Introduction

"Then cry 'havoc' and let slip the dogs of war."

    —William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*

"Why did we become blind?
I don't know. . . .
I think we are blind, Blind but seeing
Blind people who can see, but do not see."

    —José Saramago, *Blindness*

After all the parades, the patriotic tributes, and the media portrayals that enshrine familiar virtues while maligning foreign vices, it is the weakest participants of armed conflict who bear its greatest burden. No matter how you look at it, by any reasonable measure it is clear that civilians suffer most in large-scale violent conflicts. Violence against the innocent is not a secondary or passing consequence of war—it is deeply embedded in the character and evolution of today's hostilities. Hatred against the enemy can quickly convert to attacks on noncombatants. Women and children are often targeted. In all too many armed conflicts raging across the globe, brutality to civilians caught up in the hostilities does not "just happen." It is not merely occasional, nor is it circumstantial to some larger set of events. In such conflicts, the deep structures of existing enmity between the groups involved dictate how the participants treat civilians.

Notions of the militant enemy's evil nature drive conflict protagonists to believe that their cause is just, that security at home is threatened, and that certain sacrifices will have to be made. The infectious rage that wartime rhetoric often evokes in the "good people" at home also seeps into their sentiments, ideas, impressions, and images about the civilian Other. The feelings of euphoria and purity that are evoked in the rhetoric of war often have a powerful yet frequently implicit impact on the ways in which civilians are characterized. The conflict spiral between protagonist groups is intensified by ideas about what civilians living in the enemy

camp do, who they are, and how they should be treated in war's tumult. As a protagonist group becomes obsessed with the militants' evil, members often castigate the enemy's civilian compatriots. In times of armed conflict, whole societies may slip into collective modes of denial of the differences between an enemy combatant and an enemy civilian.

The international community has failed to protect the innocents, in part by missing their plight altogether; studies of war often neglect the fact that civilians are situated centrally in the nature of armed conflict, and as in past centuries, the least powerful participants in armed conflict suffer most. In times of war, civilians tend to live strange lives. They can be uprooted from their homes, removed from their guardianship of their land, and treated like refugees in their own country. From the perspective of martial forces, civilians should have no power to affect war's outcome. Warfare is not "theirs" to win or lose. Civilians are neither allies nor enemies, neither political leaders of the opposing forces nor their subordinates. From the perspective of international law, warfare is primarily an enterprise of combatants, for combatants, and with complicity of the combatants' political institutions. And the exclusion of civilians from military decision making magnifies civilians' powerlessness. Their cries in the face of impending doom are dismissed by combatants as signs of their "irrationality," in contrast to the professional demeanor of trained soldiers. In spite of being objectified by martial forces engaged in combat, civilians are witnesses to a side of war often buried by military leaders. Politicians and military leaders predominantly view civilians as powerless—and must continue to perceive them in this way so that their devastation can be cast as inevitable. Thus, those civilians living in the path of protagonist military forces are objectified as impediments to the real business of war. Their political status as citizens is undercut by the military-political "realities of war" that seem to necessitate their demise.

In this work, we seek to explain why they die. We launch this inquiry by bringing a novel perspective to the analysis of violent conflict. We find dualistic models of conflict inadequate for our purpose because such models fail to give primacy of place (or, indeed, any place) to the category of civilians. Probing beyond the binary framing of conflicts as existing solely between militant groups, we focus our analysis on the formative constructions of and between the two Others—militants and nonmilitants—from the perspective of the ingroup. Our findings reveal that in times of protracted conflict, such constructions take perceived identities of these Others as infallible truths and often serve as a basis for decisions, commands, and policies that endanger civilians.

We show that the identity politics surrounding two groups—enemy combatants and civilian noncombatants—play a major role in the aggression against civilians that would be unthinkable in times of peace. A common source of civilian devastation in armed conflict is found in the relationship between the militant Other and the nonmilitant members of the enemy population from the perspective of the ingroup combatants. In other words, the perspective of the protagonist forces in combat (the "good guys") is shaped by a set of characterizations pertaining to the relationship between the enemy combatants or militant members of an enemy group (the "bad guys") and the nonmilitant civilians (compatriots of the "bad guys"). And such a relationship is malleable; various military and political forces manipulate this relationship to set and then justify their courses of action.

