2 The Radicalization of Communal Loyalties

"Most societies seem allergic to internal anonymity, homogeneity and amnesia."
—Ernest Gellner *Culture, Identity and Politics* (1988)

"A prolonged civil war is the most overt societal schism. In the preliminary civil discord—no matter how divisive and mutually contradictory are the elements involved, no matter how long-standing the opposing values or how deep-seated the distrust—a society, however strained or artificial, continues to exist. Once civil strife has passed the point of no return into civil war, however, the prewar society has, for better or worse, committed suicide."
—J. Bowyer Bell, *The Gun in Politics* (1987)

"It is more difficult to quell an impulse toward violence than to arouse it."
—Anthony Storr, *Human Aggression* (1965)

A defining element in Lebanon's checkered sociopolitical history, one that has had substantive implications for the character and magnitude of collective strife, is the survival and reassertion of communal solidarities. In fact, the three overarching and persisting features—(1) foreign intervention, (2) the reawakening of primordial identities, and (3) the escalation of protracted violence—are all intimately related. This is, after all, what informs the major thrust of this study. We will, in subsequent chapters, identify and account for the various forms foreign intervention has assumed. More explicitly, an effort will be made to explore how the unresolved regional and global rivalries have contributed to the protraction and escalation of conflict and the reassertion of communal solidarities. The aim here is to document a few of the persisting features underlying the survival of com-

munal loyalties, particularly those aspects of Lebanon's "retribalization" exacerbated by the inside-outside dialectics. How and under what circumstances, to be more concrete, are communal loyalties radicalized?

By focusing on different episodes — ranging from peasant uprisings, factional feuds, and "class" and ideological struggles to other intermittent incidents of civil strife — it is possible to elucidate how, regardless of their origins and overt manifestations, they are all transformed (or deformed) into sectarian hostility. It is also then, as will be seen, that the conflict becomes bloodier, uncivil, and more mired into the tangled world of foreign intervention.

In effect what is being suggested here is that it is possible, for purposes of analysis, to identify three different layers or magnitudes of violence. There is first social strife, the product largely of socioeconomic disparities, asymmetrical development, ideological rivalries, relative deprivation, and feelings of neglect and dispossession. These, normally, are nonmilitant in character and express themselves in contentious but nonbelligerent forms of social protest and political mobilization. Second, if the socioeconomic disparities persist and the resulting hostilities are unappeased, particularly if accompanied by feelings of threatened communal legacy and confessional loyalties, conflict and discord are inclined to become more militant and bellicose. It is here that social discord is transformed into communal violence; or in the words of Bowyer Bell (1987) that *civil strife* passes the point of no return into *civil war*. Finally, civil violence is not, or does not always remain, "civil." When inflamed by the atavism of reawakened tribalism, enmity, and deepseated suspicion of the "other," internecine feuds, and unresolved regional and global conflicts, collective violence could readily degenerate further into the incivility of proxy wars and surrogate victimization. It is here that violence acquires its own inherent self-destructive logic and spirals into that atrocious cycle of unrelenting cruelties.

Within this context, it is meaningful to identify and account for some of the circumstances associated with the tenacity of communalism and its various manifestations. An effort is also made to consider how social strife is deflected into communal violence and ultimately descends into further barbarism and incivility. Queries of this sort are not only of historic significance. There has been recently renewed theoretical interest in the nature, manifestations, and consequences of renewed "tribalism" and reassertion of local and communal identities, particularly as they relate to the forces of globalization and post-modernity.[1]

The Resilience of Communalism

For some time mainstream theoretical paradigms — i.e., those associated with modernization, Marxism, and their offshoots — were quite tenacious in upholding their views regarding the erosion of primordial ties and loyalties. Despite the striking ideological differences underlying the two meta theories, they shared the conviction that ties of fealty, religion, and community — which cemented societies together and accounted for social and political distinctions — were beginning to lose their grip and would, ultimately, become irrelevant. Indeed, to proponents of modernization theory, notions like familism, tribalism, confessionalism were not only pejoratively dismissed and trivialized, they were seen as obstacles to modernity. So-called "traditional" societies, in other words, were expected to break away and disengage themselves from such relics of pre-modern times if they are to enjoy the presumed fruits of modernity or to become full-fledged nation states. Given the resilience of traditional loyalties, some proponents made allowances for interim periods where "transitional" societies might linger for a while. Eventually, however, all such precarious hybrids will have to pass. They cannot, and will not, it was argued by a generation of social scientists in the sixties and seventies, be able to resist the overpowering forces of industrialization, urbanization, and secularization.

Likewise to Marxists, communist and socialist regimes were perceived as "giant brooms" expected to sweep away preexisting loyalties. If non-class attachments and interests survive or resurface, they are treated as forms of "false consciousness" to mask or veil fundamental economic and social contradictions. In short, ethnic and primordial loyalties were treated, as Theodor Hanf (1995) put it, as transitory phenomena by modernization theorists and as epiphenomena by Marxists. Both agreed, however, that primordialism was destined to disappear. Both, of course, have been wrong. It is a blatant misreading, if not a distortion, of history in both advanced and developing societies. It is a marvel in fact that such misrepresentations could have persisted given persuasive evidence to the contrary.[2]

Ernest Gellner (1988: 6–28) provides such evidence while exploring the nature of nationalism and cohesion in complex societies. He finds it conceptually fitting to reexamine the role of shared amnesia, collective forgetfulness, and anonymity in the emergence of nation-states. Among other things, he argues that the presumed erosion of primordial allegiances is not

a prerequisite to the formation of cohesive nation-states. Likewise, the formation of strong, ruthless centralizing regimes is not the monopoly of any particular state or culture. Seemingly cohesive and integrated old states are not as culturally unified and homogeneous.

Of course here Ottoman Turkey became the prototype of the "mosaic" where ethnic and religious groups did not simply retain much of the so-called primordial and archaic identities, but were positively instructed — through edicts, centralization, fiat, etc. — never to forget. As such, the Ottomans were tolerant of other religions but they were strictly segregated from the Muslims. The various "millets," in other words, mixed but were never truly combined in a homogeneous and unified society. Today such a dread of collective amnesia is amply visible in the dramatic events surrounding the collapse of the USSR and the unfolding disintegration of Eastern Europe.

Nor are the nascent new nations today bereft of the loyalties and institutions often attributed exclusively to civil and secular nation-states. Perhaps conditions of anonymity are true in time of swift or revolutionary social changes and turmoil. But after the upheavals, when the deluge subsides, when social order is restored, internal cleavages and continuities resurface. New memories are invented when the old ones are destroyed. Indeed, "most societies," Gellner reiterates, "seem allergic to internal anonymity, homogeneity and amnesia." (Gellner 1988: 9).

Lebanon's political history, both in good and bad times, reinforces this self-evident but often overlooked or misconstrued reality. Throughout its epochal transformations — the emergence of the "principality" in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the upheavals of the mid-nineteenth century and the consequent creation of the Mutesarrifate of Mount Lebanon (1860–1920), down to the creation of Greater Lebanon in 1920, the National Pact of 1943, the restoration of unity and stability after the civil war of 1958, and the aftermath of almost two decades of protracted violence — some salient realities about the ubiquity of recurring "retribalization" are reconfirmed. One might argue that Lebanon has not been detribalized sufficiently to be experiencing retribalization. The term, nonetheless, is being employed here rather loosely as a catchall phrase to refer to the resurgence of communal loyalties, particularly the convergence of confessional and territorial identities. As has been demonstrated by a score of socioeconomic and political historians, the sweeping changes Lebanon has been subjected to, from internal insurrections to centralized and direct rule by foreign powers or the more gradual and spontaneous changes associated with rapid ur-

banization, spread of market economy, and the exposure of a growing portion of the population to secular, liberal and radical ideologies, etc., did little to weaken or erode the intensity of confessional or sectarian loyalties. Indeed, in times of social unrest and political turmoil such loyalties became sharper and often superseded other ties and allegiances.[3]

Confessional loyalties have not only survived and retained their primacy, but also continue to serve as viable sources of communal solidarity. They inspire local and personal initiative, and account for much of the resourcefulness and cultural diversity and vitality of the Lebanese. But they also undermine civic consciousness and commitment to Lebanon as a nation-state. Expressed more poignantly, the forces that motivate and sustain harmony, balance, and prosperity are also the very forces that on occasion pull the society apart and contribute to conflict, tension, and civil disorder. The ties that bind, in other words, also unbind. (Khalaf and Denoeux 1988; Khalaf 1991).

As the cruelties of protracted violence became more menacing, it is understandable why traumatized and threatened groups should seek shelter in their communal solidarities and cloistered spaces. Confessional sentiments and their supportive loyalties, even in times of relative peace and stability, have always been effective sources of social support and political mobilization. But these are not, as Lebanon's fractious history amply demonstrates, unmixed blessings. While they cushion individuals and groups against the anomie and alienation of public life, they also heighten the density of communal hostility and enmity. Such processes have been particularly acute largely because class, ideological, and other secular forms of group affiliation have been comparatively more distant and abstract and, consequently, of less relevance to the psychic and social needs of the uprooted and traumatized. Hence, more and more Lebanese are today brandishing their confessionalism, if we may invoke a dual metaphor, as both emblem and armor: Emblem, because confessional identity has become the most viable medium for asserting presence and securing vital needs and benefits. It is only when an individual is placed within a confessional context that his ideas and assertions are rendered meaningful or worthwhile. Armor, because it has become a shield against real or imagined threats. The more vulnerable the emblem, the thicker the armor. Conversely, the thicker the armor, the more vulnerable and paranoid other communities become. It is precisely this dialectic between threatened communities and the urge to seek shelter in cloistered worlds that has plagued Lebanon for so long.

Massive population shifts, particularly since they are accompanied by the

reintegration of displaced groups into more homogeneous, self-contained and exclusive communities, have also reinforced communal solidarity. Consequently, territorial and confessional identities, more so perhaps than at any other time in Lebanon's history, are beginning to converge. It is in this sense that "retribalization" is becoming sharper and more assertive. Some of its subtle, implicit, and nuanced earlier manifestations have become much more explicit. Political leaders, spokesmen of various communities, opinion-makers and ordinary citizens are not as reticent in recognizing and incorporating such features in their daily behavior or in bargaining for rights and privileges and validating their identities. Even normally less self-conscious and more open communities such as Greek Orthodox, Catholics and Sunni Muslims, are beginning to experiment with measures for enhancing and reinventing their special heritage and particular identity.

Recently such symptoms of "retribalization" have become, as will be elaborated in subsequent chapters, more pronounced. Ironically, during the pre-war and pre-Taif periods when confessionalism was recognized, its manifestations and outward expression were often subtle and attenuated. Groups seemed shy, as it were, to be identified by such labels. More so during the decades of the 1950s and 60s when nationalism and often secular and so-called progressive and ideological venues for group affiliation had special appeal (See Melikian and Diab 1974).

Today, as the sectarian or confessional logic is consecrated by Taif and, to the same extent, by public opinion, the overt expression of communal and sectarian identities has become much more assertive. Political leaders and spokesmen of various communities, of all persuasions, are not at all reticent or shy in invoking such parochial claims. Indeed, dormant and quiescent communal identities are being reawakened, often reinvented, to validate claims for special privileges.

Universities, colleges, research foundations, voluntary associations, special advocacy groups, radio and TV stations are all being established with explicit and well-defined communal identities. So are cultural and popular recreational events and awards to recognize excellence and encourage creative and intellectual output. Even competitive sports, normally a transcending and neutral human encounter, have been factionalized by sectarian rivalries.

These and other such efforts can no longer be wished away or mystified. They must be recognized for what they are: strategies for the empowerment of threatened groups and their incorporation into the torrent of public life. The coalition of confessional and territorial entities, since it draws upon a potentially much larger base of support, is doubtless a more viable vector for

political mobilization than kinship, fealty, or sectarian loyalties. Hence, as we will observe, it was not uncommon that protest movements and other forms of collective mobilization of social unrest, sparked by genuine grievances and unresolved public issues, were often deflected into confessional or communal rivalries.

Theodor Hanf (1995) coins the term "ethnurgy" to highlight such conscious invention and politicization of ethnic identity. Circumstances associated with the emergence and mobilization of such identities are instrumental in accounting for the pattern and intensity of intra- and interstate conflict. Since all societies are, to varying degrees, horizontally stratified with vertical cultural cleavages, conflict is bound to reflect both the horizontal socioeconomic disparities and the deep cultural divisions. By themselves, however, the strata and cleavages will not become sources of political mobilization unless groups are also made conscious of their distinctive identities. Differences in themselves, horizontal or vertical, become politicized only when those who share common distinctive attributes also share awareness of their distinctiveness. Analogically Hanf translates Marx's "class-by-itself" and "class-for-itself" into ethnic group loyalties. Hence, only an ethnic group "for itself" can become a source of political mobilization.

Within this context it becomes meaningful to identify circumstances in Lebanon's sociopolitical and cultural history that heighten and mobilize the political and radical consciousness of communal and confessional identities. Of course technically speaking, communal and confessional attachments are not strictly "ethnic" in character, if by that is meant that the assignment of special or distinct status, within a culture or social system, is arrived at on the basis of purely racial or physical characteristics. But if "ethnicity" is broadened to incorporate variable traits associated with religion, communal, ancestral affiliations, dialect, and other behavioral and subcultural distinctions, then confessional and sectarian identities may well assume some ethnic attributes (Horowitz 1985: xi). It is also then that these identities become sharper and more militant. They acquire a density of their own and coalesce around sentiments of solidarity and collective self-consciousness.

Popular accounts then were keen on depicting, often with noted amazement, the eagerness with which impressionable teenagers flocked to the barricades, just as their older brothers only a few years back had taken to frivolous pastimes, such as nightclubbing, fast cars, pinball machines, and sleazy entertainments. (Randal 1984: 112–13). This is all the more remarkable since we are dealing with a fairly quiescent political culture, one without much background or tradition in military service, conscription, or prior experience in paramilitary organizations.

In short, what these and other manifestations imply is that religion is not resorted to as a spiritual or ecclesiastical force. It is not a matter of communing with the divine as a redemptive longing to restore one's sense of well-being. Rather, it is sought largely as a form of ideological and communal mobilization. Indeed, it is often people's only means of asserting their threatened identities. Without it, groups are literally rootless, nameless, and voiceless.

Such realities, incidentally, are certainly not unique to Lebanon. In an insightful and thoroughly documented study of Hindu-Muslim rioting and violence in India, Sudhir Kakar (1996) reaches essentially the same conclusion. The author also draws on other historical encounters — such as the anti-Semitic pogroms in Spain in the fourteenth century, or sixteenth-century Catholic–Protestant violence in France, and anti-Catholic riots in eighteenth-century London — to validate the inference that all such instances of collective mobilization were more a byproduct of cultural identities and communalism than a reflection of religiosity or revitalization of religious zeal as such:

> If we look closely at individual cases around the world, we will find that the much-touted revival is less of religiosity than of cultural identities based on religious affiliation. In other words, there may not be any great ferment taking place in the world of religious ideas, beliefs, rituals, or any marked increase in the sum of human spirituality. Where the resurgence is most visible is in the organization of collective identities around religion, in the formation and strengthening of communities of believers. What we are witnessing today is less the resurgence of religion than (in the felicitous Indian usage) of communalism where a community of believers not only has religious affiliation but also social, economic, and political interests in common which may conflict with the corresponding interests of another community of believers sharing the same geographical space (Kakar 1996: 166–67).

To Kakar, communalism then is a state of mind elicited by the individual's assertion of being part of a religious community, preceded by the awareness of belonging to such a community. He goes further to maintain that only when, what he terms, the *"We-ness of the community"* is transformed into the *"We are of communalism"* can we better understand the circumstances which translate or deflect the potential or predispositions for intolerance, enmity and hostility and how these are ultimately released into outward violence (Kakar 1996: 192). Enmity after all can remain at a latent level. As

will be demonstrated, hostility between the various communities in Lebanon did not always erupt in bloody confrontations. Rather, it managed, and for comparatively long stretches, to express itself in a wide gamut of nonviolent outlets and arrangements ranging from mild contempt, indifference, guarded contacts, and distancing, to consociational political strategies and territorial bonding in exclusive spaces.

This is why it is instructive to identify those interludes in Lebanon's checkered history — the critical watersheds so-to-speak — during which feelings of communal identity were undermined and when the vague, undefined threats and fears became sharper and more focused. As will be seen, it is also during such moments that communities sought efforts to reconnect and revive communal solidarity and mobilization. Identifying with and glorifying the threatened virtues of one's own group is heightened and rendered more righteous — as the psychology of in-group/out-group conflict reveals — if it is reinforced by enmity toward the outgroup. (For further elaboration, see Kelman 1987; Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry 1987). If uncontained, especially when amplified by rumors and stoked by religious demagogues, the hostility could easily erupt into open violence. By then only the slightest of sparks is needed for a violent explosion.

