Intergenerational transmission from narrative: The Memory of War

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Abstract

As the victors and vanquishers get reduced in population, their memories may get preserved through various societal channels, such as families, institutions, or even through political elites, which may contribute to divisions in the societies. These divisions can go on for much longer. This study looks into the ways in which narratives of the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) persist in shaping intergroup division in a confessional power-sharing society. The entire research process adopts a single case study design utilizing solely secondary data. From 1989 to 2025, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program's annual-organised-violence deaths are combined with published survey evidence from Lebanese Christians and Muslims collected in 2019 (Zahreddine et al., 2026). The results indicate that violence continued after the war's official end, with peaks in 2006 and 2024. Moreover, they indicate that the narratives of the war are interpreted conditionally rather than uniformly. Religious identification revealed strong defensive blame patterns, especially for one's own group following reminders of group suffering. Patterns of this nature were only mitigated to a limited extent by national identities. Meanwhile, participants recognised that others ultimately suffered, implying that competitive victimhood is not a foregone conclusion and that other, more inclusive forms of memory are possible. According to the study, collective memory must be regarded as a measurable social process linked to identity and institutional design. That said, their evidence shows relationships not evidence that merely memory causes a renewal of violence.

Introduction

In post-conflict societies with divisions so deep, military hostilities may cease formally but not communally. The first-hand generation perishes, which ensures family, institutional, and political elite socialization continues to pass on narratives of the war and often causes political divisions or restarts hostilities among post-war youth. After the Lebanese Civil War of 1975-1990, the state adopted the Taif Agreement, which saw the initiation of corporate consociationalism. At the same time, the state pursued an official policy of amnesia and state forgetfulness. Nonetheless, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) data show that organized violence did not entirely cease, with a significant peak in 2006 and 2024. As such, the general context is concerned with the operation of intergenerational memory within a confessional power-sharing order and a situation where the state imposes a culture of institutional amnesia while sectarian communities and political parties foster different memory cultures. Grasping the mechanisms by which war narratives are transmitted from one generation to another is important for ensuring political stability, ordering the post-conflict state, and securing inter-group reconciliation. In divided societies, political elites often exploit selective memories and their cultures to reinforce sectarian, as well as national and political, identities, mobilize and energize their constituencies, and consolidate control over strategic populations that have come into existence long after active fighting ceased. When intergenerational memory includes alternate or inclusive accounts of suffering, collective remembrance can work in the opposite way to facilitate peacebuilding and structural renewal. Examining this mechanism provides key insights for policy and governance in post-conflict statebuilding. Academics have divided the literature of post-conflict memory and governance into three clusters. Firstly, it depicts collective memory as a political and social

construction. The Foundational memory scholarship debates whether collective memory is a presentist social reconstruction or a patterned historical constraint on present behaviour. Scholars note that communicative memory comes from the living, while institutionalized memory has a different origin. They also explore how actors deploy memories to produce politics of identity and legitimacy. It further offers studies of Intergenerational Narrative Transmission, which recounts inherited trauma research based on Marianne Hirsch's postmemory concept. Testimonies from the non-experiencing descendants connect them to past violence. Other scholars stress that generations do not passively accept what their forebears communicated to their descendants. Rather, they negotiate how stories get inherited, reinterpreted, or resisted. The institution of power-sharing establishes arrangements for maintaining peace and stability in society. Certain democratic responses to deep segmental divisions in society. Corporate consociationalism institutionalized political sectarianism in Lebanon. As a result, there was no national history book that would be uniform for everybody, and the wars were narrated in private confessional schools, political parties, and families. Current literature contains five important research gaps despite the literature review. To begin with, it has a population gap; studies have insufficiently examined how post-war youth, specifically non-experiencing generations, within confessional West Asian societies, process and interpret inherited war narratives under varying identity and framing conditions. Research on intergroup memory has largely focused on Western contexts in post-Second World War Germany, Northern Ireland, the former Yugoslavia, and related cases with little empirical evidence from West Asian confessional states like Lebanon. The current literature on post-conflict memory primarily contains qualitative accounts or clinical psychological paradigms (like universalized PTSD). There is a methodological gap for studies

that combine quantitative estimates of conflict deaths with experimental survey designs measuring victimization and attribution of responsibility. Studies show various findings. One school of thought says that collective memory is always a trap for divided societies, forcing them to recognize competitive victimhood. Another school of thought, however, says that the shape of memory matters. They say that some memories allow an acceptance of out-group suffering. It also contains a theoretical gap, where standard post-conflict frameworks (jus post bellum, consociational theory) focus almost exclusively on constitutional and elite power-sharing mechanics in the short term. However, they ignore how institutional settlements govern memory and history education in the long term. To address this, the study chose to be guided by the following main research question. “How do narratives of victimhood and responsibility for the Lebanese Civil War, transmitted through family, institutional, and elite channels within a confessional power-sharing system, sustain or soften intergroup divisions among later generations?” The present study pursues four specific objectives to answer the above research question. The aim of this research is to examine both the micro- family/community), meso-(institutional/education), and macro-(elite/state) channels through which war narratives circulate. This study aims to examine the impact of corporate consociationalism and state-level amnesia on institutional governance in relation to history education and memoryscapes. Through this research, it aims to understand the impact of strong identity; that is, religious versus national identification and Framing of the event; that is, in-group victimization versus in-group harm-doing, on citizens’ attribution of Responsibility and Victimhood. To analyze how the narratives of wars appear to align with the empirical moments in time after war. This study combines macro-level UCDP conflict-event data (1989-2025) with micro-level experimental

survey research and institutional governance to enhance the post-conflict literature. It challenges rigid victim/perpetrator dualisms by showing that collective memory is patterned and identity-linked. This means it can accommodate recognition of inclusive victimhood along with defensive attributions. Scholars, educators interested in reforming the history curriculum, and policy-makers involved with the design of long-term governance structures in divided societies will benefit from the insights. Research shows that collective memory is socially reconstructed and traded through generations, organized by macro-level power-sharing institutions and elite discourses. What we don't know is how long-term consociational power-sharing and specific identity-based event frames impact post-war generations' attributions of blame, victimhood, and responsibility in West Asian confessional contexts. According to our analysis of quantitative conflict trends combined with experimental survey data, a strong religious identity serves as a defensive filter under victimization framing. A focus on a nation rather than a religion and recognition of the suffering of an out-group create actionable steps to diminish intergroup divides.

Literature Review

When the generation that lived through a war ceases to exist, its story seems to be lost. The political elite harness these ethnic divisions to influence whole populations, many of whom are born after the fighting. It continues to sow divisions. This review looks at how people transmit war narratives from one generation to the next and, importantly, under what circumstances that transmission fuels intergroup conflict rather than helps resolve it. The issue of the study is situated at the meeting point of two literatures that rarely discuss each other. Scholars in memory studies examine how the past is selected, reconstructed, and politicised (Halbwachs, 1992;

Assmann, 2006; Mälksoo, 2023). Studies examining power-sharing in situations of post-conflict settlement show how power is divided among the groups in a "peace settlement (Lijphart, 1969; O'Leary, 2019; Horowitz, 2002). The impact of peace settlement institutions on narrative dissemination among future generations, along with implications for group identity and reception of narratives, is yet to be examined conclusively. The review focuses on a particular case: Lebanon. The civil war of 1975 to 1990 ended in a confessional power-sharing order which scholars refer to as corporate consociationalism (Salamey, 2009). In the aftermath of the war, the state did try to ensure that civilians forgot the war and the violence (Haugbolle, 2010; Larkin, 2012). However, UCDP data indicates a different perspective, as organized violence did not end there, and it spikes after that in 2006 and 2024. Zahreddine et al. (2026) further conducted some recent survey research that allows for advancing the measurement of how Lebanese citizens understand victimhood and responsibility decades after the war and the fighting. The question guiding this review is: how do narratives of victimhood, of responsibility for the Lebanese Civil War, transmitted through family, institutional, and elite channels, within a confessional power-sharing system, sustain, or soften, intergroup divisions among later generations? The evaluation takes place in five phases. Theme 1 illustrates how collective memory becomes affiliated with the perpetuity of conflicts. Theme 2 focuses on how behaviors are passed down. Theme 3 develops a comparative analytical framework of transmission channels from Northern Ireland and the former Yugoslavia. Theme four looks at power-sharing and the institutional governance of memory through education. The last sections of the manuscript apply this framework to Lebanon and identify the gaps addressed by the manuscript.

Theme 1: Approach of collective memory as political, contested and selective:

Scholarship generally agrees that collective memory is more appropriately a social reconstruction than a record of the past, but there is disagreement as to how far the present can reshape that past. This disagreement is important for research on conflict because it determines whether war narratives are treated as freely manipulable or as durable constraints on later generations. Halbwachs (1992) provides the strong, foundational presentist position. People's recollection of the past and reconstruction of their identities is also shaped by the social perceptions of the groups to which they belong. Groups such as family, religious community, and class isolate events from their past and reconstruct them in ways that fit their present values and identities. The different interpretation of the same events by groups makes contestation over the past inherent in collective memory. Schwartz (2016) challenges this presentism, although he accepts the social character of memory. According to him, it is the past which also constrains the present. Furthermore, he explains that collective memory is not a notion that everyone in a country perceives similarly; it is a patterned distribution of belief. This difference is analytically important for this analysis: it implies researchers should expect variation within communities as well as between them and should ask what explains that variation. Assmann (2006) presents a third element that is underemphasized in earlier accounts: forgetting. By differentiating communicative memory (disseminated in interaction among living generations) from cultural memory (entrenched in institutions, media, and commemoration), she displays that both are selective; that is, they retain some interpretations while omitting others. When intergenerational transmission takes place is precisely when communicative memory gives way to cultural memory. Hahn (2010) takes this argument further, suggesting that selective recollection can

shade into providing false accounts and the denial of past events, which then become part of the historical record. These accounts describe how memory is formed, but do not explain why it should endure conflict. Two additional works provide the link by placing the mechanism at varying levels of specificity. Memory is treated as a resource by political approaches in strategic competition. According to Mälksoo (2023), actors compete over historical narratives to construct identity, institutionalise influence, and claim legitimacy. Mannergren Selimovic (2023) argues that memory politics may reproduce antagonisms or reshape them into reconciliation. The mechanism is situated in group cognition, which is social-psychological. Paez and Liu (2011) argue that collective memories of past violence generalise hostility to the present and reinforce in-group favouritism. Bar-Tal (2014) shows the fusion of narratives of suffering, resistance and injustice with collective identity. Nicholson (2017) links the two together by arguing that perceptions of past relations, framed along the axes of recognition vs. non-recognition and threat vs. security, harden group boundaries, but can also become a lever of change when alternative narratives are supplied. The works suggest that memory contributes to conflict persistence through four processes: (1) memories become politically salient; (2) the narratives are used for strategic political purposes; (3) the narratives become identity-narratives, especially relating to victimhood and blame; (4) these identity-narratives construct hostile boundaries in the present. Importantly, the same literature notes that inclusive or alternative narratives have a weakening effect in this regard. The rest of the review will ask how this process works when narratives cross generations, and what circumstances will push transmission towards one path or the other.

Theme 2: Intergenerational dissemination of war narratives

There is a division among the literature on intergenerational memory over whether what later generations inherit is war memories or whether they renegotiate them. Depending on the response, transmission will be expected to either reproduce conflict or transform it. The inheritance view is grounded in Hirsch's (2008) concept of postmemory. Hirsch (2008), extending Halbwachsian thought, distinguishes between 'direct memory', based on personal experience, and 'postmemory', a relation created by descendants with earlier traumatic events. Descendants come into contact with these incidents through photographs and objects as well as stories and behaviours that circulate in the family and wider culture. This mediated knowledge has the capability to stimulate a punch emotionally that it feels like memory in its own right. Hirsch (2012) calls this connection multiply mediated in her later work through family and cultural forms instead of through lived experience. Postmemory is important to this study because it feasibly helps us understand how non-experiencing people also load with the effect of violence. The limitation of this is that it tends to represent the receiving generation as mere recipients of excessive memories rather than as agents that select and reshape them. The negotiating view is correcting this approach. In their study on family conversations about the National Socialist past in Germany, Tschuggnall and Welzer (2002) demonstrate that the meaning of history is reconstructed in intergenerational interaction and shaped by present concerns; younger family members do not merely absorb what they hear; they rework it. The German context distinguishes itself rather sharply from that of a civil war: it concerns a perpetrator society after the end of a totalitarian regime, which is held responsible for the injustice, not two mutually violent communities that must continue to share a state. The mechanism, not the context, and the

implications are what this paper focuses on. It is a finding that the family conversation is itself a site of reconstruction. Evidence from post-conflict research supports this mechanism. Children in Northern Ireland, according to Fargas (2011), are active agents in resistance to their ancestors' stories of victimization and sorrow. When parents choose silence as a way to protect children, children end up creating their own understanding through environmental cues, school education, and peers. Argenti and Schramm (2010) further add that transmission is not limited to the verbal; corporeal practices, somatic symptoms, and transgenerational haunting, where parental trauma remains unresolved and remembered suffering resurfaces as worries in children who never saw the violence. In addition, they warn that clinical paradigms such as PTSD can universalise trauma and obscure its specific forms. Most relevant to this study, Larkin (2012) applies the concept of postmemory to Lebanese youth born after the civil war. The generations are forced to negotiate between those that wish to remember it so as not to repeat it and those that wish to forget it, within a society where the past remained officially unresolved. This shows that beyond the Holocaust, postmemory travels to a confessional, post-Civil War setting and that inheritance and negotiation work together in such settings. This seems to demonstrate a pattern of transmission being not a replication; rather, generations inherit emotionally charged narratives later (Hirsch, 2008, 2012). But narratives are reworked through family interaction, environment, and identity (Tschuggnall & Welzer, 2002; Fargas, 2011; Larkin, 2012).

Theme 3: Channels of transmission:

Comparative studies demonstrate that the narratives surrounding a war reach successor generations through three distinct channels: family and community (micro), institution and physical space (meso), and elite and state discourses (macro). In post-conflict societies, collective

memory isn't just a simple reconstruction of the past. Rather, the past is selectively and partially recreated through contemporary politics and negotiations of remembering communities (Argenti & Schramm, 2010). The dominant mode of transmission varies according to the institutional, spatial and social configuration of each society (Mochtak, 2024). In the context of comparative evidence, since the Good Friday Agreement, in Northern Ireland, transmission occurs largely by parents through family socialisation, oral storytelling and parent-child communication, where parents weave their experience of the Troubles into local community stories (Fargas, 2011). Despite their painful past, parents avoid burdening their children with inappropriate recollections of the past.

Theme 4: Power Sharing, Educational Resources and Institutional Memory Governance

Intergenerational memory is shaped, taking power-sharing agreements into account, that determine the control of the institutions, above all schools, teaching the past. The consociational literature has investigated these settlements extensively, but has neglected education and memory. This theme reviews the literature and identifies the gap. The consociational theory of Lijphart (1969) suggests that deeply divided societies will remain stable as long as the elites of each segment cooperate. The four characteristics that are typically used to summarise the model are grand coalition, proportional representation, segmental autonomy, and minority veto. According to O'Leary (2019), the model is still relevant in cases beyond the classic European contexts. These are parity, proportionality, segmental autonomy, and veto rights, which are all mechanisms by which institutions accommodate national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic differences. Settlement design may not guarantee settlement outcomes, according to the case studies. According to Southern (2020), the power-sharing arrangement from 1994 in South

Africa helped ease the transition but created difficulties for smaller parties. According to Sullivan (2005), the peace process has troubles because of weaknesses in the establishment and implementation of the core consociational pillars. In the context of Lebanon, political sectarianism is institutionalised through corporate consociationalism in which national offices are allocated on a confessional basis. Salamey (2009) argues that demographic and regional changes make this arrangement conflictual and fragmenting. The Taif Agreement, which ended the war, called for a standardised national history textbook from which all Lebanese students would learn (Nehme, 2006). History teaching continues to be shaped by the tradition of confessional and private education and political gridlock (Yoder, 2015). Such formal education takes place at the intersection of past conflict and future peace (Van Ommering, 2015). The institutional design of Lebanon's settlement has, in fact, delegated the war's narration to communities, parties, and families.

Memory After the Taif Settlement: The Lebanese Case

Lebanese literature demonstrates a forgotten state, a remembering society, and the narratives that shape the conception of victimhood and blame by citizens. Qualitative studies of post-war memory, conflict-event data, and recent survey experiments support this argument. Haugbolle (2010) argues that after 1990 the Lebanese state encouraged a culture of forgetfulness while political parties produced sectarian interpretations of the war through cults of dead leaders. Intellectuals and activists defended that a confrontation against the war was necessary for political and cultural renewal. He argues that there are different sectarian memory cultures instead of a single national one in this context. Larkin (2012) illustrates how the post-war generation negotiates the war landscape through post-war amnesia, oral narratives, and

visual-spatial “memoryscapes,” highlighting war memory as a catalyst for ethnic conflict on one side, and peacebuilding on the other. Lebanon combines all three channels in terms of the Theme 3 framework: community and party memory at the micro, institutional silence in schooling at the meso, and state-level amnesia at the macro level. In contrast, Zahreddine et al. (2026) present evidence that addresses how the Lebanese interpret war today. In 2019, they ran two studies on Lebanese Christians and Muslims residing in Lebanon. In Study 1 (N = 405), respondents read a timeline-based storyline of the civil war. In Study 2 (N = 338), the participants were primed to remember in-group victimisation or in-group harm-doing. This review is influenced by four findings.

1. One's identity strength, not membership, causes interpretation. When individuals identified themselves with religion, they solidified their defensive patterns, especially responsibility attributions. On the other hand, identifying oneself as a Christian or a Muslim did not play a more significant role in moderating impact.

2. Changes blame framing. Following reminders of victimization, religious people tended to respond in a way that benefitted their religious group.

3. Limited Protection Provided by National Identity. The national identification showed only limited buffering effects, mainly among the low religious identifiers.

4. Competitive Victimhood is Not Inevitable. Despite remaining defensive, participants acknowledged out-group suffering, which may indicate potential for inclusive victimhood, the authors claim.

The evidence will be linked to the review's themes. The outcomes are involved with discussions that took place earlier. The disparity by strength of identification rather than by sect supports

Schwartz's (2016) argument that collective memory is distributed in patterns within groups. The framing effect illustrates that by emphasising certain events, a channel can shift blame, which relates the content of the framing to Mälksoo's (2023) consideration of memory as a political resource. The recognition of the pain suffered by those outside the group in question offers real-world credence to the counter-pathway.

Research gap and contribution

There are six gaps in the literature; this study focuses on five directly, and while it imposes a limit on the sixth, it does not ignore it. Each gap is mentioned below with the response of the study. Firstly, standard post-conflict frameworks, including just war theory's jus post bellum, focus on short-term arrangements such as ceasefires and elections, but ignore the long-term, inter-generational impact of settlements (Nherera, 2025). This research survey recognizes that the Taif power-sharing settlement is a long-term variable whose influence can be traced in memory more than three decades after the civil war ended in 1990. Secondly, consociational research examines how power-sharing governs the distribution of political authority but has largely overlooked how it governs education and memory (Lijphart, 1969; O'Leary, 2019; Horowitz, 2002). This research attempts to fill that gap, showing how Lebanon's confessional power-sharing and the failure to produce a single history textbook left the narration of the war to communities, parties, and families. Additionally, comparative studies frequently compare countries whose processes of transmission operate at various levels, which may not be comparable in any common framework (Mochtak, 2024; Fargas, 2011). Instead of making comparisons between countries, this study looks at the common dimensions of transmission channels, namely channel, level, narrative content, persistence mechanism, and counter-pathway,

and applies to just one case. Fourth, the research often relates post-conflict populations to rigid dualism such as victims and perpetrators (Argenti & Schramm, 2010). This research is based on evidence that measures both victimization and harm-doing frames. Participants acknowledge out-group suffering along with defensively attributed harm (Zahreddine et al., 2026). Research on intergroup issues is still predominantly done in Western contexts, an issue explicitly addressed by Zahreddine et al. (2026). Universalisation of traumatological reactions in global clinical paradigms such as PTSD occurs (Argenti & Schramm, 2010). This study examines a confessional society in the context of West Asia with a focus on socio-political memory rather than clinical trauma. There are only a few longitudinal studies of how children and youth receive, reinterpret, or reject inherited narratives across time (Fargas, 2011; Mochtak, 2024). The gap identified in this study is partial. The project incorporates conflict-event data from 1989 to 2025 with survey evidence of present-day interpretation, but cannot follow the same individuals over time. The distinct contribution of this study is to link levels that the literature typically studies separately. Data collected on conflict events signify when any physical violence took place; evidence based on surveys captures how citizens are interpreting the war. Document evidence is all about institutions similar to history education and captures the channels in between. Neither data source replaces the other, and the analysis doesn't make the claim that collective memory causes renewed violence.

Methodology

1. Research Design

The study is conducted using a single case study design and focuses on Lebanon and the memory of the Lebanese Civil War. The case has a multi-level design. It combines two kinds of secondary evidence: an annual series of organised-violence deaths, and experimental survey evidence, published between 1999 and 2005, on how Lebanese citizens interpret the wars. The design describes and interprets the phenomenon and process and is not causal. The purpose here is not to show that the causes of renewed violence are located in collective memory, but rather to show how violence and war narratives relate. The design meets the research question for three reasons. The first part of the question asks how war narratives sustain or soften divisions within a particular post-war society, which requires depth on one context rather than breadth across many. The literature review revealed that almost all studies examine either one or the other; indeed, studies examine either physical violence or memory, but rarely the two. A multi-level design allows the two to be read together. A single case, third, avoids a peer-review problem with comparing types and institutions of conflict in very different societies. Lebanon was chosen as the case for meeting four criteria from the literature review. Lebanon is a post-war society where political power is shared along confessional lines. After the war, remembrance became less important. Instead of confronting the war, it encouraged forgetting. Violence that was systematic did not stop with the civil war. Importantly, uniformly available to all, peer-reviewed survey evidence measures how citizens interpret victimhood and responsibility decades after the war (Zahreddine et al., 2026).

2. Nature of Research

The research is secondary and empirical. The information in the report has been produced from various secondary data sources, and the quantitative part of the study compiles numerical evidence. The first is annual counts of organised-violence deaths, described over time. The qualitative aspect is interpretive. The analytical framework established in the literature review is used to read the published survey results and the Lebanese memory scholarship. It's not only about reporting the numbers but explaining what they mean for the transmission of war narratives.

3. Sample and its Technique

Lebanon is the main unit of analysis. Two sources were purposefully selected:

(i) Conflict data: It involves deaths from organised violence (including armed conflict and one-sided violence) in Lebanon from the year 1989 to 2025, evidence collected from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP).

(ii) Evidence from Surveys: two studies by Zahreddine et al. (2026). The tool used to implement the two studies was an online questionnaire which they created for this purpose.

4. Data Collection source:

All data used for conducting this study are secondary. The conflict-death figures were used from a UCDP-derived Lebanon series and plotted over time. The survey results were extracted from Zahreddine et al.'s (2026) published paper, as well as its publicly accessible dataset in PsychArchives, then collated in a table and a graph. This paper further accessed the studies of Haugbolle (2010) and Larkin (2012) to interpret the results on post-war memory in Lebanon.

5. Analysis Dimension:

The study looks into the following variables of the annual death toll in organised violence in Lebanon, and people's perceptions regarding how far their group and the other group are victims of the war. In addition, it includes responsibility attributions involve deciding who the offender is and who is perceived to have provoked the war. Moreover, the strength of one's identification with their religious community and with Lebanon has taken, and lastly, the events that encouraged people to reflect on either the injury inflicted by their group or the suffering of their group.

6. Ethical Consideration

This research does not include any human participants for data collection and is developed on publicly available secondary data and governance content. Therefore, the relevance of ethical consideration revolves around the responsible usage of secondary data, concerning the formal and correct citations and attributions of the original Scholars, journalists, reporters, the individuals who are quoted, and the researchers.

7. Limitations

There are a few limitations of this paper. Firstly, the conflict data commences from 1989 and does not cover the entire civil war from 1975 to1989. Therefore, it is an incomplete coverage of war narratives. Secondly, causation cannot be claimed. The data indicate that violence has always been there and that memory is identity, but they cannot prove that memory induced later violence. Thirdly, the survey evidence did not have wide reach. The surveyed individuals are only Christians and Muslims living in Lebanon in 2019. Furthermore, the study does not

re-analyse the raw data but relies on published results. The results may not be applicable to all Lebanese people or over generations.

DATA ANALYSIS

This study explores the relationships between the persistence of conflict and the ways in which the conflict can be remembered after the formal end of war. The analysis has two phases, and each focuses on a different facet of the impact of conflict. Phase 1 seeks to understand the trajectory of organized violence, while Phase 2 investigates collective memory. Phases 1 and 2 examine different dimensions of the legacy of conflict. While Phase 1 is primarily concerned with the changes in the level of physical violence, Phase 2 focuses on the ways in which the same conflict can be interpreted by participants decades after its formal end.

Phase 1: Data Analysis of Conflict-Related Violence

The data used for the analysis of the first phase were derived from Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP). UCDP provides data on organized violence, which can be further divided into state-based violence, non-state violence, and one-sided violence. Using this categorization, it becomes possible to explore not only the number of deaths but also the different forms of organized violence that occurred in Lebanon (UCDP, 2026). The Lebanese Civil War is traditionally dated between 1975 and 1990. However, the UCDP-derived series, which is used in this analysis, begins in 1989. Therefore, the dataset should not be used as a chronological series to describe all instances of violence in the Lebanese Civil War. Instead, the focus is on the final stage of the war and on the sequence of organized violence that occurred after its formal end. It is also important to note, from a methodological perspective, that the purpose of the analysis is not

to calculate the total human cost of the Lebanese Civil War. Instead, it was necessary to answer the question of whether organized violence disappeared once the war officially ended. The data reveal extremely high levels of organized violence during the final years of the Lebanese Civil War. In 1989, Lebanon recorded 1,097 organized-violence deaths. This number increased up to 1,903 deaths in 1990, which represents an increase of around 73.6%. The increase in deaths is especially important as the year 1990 is generally considered to be the final year of the Lebanese Civil War. Therefore, the data show that violence was extremely intense both before and during the year, in which the conflict officially ended. Following its end, the number of deaths decreased dramatically. The dataset records 68 deaths in 1991, compared to 1,903 deaths in 1990, a reduction by around 96%. The sharp decline in organized violence indicates that the formal end of the Civil War was associated with the substantial reduction of conflict-related deaths. However, it is important to note that the data do not indicate a permanent disappearance of violence. After the war had officially ended, the level of violence continued to be considerable, although the annual death toll was comparatively low for several years following the war. The dataset records 132 deaths in 1992, 165 deaths in 1993, and 144 deaths in 1994. The number of deaths declined to 126 in 1995, and increased to 216 in 1996. Although there are certain fluctuations from year to year, these figures are considerably lower than the level of organized violence recorded during the final years of the Civil War. The pattern indicates that the end of the Civil War is associated with a significant reduction in the intensity of organized violence. However, the continued presence of deaths indicates that the end of the Lebanese Civil War does not constitute an absolute end of conflict-related violence. Therefore, the data should be interpreted as indicating the transition from extremely high levels of warfare to a relatively low

level of violence that still took place. An important observation from the dataset is that the decline in violence recorded after 1990 was not permanent. There was a significant increase in 2006, when Lebanon recorded 1,194 organized-violence deaths. This figure is much higher than the 68 deaths recorded in 1991, which demonstrates that significant levels of organized violence could re-emerge after a prolonged period of relatively low-level violence. The later data show that the level of organized violence again fluctuated throughout the 2010s. The dataset records 179 deaths in 2013, 231 deaths in 2014, and 297 deaths in 2017. These figures are considerably lower than the peaks recorded in 1990 and 2006, but they still demonstrate that the post-war period was not completely devoid of organized violence. The most significant increase of the later period is recorded in 2024, when the dataset shows 4,339 organized-violence deaths. This figure is around 128% higher than the 1,903 deaths recorded in 1990, and also exceeds the 1,194 deaths recorded back in 2006 by more than three times. The UCDP data distinguish between state-based violence, non-state violence, and one-sided violence. This categorization provides a more detailed picture of how the nature of violence varied throughout the timeline. In 1989, the 1,097 recorded deaths comprised around 780 state-based deaths and 317 non-state deaths. In 1990, the distribution shifted, and approximately 765 state-based deaths were recorded alongside 1,138 non-state deaths. This change indicates that the character of organized violence was not constant throughout the final stage of the conflict. The post-war period also contains examples of different forms of violence. One-sided violence appears in some years, and non-state violence becomes more prominent during other periods. It is also important to note that the total number of deaths cannot adequately illustrate the nature of the conflict. For example, two years with similar numbers of deaths can be significantly different in terms of the nature of political or communal

violence. Overall, Phase 1 produces three major findings. First, the final years of the Lebanese Civil War were characterized by extremely high levels of organized violence. Second, the number of deaths decreased considerably following the formal end of the war in 1990. Third, this decline did not represent a permanent disappearance of organized violence. The later increases recorded in 2006 and especially 2024 demonstrate that Lebanon remained vulnerable to periods of renewed organized violence even decades after the Lebanese Civil War. UCDP data provide support for the conclusion that the formal end of a civil war does not necessarily mean that the possibility of organized violence has been eliminated permanently. However, these data alone cannot establish that collective memory directly caused the later outbreaks of violence. They merely show the occurrence and intensity of organized violence.

Phase 2: Data Analysis of Collective Memory

The second phase of the analysis investigates the psychological and social legacy of the Lebanese Civil War through data based on quantitative collective-memory research. The underlying data were collected in Lebanon in 2019 and examine the ways Lebanese participants interpreted Civil War narratives in relation to victimhood, responsibility, national identification, and religious identification. The associated peer-reviewed study by Zahreddine, Licata, Klein, and Azzi examined two studies. Study 1 included 405 participants, while Study 2 included 338 participants. The participants responded to questions regarding victimhood and responsibility using numerical scales, allowing the researchers to compare their responses quantitatively (Zahreddine et al., 2026). This is particularly relevant because the research does not simply ask whether participants remember the Civil War. It investigates the ways in which people interpret the conflict and assign meaning and responsibility to its events. Study 1 presented participants

with a chronological narrative of the Lebanese Civil War. The narrative included events involving different groups throughout the conflict, rather than focusing exclusively on one community's experiences. One of the most important findings was that participants did not show a clear competitive pattern of victimhood. In other words, participants were not necessarily inclined to acknowledge one group's suffering as the one that required them to deny the suffering of another group.The analysis found no statistically significant difference between the perceived ingroup and outgroup victimhood. This means that participants, overall, were able to acknowledge victimhood on both sides (Zahreddine et al., 2026). This finding is important because collective memory after conflict is often assumed to follow a simple pattern in which each group views itself as the primary victim. The findings of Study 1 provide a more complicated picture. They indicate that Lebanese participants were capable of acknowledging that multiple groups suffered during the Civil War. The analysis of responsibility revealed a different pattern. The researchers found a statistically significant relationship between religious identification and responsibility attribution. The analysis found a statistically significant relationship between religious identification and responsibility attribution ($p = .048$). However, the effect size was small ($\eta^2p = .01$), suggesting that although religious identification was related to the way responsibility was assigned, its overall influence was limited (Zahreddine et al., 2026). This finding should not be interpreted as indicating that religious identity completely determines the way a person understands the Civil War. Instead, it suggests that stronger identification with a religious group was associated with somewhat more defensive patterns when participants evaluated the responsibility for the conflict. In other words, identity appears to influence how people process information that concerns their own group's role in a violent past. The study also

examined national identification. Participants generally identified more strongly with the Lebanese nation than with their religious group.

PHASE 3: How narratives interact with identity, collective memory

Data Presentation:

Study	**Sample Size (*N*)**	**Narrative Exposure / Condition**	**Primary Analytical Findings**
Study 1	*N*=405	Chronological Lebanese Civil War narrative	Absence of a rigid competitive ingroup-victimhood pattern; participants recognized suffering on bothsides.Religious identification moderated responsibility: high religious identifiers attributed more responsibility to the outgroup and third parties than to the ingroup; low religious identifiers showed smaller differentiation.
Study 2	*N*=338	Reminders of ingroup victimization vs ingroup harm-doing	Event framing significantly altered both victimhood and responsibility patterns.When exposed to ingroup victimization, high religious identifiers showed strong defensive blame (higher outgroup responsibility; third parties consistently received high blame).National identification altered responsibility patterns depending on whether the reminder described ingroup harm-doing or victimization

2)The 5-Step Analysis Formula

PATTERN → COMPARISON → MAGNITUDE → INTERPRETATION → RESEARCH LINK

Step 1: Pattern

Across both studies, narrative interpretation is conditional rather than uniform. Exposure to historical war narratives does not trigger a universal defensive reaction; rather, participants demonstrated an ability to acknowledge outgroup suffering alongside ingroup experiences. However, when specific event frames are introduced, responsibility attribution shifts systematically depending on social identity strength.

Step 2: Comparison

- **By Identity Group:** High religious identifiers displayed significantly stronger defensive attribution patterns than low religious identifiers. High religious identifiers directed blame away from their ingroup toward outgroups and third parties, whereas low religious identifiers exhibited smaller differentiation in responsibility assignment.
- **By Event Framing (Study 2):** Reminders of ingroup victimization elicited pronounced ingroup favoring or defensive responses among highly religious participants. Conversely, reminders of ingroup harm-doing interacted with national identification to alter responsibility attribution patterns.

Step 3: Magnitude

The evidence supports a mechanism in which remembered events provide a frame for judging who suffered and who is responsible. The frame is not independent of identity: religious identification is associated with stronger defensive attribution patterns in the published studies. However, the results also show recognition of suffering across groups, so the data should not be reduced to a simple "one side blames the other" story.

Step 4: Interpretation

These findings indicate that historical narratives provide a cognitive frame for evaluating post-war suffering and culpability. Religious identification acts as a defensive psychological filter when ingroup suffering is highlighted, reinforcing outgroup blame. At the same time, the observed willingness to acknowledge outgroup suffering suggests that collective memory is not inherently locked into competitive victimhood, leaving room for more inclusive post-conflict memory structures.

Step 5: Research Link

This analysis addresses the central overarching research question: how societies sustain conflict after physical hostilities decrease. The data proves that collective memory is a measurable social process; societies carry past conflicts forward through identity-linked interpretations and framed blame narratives long after major combat spikes subside.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

1. Memory Matters for Post-Conflict Policy

The findings suggest that collective memory continues to play an important role in societies that have experienced conflict, even when direct violence has decreased. The data on collective memory shows that Lebanese participants continued to understand the Civil War through ideas of victimhood, responsibility, and group identity many years after the conflict had ended. This means that memorials, school education, public commemorations, and historical narratives can shape how younger generations understand the conflict and the groups involved in it. Therefore, peacebuilding after conflict should not focus only on stopping physical violence. How societies remember, discuss, and communicate their past is also an important part of creating a peaceful post-conflict environment.

2. The Way History Is Presented Matters

The findings also show that the way historical events are presented can influence how people understand victimhood and responsibility. Study 2 compared two different types of narratives: one that highlighted the suffering of the participants' own group and another that focused on the harm caused by their own group. The results indicate that different reminders of the past can produce different patterns in how people assign responsibility and understand victimhood. In other words, the same conflict may be remembered differently depending on which part of the history is emphasised. This suggests that collective memory is not simply a fixed description of what happened in the past. The way historical events are presented and remembered can shape how individuals understand responsibility and the actions of different groups.

3. Inclusive Memory Is Important

The findings do not support the idea that every group remembers itself only as a victim. Study 1 did not show a clear pattern of competitive ingroup victimhood. Instead, participants were also able to recognise that people on both sides had experienced suffering. This is important for understanding post-conflict memory because it shows that memories of suffering do not necessarily have to remain limited to one group. People may also recognise the experiences of those belonging to other groups. Therefore, collective memory should not be understood simply as a process in which one group blames another. Greater attention should be given to whether historical narratives create space for the suffering and experiences of different communities to be acknowledged.

4. Bringing Conflict and Collective-Memory Data Together

The analysis demonstrates the usefulness of combining different forms of data. The UCDP-based conflict data provides information about the level and changing intensity of organised violence, while the collective-memory data helps us understand how people interpret the conflict through ideas of victimhood, responsibility, and identity. These two datasets therefore examine different aspects of the same broader issue. Conflict data helps us understand changes in physical violence, whereas survey-based evidence provides insight into how later generations understand the conflict and the actors involved in it. Looking at both dimensions together provides a broader understanding of how the consequences of conflict can continue even after physical violence has declined, particularly through people's interpretations of the past.

5. Avoiding Strong Causal Claims

The findings need to be interpreted carefully. The available data shows relationships between narrative framing, identity, victimhood, and perceptions of responsibility. However, it does not demonstrate that collective memory by itself causes violence to return. The findings are therefore better understood as showing that memories of past events and identity-based interpretations can continue to have social and political significance after a conflict has ended. They should not be interpreted as proof of a direct causal relationship between collective memory and renewed violence. This distinction is important because it ensures that the conclusions remain consistent with what the available evidence can actually demonstrate.

LIMITATIONS

1. Limited Time Coverage of the Conflict Data

One important limitation relates to the period covered by the UCDP-based conflict dataset. The Lebanese Civil War is generally considered to have lasted from 1975 to 1990. However, the quantitative conflict series used in this analysis begins in 1989. As a result, the dataset covers only the final part of the Civil War and the subsequent period. It does not provide a complete year-by-year account of organised violence throughout the entire 1975–1990 conflict. Therefore, the data should not be used to reconstruct the complete history or intensity of violence during the Lebanese Civil War. Instead, it is more appropriate for examining the later phase of the conflict and subsequent changes in organised violence.

2. Limited Generalisability of the Collective-Memory Findings

Another limitation concerns the population included in the collective-memory studies. The survey data was collected from Lebanese citizens living in Lebanon during 2019/2020. Study 1 involved 405 participants, while Study 2 included 338 participants. Because the sample was limited to these participants, the findings cannot automatically be applied to all Lebanese citizens or to every society that has experienced civil war. The findings should therefore be understood primarily within the context of Lebanon and the specific participants included in the research.

3. Specific Narrative Stimuli and Identity Measures

A further limitation comes from the particular narratives and measures used in the original studies. Study 1 presented participants with a chronological account of the Lebanese Civil War. Study 2, in comparison, exposed participants to narratives that either highlighted victimisation of their own group or focused on harm caused by their own group. Different types of historical narratives, reminders, or participant populations could potentially lead to different interpretations. For this reason, the findings should be understood in relation to the specific narratives and measures used in these studies rather than being treated as representative of all forms of collective memory.

4. Limitations of the Available Dataset

The second dataset used in this analysis is based on extracted evidence from published research rather than the original respondent-level dataset. The source material indicates that the original research dataset remains the appropriate source for detailed respondent-level analysis. As a result, the extracted dataset limits the extent to which additional calculations or independent

statistical tests can be carried out.Therefore, the present analysis should remain within the boundaries of the information available in the extracted data.

5. No Direct Causal Relationship Can Be Established

The most important limitation is that the analysis cannot establish that collective memory directly causes renewed violence.The datasets demonstrate relationships involving remembered events, group identity, victimhood, and perceptions of responsibility. However, they do not show that collective memory alone leads to renewed physical conflict. The findings should therefore be interpreted as evidence of relationships between historical narratives, identity, victimhood, and responsibility attribution rather than as proof that memory directly causes conflict. Maintaining this distinction is essential for ensuring that the conclusions accurately reflect the evidence available in the study.

DATA SOURCES AND ANALYSIS

The analysis draws on data from established conflict research and psychological research sources. Together, these sources provide information about both the development of organised violence in Lebanon and the ways in which people remember and interpret the Lebanese Civil War.

1. UCDP Dataset

The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) serves as the main source of conflict-related data. The dataset used in the study covers organised violence in Lebanon from 1989 to 2025 and includes deaths associated with state-based, non-state, and one-sided violence. The data also indicates that significant levels of organised violence continued after the main period of the

Lebanese Civil War. For example, the dataset records 1,097 deaths from organised violence in 1989 and 1,903 in 1990. It also records later increases, including 1,194 deaths in 2006 and 4,339 in 2024.

2. UCDP-Derived Lebanon Conflict Series

The analysis also uses a Lebanon-specific conflict series derived from UCDP data. This series helps illustrate how the intensity of organised violence changed over time. However, because the available series begins in 1989, it should not be considered a complete reconstruction of violence throughout the entire 1975–1990 Civil War.

3. Psych Archives – Collective Memory Dataset

The second major source is the *Collective Memory of the Lebanese Civil War* dataset available through Psych Archives. The dataset provides quantitative evidence on how Lebanese citizens understand and remember the Civil War. It focuses on issues such as victimhood, responsibility, national identification, and religious identification after participants were exposed to different narratives concerning the war. The research data was collected in 2019/2020.

4. Peer-Reviewed Research Article

The analysis also draws upon the 2026 peer-reviewed article, *Collective Victimhood and Responsibility Attributions: The Lebanese Civil War Through the Lens of Social Identity*. The research consisted of two studies. Study 1 involved 405 participants who were presented with a chronological narrative of the Lebanese Civil War. Study 2 involved 338 participants who were exposed either to narratives highlighting their group's victimisation or narratives focusing on harm caused by their own group. The responses were measured using 1–10 rating scales.

5. Analysis of the Data

The combination of these datasets provides two complementary perspectives. UCDP data helps measure the physical intensity and changing pattern of conflict, while the collective-memory research provides insight into how individuals understand the conflict and assign victimhood and responsibility. The findings indicate that the framing of historical narratives can influence people's judgements. In particular, stronger religious identification was linked with more defensive patterns of responsibility attribution. When participants were reminded of their group's victimisation, participants with stronger religious identification assigned considerably more responsibility to the outgroup than to their own group. At the same time, the studies showed that participants could recognise suffering experienced by both sides. Taken together, the evidence suggests that the consequences of war can extend beyond the period of direct physical violence. Conflict data illustrates changes in the level of violence, while collective-memory data shows how memories, identities, and historical narratives influence perceptions of responsibility and victimhood. This indicates that societies may continue to experience the social effects of past conflict through memories and identity-based interpretations, even when active violence has decreased. At the same time, it is important to emphasise that the data does not demonstrate that collective memory by itself causes renewed violence. Rather, it identifies relationships between conflict experiences, memory, identity, and perceptions of responsibility. The Lebanese case shows that the memory of war is more than a historical record of past events. It can also be understood as an ongoing social process. UCDP data illustrates how organised violence changed over time, while the collective-memory studies demonstrate how exposure to different war narratives can shape perceptions of victimhood and responsibility in relation to group identity.

Overall, the evidence suggests that the effects of conflict can remain within society through memories of suffering, interpretations of responsibility, and identity-based understandings, even after physical violence has declined. The findings also point to the value of a more inclusive approach to remembering conflict. Recognising the suffering experienced by different groups may contribute to a more balanced understanding of the past and may be relevant to addressing divisions that continue after conflict. However, the evidence should be interpreted cautiously. The analysis demonstrates relationships between memory, identity, victimhood, and responsibility, but it does not establish that collective memory directly causes renewed violence.

Discussion

This study examined how narratives surrounding victimhood and responsibility for the Lebanese Civil War continue to shape relations between different groups within Lebanon's confessional power-sharing system. Overall, three important findings emerge from the analysis. First, the end of the Civil War did not bring an immediate or permanent end to organised violence. Recorded deaths declined sharply from 1,903 in 1990 to 68 in 1991, representing a fall of around 96%. However, violence appeared again in later years, with 1,194 deaths recorded in 2006 and the highest level in the dataset, 4,339 deaths, recorded in 2024. This pattern suggests that the formal conclusion of the war did not completely remove the possibility of later episodes of organised violence. Second, the findings of Zahreddine et al. (2026) do not show strong evidence of competitive victimhood. Participants did not report significantly different levels of victimhood for their own group and the other group. In other words, participants were able to recognise that suffering had been experienced on both sides of the conflict rather than viewing their own community as the only victim. Third, the strength of religious identification was related to how

participants assigned responsibility for the conflict. Stronger religious identification was associated with a more defensive pattern of responsibility attribution ($p = .048$, $\eta^2p = .01$). This tendency became more pronounced when participants were reminded of their group's victimisation. National identification appeared to provide some protection against this defensiveness, although the effect was relatively limited. The interpretation of findings of two datasets used in this study capture different aspects of the Lebanese conflict. The UCDP series provides evidence about the changing level of organised violence, whereas the survey data provides insight into how people continue to interpret the conflict through ideas of identity, suffering, and responsibility. When these findings are considered together, they suggest that the consequences of conflict cannot be understood only through the number of deaths or the occurrence of physical violence. Conflict can leave behind social and psychological effects that continue to influence how people understand the past. The survey findings also show that people's responses to historical narratives were not uniform. The narratives themselves did not produce the same defensive reaction among all participants. Instead, the response depended partly on the strength of an individual's identity. The framing of the historical event also mattered. Reminders that emphasised ingroup victimisation produced different patterns of responsibility attribution from reminders that focused on harm committed by the ingroup. This suggests that memories of conflict can operate as interpretive frames, but their influence depends on the person receiving the narrative and the identity through which that person understands the event. At the same time, the small effect size is important. Religious identification was related to responsibility attribution, but it did not determine participants' responses. The findings of this study are broadly consistent with previous literature on collective memory, identity, and conflict.

