The Enemy of My Enemy is My Friend
The Role of Common Enemies in Post-Civil War Superordinate Identity Formation

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Uppsala University
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Master’s Thesis
Summer 2017
Word Count (Excluding Acknowledgments and Bibliography): 19,783
Abstract

This paper contributes to the literature on post-conflict identity in exploring the question: which conditions favor the success of superordinate identity formation among former conflict parties in post-civil war societies? Building on the social psychological literature on terror management theory (TMT) and optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT), it argues that the presence of a common enemy among former conflict parties increases the likelihood of successful superordinate identity formation. An in-depth qualitative comparative study on national identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) after the 1992-1995 civil war and Lebanon after the 1975-1990 civil war is conducted in order to test the theoretical arguments of this paper. The empirical findings lend preliminary support to this hypothesis, yet also point to limits in the study’s theoretical framework, including the instability of an identity predicated upon a common enemy which may not exist in the future. This paper also identifies two alternative explanations to account for the outcomes observed in the two cases, including differences in the nature of the conflicts and the different ways consociationalism has been implemented in the two countries.
Acknowledgements

Thank you, my friends and family, both new and old—in Stockholm, New York, Mallorca and everywhere in between—for showing me a love I had never dared to dream was possible. Your presence in my life is a reminder that I'm headed in the right direction. A few people deserve special mention:

Roland Kostić, the thesis advisor of my dreams: for having an unshakeable faith in me even as I doubted myself.

My parents, Olga and Mikhail: for your unconditional love and support of all of my endeavors.

Annette, my roommate, soulmate, dance partner and travel companion: for being my rock and my greatest teacher in compassion.

All of you beautiful people at the Node and Fröken Anderssons, my two homes away from home in Stockholm. You inspire me to keep being the best and truest version of myself!
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1. Introduction

The increased incidence of intrastate conflict in the post-Cold War world order has led to a shift in both research and policy regarding the scope and aims of post-war reconstruction (Goetzee and Guzina, 2008). In particular, the restoration of ties between former conflict parties has been given great attention, as this takes a very different form depending on whether the conflict is of the interstate or intrastate variety. While rebuilding ties between countries largely means restoring normal diplomatic relations and trade—and perhaps cooperating over security and economic policy as additional signifiers of mutual trust—former civil war conflict parties must continue to live together in one country after mass atrocities have eroded trust in the state and in other groups. Post-conflict reconstruction after intrastate conflict has thus been conceived of mainly through the prism of nation-building: creating the strong state institutions necessary to consolidate power over divided populations, as well as the superordinate collective identity necessary to legitimize these institutions (Talentino, 2004; von Bogdandy, Häußler, Hanschmann & Utz, 2005).

While existing scholarship recognizes both state-building and identity formation as the two pillars through which nation-building is to be achieved, in practice, both research and policy have focused on the former and neglected the latter (Talentino, 2004). Thus, while there is a lively debate regarding how to best strengthen institutions—as well as whether or not such interventions ultimately do more harm than good—there is virtually no information about how to unite conflict parties around the common values, symbols and beliefs necessary for an overarching, superordinate identity to arise. I argue that this is a critical gap in the literature, as the institutions strengthened through state-building continue to lack legitimacy in the eyes of those they govern if they are not predicated upon a strong collective identity, which decreases the likelihood of their long-term viability.

This paper contributes to the literature on identity formation in exploring the question: which conditions favor the success of superordinate identity formation among former conflict parties in post-civil war societies? Since existing literature on nation-building is so limited with respect to this question, it proposes a novel theoretical framework through which to conceptualize the process. Drawing on the social psychological literature on terror management theory (TMT) and optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT), it argues that conflict increases the need for a strong collective identity (Greenberg, Pyszczynski & Solomon, 1986),
and that such an identity is equally conditioned on a salient out-group with respect to which the collective is defined (Brewer, 1991). A common enemy creates an increased need for a strong collective identity—due to a situation of conflict—and acts as a salient-out-group with respect to which both (or all) groups can define themselves. Thus, this paper argues that the presence of a common enemy among former conflict parties increases the likelihood of successful superordinate identity formation.

An in-depth qualitative comparative study on national identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) after the 1992-1995 civil war and Lebanon after the 1975-1990 civil war is conducted in order to test the theoretical arguments of this paper. Recent literature has compared the two cases, both former Ottoman protectorates historically renowned as interethnic and multi-faith havens, succumbing to violence in part through the destructive role of regional powers (Bieber, 2000). Both conflicts ended with the signing of internationally mediated peace agreements that institutionalized group incompatibilities through the establishment or maintenance of consociational democratic systems. Despite these and other similarities, a major difference between the two cases has been the presence of a common post-civil war external enemy for former conflict parties in Lebanon—which was occupied by Israel from 1985-2000—with no equivalent occurrence in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Spyer, 2009). This paper employs Mill’s method of difference (most similar systems design) to test its hypothesis, predicting that Israel’s role as a common enemy for all Lebanese led to successful superordinate identity formation in the country, while the absence of a common enemy in BiH meant that superordinate identity failed to take hold.

The empirical findings lend preliminary support to this hypothesis, finding that a collective Lebanese identity has arisen after the civil war, whereas in Bosnia and Herzegovina, ethnonational cleavages have remained the main source of identification for the three major constituent groups (Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks), precluding the development of a unified Bosnian identity. Wielding particular explanatory power is the study’s finding that the Israeli occupation incentivized people from across civil war cleavages in Lebanon to unite against the invaders (Moaddel, 2008; Salamay & Tabar, 2012; Telhami & Zogby, 2007) while two of the three Bosnian constituent groups continued to align with Serbia and Croatia, further fragmenting the social and political divisions present in the country (Kostić, 2008; 2012). However, the analysis also finds limits in the study’s theoretical framework—including the instability of an identity predicated upon a common enemy which may not exist in the future—and identifies two alternative explanations to account for the observed
outcomes, including differences in the nature of the conflicts and the different ways consociationalism has been implemented in the two countries.

The paper is constructed as follows: Chapter two reviews previous literature on identity formation, and identifies the specific research gap in the field regarding this issue. Chapter three draws on social psychology to develop the theoretical framework and constructs the hypothesis to be tested. Chapter four outlines the methodological choices guiding the empirical analysis. Chapter five presents the cases and assesses the values of the variables of interest within the two individual case studies, while chapter six analyses the empirical findings in a comparative manner before discussing the limitations of the study as well as alternative explanations to account for the observed outcomes. Finally, in chapter seven, I conclude and summarize the main findings, and provide suggestions for future research on this topic.

2. Previous Research on Collective Identity Formation: What Do We Mean When We Say “Nation-Building”? 

The end of the Cold War marked a major shift in international relations discourse and policy (Goetzee and Guzina, 2008). Despite the increasing number of civil wars and other forms of ethnonationalist violence in the 1970’s and 80’s, international organizations such as the UN had been decidedly non-interventionist, constrained by the interests of the major powers, who vetoed resolutions that threatened their interests in their spheres of influence (Call, 2008; Call & Cousins, 2008). When they did intervene, it was as mediators and facilitators of peace accords, their goal being the cessation of armed conflict, known as negative peace. With the end of the Cold War, however, international interventions became much broader in scope, focusing not only on ending fighting, but on tackling wars’ underlying structural causes in order to prevent the reemergence of violence: this was termed positive peace.

By the latter half of the 1990’s, the dominant paradigm through which such interventions were conceived of became nation-building (Talentino, 2004). Nation-building, defined as “the process of creating a stable, centralized and cohesive state that represents a definable community” (Talentino, 2004: 559), was situated within the broader frame of the liberal peace theory—whose central tenet is that liberal democracies are less prone to waging wars with one another and—accountable to their own citizens—less likely to use violence against them (Goetzee and Guzina 2008; Chandler, 2010). Thus, the way that nation-building
envisioned the post-conflict state was as a liberal democratic one, like its European counterparts. In particular, it stressed the importance of creating inclusive, democratic state institutions that treat their heterogeneous populations equitably as precursors to a stable peace, and termed the building of such institutions state-building. As these institutions are granted legitimacy by a strong identification on the part of the governed with the state, their strength is predicated on the existence of a collective identity. Collective identity is the presence of agreed upon norms, values and behaviors that take the form of a shared national allegiance (Talentino, 2004). In a context of pre-existent sociopolitical fragmentation, such a collective identity may be called a superordinate identity, existing alongside—or superseding—narrower identities, such as those based on tribe, ethnicity, religion or political group.

In thus conceptualizing nation-building, however, nation-builders ran into a Catch 22. Just as state institutions were legitimized by a strong national identity, national identity in itself was predicated on a shared faith in and identification with state institutions (Talentino, 2004; von Bogdandy et al., 2005). The post-conflict context, characterized by weak and failed state mechanisms and structural injustice exacerbated by years of violence, was an unlikely site for either. This led researchers and policymakers to advocate for the international community to take on a custodian role in the early years of a country’s nation-building process (Paris, 2004). The majority of literature on nation-building, however, is unclear in its definition and operationalization of the term. In particular, its use of the terms state and nation—and consequently, state- and nation-building—is vague and inconsistent. According to von Bogdandy, state-building is a structural and institutional process: it means “the establishment, re-establishment, and strengthening of a public structure in a given territory capable of delivering public goods” (von Bogdandy et al., 2005: 584) and can be facilitated, supported and even partly designed by outside actors. Nation-building, meanwhile, is “the most common form of a process of collective identity formation with a view to legitimizing public power within a given territory” (586) and is thus a grassroots process occurring primarily on the social and cultural levels. For Talentino, on the other hand, state-building and collective identity formation are the two component parts of the overarching process of nation-building, defined as “the process of creating a stable, centralized and cohesive state that represents a definable community” (Talentino, 2004: 559). State-building is the building of the stable, centralized state and identity formation is the building of the definable community. This paper employs Talentino’s definitions in
conceptualizing of state-building and collective identity formation as the two pillars of nation-building.

While Talentino and von Bogdandy may not agree on the details, they at least differentiate between state- and nation-building. Most literature, however, never bothers to make such a distinction, instead using state-building and nation-building interchangeably, yet generally taking them to mean a state-centered strengthening of institutional capacity (Talentino, 2004; von Bogdandy et al., 2005). This is mirrored by the policy world’s general overemphasis on state-building while referring to it as nation-building, and is reflected in the design of international interventions, which primarily engage in institutional reform. Using Talentino’s distinction between the two facets of nation-building—function (developing government capacity) and identity—it may be argued that both research and policy focus almost exclusively on the former while taking the latter for granted: “International nation-building, therefore, pursues state-building tasks in the hopes that a stable political culture will provide an adequate environment within which identity-building can occur over time” (Talentino, 2004: 560).

However, the complications of attempting to reform state structures without accounting for—and often further marginalizing—grassroots processes of identity formation, has led to a lack of ownership of the process on the part of local populations (Bleiker, 2012; Clark, 2009; Talentino, 2007). The end result is that the state-building process is subverted, and the on-the-ground reality is not the one envisioned by the international community (Bleiker, 2012; Shaw & Lars, 2010). While literature on hegemony and structural violence has rightly condemned the coercive nature of the liberal peace, it has tended to portray common people as passive onlookers lacking agency, “guided by the disciplinary force of established rules” (Bleiker 2012: 298). However, “they are not simply faceless consumers, but active producers” (300). Indeed, in societies characterized by widespread poverty and inequality, people develop a plethora of mechanisms of resisting, subverting and co-opting structural injustice. Nation-building’s lack of attention to local needs and to grassroots processes of identity formation has thereby led groups to turn to alternative forms of identification that both respond to their needs and provide more compelling narratives of inclusion and belonging. In post-conflict settings, this has often meant reliance on the “traditional” forms of identification consolidated by nationalist parties along the very ethnonational cleavages that nation-building attempts to override.

Talentino and von Bogdandy provide alternative conceptions of an international nation-building framework that does take local needs and identities into account. Both stress
the importance of implementing state-building in tandem with grassroots processes of collective identity formation. State-building is seen as providing the “initial catalyst for identity building” (Talentino, 2004; 559), which then serves as the foundation for long-term state consolidation. For Talentino, thus, “International actors may need to nurture bottom-up processes by facilitating and funding local organizations...In the end, however, identity building cannot be forced or imposed” (560). For von Bogdandy, this means that international actors can help create the necessary structures to facilitate the development and consolidation of grassroots movements without interfering in or overriding the process by which they articulate and prioritize their goals and grievances (von Bogdandy et al., 2005).