A drop of blood here and there, in moments of aroused communal passions, always begets a carnage. If I were to express this prosaically or more crudely, there is a relationship after all between hot-headedness and cold-blooded violence. The more impassioned and impetuous groups are, the more likely they are to be merciless and guilt-free in their brutality. Hot-headedness should not here be mistaken for mindlessness. Hard-core fighters, both by virtue of their youthfulness and effective resocialization, are normally impelled by an ardent, often sacrificial, commitment to the cause and strategies of combat. Hostility is thus made more legitimate by dehumanizing, depersonalizing and reducing the enemy into a mere category; a target to be acted upon or eliminated. The "other" becomes no more than an object whose body is worthy of being dispensed with (see Volkan 1979 and 1985; Keen 1986; Zur 1987). Assailants can now commit their cruelties with abandon and without shame or guilt. It is also then that collective violence degenerates into barbarism and incivility.

Social Strife and Communal Violence

By drawing on the rather prosaic distinctions we employed earlier between "horizontal" and "vertical" divisions, we can begin to isolate the cir-

cumstances which radicalize communal loyalties. At least we can better gauge and ascertain the magnitude and direction conflict is likely to assume as ordinary social strife is deflected into communal and fratricidal violence and how this escalates or degenerates into barbarism and incivility.

Horizontal socioeconomic disputes, at least as the experience of Lebanon is concerned, are more likely to remain comparatively mild and less belligerent. Affected strata are prone to experience various degrees of deprivation and neglect. Their social standing is undermined. They become less privileged. Like other impoverished, aggrieved, and dispossessed groups, they resort to collective protest to dramatize and, hopefully, correct the injustice and inequities. Such mobilization, however, unless it is deflected into confessional and communal hostility, rarely escalates into violent confrontations.

Communal and sectarian rivalries are of a different magnitude. While social strata are embittered by loss of status, material advantage, and privilege, "ethnic" groups (in this sense confessional and communal formations) are threatened by the loss of freedom, identity, heritage, and even their very national existence. As Hanf aptly puts it, "politicizing ethnic distinctions shift the struggle from divisible goods to indivisible principles" (Hanf 1995: 45).

It is at precisely such junctures, as socioeconomic and political rivalries in Lebanon are transformed into confessional or sectarian conflict, that the issues underlying the hostilities become "indivisible." The intensity of violence is bound to become more savaging and merciless. It is also then that prospects for resolving the conflict without belligerence become all the more unlikely.

In his probing analysis of civil strife in Ireland, Bowyer Bell (1987) expresses this poignant dilemma in terms which are quite applicable to Lebanon, particularly with regard to that fateful threshold when civil strife crosses over to the "point of no return into civil war."

A prolonged civil war is the most overt indication of an attenuated societal schism. In the preliminary civil discord — no matter how divisive and mutually contradictory are the elements involved, no matter how long-standing the opposing values or how deep-seated the distrust — a society, however strained or artificial, continues to exist. Once civil strife has passed the point of no return into civil war, however, the prewar society has, for better or worse, committed suicide. There can be no restoration of the uncomfortable but familiar past, for civil war can lead only to the ultimate triumph and imposition of a new

society, cherished by the victors, inconceivable to the vanquished (Bowyer Bell 1987: 169).

Alas, this is a lesson the Lebanese have yet to learn despite their repeated encounters with both civil strife and civil wars. It is in this explicit sense that prolonged or recurrent wars are the most overt indication that something is not changing. The *belligerent equality* so-to-speak has never transformed itself into the *peaceful inequality* that entails the designation of one as victor and the other as vanquished. Despite the intensity, massiveness, and depth of damage and injury, the wars went on. They imperiled and demoralized everyday life. There was perpetual hurt and grief with no hope for deliverance or a temporary reprieve. Like a malignant cancer, it grows but refuses to deliver its victim from the anguish of his pain. The enfeebled patient lives on, doomed as it were to be rejuvenated by the very sources of his affliction.

This is why Lebanon's experience in this regard, both past and more recent, is not very encouraging. In fact, it is quite dismal. Throughout the hostilities of 1975–90, cycles of violence were interspersed with efforts of foreign emissaries interceding on behalf of their shifting client groups to broker a short-lived cease-fire or an abortive political settlement. Lebanon's political landscape is strewn with the wreckage of such failed efforts. Cease-fires, in fact, became the butt of political humor and popular derision. As soon as one was declared, it was summarily violated. These were more ploys to win respites from the cruelties of war and recoup losses than genuine efforts to arrest the fighting and consider less belligerent strategies for resolving conflict.