In the chapters that follow, we forgo the familiar top-down approach to causal explanations in which abstract principles are first presented and then followed by specific applications to cases. Instead, we adopt a grounded approach that gives primacy of place to case studies that then build to a detailed analysis. After introducing four explanatory models in chapter 2, we offer corresponding case studies in chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6. These cases encompass three forms of civilian devastation: (1) structural violence against civilians in totalitarian regimes, as illustrated by the deportation of Crimean Tatars in 1944 (chapter 3); (2) the devastation of civilians in ethnic and religious conflicts, as illustrated by the Rwandan genocide in 1994 (chapter 4); (3) and the killing of civilians in both the Second Lebanon War of 2006 (chapter 5) and the Iraq War that began in 2002 (chapter 6). These six chapters comprise Part I of the book.

In Part II, we examine the central themes that are drawn from these cases—themes that we believe explain the systematic nature of civilian devastation in times of armed conflict. We move outward from specific case studies to examine the systematic nature of civilian devastation in modern conflict in terms of the sociopsychological underpinnings of group identity—religious, political, and national. Redressing the radical failings of militarist-oriented explanations of civilian suffering, we resort to studies of group identity as a theoretical framework for understanding enmity among the primary groups involved in armed conflict. The formation of social identity guides our explanation of civilian devastation in violent conflict. We examine how, as a prelude to collective violence, group identity is shaped by a complexity of value commitments that guide protagonists to believe in the necessity of their course of action. We argue that the constructed forms resident in the collective consciousness essen-

tialize who they are and how they should respond to the Other. Such commitments cohere individuals and exert a force for them to act in unison. We argue that each identity group engaged in conflict establishes a rationale for combat through its self-defined collective axiology.

Collective axiology encapsulates a group's sense of virtue and vice, right and wrong, and good and evil in relations with outsiders. The axiology establishes obligations that compel some to act according to their duties, demands rights from others, and establishes judgments of character through the attribution of virtues and vices to members of the ingroup and outgroup, respectively. The unity of the collective is founded in shared aspirations to achieve something permanent for the group, transcending the finitudes of each individual (fleeting) life, and to find solace in a vicarious immersion in the universal and the eternal. Such unity is manifested in connections across generations achieved through the use of symbols, myths, stories, and icons. Stories of violence and victims, dangers and purity, establish boundaries and orders of identities that confer an existential orientation on agents of conflict, establishing their placement (as victims) in a dangerous world, offering a rationale for violent retribution, and charting paths for right actions.

We define social identity as an individual's sense of connection to a social group and the social category, a connection that affects perceptions and behaviors. Social identity is generated, confirmed, and transformed in the process of interactions between groups and individuals. And through such interactions, the individual achieves a feeling of belonging. As the salience of group identity intensifies, the group members take on notions of a shared history, common values, and local customs. With such salience providing ingroup unity, outgroup differences become more pronounced. Identity forms in the process of comparing ingroup characteristics with outgroup ones.

Our theory centers on the moral and political polarities of collectivities. As the ingroup identity becomes essentialized, outgroups are differentiated, and borders between good and bad, right and wrong, and virtue and vice appear impermeable. Nuance goes out the window as notions of ingroup purity give new life to common normative categories such as good/evil, clean/dirty, and virtuous/vicious. These categories are as relevant to soldiers preparing for combat as they are to religious extremists preparing to proselytize. In many contexts, the need to comprehend what is incomprehensible results in the emergence of stories, narratives that provide shape to horrific events and clarity to murky morality. These narratives of violence further entrench either/or thinking and provide coher-

ence to the struggle of "us against them." Such normative dualities also establish unrealizable ideals that are driven by a need to overcome hardship, struggle, and suffering yet are manifested in practices that are purposive, corrective, and potentially transformative.

It is easy to see how the rationale for domination, manipulation, or downright conquest of the outside group is created in the context of such dualities. Undergirding this rationale is a system of normative positioning not only of the militant enemy but also of the nonmilitant civilian, as we show in the chapters that follow. Each of our four causal models in the study of this positioning replicates a critical element of the enemy/innocent dynamic and in so doing sheds new light on the prevalence and hidden nature of civilian devastation in war.