An important component of this is serving as a bridge between various groups and initiatives, and the simultaneous building of the state’s capacity and resolve to do the same. Nothing can replace a strong and unifying state, without which local groups are disparate, isolated actors without the cooperation and shared vision of the future necessary to move beyond the local. State and international actors are thus invaluable as guarantors of security, as grassroots organizations cannot function in an environment of insecurity, which is often precisely the case after state failure. In sum, external interventions can be invaluable assets in strengthening state structures, coordinating initiatives and guaranteeing security, provided they are accountable to local grievances instead of usurping the process for their own aims.

While these authors provide frameworks for more effective state-building in line with local needs and identities, they acknowledge the limits of their and others’ work in conceiving of the way collective identities themselves are formed. As grassroots processes, they have received less attention than state-building, as both research and policy—recognizing the state as the basic building block from which identity ultimately springs—have focused on the state-building aspect of nation-building (Talentino, 2004). Accordingly, the literature on grassroots movements that does exist views these groups as local efforts for state-building rather than identity development, focusing on their ability to deliver basic goods and services that the incapacitated state is unable to provide, especially when it is unable to extend its reach within all local areas. Talentino, however, cautions against viewing local initiatives as merely “stop-gap measures to fill pressing needs or promote agendas that the state cannot” (Talentino, 2004: 568), as neither common identity beyond the local level nor the long-term state capacity can flourish without commitment from the major belligerent parties.

The only international relations literature that addresses post-conflict common identity formation is that on truth-telling and reconciliation (Clark, 2009; Shaw and Lars,
According to this approach, “the acknowledging of the suffering, developing a shared view of war-time events, and envisioning of the future by the former enemies is often seen as a strategy of social integration and engendering of national unity in the aftermath of civil wars” (Kostić, 2008). However, the fact that this literature situates itself within the transitional justice framework—as opposed to the nation-building paradigm—means that it frames its own discourse as one of attaining justice, which it presents as morally neutral and universally desired. Identity formation, on the other hand, is a deeply cultural and political process, and transitional justice’s failure and unwillingness to recognize this has led to a lack of critical self-reflection in its implementation, symptomatic of the broader liberal approach from which it stems (Clark, 2009; Chandler, 2010).

Indeed, speaking in the context of transitional justice, Clark (2009) notes that just as any other values, liberal values are not absolute moral truths, but rather products of a specific paradigm arising in particular temporal and spatial locations (Clark, 2009). Their danger lies in the fact that they have post facto mythicized themselves to have been the a priori order of things and, as self-proclaimed universalisms, propagate themselves across the world as if they were such. Furthermore, both the nation-building and transitional justice literature—embedded in political science and international relations literature—offer structural and functionalist explanations that prove inadequate to explain the individual and collective emotional, cognitive and behavioral processes intrinsic to identity formation. In developing a critical perspective on collective identity, I thus find it useful to turn to a different approach: social psychology, and particularly, terror management theory (TMT) and optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT).

3. Theoretical Framework: A Social Psychological Approach to Superordinate Identity Formation

One of the major components of collective identity is common history, also known as a “great narrative” (von Bogdandy et al., 2005: 601). It is a cultural myth-making of a common origin from which the group draws its sense of self in the present. The fact that it is a narrative means that it is dynamic and ever-evolving, contingent on historical events and processes that render certain parts salient while obscuring the importance of others. It is thus not unreasonable to believe that it is changeable. In times of intergroup conflict, however, group identity may seem fixed and irascible. Terror management theory (TMT), a social psychological approach that frames group behavior as a means of coping with existential
With a nod to earlier social psychological frameworks such as social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), TMT’s point of departure in explaining group membership and behavior is the fundamental human need for self-esteem: a positive and secure self-concept derived from a sense of belonging to the social world (Greenberg et al., 1986). The theory’s distinctiveness lies in its differing explanation for this need. According to TMT, humans are unique due to their self-awareness, which extends to the fundamental meaninglessness and randomness of the world and the possibility of sudden annihilation that can theoretically occur at any moment. The acknowledgment of an uncontrollable universe in which only death is inevitable would paralyze us with terror, which is why over time, humans have developed “cultural worldviews that imbued the universe with order, meaning and permanence” (Greenberg et al. 1986: 196).

TMT argues that cultures mitigate existential angst by serving as an “anxiety-buffer” in creating a compelling “cultural drama” through which individuals experience the world—and their actions within it—as endowed with purpose. Self-esteem, thus, “consists of viewing oneself as valuable within the context of the universal drama conveyed by the culture” (Greenberg et al. 1986: 197). Such a conception, however, is under constant threat from other, competing cultural dramas that imbue the universe with alternative meanings. The instability in self-concept that this implies is, once again, a source of existential terror, leading us to establish boundaries between in- and out-groups as a means of surrounding ourselves with those who legitimize our worldviews.

TMT research on mortality salience (MS) has shown that conflict heightens the need for self-esteem: to feel that one’s worldview is the correct one and that one is successful in embodying it. According to the concept of mortality salience, people explicitly made aware of the possibility of death defend cultural in-groups and their worldviews to attain a sense of symbolic immortality (Fritsche and Jones, 2013). It becomes increasingly important to adhere to and enforce acceptable group values and behavioral norms, as well as to maintain boundaries between the in-group and out-groups. According to TMT, this is done to minimize uncertainty in the face of existential threat, and to assure that even if the individual does not survive, the social collective to which she belongs will outlive her.

It is commonly argued that the need to maintain in-group distinctiveness in the face of threat leads to increased conflict-fueling behavior, with the dominant rhetoric describing identity becoming a militarized one (Bar-Tal, 2000; Kauffman, 1996). Members are called
upon to take up arms in defense of the group and an ethos of conflict—a term describing the belligerent attitudes and behaviors characteristic of group social life in times of collective threat (Bar-Tal, 2000)—propagated by social and cultural institutions such as media and instrumentalized by political groups as an ideological basis to gather support from a fearful and defensive population. The fundamental uncertainty of survival poses such an existential challenge to the group dynamic that individuals deviating from the collective mentality risk punishment and exclusion. This is particularly likely to occur in identity wars—or wars in which belligerent alignment occurs along ethnonational or religious fault lines—as the threat to the group is an existential one rather than a territorial or economic one (Kauffman, 1996; Roe, 2005). As Kauffman (1996) puts it: “In ethnic wars both hypernationalist mobilization rhetoric and real atrocities harden ethnic identities to the point that cross-ethnic political appeals are unlikely to be made and even less likely to be heard” (Kauffman, 1996: 7).

Nonetheless, if identity is malleable, and the way it is expressed is fundamentally a question of which behavioral norms and aspects of the group narrative are made salient, there is hope for a softening of militaristic rhetoric in favor of a more positive conception of identity. Indeed, social identity theory has shown that despite the tendency of threatened groups to mobilize around out-group hate, competing discourses stressing intergroup tolerance and cooperation also exist in every social collective (Fritsche & Jones, 2013). Since norm compliance after MS underlines a heightened need of individuals under threat to feel part of a group (the importance of collective identity is increased), we can assume that individuals will behave in whichever way is seen as most exemplary of normative standards. According to Fritsche & Jones, “highly identified group members who perceive competitive or even hostile behavior toward out-groups as being the in-group norm may become more biased and hostile when self-stereotyping. In contrast, when the in-group is seen as highly valuing the norms of fairness and tolerance, more peaceful interactions with out-group members would be expected” (Fritsche & Jones, 2013: 551).

Yet if hypernationalist mobilization and war-profiteering are so profitable to leaders, how is the transition from intergroup competition to intergroup cooperation to be made? The answer seems to lie in examining the conditions that incentivize relevant actors to partake in the spread of norms of collaboration and inclusiveness in favor of those of division and animosity. While nation-building interventions have attempted to encourage moderation by banning nationalist leaders from post-war elections, this has created backlash (Hayden, 2011). In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, the ban on nationalist leaders for non-cooperation with the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), as well as the
ICTY’s indictments, led to accusations of selective justice and bolstered support for the indicted leaders, seen as victims of politically-motivated attacks: “Heroes are sometimes made of very cheap stuff, and it apparently takes but little persecution to make a hero of a monarch” (Brown, quoted in Hayden, 2011: 322). Thus, it is crucial that the change in rhetoric come from within, or at least be seen as such.

It may be helpful to draw on known examples of superordinate identities that have been successful in uniting previously disparate—even opposing—groups. Examples include Soviet identity and Yugoslav identity, as well as pan-Arab and pan-African identity. A factor common to all of these groups is that each frames itself with respect to a clearly defined out-group. For Soviets, this function was occupied by the United States and the rest of the capitalist West. For Yugoslavs (whose country was part of the Non-Aligned Movement, it was both the United States and the Soviet Union with respect to which they were not aligned (Wilmer, 1997). For pan-Arabists, theirs was a movement to unite Middle Eastern and North African countries—most former British and French colonies—against Western political involvement. Similarly, pan-Africanists asserted a rhetoric of unifying African values predicated on struggles against White racism, slavery, colonialism and neo-imperialism (Okeke & Eme, 2011).

Indeed, according to Marilyn Brewer’s optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT), the existence of an out-group with respect to which the in-group can define itself is a key factor in collective identity formation (Brewer, 1991). According to ODT, human beings have competing needs for both inclusion and distinctiveness. Without feeling like one belongs to a collective, she is left vulnerable and marginalized, while total de-individuation provides no room for comparative self-evaluation. Thus, both in-groups and out-groups are necessary for the individual to locate herself within the social world: “Social identity can be viewed as a compromise between assimilation and differentiation from others, where the need for belonging is satisfied within in-groups, while the need for distinctiveness is met through intergroup comparisons” (Brewer, 1991: 477). Optimal distinctiveness theory thus hypothesizes that social identification will be strongest when the group both provides members with a sense of belonging and affiliation within the group and establishes clear boundaries with respect to relevant out-groups, thereby reaching a point of perfect equilibrium between the two competing needs.

To summarize thus far, TMT and ODT elucidate several key features of collective identity formation. TMT maintains that instances of mortality salience such as the presence of conflict increase the need for group belonging, embodying group norms and maintaining
in-group distinctiveness (Greenberg et al., 1986; Fritsche & Jones, 2013). ODT, on the other hand, stresses that all collectives need to position themselves with respect to relevant out-groups in order for their identities to be meaningful (Brewer, 1991). Now that we have understood the basic premises of each, it is time to synthesize the two approaches in accounting for superordinate identity formation after civil war.

Within the TMT framework, Fritsche & Jones (2013) argue that “group-based reactions to existential threat should depend not only on which in-group norm is salient in a situation but also on who is defined as the in-group. Social categorizations of ‘us’ and ‘them’ are flexible and contingent upon social situations” (Fritsche & Jones, 2013: 551) From an ODT perspective, Brewer (1991) argues that “the optimal level of category distinctiveness or inclusiveness is a function of the relative strength of the opposing drives for assimilation and individuation” (Brewer 1991: 478) which, in turn, are shaped by sociopolitical context.

Thus, TMT and ODT both recognize group identities to be fluid and subject to recategorization, rather than static and immutable wholes (Brewer, 1991; Fritsche & Jones, 2013; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). Larger and smaller groups can exist simultaneously, but the ones that people will primarily identify with are the ones made salient by the given circumstances. According to TMT (Fritsche & Jones, 2013), the salient group identity is the one experiencing threat due to mortality salience, whereas according to ODT, the salient identity is the one that both provides a strong sense of in-group inclusion and distinctiveness with respect to relevant out-groups (Brewer, 1991). In our study of superordinate identity formation after civil war, we are interested in probing the conditions under which a particular kind of in-group recategorization is likely to occur—namely, under which conditions former in-groups having fought one another are likely to be recategorized into one inclusive, superordinate group encompassing both (or all) of the former conflict parties. This identity, in turn, must be more salient than other sub-identities. Following ODT’s logic, which stipulates that the relative strengths of the opposing drives for distinctiveness and assimilation must balance each other out, it follows that in order for a need for greater group inclusivity to arise, a simultaneous increase in group differentiation with respect to other groups must occur (Brewer, 1991). Applying the TMT standpoint to this latter statement, we can deduce that an increased need for assimilation—and thus a greater level of group inclusiveness—would occur when the larger, overarching group identity is the one under threat, as this would be the in-group impacted by mortality salience (Fritsche & Jones, 2013).

Drawing on ODT, we understand that since every in-group needs an out-group with respect to which it can define itself, merely uniting groups under a superordinate identity
does not solve the question of who they would not be; each group would lose the other as a reference point for self-definition (Brewer, 1991). The answer, then, seems to lie in locating another out-group that all former conflict parties find to be a relevant reference point for self-definition. TMT has demonstrated that perceived threat leads to a strengthened sense of group identity (Fritsche & Jones, 2013), so a logical conclusion would it be that a common threat acts as a unifying factor between groups. In this paper, the term “common threat” is narrowed to “common enemy”—in which the threat is specified as a human one—a methodological choice made to accommodate the ODT precondition for a relevant out-group. The idea that a common enemy may unite groups hostile to one another provides a new lens through which to view the mechanisms proposed by realist conflict theory, which posits that “opposed group interests in obtaining scarce resources promote competition, and positively interdependent (superordinate) goals facilitate cooperation” (Tajfel & Turner 1979: 33). Defeating a common enemy is precisely such a superordinate goal, with the presence of a common enemy fulfilling both the TMT condition for mortality salience and the ODT requirement for a relevant out-group.

A common enemy as a unifying factor is supported by the examples of the aforementioned superordinate identities (Soviet, Yugoslav, pan-Arab, pan-African), as well as by Putnam & Holmer’s (1992) study on frame changes in intractable conflicts. While intractable conflicts are by definition particularly ingrained and difficult to solve, intractability itself “evolves over time through the way that parties frame their situations, enact the dispute, and interact with each other” (Putnam & Holmer, 1992: 248). The authors find that the existence of a common enemy is one of the factors with the potential to reshape deeply entrenched ways of interacting and cognitive framing, leading conflict parties to cooperate across group lines and view each other as allies rather than threats. This, in turn, provides fertile ground on which a superordinate identity may take hold at both the top-down and the grassroots level.

Political elites, realizing that external attack poses a greater threat to their grip on power than competition from other countrymen, will be incentivized to mobilize discourses of intergroup cooperation and inclusiveness with respect to constituent groups, while directing a militarized rhetoric of intergroup animosity and incompatibility against the external threat. Meanwhile, individuals experiencing mortality salience will experience a greater need to assimilate into the group under threat, making superordinate identity the stronger form of identification (Fritsche & Jones, 2013). At the same time, the external enemy tilts the assimilation-differentiation equilibrium in favor of differentiation, which a
superordinate identity can counterbalance by providing a greater degree of group inclusiveness. The evolution of elite action in tandem with public attitudes will thus be a mutually reinforcing process, further increasing the likelihood of successful superordinate identity formation, which needs both grassroots support and institutionalization by state actors in order to be consolidated (Talentino, 2004). Based on these theoretical premises, I expect former civil war conflict parties who are faced with a common enemy in the post-war context to be more likely to collaborate across former cleavages and thus, to have a greater likelihood of uniting around a common, superordinate identity.

3.1 Causal Mechanism and Hypothesis

The causal mechanism derived from the above theoretical framework may thus be articulated from both a TMT and an ODT perspective, and can be summarized as follows. Within the TMT approach, a common enemy serves as an instance of mortality salience, increasing the need for group identification (Fritsche et al., 2013). The salient group identity is the one under threat, and since a common enemy is a threat to the broader, overarching group, the need for identification with this group is increased. Thus, superordinate identity is likely to be strengthened. From an ODT perspective, the presence of a common enemy creates a new relevant out-group with respect to which in-groups must define themselves (Brewer, 1991). This shifts the balance between assimilation and distinctiveness in favor of distinctiveness, as the new out-group is an additional example of what each in-group is not. For equilibrium to be reinstated, the increased need for assimilation must be met, meaning that the in-group must be more inclusive. A larger, overarching group identity meets this requirement; thus, superordinate identity is likely to be strengthened. The diagram below maps the process.
From the above theoretical framework, I make the following hypothesis:

_Hypothesis: The presence of a common enemy increases the likelihood of successful superordinate identity formation among former civil war conflict parties._

The remainder of this paper tests this assumption through a comparative case analysis of superordinate identity formation in Lebanon and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In line with my hypothesis, I expect Lebanon—where a common enemy was present after the civil war—to have been more likely to witness successful superordinate identity formation than Bosnia and Herzegovina, where no common enemy was found. In the following section, I describe the structure and methodology of my research before gathering data and analyzing the results.

4. Research Design

In this section, I explain and motivate the methodological choices guiding this study. As I conduct empirical research, which is based on “actual, ‘objective’ observation of phenomena to achieve scientific knowledge” (Johnson and Reynolds, 2011: 7), it is important that my methodology be as clear and transparent as possible. Since science is cumulative, with studies building upon their predecessors, a clear methodology ensures that the study will be replicable by researchers wishing to study similar phenomena.

4.1 Structured, Focused Comparison

I employ qualitative methods to undertake a structured focused comparison—a variant of the comparative case study method—between post-civil war collective identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Lebanon. In the social sciences, qualitative methods are used to describe human subjectivity in ways that quantitative methods cannot, teasing out the causal mechanism through which the independent variable leads to the dependent one (Gerring, 2007; Johnson & Reynolds, 2001). While statistics are useful in gaining information regarding macro relationships between large amounts of variables and/or patterns across a broad selection of cases, they indicate correlations (the direction of the relationship between variables), without accounting for the _how_ and the _why_. Case studies thus strive to provide a more in-depth understanding of micro level processes, yet still “rest implicitly on the
existence of a micro-macro link in social behavior” (Gerring 2007: 1), thereby satisfying the scientific requirement of generalizability.

In structured focused comparisons, it is key that the research be structured: each case must be given the same scientific treatment so that the results are able to be compared and systematically analyzed. Furthermore, rather than studying all elements of a particular case, it must have a specifically-defined focus area. Both requirements exist to ensure the “orderly, cumulative development of knowledge and theory about the phenomenon in question” (George and Bennett 2005: 70).

I argue that the nature of my study is indeed best suited to such a method. The question of collective identity in post-civil war settings—and particularly, of the potential role of a common enemy on its formation—is understudied and not accounted for by the mainstream literature on nation-building (Talentino, 2004). Consequently, a large-N study is beyond the scope of this paper, as there is not sufficient data to draw from. Rather, an in-depth qualitative analysis tracing the process through which the relationship takes shape can pave the way for cutting-edge research to build on its findings by studying different cases and, eventually, approaching it through a quantitative framework.

### 4.2 Case Selection

In comparing Bosnia and Herzegovina and Lebanon, I employ Mill’s method of difference (most similar systems design), in which the cases have differing values on the independent variable, yet similar values on other relevant variables. Such a set-up mitigates against possible variable bias, in which the perceived causal relationship between the independent and dependent variables is spurious, and instead explained by an intervening variable (Gerring, 2007: 131). In accounting for as many potential confounding factors that could have contributed to different scores on the outcome (Y) variable, the most similar systems design allows us isolate the relationship between the independent and dependent variables in order to test its significance.

In addition to mitigating variable bias, Mill’s method of difference also counters selection bias, which refers to picking cases that are unrepresentative of the population of cases and/or to prove the hypothesis right. In qualitative research, this may occur when researchers—while officially selecting their cases based on the the X variable—are nonetheless aware of their cases’ Y scores, and are tempted to choose cases that support their
hypotheses (Gerring, 2007; Johnson & Reynolds, 2011). In so doing, they may overgeneralize the found relationship to a larger population of cases than that to which it really applies. The more rigorous selection process for Mill’s method of difference—which requires the presence of several control variables as criteria that cases must meet before being selected—assure that the cases are not merely chosen based on differing X and Y scores.

In studying post-conflict superordinate identity formation, we must first limit our cases to intrastate armed conflicts not ending in partition or secession, as those are the ones in which former enemies must continue living together in the same state, and thus need an overarching, collective identity to unite around. Intrastate armed conflict is a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which one is a government and the other a non-government entity, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year (UCDP; ). Here, I further narrow down intrastate conflict type to civil wars, defined as instances of intrastate armed conflict which result in at least 1000 battle-related deaths in one calendar year. I justify this scope condition because both the high death toll and nationwide polarization experienced in civil wars—while smaller armed conflicts may only affect certain segments of a population—are likely to erode groups’ trust in one another sufficiently for the links among them to splinter or break (Bar-Tal, 2000; Kauffman, 1996; Roe, 2005). It is only in the case of national identity breakdown during conflict that a study on post-conflict superordinate identity formation is meaningful. A final scope condition is for the conflicts to have ended prior to 2007, to give a 10-year period for collective identity to have been formed.

Since I am using the most similar systems design, my cases also need to agree on several other relevant control variables. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Lebanon, as well as the civil wars that emerged in each at the end of the previous century, have indeed been compared in recent years on the basis of demographic, historical and cultural parallels, yet similarities in the cases’ sociopolitical variables have not been accorded equal attention (Bieber, 2000). Thus, in comparing the two cases, I contribute not only to research on the understudied phenomenon of post-conflict superordinate identity, but also add a novel framework to existent scholarship comparing the two cases. In the following paragraphs, I provide a brief overview of the cases’ similarities and identify five relevant control variables before motivating their use in this study.

Both former parts of the Ottoman Empire, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Lebanon have historically been renowned as multi-ethnic and interfaith havens, acting as sanctuaries even as the fall of the Ottoman Empire precipitated ethnoreligious conflict and displacement
(Bieber, 2000). In both cases, neighboring countries (Israel and Syria, Serbia and Croatia) played a destructive role, with the former two justifying their intervention in Lebanon due to a preoccupation with the internationalized Palestinian crisis, and the latter two claiming to protect their ethnic brethren in BiH from extermination by other groups. This, combined with rapid and uneven industrialization and urbanization that favored certain groups at the expense of others, contributed to the consolidation of negative identity (primarily in opposition to other identities) along ethnoreligious lines. In both countries, a lack of independent media and of infrastructures fostering intergroup dialogue enabled political leaders to mobilize divisions as they vied for control over their respective constituencies. The ethnoreligious political party structures that developed during the wars—providing social services to their respective constituents, running parallel administrations in their spheres of influence and creating their own armed wings—exemplify another parallel between the two cases. Both conflicts ended through the signing of internationally mediated peace agreements (the Dayton Peace Agreement in BiH and the Taif Agreement in Lebanon) that ended in the establishment or maintenance of consociational democratic systems. From the above comparison, several control variables with the potential to impact the likelihood of successful post-war superordinate identity formation can be identified: namely, the wars’ ethnoreligious dimensions, the role of media and civil society, wartime political structures, regional involvement in the conflicts, and post-war political configuration.

First, the fact that both wars took on an ethnoreligious dimension implies that the condition of mortality salience proposed by TMT is present in both cases, as wars in which alignment occurs on the basis of identity dimensions creates the existential threat to identity necessary to render it salient. This, in turn, poses unique challenges to post-conflict intergroup unity, a point that Kauffman articulates well: “In ethnic wars both hypernationalist mobilization rhetoric and real atrocities harden ethnic identities to the point that cross-ethnic political appeals are unlikely to be made and even less likely to be heard” (Kauffman, 1996: 7).

Second, the absence of independent media meant that leaders could use news sources to mobilize national cleavages while the absence of structures to foster intergroup dialogue meant that these destructive narratives were not mitigated through direct communication between opposing parties (Bieber, 2000). These unmet preconditions are crucial in fostering a civic culture of peace even in the event of violent conflict (Varshney, 2001). Thus, we would expect that intergroup relations in both cases deteriorated considerably, leading to deeply entrenched attitudes of distrust and animosity that complicated post-war unity.
Third, the broad influence of political parties with armed wings in both cases meant that people depended on these actors—and not on a unified central authority—for goods, services and protection, thereby weakening state structures (Bieber, 2000). The absence of the strong, unifying state structures crucial for the long-term consolidation of collective identity are thus challenges faced by both cases.

Fourth, the fact that regional powers intervened on opposing sides of each conflict—acting as patrons to their respective groups—further polarized groups, which developed loyalties to competing outside actors (Kauffman, 1996). This, in turn, undermined state authorities as the sole and legitimate protectors of their constituents and meant that a plurality of actors vied for influence in shaping each nation’s wartime and post-war identity. All of these components of regional involvement create additional difficulties for a unified superordinate narrative to take shape.

Finally, the fact that both BiH and Lebanon have been consociational democracies since at least after the end of their respective civil wars means that diverging identities—such as religion and ethnicity—have been entrenched and institutionalized at the expense of integrating identities such as class. Horowitz (2014) argues that the dynamics of intraethnic competition—flanking—inherent to the framework of consociationalism can lead to the reification of ethnic divisions, with leaders rewarded by their group for taking hardline positions against other groups (Horowitz, 2014), rather than adopting a conciliatory, inclusive tone fostering the group unity required for the development of a superordinate identity.

One major difference between the two cases is the duration of the civil wars: three years in BiH and fifteen years in Lebanon. Protracted conflicts are characterized by higher death tolls, as well as by escalation and increased complexity “as issues and numbers of parties grow and interweave, often crossing multiple layers of social systems (Putnam & Holmer, 1992). These factors, in turn, make them more likely to result in deeply entrenched societal polarization and thus, pose a greater challenge to intergroup unity. According to this reasoning, superordinate identity formation is expected to face more difficulties in Lebanon after its fifteen-year war than in BiH after its three-year war.

However, I argue that such variation does not compromise my study. If it were indeed salient, the impact of this variable would be in contradiction to my hypothesis, which expects the case in which a common enemy is present (Lebanon) to enjoy greater success. Since the duration variable is expected to alter the relationship in the opposite direction to that of my prediction, it does not interfere with my research design in a way that would lend false support to my hypothesis (Gerring, 2007; Johnson & Reynolds, 2011).
4.3 Operationalization of the Theoretical Framework

In order to test the theoretical arguments of this paper, as well as the hypothesis derived thereof, concepts must be operationalized. Thus, the presence or absence of a common enemy, as well as the degree to which a superordinate identity is present, must be formulated in terms of measurable indicators. Furthermore, the chosen method of structured, focused comparison requires a set of questions asked of both cases to guide the empirical analysis (George & Bennett, 2005).

The independent variable of this study—the presence of a common enemy—is treated as a dichotomous variable where:

\[ X = 1 \text{ when former conflict parties are faced with a common enemy} \]
\[ X = 2 \text{ when former conflict parties have no common enemy} \]

The question asked of each case in order to determine its value on the independent variable is “Was the same actor perceived as a threat by citizens from all groups who fought each other during the civil war?” If so, \( X = 1 \) and if not, \( X =2 \).

The dependent variable of this study—superordinate identity formation—is also analyzed as a dichotomous variable:

\[ Y = 1 \text{ if superordinate identity formation among former conflict parties is successful} \]
\[ Y = 2 \text{ if superordinate identity formation among former conflict parties is unsuccessful} \]

The question asked of each case in order to determine its value on the dependent variable is “Is the superordinate group the primary locus of identification for each subgroup?” If so, \( Y = 1 \) and if not, \( Y =2 \). In this question, the word “primary” is key. As ODT and TMT argue that multiple identities—such as Lebanese and Maronite or Lebanese and Arab—can exist side by side, I aim to measure the relative salience of each identity that a person or group may simultaneously hold. Successful superordinate identity formation is thus operationalized as not merely the existence of a common identity, but the precedence of that
identity over other sub-identities. I argue that if such is not the case, common identity will not survive rifts along ethnic or religious lines in the case of renewed conflict.

In addition to the above question, three secondary indicators—unifying national symbols, a common language and a unified education system—are used to undertake a more rigorous test of the dependent variable, and to aid us in subsequently analyzing observed outcomes. They are particularly helpful in mitigating a discrepancy between the operationalization of the Y variable as dichotomous and the construction of the hypothesis in terms of scale (superordinate identity formation is seen as more likely to be successful in the presence of a common enemy). This would not pose a problem in analyzing the results if one case scored a “1” on the dependent variable and the other scored a “2”; in such an instance, we could still compare them in terms of being more or less likely, as a “yes” clearly implies greater likelihood than a “no.” However, if both cases scored a “1” or both scored a “2”, the results would be inconclusive if we only used our guiding question. In such a situation, the case with the greatest amount of indicators present would be the one considered “more successful.”

The indicators are derived from Deutsch and Foltz’s (1966, cited in Kostic 2008) theory of national political identity as comprised of four key requirements: common symbols and rituals, language, education and mass media. Common symbols enshrine the performance of national identity by “designating a certain group to form collective emotional memories and experiences” (Koschut, 2013: 539) while rituals “function as mechanisms to synchronize individual emotional states, to define social roles and status, commit members to future actions and sharpen the boundaries between insiders and outsiders” (539). However, Koschut cautions that symbols and rituals are only meaningful if they are viewed as legitimate by the populations they claim to represent (542). Thus, in asking whether national symbols are “unifying,” I am interested in examining whether or not groups from all sides of the civil war identify with them.

The second indicator—a common language—acts as both a unifying symbol and a signifier of the possibility of close and direct communication between different groups. Its use in public institutions ensures these groups’ equal access to the state and public sector structures meant to represent them (Deutsch and Foltz, 1966; in Kostić, 2008). The third indicator—a unified education system—is necessary to consolidate the values and norms of a collective identity, as well as to provide a shared understanding of the groups’ common history, including their violent past. While Deutsch and Foltz’s suggestion of mass media as a fourth indicator is well-taken—media is indeed crucial in the spread of the societal norms and
values buttressing collective identity—a comparative evaluation of media’s role in BiH and Lebanon would be an interesting topic for another paper, yet is too broad and multi-faceted to be consolidated into an indicator in this paper’s research design, and is thus beyond the scope of this master thesis.

4.4 Time Frame

This paper analyzes the case of Lebanon from 1998 until the present day. While the Lebanese Civil War ended in 1990, the Israeli occupation of Lebanon until 2000 and the Syrian occupation until 2005 profoundly shaped both the country’s domestic and foreign policy. In particular, Syrian control over Lebanon stifled dissenting voices questioning the Damascus-imposed Arabist vision of Lebanon while Israeli control of the country’s south meant that a large section of the Lebanese population was too preoccupied with ending the occupation to debate national identity (Salamey & Tabar, 2012).

While Salamey and Tabar argue that 2005 was a turning point, as “Lebanese for the first time since 1975 had the opportunity to re-examine their national identity free from direct foreign intervention” (2), I begin in 1998 as “a critical moment (for Lebanon) in its relationships with its two neighboring powers of Israel and Syria” (Riskedahl, 2005: 13). Indeed, the final years before the Israeli pullout witnessed increased identity-building through appeals by the state and Hezbollah for Lebanese unity, mirrored by the mass mobilization of people through protests and other forms of collective action. In my view, the 1998-2005 period did much to shape the basis on which the post-2005 debate would take place.

I further argue that while Israel withdrew from Lebanon in 2000, this did not signal the end of its status as an “enemy state” among Lebanese. This is largely due to the fact that while Israel has not been at war with the Lebanese state since 2000, the constant border skirmishes in the south of Lebanon and the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War have meant that Lebanese have continued to see Israel as a threat (Spyer, 2009). Thus, the post-1998 period is an acceptable time frame in which to measure the impact of Israel as a common enemy on superordinate identity formation in Lebanon.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the other hand, is studied from the end of the war on 14 December 1995 until the present day. While BiH has not been formally occupied by a foreign country since the end of the civil war, the extensive powers wielded by the United Nations through its High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Office of the High Representative (OHR) have meant that the country has not enjoyed de facto sovereignty since
the end of the war (Kostić, 2007; 2008; 2012). The OHR, originally created to aid in the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement, was granted additional powers at its 1997 Bonn meeting, among them the right to adopt binding decisions when local powers are seen as unable or unwilling to act (Hayden, 2011), which it used when local leaders could not agree on designs for national symbols (Kostić, 2008). Accordingly, the OHR has played a substantial role in shaping post-conflict identity in BiH until 2005, when the direct protectorate phase began to end. However, I argue while the OHR’s strategies of liberal peace-, state- and nation-building have both fostered and constrained the development of identity(ies) in BiH, they cannot be likened to the direct military occupations experienced by Lebanon until 2005. Thus, while the pre- and post-2005 periods have differed with respect to the extent of OHR influence, the difference is one of degree rather than a clear-cut, drastic shift like the one experienced by Lebanon in the years leading up to the withdrawal of Israeli and Syrian forces. Thus, the post-1995 period in BiH is treated as one measurable unit.

4.5 Data Collection

In conducting my analysis, I use primary sources—such as sociological surveys and official government records—to determine the cases’ values on the dependent and independent variables. I contextualize the findings and subsequently analyze them by drawing on books and articles by scholars of political science, sociology, anthropology, European studies, Middle Eastern studies and social psychology, as well as experts on the cases themselves. The broad range of fields synthesized in this paper is a testament to the difficulty of studying identity solely from a political science perspective, embodied in the paucity of political science research on the collective identity formation aspect of nation-building. As such, this paper emphasizes interdisciplinarity as a practice with the capacity to enrich each of the fields it draws from and views the future of research as one based on interdisciplinary collaboration rather than competition for a supposed monopoly on truth.

4.6 Structure of Analysis

The subsequent empirics section provides some background information on identity in BiH and Lebanon before turning to the variables of interest. Chapter 6 analyzes the results within each case and compares them across the cases, reflecting back to the theoretical framework of the study and discussing the degree to which the theory tested is supported by
the empirical evidence from the two cases. The latter parts of the Analysis section discuss the implications of the findings for research in the field and examine the possibility of alternative explanations for the observed outcomes. The conclusion summarizes the findings and suggests avenues for further research.

5 Empirics

In this section, I present some background information on the cases of Lebanon and BiH and measure their scores on the dependent and independent variables.

5.1 Superordinate Identity in Lebanon

At different points ruled by Phoenicians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, Persians, Arabs, Ottomans and French, Lebanon has long been a uniquely heterogeneous part of the Middle East (Nassar, 1995; Fakhoury Muehlbacher, 2008). In its modern history as an Ottoman province turned French mandate, its brief independence lasted from 1943 until 1976, when it was occupied by Syrian forces until 2005, during which parts of the country’s south were also occupied by Israel from 1982 until 2000. Home to eighteen officially acknowledged religious groups (Mooney 2007: 3), Lebanon has long seen external actors—including France, Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Israel—competing for power and influence within its borders (Nassar, 1995). This combination of factors has created a multi-faceted Lebanese identity in which groups have historically collaborated with different regional and international powers in order to maintain leverage with respect to other groups and their patrons.

In such a political terrain, competing nationalisms have emerged, each seeking to define the identity of the Lebanese nation and the political direction of the Lebanese state (Fakhoury Muehlbacher, 2008). With the end of the French mandate in 1943, in which Christians—and particularly Maronites—had been accorded preferential political status, the Maronites feared losing their privilege, with the radical Phalangists fighting to establish a Christian mini-state in Lebanon and the rest advocating for Lebanon’s continued status as a Western-style market economy. Meanwhile, leftist/Muslim coalitions resentful of Christian political dominance wanted greater integration in the broader Middle East, aligning themselves with Syria and its vision of Arab socialism. This occurred in tandem with the rise of the Shia—traditionally the poorest and least politically represented of the confessional
groups—as a political community in the 1970’s, whose more religious currents looked to post-1979 Iran as a model for an Islamic theocracy in Lebanon (Nassar, 1995; Fakhoury Muehlbacher, 2008). Meanwhile, regional actors such as Syria, Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) exploited domestic tensions in Lebanon to advance their own interests in the region.

The civil war of 1975-1990 was thus in part an attempt to orient the country towards either the broader Arab-Islamic world or a Lebanese particularist identity with strong ties to the West: “the lack of consensus regarding Lebanon’s strategic mission in the Arab world...and the degree of involvement in the Palestinian crisis has left the republic in a state of oscillation between regional and ‘particularist’ tendencies, unable to integrate fully into the Middle Eastern orbit, or disengage from the Arab-Israeli conflict” (Fakhoury Muehlbacher, 2008: 2). While the 1989 signing of the Taif Agreement ending the war clearly defined Lebanon as an Arab country, it occurred in the absence of a decisive military victory and Syria’s presence as a guarantor of security (Mooney, 2007; Parisciani, 2012) . This meant that the war ended as a stand-off rather than signaling a decisive new order. The fragility of such a peace has meant that the country, afraid of renewed sectarian conflict, has never confronted its own complicity in its violent past, with scholars referring to the dominant post-war narrative as “state-sponsored amnesia” (Nasr, 2008; Larkin, 2010). Meanwhile, the amnesty law included in the peace agreement enabled belligerents to transition from being militia leaders to politicians, while the Syrian occupation would continue for another fifteen years and the Israeli one a further ten.

This combination of factors seems to suggest that the wartime status quo of Lebanon’s ambiguous identity, sectarian incompatibilities, political grievances and regional actors’ exploitation of them has largely been maintained. However, at least one major change has occurred since the civil war period. While some Christian factions initially allied with Israel—in particular, the radical Phalangist factions who welcomed its 1982 invasion to counter Syria—by the end of the war, all political actors in Lebanon were opposed to Israel (Nassar, 1995; Spyer, 2009)). This shift occurred mainly due to the weakening popularity of the Phalangists even in Maronite circles after the Phalangist massacres of Palestinian civilians at two refugee camps and the rise of the Hezbollah-led Shia resistance to Israel. The Muslims’ show of force and the Phalangists’ demise incentivized Maronites to improve their relations with their Muslim neighbors, which was incompatible with allying with Israel. According to Spyer, “Israel's alliance with the Maronites derived from a faulty analysis of the
real balance of forces in Lebanon... Israel overestimated the strength of their Maronite allies, their sincerity, and their ability to impose their wishes on the rest of Lebanon” (Spyer, 2009).

While a historical overview of post-civil war relations between Israel and Lebanon clearly shows that the states of the two countries are political enemies, it does not demonstrate whether Israel has been perceived as an enemy by people from groups across civil war cleavages. Here, we go back to the question posed in the research design to evaluate whether or not our independent variable—the existence of a common enemy—is present in this case.

Question: Was the same actor perceived as a threat by citizens from all groups who fought each other during the civil war?

To answer this question, we must first define what is meant by “all groups”. In the Lebanese Civil War, a plethora of militias fought in the war at various times, with some disintegrating and giving way to new ones. However, regardless of the specific groups engaged in the conflict at a given moment, the major religious denominations they represented were the Shia, the Sunni, the Christians (of many sects) and the Druze (Nassar, 1995; Fakhoury Muehlbacher, 2008). While other groups partook in the conflict (including regional actors such as the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)), these groups are not included in the term “Lebanese” and thus are not considered in our study of the country’s superordinate identity. To determine whether or not a common enemy exists in Lebanon, we must thus measure perceptions among the four aforementioned Lebanese constituent groups.

Moaddel’s (2008) survey found that 87% of those surveyed— and at least 82% in each of the four groups—responded “very negative” when asked how they perceived Israel’s role in the political problems plaguing Lebanon (Moaddel, 2008). Similarly, Telhami’s (2007) survey found that 80% of respondents named Israel as one of two countries that posed the greatest threat to them (Telhami, 2007). The results are summarized in the following table:
From the above information, we see that a vast majority (all reported figures are above 70%) of members of all groups having fought on all sides of the Lebanese Civil War viewed Israel as a threat. Thus, the value of the independent variable in Lebanon is $X = 1$, meaning that a common enemy is indeed present.

Next, we turn to the dependent variable: superordinate identity formation. The question we ask of our case is “Is the superordinate group the primary locus of identification for each subgroup?”

In Lebanon, this question is once more directed at the Sunni, Shia, Christians and Druze. Moaddel (2008) finds that 67% of respondents—and a majority in each of the four groups—list “Lebanese” as their primary identity, followed by religious identity (25%) and Arab identity (4%). Telhami (2007) and Salamey and Tabar (2012) report similar findings, with 78% of Telhami’s respondents and 76% of Salamey and Tabar’s self-identifying as Lebanese above all. The results are presented in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunni</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shia</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Druze</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Moaddel (2008): “What is your primary conception of identity?”</td>
<td>Telhami (2007): “Which of the following identities is most important to you?”</td>
</tr>
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<td>---------</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% mentioning “Lebanese” % mentioning religion % mentioning “Arab”</td>
<td>% mentioning “Lebanese” % mentioning religion % mentioning “Arab”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni</td>
<td>62 31 6</td>
<td>74 11/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shia</td>
<td>61 29 6</td>
<td>70 22 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>71 22 1</td>
<td>75 24 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Druze</td>
<td>96 3 1</td>
<td>86 8 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>67 25 4</td>
<td>78 14 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the above information, once again a vast majority of people—with all figures reported above 60%—from all of the Lebanese constituent groups view themselves as Lebanese above religious or Arabist affiliations. Thus, the value of the independent variable in Lebanon is $Y = 1$, meaning that a superordinate identity is the primary locus of identification for all groups.

We now move on to our three secondary indicators of common identity: unifying national symbols, a common language and a unified education system. In assessing the value of the first indicator, we find that no surveys have been conducted regarding people’s views on national symbols. However, we do find that the main organization contesting Lebanese sovereignty after the war’s end—Hezbollah—has flown the Lebanese flag at rallies alongside the Hezbollah flag since the party removed the goal of creating a separate Islamic state in Lebanon in 1992 (Norton, 2000; Riskedahl, 2005). They have also begun to chant the Lebanese national anthem at rallies, seen as part of their strategy to portray the resistance movement against Israel as belonging to all Lebanese. Currently, the fact that no debate on
the matter exists points to the fact that the issue is non-controversial, and that the legitimacy and unifying power of national symbols is uncontested, even by Hezbollah.

According to the Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) in Lebanon, 99% of Lebanese citizens speak the Lebanese Arabic dialect and 31% above the age of fifteen also speak French, while 22% also speak English. Thus, a common language (Lebanese Arabic) exists, and Arabic is also defined as the national language of Lebanon in the country’s constitution, with its use mandated in all national institutions (CAS 2012).

As for education, CAS Lebanon notes that approximately two-thirds of the Lebanese population attends private schools (CAS, 2012). However, the curricula of these schools must still meet the criteria of the national curriculum, regulated by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, so this, in itself, does not mean the system lacks unity. However, a significant finding is that history textbooks only cover national history until 1943, the year of independence from France. Indeed, the last unified history curriculum dates to 1946, with contentious subjects such as religious diversity, local politics and the civil war excluded from teaching syllabi and discussions (Nasr, 2008; Larkin, 2010; Ghosn and Khoury, 2011). Since education is a crucial vector for a common understanding of the past—and particularly for reconciliation in a post-civil war context (Kostić, 2008)—the lack of a unified history curriculum is interpreted as a “no” on the unified education system indicator.

The implications of the above findings are discussed in the subsequent “Analysis” section. Meanwhile, we turn to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

5.2 Superordinate Identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The development of national identities in Bosnia and Herzegovina is inseparable from those of neighboring Serbia and Croatia (Wilmer, 1997; Babuna, 2006). The Serbian and Croatian national movements—which emerged in the late 19th century—both originally considered the Muslim Bosnians as either Islamicized Serbs or Croats (Babuna, 2006: 405). However, the Austro-Hungarian occupation of BiH from 1878 until 1918 saw efforts to create a territorially-based “Bosnian nation” to counter Serbian and Croatian nationalism. While these efforts failed, they did contribute to the formation of a national consciousness among Bosnian Muslims. Indeed, the post-World War II resurgence of nationalism in BiH first occurred among Muslims, who lobbied for recognition in the late 1960’s (Wilmer 1997: 10), granted them in 1968 by the communist regime, who saw in them an effective buffer
against rising Serbian and Croatian nationalism. Croats, in turn—concerned with Serbian political, cultural and economic hegemony and increasingly interested in economic liberalization—had a “Croatian spring” in 1971. While the movement was quashed by Yugoslav president-for-life Josip Broz Tito, its revival of Nazi-era uestaša national symbols such as the sahovnica led to the resurfacing of World War II traumas among Serbs (Wilmer, 1997). These movements came to a head in the 1990’s and this time, with no Tito to quash them, led to the outbreak of war.

The Bosnian War, which lasted from 1992 until 1995, arose in a tense political and economic climate in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Yugoslav identity had been fundamentally predicated on the existence of a strong, unifying state with Tito as its figurehead (Bieber, 2000: 271). The 1980 death of Tito plunged the country—which had been relatively prosperous and successful prior to the 1980’s—into crisis. The combination of economic stagnation and state weakness was compounded by a fragmentation in the country’s collective identity after the death of its leader and further, with the end of the Cold War, during which the SFRY’s status as non-aligned had given its citizens a clear collective purpose (Wilmer, 1997). In the 1990’s, nationalist leaders exploited people’s economic concerns and the collapse of Yugoslav civic identity to consolidate their grip on power along ethnonational lines. Aided by sensationalist, state-controlled mass media, these leaders brought up past traumas—such as the extermination of hundreds of thousands of Serbs at the hands of Croatian uestaše during World War II—to mobilize the country’s three major constituent groups (Catholic Croats, Orthodox Serbs and Muslim Bosniaks) against one another. The conflict was regionalized as Serbia and Croatia intervened to aid their ethnic kin, while the Bosniaks received most of their support from mujahideen from other Islamic countries.

As we turn to our variables—the presence of a common enemy in the post-conflict period, and superordinate identity formation—a few conditions present in post-civil war BiH provide valuable context as we measure their value. First, BiH is divided into two constitutional and legal entities—the predominantly Croat and Bosniak Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the mainly Serb Republika Srpska (Kostić, 2005). Second, while post-Dayton BiH has not experienced a recurrence of armed conflict, neither within the country nor against an external actor, it has seen Serbia and Croatia—both guarantors of the Dayton Peace Accords—continue to wield considerable economic, political and cultural influence among Bosnian Serbs and Croats. The above points highlight the transnationality of the terms “Serb” and “Croat”, an important characteristic of BiH signaling the inadequacy of
dichotomous conceptions of internal and external actors in describing this case. Furthermore, as the Bosnian Serbs and Croats remain closely aligned with different neighboring countries and are amongst themselves divided into two largely autonomous entities, notions of “common” enemy or “collective” identity are hypothesized to be highly difficult to find, particularly given the absence of armed conflict with a third party.

In analyzing the independent variable—the presence of a common enemy—the question we attempt to answer is, once again: “Was the same actor perceived as a threat by citizens from all groups who fought each other during the civil war?”

In this case, “all groups” refers to the Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks. Given the absence of any post-civil war armed conflict in BiH, no surveys on Bosnians’ perceptions of external threat were found. As a proxy, we turn instead to Kostić’s sociological surveys—conducted in 2005 and again in 2010—probing local attitudes in BiH, which show that Bosnians’ views of wartime events and actors are dramatically divergent and consolidated around ethnonational cleavages. For example, while 95% of Bosniaks and 73% of Croats in 2005 saw the war as an outside aggression, 84% of Serbs considered it a civil war. For 97.9% of Bosniaks and 88.9% of Croats, the aggression came from Serbia and Montenegro, whereas only 2.5% of Serbs “agreed” or “mostly agreed” with this statement (Kostić, 2008). For 87.1% of Bosniaks, Croatia also attacked BiH, while only 44% of Serbs and 9% of Croats “agreed” or “mostly agreed” with this statement (Kostić, 2008). Thus, nearly all Croats and Bosniaks saw Serbia as a threat during the war, whereas most Bosniaks and a little less than half of Serbs held similar views of Croatia.

Similarly, when asked to name the military force they considered to be “the defender” in the war, 91% of Bosniaks in 2010 chose the BiH Army (Armija BiH), while 92% of Croats chose the Croatian Defense Council (HVO) and 88% of Serbs chose the Army of Republika Srpska (Vojska RS) (Kostić, 2012). This post-conflict tendency of each group to see itself as having been the primary victim of the war—and other groups or their transnational brethren as aggressors—coupled with the failure of reconciliation efforts in BiH to bring about frame changes (Kostić, 2007; 2008; 2010; Stefansson, 2010) leads us to infer that narratives about who is an enemy in the post-war period also differ radically among the three groups. Thus, the value of the independent variable is $X = 2$, meaning that no common enemy exists in the case of BiH. The key findings (Kostić, 2012: 8) are summarized in the following tables.
In your view, which of these is the best representation of the last war in BiH? (% in 2005, % in 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Belonging</th>
<th>Aggression</th>
<th>Civil war</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bosniak</td>
<td>95.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serb</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>83.6</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croat</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please tell us, according to you, which of these military forces can best be characterized as defenders in the last war? (% in 2005, % in 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Belonging</th>
<th>HVO</th>
<th>Armija BiH</th>
<th>Vojska RS</th>
<th>Vojska AP Zapadne Bosne</th>
<th>JNA</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bosniak</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>91.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serb</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>89.6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croat</td>
<td>92.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kostić’s surveys show that not only do the three Bosnian constituent groups disagree about wartime events and actors, they diverge on just about everything from the ideal structure of the Bosnian Federation to its education system and language to the impact of OHR interventions (Kostić, 2008; 2012). In turning to the dependent variable—superordinate identity formation—we ask “Is the superordinate group the primary locus of identification for each subgroup?” in order to test the assumption that the three groups diverge on this point as well.
The 2013 census in BiH—the first since the war—shows that Bosnians continue to identify along ethno-religious lines, with 50.11% identifying as Bosniaks, 30.78% as Serbs, 15.43% as Croats and 2.73% as Others (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina). The latter 2.73% include those choosing to identify as “Bosnians”, or citizens of BiH whose ethno-religious identity is not a defining trait. Kostić’s surveys yield similar findings, finding that over 90% of each of the three groups identify with their confession when describing their “national belonging”, with only 3% of total respondents not identifying with a confessional group (Kostić, 2008). Moreover, 53.5% of Bosniaks, 69.8% Croats and 46.1% of Serbs consider ethnonational belonging “an important part of my life” while only 3% of respondents view it as irrelevant.

Further proof of the lack of superordinate identification in BiH is the respondents’ answers to the prompt: “Members of different nations live in our country. In your opinion, what would an ideal multicultural (multinational) society look like?” (318). 42.5% of respondents envisioned a society of cohabitation without mixing, 40.4% were supportive of some mixing provided that each group could keep its own culture, and only 20.6% imagined a society where national belonging was irrelevant (Kostić, 2012). This is interpreted to mean that for most locals, ethno-religious identification takes precedence over a superordinate national identity—whether real or imagined—so the dependent variable takes on a value of Y = 2, meaning that superordinate identity formation has not been successful. Key findings from Kostić’s surveys are summarized below.

Do you consider yourself a member of any religious community? (Percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Belonging</th>
<th>Bosniak</th>
<th>Croat</th>
<th>Serb</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>97.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>96.5</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>755</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>2478</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How would you best describe your relation to your national belonging? (Percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance of belonging</th>
<th>Bosniak</th>
<th>Croat</th>
<th>Serb</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National belonging has no relevance for my life.</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I accept it, but don’t think of it much.</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National belonging is an important part of my life.</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>69.8</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>56.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>755</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>2478</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bosnians’ views on the three secondary indicators—national symbols, language and education—are also explored by Kostić (2008; 2012). In BiH, the presidency’s inability to agree on the design of a state currency, flag and national anthem led to the formation of a committee—led by the High Representative of the United Nations—to decide on the matter. At the same time, the use of ethno-national symbols by court and police officials in BiH was prohibited by the OHR, a combination of factors that led to a heated debate at both the popular and elite levels.

Most of Kostić’s Serb and Croat respondents did not identify with the new symbols, seeing them as an outside imposition with no personality or links to their own cultures and identities. Furthermore, they viewed the ban on ethnonational symbols as a restriction on the basic freedoms of speech and expression that the international community was supposedly there to protect, and thus condemned it as hypocritical. Rather, they respectively identified with Serbian and Croatian symbols when these were presented as options. Indeed, 76% of Croats choose the Croatian anthem over the Bosnian one while 93% of Serbs chose the Serbian one over that of BiH (Kostić, 2008). Only the Bosniaks displayed a high degree of identification with regard to the state flag, coat of arms, national holiday and national anthem, which serves to underscore the fact that the symbols are not unifying: while overwhelming
support (amongst the Bosniaks) and opposition (amongst the Serbs and Croats) to symbols have created intra-group unity for each demographic, they have further polarized the three groups with respect to one another.

Language in BiH and indeed—throughout the former Yugoslavia—is a topic of continued heated debate. While Serbo-Croatian was the official language of BiH during the SFRY, Serbian and particularly Croatian nationalist currents claimed that Serbian and Croatian were actually two distinct languages rather than dialects of the same language (Wilmer, 1997). Following the actions of Croat and Serb elites, who campaigned for the recognition of their own homonym variant of the national language at the signing of the Washington Agreement in 1994, Bosniak elites did the same, with the language first called Bosniak and then Bosnian.

Kostić (2008) finds that in 2005, 97.1% of Bosniaks spoke Bosnian or Bosniak, while 97.9 and 92.8 of Serbs and Croats, respectively, spoke Serbian or Croatian. Meanwhile, while most Bosniaks and Serbs (88.7 and 87.6, respectively) agreed that the three variants are either the same language or mainly the same with some small differences, 48.8% of Croats considered them three separate languages, with 11.4% viewing them as “entirely different” (Kostic, 2008: 296). While the three groups have no problem communicating, and typically use “neutral” language when in mixed company—even referring to their language as naš jezik - our language, and avoiding the terms Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian (Stefansson, 2010), their insistence on the existence of three separate, official languages, leads me to conclude that while a common language exists, it is not a unifying element in BiH.

As for education, each of the three constituent groups has its own national curriculum—with Serbs and Croats using the curricula of Serbia and Croatia—containing negative stereotypes about the other groups and serving as an identity builder (Kostić, 2005). Prominently, history textbooks present the respective group’s own version of the war which, as we have seen, means that three diametrically opposed group narratives are enshrined in the BiH education system. Kostić’s surveys find that while 90.9 percent of Bosniaks support a unified curriculum, only 21.2% of Croats and 16.0% of Serbs feel the same way, further proof that education in BiH is neither unified nor unifying (Kostic, 2008).

Now that the empirical findings from both cases have been presented, I proceed to an analysis of the results.
6. Analysis

I begin this section by summarizing the results found in the previous section and comparing them to the expected outcomes derived from the theoretical framework. In so doing, I test the explanatory power of my model before undertaking an in-depth discussion of its merits and limitations. I conclude this section by exploring two alternative explanations for the outcomes observed in the two case studies.

6.1 Main Analysis

The results from the “Empirics” section may be summarized as follows:

**Independent and Dependent Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Common enemy (X)</th>
<th>Superordinate identity (Y-expected)</th>
<th>Superordinate identity (Y-observed)</th>
<th>Support for hypothesis?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>X = 1 (Yes)</td>
<td>More likely</td>
<td>Y = 1 (Yes)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BiH</td>
<td>X = 2 (No)</td>
<td>Less likely</td>
<td>Y = 2 (No)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Indicators for Superordinate Identity Formation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Unifying national symbols</th>
<th>Common language</th>
<th>Unified education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BiH</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes*</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*While all of the official languages (Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian) spoken in Bosnia and Herzegovina are mutually intelligible, the constituent groups insist on maintaining distinctions among the three variants. Thus, while a common language can be said to exist, language is not a unifying element in BiH.
The hypothesis formulated in the “Theory” section of this paper was that the presence of a common enemy would lead to an increased likelihood of post-conflict superordinate identity formation among former conflict parties. Of the two cases studied, a common enemy (Israel) was present in Lebanon, whereas in Bosnia and Herzegovina, no threat united all former belligerents. Therefore, a superordinate identity was hypothesized to be more likely to have taken root in Lebanon than in BiH. Indeed, in Lebanon, a common identity was shown to exist after 1998, as each of the groups identified more with the Lebanese nation then it did with religious or pan-Arab identity. In BiH, the groups’ continued attachment to their ethnonational affiliations (Kostić, 2008; 2012) overrode the possibility of a successful overarching identity after 1995; a superordinate identity was not found to exist. While the results thus far offer preliminary support to the study’s hypothesis, it is crucial to more deeply probe the causal mechanism to understand how and why it works before drawing a definitive conclusion. In so doing, we put the theoretical framework to a more rigorous test, evaluating both its merits and limitations before discussing the potential effectiveness of alternative explanations in accounting for the observed outcome.

In Lebanon, post-civil war unity in the face of Israel has been propagated by various sectors of Lebanese society, some of them seemingly unlikely. Notably, Hezbollah, whose 1985 manifesto included the goal of forming a separate Shia Islamic state in Lebanon, has adopted a radically different tone since its 1992 transition into a political party in the midst of the ongoing conflict with Israel (Norton, 2000; Riskedahl, 2005). The day after the withdrawal of Israeli forces in 2000, the party’s leader, Nasrallah, addressed a crowd of mostly Shia supporters stressing the importance of Lebanese unity in bringing Israel to its knees, and declaring the withdrawal as “a victory for all Lebanese” (Riskedahl, 2005: 116). Similarly, then-President Émile Lahoud urged the Lebanese to remain united in the face of the 2006 Israeli offensive against Hezbollah, with whom both he and current president Michel Aoun have allied since it became clear that the resistance movement would fail without the party. On the grassroots level, the 2000 CNN protests condemning the lack of media coverage of the Israeli bombings drew a crowd of high school and university students representing all confessional groups. One year earlier, a group of over one thousand students of an equally diverse grouping had marched to liberate the border town of Ammoun. The students’ chants emphasizing the tropes of national unity and collective resistance “showed a building momentum for unity of action among Lebanese citizens, a sense of common national goals in the new generation” (Riskedahl, 2005; 130).
These events are particularly striking given the country’s trajectory from the end of the French protectorate in 1943 until the end of the civil war in 1990. At the time of French withdrawal, Lebanese identity was already fragmented among competing nationalisms, and polarization along religious lines increased as the civil conflict loomed (Nassar, 1995). According to Druze leader Jumblatt, speaking one year into the war: “Confessionalism has prevented the achievement of a unified national identity in Lebanon, and because of confessionalism two corresponding nationalities have emerged: Lebanese Christian Maronite nationalism and Arab Islamic nationalism” (Nassar, 1995: 254-255). The former looked to the West as a model for a culturally European and economically market capitalist society, while the latter sought integration within the broader Arab-Islamic world and subscribed to the Syrian-led vision of Arab socialism. The above statement from the 1970’s provides a very stark contrast to the rhetoric of intergroup unity and collective action of the late 1990’s and the early 2000’s, thus signaling the occurrence of major change.

These developments in Lebanon can be explained through the work of TMT and ODT on both the top-down and the grassroots levels. The conflict with Israel, as an example of mortality salience (TMT), meant that group belonging and identity took on greater importance than they would have had in times of peace. However, since the Israeli invasion first occurred during the civil war, it is arguable that mortality salience had already occurred in the Lebanese case. With the end of the civil war and the continuation of the Israeli occupation, what did change was the salient in-group. Recall that according to the TMT framework, Fritsche and Jones argue that “group-based reactions to existential threat should depend not only on which in-group norm is salient in a situation but also on who is defined as the in-group.” (Fritsche and Jones, 2013; 551). After the end of the civil war, Lebanese leaders—understanding that the greatest challenge to their authority came not from other confessional groups but from the presence of an occupying power who controlled approximately 10% of the country’s land (Norton, 2000)—formed political alliances across previous divisions and stressed the common identity and purpose of the Lebanese in their public discourse. In so doing, they drew on norms of intergroup cooperation among Lebanese while simultaneously propagating a militaristic rhetoric of a united nation under attack to mobilize people against the external threat. At the bottom-up level, the fact that the group threatened by Israel was the entire Lebanese nation made that group take precedence over sectarian affiliation. Thus, people united across group lines in solidarity while adopting a defiant stance (protesting, marching) against the occupiers.
From the ODT standpoint, recall that optimal distinctiveness occurs when a collective identity is able to meet members’ competing needs for both assimilation and individuation (Brewer, 1991). The way in which these needs manifest, in turn, depends on the sociopolitical context. During the Lebanese Civil War, national cleavages meant that people identified with their sectarian affiliations to feel included in a collective, while opposing other factions to maintain distinctiveness. After the war’s end, Israel became the unanimously agreed upon group with respect to which it was crucial to maintain distinctiveness (Salamey and Tabar, 2012; Telhami and Zogby, 2007; Moaddel, 2005). Since optimal distinctiveness is about maintaining an equilibrium between individuation and inclusion, continuing to identify primarily along confessional lines would tilt the balance too far in favor of distinctiveness: one would then have been distinct both with respect to other Lebanese and with respect to Israel. Thus, the superordinate Lebanese identity was the salient one, as it provided the right level of inclusiveness to counter the distinctiveness of the Lebanese nation against its Israeli counterpart.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the sociopolitical context gave rise to a vastly different situation. Before its suspension in 1992 with the start of the Yugoslav Wars, Yugoslavia was part of the Non-Aligned Movement, a group of states not formally aligned with any major power bloc, particularly those in which the Soviet Union or the United States wielded influence (Wilmer, 1997). In terms of the ODT framework, which stresses the need for an out-group for self-definition, Yugoslav distinctiveness was in large part predicated on the country’s lack of involvement in Cold War competition over spheres of influence. In particular, Yugoslavia’s status as socialist, yet not Soviet, made maintaining boundaries with the Soviet Union of utmost importance. Indeed, the original expulsion of Yugoslavia from the international Communist organization Cominform in 1948 deteriorated relations between the two states (Wilmer, 1997). While they were normalized after Stalin’s death in 1955, Yugoslavia still kept its distance from the Warsaw Pact, as well as from NATO. During the Cold War, the salient identity was thus the superordinate Yugoslav one, as this was what provided internal unity just as it distinguished the country’s inhabitants from both the major powers and its Communist bloc neighbors, particularly ones with whom it had a history of turbulent relations, such as Albania and Bulgaria.