Incidentally, comparative evidence on the relationship between civil violence and conflict resolution is very instructive. Unfortunately, much of this evidence tends to reinforce Lebanon's bleak prospects. At least a recent analysis of how six other instances of civil unrest have ended — Colombia, Zimbabwe, Greece, Yemen, Sudan, Nigeria, and the American Civil War — suggest that in cases where conflict is primarily of an ethnic, communal character in contrast to those provoked by economic and/or political issues, the likelihood of a negotiated nonbelligerent resolution becomes very slim (Rutgers 1990). Indeed, all communal wars end in blood so-to-speak. There must be a victor and a vanquished before combatants begin to consider negotiation (Kaplan 1980).

Fred Ikle arrives at the same conclusion, particularly when he distinguishes civil conflict from international wars. "Outcomes intermediate between victory and defeat are difficult to construct. If partition is not a feasible

outcome because belligerents are not geographically separable, one side has to get all, or nearly so, since there cannot be two governments . . . and since the passions aroused and the political cleavages opened render a sharing of power unworkable" (Ikle 1971: 95). More interestingly, even if any of the major adversaries is defeated, other participants may not admit or recognize such realities. This, too, has plagued Lebanon for so long. Defeat is a state of mind; everyone decides for themselves when they are defeated (Carroll 1980: 56).

Being entrapped in such a setting of unresolved and protracted hostility is inflammable. The most trivial slight or petty personal feud can become, as was to happen time and time again, an occasion for the shedding of blood. Also as Peter Gay reminds us, groups caught up in the frenzy of vengeful bloodletting do not normally resort to violence to avenge a slight. Rather, they are more prone to seek, or invent, a slight in order to release their impulse for aggression (Gay 1993:31). Hypersensitivity to being insulted or violated, nurtured by muted enmity, almost always provokes a tendency to retaliate out of proportion to the initial offense. This was clearly the case in the massacres of 1860, not as much in 1958, but much more pronounced in 1975–90.

Quickly during the early rounds of the war of 1971–76, the conflict started to display many of the features of confessional struggle. The two major combatants—the Christian Phalange and their allies and the Palestinians and the Muslim-Left Coalition—behaved as if their very existence was at stake. Little wonder that the fighting quickly descended into the abyss of a zero-sum deadly rivalry, where the perceived victory of one group can be realized only by annihilating the other. Spurred by the fear of being marginalized or swept by and subjugated in an Arab-Muslim mass, the Kata'ib reacted with phobic fanaticism to what seemed to them at the time as an ominous threat. They felt that they were resisting not only the violated authority of state sovereignty but also their way of life, unique heritage, and national existence. Often the threat was willfully dramatized to incite and awaken communal solidarity and, thereby, mobilize reticent Christians to the cause of militancy.

Moderation is hard to sustain in the midst of distrust and fear. Progressively the Kata'ib, more so perhaps than other Christian communities, departed from their earlier support of pluralist social arrangements and their preference for a democratic dialogue over progressive reform. They reverted, instead, to a more fanatic anti-Islamic rhetoric. Such awakened parochialism, associated with sectarian hostility, provided added stimulus from the cultivation of reflexive hatred.

Palestinians were likewise threatened by the fear of being liquidated. Lebanon, by the mid-seventies, was their last abode so-to-speak. It had become at the least their most strategic stronghold. After the loss of its Jordan base, the PLO was more entrenched in Lebanon. It also jealously guarded the political and strategic gains it had managed to carve there. The 1969 Cairo Accord, by placing Palestinian refugee camps under PLO control, rendered them virtually inaccessible to Lebanese authorities. The accord was therefore tantamount to an act of national liberation. The logistical and ideological support they were receiving from Arab radical and rejectionist regimes, particularly after the Egyptian-Israeli peace accord, made their presence in Lebanon all the more vital for their survival. Hence, they were protecting not merely the privileges and freedoms they had acquired in recent years, but also the political setting that had nurtured and safeguarded their very existence.

