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The uses and abuses of victimhood nationalism in international politics

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Abstract

Contemporary populist movements have inspired political pundits in various contexts to opine on the resurgence of victimhood culture, in which groups demonstrate heightened sensitivity to slights and attempt to evoke sympathy from third parties to their conflicts. Although reference to victimhood's politics oftentimes surfaces examples of egregious microaggressions, when victimhood claims are scaled up to the realm of nationalisms, oftentimes so too are their consequences. Current literature on victimhood in international politics, though, lacks a unifying theorisation suitable for the comparative analysis of victimhood nationalisms as important identities in the international arena. This gap prevents scholarship from investigating how the severity of perceived or real suffering relates to the formation of victimhood, as well as how victimhood nationalisms legitimize the projection of grievances onto third parties, potentially sowing new conflicts. This article theorises victimhood nationalism as a powerful identity narrative with two key constitutive elements. First, drawing on the narrative identity approach, it outlines how victimhood nationalisms are constructed via narrations of perceived or real collective trauma. Second, it argues that victimhood nationalist narratives, unlike other narratives of collective trauma, break down the idealized victim–perpetrator relationship and project grievances onto otherwise uninvolved international actors, including other nation-states. The article concludes by offering comparative case studies of Slobodan Milošević's and David Ben-Gurion's respective invocations of victimhood nationalism to illustrate the empirical applicability of this theorization, as well as victimhood nationalism's importance in international politics across time and space.

Keywords

Identity, Israel, nationalism, Serbia, trauma, victimhood

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Introduction

In the wake of the election of US President Donald Trump and the UK's decision to leave the European Union (EU) ('Brexit'), pundits from across the political spectrum and across the globe have lamented the rise of 'identity politics' justifying otherwise illogical grievances and abnormal political behaviour in a variety of contexts. Campbell and Manning (2014: 692, emphasis in original) have described this trend as a shift to '*victimhood culture*', utterly distinct from past eras, in which groups demonstrate heightened sensitivity to slights and attempt to inspire sympathy from third parties to their conflicts. Although reference to the politics of victimhood oftentimes surfaces examples of egregious claims of microaggressions,[1] when notions of victimhood are scaled up to the realm of nationalisms, they necessarily entail consequences for international politics. For example, Yilmaz (2017) has argued that a sense of victimhood among Turkish Islamists has fueled the political rise of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP), while Caplan (2012) has argued that Israeli and Palestinian victimhood narratives have reinforced mutually exclusive claims that contribute to the conflict's intractability. More recently, scholars like Fukuyama (2016; see also Solis, 2017) have employed the ideas of victimhood and grievance to explain Trump's electoral success in invoking rhetoric of the US 'losing' to the savvy of China, Mexico and others in an allegedly zero-sum game of international economic relations. This rhetoric notably contributed to America's withdrawal from the landmark Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal in January 2017 and renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 2018.

This juxtaposition of various nation-states' invocations of victimhood begs two important sets of questions for International Relations (IR) scholarship. First, as Jacoby (2015: 528) aptly identifies in her article on victimhood identity: '[W]hat is the connection, if any, between the severity of the harm and recognition/redress of the victim?'. In each of these examples, nationalist narratives claim unjustified suffering at the hands of other nations, but the severity of this suffering — past imposition of secularism in Turkey, the Holocaust for Israelis, al-Nakbah for Palestinians and the decades-long decline of the industrial middle class in the US — ranges widely. In some instances, victimhood nationalisms might emerge out of claims to collective trauma that are clearly exaggerated or fabricated — does this impact the political potency of the narratives in question? A second, related set of questions also arises: how and why do victimhood narratives legitimize the implication of third parties? Israeli leaders, for example, have often invoked the Holocaust, perpetrated by Nazi Germany and European collaborators during the 1940s, to legitimize actions against Arab neighbours decades later.[2] Victimhood's projections often span both time and space, implicating either uninvolved nations or younger generations within perpetrating nations that were not present for their forebears' crimes. Put crudely, why is 'paying it forward' such a common response to historical injustices?

These questions are important not only for the clear ethical dilemmas that they entail. This article's comparative case studies of leaders invoking victimhood nationalism — Slobodan Milošević before the break-up of Yugoslavia and David Ben-Gurion during the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann — demonstrate victimhood nationalism's power in international politics, both in appealing to aggrieved populations and for manipulation by

savvy political actors interested in mobilizing an in-group and garnering sympathy from out-groups. Enns (2012) observes that in both domestic and international contexts, this mobilization often results in violence, while the sympathy that victimhood nationalisms frequently evoke can be used for the absolution of guilt for past crimes or to evade critical scrutiny for ethically dubious actions in the present. Beyond Enns's insights, which apply to both the domestic and international realms, victimhood nationalism is of particular interest to IR scholarship for two reasons. First, as Lim (2010: 138) observes, 'the nationalist imagination can be fed only in transnational space' because of the way it implicates an ontological other in the form of competing nations. As this article's case studies demonstrate, victimhood nationalism is a potent force in defining the self–other distinctions that shape the international arena (Neumann, 1996). Second, because nationalisms are defined by their aspirations to exert exclusive control over the state apparatus (see Eriksen, 2010: 10), and victimhood nationalism, as this article defines it, stems from the narration of trauma as constitutive of national identity and the projection of grievances onto third parties, these identity narratives oftentimes inspire otherwise irrational state actions, including violence against nation-states uninvolved in precipitating traumas (Feldman, 2001: 140–142).

This article argues that in order to understand victimhood nationalism as a common and powerful identity in international politics, scholarship must theorize it in a manner suitable for the comparative analysis necessary to address the aforementioned questions of proportionality and the projection of grievances onto third parties. Without a robust theory of victimhood nationalism that isolates the phenomenon from its potential consequences, scholarship is prone to discussing solely those cases with noteworthy outcomes, rather than understanding victimhood nationalism as a distinct and common form of identity in IR that can both be used instrumentally and appeal to legitimate group sentiments in a variety of settings.[3] Further, without adequately theorizing how victimhood nationalist narratives function, future scholarship will be unable to generalize from comparative work on victimhood nationalisms' relative frequency and impact across contexts, while normative scholarship will be unable to assess victimhood nationalisms' legitimacy, distinguishing cases of blatant demagoguery from those with more justifiable cases for grievance projection.

Drawing on the narrative identity approach, this article theorizes victimhood nationalism as a type of identity narrative involving two key elements. First, victimhood nationalism involves the politicized narration of collective trauma. Due to the contested nature of collective trauma, which this article defines via the paradox inherent in its conceptualization, any narrative that emerges from collective trauma will necessarily distort and abstract from the underlying experiences that it references. However, although cultural trauma theorists have argued that politically potent narratives of trauma need not retain *any* linkage to underlying traumatic experience (Alexander, 2012; Alexander et al., 2004; Sztompka, 2000), this article argues that underlying traumatic experience remains an important factor in checking politicized trauma narratives' blatant instrumentalization and illegitimacy over time. Second, among different types of post-traumatic identity narratives, this article distinguishes victimhood nationalist narratives by the breakdown of the archetypal victim–perpetrator relationship to project grievances onto other (oftentimes national) third parties. This breakdown is important to understanding how

victimhood identity differs from the simple status of being a victim. Whereas one must be a victim *of* something or someone, victimhood has no specific object and thus its grievances are malleable beyond a singular situation or set of perpetrators.