The end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union meant that Yugoslav identity now lacked relevant out-groups for self-definition (Wilmer, 1997). The weakening of this identity provided fertile ground for ethnonational leaders to mobilize people on the basis of a different identity. This “other” identity was not invented on the spot, but rather drew on
the parts of the “great narrative” (von Bogdandy et al., 2005) of each ethnoreligious group that highlighted its vulnerability and victimization at the hands of other groups, as well as on its heroism in overcoming adversity (Fierke, 2004). Indeed, Serb and Croat identity has long been mobilized both around “positive images of who we are and negative images of who we are not” (Wilmer 1997: 9), and Serbhood, in particular, “relies heavily on the negative identification of enemies as a source of national identity” (10). The memory of Serb extermination at Nazi death camps was personified through the image of the Croatian ustaša collaborator, while Serbia and BiH’s occupation by Ottomans was embodied in the Bosnian Muslim “race traitor” converted by “the filthy Turks” (10). Indeed, nationalist leaders and state-controlled media on all sides of the Bosnian War often fabricated incidents that had actually been documented during previous conflicts involving the same enemy groups, to the point where “reporters in the Balkan wars who listened to stories of atrocity noted a frequent uncertainty about whether the stories had occurred yesterday or in 1941, 1841 or 1441” (Fierke, 2004: 489).

After the war ended, the continued influence of Serbia and Croatia—who fund their respective client groups’ schools and cultural activities—has meant that the same ethnoreligious cleavages present during the war have remained salient since its end. This situation has been exacerbated by the weakness and decentralization of the BiH state, which has not had the means to consolidate its power nor to develop the unifying identity necessary for this to occur (Kostić, 2005). The continued identification of the Bosnian Serbs with the Serbian national anthem and coat of arms—as well as their insistence on institutionalizing the Serbian variant of the national language—is mirrored by the Croats doing the same: each group’s identity is intimately linked to that of a transnational ethnoreligious entity, rather than to a superordinate Bosnian identity. Meanwhile, Bosniaks—whose history as a nation is much more recent and not linked to a transnational entity—are proud of the BiH national symbols and view the Bosnian language as representative of the first time that their identity has been institutionalized (Babuna, 2006; Kostić, 2008). Thus, they are proud of being Bosniak in the sense that their own particularity has finally been recognized. The inability of the three groups to agree on anything from the cause of the war to the best way to move forward are further indicators of the fragmentation among the three groups.

This is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the education sector, of primary importance in identity building. Recall that Bosnian Croats follow the Croatian national curriculum while the Serbs follow the Serbian one, with the Bosniaks having developed their own. The three national curricula are further subdivided at the municipal level—depending
on which group has majority status—resulting in at least eleven variations at the level of implementation (Kostić, 2005). Kostić argues that “By enabling each canton to set standards, devise legislation and develop its own curriculum and textbooks, political and national divisions that surfaced during the war have been reinforced” (Kostić, 2005: 60).

What is perhaps least conducive to intergroup unity, however, is the content of the Serbian and Croatian curricula used by the countries’ ethnic kin in BiH, full of militaristic rhetoric and negative stereotypes of other groups. Pesić and Rosandić’s (1994) study of Serbian literary texts found that of ninety texts in which themes of collaboration and conflict between Serbs and others appeared, fifty-eight were classified as "bellicose", eighteen were "mixed," and only fourteen had a "peaceful" orientation (Pesić 1994, cited in Wilmer 1997). The most common recurrent enemies are the Turks (with Bosnian Muslims a reminder of the shame of the Ottoman occupation), followed by the Germans and then internal enemies such as the (Croatian) ustaše. Indeed, "Religion...is most often cited as a cultural characteristic of a community within the context of defending itself from the enemy; it becomes naturalized through the battles fought in its name, like a natural characteristic of the community" (Wilmer, 1997: 77) The fact that the trope of confronting internal and external enemies is so deeply ingrained in each group’s sense of self has fueled "the impression that the community within is empty and without conflict, reduced only to the borders that define its freedom and identity" (76). From this, it is unsurprising that the continued salience of these group identities, rooted as each one is in not being the others, has precluded the development of a unified, superordinate Bosnian identity.

Just as the post-civil war change in Lebanon from the dominance of sectarian identity to the primacy of national identity is accounted for by this study’s theoretical framework, so too is the lack of change in Bosnia and Herzegovina from its wartime status quo. In terms of optimal distinctiveness, the lack of a common enemy in BiH has meant that each group’s need for differentiation has continued to be met by distinguishing itself from the other constituent groups, while its need for assimilation has led to Serbs and Croats to continue identifying with Serbia and Croatia, respectively. This is structurally and legally embodied in the division of BiH into two constituent entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Republika Srpska, which run parallel administrations for their constituent groups (Kostić, 2005). In terms of TMT, the lack of post-war violent conflict has meant that the theory’s mortality salience requirement for the reconfiguration of identity has not been met. In other words, since the three constituent groups have not experienced a collective external threat, they have experienced no increased need to embody a collective Bosnian and Herzegovinian
identity. Rather, they have continued to identify along the same divisions made salient by the last instance of mortality salience: the civil war itself.

Up until now, the results from the Lebanon and BiH cases have been in support of the hypothesis that a common enemy leads to an increased likelihood of superordinate identity formation among former conflict parties. However, looking at the Lebanese identity indicators, a more complicated picture emerges. While the Lebanese unite around a common language and symbols, their educational system is not unified with respect to the country’s post-independence history (CAS Lebanon; Larkin, 2010). History books “reach the ‘end of history’ in 1943 and tend to valorize Lebanese coexistence, claiming Lebanon to be a ‘tolerant society whose members love one another and associate as brothers’” (Messara, 1995; cited in Larkin, 2010: 622). Indeed, the war has remained a taboo topic in Lebanon, and intergroup discussions of it have largely been avoided. In fact, the dominant state narrative of the war has been that of a guerre des autres (war of others), in which regional powers (particularly Israel, Syria and Iran) purposefully exacerbated intergroup tensions in order to destabilize Lebanon and increase their influence within it.

Scholars have termed this “state-sponsored amnesia”, an unwillingness of the Lebanese to face their complicity in their own violent past, instead blaming the damage on foreign powers. Another concrete example of this is the government’s reconstruction of war-devastated central Beirut, ridding it of architecture and monuments linked to specific confessions: “The downtown area required a detachment from any image of Arabness associated with the Muslim culture as well as Western features that could be identified with the Christian community” (Nasr, 2008: 376). Instead, the city center is designed to recall a common Phoenician identity, “an effort to tie a national identity to a civilization that surpasses all communal schism in the past centuries” (378).

The process of burying the memories and traumas of the war was begun and institutionalized through the Taif Agreement ending the civil war, as well as the 1991 general amnesty law. Both documents “aimed to regulate or manage the conflict to reach a settlement that would appease the elites” (Ghosn and Khoury, 2011: 388), meaning that they have prioritized a short-term solution for ending the violence (negative peace) to addressing the root causes of the conflict (positive peace). Namely, neglecting the various groups’ grievances regarding past injustices, as well as anxieties regarding future coexistence, “did not allow room for rehabilitating the relationship between the different communities” (390).

Indeed, Ghosn and Khoury find that 85% of their survey respondents believed that the Lebanese had not reconciled, with sectarian communities still blaming one another for the
The absence of a unified history curriculum has meant that younger generations have grown up learning about the war at home and among their own communities, thereby internalizing their own groups’ trauma narratives without hearing the perspectives of other groups. The simmering tensions beneath the country’s fragile peace are made evident by the fact that “any tiny problem stirs factional feelings” (Ghosn and Khoury, 2011: 388). One such example (albeit more than a “tiny problem”) is the country’s response to the 14 February 2005 car-bomb explosion that killed then-Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and 21 others, leading to accusations of Syrian involvement in what was presumed to be a political assassination (Parisciani, 2012). This polarized the country into two camps—the pro-Syrian March 8 Alliance and the anti-Syrian March 14 Alliance. The Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL), launched in 2009 in response to the assassination, further divided public opinion, particularly when Hezbollah members were indicted in 2011. This led to the resignation of eleven cabinet ministers aligned with the March 8 Alliance and a subsequent government collapse, while the Western-oriented March 14 Alliance welcomed the presence of an international tribunal in Lebanon (Parisciani, 2012).

6.2 Limitations

With the above analysis of our results as a point of departure, we begin our discussion regarding the limitations of this study’s theoretical framework. These limitations are more apparent in the Lebanese case, in which the on-the-ground situation is vastly more complex and less rosy than its “1” score on the dependent variable implies. This is to be expected: the case in which the independent variable is present may be seen as bearing a greater share of the burden of proving the theoretical model’s explanatory power, as the mere absence of a variable is not enough to say that it cannot have an impact, if present. Since this study set out to test the effect of common enemies on superordinate identity formation and a common enemy was present in Lebanon, this section will focus predominantly on the lessons learned from Lebanon as a case of supposed “successful” superordinate superordinate identity formation.

While our theoretical framework accounts for the formation of superordinate identity, it says nothing about the qualities of such an identity, including its strength, durability and peacefulness. Furthermore, it does not determine whether or not a so-called “superordinate identity” is interpreted in the same way by each of the case’s sub-groups; to put it otherwise, an identification with the nation may not mean that the defining traits of said nation are
agreed upon. With regard to the latter point, it is possible that while the Lebanese identify with their nation more than with their sect, each group continues to have its own idea of what it means to be Lebanese. Christians continue to look to the West in their conception of “Lebanon’s particularism as a unifying thread between the West and the Arab world” (Mooney, 2007: 14) while Muslims envision their country’s deeper integration within the broader Arab-Islamic world. Indeed, Bieber argues that this was the wartime status quo as well: “In Lebanon, all the fighting factions claimed to represent Lebanon as a whole” (Bieber, 2000: 279). Thus, while each group continued to identify with the concept of being Lebanese, each group claimed to hold a monopoly on the term “Lebanese”, to the effect that the warring factions could not agree on a common understanding of what being Lebanese actually entailed on a practical level. Lebanon’s scores on secondary indicators of identity suggest that this has not changed since the end of the civil war. While matters such as national symbols and language—as affirmations of a conceptual Lebanese identity—are agreed upon, the education sector harbors a huge rift in terms of the country’s history, as a unified education system would imply a unified understanding of what being Lebanese means. The lack of national reconciliation and other efforts to integrate groups outside of the context of opposition to Israel has meant that such an understanding has never been reached: “the communities still live in total separation, rejecting each other, blaming each other” (Ghosn and Khoury, 2011: 388), in addition to harboring widely different understandings of the country’s past and visions for its future.

With this in mind, the question asked of each case in order to determine its value on the dependent variable (Is the superordinate group the primary locus of identification for each subgroup?) was unable to capture the distinction between a “common” superordinate identity and the instance of several groups all claiming to identify with the same overarching group, yet in irreconcilable ways. Indeed, Lebanon scored a “yes” despite the fact that its superordinate identity may have meant something different for each of the groups. While this is in stark contrast to the total absence of common identity among groups in BiH—who could not even agree on the national anthem nor on the name of the language they were to speak (Kostić, 2012)—the reality is still much more complicated than a dichotomous variable could capture. Future studies should thus pay particular attention to this nuance. With that said, the inclusion of the three secondary indicators for superordinate identity in the study was a wise choice, as Lebanon’s “no” on the education indicator prompted a more thorough investigation into the implications of unreconciled wartime narratives. This, in turn, led to the discovery
that different groups’ conceptions of the term “Lebanese” were also unlikely to have been reconciled.

In addition to being unable to capture whether or not a given superordinate identity was understood in the same way by all parties, our theoretical framework did not assess the qualities of such an identity, namely its peacefulness, strength and durability in the face of external shocks. In terms of peacefulness, an identity predicated on fighting off an external enemy is a bellicose identity that mobilizes people around what they are not instead of what they are. The danger of this is that it maintains an ethos of violence (Bar-Tal, 2000), thereby propagating norms of out-group hate more than in-group belonging. In placing hatred for an external actor at the center of group unity, the identity becomes void and hollow without the presence of an enemy (Pesić & Rosandić, 1994), creating a dependence on conflict for collective self-definition. Scholars studying post-conflict trauma describe such group identities as instances of collective trauma in which continued attachment to the feeling of victimhood creates a pathological tendency to constantly defend the in-group against real or imagined threat (Fierke, 2004; Kevers, Rober, Derluyn & de Haene, 2016; Schick, 2011). This, in turn, leads to defensive attitudes and behaviors, as well as black-and-white thinking (viewing oneself as a hero and demonizing the Other) that serve to maintain and reproduce spirals of conflict until the trauma is processed and a new, empowered identity takes its place. This process—which Schick terms “working through” (Schick, 2011)—is incredibly difficult, as an identity’s deep rootedness in suffering means that letting go of victimhood destabilizes the very core of the group’s collective self-definition. Instead, many collectives continue to “act out” the trauma, preferring living in fear to living without a sense of self. Superordinate identity in Lebanon, so heavily mobilized in opposition to the perceived existential threat posed by Israel, is a prime example of a traumatic identity that risks reproducing conflict in order to maintain itself.