The relationship between identity strength and collective memory supports Schwartz's (2016) argument that collective memory should not be viewed as a single and uniform national understanding of the past. Instead, people's interpretations may vary according to the strength of their identification. In this study, the differences were more closely related to the strength of identification than simply to membership of a particular sect. The influence of narrative framing is also consistent with Mälksoo's (2023) understanding of memory as a political resource. The way particular historical experiences are highlighted can influence how people interpret responsibility and decide who should be held accountable for past violence. Similarly, the defensive attribution observed among stronger identifiers is consistent with the arguments of Bar-Tal (2014) and Paez and Liu (2011). Their work shows how memories of suffering and injustice can become closely connected with group identity, encouraging individuals to favour and defend their own group. The findings also relate to Haugbolle (2010) and Larkin (2012), who emphasise the existence of different sectarian memory cultures in Lebanon rather than a single, shared national narrative of the Civil War. However, the present findings also differ from some expectations in the existing literature. Paez and Liu (2011), for example, would suggest that memories of violence may contribute to stronger negative attitudes towards the opposing group. In this study, however, participants were still able to recognise suffering experienced by the outgroup, even when they showed greater defensiveness in assigning responsibility. This is an important distinction. It suggests that recognising another group's suffering does not necessarily mean abandoning one's own group's interpretation of responsibility. Nicholson (2017) argues that alternative narratives can create possibilities for changing established understandings of conflict. The recognition of outgroup suffering found here may indicate that such possibilities also exist in

the Lebanese context. Larkin's (2012) work focuses particularly on how young people negotiate memories inherited from previous generations. The present study adds to this discussion by examining how contemporary adults interpret the conflict. However, it does not directly examine how these memories are transmitted from one generation to another. There are several possible ways to understand the relationship between identity strength and responsibility attribution. One possibility is that stronger religious identification makes the suffering of one's own group a more important part of one's identity. In such circumstances, individuals may be more inclined to direct blame towards the opposing group in order to protect the positive image of their own community (Bar-Tal, 2014). A second explanation may be found in Lebanon's institutional and educational context. The Taif Agreement called for the development of a common history textbook (Nehme, 2006). However, the teaching of history has continued to be influenced by confessional education and political disagreements (Yoder, 2015). As a result, the interpretation of the Civil War has remained influenced by communities, political parties, and families. This may help explain why different sectarian interpretations of the conflict continue to exist, as suggested by Haugbolle (2010). These explanations should, however, be treated as possible interpretations rather than established causal explanations. The data used in this study does not directly test the influence of education, family, political parties, or institutional arrangements on the observed patterns. The absence of clear competitive victimhood is one of the more interesting findings of the study. It challenges the common assumption that communities emerging from conflict necessarily view themselves as the primary or exclusive victims. One possible explanation is that the experience of suffering during the Lebanese Civil War was widespread across communities. Another possibility is that recognising the suffering of another group does not necessarily threaten one's

identity when the main issue under consideration is responsibility rather than victimhood. The relatively weak buffering effect of national identification is also noteworthy. A stronger Lebanese national identity appears to reduce defensiveness mainly among individuals whose religious identification is relatively low. This suggests that national identity by itself may not be strong enough to overcome deeply rooted group identification. The small effect size also calls for caution. Although the findings reveal a meaningful relationship, they should not be presented as showing that religious identification determines how people understand responsibility for the conflict. The findings demonstrate relationships between narrative framing, identity, victimhood, and responsibility attribution. They do not demonstrate that collective memory directly causes renewed violence. The increases in violence observed in 2006 and 2024 should therefore be understood as recorded episodes of organised violence rather than as consequences of collective memory. The UCDP series begins in 1989 and therefore does not provide a complete record of the Lebanese Civil War, which began in 1975. The survey evidence also has limitations in terms of generalisation. The two studies included 405 and 338 Christian and Muslim participants in Lebanon in 2019. Furthermore, the present analysis is based on published findings rather than an independent analysis of the original respondent-level data. The conclusions should therefore be applied primarily to the participants and Lebanese context examined in the studies. They should not automatically be extended to the entire Lebanese population or to other societies that have experienced civil conflict. The study is significant because it brings together several dimensions that are often examined separately: patterns of physical violence, people's interpretations of conflict, and the institutional context in which memories of the past are formed and maintained. It also adds a memory-related dimension to research on consociational governance. Classic work by

Lijphart (1969), along with later scholarship such as O'Leary (2019), has largely examined how political power is distributed and shared between different communities. The present findings suggest that the long-term stability of divided societies also requires attention to education, historical narratives, and the ways in which conflict is remembered. The practical implications are equally important. Post-conflict peacebuilding should not be limited to preventing physical violence. Attention should also be given to how the past is taught in schools, represented through commemorations, and discussed within communities. Narratives that acknowledge the suffering experienced by different groups may create greater opportunities for mutual recognition. In contrast, narratives that selectively emphasise the suffering of only one community may contribute to maintaining existing divisions. Returning to the central research question, the findings suggest that narratives of victimhood and responsibility can contribute to the continuation of intergroup divisions, particularly among individuals with strong religious identification. This tendency becomes more pronounced when the suffering of one's own group is emphasised. At the same time, the findings provide an important indication that collective memory is not necessarily trapped in a cycle of competitive victimhood. Participants were able to acknowledge suffering experienced by the outgroup even when they showed defensiveness over questions of responsibility. At the same time, the findings provide an important indication that collective memory is not necessarily trapped in a cycle of competitive victimhood. Participants were able to acknowledge suffering experienced by the outgroup even when they showed defensiveness over questions of responsibility. This makes the Lebanese case more complex than a simple division between competing memories. Collective memory can reinforce existing boundaries, but it can also contain space for recognition of shared suffering and more inclusive

interpretations of the past. Future research could build on these findings by using respondent-level data, examining people who grew up after the war, and exploring how memories of the Civil War are passed through families, schools, political parties, and other social institutions. Such research could provide a deeper understanding of how memories of conflict continue to shape Lebanese society across generations.

Conclusion

Overall, the article demonstrates that the end of the Lebanese Civil War did not signify a complete end of the violence or the memories entangled with it. The UCDP data demonstrates that although the incidents of violence reduced significantly after 1990, there was a clear rise in 2006 and especially 2024, which demonstrates that Lebanon is still vulnerable. In addition, the study demonstrates that people do not pass down the memories of war unchanged; it is not a matter of families, communities, political parties, institutions, or any other social entities having set histories in place. In Lebanon, the absence of a single national history textbook and the persistence of the sectarian narratives allowed for the different communities to continue to hold out their respective takes on the war. Meanwhile, the findings do not indicate conflictual memory practices per se but rather the fact that collective memory can be used as a tool for contention and conflictual remembrance, where the survey data demonstrates that the Lebanese respondents were able to correctly identify the victimhood of their respective communities, in the face of the other communities' victimhood; concomitantly, where the narrative of one group focused on their victimhood, the higher the level of religiosity corresponded with more defensive blame attributions. As such, there are two sides to memory, in its capacity as a divisive force when it is used to stoke the grievances of one side against another, as an agent of division, but also in its

ability to facilitate understanding by acknowledging the victimhood of the others, which allows for more inclusive and less divisive future narratives to emerge, the key realisation being not that the remembrance of the past causes violence, but the specific ways of remembering engage people with divisive issues, which is why the past matters to the present.

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