This article begins with a brief explanation of the narrative identity approach and its utility in theorizing complex identities and their impacts in international politics. Then, it outlines its novel two-party theory of victimhood nationalism. This theorization serves both to help identify victimhood nationalism as a common response to perceptions of collective trauma in international politics, and to facilitate vital comparative analysis. Next, this article turns to comparative case studies of two leaders who invoked victimhood nationalisms — Slobodan Milošević in Serbia and David Ben-Gurion in Israel — that demonstrate the utility of this article's theorisation, as well as the political benefits that can accrue to leaders able to contort victimhood nationalist narratives. As both Milošević and Ben-Gurion were uniquely charismatic leaders with immense power within their respective nations' political discourses, these cases are prime candidates for such first-image analysis (Byman and Pollack, 2001; Lerner, 2018a). Yet, because both 'deviant cases' emerged in such different political contexts (authoritarian populist versus democratic, nation-state versus nation within a federated republic, post-Second World War versus end of the Cold War, etc.), they also demonstrate how victimhood nationalist narratives are relevant across time and space.[4] Contrary to the expectations of existing scholarship, these cases demonstrate how victimhood nationalist narratives can emerge to legitimize the projection of grievances onto otherwise uninvolved third-party actors to a conflict in diverse contexts, obviating the dismissal of victimhood nationalism as epiphenomenal or marginal. Finally, this article concludes by reflecting on how future scholarship might expand beyond case-specific comparative analysis and generalize on what factors contribute to victimhood nationalism's relative prevalence and legitimacy across time and space.

The narrative identity approach

The rise of constructivism as a paradigm in IR has placed the concept of identity front and centre in debates on the factors influencing state behaviour in the international arena.[5] Subsequent scholarship has likewise distinguished between state identity, reflected in the material, structural and bureaucratic apparatus of the state, and national identity, present in a community with distinct claims to the powers of the state apparatus (Adamson and Demetriou, 2007; Berenskoetter, 2014). However, despite the emphasis in many works on identity formation through socialization, early constructivist invocations of identity in IR (see, e.g., Jepperson et al., 1996; Wendt, 1994, 1999) tended to reflect what Somers (1994: 605) labels '"essentialist" (pre-political) singular categories', which neglect the temporality, spatiality and relationality inherent in identity as a social construct. Loosely put, 'essentialist' explanations claim that nations and states change identities through social interaction, but ostensibly by shifting between vaguely Platonic categories (friend to enemy, victim to perpetrator, etc.) rather than via ongoing, evolutionary, historically bound, discursive processes. The problems associated with this typological approach to identity become clear when adapted to comparative analysis. Although both Milošević and Ben-Gurion promoted victimhood nationalist identities,

this article is premised on the idea that their respective legitimation claims are rooted in their groups' specific collective traumas and that they must be understood in relation to the historical contexts in which they emerged.

The narrative identity approach, by contrast, theorizes identities like victimhood nationalism as essentially constituted by narratives. Pioneered by French philosopher Paul Ricœur (1991, 2008a, 2008b) and further elucidated by multiple scholars writing in his wake (Anthias, 2002; Ezzy, 1998; Feldman, 2001; Somers, 1994), this approach argues that individuals and groups form identities within larger social discourses by both interpreting and rearticulating narratives. Somers (1994: 613, 614, 606, 616, emphasis in original) writes that viewing identities as constituted by narratives undermines social scientists' frequent assertion that narrative is an artificial representational mode 'imposed by historians on the chaos of lived experience'; instead, she argues, narrative should be seen as an '*ontological condition of social life*'. Accordingly, social scientists interested in identities need not consider narrative analysis an '*epistemological other*', but can rather view it as the theoretical basis for unravelling the interwoven relationships that constitute identities. In this sense, the rigid categorical 'essentialist' accounts of identity categories are, in fact, artificial representations imposed on discernible patterns in narrations of self over time.

Over the past two decades, the narrative identity approach and related narrative analysis have found fruitful application in IR scholarship, particularly in relation to issues like nationalism and ontological security (Berenskoetter, 2014; Bially-Mattern, 2005; Brand, 2010; Hansen, 2006; Mitzen, 2006; Ringmar, 1996; Steele, 2008). Among its advantages, three stand out for this article's examination of victimhood nationalism. First, because narratives create meaning out of otherwise discordant elements, employing the narrative identity approach shifts scholarship's focus away from what identities *are* to what they *do*, in terms of creating meaning and continuity for groups and individuals across time and space. Without the context, relationality and temporality provided by narratives, ideal-type identity categories like race, ethnicity or nationality would be functionally inert, providing no insight for social science analysis. Indeed, narrative's meaning-making abilities are vital to this article's examination of how victimhood nationalisms endow traumas with new meanings that legitimate the projection of grievances from perpetrators onto third parties. Second, the emphasis in narrative analysis on interpretation offers a means of overcoming the idealist–instrumentalist[6] debate on identity construction that has, to date, inhibited the incorporation of identity into many theories of international politics. Although, as this article demonstrates, political entrepreneurs can certainly manipulate identity narratives to mobilize populations for material gains, these narratives' resonance oftentimes depends on their ability to appeal to many people's sincerely felt understandings of self. Thus, they cannot easily be dismissed as either purely instrumental and epiphenomenal or purely ideal before rigorous analysis of their multiple context-specific interpretations (Somers, 1994: 627–628). Third and finally, although narrative by no means eliminates the agent–structure problems inherent to so much social science analysis, the narrative identity approach does help frame discussions of how individuals interpret socially available narratives and rearticulate them in political discourse. This article's first-image empirical sections of two powerful political leaders (Milošević and Ben-Gurion) that championed new articulations of two historical

traumas (chiefly, the Battle of Kosovo and the Holocaust) demonstrate the utility of analysing narratives that spread through political discourse and shape larger group understandings.

Defining victimhood nationalism

Although quite limited, existing scholarship on the politics of collective trauma, large-group victimhood identity and victimhood nationalism more specifically suffers from a lack of unifying vocabulary, as well as the intellectual confusion almost inevitable in such interdisciplinary debates. One strand of relevant scholarship has come from ontologically individualistic work in psychology and psychoanalysis writing about perceptions of victimhood among individuals in political conflicts (Bar-Tal et al., 2009; Noor et al., 2017; Volkan, 1998, 2001; Vollhardt, 2012). However, while this literature has proven vital in bringing a wealth of psychological and psychoanalytic research on trauma and learned helplessness into discussions of international political conflicts, it has tended to neglect analysis of the political entrepreneurship inherent in victimhood narratives and has only tangentially addressed the larger ontological issues of victimhood as a form of *collective* identity that shapes international politics.[7] Alternatively, existing IR scholarship on victimhood as a collective identity has tended to downplay the role of underlying psychological trauma in fomenting victimhood identities, as well as the tension inherent between politicized victimhood narratives and the complex underlying collective and individual sentiments that fuel them (Jacoby, 2015; Wang, 2008, 2014).

These issues ultimately prevent existing theoretical models from suitably addressing the two questions posed in the introduction of this article and facilitating comparative analysis of diverse victimhood narratives in international politics. To fill this gap, this article divides its theory of victimhood into its two constituent elements. First, drawing on the narrative identity approach, it outlines the tensions inherent in forming identity narratives out of collective trauma. Second, it demonstrates how victimhood nationalist narratives differ from other narratives of collective trauma in their projection of grievances onto third parties. In the context of international politics, where no authority monopolizes the administration of justice, this article argues that nations have added incentives to construct such narratives.

Victimhood nationalism as a narration of collective trauma

Every narrative of victimhood nationalism begins with a perception of collective trauma — oftentimes stemming from war, genocide, ethnic cleansing, colonial oppression or a devastating natural disaster — that leads to a sense of loss and resultant grievances. Still, the relationship between underlying experiences of psychic trauma, present in many interconnected individuals, and a collective victimhood nationalism is not linear. Ample scholarship has pointed out that trauma's legacy on a political culture is determined not only by the severity of the precipitating offence, but also by the way in which it is embedded in sociocultural environments and material circumstances, the potency of its narration, public efforts to mourn and 'work through' the shock,[8] and the resources available for rehabilitation (Lerner, 2018b). This section explores how paradox is inherent to

theorizing collective trauma and how this paradox implies tension between underlying psychological trauma and the narratives that emerge to represent and politicize it. Although collective narratives of mass trauma need not form from traumatic experiences and, if they do, need not take the form of victimhood nationalism, the tension inherent in narrating collective trauma constitutes the first element of victimhood nationalism and the first clear criteria for comparative analysis.

Theorizing collective trauma implies paradox. Numerous psychologically and psychoanalytically minded trauma theorists have described individual trauma as a form of mental shock that jars the psyche and can only problematically be incorporated into mnemonic schema and language (Caruth, 1995, 2016; Herman, 1992; Van der Kolk, 2014; Van der Kolk and McFarlane, 1996). Edkins (2003) argues that adequately articulating traumatic experiences as they exist in the individual psyche may be impossible; she suggests that these experiences can only be *encircled* by narratives. Yet, despite a clear desire among individuals to repress traumatic experiences, Herman (1992: 1) argues that trauma also leads to a desire to bear witness and narrate one's experience for social consumption: 'Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims.' Thus, in her exploration of collective trauma in affective communities, Hutchison (2016) defines the phenomenon as inherently paradoxical — narratives of collective trauma will necessarily abstract from and distort the underlying repressed or emotionally laden experiences of individual trauma that they seek to describe. In this sense, a sociocultural perception and narration of collective trauma must exist in tension with the underlying psychologically damaging experiences in individuals that it seeks to describe. Narratives, Hutchison (2016: 112) writes, 'locate trauma within particular historically embedded ways of understanding; they frame, provide a lens to interpret, and constitute "trauma" by appealing to established discourses concerning what it means to experience extreme events'. Narratives can exaggerate minor traumas or understate major ones, endowing them with new meanings and fomenting new grievances whose political potency oftentimes depends on external factors.

Due to the inherent distance between narratives of collective trauma and the underlying experiences that they seek to address, some scholars have posited that narratives of collective trauma (or 'cultural trauma') need not refer to any underlying psychologically traumatic experience (Alexander, 2004, 2012; Eyerman et al., 2011). For instance, Alexander (2012: 4) writes that '[t]he truth of a cultural script depends not on its empirical accuracy, but on its symbolic power and enactment'. Indeed, as this article's case studies will demonstrate, this disjunction helps explain why Slobodan Milošević was able to incite such fervour via his narrative of Serbian defeat in a 14th-century battle, from which no 20th-century Serbian could reasonably be expected to have experienced even vicarious, transgenerationally transmitted psychic trauma.[9] This vision of collective trauma as a purely socially constructed phenomenon, utterly distinct from any underlying psychic trauma in individuals' psyches, similarly characterizes Williams's (2008) discussion of 'dangerous victims' and has proven influential in much existing IR scholarship on collective trauma.

Yet, as Joas (2005: 368) writes, this cleavage begs the question of 'whether these constructions do refer to something that has its own qualities that exert some resistance

in the process of construction, whether traumas are therefore "nothing but" construction'. This article argues not only that underlying psychic trauma makes narratives of collective trauma (including victimhood narratives) more resonant, but also that completely fabricated narratives that do not appeal to individuals' psychic experiences are prone to collapsing over time — losing out in competitive political discourses to more resonant narratives. This insight helps explain why Milošević's invocation of the Battle of Kosovo proved resonant despite his audience's distance from the event in question. Not only was his narrative rhetorically powerful, but it also appealed metaphorically to a Serbian population that had, indeed, suffered tremendous poverty under communism, as well as from fascist violence during the Second World War. Emphasizing the interpretation inherent to trauma narratives reveals that their resonance stems from multiple factors beyond their symbolic and emotive power in political discourse, including the underlying trauma's severity and its victims' ability to emotionally and economically recover from its effects.

Thus, the first element of any victimhood nationalism is the abstraction of underlying masses' psychic trauma into a stylized narrative account that endows otherwise intangible traumatic experiences with causal and relational meaning, contributing to a larger, politically salient sense of national identity. While narratives of collective trauma can emerge somewhat organically within existing discourses, political entrepreneurs interested in exploiting them can also craft them more deliberately. However, although these narratives can significantly abstract, exaggerate and understate underlying psychological trauma for instrumental purposes, their mass appeal in the long term depends on their resonance with individuals. In competitive political discourse, this dynamic will tend to benefit those narratives that retain a link to some sense of underlying trauma over those that do not.

The projection of grievance in victimhood narratives

Although articulation of collective trauma as a politically salient national identity narrative is a necessary condition for victimhood nationalism, it is not sufficient — not all narratives of collective trauma in international politics can reasonably be labelled 'victimhood'. Nations can repress collective traumas[10] and, oftentimes, instead of resulting in a larger sense of victimhood nationalism, collective trauma narratives articulate more limited, specific grievances, reparable via revenge, reparations, apologies or the prosecution of specific perpetrators.[11] For example, in the immediate wake of the 1984 Bhopal disaster, many victims' groups narrated their trauma as an offence to the Indian nation but largely focused their advocacy on seeking the criminal prosecution of the chief executive officer (CEO) of the American company responsible for leaking toxic gas and a large financial settlement (Lerner, 2017). Although the gas surely created victims, they and their advocates did not frequently advocate India's assumption of a victimhood nationalist identity.

The second criteria necessary for victimhood nationalism is a breakdown of the victim–perpetrator relationship to legitimize post-traumatic grievances against otherwise uninvolved actors. This aspect expands upon the work of Williams (2008), who notably argues for a theoretical distinction between revenge and victimhood. Unlike revenge, which must 'be served at the right person's cost and by the correct hand', Williams

(2008: 81) theorizes victimhood via its malleable grievances, applicable to any 'other' that can be narrated as complicit, negligent or even simply insensitive. Due to the 'complex processes of mutual identification' between disparate and diverse people of multiple generations inherent in national identities, Williams (2008: 80) argues that revenge is a rare phenomenon in international politics.[12] When nations narrate traumas in ways that create solidarity through generations around events only directly experienced by a portion of their population, they are prone to likewise over-applying the label of perpetrator to other groups, expanding grievances beyond the agents involved in inflicting harm. For this reason, notions of victimhood are common in nearly all nations, though, most of the time, they are not sufficiently compelling relative to other identity narratives to dominate political discourse and shape state action.