This brings us to our next point. While a group whose identity is predicated on the presence of threat will resist letting go of enemies lest it crumbles without them for self-definition, the complexity of sociopolitical systems is such that enemies are still bound to come and go. This, in turn, means that such an identity is not ultimately durable; recall the example of non-aligned Yugoslav identity, which fell apart just as the Cold War ended and the country could no longer find meaning in defining itself as not being the Soviet Union nor the United States. If alternate forms of identity are not fostered, the group will either continue to seek enemies elsewhere to maintain its collective sense of self or experience its own fragility as a group. In Lebanon, the deep polarization—precipitating a government
collapse—of the country over Hariri’s assassination and the subsequent set-up of the STL (Parisciani, 2012) is one example pointing to the instability of Lebanese superordinate identity. Its contingency on changeable circumstances (such as the disappearance of an old enemy or the appearance of a new one) means that it is volatile, and not likely to withstand external shocks.

Having discussed the limitations of our theoretical framework, it is important to note that this study nonetheless made several important contributions. Firstly, in finding that the Lebanese nearly unanimously identified with the term “Lebanese”, yet still took it to mean different things, this study discovered a previously understudied nuance—namely, the possibility that a superordinate identity is not the same as a common identity—that will be of use to future scholars studying collective identity formation. These scholars should take care to measure not only the existence of a collectively agreed upon term for groups’ superordinate identity, but whether or not its meaning is agreed upon as well. A unified education system—and particularly its history component—is perhaps the most telling indicator of shared meaning, as it signifies the existence of agreed upon norms that are institutionalized through schooling. Furthermore, a common understanding of the past and vision for the future are the surest signs that intergroup cohesiveness is instilled deeply enough to withstand external shocks.

On a related note, our theoretical framework’s inability to account for the particular qualities of a given superordinate identity also points to the need for future studies to do so. While this study explicitly set out to study the formation of superordinate identity rather than its traits—and thus accomplished its aims—this information alone is of limited use to peace and conflict scholars. In studying the conditions under which conflict takes place and, conversely, under which peace thrives, scholars aim to move society towards a more peaceful orientation (Gleditsch et al., 2014). Since collective identity and the state evolve in tandem (Talentino, 2004), a superordinate identity must be strong and durable in order for the state to possess those characteristics as well. Furthermore, while a strong, durable superordinate identity is likely to mitigate conflict within a society, its excessive reliance on bellicose values of out-group opposition is likely to lead to and maintain conflict with outside groups. Thus, future scholars should probe not only the factors influencing the formation of superordinate identity, but also the conditions that favor its strength, durability and peacefulness.
6.3 Alternative Explanations

In addition to the inherent limitations of this theoretical framework, two factors other than the presence of a common enemy may have contributed to the different values on the dependent variable (superordinate identity formation) observed in the two cases.

Firstly, the different natures of the two wars may have led to different post-war circumstances, with Lebanon’s lending itself better to superordinate identity formation. While the Bosnian War and the Lebanese Civil War have much in common (see “Case Selection” section of Chapter 4), they also diverge on two fundamental points. The first set of differences is with respect to the motives for the outbreak of civil war: "The temporary dissolution of central control in Lebanon was the result of competing groups trying to dominate the state, while in Bosnia it was not dominance that was the bone of contention, but rather the very existence of the state" (Bieber, 2000: 270). Thus, while different Lebanese factions disagreed over conceptions of the state, they nonetheless wished to preserve a common Lebanon, whereas in BiH, the Serbs, in particular, wanted to secede and integrate with their brethren in Belgrade into a greater Serbia. This is largely due to the conflation in BiH between national identity and religious affiliation. Recall that the national identification term used by each of the three constituent groups is directly linked to faith: Bosniak means Muslim, Croat means Catholic and Serb means Orthodox Christian. This is not the case in Lebanon, where groups distinguish between religious and national identity. The difficulty of uniting several groups viewing themselves as separate nations—as is the case in BiH—in one nation-state is best articulated by Bieber: “confessional identity does not per se exclude coexistence with other confessions in one state, while the national conceptions in Bosnia are largely incompatible with the existence of a multinational state” (Bieber, 2000: 278-9).

To better conceive of the differences between the Lebanese and BiH cases, it may be fruitful to draw on von Bogdandy’s distinction between state failure and nation failure. While state failure is the “breakdown and illegitimacy of the structure of public power” (von Bogdandy et al., 2005: 584), nation failure is the collapse of the underlying basis for that power. Namely, the collective identity that once lent it legitimacy no longer holds: “In other words, the cultural projection of a nation is no longer convincing to many; there is no consensus on the cultural traditions, customs, symbols, rituals, and the historical experience – there is no “usable past” (585). The latter scenario makes renewed cooperation extremely difficult, as it requires taking into account changing patterns of social identity and re-linking
increasingly disparate conceptions thereof in addition to the political and economic reforms necessary to remedy state failure.

While in civil war-era Lebanon, sectarian affiliation took precedence over national belonging as groups were pitted against one another, it is arguable that Lebanese identity never collapsed in the same way it did in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bieber, 2000). While the preceding section on this study’s limitations argued that the various Lebanese factions had different understandings of what it meant to be Lebanese, this is still different from Bosnians’ total lack of agreement regarding the very basics of nationhood: national traditions, symbols, and even the name of the supposedly common language (Kostić, 2008; 2012). Thus, while state failure occurred in both Lebanon and Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is arguable that Lebanon saw only partial nation failure—primarily a lack of agreement on the country’s relationship to its neighbors and the West—while BiH experienced complete nation failure. Since neither BiH nor Lebanon have addressed the root incompatibilities among the different factions (Bieber, 2000), much has remained the same since the end of the war. Lebanon is still plagued by disagreements regarding state legitimacy and the country’s purpose within the broader Middle East and Western world, while the groups in BiH have still neither agreed on a common state nor a cohesive national identity necessary to support such a project. The fact that a degree of post-civil war superordinate identity exists in Lebanon and not in Bosnia and Herzegovina is thus perhaps due to the less destructive nature of Lebanon’s (primarily) state failure than BiH’s state and nation failure.

The second element with the potential to account for the countries’ different levels of superordinate identity is consociational democratic type. While both Lebanon and BiH are consociational democracies, they differ on the specifics of consociationalism. In particular, major differences between the two countries’ respective electoral frameworks may have contributed to their differing scores on the dependent variable. This is a very interesting finding, as it challenges this paper’s earlier assumption that consociationalism would be a valid control variable in comparing the two cases, and points us to the fact that consociational type—and not merely consociationalism in and of itself—should be given greater attention when used in cross-case comparison.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, each individual has one vote and since parties are divided along ethnoreligious lines, is likely to choose from one of the parties representing her demographic (Stefansson, 2010). The fact that coalitions are formed after elections encourages extremism, with each party vying for the loyalty of its (ethnoreligious) constituents and lambasting other parties and ethnic groups. While political parties in
Lebanon are also organized around religious lines, alliances are formed prior to elections (Parisciani, 2012). This means that each voter must choose his preferred governing coalition, which is comprised of both candidates from her sect and those from other constituent groups. This framework encourages moderation and intergroup cooperation, as all candidates are ultimately accountable to a multi-faith constituency, and candidates using hardline rhetoric against other sects would risk alienating potential voters.

These circumstances have meant that in Bosnia and Herzegovina, votes have tended to go to nationalist parties, with strong rifts among the three constituent groups complicating the formation of post-election alliances (Stefansson, 2010). In Lebanon, on the other hand, the existence of several multi-confessional blocs has contributed to a form of cross-cutting in which intergroup incompatibilities have been mitigated by intra-group disagreements (Parisciani, 2012). This difference is compounded by the fact that Lebanon has eighteen officially recognized religious denominations each guaranteed a certain amount of parliamentary seats (Parisciani, 2012) while BiH has only three (Stefansson, 2010), meaning that the divides in BiH are much neater than those in Lebanon, with its diverse array of actors and intricate system of proportional representation. These differences in voting systems may have differently impacted post-civil war superordinate identity formation in each country, with Lebanese elites unable to rely on black-and-white in-group/out-group divisions in the same way as BiH elites. Because of the plurality of groups in Lebanon, none could stand on its own, meaning that Lebanese identity has needed to be more inclusive, and a superordinate identity more of a necessity than a choice to mitigate both intra-group divisions and the unfeasibility of eighteen separate “nations.” In BiH, on the other hand, the three constituent groups have been cohesive enough internally and polarized enough with respect to one another able to eschew a unified identity in favor of three separate ethnoreligious ones.

This explanation, in turn, may help explain why different factions in Lebanon have nonetheless maintained different understandings of what it means to be Lebanese. If Lebanese identity is meant to encompass eighteen different groups, it cannot be monolithic, and may rather have been diluted to the point of being able to accommodate a plethora of different perspectives. To put it simply, it may be interpreted in so many ways that it has become all but meaningless. Bieber has an optimistic take on the situation: “The objective of such a collective identity is not the forceful homogenization of communal differences but the natural development of a shared Lebanese project...a common belief in Lebanon’s particularism as a unifying thread between the West and the Arab world, and a general sense of togetherness in times of external threat” (Bieber, 2000: 14). While other scholars may
disagree with the idea of a “shared Lebanese project” beyond the need to buffer against common enemies, Bieber nonetheless illustrates that Lebanese identity is much more malleable than the rigid ethnonational framework present in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

7. Conclusion

This study has sought to contribute to the literature on post-conflict identity formation in exploring the question: which conditions favor the success of superordinate identity formation among former conflict parties in post-civil war societies? Having identified a gap in the literature on nation-building—which deals extensively with nation-building’s state-building component while largely ignoring identity formation—I proposed a novel theoretical framework through which to conceptualize the process. Drawing on the social psychological literature on terror management theory (TMT) and optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT), I argued that the presence of a common enemy among former conflict parties would increase the likelihood of successful superordinate identity formation. This is because a common enemy—as an instance of mortality salience—creates an increased need for a strong collective identity, and simultaneously acts as a salient-out-group with respect to which both (or all) groups can define themselves.

To test my argument, I employed Mill’s method of difference to perform an in-depth qualitative comparative study on national identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) after the 1992-1995 civil war and Lebanon after the 1975-1990 civil war. I predicted that Israel’s role as a common enemy for all Lebanese would lead to successful superordinate identity formation in Lebanon, while the absence of a common enemy in BiH would mean that superordinate identity failed to take hold. The empirical findings lent preliminary support to this hypothesis, finding that a collective Lebanese identity has indeed arisen after the civil war, whereas in Bosnia and Herzegovina, ethnonational cleavages have remained the main source of identification for the three major constituent groups, precluding the development of a unified Bosnian identity. The study found that the Israeli occupation incentivized people from across civil war cleavages in Lebanon to unite against the invaders while in Bosnia and Herzegovina, two of the three constituent groups continued to align with Serbia and Croatia, further fragmenting the social and political divisions present in the country.

Despite this, I discovered substantial limitations in my theoretical framework, most evident in the Lebanese case. Firstly, I was unable to account for the possibility that different groups could have differing interpretations of the same superordinate identity term. In other
words, while several groups may have agreed that they were part of one overarching group, that did not mean that they agreed on what being a member of that group entailed. Second, while my model accounted for the formation of superordinate identity, it said nothing about its qualities, particularly its degree of peacefulness and durability. In addition to these limitations, I also found two alternative explanations that may have accounted for some of the differences in observed outcomes in Lebanon and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The first involves major differences in the nature of the two countries’ conflicts, while the second stems from differences in their political systems.

Despite these limitations, this study nonetheless made several important contributions to the field. Firstly, in finding that the Lebanese nearly unanimously identified with the term “Lebanese”, yet still took it to mean different things, this study discovered a previously understudied nuance—namely, the possibility that a superordinate identity is not the same as a common identity—that will be of use to future scholars studying collective identity formation. These scholars should take care to measure not only the existence of a collectively agreed upon term for groups’ superordinate identity, but whether or not its meaning is agreed upon as well. A unified education system—and particularly its history component—is perhaps the most telling indicator of shared meaning, as it signifies the existence of agreed upon norms that are institutionalized through schooling. Furthermore, a common understanding of the past and vision for the future are the surest signs that intergroup cohesiveness is instilled deeply enough to withstand external shocks.

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