that was occupied. There is a great deal of resistance (the resistance should not be a surprise) to the occupation of the country. The contours of how the occupation will end are still unfolding at the time of writing this essay. To what conclusion do the people of Iraq look forward? Will the occupation be followed by civil war? However the occupation and the resistance to it is brought to an end, I have attempted to point towards a different language to talk about it and a different history not yet written (the subject of a much larger project).

It would be a serious mistake to underestimate the extraordinary amount of energy going into theoretical research and practical development of the instruments of war. That research and development is taking place primarily in the three realms of violence I have identified in this essay. (Obviously, I have not and will not be granted access to information that would verify that this is indeed happening; nevertheless, the evidence clearly points in this direction.) In his analysis of the role of the intellectual, Edward Said suggested that at bottom the intellectual is "neither a pacifier nor a consensus builder, but someone whose whole being is staked on a critical sense, a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formulas, or ready made clichés, or the smooth, ever-so-accommodating confirmation of what the powerful or conventional have to say, and what they do" (Said 1994: 23). If he is correct, then the best anthropologists can do is to develop still more sophisticated analyses of war and violence that do not accept formulas developed by those who wish to justify war for political reasons.

In a remarkable essay referring specifically to the invasion of Iraq, a Catholic nun asks the radical question, "Is there anything left that matters" (Chittister 2003)? Her question is disturbing. Does it matter whether we

think of two short, limited wars, as opposed to one long war? Is it possible that those who prosecute war, expanding and developing their skills at all levels, have realized that there is growing popular opposition to the use of war as a form of conflict resolution? If the war against Iraq had been framed *as a war,* could it have been sustained for 13 years?

The war against Iraq was rendered opaque by a complex set of variables, the net effect of which has been to mask the full extent of the violence it occasioned. If we see the war against Iraq clearly, then our theoretical paradigms will have to be significantly different from those that we have accepted to this point, which were paradigms presented for the most part by political and intellectual representatives who have supported either passively or actively a conventional view. Anthropologists, who by and large have not engaged in the debate so far, *can* speak about the war against Iraq and help to establish new paradigms to study it.

There are hundreds of books already written on various aspects of the case of Iraq based on a mistaken paradigm, namely, that there were two brief wars separated by a period of relative peace. Is this construction true to the reality that people in Iraq have experienced over the past decade and a half? In this essay I have suggested that this is not so. Although I have read scores of books on Iraq published over the past 15 years, I remain puzzled that so few of these books or essays challenge this view. Increasingly voices from the region reflect the reality of war experienced by people in Iraq (Al-Radi 1998; Pax 2003; Riverbend 2005). With those voices, and new theoretical models, it may be possible to resist "the easy formulas, or ready made clichés, or the smooth, ever-so-accommodating confirmations of what the powerful or conventional have to say" (Said 1994: 23). Although resisting those formulas will not be easy, doing so will help to ensure that the path of our inquiry leads us back to children, women and men living in the war zones that we study.

In sum, I reject the conventional view of what happened in Iraq and encourage others to do the same. "The Gulf War" and "the Iraq War" are socio-cultural fabrications in mainstream North American culture, representing in crass form the political and social construction of knowledge with the power to enable and to sustain, for long periods of time, war "right under our noses." There was no "new" war with Iraq in 2003 as an extension of the "war against terrorism;" for the war against Iraq, quite literally, continued for some 13 years. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 was indeed the final chapter in the war against Iraq. The effect of the war against Iraq (1991-2003) and the subsequent occupation of Iraq (2003-?) will be felt for decades, if not longer, in the Middle East, North America and globally. For men, women and children in Iraq it was a very long war that came on the heels of another very long war. And now they experience occupation and the violence it occasions. As anthropologists, how do we respond to this alarming fact?

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Notes

1 My involvement with the war against Iraq began with two trips to Iraq in March and October of 1991 to do needs assessments for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) immediately following the initial heavy bombardment of the country by a United States led cohort of countries. What I saw and experienced during those trips opened my eyes to the reality of war on the ground and was the catalyst for asking questions about the conduct of war in contemporary times. Nine years later, in 2000-2001, I returned to the Middle East, this time with my wife Tamara Fleming, to live for a year as country field representatives for two NGOs. About eight months of the year was spent in Iraq, based in Baghdad with frequent trips to the north and south of the country. Our primary responsibility was to administer and to act as liaisons for rehabilitation and reconstruction projects primarily funded by the aid organizations we represented and facilitated through local NGO partnerships. I thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for three years of doctoral funding that enabled my research at a formative point. Although errors in this paper remain my responsibility, for their help in clarifying the ideas presented here I thank Winnie Lem, Ellen Judd, Mark Vorobej, Richard Preston, Tamara Fleming and anonymous reviewers. This paper is dedicated to my brother Gerald.

2 In common parlance the early phase of the war against Iraq is referred to as "the Gulf War" (1991) while the later phase is commonly referred to as either "Gulf War II" or "the Iraq War" (2003). "The invasion of Iraq" has taken root as a favoured label for those who criticize the US administration's policy. These labels are still contested, although there appears to be a general preference for "the Iraq War" when referring to the later phase. I have used the phrase, "the war against Iraq," to indicate that I situate myself within a North American cultural context deliberately writing against the grain of commonly accepted labels applied to this conflict.

3 To give some idea of how much material has been published, since 1990 I have collected some 18 linear feet of books related to the case of Iraq and a half dozen banker's boxes full of articles, clippings and other gray literature.

4 Whatever its shortcomings, Simons does provide in her article already cited an excellent overview and critical commentary on work published within anthropology and related disciplines on the topic of war (Simons 1999), which in turn

builds on numerous earlier review articles (e.g. Ferguson 1984a; Ferguson 1990b; Harrison 1996; Otterbein 1973; Wolf 1987).

5 There were many indicators of the Government of Iraq's deeply entrenched dispute with the Government of Kuwait during the years immediately prior to the Government of Iraq's decision to occupy Kuwait in 1990.

6 I believe the authors intend this to be "experiential," although it is possible they mean to say that all experiential approaches to war and violence are also "experimental."

7 Wolf provides a useful overview and critical commentary on the contribution of this school of thought to anthropological discourse (Wolf 2001).

8 Personal correspondence.

9 In two previous essays I began to use one or the other and consistently found that when I arrived at a certain point in my analysis I required the other's set of ideas (McCutcheon 2002; McCutcheon 2004).

10 This information is archived at Mennonite Central Committee headquarters in Akron, Pennsylvania.

11 Copy on file with the author. These press releases are available from UNICEF.

12 My wife and I were under constant surveillance while living in Iraq. Out of respect for the people who worked with us in Iraq and as requested by the NGOs with whom we worked, we did not keep extensive notes of our conversations. We were aware that people who we visited often were questioned later by government officials. This raises the thorny question of how to record information and still "do no harm" while living with intensive government surveillance. Mary B. Anderson has provided a useful guide for NGO workers that may have general application for anthropologists as well (Anderson 1999).

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