Although ample literature on the transgenerational spread of trauma and the complications inherent in distinguishing perpetrators from bystanders complicates Williams's distinction between revenge and victimhood, he astutely points to how certain narrations of trauma can break down the archetypal victim–perpetrator relationship and how a sense of victimization can expand into a basis for identity. Indeed, this broad sense of victimization that allows for the projection of grievances across time and space in the international arena distinguishes victimhood nationalism from other narratives of collective trauma, as well as from the simple label of 'victim', which best applies to more limited role identities than such adaptable national identity narratives. Whereas one can assume the identity of 'victim' with regards to a specific harm and its aftermath, one must be a victim *of* something or someone. Although the psychological and sociocultural complexity of collective trauma often prevents complete rectification, as resulting harms are repaired and redressed, one's status as a victim in the present erodes. Victimhood identity, on the other hand, has no object and is thus immune to this type of rehabilitation; instead, it exists as a perpetual state of malleable grievance, allowing the assumption of the role of victim in diverse scenarios that do not directly relate to any underlying traumatization. This projection inherent to victimhood also helps explain victimhood narratives' relative durability over time, even after precipitating events are materially repaired, the psychic trauma of some individual victims has been 'worked through' and original perpetrators make amends. While victims begin to shed their status after redress, victimhood nationalisms remain so long as they are narrated into national identity.[13]

Indeed, the second abstraction of victimhood nationalism helps explain its peculiar appearance at various points in historical aggressor nations like Germany and Japan.[14] Lim (2010: 152), for instance, argues that, at times, 'shameless' victimhood nationalisms, 'de-contextualized' from the circumstances of their collective traumas' respective occurrence, have emerged in both nations. For example, the common Japanese self-identification as 'the only nation ever to have been atom-bombed' (*yuiitsu no hibakukoku*), which suffered during the Second World War solely due to the 'false indoctrination' of the nation's military leaders, tends to downplay the Japanese population's complicity in the war effort, painting 'ordinary Japanese [people] as innocent victims' rather than both victims and perpetrators. Likewise, German efforts during the *historikerstreit* debates[15] to relativize the Holocaust and compare it to the suffering that Germans experienced due to Allied bombing or communist occupation in the East has led to a popular victimhood nationalist narrative that enflames tensions with Germany's neighbours and creates a

'distasteful competition over who suffered most' (Lim, 2010: 152–156). Analysis of these Japanese and German narratives via this article's framework helps reveal why they strike outsiders as improper and ethically dubious. Although both nations undoubtedly experienced collective trauma during the Second World War, these narratives' projection of responsibility onto the vagaries of international conflict and away from their own nations' actions strikes many as tacitly denying responsibility.

The examples of contestation over German and Japanese post-war identities help demonstrate not only the prevalence of victimhood nationalism, but also why a lack of clearly defined arbitrators on the international stage makes it so common in the aftermath of international conflict. In domestic politics, which, by definition, takes place under the auspices of a state apparatus that aspires to monopolize the administration of justice, victims often decline to assume a generalized identity of victimhood and instead target grievances against perpetrators by appealing to state mechanisms for redress (courts, legislation, etc.).[16] For example, even after the traumatic internment of more than 100,000 Japanese-Americans during the Second World War, activism from victims largely sought reparations from the US government that perpetrated the injustice rather than appealing internationally to the Japanese state or some other group.[17] However, on the international stage, no hegemonic actor takes ultimate responsibility for the administration of justice and thus no arbitrator can address grievances before they spiral into victimhood nationalisms. Without such a system for seeking redress, victims on the international stage often project their grievances beyond the original perpetrators and seek sympathy and reparations from third parties narrated into the conflict.

Comparing victimhood nationalisms: Milošević and Ben-Gurion

The previous sections have theorized victimhood nationalism as a powerful type of identity narrative that emerges from a sense of collective trauma and legitimizes the projection of grievances onto third parties, oftentimes with profound consequences for international politics. While numerous constructivist scholars have analysed trauma, victimization and related phenomena like national humiliation to explain certain state behaviours, by employing the narrative identity approach to uncover victimhood nationalist narratives' two key abstractions, this article has revealed these identities' unique malleability and intractability over time and provided a framework for comparative analysis. This section demonstrates the utility of this lens by comparing how Slobodan Milošević and David Ben-Gurion, two charismatic leaders from different regions, drew on victimhood nationalist narratives more than 25 years apart. Although Milošević and Ben-Gurion's comparably powerful positions within their nations' political discourses facilitate comparative first-image analysis of their rhetoric, their divergent historical contexts reveal victimhood nationalism's potency and varied applications across time and space, helping explain its recurrence in international politics. After putting these two victimhood nationalisms in conversation, this section turns to how this theorization of victimhood nationalism can be used to reflect on the two questions outlined in this article's introduction on proportionality and projection.

Slobodan Milošević's rise to the pinnacle of Serbian politics and later role in the break-up of Yugoslavia began in earnest on 24 April 1987. On that day, Serbian President Ivan Stambolic sent Milošević, then a relatively obscure communist politician in the former Yugoslavia, to the small hamlet of Kosovo Polje to attempt to pacify a rowdy demonstration of approximately 15,000 Kosovar Serbs against the region's local government. The protestors pelted rocks at windows and pushed against police barriers, hoping to incite a reaction that would buttress claims of persecution at the hands of the region's majority ethnic Albanian population. Milošević urged calm on the crowd, but, according to now-disputed media accounts that emerged from the ordeal, he also turned to the police and famously said 'No one will ever beat this people again', a deliberately vague narration that could potentially have referred to the protestors or a larger group of Serbs and their past or future rivals (Sell, 2002: 1–2). The events were widely covered in national media and Milošević's invocation of a past 'beating' or 'defeat' made him an overnight hero for Serbian nationalists, who interpreted his statement as shattering the decades-long taboo in communist dictator President Josip Broz Tito's multiethnic Yugoslavia against politicians invoking victimhood sentiment on behalf of one ethnic group against others (Doder and Branson, 1999). Within approximately one year, Milošević would topple Stambolic and ascend to Serbia's presidency (Stevanović, 2004: 29–31).

Although the rapidity of his rise could hardly have been anticipated, Milošević's statement's resonance with ethnic Serbs is less surprising given their undeniable history of collective trauma and long-standing issues with this trauma's lack of recognition and redress. Former US Ambassador to Yugoslavia Warren Zimmermann (1999: 13) has written that 'Serbia's tragic flaw is an obsession with its own history'. As a diplomat in Belgrade from before Milošević's rise, Zimmerman recalled 'patiently [sitting] through interminable recitations by Serbs of all walks of life about the boundless ways in which they have been victimized through the centuries' (Zimmermann, 1999: 13). In federated Yugoslavia, Serbs often felt that this history was under-recognized and compounded by their lack of political supremacy under the half-Croat, half-Slovene Tito, who was in power from the end of the Second World War until his death in 1980. Many saw Tito's government as an unjust imposition upon the country's plurality Serbian community that limited its political and economic influence relative to its richer neighbours, Croatia and Slovenia (MacDonald, 2002: 187). Likewise, many Serbs resented the fact that ethnic Serbs were minorities in other republics, preventing national solidarity.[18] Although perhaps often exaggerated, these narrations cannot be dismissed as purely instrumental fabrications as they had a firm basis in collective trauma. Alongside its contribution to the genocide of Jews and Roma, the Nazi collaborationist Croatian Ustaša regime (in power from 1941 to 1945) killed and displaced hundreds of thousands of Serbs, amounting to what many have deemed a genocide (Korb, 2010). Well into the 1990s, as conflict raged, ethnic Serbs expressed fears that such massacres against Serbs might begin again (Bieber, 2002: 104–105; Mirkovic, 2000).

However, despite this history, Milošević was unique in the way he surfaced Serbs' disparate collective traumas and narrated them together as victimhood nationalism, projecting grievances against dissolved historical regimes onto Serbia's contemporary neighbouring nations — chiefly Croats, Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) and Albanians. His

most notable invocation of victimhood nationalism came in his 28 June 1989 Gazimestan speech to more than 1 million Serbs. The speech commemorated the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, in which Serbian legend holds that Turkish invaders, aided by the betrayal of the Serb Vuk Branković, executed the Serb leader, Lazar, marking the beginning of centuries of Ottoman domination.[19] During the speech, though, Milošević argued that the battle's significance extended past even the 20th-century fall of the Ottoman Empire into the present. He said that 'precisely in this year, in 1989, [Serbia has] regained its state and its dignity and thus has celebrated an event of the distant past which has a great historical and symbolic significance for its future'.[20] This narration deliberately broadened the legacy of Lazar's noble Middle Ages defeat, linking it to the post-Ottoman collective traumas experienced under Nazi, Ustaša and even communist domination. Although Milošević admitted in the speech that the 'historical truth about the Battle of Kosovo' was unknown and 'no longer important', he declared to the majority Serb audience that 'the lack of unity and betrayal in [the Battle of] Kosovo will continue to follow the Serbian people like an evil fate through the whole of its history'. His narration connected this lack of unity and betrayal to 'concessions' made by ethnic Serbs to other nationalities in the federated Yugoslavia and thus legitimated grievances against these contemporary neighbouring groups despite their lack of direct involvement in perpetrating past traumas. He called on Serbs to exhibit the 'noble qualities' of their ancestors and even alluded to potential violence, saying 'six centuries later, now, we are being again engaged in battles and are facing battles. They are not armed battles, although such things cannot be excluded yet'. Jelena Subotic (2009: ix), an IR scholar who grew up in Yugoslavia during Milošević's rise, remembered of the speech 'the sense of dread I felt, even as a teenager, at his aggressive rhetoric, his messianic tone, his language', perhaps anticipating their potential to mobilize the population towards violence.

Indeed, numerous historians and constructivist scholars writing on conflict in the Balkans have commented on the importance of Milošević's speech's portrayal of Serbia's loss in 1389 as representative of Serbs' victimization. This myth became a leitmotif of Milošević's nationalism, continually drawn upon by the Serbian leader, his allies and the media they controlled to justify policy (Bozic-Roberson, 2004). For example, Florian Bieber (2002: 95–96, 102–103) has written of the centuries-long evolution of the Kosovo myth, which he argues during the Milošević era became an integral 'part of the commemorative calendar of the nation'. This myth, Bieber adds, legitimated irredentist aspirations for Kosovo by creating a 'historical continuity' linking the Serbian kingdom of the Middle Ages with the 20th-century Serb republic and leading to comparisons of Milošević to the saintly Lazar, Albanians in Kosovo to the ancient Turks and the Serbian dictator's domestic opponents to 'modern day Vuk Brankovićs'. Similarly, David Bruce MacDonald (2002: 70, 66) has written of the Kosovo myth's ability to unify Serbs by drawing on the 'contradictory satisfactions of being the winner and the loser', as well as Milošević's rhetoric's 'simultaneous appeals to different constituencies' among Serbs through appeals to nationalism, social justice, reform and security. Jelena Subotic (2011: 320) has even referred to long-standing Serbian identity as a 'victimized nation' to help explain the country's difficulty in making reforms necessary to join the European Union.

However, while this literature has pointed to the importance of the Battle of Kosovo myth and Serbian nationalism's identification of Serbia as a historical victim, the

addition of this article's two-part framework helps uncover how Milošević changed this discourse by narrating victimhood nationalism, linking otherwise disparate traumas together to legitimate grievances against otherwise uninvolved actors. For example, although Bieber astutely analyses how the Battle of Kosovo myth evolved to legitimize Serbian irredentism in Kosovo in the 1990s, his focus on its literal content rather than its metaphoric power limits his account's ability to link the transhistorical sense of loss that it evokes to subsequent traumas during the Second World War and the communist era. While Bieber (2002: 106) argues that the Battle of Kosovo myth and justifications for early 1990s' conflicts had separate 'ideological underpinnings', the lens of victimhood nationalism reveals how Milošević narratively linked them to justify multiple projections of grievances onto otherwise uninvolved neighbours. In his Gazimestan speech, Milošević narrated the 1389 loss broadly, as the beginning of centuries of Serbian victimizations, and the victimhood nationalism that this narration helped constitute not only reanimated an ancient irredentism, but also fuelled new grievances during the 1990s against Croats, Bosnians and even Milošević's Serbian opponents, whom he portrayed as preventing national unity and perpetuating the long-standing historical subordination that led to traumatization.

Likewise, although many scholars have commented on Serbs' long-standing identity as victim, this article's framework helps reveal how Milošević helped change this identity, transforming it into a potent victimhood nationalism that re-narrated past traumas to stoke new grievances against third parties. Before Milošević's rise, the Serbian Orthodox Church had dominated collective memory of the Battle of Kosovo and Serbian suffering. Instead of narrating Lazar's execution as a symbolic motivation for contemporary political grievances, the church typically portrayed Lazar as choosing a heavenly kingdom over an earthly one and thus defended Serbs' lack of control over Kosovo as divinely ordained, akin to the Jewish people's multi-millennial exile from Jerusalem (Ejdus and Subotić, 2014). This article's framework reveals how Milošević rearticulated the myth to constitute a victimhood nationalist identity that fuelled contemporary grievances against Serbia's neighbours, who had not committed mass violence against Serbs in recent decades. Although this article has focused on only one prominent speech's narration of victimhood nationalist identity, this article's lens can help sensitize scholarship interested in a larger discourse analysis of how Serbian identity narratives changed from quelling grievances to legitimizing new ones that, eventually, justified violence.

Although mention of Milošević's victimhood nationalism inevitably results in associations with the horrors that his regime ultimately perpetrated, victimhood nationalist narratives do not always lead directly to mass violence. The case of David Ben-Gurion and his government's narration of the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann, an escaped Nazi war criminal captured by the Israeli special forces from his hiding place in Argentina, is a prime example of victimhood nationalism that was used to strategically shift grievances and unify a diverse population, but did not lead directly to violence in the years after its articulation. While Ben-Gurion's articulation of victimhood nationalism served quite different purposes than that of Milošević, this article's framework demonstrates the two key abstractions that they shared, facilitating comparative analysis.

Understanding how the Eichmann trial changed Israeli nationalism requires beginning with how official discourse from independence in 1948 through the 1950s' repressed

memory of the Holocaust. During this period, Israel's leadership attempted to craft a new image of Zionist Jews as strong and resilient, rejecting the diaspora passivity of European Jews who had gone 'like sheep to the slaughter' as emblematic of 'what Israeliness is not' (Klar et al., 2013: 126). Although, upon independence, over one-third of Israel's Jewish citizens were Holocaust survivors and the vast majority were Jews of European extraction that had lost loved ones in Nazi death camps, Israeli commemorations largely glorified those who participated in ghetto revolts, rather than mourning those who perished. In 1951, for example, the Israeli government scheduled Yom HaShoah, which it labelled 'Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day', on the day of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, while the United Nations (UN) later scheduled International Holocaust Remembrance Day for 27 January, the day of the liberation of Auschwitz (Shahar, 2015). Narrations that repressed the Holocaust's immense suffering and glorified the small minority of victims who rebelled created an underlying tension for a population plagued by collective trauma, yet unable, given the national zeitgeist, to publicly grieve the tremendous personal and communal losses that they experienced. As Tom Segev (2000: 323–344) has written, '[m]emory tormented many Holocaust survivors, both old and young, imprisoned as they were behind a wall of silence'.

Indeed, the continued insecurity and detachment that Holocaust survivors felt contributed to the larger challenges that Ben-Gurion's government faced in congealing national identity among Israel's diverse population, especially in light of two sets of changes occurring throughout the 1950s. First, throughout the decade, Ben-Gurion had controversially pursued closer relations with West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's government, beginning with a contentious reparations agreement in 1952 that paved the way for arms deals in 1958 and 1959 and a 1960 public meeting between Adenauer and Ben-Gurion where they discussed further assistance. Although Ben-Gurion and his allies believed that these decisions were warranted given Israel's immense post-independence poverty and what they considered sincere West German efforts to symbolically break with the country's Nazi past, the two countries' improving relations created significant political blowback among many survivors, leading to continual crises for the government (Yablonka, 2004: 47). Second, as immigration to Israel from across the Muslim world increased throughout the 1950s, a rift emerged in Israeli society between Jews of European extraction (Ashkenazi) and Jews from Muslim countries (Sephardi and Mizrahi) who had immigrated during the late 1940s and 1950s. By 1961, Holocaust survivors still constituted approximately 20% of the country's population, but hundreds of thousands of Mizrahi and Sephardi Jews had arrived in the decade since. These immigrants often felt discriminated against by their wealthier Ashkenazi counterparts (Yablonka, 2004: 185) and they felt little direct connection with the European trauma that had been so central to the Israeli state's founding (Arendt, 1994; Klar et al., 2013). Instead, Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews' experience of anti-Semitism largely stemmed from the persecution they experienced following Israel's independence in their Muslim-dominated anti-Zionist countries of origin. Egypt, for example, which had been home to approximately 80,000 Jews before Israel's independence, had instituted severely anti-Semitic policies in the years around Israel's independence and the precarious situation of Egyptian Jews led over 99% to emigrate by 1970 (Laskier, 1995). The rift between Ashkenazi, Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews posed a threat to the legitimacy of Ben-Gurion's

ruling Mapai party, which was dominated by middle-class, urban Ashkenazi. Ben-Gurion's fiercest political rival, the Herut party leader Menachem Begin, gained political ground among Ashkenazi Jews by protesting Ben-Gurion's rapprochement with West Germany, building upon his popularity among Israel's non-Ashkenazi communities.

As public attention increased in the lead-up to the Eichmann trial in 1961, Ben-Gurion and his allies recognized that it would serve as an opportunity to narrate the Holocaust broadly as a unifying collective trauma for all Jews, regardless of ethnic background, and to project residual grievances away from West Germany to Israel's enemies during the period: neighbouring Arab states. For this reason, Hannah Arendt (1994: 5), who famously covered the Eichmann trial for the *New Yorker* magazine, labelled Ben-Gurion the 'invisible stage manager of the proceedings', focused on 'questions of seemingly greater importance' than the guilt or innocence of the accused. Indeed, Ben-Gurion frequently broke norms that prime ministers refrain from commenting on ongoing trials, calling Eichmann 'the greatest war criminal of all time' before the trial had even begun and encouraging viewership of the trial across the world on live television and radio (Yablonka, 2001: 371). Further, historian Hanna Yablonka (2004: 83–87) has documented archival evidence of frequent interventions by Ben-Gurion and his cabinet to shape the prosecution's public narrative of Eichmann's crimes. Ben-Gurion's foreign minister, for example, asked the prosecution, led by Attorney General Gideon Hausner, to focus on Eichmann's connection to the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Amin al-Husseini, a religious and spiritual leader for Palestinian Arabs that had sought an alliance with the Nazis and even publicly mused of 'finally solving the Jewish problem in Palestine' (Yablonka, 2000: 389). Although Eichmann parried this line of questioning in the trial, Hausner (1966: 344–345) argued in his 1966 memoir, *Justice in Jerusalem*, that the relationship was significant, being emblematic of Nazism's far-reaching ideological spread to the Arab world. Ben-Gurion, for his part, intervened personally to ask Hausner to refer to the Holocaust's perpetrator as *Nazi* Germany, rather than Germany, and not to mention Hans Globke's role in formulating the Nazis' anti-Semitic 1935 Nuremberg Race Laws. Globke was then serving as a top aide to the West German Chancellor and had participated in negotiations with Israel — any direct reference to his past anti-Semitism would significantly complicate the two countries' rapprochement.

Although Hausner eventually became the public face of the trial due to his speeches and questioning, Ben-Gurion had a clear vision for how it would contribute to his larger goals for Israeli identity. In an interview with the *New York Times* soon after Eichmann's capture, Ben-Gurion dismissed the idea that Israel hand Eichmann over to an international tribunal that could depoliticize the trial as representative of an 'an inferiority complex' that downplayed Israel's role as the sovereign protector of the Jewish people. Following this logic, he explicitly linked Eichmann and the Nazi regime's crimes against the Jewish people to the contemporary threats facing Israel, expressing a hope that the trial would help 'ferret out other Nazis — for example, the connection between Nazis and some Arab rulers':

> From what we hear on the Egyptian radio, some Egyptian propaganda is conducted on purely Nazi lines. The Egyptians charge that Jews — they usually say 'Zionists' but they mean 'Jews' — dominate the United States, Jews dominate England, Jews dominate France, and they must

> be fought. I have no doubt that the Egyptian dictatorship is being instructed by the large number of Nazis who are there. (Ben-Gurion, 1960)

This rhetoric, which deliberately omitted the word 'German' and referred to Egyptians as Nazis, was emblematic of Ben-Gurion's tendency to treat contemporary Arab states as new incarnations of Nazism and West Germany as an utterly distinct state from its Nazi predecessor. In a letter to a young girl the day after Eichmann's capture, Ben-Gurion similarly wrote that although he thought Eichmann was 'despicable … there are other Germans'; by contrast, he wrote that 'in Egypt and Syria, the disciples of the Nazis want to exterminate *Israel* and this is the grave and principal danger which we face' (cited in Keren, 1991: 39, emphasis in original). Indeed, these quotes characterized Ben-Gurion's narrations of the trial and the Holocaust more generally as a unifying collective trauma for all Israelis, regardless of ethnic origin, that could project grievances onto a shared enemy. Although Ben-Gurion's claims of Nazi influence on Arab regimes are perhaps overstated as the number of former Nazis known to be working for Arab regimes was minimal,[21] his efforts to link Nazi crimes to Israel's Arab neighbours rather than Germany served as an explicit attempt to portray anti-Semitism as a global issue, affecting Ashkenazi, Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews. Further, these efforts painted Israel's Arab neighbours, who had previously discriminated against their Sephardi and Mizrahi citizens and continued to threaten all Israelis, as Nazism's leading incarnations in the post-war era.

Multiple historians have commented on the Eichmann trial's seminal role as 'national group therapy', noting how it led to a new public narration of post-Holocaust Israeli identity that paradoxically embraced victimhood but also asserted the state's strength and sovereignty (Keren, 1991; Klar et al., 2013; Segev, 2000: 351; Shapira, 1998; Zertal, 2005). Yet, far fewer have written on how the trial shaped Israel's identity in the international arena[22] or connected this internal identity construction and narration of collective trauma to Ben-Gurion's long-standing goal of projecting grievances away from post-war West Germany to Israel's Arab neighbours. While Yablonka (2004: 184–190) has outlined how the trial helped unify Israel's Ashkenazi, Sephardi and Mizrahi communities, and Weitz (1996) and Keren (1991) have discussed the trial as an assertion of Israeli sovereignty, this article's framework draws attention specifically to how Ben-Gurion and his allies used the trial to further their foreign policy agenda. They rearticulated the collective trauma of the Holocaust in a way that both congealed national identity and justified the projection of grievances away from their benefactor, West Germany, to their contemporary enemies, neighbouring Arab states. Although Ben-Gurion did not harness these grievances to launch a new offensive war against Israel's neighbours in the trial's immediate wake, his narrative's emphasis on Israel's contemporary enemies served his security agenda and prevented a reawakening of grievances against West Germany that might have jeopardized his economically beneficial rapprochement.

When juxtaposed, Milošević and Ben-Gurion's victimhood nationalisms together allow for the comparative analysis necessary to address questions of victimhood nationalism's relationship to underlying collective trauma and projection. First, both leaders clearly offered narrations of collective trauma that resonated deeply with traumatized people but also appealed to those who did not suffer by eliding potentially divisive details and relying on metaphoric power. Understanding the suffering that Serbs had

experienced throughout the 20th century at the hands of Nazism, Croatian fascism and perceived economic and political discrimination in a federated Yugoslavia, Milošević deliberately dwelled on the long-mythologized 14th-century Battle of Kosovo — a unifying myth for Serbs across Yugoslavia — because of its reference to a supposed golden age of Serbian cultural hegemony and because it created a broadly applicable sense of loss and suffering that omitted Serbs' complex historical place in the multiethnic Yugoslavia. Ben-Gurion, by contrast, recognized that the Holocaust was a deeply traumatic foundational event for his nation that created rifts between survivors and non-survivors, Ashkenazi and non-Ashkenazi, and Israel and Germany. He deliberately omitted details about the Holocaust's distinctly European roots and used the Eichmann trial to portray Nazism as emblematic of a global anti-Semitism afflicting Jews across time and space, from the Hebrew Bible to the contemporary Middle East (Bilsky, 2004: 98–102). Although this article deliberately avoids a normative discussion of which nation suffered more that could shed light on the relative legitimacy of these narratives, comparison of these two treatments of collective trauma clearly demonstrates that Milošević's mythological invocation of the Battle of Kosovo to envelop a broad array of otherwise disparate traumas required a larger metaphorical leap than Ben-Gurion's references to global anti-Semitism.

Second, although this article deliberately avoids analysis of the *actions* that these two leaders' victimhood nationalisms eventually justified, its theoretical lens enables comparison of how and to what extent these narratives facilitated the projection of grievances onto third parties. In the case of Milošević, his victimhood nationalism turned Serbian ire onto not only ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, who many Serbs saw as heirs to the Islamic Ottoman Empire, but also neighbouring Croats, Bosnian Muslims and Slovenians. By contrast, Ben-Gurion deliberately sought to project Israeli grievances over the Holocaust away from Germany and onto Israel's contemporary enemies in the Arab world. In addition to the traumatic 1948 war that Israel fought against its neighbours, Israel and the Arab world engaged in constant global public relations battles over the legitimacy of Israel's existence. By emphasizing relatively isolated linkages between Arab regimes and Nazi Germany and downplaying any linkages between Nazism and post-war West Germany, Ben-Gurion sought to portray the Arab–Israeli conflict as a reification of Jewish people's struggle during the Holocaust and thus garner international sympathy for Israel's plight. In both cases, victimhood nationalism legitimated projection onto third parties either uninvolved in perpetrating past trauma or separated from it by centuries, though notably in the case of Milošević's narration during the 1980s, it extended to nations with which Serbia had no recent history of hostility. Alternatively, the links between Arab regimes and Nazi Germany in retrospect appear far more tenuous than 1980s' Croats historical relationship to the Second World War-era Ustaša regime that perpetrated horrific crimes against Serbs.

Conclusion

The limited existing scholarship on victimhood in international politics almost inevitably focuses largely on the ethically questionable actions that it has been used to legitimate. For example, few scholars have focused on the rhetorical and ideological foundations of

Serbian and Israeli national identity narratives during the time periods in question without conflating them with Serbia's ethnic-cleansing campaigns of the 1990s and Israel's post-1967 occupation of Gaza and the West Bank or wars against its neighbours. While analysis of the actions that these identities helped inspire is certainly of interest, focusing purely on victimhood's outcomes has prevented a theoretical understanding of how it operates as a unique form of identity and the potency of its logics in different contexts. By contrast, this article's theorization of victimhood nationalism has helped uncover how these identities function and its two cases from Serbian and Israeli history have demonstrated this theorization's utility in both elucidating individual cases and in facilitating comparisons. This theorization will help scholarship interested in victimhood nationalism's long-term impacts on policy and security to develop a more complete picture of its intellectual foundations and components.

Yet, uncovering how victimhood nationalisms function also raises a number of important questions and avenues for future research interested in more generalized insight into their relative impact, frequency and legitimacy, both within nations and internationally. First, on the sub-national scale, how do victimhood nationalist narratives interact with other identity narratives and other factors within national identity discourses? Both Milošević and Ben-Gurion, by virtue of their uniquely powerful positions in their respective contexts, were able to champion victimhood nationalist narratives that proved highly influential in their domestic contexts. Yet, in both cases, these narratives' success depended on an underlying sense of collective trauma felt broadly across the target population, however latent, distant or exaggerated the underlying *experience* of traumatization might have been. Although this article has argued that the facts of underlying traumatic experience exert a 'resistance' on these narratives' deliberate instrumentalization and exaggeration, these facts are by no means the only factors that contribute to victimhood nationalist narratives' shape and potency within discourses. Future scholarship can further explore what other social, political and economic factors allow more exaggerated victimhood nationalisms to thrive and impact policymaking, as well as what other factors cause these narratives to break down or lose their salience. In these two cases, both Milošević and Ben-Gurion's uniquely powerful positions within their nations' political discourses certainly facilitated the prominence of the narratives they articulated, but how do victimhood nationalisms emerge in less top-heavy contexts? Is victimhood nationalism more likely to gain traction in such top-heavy cases than in cases defined by parity between rivalling factions?

As this work scales up beyond first-image analysis of individual actors' pioneering identity narratives in specific national discourses to consideration of victimhood nationalism as a *collective* identity, it will inevitably be complicated by the aggregation and methodological issues inherent to studying identity in international politics (see, e.g., Bucher and Jasper, 2017; Epstein, 2011; Lebow, 2016). Identities that emerge from complex national identity discourses are often labile and multifaceted, interpreted and internalized by different actors in different ways at different times. However, by parsing these complexities, future scholarship can begin to address a second set of questions on victimhood nationalism's relative prevalence in international politics across time and space. This article's examples and divergent case studies have demonstrated that victimhood nationalism is not limited to a specific region or type of underlying trauma. Further, it has argued that

because of the lack of arbitrators in international politics, victimhood nationalism is a common and potentially useful response to collective traumatization in the international arena. However, exactly how common are victimhood nationalist narratives relative to other identities in international politics? Is victimhood nationalism more likely to arise in certain regions, in response to certain types of international events or within nations facing similar types of challenges? Building on these questions, normatively inclined scholarship might also begin to determine how the practice of international politics might be reoriented to harness the appeal of victimhood nationalism for a positive agenda and limit these narratives' potential negative consequences.

Finally, this article's conceptualization, coupled with further theoretical innovation, will inspire a third avenue of empirically oriented research interested in dissecting the peculiar, case-specific contours of victimhood nationalisms, especially as they emerge in unlikely contexts. As nearly all nations have latent in their identities some mythologized historical trauma that can potentially be activated in crafting identities, victimhood nationalisms can and have emerged as potent identities in a variety of contexts across the globe. This article, for example, has mentioned controversial victimhood nationalisms in Germany and Japan, as well as potentially unexpected recent cases like the UK's Brexit referendum or the election of Donald Trump in the US. These recent cases especially demonstrate that, under certain conditions, victimhood nationalist narratives can prove potent even in states with no recent history of mass violence to contribute to trauma narratives' resonance and no serious economic or security threats to incentivize the projection of grievances. Beyond more generalized inquiry into what conditions might fuel such unlikely cases, empirically oriented scholarship interested in remaining outliers can also examine the idiographic contours of victimhood nationalist narratives that gain traction in what might otherwise seem unlikely scenarios.

Despite the complexity inherent to parsing the impact and importance of identities in international politics, this article has demonstrated that victimhood nationalist narratives cannot be dismissed as epiphenomenal or marginal. Indeed, they are a vital topic for scholarship, both due to their instrumental utility in shifting grievances and mobilizing populations, and due to their ideal resonance with traumatized peoples across time and space. Victimhood nationalisms have appeared in a diverse array of contexts, legitimating a diverse array of otherwise inexplicable behaviour. Future scholarship can help uncover why this is the case and even guide policymakers interested in preventing these narratives from justifying violence.

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Notes

1. For example, Friedersdorf (2015) discusses a Hispanic student at Oberlin College invoking grievances over white supremacy after a white student referred to soccer as 'futbol'.
2. In the 1980s, for example, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin defended his nation's invasion of Lebanon by saying, 'After the Holocaust, the international community had lost its right to demand that Israel answer for its actions' (quoted in Lim, 2010: 148).
3. On the role of emotions in creating group affinities and promoting identities, see Hutchison (2016), Hutchison and Bleiker (2008) and Mercer (2014).
4. In this sense, in addition to both being 'deviant cases' that do not conform to prior theory's expectations of behaviour, these cases can also be thought of as 'least similar', elucidating how victimhood nationalism can appear in response to perceptions of collective trauma in quite different contexts (Bennett and Elman, 2007; Seawright and Gerring, 2008).
5. For overviews of identity's importance to IR, see Berenskoetter (2010) and Lebow (2008).
6. This debate parallels the similar primordialist–instrumentalist debate in studies of nationalism. While primordialists emphasize the cultural and biological senses of belonging as explanations of identity, instrumentalists tend to view identity narratives as epiphenomenal, used primarily to achieve more base desires of wealth, power and security. For more on this debate and the problems therein, see Bentley (1987) and Williams (2015). Alternatively, Thomas Berger (2012: 8–34) has distinguished between historical determinist, instrumentalist and culturalist approaches, emphasizing related distinctions.
7. For more on the distinction between different ontological approaches to collective trauma and its identity narratives, see Lerner (2018b).
8. The distinction between 'acting out' traumas versus emotionally and psychologically 'working through' them stems from psychoanalysis and has been explored at length on a collective level by historian Dominick LaCapra (2001). For a fruitful application of LaCapra's concepts to international politics, see Schick (2011).
9. Scholars from psychology and psychoanalysis have demonstrated that traumas can be transmitted through generations via various social mechanisms, though the implications of such findings have scarcely been explored with regards to long-term mythologized trauma narratives in international politics (see, e.g., Danieli, 1985; Starman, 2006; Volkan, 2001).
10. For an example of this, see this article's later discussion of official Israeli collective repression of aspects of Holocaust trauma until the Eichmann trial.
11. For further possibilities, see Schick's (2011: 1842–1847) descriptions of three popular national narratives of collective trauma: 'the heroic-soldier', 'good and evil' and 'redemptive violence'.
12. Williams (2008: 79–82) cites ethnic Serbs' expulsion from Kosovo as reprisal during the late 1990s' Kosovo War as one possible example.
13. Some research has likewise highlighted national forgetting and repression as a deliberate, politically mediated process rather than innocent omission (see, e.g., Smith, 1994).
14. For an excellent popular history of these narratives, see Buruma (2015). For a more thorough examination of this war guilt, see Berger (2012).
15. For an examination of the ethics of the *historikerstreit* debates, see Buruma (2015) and Habermas (1988).
16. To be sure, aggrieved groups on a sub-national level that feel neglected by relevant authorities oftentimes do demonstrate certain aspects of victimhood identities. Further, when the state apparatus fails to adequately administer justice, groups often attempt to internationalize their domestic grievances by appealing to other states and international groups. The transnational activism of Palestinian groups and anti-apartheid activists in South Africa are prime examples of this phenomenon.

17. This activism resulted in the 1988 passage of the Civil Liberties Act, which paid surviving internees reparations (Hatamiya, 1993; Qureshi, 2013).
18. For a key example of this, see an influential 1986 memorandum from the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences that reflected this position (SANU, 1986).
19. Historians have increasingly called into question the veracity of this narrative. Evidence now suggests that the Battle of Kosovo was an indecisive draw, in which Serbians fought as mercenaries on both sides (Zimmermann, 1999: 11–13).
20. Translation of speech reproduced in full in Krieger (2001: 10–11).
21. Although only around 100–200 fugitive Nazis escaped to Syria and Egypt (far fewer than fled to Argentina), this number included several prominent Nazi villains who went on to work for Arab regimes. For example, Wehrmacht Major Gerhard-Georg Mertins trained an Egyptian airborne unit and helped develop Egyptian guerrilla forces for use in the Suez Canal Zone, while former SS Lieutenant Colonel Otto Skorzeny, who had previously engaged in arms deals with the Egyptian government, joined former SS and Gestapo figures Franz Buensch, Joachim Deumling and Alois Anton Brunner in advising the Egyptian General Investigations Department in Cairo. Likewise, Johann von Leers, a leading Nazi propagandist, found refuge in Egypt in the 1950s and was hired by the Egyptian government to write anti-Zionist propaganda. He lived in Cairo until his death in 1965. These Nazi fugitives' overall influence on political culture in Arab countries is a subject of significant historical debate (see Fishman, 2016; Kulish, 2015; Sirrs, 2010; Walters, 2010).
22. A few scholars have, however, written about the impact of Israeli security services' seizure of Eichmann from Argentina's territory on Israel–Argentina relations (see Rein, 2003; Weitz, 1996).

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