So both major combatants were locked into that deadly zero-sum duel. As the magnitude of sectarian fighting became bloodier, so did with each renewed cycle of violence, the intensity of vengeance, and enmity. Some time ago Anthony Storr warned that "it is more difficult to quell an impulse toward violence than to arouse it" (Storr 1968). Once aroused it acquires a logic of its own. It feeds on itself and becomes self-propagating. Again and again, the omnipresent binary categories of diabolic "them" and virtuous "us" resurfaced with sharper and more deadly intensity. The enemy is demonized further and the conflict is seen as a war between light and darkness, between the virtuous and the damned. As ordinary, quiescent citizens are drawn into the vortex of such bellicose hostility, they too become more amenable to being engulfed in this pervasive and ferocious enmity. Almost overnight they are transformed into passive, helpless pawns caught up in an inexorable process. Aroused communities are abuzz with pejorative anecdotes. Adversaries compete in assigning blame and trading invectives. Attribution and name-calling escalates to new heights. Indeed, especially in the early rounds of fighting, it was elevated to a high art of rancorous political discourse. All the repressed residues of the past resurfaced. Adversaries, once perceived as rigid, became hopelessly intransigent. "Isolationists" degenerated into bigots and traitors. Disenfranchised and unanchored masses became aliens with "green faces." "Borrowed ideologies" became repressive, chaotic and obfuscating. In short, the bad became worse; the unsavory and undesirable degenerated into the repulsive and the demonic.

One has only to read a sampling of war diaries and accounts of combatants, or even those of dispassionate observers or neutral bystanders, to highlight the war-like implications of such predispositions. This seething enmity

and fanaticism was naturally more visible in the polemical platforms of war-ring factions, militias, and their affiliated political pressure groups and par-ties. It also permeated the rest of the society. Pamphleteering, local histori-ographies, position papers and public pronouncements became legion and more rancid and divisive in tone and substance. So were church sermons and Friday mosque *khoutbas*. Colorful wall graffiti, expressive street displays, propaganda campaigns, elaborate obituaries of fallen fighters also evolved their own popular images and art forms.

Though largely symbolic, in that such manifestations may not inflict di-rect and immediate damage, they are nonetheless responsible for preparing the psychological and moral justifications for outward aggression. Violence is thus rendered socially acceptable and tolerable. Even wanton and gratu-itous violence becomes, in the words of Robin Williams, "virtuous action in the name of applauded values" (Williams 1981: 26–27).

Like other such "ideologies of enmity," as John Mack (1979, 1988) calls them, they all converge on three overriding but related objectives: First, the glorification of one's community and the ominous threats to it. Commu-nalism in this regard becomes a rapacious scavenger. It feeds upon the awak-ened sense of a privileged but threatened territorial identity. Second, the propagation of mutual vilification campaigns whereby each group depicts the "other" as the repository of all the ills and pathologies of society. Ironi-cally, the "other," as John Keane aptly puts it, is treated "simultaneously as everything and nothing" (Keane 1996: 125). The enemy is dreaded and feared, but it is also arrogantly dismissed as inferior and worthless. Finally, these inevitably lead to the legitimization of violence against the defiled other (For further details, see Mack 1988; Penderhughes 1979; Keane 1996).

The moral and psychological implications of such strategies, though self-evident, should not be overlooked. By evoking such imagery the "other" is transformed into a public menace, a threat to security and national sover-eignty. Hence it becomes easier to inflict violence against him. At least the moral inhibitions, associated with such acts of aggression, are suspended or removed. Indeed, aggression against the "other" assumes a purgative value. It becomes an act of liberation, the only way to preserve or restore national dignity and integrity. More palliating, it obviates much of the guilt of having blood on one's hands. And this is not, as will be elaborated later, necessarily the blood of strangers and distant enemies. Remorse in these instances is not as poignant. But as the ferocity of combat descends into the callused atrocities of internecine, intracommunal, and turf warfare (as it did when Christian militias were eliminating their Christian rivals, the in-fighting be-

tween Palestinian factions or between Amal and Hizbullah), the blood is quite often the blood of brothers and kinsmen.

Alas, as the recent history of "ethnic cleansing" tells us, the alleviation of guilt in the frenzy of battle is only momentary. When wars are nurtured by religious passions and the visceral hatreds that go with them, they acquire a self-destructive momentum of their own and they spiral, inexorably, out of control. Altogether they become harder to forget and even much more difficult to resolve. Entrapped in such an unyielding and atrocious cycle of vengeance and reprisal, fighting in Lebanon started to display many of the pathologies of barbarism inherent in uncivil violence.