Protecting cultural heritage during armed conflict tends to focus on key cultural properties: institutions such as museums and important historic or archaeological sites, especially World Heritage sites. While protecting these national institutions and sites is of utmost importance, cultural heritage also comes in other less obvious forms. In particular is that of any historic urban landscape: the buildings, places, streetscapes and monuments that define and represent a sense of place, history, memory and identity of that urban area and for the communities that inhabit it.

Given the nature of urban warfare, urban cultural heritage is vulnerable to both collateral and intentional damage and destruction. This intentional destruction may, at its extreme, be part of urbicide. Protecting urban cultural heritage from both collateral and intentional destruction is extremely difficult, made more so by a lack of understanding of the broader concept of the historic urban landscape and, beyond major monuments, what may constitute urban cultural heritage. In addition, it would seem that the significance of the destruction of the historic urban landscape as part of the political violence of urbicide is not fully realised. Using Beirut during the Lebanese civil war (1975–1990) as the main case study, this chapter explores the broader concept of the historic urban landscape and its significance; its relationship to and destruction during armed conflict; the relationship of this destruction to urbicide and the destruction of community in time as well as space; and the issue of protecting urban cultural heritage during conflict.

Introduction

Through all phases of the joint operation [in urban environments], the Joint Force Commander and staff must consider the following questions as a minimum: ...

(j) What cultural/historical sites must be preserved and how will that impact the operation due to the strategic ramification if damaged or destroyed (e.g., the Mosque, Eiffel Tower, Statue of Liberty)? (Joint Staff 2009, III-4, 5)

It is established that the mere destruction of a culture of a group is not genocide ... But there is need for care. The destruction of a culture may serve...
evidentially to confirm an intent, to be gathered from other circumstances, to destroy the group as such. (Judge Shahabuddeen at the trial of General Radislav Krstić for the genocide of Srebrenica, quoted in Bevan 2007, 208)

These two quotes highlight two perpetual problems and one seemingly irresolvable contradiction in urban cultural property protection and the military. The first problem is a widespread lack of knowledge of what constitutes cultural property in the urban context. As shall be examined, the cultural heritage of a city is much more than just individual and unique properties that exist in isolation from their surrounding landscape. The second problem is a lack of understanding of the wider connation of destruction of cultural heritage and its intrinsic link to urbicide and, as Judge Shahabuddeen suggests, genocide.

The seemingly irresolvable contradiction is that while the importance of recognising and protecting urban cultural heritage is severely undervalued by the military, the significance of destroying it, and its link to urbicide and genocide, is fully understood by those intent on carrying out such destruction.

Furthermore, the very nature of urban warfare makes urban cultural heritage—i.e. the cultural properties, the tangible and intangible values and traditions, the communities and the historic urban landscape—extremely vulnerable to destruction during armed conflict, whether it be sovereign, civil or civic war.

Given these major issues—lack of recognition, the nature of urban warfare, and intentional destruction and urbicide—attempting to protect urban cultural heritage during armed conflict is a complicated matter of which this paper is a preliminary examination. Referring to Beirut during the Lebanese civil war (1975–1990) and other case studies, this paper examines the broader concept of the urban cultural heritage and its significance; its relationship to and destruction during armed conflict; and the relationship of this destruction to urbicide and the destruction of community in time as well as space. The paper also attempts to provide some initial ways urban cultural heritage may be protected.

**Urban Cultural Heritage and Its Significance**

The physically defining aspect of the urban cultural heritage is the historic urban landscape (Figure 1: Skopje, Macedonia). Unesco, in its latest *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape*, defines the historic urban landscape as: