ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY AND IDENTITY CHANGE DURING THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR (2011-2019)

by
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ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY AND IDENTITY CHANGE DURING THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR (2011-2019)

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ABSTRACT

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Keywords: Ontological Security, Identity Change, Civil War

This research probes into the relationship between identity change and ontological security during the civil war in Syria, taking Salamiyah City as a case study. Ontological security is defined as an expressive zone demarcating the relation between the Self and the world; the wider this zone is, the more an individual or a group is ontologically secure. It refers to the ability of an individual (or a group) to express herself (itself) in the world, simply put. Contrary to the mainstream ontological security theory, change in identity or in routine is not necessarily a threat; indeed, ontological security is endorsed – exactly as identity – through change.

The research suggests that the collective of Salamiyah at the meso-level describes a local identity (Salamiyah identity) more positively than it does the national identity (Syrian identity) because the former fosters ontologically secure space more than the latter, not because people hyper-identify themselves with their in-groups in civil wars as the essentialists argue. Individuals also endorse – sometimes deliberately – changes in their identities in order to increase their ontological security. That is, the expressive zone is not confined to identity, but to other dimensions demarcating the relation between the Self and the world. A change in identity does not necessarily ignite ontological insecurity, the research argues.

ÖZET

SURIYE İÇ SAVAŞI'NDA (2011-2019) ONTOLOJIK GÜVENLIK VE KIMLIK DEĞIŞIMI

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Bu çalışma, Suriye İç Savaşı süresince Selamiye kentini vaka araştırması alarak, ontolojik güvenlik ve kimlik değişimi arasındaki ilişkiyi derinlemesine inceliyor. Ontolojik güvenlik kişinin kendisi ve dış dünya arasındaki ilişkinin tanımlayıcı bir bölgedeki hududu olarak tanımlanır. Bu bölge ne kadar genişse, kişi veya grup o kadar ontolojik güvendedir. Bu, kolay bir deyişle, kişinin veya grubun kendilerini yeryüzünde ifade edebilme kabiliyetine işaret eder. Yaygın ontolojik güvenlik teorilerin aksine, kimlikteki ve rutindeki değişim tehdit değildir; dahası değişim sürecinde, ontolojik güvenliğin kendisi kimliği uygun görür.

Bu araştırma, Selamiye topluluğunun bölge düzeyinde, ulusal kimlikten (Öz Suriyeli) ziyade daha olumlu bir yerel Selamiye (Öz Selamiyeli) kimliğini tanımladığını iddia ediyor. Esensiyalistlerin, insanların iç savaş süresince kendi gruplarının kimliklerine aşırı derecede bağlanır görüşünün aksine, bu çalışma Öz Selamiyeli olmak Öz Suriyeli olmaktan daha çok ontolojik güvenlik alan teşvik eder görüşünü savunuyor. Bireyler de ontolojik güvenliği artırmak için, bazen kasti olarak kendi kimliklerindeki değişimi uygun görürler. Kısacası, tanımlayıcı bölge kimlikle sınırlandırılamaz, fakat kişinin kendisi ile dış dünya arasındaki ilişki diğer birtakım boyutlarlarda sınırlandırabilir. Bunlar, günlük aktiviteler, meşruiyet, güç ilişkileri, kolektif anlam sistemleri ve özkimliktir. Araştırmanın savunduğu gibi kimlikteki herhangi bir değişim ontolojik güvensizliği körüklemez.

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Baidaa, this journey was blissful because of you.

To those whose voice can never be heard

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .... **x**

LIST OF FIGURES .... **xi**

1. INTRODUCTION **1**

2. LITERATURE REVIEW **4**

2.1. Civil War 5

2.1.1. Civil War as a Social Process 5

2.1.2. Social Changes Channeled by Civil War 9

2.1.3. Social Changes During Civil War 12

2.2. Identity Change 17

2.2.1. Individual Identity and Marcia Model 18

2.2.2. Collective Identity and Change 22

2.2.2.1. Change in Collective Identity 23

2.2.2.1.1. Content-based Identity Change. 26

2.2.2.1.2. Boundary-based Identity Change. 28

2.2.3. Identity between Collective and Individual Construction 30

2.2.3.1. Identity Process Theory 30

2.2.3.1.1. Identity Change in IPT. 31

2.2.3.1.2. Self-continuity. 33

2.2.3.1.3. Threat to Identity. 37

2.3. Ontological Security 41

2.3.1. Mainstream Ontological Security Model 42

2.3.1.1. Ontological Security Seeking Behaviors 45

2.3.2. Critiques of the Mainstream Ontological Security 47

2.3.3. Giddens's Ontological Security 50

2.3.4. Ontological Security: Adjusted Model 54

2.3.5. Conclusion 62

3. METHODOLOGY **64**

3.1. Collecting Data 65
3.1.1. Collecting Data at the Individual Level 66
3.1.2. Collecting Facebook Posts: Meso-level Analysis 67
3.2. The Research Universe and the Sample 68
3.2.1. The Research Universe 68
3.2.2. The Research Sample 70
3.3. Analysing the Data and the Limitation 72

4. DISCUSSION 74
4.1. Changes in Salamiyah Society during the Civil War at the Meso-Level 75
4.1.1. Threats and Struggling for Survival 76
4.1.1.1. The Enemy 76
4.1.1.2. Paramilitary 79
4.1.1.3. Economic Threats 80
4.1.1.4. Helplessness 81
4.1.2. Conflict Ethos 83
4.1.2.1. Why this War 83
4.1.2.2. Self-Image and Collective Identity 85
4.1.3. The State Legitimacy 88
4.1.4. Power Relations 91
4.1.5. Reflection on the Meso-Level Narratives 93
4.2. Changes during the Civil War at the Individual Level 96
4.2.1. Everyday Activity 100
4.2.2. Action Space 110
4.2.3. Self-identity 114
4.2.4. Linkages between the Meso- and Micro-Level 123

5. Conclusion 126

BIBLIOGRAPHY 131

APPENDIX A 153
A.1. Complexity and Narrative 153
A.1.1. Complexity 153
A.1.2. Narrative 154

APPENDIX B 157
B.1. The Interviews Questions 157

APPENDIX C 159
C.1. The Consent Form 160

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1. Operationalization of Marcia Model Statuses 21

Table 3.1. The Facebook Pages 72

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1. Concepts Map of Civil War – Change 17
Figure 2.2. Marcia Model 19
Figure 2.3. Chandra's Model of Collective Identity 23
Figure 2.4. The Mechanism of Collective Identity Change 25
Figure 2.5. The Mechanisms of Collective Identity Change 29
Figure 2.6. IPT, Social Representation, and Change 33
Figure 2.7. Self-continuity as Sameness and Accumulative-ness 35
Figure 2.8. Sameness Is an Illusion 36
Figure 2.9. Change in Identity 41
Figure 2.10. Ontological Security: Mainstream 45
Figure 2.11. Ontological Security: Giddens's Account 56
Figure 2.12. Place and Time 59
Figure 2.13. Ontological Security: Adjusted Model 60

Figure 4.1. Terrorism and the Role of Military- Terrorists are amorphous . 77
Figure 4.2. Christmas Tree Facing Islamists 77
Figure 4.3. Military is a Threat 78
Figure 4.4. Debilitation 81
Figure 4.5. Debilitation 82
Figure 4.6. Syrian Army Steals Civilians' Goods when it Imposes its Control on their Villages (Source: Hiea I'lamiyah) 92

Figure C.1. The Consent Form–The First Page 160
Figure C.2. The Consent Form–The Second Page 161

1. INTRODUCTION

Social life during civil war still constitutes a black box needing further elaboration. Generally, the literature on civil war can be divided into three categories: the literature that has soldiered on studying pre-civil war settings to explain the possible factors that pave the way to eruption of civil war; other academic efforts have been dedicated to probing into the aftermath phase of civil war; and finally the literature that has dug into the duration period of civil war in terms of its length (e.g., Cunningham, Skrede Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009; Wucherpfennig et al. 2012), and severity (Lu and Thies 2011). Although these wide studies, the social changes that take place during civil war and the dynamics of these changes require more elaboration and investigation. This thesis theoretically and empirically probes into the duration of civil war that has been burning Syria since 2011. It takes Salamiyah City, which roughly lies at the center of Syria, as a case to unearth how the society and its individuals change during the civil war. By doing so, this thesis investigates the relationships between identity change and ontological security at both the meso-level (collective) and individual level as the civil war is still being flamed.

During civil war, some groups are detached from their places, having displaced to strange lands; relentless apprehension alters individuals' behaviors and their secured realm; some jobs are abolished while others prosper; and fear itself varies along the course of war, as bullets become the object of fear instead of "ghosts" (e.g., Pearlman 2016). In other abstract words, the relations between groups within the same country change to be either collaborative as they face mutual enemies or antagonistic as they fight each other. The relations between individuals and the state also change, such that the state may lose its legitimacy while religious institutions become legitimized alternatively, for example. Power relations that once were dominating the society may change as well, and new power-holders emerge. Meanings and the belief-systems are also not averse to dramatic changes. New ideas and norms may be injected in the society suffering a war and become adopted as new scaffolds for the meaning-system in the society. Martyrdom, for example, come to the play intensively and death stops to be seen as merely a loss but also a source of honour. Hence, the first

question sought to be answered by this thesis is what are these changes?

Since this question is wide, I look into how the meso-level, collective-level that is represented via Facebook public pages in Salamiyah City, depicts the duration of civil war. What these pages say about all issues that are related to the war. Qualitatively analyzing these pages will help us to discover the main "topics" or themes that the collective of Salamiyah is concerned about. In parallel, at the individual level, semi-structured interviews with individuals from Salamiyah will show us how they perceive the structure of the society and how this perception has changed before and after the outbreak of the war.

All these social and structural changes can lead to changes in identities at both the collective level and individual level. Indeed, this thesis argues that identity can function as an anchor systemizing the wide array of these structural and social changes. Therefore, after elaborating on these social, economic, and political changes, the thesis seeks to reveal how identities have changed between two stages, before and after the war eruption. Hence, the second question to be answered in this thesis is: What are the changes that have taken place in identity at the individual and collective levels?

Ontological security conceptual framework (which refers to the security of a being or the security of identity) comes to the play because it helps us to grasp a more comprehensive picture of the civil war duration – identity change nexus. Every entity, either individual or collective, seeks to maintain and enhance its ontological security. This thesis tries to discover how the social and structure changes and the changes in identities are related to ontological security seeking behaviors. In other words, the collective of and individuals in Salamiyah seek ontological security during the war; how do they manage their ontological security as inevitable changes "wreck" the previous "peaceful" life and strain their identities? Thus, the nexus of civil war duration–identity changes– ontological security is what, eventually, this thesis probes into. The final and basic research question can be formulated as follows: What are the relationships between ontological security and identity change during civil war?

This thesis adopts a qualitative methodology to answer these questions. It uses semi-structured interviews with individuals from Salamiyah to collect data, and uses thematic analysis framework in order to analyze these collected data. To capture the necessary data at the meso/collective level, Facebook public pages that concern about and represent Salamiyah were analyzed by using also the framework of thematic analysis.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. The first chapter is the literature review;

it reviews and systematically – as much as possible – analyzes the literature on the three pillar of the nexus under concern: duration of civil war, identity change, and ontological security. At the end of this chapter, I suggest an adjusted model of ontological security by building on both identity change literature and Giddens's (1991) account. Then the methodology will be presented in the next chapter. I will justify the choice of adopting qualitative method and thematic analysis. I also describe Salamiyah as a case-study and why I chose it, and explain in detail how the data were collected and analyzed. The next chapter will set forth the discussion and the analysis of the data at both the meso- and individual levels. The main themes will be presented and elaborated on, besides the results that emanate from the analysis. The final chapter is the conclusion chapter. It summarizes the basic results and suggestions of this thesis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature widely addresses that civil wars do not only engender death, displacement, and misery, but they also change societies where they take place. Civil war-induced "social change" is almost an amorphous concept, difficult to be framed with concrete and precise conceptual properties especially *during* the war. Therefore, this review seeks to narrow and systemize the academic research on changes during civil war by elaborating on three topics, as follows.

First, civil war and violence will be discussed through the lens of their processes that befall societies and social groups with changes. Why and how do civil war and violence lead to a change? what is that change? How does literature depict this change *during* civil war?

Second, I will argue that tracing identity change could be a better way to systemize social change during civil war instead of dealing with change as a set of scattered, non-systemized aspects in a society. In this vein, identity will be depicted through three levels: individual identity, collective identity, and intersection between collective and individual levels. In each level, I will delineate how identity is defined and how it changes.

Third, I will depict ontological security framework as a "mechanism" that helps us grasp the whole relations between the circumstances and processes during a civil war and possible identity changes. Ontological security will be delineated as it has been conceptualized in the literature on political science (and IR), then Giddens's conceptualization of ontological security will be discussed since his theoretical model is the source from which the ontological security concept has been diffused. Finally, I suggest an adjusted theoretical model of ontological security by tapping onto the incompatibilities between Giddens's account and the mainstream theory of ontological security, on the one hand, and by incorporating the theories on identity changes into our conceptualization of ontological security, on the other hand.

2.1 Civil War

In this section, I will depict how the literature has addressed the duration of civil wars. How civil wars change or impact societies as they are happening, and how we can delineate the period of civil war's duration conceptually are what this section, mainly, aims at clarifying.

2.1.1 Civil War as a Social Process

Civil war is a prevalent bloody political violence that destroys people's lives in the contemporary world. Civil war is a cascade of devastating actions that emerge within a home-country, defined as "[an] armed combat within the boundaries of a recognized sovereign entity between parties subject to a common authority at the outset of the possibilities" (Kalyvas 2006*a*, 17). Warring parties, then, belong to the same state; they may be different political parties; government and rebels; or adjacent social, or ethnic groups that had lived together without obvious physical violence before the war onset. Those fighting parties contest over a territory; governance; political, social, or economic interests; or over material or symbolic goals (Themnér and Wallensteen 2014).

Old studies have generally pictured the warring parties in civil wars as ethnic (or sectarian, religious) groups that are centered around their in-group identities in order to fight the Others, who are different ethnic or religious groups. This argument, which can be labelled as "essentialist," draws on the necessity of identity groups to commence a collective action that will lead to a civil war. Such an identity group is essential because a clearly defined group is the subject of frustration that will engender aggression against the Others, those who caused the frustration (Horowitz 1973). Additionally, an identity group is a necessary condition for mobilization, without which civil war will not get off the ground (Nagel and Olzak 1982). This essential understanding of civil war, in sum, argues that civil wars happen between identity groups, and the battle front is clearly determined between these different ethnic or religious groups (see for example, Gurr and Scarritt 1989). As a result, individuals' identification within the in-group will increase during civil wars.

Nevertheless, Kalyvas (among others) has argued against this essentialist understanding of civil war (Kalyvas 2001, 2006*b*, 2012). According to him, conflicting

parties should not be understood as unified, homogeneous parties that are identical to “pure” ethnic or religious groups. Various and conflicting rebel sub-groups act on the rebel side, and different actors may co-exist and infight with each other on the government’s side as well, in case of a rebels-government conflict. Besides that, individuals from the same ethnic or religious group could fight each other by taking the side of various ethnic or religious groups that differ from their in-groups. This understanding of Kalyvas can be labeled as non-essentialist.

Digging deeper in the conceptualization of civil war makes us elude its reduction to the conflicting parties. The phenomenon of civil war is neither confined to objects over which parties fight, nor to the fighting itself. Rather it is a complicated phenomenon that surpasses the mere fighting to be rooted in a social narrative that nourishes and justifies the war and the resulted catastrophe. This social narrative is called “conflict ethos” which is “shared central societal beliefs” that equip the social groups (whom the warring parties claim representations and fighting for) with the discursive tools to understand the ongoing civil war, to picture the enemy-Other in a way that justifies killing, and to hold a positive image of the Self (Schori-Eyal, Halperin, and Bar-Tal 2014).[1] Civil war, therefore, has two basic scaffolds: (1) violence as its material, tangible scaffold; and (2) a social narrative(s), the conflict ethos, as the discursive, emotional, and cognitive immaterial scaffold. Hence, Kalyvas (2008) asserts that war is not only violence (thus, confined to its conflicting parties); it is a social process.

Civil war develops as a social process along various phases. It does not get off the ground suddenly, but rather it is begotten throughout a cascade of events. These phases can be drawn from wide literature and re-ordered into a timeline: (1) pre-war phase or “peaceful" relations between the citizens; (2) demonstrations; (3) repressiveness by the state; (4) violence conducted by the would-be rebels; (5) ethnic mobilization; and (6) institutionalization of the violence.

“Peaceful” relations between citizens fail to stand out for different reasons (which are out of this thesis’s scope); the government increasingly uses political violence against would-be demonstrators, real demonstrators, and would-be rebels. This repressive trend, in turn, ignites angry people to take up weapons, and a bloodier level of killing ensues as the political violence proceeds; thus, the situation passes the threshold to be considered as a civil war (Besley and Persson 2011; Joshi and Quinn 2017; Themnér and Wallensteen 2014). As a civil war progresses, ethnic mobilization (sometimes class-based mobilization or another type of mobilization)

[1] It is worthy to note that conflict ethos could exist before the eruption of civil war as dormant awaiting the high level of violence to break out. Conflict ethos can also emerge as a new one that is built or hinged upon a previous one.

is activated as the essentialists would argue. Although, at the very nascent phase of civil war, rebels exist across heterogeneous ethnic groups (or social identity groups), homogeneous ethnic groups become the fostering environment for rebellion, later (Lewis 2017). With the diffusion of the internally displaced people (IDPs), hatred becomes intensively overwhelming among the "rival" ethnic/social groups and those who once were neighbors become now enemies, and violence is increasingly fueled (Balcells 2018).

Additionally, new institutions emerge as institutions of violence, competing with other institutions such as police and traditional local authorities. Violence, hence, becomes institutionalized in life, more brutal or "unlawful." For example, raping *becomes an institutionalized* action that is conducted as a frightening show in public spheres, not hidden in dark basements by masked men (Kalyvas 2006*a*,*b*). This institutionalization of violence is what paves the way for individuals from the same in-group to join various, and sometimes warring parties (non-essentialist understanding of civil war). Because these new institutions can function as if they were independent from ethnic groups and other social entities. Along this progress of violence, what were used to be social norms and expected behaviors in everyday life may not hold anymore, while certain values, such as masculinity, arise to dominate (Brubaker and Laitin 1998; Creppell 2011; Hoover Green 2016; Kanazawa and Still 2000; Reichardt 2013). In few words, civil war/violence itself continuously changes and steers the society to change along the war's course. Civil war/violence is neither one constant phase, nor is it a simple phenomenon.

The social process of civil war is dynamic and complex. We can find highly organized violence (e.g., organized rebel groups) and less organized violence (e.g., youth gangs having sympathy to one warring party) functioning together in the same civil war. Violence does not evolve linearly in the course of civil war (Cunningham and Lemke 2014); it is complex and non-linear. Moreover, those who apply violent strategies and those who persist on applying non-violent strategies to achieve their goals co-exist during the same civil war; similarly, victimized and non-victimized people live adjacent to each other (Daly 2012; Henry 2011; Kalyvas and Kocher 2007). Each part of this complex picture impacts the course of civil war/violence in different ways, which gives rise to the dynamism and complexity of the civil war phenomenon (e.g., see Galtung (1995) for the difference between violence and non-violence's social impacts).

Analytically speaking, the *distinction* between violence and civil war is essential to establish the civil war concept as a social process. Civil war and violence are not identical (Kalyvas 2006*a*, 19), so what is the relationship between them? Violence is

a "tool" functioning to achieve specific goals within the civil war as Kalyvas argues (2006*a*). Differently put, civil war is more than violence. Most importantly, violence is implemented to reshape people behaviors in a way that serves the actors' interests by creating a constant fear (Kalyvas 2006*a*,*b*). However, this tool (violence) is not ultimately and freely used, otherwise it would backfire. Government, for example, utilizes (not overuses) violence against the "civilian" groups to which the insurgents belong in order to show that it still has enough *power*. So, government - optimally - seeks to control its own violence; only rebels are its target, not the whole rebels' social group. However, this controlling of violence (called selective violence) changes along the course of war as the *actual* power of government varies (Bhavnani, Miodownik, and Choi 2011; Kalyvas 2006*b*). This is to say, violence is the first scaffold of civil war.

This argument leads us to the second scaffold adherent to the civil war phenomenon: social narrative. Violence exists through events that occur in specific times and places. What makes the effects of these events impact those who are not directly affected by them and impact the society as a whole is the narrative of the war. This narrative is what extends the pure, limited violent "events" into an unseen milieu saturating the whole society. In this vein, Weinstein (2006) describes rebellions as diffusing "rumor[s]" (Weinstein 2006, 1). Not the tangible events per se are what imbue civil war with its changing effects over a society, but the discursive milieu (which starts as a rumor then turns into a robust narrative) in which these events spring up because it gives meanings to these events. Generally, social narrative that is used in civil war (or the conflict ethos) justifies the war; delegitimizes the Other by de-humanizing it; glorifies the Self and the group of belonging (in-group); and alludes to the desired, pre-designed peace which is nothing more than the desired victory (Bar-Tal and Alon 2016).

In sum, civil war is a social process with the following qualities: (1) its properties and effects change as the civil war proceeds; (2) it is dynamic and complex; and (3) two pillars (violence and social narrative) scaffold it.

Perceiving civil war as a social process entails that a society – in a point of time – is transformed into a war; civil war is not something that exogenously inflicts societies from outside, "the conflict process is endemic to society [. . .] and is self-contained and self-generated," Lichbach and Gurr (1981, 4) assert. Literature, directly or indirectly, indicates how pre- civil war's social/political structure (social network, economic stratification, values and norms, accumulated human and physical capital) is transformed into a civil war. Just to mention a few of these structural transformations: various levels of income disparity among individuals; level of GDP

per capita all over the country; richness in natural lootable resources; relationship types between ethnic groups; and various ways of experiencing grievance are transformed into *different levels* of civil war *severity* and different types of *rebellion* as well (Braithwaite, Dasandi, and Hudson 2016; Collier, Hoeffler, and Söderbom 2004; Lu and Thies 2011; Mosinger 2018; Nwankwo 2015; Oyefusi 2007; Weinstein 2006; Zeira 2019). Collective emotion, too, is transformed from fear to anger (Pearlman 2013), and so do values from civilians-values to combatants-values (Berger 2019; Kaplan 2013*a*). Therefore, it is more precisely to think of "social changes through/via/channeled by" civil war than "social changes derived/caused/led by" civil war. More precisely, civil war can be understood as *constitutive*.

2.1.2 Social Changes Channeled by Civil War

The transformative process of civil war constitutes changes in a society during and after civil war. Put differently, some properties of a society should differ between two stages: before civil war, on the one hand, and during and after civil war, on the other hand. In this section, I will depict how this change has been demarcated in literature, and what the missing elements are as well.

Civil war changes *identities* (who are we?) of groups. Kalyvas went further contending that civil war might generate new collective identities as it contributes to changing how groups perceive themselves, and how they construe the meanings and the picture they uphold on themselves and on the world (Kalyvas 2006*a*, 80). Groups, because of the traumatic events, recompose their identities *emotionally* in order to cope with unfamiliar daily events, and *rationally* to adjust their beliefs and norms to fit into the emerging violent situation they –themselves- are engaged in. In other words, groups' identities change because of seeking survival, to escape victimization, or to launch violence against those who form a threat (Brubaker and Laitin 1998; Kalyvas 2006*b*; Petersen 2012).

Individual identity (who am I?) also changes. As violence becomes prevalent in everyday banal life, individuals cope with it by *normalizing* it. Individuals create or prime certain values within their inner selves in order to perceive the violence as normal, expected, and a part of their daily lives (Munck 2008). Thus, values change and so do individual identities. Besides changing values, some scholars have indicated how group's members add qualifiers to their identities to adapt to a civil war (Kalyvas 2008). For example, some individuals can define themselves as moderate Muslims instead of Muslims in a context of civil war between Muslims and

non-Muslims.

Changes in identity also springs up within the same identity group during a civil war. That happens throughout engendering new cleavages at the local level among individuals who belong to the same group, because of an old hatred and the desire to take revenge, or simply to take advantages over others. Some individuals utilize the macro-cleavages (around which the civil war originally was erupted) to serve their own intentions by transforming these cleavages into micro-cleavages within their in-group (Kalyvas 2001, 2006*b*; Kalyvas and Kocher 2007). For example, some individuals, who belong to an ethnic group X, may join a strong militia which represent an enemy ethnic group Y. They do, then, fight their own ethnic group in order to take revenge for their previous marginalization. This case leads to change in identity within the in-group by creating different "selves," (non-essentialist understanding of civil war).

Another strand of the academic literature has focused on civil war-channeled change that happens at the structural level (not identity). Structure refers to the fundamental endured aspects of a society; these aspects are deep, last for a long time, and do not unfold directly in front of observer's eyes (Baber 1991). In a more tangible sense, structure points to: (1) norms and symbols that incorporate individuals' behaviors with meanings and control these behaviors in terms of what is allowed and what is not; (2) power that indicates the societal stratification and resources distributions in terms of political and economic seizure of resources; and (3) legitimacy that gives a consensual right to some institutions (and people) to punish deviant behaviors (Giddens 1989).

Looking at structure as the location of civil war-channeled change has been a topic of academic research for a long time. Thompson (1931) addressed the change in the society's socio-economic structure during the American Civil War in the Southern States. He showed how those who previously occupied a higher social status turned down to a lower status as new individuals scaled up the social stratification, because new jobs erected to meet new needs of the war while traditional jobs declined.

Recently, Kalyvas contends that violence in civil war is produced by removing and destroying what was – before the war – a traditional mechanism of control (Kalyvas 2006*a*). Civil war changes norms that hinder violent deeds and promotes other values that ignite aggressive actions; thus, norms (allowed and not allowed) and their meanings are altered. Civil war, also, changes social power by removing the traditional social power from elderly people to young people, who usually take up weapons (Kalyvas 2006*a*, 55-58).

Other scholars have focused on changes that take place in social capital as another facet of structural changes (indicated basically by social trust), positively or negatively. Weidmann and Zürcher (2013) argue that intensive violence in civil war erodes social trust among the same local community as individuals who tend to use violence at the banal life level enormously dominate the society (Miguel, Saiegh, and Satyanath 2011). By contrast, Gilligan, Pasquale, and Samii (2014) argue that social cohesion increases when local community is exposed to violence perpetrated by outsiders. Congruently, Kuol (2014) finds that social capital of a local community (trust and cohesion) is contingent on the violence conductors' identity: If they are from within the local community, social capital fades away, while strange conductors strengthen the social capital within the local community.

The above mentioned literature does not provide a consent picture of structural changes in civil war. On the one hand, civil war is described as "development in reverse" since it destroys the human capital, which results in a deep and difficult-to-heal damage in society (Collier and Duponchel 2013; Lai and Thyne 2007). On the other hand, civil war can incite positive changes in the societal structure, such as in some cases, women have become productive at the core of their societies, politically, socially, and economically after being marginalized for a long time (Ingiriis and Hoehne 2013; Kuol 2014). In other words, norms, power, and legitimacy could be shifted in a positive way as well as in a negative way.

Therefore, we see again that dynamism and complexity constitute the deep nature of social changes though civil war. Although women participation in political and economic spheres is a positive change per se, it may emit negative consequences. Men find themselves jobless as they come back from battle fields; hence, they tend to expand the fighting operations and violence as long as possible (Demeritt, Nichols, and Kelly 2014). Social networks and social capital, also, do not always change in a clear direction as depicted above. Civil war re-mixes and conflates social networks in a complicated way as a function of displaced people: Individuals who belong to polarized identity groups could find themselves working in the same place or living in the same neighborhood, namely, they would find mutual interests to defend (Lehmann 2009). This dynamism is amply elaborated by Kane (1997). She argues that symbols and cultural elements' meanings (which boost the norms and symbols of the structure) are contested between society members during crisis. This contestation over "re-interpreting" cultural elements (norms and symbols) is ambiguous and uncertain in terms of its consequences. That is, a new meaning injected into the system of symbols and social practices would lead to changes in other connected meanings, which we cannot predict. This happens because culture is a whole connected system having its autonomous entity. A change in one side leads to unpredicted changes in

many other cultural sides.

To sum up, changes through civil war are traced on two planes: identity (individual and collective) and structure. The change's process is dynamic and complex; could be positive or negative; and is eventually anchored in the meaning dimension of self and culture. Nevertheless, identity and structure changes are mostly depicted as two separate fields of change. The systemized link between the two is missing (we will see later why it is important to bridge them). Moreover, the presented literature either does not specify the period of change, post-civil war or during civil war, or clearly confines its scope to the aftermath of civil war. In what follows, I will set forth how another strand of the literature has delineated changes *during* civil war.

2.1.3 Social Changes During Civil War

Capturing changes in identity and structure during civil war is an arduous task because these changes are fluid (King 2004) and fast in pace. In this section, I will depict the scholarship that has focused on changes during civil war specifically.

Munif (2013) approaches civil war duration from the hegemony perspective. Hegemony, simply, refers to power or social narrative installed into a society (so, it is interwoven in and by the society culture),[2] determining how citizens perceive objects in the political and social world around them. It saturates social objects with a sense of *nature*: political order, state building-model, state ideology, socio-economic stratification, gender-based division of labour, and the like seem to be natural; hence, not radically challengeable. According to Munif (2013) duration of civil war is not only entangled with hegemony, but also this duration is determined by hegemony (along other features). As long as a hegemony is *contested* without setting a new "dominant" hegemony, civil war continues.

Other scholars have studied civil war duration by probing into emotions' change since war requires anger, frustration, and (maybe) fear. Emotions could drive people's behaviors to fight, prolonging civil war, or to compromise and reach peace with the rivals, shortening the war duration. In this vein, emotions do not flee freely to be picked up by individuals. Rather, emotions – to some extent – lurk

[2] Hegemony, the concept that is taken from Gramsci (1999), is ethical-political domination (p.161) that is not only and merely imposed upon the society, but also is shaped by the interaction between the civil society's culture and the elite's (ruler) institutions or the state's "culture" as Gramsci calls it (p.12). The hegemony is enrooted in a society when a consensus over this ethical-political discourse develops to be accepted by the majority and incorporated in the society's culture.

in the collective cultural repertoire to which individuals belong (Bar-Tal, Halperin, and De Rivera 2007; Pearlman 2016). Hence, different cultures produce different emotional responses to violence, so duration of civil wars may vary from a culture to another *ceteris paribus* (close to this discussion, see (Galtung 1990, 1995)). For example, a masculine culture that glorifies honor by revenging may prime anger more than fear when harm is befallen on someone. On the contrary, a liberal-like culture may incite frustration more than anger as a response to the harm. However, this strand in the literature (regarding the role of culture in relation to emotion and hegemony) is limited and needs more discussion, yet it is not ignorable.

Kalyvas, on the other hand, partly explains duration of civil war as a function of one need, *survival* (Kalyvas 2006*a*, 124). What happens during a civil war is derived by an omnipresent motive which is seeking survival. All other motives, such as meeting ethical norms, seeking power, protecting identities come secondary.

Besides the strands of culture and survival, other significant literature has approached civil war duration from the *actors'* angle. Not surprisingly, actors of a conflict (rebels, government, civilians, and paramilitary) are more tangible and observable objects to be studied in such a period. So, civil war duration has been analyzed as a function of actors.

Four actors have been defined by scholars: state/government, paramilitary (semi-official troops backing the state), rebels, and civilians. Civil war is mutually produced by all these actors (Kalyvas 2006*b*), and is complicated – partly at least– because no one actor is unified and homogenous (Orjuela 2005; Pearlman 2009). Heterogeneous sub-groups act among rebels, civil society organizations, and state's side. These sub-groups could infight to maximize their self- interests, and even they might collaborate with other sides (Lyall 2010; Staniland 2012), which lead to a *prolonged* duration.

Briefly speaking, rebellion – civil war duration nexus has been elaborated in terms of rebels' unification, their organizational capacity, and their strategy to fulfill their goals (Bakke, Cunningham, and Seymour 2012; Collier, Hoeffler, and Söderbom 2004; Pearlman 2012). The more the rebels are unified, the shorter the civil war is.

Civilians and civil communities, on the other hand, have been studied by Kaplan (2012, 2013*b*, 2017) as an active party in civil wars. Civilian actors deal with both warring parties (the rebels and the state) to neutralize themselves during the war, and they may participate in implanting peace seeds amidst the violence, shortening the war duration. This "civic" ability to neutralize communal locals from war is basically contingent on the strength of their collective identity and social capital

(trust) (Bramoullé and Kranton 2007; Southwick and Kaplan 2016).

In terms of government-rebels interaction, this nexus is not limited to violence and fighting.[3] Some studies, for example, have shown that *legitimacy* (a structure's component) is mutually re-produced between government and its rivals! Both parties overlap in applying their sovereignty and legitimacy in different sectors (education, health, etc.) in the same region (Kasfir, Frerks, and Terpstra 2017; Klem and Maunaguru 2017). Moreover, and paradoxically, rebels may mimic state legitimacy in their own stronghold areas (Kasfir, Frerks, and Terpstra 2017; Klem and Maunaguru 2017), which shifts people's view of the conflict from being an "emancipatory" insurgency to a merely grappling over power.

Finally, paramilitary is the troop that keeps the state clean from conducted human rights abuses, seeking to suppress the rebels and their supporters. However, paramilitary often reduces the state legitimacy in front of state supporters' eyes since power is shared between the state and the paramilitary (Staniland 2012).

To this end, civil war duration is depicted as a function of the war actors and their relationships. For example, if rebels adopt guerrilla warfare tactics, civilians might suffer more than the case of conventional war with clear-cut fronts (Balcells and Kalyvas 2014) (or the reverse (Krcmaric 2018)). Therefore, civilian victimization would decrease (or increase); thus, the civilians' legitimization of both the state and the rebels, social norms, and their relations with powerful institutions will change.

The literature, then, represents duration of civil war as a function of actors; function of survival; and function of culture (hegemony and emotion). However, it does not tell us enough how these variables lead to social change. Differently put, the mechanism that sutures survival, actors, culture (more precisely, some elements of culture) and social change during civil war together needs more clarification.

To sum up, civil war is a social process through which society endorses an unavoidable change. Such change is endogenously engendered as societal structures are transformed through the process of the civil war. Civil war, then, is a transformative process of society. This transformation is dynamic and complex, and rests on two pillars that – indeed – compose civil war: violence and social narrative.

Violence, which is a material (or tangible) event-based tool, aims at creating fear, reimposing power of the parties, and reshaping people's behaviors. Social narrative, which is an immaterial discourse-based tool, imbues the war with meanings, on the other hand. However, understanding civil war as a social-transformative process

[3] It is worthy to note that civil war duration is not only about how long the war is, but also about what is going on in this period. This thesis is concerned about the latter more than the former.

pushes us not to describe violence and social narrative as merely tools or instruments of such wars; rather they constitute simultaneously (1) a *milieu* in which the social transformation takes place and (2) tools to stimulate this transformation.

Changes in society are the observable aspects of this transformative process. The literature shows that changes throughout civil war are observed in both identity (individual and collective) and structure.

Regarding changes in identity, the relations between Self (in-group) and Other (out-groups) become more radicalized as war outbreaks (essentialists argue). Additionally, in-group becomes divided between different sub-groups in terms of how the group members understand themselves, their group, their relations with the others, and the conflict itself; *viz.*, an identity– group does not remain one unified group during a civil war, but many disputes within it may emerge (non-essentialist understanding of civil war). In other words, Other is not only limited to out-groups, but also new Others can be generated within the in-group or the collective Self, creating "*other*-Selves," to borrow Lupovici (2014*a*) expression.

With respect to identity change, we find that: values upheld by individuals and groups; emotions; and meaning-systems change. These changes, worthy to mention, are not only generated by reaction from "passive" groups/individuals (who are not actively participants in the war) who struggle to only survive, but they also come out from those who *decidedly* become aggressive, the active actors.

On the other hand, changes in social structure are traced along three dimensions: the symbols of the culture and the social norms (meaning's dimension); power's relations, and political and economic institutions; and the legitimacy that are held by the state and the traditional societal configurations. These changes could be negative or positive, normatively. [4]

These changes (in identity and structure) are either approached as general changes channeled or constituted by civil war or clearly demarcated aftermath civil wars as a time frame. Other literature has approached changes occurring during civil wars as a time frame. In this vein, civil war duration has been depicted as: (1) a function of survival; (2) a function of culture (indicated by hegemony and emotions); and (3) as a function of actors and their complicated relations. How these variables affect or facilitate change during a civil war needs more clarification.

To this end, it will be useful to explicitly address the contributions to the literature

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[4]Structure is not something tangible; it is immaterial, and only instantiated by observable actions as defined by Giddens (1991) and Wendt (1987). Therefore, meaning is the latent variable that changes as structure changes. Meaning is alluded by culture and symbols of structure but not limited to.

this thesis seeks to do.

Firstly, this thesis will try to draw a systematic and comprehensive view as much as possible on what happens during a civil war by looking at the changes at the levels of identity and structure. Secondly, it seeks to explain identity changes during civil war by incorporating identity theories into the conceptual framework of civil war duration. That is, the literature on civil war usually explains identity's changes by using the concepts of civil war (e.g., frustration that is related to an identity-group) but not by using the concepts that inherently belong to identity theories. Therefore, this thesis tries to use the concepts of identity theories in order to explain how and why identity may changes during a civil war. The next chapter will discuss the identity theories extensively.

Thirdly, this thesis aspires to systematically bridge the structure and identity theoretical concepts together to study the duration of civil war. As mentioned above, changes during civil war are observed at two levels: identity and structure. Bridging these two together in order to have a whole comprehensive (and systematic) understanding of changes during civil war is a worthy endeavor. Indeed, identity (collective or individual) springs up within structure, and the two are inextricable (e.g., Giddens 1989, 1991). More importantly, this separation between identity and structure could be misleading when we study civil war because of the very nature of such conflicts. Many scholars have contended that conflict (and civil war, more particularly) is *complex* and ambiguous in its very nature (Berger 2019; Brubaker and Laitin 1998; Granzow, Hasenclever, and Sändig 2015; Kalyvas 2001, 2003), so we need to account for identity and structure together to properly study this complex phenomenon.

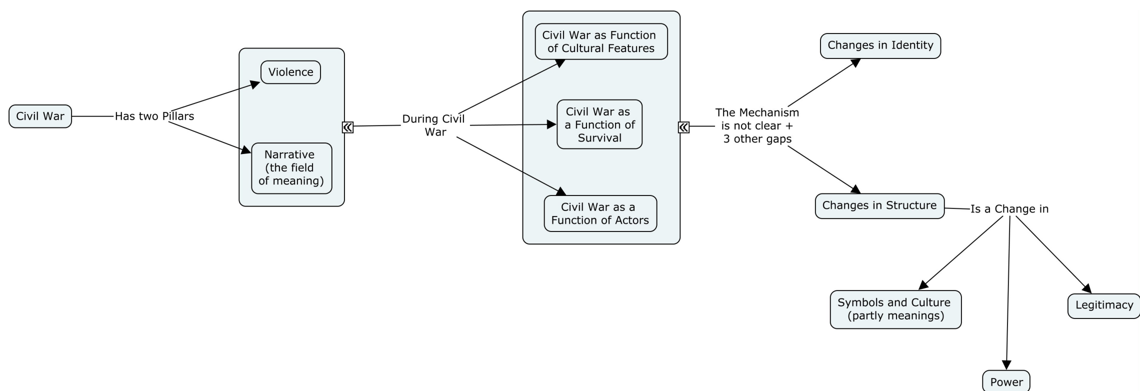
To dig deeper in this point, I will delineate what complexity means. The basic idea of a complex social system is the negation of the *ceteris paribus* notion. When a factor changes, *all* other factors change, nothing remains constant as any single thing changes. This case is very prevalent in social phenomena because – partly at least - we cannot define a concept as ontologically distinct from other concepts; i.e., the boundaries of a concept is permeable and porous. "Legitimacy," for example, is inherently – not independently – interwoven with many other concepts (Byrne 2005; Jervis 1997; Little 1993). In other words, we need to approach civil war and social change as one whole system. Therefore, the best approach to deal with this complexity (in social science generally) is to bring the two interactive levels together: micro- and macro-levels, identity (at individual or collective level) and structure as various scholars have asserted (Cederman and Vogt 2017; Chandra 2006; Elster 1982; Gerring 2010; Hedström and Ylikoski 2010; Jepperson and Meyer

2011; Kalyvas 2003, 2012; King 2004; Little 2015; Norton 2014; Tilly 2001).

In order to capture effectively and parsimoniously the interaction between micro- and macro-level and between identity and structure, we need to find a conceptual framework that can function as a "mechanism" suturing these levels together (e.g., King 2004; Tilly 2001). I argue that ontological security framework will be helpful in this regard because it basically studies the security of the being in its relations to the world and to the others. The third section in this chapter, therefore, will depict ontological security framework.

Figure 2.1 below represents the main concepts that are discussed in this section.

Figure 2.1 Concepts Map of Civil War – Change



2.2 Identity Change

Delineating the mechanisms and processes of identity changes would enhance our understanding of how changes happen during civil wars. Two points should be asserted here. First, measuring or operationalizing changes in identity speculates that identity indicates the deepest, the most lasting, and systemized changes in a society(de la Sablonnière 2017; Kranton 2016). Identity helps to filter out the superficial changes, or those changes which are temporary and not able to stand by themselves when the war ends. However, change in identity does not mean that changes in structures are ignored since both types of change are not separable as we will see in this section and the next one.

Second, I will depict identity theories on three levels, focusing on how change is theorized at individual, collective, and in-between (individual–collective) levels. Presenting these three levels will serve two goals: (1) having a comprehensive view of

identity change concepts; and (2) revealing how these three levels interact, which meets the requirements of complex phenomena studies.

2.2.1 Individual Identity and Marcia Model

Individual identity spins around the question of "who am I?" Identity is neither merely the answer, nor the question itself; it is both. James Marcia, and Erik Erikson before him, defined individual identity as self-awareness, self-perception, and self-imagination of one's self (*cf.* Cieciuch and Topolewska 2017). If someone could not develop a sense of him/herself, s/he would have no identity, suffering from psychological disorders. [5] An important development of identity concept has blossomed by Marcia's seminal works, who has developed the Identity Statuses Model (or Marcia Model), expanding the identity definition to be a dynamic, not a static awareness of the self.

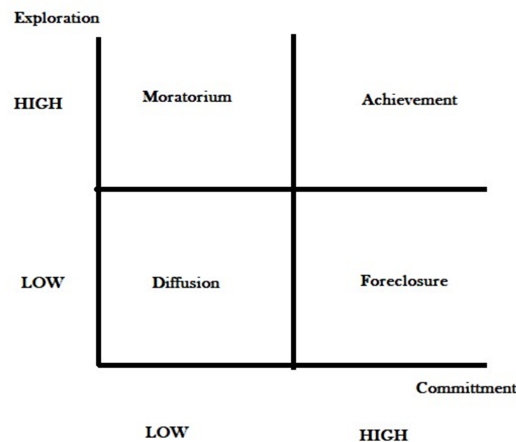
Marcia Model delineates identity as a *process* of developmental self-awareness. Identity develops along two dimensions: exploration and commitment. The exploration dimension refers to efforts an individual exerts to discover possible values that will be upheld; possible beliefs on the world and the others; and possible goals of his/her life. The exploration dimension is about discovering possible identity elements. On the other hand, the commitment dimension refers to an individual's conformity to the identity elements s/he has already adopted. An individual is committed to his/her identify by clearly addressing certain goals, values, and beliefs (Kroger, Martinussen, and Marcia 2010; Marcia and Josselson 2013; Marcia 2002; Marcia and Archer 1993; Schwartz 2004).

These two dimensions generate four identity statuses: (1) Those individuals who exert a high level of exploration, then conform highly to the explored identity's elements are in the *achievement* status; (2) those who exert a high level of exploration, but did not yet decide about what to adopt – i.e., they have only a low level of commitment – are in the *moratorium* status; (3) those who show a high level of commitment to their identity's elements, but only a scant effort has been devoted to explore other possible elements (low level of exploration) are in the *foreclosure* status; finally (4) those who do not commit seriously to any values, goals, and beliefs

[5] Identity and self are not identical. Identity - in this thesis - refers to a sense of self; hence, any human being has a self, but not necessarily an identity. A schizophrenia patient has a self, but s/he lacks the sense of his/her"self" as well as a sense of reality (Parnas et al. 2005). The scope of this thesis stops at the borders of schizophrenia, we assume at least a minimum sense of self. It is worthy to note that when I write Self - with an upper case - I mean sense of self.

(low level of commitment) and do not exert any important effort to explore possible identity's elements (low level of exploration) are in the *diffusion* status (Bilsker and Marcia 1991; Crocetti et al. 2013; Kroger, Martinussen, and Marcia 2010; Marcia and Josselson 2013; Marcia 2002; Marcia and Archer 1993).

Figure 2.2 Marcia Model



Achievement and moratorium statuses are called *progressive* or *high* statuses, whereas foreclosure and diffusion statuses are called *regressive* or *low* statuses (Kroger, Martinussen, and Marcia 2010; Slugoski, Marcia, and Koopman 1984). An achievement status - especially - is associated with a higher level of well-being. It implies that someone has more control over him/herself and life, higher levels of caring of him/herself and others, and more self-esteem. Moratorium status paves the way for the self to discover new identity's elements to be integrated into the inner realm of the Self. Generally, both of the moratorium and achievement statuses(progressive statuses) enriches the identity. Foreclosure status, on the other hand, does not allow someone for developing his/her ideal astray from the traditional or political authority and the related "sacred" identity's elements. For individuals of the foreclosure status, adapting to and adopting new ideas and changes in life become an obstinate track and a source of anxiety. Finally, diffusion status points to a careless person, such that s/he does neither care of him/herself nor of others, and significantly s/he lives in void of meanings (Årseth et al. 2009; Bilsker and Marcia 1991; Cieciuch and

Topolewska 2017; Crocetti et al. 2013; Marcia 2002; Schwartz 2004).

Apparently from the names, progressive statuses (achievement and moratorium) denote a more coherent and richer identity. A progressive status individual can adopt different values, goals, and beliefs without endorsing self-conflicts among these elements. Thus, a person in a progressive status is more open to others and to changes, more emotionally secure, and more positively oriented towards the future (Årseth et al. 2009; Crocetti et al. 2013; Slugoski, Marcia, and Koopman 1984). By contrast, regressive statuses (foreclosure and diffusion) are associated with less ability to adapt to changes in the life course. A person in a regressive status is less open to others, and has a less ability to build a whole coherent self. S/he is emotionally insecure, and shows a negative disposition towards the future. Moreover, his or her self-ideal is easily distorted when changes occur in his/her life; that is, s/he is uncertain about his/her opinions and his/her "uniqueness" since s/he borrows his/her Self from others (Årseth et al. 2009; Crocetti et al. 2013; Feiner 1970; Flury and Ickes 2007; Marcia and Josselson 2013; Slugoski, Marcia, and Koopman 1984).

At the psycho-individual level, Marcia Model stresses that the progressive statuses are laborious and effortful. Individual has to devote efforts in order to achieve these statuses. As a reward, progressive statuses help individual to deal with crisis (such as a civil war), and indeed, these statuses are activated during crisis as adaptive mechanisms, roughly speaking. The achievement status – especially – leads to a *complex-self*, which is a Self with multiple goals, values, and beliefs co-existing in a harmony, and is a Self with an open disposition towards changes in life (Crocetti et al. 2013; Gatson 2003; Marcia 2002; Slugoski, Marcia, and Koopman 1984).

Complex-self derived by progressive statuses equips individual with a clear "purpose—in—life" helping him/her to pass the crisis because purpose—in—life sustains the continuity of individual Self by maintaining a coherent-continuous meaning of the Self from the past through the present to the future (Côte and Levine 1983). Therefore, complex-self is hardly shaken up even when radical, unpleasant changes stir up the individual's life. Analogously, complex-self resembles a house with multiple pillars, whereby falling apart is difficult.

On the contrary, regressive statuses are less laborious. Foreclosure and diffusion statuses are maladaptive during crisis; anxiety and meaninglessness ensue as individual faces changes that challenge what s/he has got used to face (Crocetti et al. 2013; Marcia and Josselson 2013; Slugoski, Marcia, and Koopman 1984). To put it simply, regressive statuses resemble a uni-pillar house, it can easily collapse. [6]

[6] Regressive statuses must not be - essentially - understood as one (or few) goal and value someone embodies in his/her identity. Rather, I argue based on the previous relative literature, that a regressive status means

Although this model studies identity at the psychological level,[7] it points out that in fact *contexts* influence which a status an individual would activate. For example, living and studying in closed schools with similar students' backgrounds and rigid indoctrination will not help the students to develop a progressive status (Kroger, Martinussen, and Marcia 2010; Slugoski, Marcia, and Koopman 1984). This notion channels our discussion to the upper level, collective identity, which I will discuss below.

To sum up, Marcia Model discerns individual identity as changeable. Identity is a struggle for meaning, and this struggle is projected onto two dimensions: exploration and commitment (Cieciuch and Topolewska 2017). This model asserts that opening to new identity elements enriches the Self and leads to a more resilient personality during crisis (complex-self). Complex-self is strong because it helps the individual to keep a continuous sense of his/her identity. By contrast, individuals who are engulfed on their identities – regressive statuses – fail to maintain self-continuity because what had been unchallenged values, for example, become harshly contested in crisis times (later, I will discuss the complexity of Self in more details). However, a serious challenge stands out, operationalizing this model is arduous (Schwartz 2004) because the four statuses usually function together.

At any rate, carefully we can use the following ways to operationalize the four statuses (Table 2.1) (Marcia and Archer 1993).

Table 2.1 Operationalization of Marcia Model Statuses

The Status	How to Observe in an Respondent's Narrative
Achievement	I have a clear definition of my identity I have made an enough research to form my identity
Moratorium	I am still in researching to form my identity I am not yet done in forming my Identity There are some contradictions in expressing the identity
Foreclosure	I have adopted my identity from my parents
Diffusion	I did not decide yet I do not care of identity

that a simple-self does not develop a robust mechanism to sustain and develop what the Self believes in. Hence, the Self meaning-system is fragile.

[7] Later, in the ontological security section and in the Discussion Chapter, I will compare between Marcia Model – among other identity theories – and the ontological security framework.

2.2.2 Collective Identity and Change

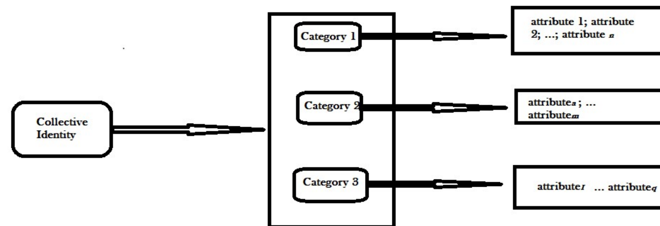
Collective identity refers to how a group (such as a religious group, a political party, or a nation) identifies itself by asserting its norms, belief-system, and the belonging criteria. Collective identity, in this vein, is not a sum of its members' identities. Rather, it has its own "ego," distinct collective self-esteem from its members' individual self-esteem, and its own ideal self sought to be fulfilled (Halperin et al. 2010).

Among many collective identity theories, Chandra's account fits more than the others into the purpose of this thesis because it organically entangles collective identity and change (Chandra 2000*a*, 2012*a*,*c*; Chandra and Wilkinson 2008). Chandra defines collective identity as a set of one or more categories, each category consists of *necessary core attributes* (Chandra 2012*a*) which are necessary for a member to belong to the collective.

Necessary attributes point out that someone cannot be a member of a group if s/he does not gain *all* of these necessary attributes. They are the characteristics that identify a group, distinguishing it from others. For example, to belong to the black American group, the necessary attributes are that the skin color is black and the place of birth is the USA. Similarly, to belong to the Arab group, you should speak Arabic, be born in an Arabic country, your parents are Arabic, and the like. [8] Collective identity is usually more complicated than being composed of one category (e.g., a collective identity is only Arab), rather it is generally spun of a set of categories. Let a collective identity be Arab Syrian Sunni. This collective identity is composed of three categories: Arab, Syrian, and Sunni. Besides the Arab category, Sunni category includes attributes, such as believing in Mohammad as the last prophet, believing in Qur'an, and so on. While the Syrian category includes attributes, including being born in Syria or having the Syrian nationality. Figure 2.3 represents Chandra's model for collective identity formation.

[8] This is a made up example. What makes someone Arabic in Saudi Arabia is different from that in Syria. Determining the necessary core attributes is a complex process as we will see later

Figure 2.3 Chandra's Model of Collective Identity



Drawing on this understanding, we can define any collective identity, ranging from a political party to an ethnic group, by addressing its categories and, more importantly, the necessary attributes of these categories. Ethnic identity, however, has an additional feature: The attributes of an ethnic identity's category(s) should be descent-based; *viz.*, being passed down from generation to another. Such ethnic attributes could be place of birth, religion, language, color of skin, and so on (Chandra 2012*d*).

Below, we will see that all collective identities are changeable, including ethnic identities.

2.2.2.1 Change in Collective Identity

Skin color per se means nothing; its attached meanings are what makes it a necessary attribute for a collective identity. Collective identity (including ethnic identity, notwithstanding its passed down descent-based attributes) are changeable in the long-term or the short-term (Chandra 2012*c*; Fearon and Laitin 2000). This change is not *only* a result of political and economic (exogenous) factors, but also a result

of the endogenous process taking place within the identity's construction. That is, collective identity is continuously under social constructions and re-constructions from inside (Chandra 2012*c*; Fearon and Laitin 2000).

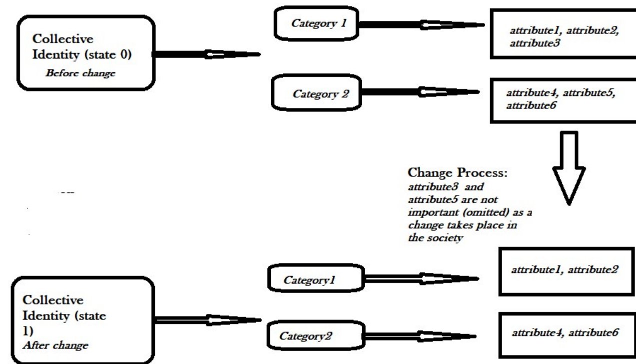
Change in collective identity happens at three levels, with or without undergoing a crisis (i.e., exogenous factors). According to de la Sablonnière (2017) change in a collective identity happens by changing: (1) the *social structure* of a society, such as the socio-economic stratification, the nation-building model, or the power of institutions; (2) the *normative structure*, which includes the norms and prescriptions of what to do and what not to do in different contexts; and (3) the *belief-system* (necessary attributes in Chandra's words) which is the core of the collective identity.[9] These three levels are ordered from the less essential to the more essential–lasting changes. Thus, changes in the belief-system/necessary attributes allude to the radical and more lasting changes in an identity.

Chandra (2012*a*) amply offers a mechanism explaining how changes take place in identity, penetrating the three previous levels. Simply put, members of a collective silence some attributes of their identity and prime others in different contexts. A constant pattern of silencing/priming *launches* a process of change in the collective identity, then this process could cause a radical or incremental change. The changing process also can fail to be achieved, and the collective finds itself stranded in-between (*inertia state*); neither does it hold the previous identity, nor does it move to a new identity (de la Sablonnière 2017). Change - worthy to note - does not necessarily mean a moving to a completely "done" new state, however.

Change needs capacity to be achieved. Let a collective identity include n categories, each has m attributes. For a change to be launched, an attribute either should be subtracted or added to one of the categories at least (perhaps, as a result, a category will be also added or subtracted). To this end, a significant change should be observed in a society (more than only in the group under study). For example, to say that belonging to a socio-economic class is not important any more to identify a group (subtracting an attribute from a category), a significant change in the society should be fulfilled (Chandra 2012*a*), such as melting the socio-economic stratification in a way or another. Tracing identity's attributes, then, is crucial to understand change at the macro-level, i.e., collective identity-level. Differently put, collective identity attributes form indeed the unit of analysis of any research probing into collective identity change (Figure 2.4 explains the mechanism of change).

[9] de la Sablonnière (2017) calls the belief-system or the necessary attributes: core cultural identity

Figure 2.4 The Mechanism of Collective Identity Change



It is important to assert that change is not easily achieved, not because people resists it – indeed, change happens all the time at the base of everyday life -– but because change needs certain capacity and effort to be completed, and needless to say that such capacity (which can be cognitive capacity) is not always available in a society. Change is not an easy, soft shift taking place in an identity, rather it is *complex* and *paradoxical*, to borrow Rumelili and Todd (2018) expression. Collective identity is woven by interactions between the Self (in-group) and the Other (out-group); it is not confined to the inner realm of "we-ness," and — partly – that is why it is not simple. How in-group defines the Other, expresses itself in front of it, and how both of them interact constitute the collective identity of the in-group (Degli Esposti 2018; Rumelili and Todd 2018). Collective identity is, also, constructed as the collective's members contest among themselves over certain meanings of their identity. Consensus is not easily reached, and it is never perfectly done.[10] Communication and struggling among the in-group members continue until reaching a consensus over what - for example - a social norm must mean and how it must be interpreted in different contexts (Rumelili and Todd 2018; Todd 2018).

Bearing that in mind, someone may argue that change is not the opposite of self-

[10]However, lacking a significant degree of consensus leads to an inertia status of the collective identity.

continuity, as it may seem at the first glance. Change can happen throughout continuity of the (collective) Self as attributes are added or deleted from the collective identity, which happens all the time. This change in core attributes can happen in a way that sustains the sense of self-continuity (because contexts change all the time, attributes change as well, and that does not mean losing the self-continuity of a collective identity). Thus, it is better — up to this point – to think of change and continuity as *duality* not opposites (Rumelili and Todd 2018; Todd 2018). In this vein, Geertz (1973) gives an illustrative example of the Bali "tribe" in Indonesia, such that the Bali people have reinterpreted their polytheist religion as a monotheist one without losing their core identity as Bali.

Finally, it will be useful to categorize *how* change in collective identity occurs by impinging on two wide mechanisms: changes that happen in identity's boundary and in identity's content. Identity's boundary refers to who is a group's member and who is not, how to distinguish between members and non-members. For example, Kurdish Syrians speak Kurdish, while Arab Syrians speak Arabic; language here functions as a boundary. Identity's content, on the other hand, refers to meaning- and belief-system or necessary attributes of the collective. For example, Kurdish Syrians believe in their indigenous right of the northern-east part of Syria; this belief is what makes a Kurdish person Kurdish, for some political parties (David and Bar-Tal 2009; Fearon and Laitin 2000). Other studies have asserted that changes in collective identity happen by changing the boundary and the content of that identity, simultaneously. (Todd 2018).[11]

2.2.2.1.1 Content-based Identity Change. [12] Individuals from various and different collective identities interact with each other every day. They create political parties, civil society organizations, unions, and other *multi*-identity collectives that penetrate different in-groups, besides – of course – collective organizations which are limited to their in-groups. It is common to find someone who belongs to Alawite group, in Syria, and simultaneously to a trade union with non-Alawites. S/he could belong to a working-class, so his/her interests are congruent with other working-class Sunni people — for example – more than with Alawite people who do not belong to the working class. This *multi-dimensionality* of a collective identity is the cornerstone of changes in identity. Multi-dimensionality means that a collective's members activate or prime selective attributes from this collective identity

[11] Belief-system and meaning-system are widely exchangeable terms. However, belief-system denotes a set of beliefs and ideas about the world and the sacred realms, while meaning-systems or meaning-making system refers to the process of making meanings on the world and the process of shaping the belief-system.

[12] Chandra's account as discussed above denotes changes of collective identity as changes happening in the content.

and silence others to meet their needs in varying contexts. In the example above, the Alawite person may prime her/his status as a worker in the context of his/her work or when s/he lives in a far city, and silence her/his identity as an Alawite. When s/he comes back to his/her village, s/he silences his/her identity as a worker and primes his/her Alawite-ness. (Chandra 2012*a*,*b*,*d*; Chandra and Boulet 2012; Chandra and Wilkinson 2008).

Multi-dimensionality leads potentially to a change because people interpret their groups' or collectives' meaning-systems in different ways as they move from a context to another, from an activated dimension to another. The *accumulation* of differentiated, incremental (re)interpretations of the collective identity's meanings leads to a change in the collective identity itself (Akerlof and Snower 2016; Akerlof and Kranton 2000).

To illustrate, I will reformulate an example taken from Akerlof and Kranton (2000). Each collective has its own meaning-system (i.e., prescriptions of how to act, how to understand the outer world's objects). This meaning-system informs the collective's members about their roles in the life; women work inside homes as care-givers, and men go to work outside in factories. However, because every woman and man acts in a multi-dimensional milieu, they have multiple motivations, multiple objectives, and multiple means to achieve their goals. In a time of economic crisis, or war, when men go to war or their income is not enough for their families, women decide to go to work in factories. Hence, women violate the collective identity prescriptions. By doing so, they reinterpret the meaning-system by priming the need for money to give care for children and silencing the masculine values. Men who are the owners of the factories would welcome women as workers because they need to continue producing during the war/crisis. As a result, women's identity changes and so does men's. Both of them now will lack the attribute of gender-based division of labour. This attribute is omitted from the collective's categories in Chandra's words (Akerlof and Snower 2016; Akerlof and Kranton 2000). In few words, we act in various contexts, priming some identity attributes and silencing others as the contexts vary. The attributes that contribute to greater symbolic or economic utilities will survive and alter those which impair such utilities. If being an Alawite contradicts someone's interests as a worker, s/he will laboriously pursue changes in the Alawite identity by priming certain attributes and ignoring others.

This understanding of collective identity change also implies – sometimes – that change goes through a *discrepancy* between the ideal collective Self, which conforms to the meaning-system, and the actual collective Self, which violates the meaning-system by re-interpreting it or, simply, by acting against it (Halperin et al. 2010). As

depicted in the previous example, the discrepancy ensues between the prescriptions of gender-based division of labour and its negation. This discrepancy causes anxiety, and harms the self-esteem of the collective Self (men would feel that they lost an important part of how they identify themselves); thus, in order to reduce the anxiety, the meaning-system as a whole should change (Halperin et al. 2010) by – for example – modifying the perception of job as a masculine value. Otherwise, the discrepancy, and hence anxiety, will persist to stir up the collective Self.

2.2.2.1.2 Boundary-based Identity Change. Collective boundary lies at the zone between the Self (in-group) and the Others (out-groups), and it is mainly formed via the relationship with the Other (or what is called "othering" as a process of defining the Self as against the " abhorrent" Other to a degree or another, briefly speaking (see for example, Çelik, Bilali, and Iqbal 2017)). Boundary is not simply a line that demarcates who belongs to "us" and who belongs to the Other, "them." Rather, identity boundary is better understood as a *system of differentiation* marking the Other and the relationship with it. Does it include sharable elements or not, for example? Is the region of the in-group tolerated to exchanges with the Other or not (Geertz has elaborated on the sharable materials between groups to mark the boundaries, *cf.* Li 2003)?

To delve deeper, according to Flesken (2018), identity boundary has three components: (1) characteristics that determine the in-group's symbolic and material region (clothes, language, territory, etc.); (2) boundary's salience which separates "us" from "them" to an acute or moderate extent; (3) permeability of boundary, i.e., to which extent the Other can be included in the in-group.

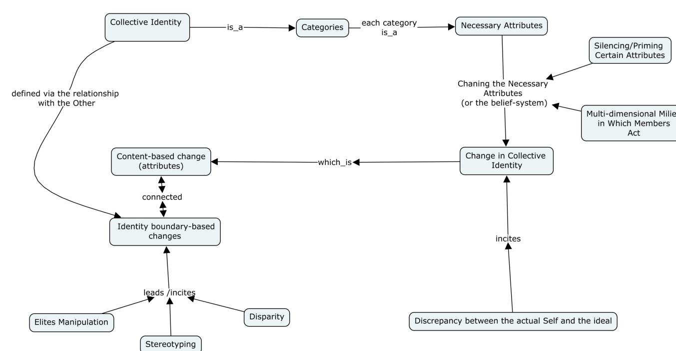
Collective boundary is "managed" through diverse ways. The literature reviewed here suggests three ways of boundary's management or shaping. First, elites could manipulate the boundary to erect distinctions between the elite's in-group and others rival groups. Political party is an important instrument in this regard. Some political parties mobilize their constituents on the base of ethnic identities and on *excluding* a specific Other, which thickens the boundary between groups (Chandra 2000*a*,*b*). For example, Ba'ath Party in Syria defines itself as a Pan-Arabism party; thus, it excludes Syrian Kurds, and thickens the boundary between Arab and Kurdish ethnicities.

Stereotype is the second way. Stereotype is assigning, usually, negative characteristics to the Other in a way that these characteristics become enough to identify this Other (Coutant et al. 2011). Therefore, the boundary between "us" and "them" becomes salient and impermeable as "we" is unreachable from the stigmatized, tarnished Other.

Finally, disparity between groups (or collectives) in terms of their social, political, and/or economic statuses demarcates boundaries between identities. “Poor” can become a sign of a collective boundary distinguishing it from the rich Other. This disparity steers collective actions (e.g., violence or negotiation and dialogue with the Other) which, in turn, change the permeability of boundaries. They may become more solid (in case of violence) or more flexible (De la Sablonnière and Tougas 2008; de la Sablonnière et al. 2015; Van Zomeren and Iyer 2009).

To sum up, collective identities change throughout changing the boundary that distinguishes the in-group from out-groups; throughout changing the meaning-system that imbues the in-group with its “content”; or by both. This change is unavoidable because every group’s members live and act in a multidimensional milieu, whereby they need to constantly re-interpret their collective identity’s meanings (see Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5 The Mechanisms of Collective Identity Change



2.2.3 Identity between Collective and Individual Construction

Some scholars have contended that dealing with the individual identity and the collective identity concepts separately is misleading. Identity is reciprocally constructed idiosyncratically and collectively (Breakwell 2001; Timotijevic and Breakwell 2000). However, that does not mean collective and idiosyncratic identities are identical. Rather, it means that individual spins his/her identity simultaneously by asserting his/her personal role and its adhered values (e.g., father, teacher, soldiers, etc.), and by belonging to a group(s) and adopting its social norms and worldview. (Akerlof and Kranton 2002; Bar-Tal, Halperin, and De Rivera 2007; David and Bar-Tal 2009; Kranton and Sanders 2017; Stets and Burke 2000).

Identity Process Theory (hereafter, IPT) which was developed firstly by Glynis Marie Breakwell (1986) provides us with a systematic way of dealing with these two dimensions of identity, the idiosyncratic and the collective. More importantly, IPT incorporates the notion of change within its definition of identity, which makes it fit into the topic of this thesis.

2.2.3.1 Identity Process Theory

IPT is widely presented congruently among scholars. Some studies have enriched it with more nuanced details; yet, no contradictions are observed in the literature on IPT. Below I will delineate this theory as it has been presented and applied in the relative literature, resting on semi-systematic literature review: Akerlof (2017); Amiot and Jaspal (2014); Bardi et al. (2014); Breakwell (2010, 2014*b*); Hogg, Terry, and White (1995); Jaspal (2013); Jaspal and Breakwell (2014); Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010*a*, 2012); Jetten et al. (2015); Kachanoff et al. (2016); Mitha, Adatia, and Jaspal (2017); Ryeng, Kroger, and Martinussen (2013); Sani, Bowe, and Herrera (2008); Secrest and Zeller (2003); Timotijevic and Breakwell (2000); Vignoles, Chryssochoou, and Breakwell (2000, 2002); Whitbourne, Sneed, and Skultety (2002). Demarcating the theory in its general aspects, yet with accounting for its nuanced constructive elements, is what the following paragraphs aim at.

Identity in IPT has a hierarchical construction, which is continuously formed and re-shaped. The hierarchical construction of identity means that identity's elements are arranged along this hierarchy from the most important (at the top) to the least important (at the bottom). By identity's elements we mean both idiosyncratic and

collective elements: personal values, social norms, beliefs, personal and collective goals, personal traits, and behavioral rules. Each identity's element has a value: higher values push the element to the hierarchy's top, i.e., this element is more important, and vice versa. It is noteworthy to assert that this process of pushing elements up and down is continuous and dynamic; *viz.*, the positions of the elements along the hierarchy change according to various conditions that will be mentioned below.

What are the criteria that determine where on the hierarchy an identity element is located? In other words, how do we know how important an identity's element is?

Seven *identity principles* are set forth in the literature as "guiding principles" or criteria that steer the process of re-arranging the elements along the hierarchy. The higher an identity element scores on each of these principles, the higher position it occupies along the hierarchy. These principles are: (1) self-esteem, the positive image a person holds on him/herself, his/her worthy self, and his/her worthy story to be told to others; (2) distinctiveness, namely, an individual has his/her own distinguishable characteristics from others; (3) self-continuity referring to a coherence in the Self between the past, the present, and the future; (4) self-efficacy which refers to having a control over life in terms of job choices, accommodation, and so on; (5) purpose-in-life pointing to having a goal to be achieved as long as someone struggles and acts in life; (6) belonging to a group and feeling close to other people; and (7) self-consistency, i.e., the different and various identity elements coexist in a harmony in the identity's hierarchy, without self-contradictions, creating a coherent whole.

Finally, individuals are immersed within a society, where they encounter new ideas, values, norms, and meanings. Therefore, they always "receive" identity's elements to be arranged in their identity hierarchy. Being guided by the seven identity principles, two processes are defined: (1) Those relatively new elements which can be easily absorbed into the "old" identity's hierarchy are *assimilated* and no change occurs in the identity; while (2) those very new elements which cannot be absorbed into the "old" identity's hierarchy are *accommodated*, i.e., the whole hierarchy is re-arranged and re-shaped in a way that allows for the new elements to be coherently placed in their fittest positions. Change occurs only via the accommodation process, and that happens only because of living in a society when a new element "runs into" an individual, pushing him/her to accommodate it..

2.2.3.1.1 Identity Change in IPT. Change is a natural aspects of identity in IPT; change is not something inflicting the identity or something that is wreaked upon the identity. Pehrson and Reicher (2014) go further by suggesting that iden-

tity in IPT could be defined as a *function of change*. Individuals (and groups)[13] struggle to impart their meaning-making system over the world. They, therefore, find themselves immersed in a contesting world where different meaning-systems confront and interact. As a result, their own identity will be exposed to various new elements that would roam above the identity hierarchy to be accommodated, assimilated, or rejected.[14] Change in identity, then, is not only unavoidable, but also *adherent to the nature* of identity. We simultaneously change others by diffusing our meaning-systems and are changed by others' similar endeavors.

This struggle to imbue the world with our own meaning-systems occurs through a milieu called *social representation*, which plays an essential role in IPT. Social representation is a set of systematic connected concepts, ideas, and images forming a lens through which the world is seen and objects are comprehended by people (Moscovici 1988). Social representation can be understood as a general (or master) social narrative that forms the space for struggle over meaning-making systems. Individuals as well as groups, political elites and ordinary people are all engaged in shaping and re-shaping social representation. In other words, individuals and groups receive meaning-systems from the social representation in which they live, and at the same time inject this social representation with meaning-systems that may be "imported" from different contexts, different cultures, or different social representations. Thus, social representation is malleable, systematic, and autonomous (i.e., it has its own existence as a milieu always exists there to be injected with meanings) (Bardi and Goodwin 2011; Breakwell 2014*a*; Moscovici 1988).

As change in identity naturally happens via the milieu of social representation, we need to delve deeper into the identity principles because they are the guiding criteria that tell us how to evaluate a change; is the "new" identity element positively or negatively affecting the identity? The seven identity principles (self-esteem, self-distinctiveness, self-continuity, self-efficacy, purpose-in-life, belonging to a group, self-consistency) do not function totally in harmony. Some principles are achieved only at the expense of others, and their relationships are – to some extent – trade-offs. For example, *self-esteem* is achieved by balancing two other principles: *uniqueness* of the individual and his/her *belonging* to a group(s), implying conforming to the group's norms and "losing" her/his "uniqueness" (Akerlof 2017). In sum, we need to think of the identity principles as independent from each other, yet interacting by, often, trade-off relationships (Akerlof 2017; Jaspal and Cinnirella 2010*a*,*b*, 2012; Kachanoff et al. 2016). Therefore, change is very dynamic and difficult to be ob-

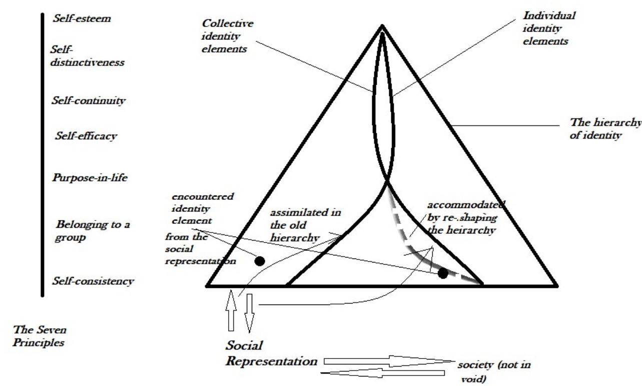
[13]IPT is applicable to both individual and collective levels since studying a group's identity implies that this group endorses an ego, as Oren and Bar-Tal (2014) demonstrate.

[14]Later in this thesis we will see that rejection cannot happen without making a change in the own identity.

jectively evaluated and predicted because individuals and groups' evaluation of the identity principles varies; what is good for someone is bad for another and what is good now could become bad tomorrow. Nevertheless, keeping these principles as a baseline to observe changes in identity is useful.

To this end, two concepts should be deeper discussed to show how change functions within identity: the self-continuity principle and identity threat. Figure 2.6 illustrates IPT and how change occurs.

Figure 2.6 IPT, Social Representation, and Change



2.2.3.1.2 Self-continuity. Self-continuity is the most controversial principle and directly related to the main theme of this thesis: change, which seems to be the opposite of self-continuity. When Marcia Model (identity at the psychological-level) and collective identity theories (drawing on Chandra's account and others') were discussed above, change in identity appeared as unavoidable, as something that always happens. IPT pushes the change concept deeper into identity *to be a very "natural" ingredient* of it (self-continuity is applied to both individual and collective levels (Smeekes and Verkuyten 2013)). In what follows, I will argue that change is not the opposite of self-continuity. If change is the opposite of self-continuity, then it will not be a natural part of identity, but an exterior quality that inflicts or wrecks identity. If change is the opposite of self-continuity, then identity must resist it and

it is not a part of it, differently put.[15]

Erikson has argued that identity is endorsed, exercised through keeping its continuity and *sameness* over time; individual's identity must stay the same, as s/he moves in time and places, in front of his/her own eyes and others' eyes (*cf.* Cieciuch and Topolewska 2017). Patently, continuity and *sameness* are identical in this account and opposite to change. However, other scholars have tried to measure self-continuity and found that there are no coherent measurements of self-continuity; we cannot objectively capture and generalize a set of aspects that point directly to self-continuity (Dunkel, Minor, and Babineau 2010; Spini and Jopp 2014). Furthermore, others have found that continuity and dis-continuity are not mutually exclusive (Secrest and Zeller 2003). Someone may explain this case by arguing that self-continuity is a *discursive* phenomenon,[16] therefore it varies as a person's discourse (or his/her narrative topic) varies (Rumelili and Todd 2018).

Conceptualizing self-continuity as discursive in nature paves the way to differentiate between two types of self-continuity: (1) the first stresses *sameness* in the past, the present, and the future; and (2) the second asserts that continuity is an *accumulative* experience held by the Self throughout the life course, hence, sameness is not identical to self-continuity (Sani, Bowe, and Herrera 2008; Sani et al. 2007; Santo et al. 2013). For the latter, accumulative-ness, change happens through accumulation *in order to* sustain and achieve self-continuity (as an identity principle) over time. Hence, change is not the opposite of self-continuity; change and self-continuity are related as communicating vessels, entangled with each other. We add to our experience and can change our core belief-system in order to sustain the sense of being continuous from the past through the present to the future. We need to do so because contexts and social representations change all the time, and changing some elements of our identity is what can "protect" our identity from being "distorted" by the changing contexts. Figure 2.7 illustrates the difference between understanding self-continuity as sameness and as accumulativeness.

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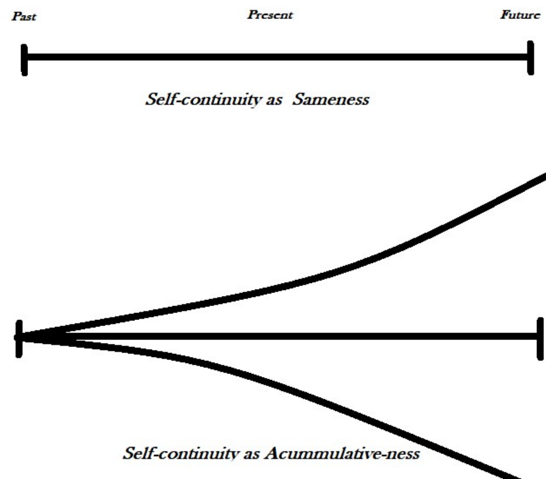
[15] I said above that the seven identity principles are related to each other, sometimes, in trade-off relationships. Needless to say that change is not an identity principle, and being *opposite* to a principle is different from being related to it in a trade-off relationship. The relationship between the identity principles is similar to that in communicating vessels. Opposite-relationship is totally different. It is a negation of something.

[16] Namely, self-continuity does not exist out of narrative, discourse, or expression

Figure 2.7 Self-continuity as Sameness and Accumulative-ness



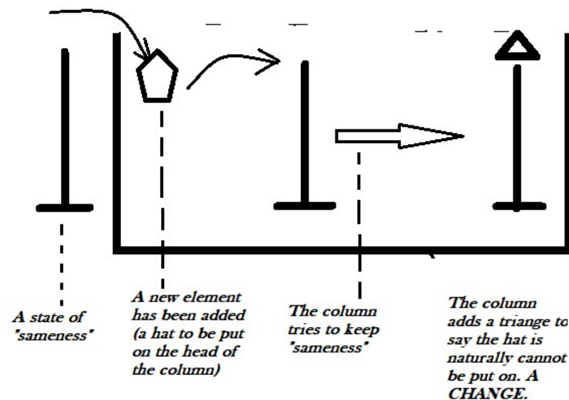
The questions, still, arise: Is self-continuity as sameness logically valid? Does self-continuity have two natures, sameness and accumulative-ness?

I argue that sameness is not logically sound. We have seen that identity is endorsed in a society, and more precisely by immersing the Self in social representation milieus. Social representation is a field on which individuals and groups struggle to impose their own meaning-systems. For an individual trying to keep the sameness of his/her Self, s/he always needs to restore the social representation to the same meanings and interpretations. But s/he cannot. Social representation is a mutual space; someone may control him/herself, but s/he cannot control the others, who belong to the in-group and out-groups. As long as others inject social representation with meanings, with different interpretations of the world (and thus, understanding of the Self and its disposition in the world), keeping the "same-Self" entails resisting new meanings in social representation. The only way to do so - for someone who tries to keep him/herself the "same" - is to contribute to the social representation by re-interpreting its (new, intruder-) meanings in a way that restores the sameness. This leads us to a self-contradiction. S/he seeks to sustain sameness by re-interpreting meanings by adding to his/her experience new interpretations in order to "fight" the "annoying" intruder-meanings in the social representation. Let X be a new interpretation of a norm Y in the social representation of a group. Those who want

to keep the collective Self of their group the same have to interpret Y as it has been always interpreted. X then must be refused or be proved futile. The only way to do so is to add new elements, new meanings Z, showing that X is invalid. Even if the group needs to use violence against the X interpretation, it has to justify it by developing meaning and injecting Z interpretation into the social representations to protect Y as it has been interpreted.

Hence, sameness is an illusion (see a similar argument, Browning and Joenniemi 2017) The Self appears *as if* it remains the same. Sameness implies change, and it is only sustained (as an illusion) via creating changes (Figure 2.8 illustrates this argument).

Figure 2.8 Sameness Is an Illusion



Empirically speaking, Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010*a*, 2014) studied gay Pakistani Muslims in Britain, and found that homosexual Muslims have tried to sustain the continuity principle of their collective identity [17] either by hyper-identifying with Islam; by sacrificing other identity principles such as self-consistency; or by expanding their belonging to all Eastern Asian people, not to Pakistanis. All of these strategies aimed at keeping self-continuity by making some changes in the identity (e.g., we are

[17] I.e., to assert that they are still Muslims despite the fact that they are homosexual, since for Muslims gayness is sinful.

Eastern Asians not Pakistanis (changing one in-group), or we are Muslim although sinful (scarifying the self-consistency)).

In sum, change is not the opposite of self-continuity. Self-continuity is one identity principle among other six; it is sustained only via change as well as the identity itself is endorsed only through change, even for those who decidedly seek keeping their identity as the same.

2.2.3.1.3 Threat to Identity. Change and threat to identity are two essentially correlated concepts in IPT. Threat facilitates (not causes) changes by triggering coping strategies.

Threat to identity happens when the social representation, within which individuals and groups act, hampers the achievement of one at least from the seven identity principles (Barnett and Breakwell 2001; Breakwell 2010). Threat emanates from risky events, such as civil wars or diseases, *only* when these risks challenge the meaning-systems that are held by individuals' (or groups') identities. Put differently, how people understand and represent risks cognitively is how much the risk threatens their identities by harming the identity principles (Barnett and Breakwell 2003; Breakwell 2010).

Civil wars, for example, may threaten some individuals' or groups' identity and enhance others', depending on how they perceive the civil war and the changes in meanings that are attached to it. Civil wars change the meanings and the social narratives as mentioned earlier. This change takes place in the social representation, i.e., some groups will inject the social representation with ideas, such as "war is a moral must," "this war is a revolutionary good war," while others will impart other ideas, such as "this war is a war against terrorists," "the enemy is an extent to historical religious enemies." Those whose identities are threatened and who cannot harmonize their meaning-systems to any of the dominant social representations will feel detached from their belongings (belonging to a group is an identity principle). Hence, they face an identity threat (Oren and Bar-Tal 2014). For example, someone may think "I do not believe that this war is a moral must," contrary to his in-group.

In order to deal with threat, people adopt coping strategies. These strategies vary a lot, but they all aim at protecting identity principles *as much as possible* since the identity principles can conflict with each other. We can count a number of these strategies: denying the existence of the threat; acquiring knowledge on the risk/threat; justifying the change in meaning-system and changing the belief-system itself; re-interpreting the Self to avoid contradictions; isolating the Self from the world; and changing the boundary of the group to change the threatening Other

(Barnett and Breakwell 2001; Breakwell 2010; Halperin et al. 2010; Jaspal and Cinnirella 2010*a*, 2012; Murtagh, Gatersleben, and Uzzell 2014).

People, at any rate, vacillate in their ability to respond to a threat between successfully adapting to the threat and tragically falling in a destroying trauma. À la Marcia Model, scholars (e.g., Jetten et al. 2015; Linville 1985) have contended that the more the Self is complex, the higher the ability is to adapt to threats. Self-complexity (developed by Linville (1985)) refers to having multiple concepts of the Self while all of them are in harmony. In other words, self-complexity is associated with a rich self-conceptualization; open to others; and able to encompass different roles. For example, identifying the Self as a teacher and mother is more complex than identifying it as only a mother. Self-complexity also refers to belonging to *different* in-groups without having contradictions in constructing a coherent identity. For example, being Muslim and British is more complex than being Muslim Arabic; and being Christian Arabic is more complex than being Christian German because Arabs and Muslims are two close groups (or say, categories), while British and Muslims are more distanced from each other (Dixon and Baumeister 1991; Jetten et al. 2015; Koch and Shepperd 2004; Linville 1985; Roccas and Brewer 2002; Slone and Roziner 2013).This understanding is similar to Marcia Model; foreclosure and diffusion statuses are correlated with less self-complexity and correlated to low well-being, while achievement and moratorium statuses are attached to more self-complexity and higher well-being.

To sum up Identity Process Theory, it merges individual (psycho-level) identity and collective identity, refusing the distinctions between the two. Identity is a hierarchical dynamic structure, its elements (values, goals, and beliefs) are arranged alongside the hierarchy according to their importance to the Self (either individual or collective). This hierarchy is immersed in social representation, which is a set of systemized ideas, images, and concepts that forms the comprehensive-device for people to understand the world. Into this social representation, individuals and groups inject their meaning-making systems; i.e., how to interpret events and understand the Self disposition in the world.[18]

As the Self and the Others are mutually engaged in continuously re-shaping the social representation, every individual or group seeks to maintain a high level of the identity principles. These seven principles constitute a "scale" telling us to which

[18] At this point it is critical to clarify the following point. This thesis studies identity change at the individual level at the first place. In this vein, collective identity is understood as identity of a group as it is represented in the group's official documents, official and semi-official speeches, collective ceremonies, and the collective rhetoric generally. However, the individual identity includes the collective elements of the group's identity *as they are perceived by* the individual. The researcher, then, does not concern about the "real" or objective collective identity since s/he studies the identity at the individual level. How an individual perceives such a collective identity is what matters.

extent someone (a group) is successful in maintaining a strong identity and endorsing a higher level of well-being or not. However, this "scale" is dynamic because the seven principles could contradict each other as someone (a group) constructs his/her (its) identity. These seven principles also form the baseline for coping strategies that are used by someone (a group) to adapt to a threat (e.g., civil war).

Change always happens as long as we sustain and endorse our identities (identity is a function of change). Change is not something inflicts the identity, but an inherent nature of it. Change, in this vein, happens as (1) the social representation is injected with new images and concepts; and/or (2) the Self accommodates new elements into its hierarchy or changes the importance of some elements, silencing or priming them. Change is not the opposite of self-continuity; the opposite of self-continuity is self-discontinuity not change.

Finally, I will present a brief of what have been mentioned in this section on identity at the individual, collective, and the intersecting levels (IPT).

Identity conceptualized either as individual (psycho-) identity, as collective identity, or as merged between the two (IPT) is endorsed and constructed only through change. Change is inherent to identity, not exogenous to it.

Individuals or groups continuously re-construct their identities as being guided by seven identity principles: self-continuity, self-consistency, self-efficacy, distinctiveness, belonging to a group and closeness to others, purpose-in-life, and self-esteem. Every identity construction fulfils these seven principles. When one of these principles is harmed, the identity is threatened.

Two orientations are discerned as individuals or groups endorse their identities. The first is openness; i.e., seeking to explore more possible values and meanings to be incorporated into the identity. The second is closeness; namely, refusing new possible meanings or values. The first orientation is called progressive statuses (achievement and moratorium) at the psycho-level analysis, while the latter is called regressive statuses (foreclosure and diffusion). Progressive statuses – apparently from the name – are associated with high levels of well-being, or a higher ability to achieve the seven identity principles. Whereas the regressive statuses are associated with a lower ability to achieve the seven principles.

In parallel, self-complexity is a another useful concept referring to a Self that integrates various belongings and diverse self-conceptualizations. Put differently, progressive statuses and high self-complexity, on the one hand; and regressive statuses and low self-complexity, on the other hand, are identical. Self-complexity, then, is associated with higher well-being and better resilience to threats. However, self-

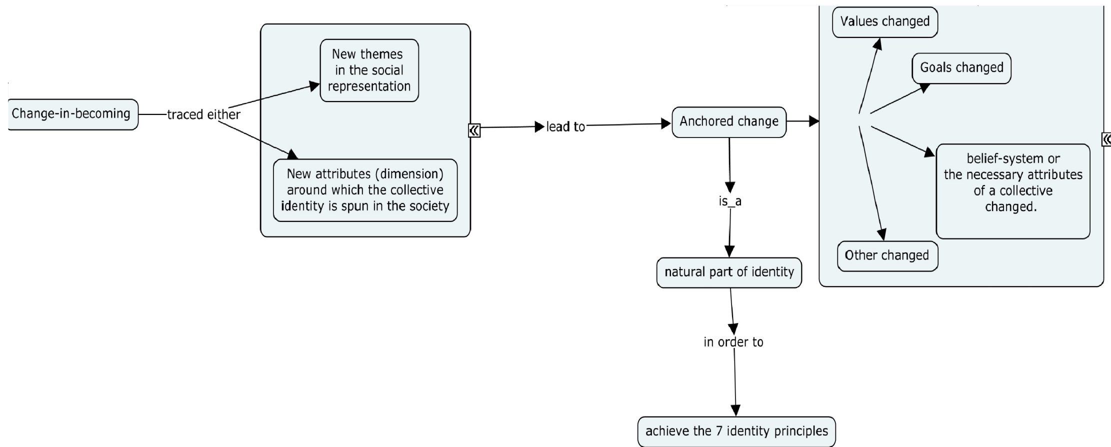
complexity adds belonging to groups to its definition, while progressive/regressive statuses do not (because progressive/regressive statuses were designed to study psycho-identity). As the thesis processes, I will adopt self-complexity terms instead of progressive/regressive statuses, defining it as: an ability of collective and individual Self to enrich itself by opening to different Others and accommodating new identity elements (values, goals, and beliefs).

Drawing on this understanding, change is observed in identity in one or more of the following elements. First, New values are adopted (or old values are omitted) at idiosyncratic and/or collective level. Values, in this context, refer to what is good and what is bad emotions, deeds, or ideas. Second, goals which individual or group aims at achieving in the future have been shifted. Goals are directly linked to purpose-in-life; hence, to the meaning someone or a group holds. Third, beliefs-system is adjusted; i.e., what we had once believed in to be a transcendental truth (e.g., a religion) or absolute truth (e.g., an ideology) is adjusted in a way or another (Tetlock and Oppenheimer 2008). In terms of collective identity, belief-system includes the necessary attributes of the collective;it refers to the content of the collective. Fourth, the Other is either perceived in a different way or the individual/group defines a new Other. In terms of the collective identity, a different Other means changing the boundary of the identity. Change is anchored or becomes easily observable in these four elements (values, goals, meaning-system, and Othering). In this regard, it is worthy to reassert that both orientations, openness and closeness or high or low level of self-complexity (*not only openness*), can equally lead to changes in – at least – one of these elements.

However, change-in-becoming (*before* it is observed and anchored in these four elements) is also observable and traceable. We can trace change-in-becoming by looking for new themes that are injected in the social representation milieu, such as media discussion and elites' speeches as well as daily conversations. Then we can search for what elements are silenced and what are primed by individuals or groups.

Tracing changes in identity is useful, I argue, to study changes during a civil war because any change in identity means that the individual or the group has accommodated this change into the Self; hence, this change cannot be superficial. I will call these changes during civil war which are traced in identity *sedimented* changes to distinguish them from superficial changes that evaporate immediately as their conditions disappear during or after the war. Figure 2.9 illustrates the concepts related to identity's changes.

Figure 2.9 Change in Identity



2.3 Ontological Security

Ontological security is a theoretical framework studying the relationships between security and identity (Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017*a*), or the relationship between security and a being or self, for those who distinguish identity from self (Browning and Joenniemi 2017; Gustafsson and Krickel-Choi 2020).[19] Ontological security has firstly been developed by Laing as a concept in psychoanalysis theory, then it was deployed later by Giddens in the socio-psychology field (Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017*a*). Political and IR scholars have also applied the ontological security concept in their studies to probe into individuals, groups/societies, or states' behaviors.

This framework will help us link the security theme and identity change during civil war. In what follows, I will elaborate on how ubiquitously ontological security has been depicted in the literature, then I will show how some scholars have challenged this ubiquitous, mainstream understanding and how they have criticized it. Finally, I will set forth Giddens's account of ontological security, and I dwell on certain ontological security's scholarship to suggest a theoretical model of ontological security by incorporating what was depicted above about change in identity and the literature on ontological security in one model.

[19] I will discuss the difference between identity and Self in relation to ontological security below. For now, I will use identity only as the object of ontological security because it is ubiquitous in the literature.

2.3.1 Mainstream Ontological Security Model

In order to build a comprehensive conceptual picture of ontological security as it has been ubiquitously depicted in the literature, I will extract the common, agreed points among scholars to build this picture. Although, these scholars emphasize different angles in their study of ontological security, they have a consensus on main points of ontological security. I will call this "extracted" theoretical model or picture the mainstream ontological security model.[20]

The mainstream model of ontological security is constructed by systemizing five concepts together as they appear in multiple studies (Browning 2018; Kinnvall 2004; Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017*a*,*b*; Mitzen 2018*a*; Rossdale 2015; Rumelili 2014*a*,*b*, 2018; Steele 2005). The first concept is *being* of an individual, group, or state such that it should be genuine (its values emanate from inside), real (schizophrenia is the extreme antipode of being real), autonomous (or free), and different from others (unique). When a being fails to achieve these characteristics, it becomes ontologically insecure; it becomes fragmented, anxious, or paralyzed. Ontological security in its fundamental configuration is the security of being, therefore. This first concept was, indeed, introduced by Laing in his book, *The Divided Self*, 1964, as the cornerstone of ontological security. For Laing, an ontologically secure individual is "a real, alive, whole" person, while an ontologically insecure individual feels that s/he is "dead more than alive" and only "precariously" different from the outer world (Laing 2010).

Everyday routine is the second concept. It refers to habitual practices that are exercised at the everyday level. Routine establishes a trusted world around *beings*; everything is repeatable, and nothing unexpected would happen. The future is guaranteed, and things that we cannot observe right now and right here are not dangerous, ambiguous, or surprising because they are embedded in the whole routines (e.g., an ordinary person does not worry about what happens behind his/her boss office's walls since everything flows well, every day, as usual). Routine resembles a machine that thinks on behalf of us; that is, we do not need to think of everything all the time. Obviously, ruptures within a routine causes ontological *in*security.

The third concept is *meaningfulness*. Meaningfulness refers to acquiring and producing meanings in life; deeds, behaviors, and social norms are justified by serving meanings of *beings*. Meaningfulness implies that a meaning-making system of a be-

[20]This literature review I have done is not systematic in the most rigorous term. Therefore, the mainstream model of ontological security may be understood as something I construct out of these articles and books I have analyzed more than as an "objective" review that rests on clear and rigorous methodology.

ing is active and able to provide a satisfying interpretation of events and objects. Losing meaningfulness leads beings to endorse moral emptiness, making them ontologically insecure. In this case, an answer on the question *why* in life becomes obscure and unpersuasive: Why should I go to pray? Why should I read books? Save money? They all become questions without clear answers.

The fourth concept is the *Other* and *the objective world*. Beings should not be isolated from the different Other or from the social objective world. Indeed, a being maintains its genuineness, reality, and all other ingredients of ontological security only by living in and weaving itself with others in the social world. Otherwise, a being is isolated and insecure ontologically. Someone cannot experience his/her uniqueness and cannot express him/herself without an existence of the Other. Moreover, a being could be ashamed or contemned by others, which shakes up its ontological security. Ergo, a being has not only to be engaged in the surrounding objective world, but also it has to *well* manage its interaction with this world.

The final concept is the being's identity, which should be *continuous-consistent* in the case of ontological security. Consistency within a being's meaning-making system and continuity of a being's self-conceptualization from the past to the future are two crucial elements that every being seeks to maintain. If an individual or group's identity loses continuity over time or includes in-coherent elements in its self-description, it becomes ontologically insecure.

To put these concepts together, someone may write: ontological security is a concept referring to a genuine, real being[21] who is saturated with meaningfulness; who interacts with Others and acts in the social world through a repeatable daily routine in order to (and by) keep(ing) its identity continuous and consistent over time and in different contexts.

It is worthy to note that some scholars have asserted that ontological security is neither a fixed nor an absolute status, rather it is *relatively* endorsed and always not fully achieved. Ontological security is precarious in its nature (Rossdale 2015; Rumelili 2014*b*). Precariousness means that all beings cannot absolutely and fully fulfil their ideal desired routines; their meaningfulness; perfect relationships and interactions with Others and the social world; and their continuous and consistent identities.

Two critical points should be dusted before we progress. The first is the critical differentiation between a "being" and its identity; a being is not reduced to its identity

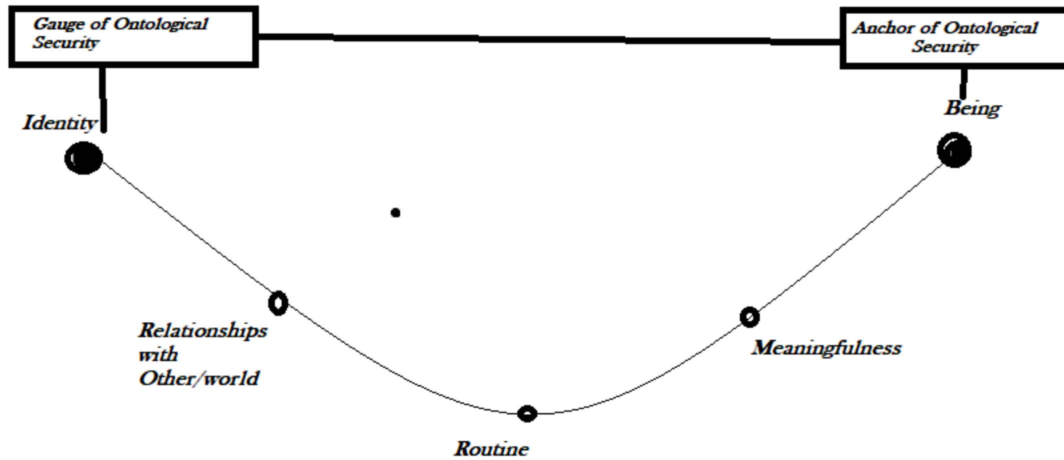
[21] This reality of a being is very essential in Laing's definition of ontological security, although it does not *explicitly* appear in some studies.

in the light of ontological security. Indeed, ontological security can be defined more precisely as "security of being" more than of identity,[22] although identity appears as *the* object of ontological security in some studies (e.g., Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017*a*). Both identity and ontological security are *qualities of* a being, while being is the object anchoring both of them. Ontological security adheres to a being not to an identity; ergo, writing ontological security *of identity* lacks accuracy. Practically, we study the ontological security of *individual*, not of his/her identity. To elucidate more precisely the differences between self, identity, and being, I will recall what mentioned before when I was discussing identity. Every person (or, to some extent, social entity) has a self, but does not necessarily an identity because identity is an auto-reflection on the own self. If an individual does not reflect or is not aware of his/her own self, then s/he lacks identity. Hence, Self with a capital "S" refers to being aware of the self; i.e., to identity. Being, on the other hand, is what "anchors" both identity and self (or the Self and self). Being, then, is the base of identity (that is why we write an identity of a being).

The source of conflating being and identity, by attaching ontological security equivalently to both of them, is that only through identity we can measure or observe the state of ontological security. We recognize time through clocks, watches, or the movement of sun every day; however, time is measured by these observations and tools, and it is not someone's wrist watch or the sun's movement. Time, in other words, is not anchored in my wrist watch, but it is measured by it (this illustration is borrowed from Radovan 2011). Similarly, to reassert, ontological security is anchored and exists in a "being" and only measured – according to the mainstream conceptualization – by identity (see Figure 2.10). Let, for example, a being's relationships with Others radically change. If and only if this change wrecked the continuity or consistency of this being's identity, we can say that the ontological security of this being has deteriorated. The change in the relationship with Others and with the social world *per se* does not impact the ontological security state; we observe this impact *only if it unfolds via identity.* Hence, it may have no effect if the being does not feel it, for example. The same is to be said for the routine and meaningfulness conceptual ingredients.

[22]Otherwise, we do not need the concept of ontological security; IPT or other theories that are concerned about psychological security are sufficient.

Figure 2.10 Ontological Security: Mainstream



The second point to be asserted is that ontological security is *expressive* in its nature (Rossdale 2015; Rumelili 2018). Patently, if meaningfulness, continuity, and consistency of an identity are not narrated, they are not captured either by the being (or the Self) or by researchers. I will discuss narrative more extensively in the Methodology Section. For now, it is important to bear in mind that without narrative, we cannot study ontological security.

In what follows, I will present how the literature on ontological security (the mainstream model) has demarcated the ontological security seeking behaviors that are adopted by entities (especially individuals) in order to sustain or obtain ontologically secure states.

2.3.1.1 Ontological Security Seeking Behaviors

Ontological security is *continuously* sought by individuals, groups, or states (because it is precarious as said above), especially when a threat (*cf.* Threat to Identity) or a critical situation (such as a civil war) emerges menacing continuity or consistency of the identity. A critical situation is a threatening change that interrupts or shakes up one of the ontological security conceptual components (daily routines, meaningfulness, relationships with Others and the social world) causing discontinuity or

inconsistency in the identity of the being under concern. Accordingly, ontological *in*security ensues.

In order to restore the state to ontological security, after a critical situation, ontological security seeking behaviors are ignited. All these behaviors aim at achieving one goal: keeping continuity and consistency of the threatened being's identity, which implies keeping the routine, the meaning-making system, and the relations with others and the world *stable* and *unchangeable* (Bloom 2013; Kinnvall 2004; Kinnvall and Mitzen 2018; Lupovici 2014*b*; Mitzen 2018*a*; Rumelili 2014*a*; Vieira 2018). Simply put, the only goal is countering the change, the critical situation, or the menacing interrupting events.

Two main behaviors, in this vein, are addressed in the relative literature: keeping the threat unthinkable, and simplifying the Self. Keeping threatening ideas (or even facts) out of mind (out of perception) means that people do not think of what interrupts their self-continuity or consistency (Mitzen 2018*a*). In this line, people tend to freeze their core meaning-system, especially religious beliefs, taboos, and ideologies (Hameiri et al. 2018; Lodewijkx, Kersten, and Van Zomeren 2008; Tetlock and Oppenheimer 2008; Tetlock et al. 2000). This behavior is not conducted by isolating the Self from Others and from the outer social world (because isolation triggers ontological insecurity since being in the world is a main ingredient of ontological security), but by strengthening the Self-identification with the in-group and by blocking the "annoying" information that does not support the Self meaning-system (Bar-Tal 2017; Bar-Tal, Oren, and Nets-Zehngut 2014; Nasie et al. 2014; Shahar et al. 2018). This type of behavior makes the threat as if it had not happened. Needless to say that this behavior is not always applicable. In the case of a radical change in the daily routine, ignoring behaviors cannot work. Nevertheless, resisting the routine's change or thinking of this change as "temporal" is a way to make the threat unthinkable as much as possible.

The second behavior is simplifying the Self (Kinnvall and Mitzen 2018); a simple self with few coherent concepts and collective belongings is easier to be kept continuous and consistent because this Self does not deal with many various ideas and beliefs. Securitizing the Other is one way to keep the Self simple. Securitizing the Other is achieved by picturing it as an enemy not merely as a stranger. In consequences, this enmity prevents the Self from any degree of "identifying" with the Other and reduces the relationship to one dimension: The Other should be always away there, while "we" (the Self) are here, and no connection with this Other but (physical or cultural) violence (Kinnvall 2004; Rumelili 2014*a*, 2018).[23]

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[23]There are many other behaviors, such as creating an ambiguous political environment that defers clarifying

After presenting the mainstream model of ontological security, I will now present the critiques that some scholars have projected against this model. Discussing these critiques will lead us, then, to discuss Giddens's conceptualization of ontological security and how other ontological security scholars have responded to these critiques.

2.3.2 Critiques of the Mainstream Ontological Security

Some scholars have criticized the ontological security framework, contending that it is a *negative* security type (e.g., Roe 2008). Negative security refers to be free *from* fear and wants; to keep dignity protected *from* persecution and repression. By contrast, *positive* security refers to be free *to* achieve "your" potential; and to be *able to* actualize prosperity and the desired future. Ontological security is about keeping the Self (identity) continuous and consistent; i.e., protecting it *from* unexpected changes. Hence, ontological security is negative security. Negative security is generally sustained by keeping clear-cut boundaries between the Self and the Other, between friends and enemies (because by doing so, the Self stays protected from change, which is not available due to thick boundaries against the Other).[24] Positive security, however, is about celebrating *opacity* of the Self. This type of security *celebrates* threats to and some contradictions in Self because Self – in its healthy state – is not clear like as a fixed mirror, but it is opaque and open to probabilities like as a softly moving surface of water (Giles and Vintimilla 2007; Roe 2008; Shani 2017). The positive security account is in line with other psychological and socio-psychological accounts, which assert that self-complexity has a higher level of well-being and leads to more resilience than simple self does.

Nevertheless, many ontological security scholars are aware of its negative security aspect. Mitzen (2018*a*,*b*) demarcates the difference between a *pathological* track of ontological security seeking behaviors and a *healthy* track. Enclosing the Self upon its simple, unthinkable realm is an isolation which does not corroborate an ontological security state in the long term; it is a pathological track of seeking ontological security. On the other hand, discussing threatening ideas and opening the Self to the Other – not as an enemy, but as a different identity-project — form a behavior that carves out the healthy track. In this vein, Rumelili (2018), and

the relation with the previous enemy-Other, keeping the relation with it as it was: simply an enmity not a new peaceful relation (Lupovici 2014*b*).

[24]The previous section on the ontological security seeking behaviors denotes how the mainstream of ontological security framework is negative security.

Rumelili and Çelik (2017) similarly argue that admitting the validity of different Other's narratives by the Self does not menace the Self ontological security in the long term, rather accepting the Other's narrative establishes a base for a long-term peaceful and secure relationship. Ergo, a stable state of ontological security ensues.

The distance between pathological/negative and healthy/positive (ontological) securities is marked by incompatibility more than discrepancy. A path or a mechanism that bridges these two types of security is addressed very well in the literature. For example, I conclude from Rumelili (2014*b*) that what she calls *peace anxiety* is a channel transforming a state of negative ontological security to positive one: Peace anxiety stirs up "temporarily" ontological insecurity within the Self because it *changes* the old meaning-system within the Self to a new meaning that can establish a positive/healthy ontological security. Mainly, this happens by changing the relationships with the enemy-Other, and accepting its own narrative even when this narrative contradicts the Self's narrative (i.e., opening the Self to the different Other). Thus, having a positive ontological security passes through anxieties or ontological insecure statuses. Put differently, ontological security that is based on enclosing on the Self and securitizing the Other as behaviors to resist any change in the Self is superficial security or short-term security. On the contrary, accepting the Other and opening the Self to unfamiliar ideas are behaviors that establish deep security or long-term security.

In spite of this clarification on the difference between the positive/healthy and the negative/pathological ontological security in the literature (of the mainstream ontological security), the tenet of *non-change*, stability in self-conception is still the necessary condition for ontological security. In other words, either in the negative or positive copies of ontological security and its seeking behaviors, a being is ontologically secure if and only if its identity (as narrated) is continuous from the past through the present towards the future. Therefore, the mainstream model of ontological security can be labeled as fixation-based ontological security.

This note will bring us to another critique against the mainstream ontological security: stability, or non-change, of the identity of a being as the omnipresent criterion of ontological security is misleading. Flockhart (2016) amply argues that an individual (as a being having an agency and an identity, mutually constructive) can deliberately commence a change-making action in order to enhance his/her ontological security. S/he embarks on such a change in order to change the circumstances in a way that enhances his/her self-esteem. Hence, change is a way of obtaining ontological security, contrary to what the mainstream ontological security argues. However, for Flockhart (2016), this change is launched only by agency, not identity;

i.e., identity of a being (e.g., individual) struggles to stay stable and non-changeable in order to keep the ontolgoically secure state.[25] Browning and Joenniemi (2017) argue similarly that conceptualizing ontological security as a stability in identity is misleading; that is, every being (e.g., individual) is "thrown into the world" (p.10) and the world is constantly changing. Therefore, they argue that ontological security should be understood as both: stability and ability to adapt to changes. Gustafsson and Krickel-Choi (2020) also defend the idea of change; some normal anxiety (resulted from change) is necessary for creativity and it does not threat ontological security.

In sum, change is not seen as the antipode of ontological security for some scholar, rather beings can launch a change in order to destabilize the status quo and enhance or obtain ontological security. However, a question arises: what is the criterion that a being seeks to meet as s/he (it) embarks on a change? Why will an individual make a change in his/her routine or identity?

Flockhart (2016) answers such a question by simply saying that an individual will (or has to) be engaged in a change-making action in order to enhance his/her self-esteem, which will result in a "better" ontological security state if the status quo does not provide him/her with high levels of self-esteem. Rumelili (2014*b*) and Browning and Joenniemi (2017) would argue that a being (group or individual) will be engaged in a change-making behavior in order to have a peaceful relationship with the Other, even if this change implies a change in the self-identity. An individual or a group will do so, simply, because a peaceful relation is ethically or normatively better (Browning and Joenniemi 2017) than an antagonistic one even if that requires a "painful" change in identity.

This "ethical" or "normative" explanation of why a friendly stable relation with Others is better than an antagonistic stable relation in terms of ontological security borrows what is positive and negative ethically from outside the conceptual realm of ontological security, from the common sense (peace is better than enmity). I argue that we need to find a mechanism or a conceptual explanation that is incorporated into our conceptualization of ontological security in order to explain why a peaceful stable relation is better for ontological security than an antagonistic stable relation. Moreover, do people seek ontological security in order to keep their self-esteem high as Flockhart (2016) states? If it is so, then why do we need the concept of ontological security since identity theories can provide us with enough conceptual

[25] We see that Flockhart's argument is very close to Rumelili's idea of Peace Anxiety as I interpret it in this thesis, but Flockhart stresses on change, more than Rumelili does, as a way to enhance ontological security. In other words, for Rumelili, ontological security can be transformed from a negative security to a positive security *in spite of* the necessary change, while Flockhart argues change is the way of creating ontological security (not in spite of it).

tools to study actions or identity changes in terms of self-esteem. Again, I argue that understanding self-esteem as the criterion of seeking ontological security is borrowed from psychology mainly, and it is not well incorporated into the ontological security framework (see the five basic concepts that form the mainstream ontological security).

In sum, two main critiques have been presented against the mainstream ontological security as it is: (1) a negative type of security, and (2) based on stability and fixation of identity. Many scholars have responded to the former by arguing that ontological security can be endorsed by making changes in order to open the Self to Others, to new ideas, and to alter the status quo. On the other hand, others have responded to the latter by arguing that change is a part or an ingredient of ontological security state and its seeking behaviors; individuals, for example, change their routine in order to enhance their state of ontological security. This argument shakes up – to some extent – the mainstream model of ontological security by "de-emphasizing" the importance of stable/continuous identity of a being as the cornerstone of ontological security.

In what follows, I will present how Giddens conceptualizes ontological security because his works (1984 and 1990) have diffused ontological security in sociology and socio-psychology, and later in IR and political science.

2.3.3 Giddens's Ontological Security

The ontological security concept is taken from Anthony Giddens' writings. Giddens has introduced this concept in two important books: *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1991) and *Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (1989 [1984]). Giddens himself borrows this concept from the psychologist Laing, but he develops it and incorporates it into his theory, Structuration Theory. In what follows, I will sketch out Giddens's account, then I will show how it slightly, yet importantly, deviates from the mainstream conceptualization of ontological security as mentioned above.

Before probing into ontological security in Giddens's account, presenting how he understands societies is crucial because he has developed the ontological security concept by weaving it within society, roughly speaking.

Society is a whole *social system* composed of overlapping structures. The structure concept is the cornerstone in Giddens's understanding of social system. Every

structure is a set of rules: how to act; what to do in specific contexts; what the expected behavior from you is; and the like. Rules, in other words, are procedures in the life, which guide people's behaviors in their everyday life, from their private places to public places. Structure is also composed of *resources*. Resources refer to: (1) human resources (or capital) that manifest through managing people's skills and knowledge in a society (employees in a factory, for example) and through dividing labors across different sectors, such as health and military sectors; and (2) material resources, such as natural resources. Rules and resources function together, giving a structure its properties. These properties can be grouped into: (1) significance, referring to cultural meanings, norms, and symbols; (2) power, referring to ability of managing and seizing both the human and material resources; and (3) legitimacy, alluding to a formal and informal punitive authority that keeps norms, meanings, and resources' control unchallenged (Baber 1991; Giddens 1989; Kim 2004; Stones 2001). To recall, we have seen that a civil war changes structures; namely, it changes these properties by changing the rules and/or the resources and their holders.

Any social system is also constituted by its individuals; i.e., agents. Agency is another basic concept beside structure in Giddens's account. An agent is an *active* individual; an agent is an actor and the two terms are totally exchangeable. Agency is founded on the base of *reflexivity* that an agent exercises to know and understand him/herself, others, and the outside world. Every agent, then, is aware of him/herself. S/he is able to discursively express what and why s/he does in a way that imbues his/her life with meaningfulness; i.e., s/he consciously constitutes and pictures his/her identity and actions (Giddens 1989). [26] The other ingredient of agency is *capability*. An agent is always able to "act otherwise" and s/he "ceases to be such [agent] if he or she loses the capacity to 'make a difference' " (Giddens 1989, 14).

Both agency and structure are inextricable; agents act only within structures, and out of structure there is no agency[27] (Giddens 1989, 1991). This interaction or duality of agency-structure happens through time and space. Our lives are organized as a set of time-space slices: dinner at home, working time at a factory, hanging out with friends in streets, watching films in cinema halls are all different time-space slices, through which an agency is endorsed within structures. Patently, the structure's properties of having a dinner with family is different from working in a factory (in terms of meanings/significance, powerful relations, and legitimacy). Ontological security in Giddens's account lends on the concept of time-space, which is formu-

[26]This reflexivity, however, does not eliminate the unconscious motives Akram (2013).

[27]This is the fundamental point of Giddens's Structuration Theory

lated as the material milieu in which the agency-structure interaction manifests as I will explain now (Bates 2006; Bertilsson 1984; Giddens 1989, 1991; Southerton 2013; Storper 1985).

Ontological security is a *protective cocoon* within which every secure agent exerts his/her identity, meaning-system, capability, power, reflexivity, and his/her interactions with structures. Protective cocoon, in other words, is nothing more than the *potential* time-space in which an agent acts, but this time-space must be saturated with trust and feeling of being at home: No threat is expected from the outside world, and everything that can happen is totally treatable, exactly because the protective cocoon (potential time-space) is formed in a way that turns threatening or critical situations into absorbable elements into the meaning-system and the everyday routine of the agent. It is the protective cocoon, not only the strong ego, that sustains the ontological security; i.e., agency, structures, and time-space together are responsible to sustain the ontological security state (Giddens 1989, 1991). This point is what distinguishes the ontological security framework from identity theories discussed above, which focus on the agent/identity ingredient ignoring the structure's and the time-space's ingredients (when threat is the topic under discussion).

By absorbing the outside world into the meaning-system of an agent, protective cocoon functions to keep the meaning-system, the everyday routine, and the agent's identity *unchangeable, stable, continuous, and consistent*. Thus, an agent trusts the world. Up to this point, Giddens's account is almost congruent with the mainstream ontological security's scholars, although those scholars do not pay enough attention to the capability of agents. An agent is ontologically secure as s/he is active, protected from anxiety, and almost everything around is answerable.

However, Giddens makes a delicate elaboration on ontological security, which is not covered enough in the mainstream literature. According to him, ontological security is a quality that oscillates between two extreme poles of ontological *in*security. The first pole is having a rigid meaning-system (or identity) that does not change at all, while the second pole is having an amorphous meaning-system (or shapeless identity) that fits into any context (Giddens 1991). Giddens (1989, 125) calls these two extreme insecure poles front region and back region. Front region refers to time-space in which an agent can express him/herself publicly, while back region refers to time-space in which an agent reflects on his/her inner realm and does not expose him/herself to others. Ontological security oscillates between these two regions; someone should neither project him/herself fully to the public and lose his/her identity's boundary (extreme front region), nor does engulf on his/her "omnipresent" self and become isolated and agent-less or active-less (extreme back region).

We can see that in-between these two poles or regions, *change* permanently stands out contrary to what Giddens himself argues in defining ontological security. That is, in the extreme front region the Self changes with every context and with every contact; thus, there is no meaning to talk about change. Differently put, there is no referential point to which we can compare a changed point. By contrast, in the extreme back region, no change will happen at all, such that the Self is totally isolated, therefore, we also do not need to speak of change. Change does not happen in these extreme two regions, or it has no meaning in these regions. As a result, if change does not happen, then the Self (or the being more precisely) is either at its extreme front or back region. But, we know that the telos of ontological security and the very fundamental base of it is stability, *no-change*; hence, these two extreme regions must – according to the definition of ontological security – bestow the agent with ontological security. Giddens says that ontological security is only in-between these two region, where there is a valid room for "some" change. Ergo, a striking contradiction or – at least – inconsistency emerges. [28] This ambiguity in Giddens's account is aimed to be demystified in the next section (Ontological Security: Adjusted Model).

We need to delve deeper and more comprehensive in change. Change is an inherent ingredient of agency and structure. Structures overlap, so: (1) they "borrow" meanings (the significant property of structure) from each other; (2) power could be shaken up because of exchanging resources between structures (e.g., replacing employees) or because of exhausting resources; and (3) legitimacy can be challenged if an authority from a different structure gains admission from agents instead of their original structure's authority (Bertilsson 1984; Giddens 1989; Sewell Jr 1992). Agents, on the other hand, inherently change the meaning of rules (the structure's ingredient) every time they speak on these rules. Furthermore, they re-reinterpret the rules (and implicitly the sources of meanings/significance) at the base of everyday routine, so these interpretations are apt to change (Dixon 2011; Giddens 1989; Leydesdorff 2010; Storper 1985). The change of agents is not surprising since identity and agency of an agent (individual) are entangled(e.g., Flockhart 2016) and since change is a "natural" quality of identity.

In sum, change is natural and adherent to agency-structure, which is in congruence with what was depicted in this thesis before: Change is a natural, inherent quality of identity (*cf.* Identity Process Theory). Therefore, any act or behavior that aims at ceasing or resisting a change is an act of change[29] (*cf.* the critique against same-

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[28]Find another critique against Giddens by Bates (2006).

[29]Hence, speaking on change as something unavoidable is less accurate than speaking on change as a natural

ness as a conceptualization of continuity). I argue that ontological security seeking behaviors, which are drawn on *non-change and stability*, are acts of ontological insecurity. Someone (or a group, as Giddens's account is also applicable for groups which interact into a structure (e.g., Wendt 1987).) by resisting changes behaves in a way that causes a change in his/her identity and meaning-system, but without being aware of it. Not being aware in this context means that agency is fading because awareness/reflexivity is one of the basic ingredients of agency.

Let us now discuss what ontological security is based on when stability is ruled out as its fundamental base.

2.3.4 Ontological Security: Adjusted Model

The "perils" in the mainstream ontological security framework as presented above emanate – I argue – from what follows. First, change is prevalently incorporated into the ontological security framework as a quality that an entity (agent/individual or group) has to dampen it. Change, thus, is seen as the opposite of self-continuity, the identity principle, and (maybe) of consistency, accordingly. However, this thesis seeks to show that change is not an opposite to any identity principle (e.g., self-continuity). Change is a quality of identity (as I tried to prove when discussed the IPT), and a quality of structure-agency social system as Giddens himself asserts.

Second, continuity, consistency, and control (or in Giddens's words, the capability of agent to make a difference) are only three explicit identity principles (out of seven principles) which score high when someone is ontologically secure. Nevertheless, the other four principles are ignored in ontological security studies, while all these principles are associated with ontological security as they guide the individual to achieve a higher level of well-being (self-esteem, purpose-in-life, belonging, and self-distinctiveness) as widely discussed earlier. Hence, there is no reason to omit four principles, leaving only three in "operationalizing" or conceptualizing ontological security. However, ontological security scholarship does not negate or explicitly ignore these four remaining principles, but it does not explicitly focus on them as it does on the first three (self-continuity, self-consistency, and self-efficacy or control over life). We need to bring all these seven principles into the fore and to focus also on their *inner* dynamics and correlations as a guidance for what makes someone secure.

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quality of identity, agency, and structure.

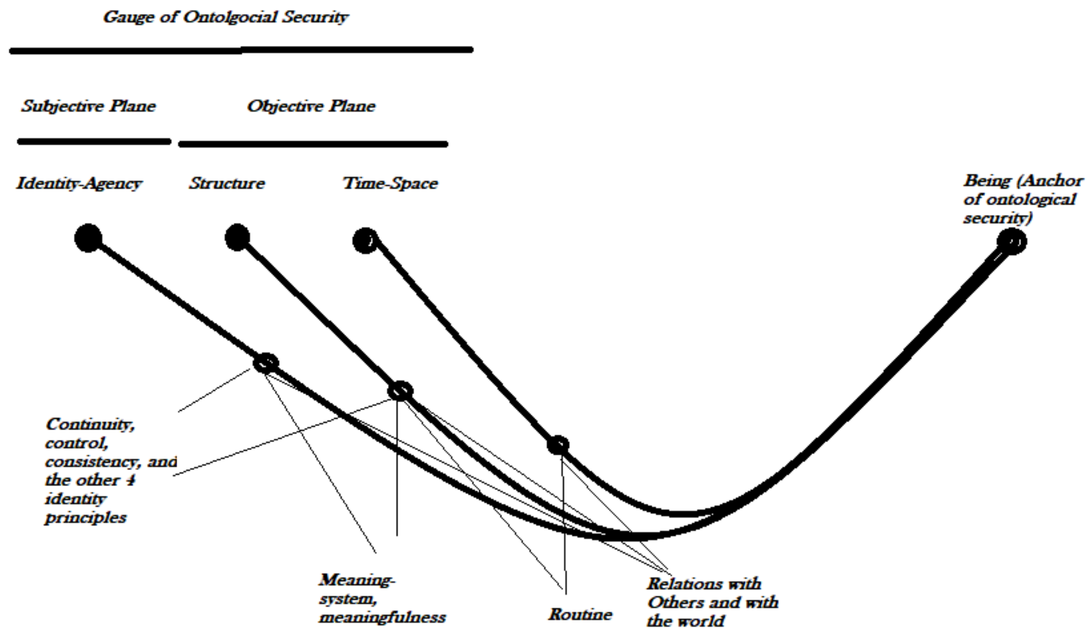
Third, the mainstream ontological security is based on an identity-agency[30] (of an individual or a group) alone, while *three* systemized ingredients of a social system foster ontological security as clearly depicted by Giddens: agency-identity; structures; and time-space. It is true that we mainly measure or observe ontological security in the identity (agency) zone, but this means that identity fosters the *indicators* of ontological security not the ontological security itself. Measuring the temperature of a patient from his/her forehead tells us about the degree of the temperature, but does not tell us the whole quality and the lurking mechanism of this temperature.

If we confine ontological security to the zone of identity (agency), we limit it to a subjective plane, while expanding it to the zones of structure and time-space makes it lie at both objective and subjective planes (for a similar argument see, Flockhart 2016).

To clarify the argument up to this point, I will briefly put the its pieces together. The mainstream scholarship anchors ontological security in a *being* (individual, group, or state), and gauges (or observes) it by *identity* in terms of being consistent and continuous (Figure 2.10). Between these two pillars (the anchor and the gauge), three ingredients contribute — essentially -– to establishing the ontological security concept: routine; relations with Others and with the social world; and meaningfulness. Giddens's ontological security, however, slightly differs from the mainstream. For Giddens, not agency–identity alone but also structure and time-space are what form the "gauge" or the observable pillars of ontological security. In other words, ontological security does not only manifest through the identity–agency of a *being* but also through the structure and the time-space, in which this being acts and exits, because at least these three ingredients are inextricable and not reducible to each other. Figure 2.11 illustrates ontological security as I interpret it from Giddens, and I add to it the seven identity principles.

[30] Identity and agency – of course – are not identical concepts; however, they are inherently interwoven. In Giddens's account, it is difficult to split identity from agency: An individual acts in a way that fits his/her meaning-system (the significance dimension of structure); *viz.*, s/he acts in congruence with his/her identity, otherwise s/he is agentless. Someone may imagine a slave or a prisoner. S/he cannot develop and sustain a moral realm of his/her inner Self, neither can s/he develop an authentic meaning-system of his/herself since s/he is enforced to do what s/he cannot change and to reflect on what s/he does not choose or believe in. What we do, in other words, is directly reflected in what we believe that "we are" and vice versa (Juen 2000; Tappan 2000). In this regards, Nelson and Lindemann (2001) explicitly conflate identity and agency as two dimensions that are inextricable and interactive.

Figure 2.11 Ontological Security: Giddens's Account



Ontological security, in the mainstream scholarship, is limited to the subjective plane, while it belongs to both the subjective and objective planes in Giddens's account (Figure 2.11). Hence, in order to know whether a *being* (usually an individual in Giddens's account) is ontologically secure or not, we need to check both planes not only the subjective one. For example, let an agent X experience an abruptly event that will harshly distort her daily routine. In the mainstream ontological security, we check whether X's identity is still continuous and consistent or not. If X almost preserves her identity continuous and consistent, then the abrupt change in the routine does not matter. While in Giddens's account, as I demarcated it, we check X identity–agency, the structure, and the time-space. The time-space that X has got used to act within has changed after the abrupt event; thus, X does not live anymore in her protective cocoon, and accordingly, her ontological security is dismantled until she creates a new routine. It is *sufficient*,[31] then, for X to be ontologically *in*secure if her time-space is distorted (or the structure is changed) in Giddens's account. By contrast, in the mainstream ontological security, a change of the routine per se is not sufficient for X to be ontologically insecure (a change in identity that distorts its continuity is required).

The mainstream and Giddens's ontological security are not contradicted, and the differences between them are only nuanced, yet important. Someone may argue what if X indeed did not suffer any inconsistency or discontinuity in her identity

[31] It is a sufficient but not a necessary condition, logically speaking.

even if a savage abruption hit her routine (time-space), does Giddens's account still consider X as ontologically insecure? The answer is yes, although such a case cannot happen because identity–agency, structure, and time-space are essentially entangled in Giddens's conceptual realm. At any rate, let it happen. Why will X be insecure if her identity is stable and only her routine is distorted? Because X will be unable to predict what will happen on the next day, in the next street, in her job, or in her home. She will be stressed all the time because she is not certain about her ambient world; threats spurt from every corner of her protective cocoon or her potential time-space. In order to know whether her identity is still consistent and continuous after the abrupt event, we need to ask her. This is the only way. In our example, X will say "yes, my identity is still consistent and continuous." But, should we trust her answer if we were in Giddens's shoes? The answer is no. Firstly, people could justify their undesirable situation, especially when they are in a weak position (such as the abrupt change in routine happening out of the agent's control). This case is called system justification, and it has been widely discussed in literature (e.g., Jost, Banaji, and Nosek 2004; Pacilli et al. 2011). Secondly, if a savage abruption hits X's routine, then her agency is negatively and severely affected. As a result, her identity cannot still be as it was before the event. Therefore, the objective plane is important to analyze and account for ontological security.

Contrary to this argument, Flockhart (2016) and – to some extent – Gustafsson and Krickel-Choi (2020) assert that a change is not enough to say that an individual experiences ontological insecurity, but the ability of an individual to cope with this change is what makes us ascribe ontological security or insecurity to him/her. If s/he could deal with the change well, then s/he is ontologically secure, otherwise s/he is not. Nevertheless, Flockhart (2016) assigns a significant heft to the objective plane, the structure or the social world, because this plane – besides agency – is what enables or prevents individual (agent) from sustaining an ontologically secure state after an abrupt change.

Finally, both the mainstream and Giddens's ontological security are bound to few criticisms, which emanate from the same source: stability or no-change core concept. No-change is the cornerstone of ontological security for both scholarships. However, "no-change" engenders a kind of inconsistency within Giddens's account, on the one hand, and makes the mainstream ontological security susceptible to be trapped within the "negative security" hollowness on the other hand as discussed above.

In order to build a whole coherent model of ontological security, surpassing the perils and inconsistencies, two conceptual changes should be done in both the mainstream and Giddens's ontological security. First of all, and more importantly, change (or

stability) should not be included in the ontological security model as a criterion. Stability is not the core of ontological security, which stands in line with what was discussed in the section of identity: Change is not the opposite of self-continuity (or consistency, accordingly), and it is not a criterion of gauging the "strength" of identity, rather it is something natural to identity such that no identity without change. Similarly, change must not uproot ontological security, neither must stability foster it, *necessarily* (similarly see, Browning and Joenniemi 2017; Flockhart 2016). Hence, the contradiction or the inconsistency within the mainstream and Giddens's ontological security will not exist anymore, and the ontological security will be in line with identity theories regarding the self-continuity principle.

Secondly, Giddens builds the Structuration Theory by drawing on an essential idea: agency and structure are mutually created; there is no agency without structure, neither is their structure without agency. At the time of writing his books (1991 and 1984), the framework of *ontic structural realism* as an epistemological and ontological stance was not developed yet. Ontic structural realism is an epistemological and ontological framework arguing that relations exist before relata, and only relations define the relata. In other words, a relation between two things is what creates these two things, not vice versa. Relata then supervene the relations (Bain 2013; Esfeld 2009, 2013; Esfeld and Lam 2008; McKenzie 2014, 2017; Ross 2008). In the light of this framework, agency and structure of the Structuration Theory are created by or supervene the relation that connects them. In order to identify both of them, we need to look at and define this relation because it is the "real" thing, while agency and structure (the relata) are the results of this relation. Ontological security can be understood then as a relation between the Self and the world (the subjective and objective planes) in terms of the ontic structural realism. Hence, neither the being nor the world has a priority over the other. That is to say, ontological security is not anchored in the being (as it is in the mainstream and Giddens's ontological security) but it is anchored in the relation between a being and the world. But, since any relation is difficult to be "grasped" or imagined, we can say that ontological security is anchored in both the world and the Self (or being).

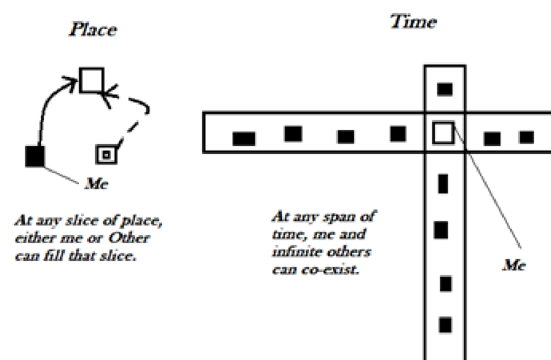
To build an "adjusted" model of ontological security, we need to see how we can observe or gauge it in light of ontic structural realism. I will borrow – and reformulate – a notion from Giddens that he does not use in defining ontological security: the abstract distinction between space and time (he uses this notion to define globalization) (Giddens 1991). Instead of time-space, I will use the term *time-place* because "place" is a more concrete concept and is sociologically enrooted in the literature more than "space" (Daskalaki, Butler, and Petrovic 2016; Kivisto 2003; Pretty, Chipuer, and Bramston 2003; Sheller 2017). Additionally, "place" is a conceptual

room, in which Othering, self-conceptualization, self-narrative, and identification are discussed (e.g., Devine-Wright 2009; Devine-Wright and Lyons 1997; Di Masso, Dixon, and Pol 2011; Dixon and Durrheim 2004).

Place[32] – in its fundamental meaning – refers to the *non-shareable.* The one squared meter in which I stand is only mine, it is fully occupied by my body, and necessarily no one else can stand exactly where I do. This uniqueness eliminates every Other, any other meaning, power, legitimacy, and structure but "mine." In other words, place refers to the omnipresent *unique* agent-structure-place, the absolute stability, and it is analogous to the Self or being. The ultimate, extreme place can be represented as a dot or a zero-dimension.

Time,[33] on the other hand, refers to the *shareable* in its fundamental meaning. I talk to another one in this moment; I communicate with someone who had lived 1000 years ago by reading his book; I can imagine a communication with others in the future; and unlimited people interact over time. Time, then, eliminates me (in its absolute nature), and my omnipresent meaning, power, legitimacy, and structure, but all others'. Differently put, time refers to the omnipresent *diverse, plural* agent-structure-time; the absolute evanescence. It is analogous to the world. At the ultimatum value of time, it can be represented as something of infinite-dimensions. Figure 2.12 below illustrates time and place as presented here.

Figure 2.12 Place and Time



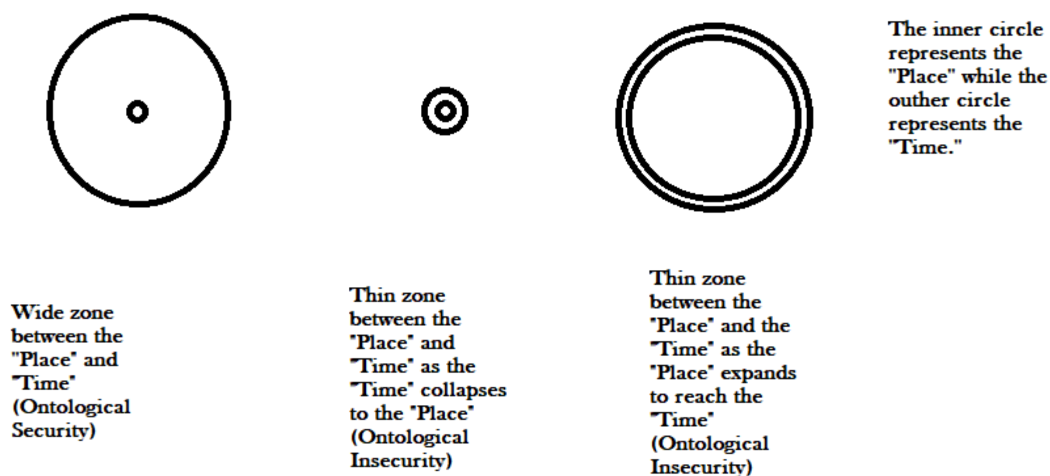
[32]Using metaphorical expressions in what follows is useful to elaborate on these complicated concepts. Giddens uses the metaphor of protective cocoon to denote ontological security, and Mitzen (2018*b*) uses the metaphor of "hearth" around which people converge, denoting the same concept.

[33]The metaphor of time, used here, is in congruence with the different definitions of time (subjective or absolute objective), and especially with Deleuze's philosophy. However, I cannot say whether the concept of time here does agree or conflict with Einstein's Relative Theory because time in his theory is ambiguous and controversial (Al-Saji 2004; Bunge 1968; de Carvalho 2018; Huijer 2010; May 1996; Radovan 2011).

Place is wedded to an analogy of an enclosed, protected, and impermeable fortress, while time is wedded to an analogy of the open, where everyone can meet everyone else, where no particular idea or power exists, such that this “open” is amorphous.

For the sake of more illustration, place (being) in this adjusted model is represented as the inner circle (Figure 2.13), while time (world) is represented as the outer one.

Figure 2.13 Ontological Security: Adjusted Model



Ontological security, accordingly, is a state that enables both the being and the world to manifest ultimately. It is a relation between the two, functioning perfectly by making them manifest, exist perfectly. The being’s Self has its own “voice,” its unique nature, and the world is rich, plural, and encompasses the various, infinite beings’ Selves echoing their own “voices” and the “resulted” voice of the world (which is vicarious). I will call this relation between the being (or its Self) and the world the expressive zone. Wide expressive zone is equivalent to ontological security state, while narrow expressive zone is equivalent to ontological insecurity state, whereby the relation between the Self and the world does not function perfectly, and it does not enable them to manifest perfectly. Ontological security, then, is about expressive-ness, which is not related only to the being and its Self, but also to the world (that is why ontological security is anchored in both the world and the being).

When the expressive zone is narrow, two alternatives emerge. The first is that the outer circle, the time, or the world recedes to the inner circle, the place, or the being. I call this type of ontological insecurity “Type I.” It means that the being’s Self is

afraid to express itself, so it refuses the world, and prevents any possible interaction with it, keeping its voice to itself. It is engulfed into its inner realm. The second alternative is that the inner circle, the place, or the being expands to impinging on the outer circle, which I call "Type II" of ontological insecurity. It means that the world absorbs the Self or the being, annihilating any uniqueness, making all Selves the same. The world, in other words, is repressive, or the being is weak such that it surrenders itself to the Others and to the social world. The world encapsulates the being's Self, preventing it from expressing its own voice since no "unique" entity is allowed to exist.

At this point, a question arises. What is the difference between the circles of time and space, on the one hand, and Giddens's front and back regions, on the other? Firstly, the front and back regions are psychological concepts, so they are confined to the subjective plane. While both time and place circles extend to both subjective and objective planes.

Secondly, the front region according to Giddens refers to an agent's exposure to the Others, to the outer world, in a way that him/herself becomes sacked by those plural others and sucked in different contexts. In other words, no authenticity is sustained of a Self or a being in the front region (see similarly, Feiner 1970). The time circle in the adjusted model is different from the front region, however. Front region entails that the being (the individual) entails a hollow core of Self and a weak ego. S/he is passive because there is no way to empower the Self. The time circle does not assume a weak ego necessarily. Rather the being (e.g., individual) can have a strong ego but s/he chooses to deny any type of categorization or identification, which is called queer-dilemma in the literature (Gamson 1995; Gatson 2003).[34] Therefore, the time circle implies (includes) the front region, but not vice versa.

Drawing on the expressive zone idea, I argue that ontological security indeed is exercised and endorsed through change. Since ontological security is anchored in the relation between a being and the world, and since the world is continuously changing (because – at least – it is made up of the interactions of multiple actors, natural factors, and so on), then a being *always* has to keep the expressive zone as wide as possible. This understanding implies that a being has to act in, to re-interpret the world in a way that widens the expressive zone as much as possible, otherwise the changes in the world may narrow the expressive zone.

As a final note, the adjusted model can show why peace is a place of more ontological security than enmity (*cf.* the criticism against the mainstream ontological security).

[34]queerness refers here to absolving the Self of belonging to any categorization. However, the individual who belongs to the "queerness" finds him/herself categorized and defined into a category: queer.

In peace, a being's Self is not defined primarily by whom one is not (i.e., the Other), but it defines itself by itself, whereby no an "antipode" Other is there anymore to be against it (but only to be different from), and the Self has the opportunity to be richer and multi-dimensional as it is freed from the tows of the hated Other (one-dimensional relation). It has a wider expressive zone because it does not confine its ability of expression to "fight" that Other.

2.3.5 Conclusion

Civil war is a social transformation emanating from within the society, causing changes in the identities and in the structure of societies. These changes can be traced during a civil war through identity's changes because changes in identity are "sedimented." They last for a loner time than other types of changes, and they are less conditioned on their contexts. That is, changes in identity means an entity (an individual or a group) has incorporated these changes into itself and in its meaning-system. Duration of civil war is imbued with changes in identities (and in structure) as "conflict ethos," institutionalized violence, and the need for survival incite individuals and groups to adapt to these emerging changes by changing their understanding of the world, their values, and their goals.

Changes in identity, as depicted in a part of the literature, is something natural to identity. It is not an exterior quality inflicting identity, which should be avoided. Rather, change is an interior quality of identity, and any endeavor to sustain fixation in identity, no-change, is only an illusion. Since change is an interior quality, it is not a threat or weakness. I argued above that change should not be understood as the opposite to self-continuity. Self-continuity is maintained only through changing elements of identity such as re-interpreting some values. Resisting such changes – if someone desires to do – cannot happen without making changes in the Self, paradoxically.

In the last section of the this chapter, I discussed ontological security. Two main tenets exist: the first one dwells on the idea of no-change, such that a being is ontologically secure when its self-identity is perceived as continuous, and when there is no change in the daily routine. The second one argues that change is not the core of ontological insecurity; a being can deliberately make a change in order to keep itself ontologically secure. I extend the latter, arguing that ontological security – in line with literature on identity – can be endorsed throughout change. I define it as a relation between a being and the world, which gives rise to both of them. When

this relation functions perfectly, both of the being (e.g., individual) and the world exist ultimately (the being's Self as unique, and the world as plural), and this is the state of ontological security. When the being's Self or the world is prevented from being manifested ultimately, then the relation between them does not function perfectly, and this is the state of ontological insecurity. To make this definition more attainable, I use the term "expressive zone," which demarcates the relation between a being and the world. Ontological security then is about the expressive-ness. The wider the expressive zone is, the more a being is ontologically secure, and vice versa. Thus, change is not a part of the definition. Only if a change makes the expressive zone narrower, then it causes ontological insecurity.

3. METHODOLOGY

Civil war is a complex phenomenon in its nature as some scholars have asserted (Brubaker and Laitin 1998; Kalyvas 2003; King 2004). This complexity imposes a serious challenge on academic research and has caused an inconsistency within the civil war scholarship (Kalyvas 2003). Complexity means that the phenomenon under study functions as a whole–organic system, whereby every variable or factor of it impacts the rest, and there is no way to seclude one variable since, in complex phenomena, there is no room for *"ceteris paribus"*. Taking complexity into account is, therefore, useful in this thesis. Accounting for complexity requires: (1) analyzing the phenomenon at the micro-level (Little 1993, 2015), at the meso-level (Hedström and Ylikoski 2010; Jepperson and Meyer 2011), and at the macro-level (Elster 1982); (2) accounting for the interactions between these levels; and (3) looking at the relations between the variables (at each level) as interactive not one-way relations. I discuss complexity in more detail in Appendix A.[1]

Practically, adopting qualitative methodology fits into studying complex phenomena more than the quantitative. Qualitative methodology, generally, allows researchers for digging deeply into the phenomenon under study and to encompass numerous variables that interact in one case study (Neuman 2014). Besides that, the researcher will be able to adjust his or her theoretical model, variables, and the ex ante designed theoretical relationships as the qualitative research progresses (Neuman 2014).

Additionally, a small-N research design is more suitable to study complexity than large-N design (Smith and Little 2018). A small-N design allows researchers for probing comprehensively into the complex phenomenon; thus, relationships and interactions between the various variables are observable at a more nuanced level. Qualitative methodology, generally, fits into conducting a small-N design more than quantitative methodology. In sum, taking into account what have mentioned above,

[1] Indeed, saying that complexity is an essential nature of civil war may be criticized. That is, complexity is not simply an objective quality adhering to an object or phenomenon, but also complexity is a perspective that the researcher casts upon the phenomenon under study (Alhadeff-Jones 2008). At any rate, either complexity is a quality adhering to a phenomenon or a perspective casted upon it, I adopt it in this study as the theoretical framework clearly requires.

this thesis will adopt qualitative methodology, therefore.

Accounting for the three levels altogether is an arduous task, and it goes behind the scope of this thesis. Therefore, I will analyze only the micro-level by analyzing individual narratives, and the meso-level by analyzing public Facebook pages' narratives of Salamiyah (the city under study). It is important to understand the data that will analyzed as *narrative* not, merely, interviews or Facebook posts; that is, identity, Self, and ontological security are all discursive in their nature, and simultaneously are – at least theoretically – captured through narratives. I discuss narrative, for a theoretical sake, in Appendix A.

The data will be analyzed using the framework of thematic analysis as will be discussed below.

3.1 Collecting Data

The main research question is "what is the relation between identity change and ontological security during civil war?" This thesis aims at *exploring* the potential relationships between ontological security, on the one hand, and identity change, on the other. The researcher seeks to reveal how individuals' identities change as they adopt/abandon certain behaviors to sustain, endorse, and enhance their ontological security during the tragic events of a civil war. The literature does not provide us with robust knowledge on the relationship between these two concepts, ontological security and identity change; so, it is important to assert the *explorative* task of this thesis.

Data will be collected at the micro-level by conducting semi-structured interview with individuals from Salamiyah City (see later the universe and the sample of the study), and at the meso-level by collecting public Facebook pages that function as "media outlet" to serve Salamiyah City.

3.1.1 Collecting Data at the Individual Level

With respect to collecting data methods at the micro-level, *semi-structured interview* is widely used. Semi-structured interview equips the researcher with a flexible, yet organized means to interview respondents and gain their subjective understandings of the phenomenon under study (Dilley 2004; Kallio et al. 2016; McIntosh and Morse 2015).

While conducting the interviews, no "very" direct questions will be asked because I seek to gain "stories" more than "analysis" by the participants about the reality. People tell their personal stories easier than answering direct questions, and more importantly people can give "thick description" (i.e., in-depth data and comprehensive accounts) by telling or narrating their stories more than by answering direct questions (Savin-Baden and Niekerk 2007). This way of asking becomes critical when the studied phenomenon is abstract, such as ontological security, identity, the like. For example, asking a respondent about his/her thoughts of the state legitimacy (which is a concept in this thesis theoretical framework) is not proper especially if the respondent is not well educated. Lightly impinging upon the themes and leaving a – relatively – free room for the participants to answer form the main guideline for the interviews.

On the other hand, it will be useful if the researcher *actively* engages the respondent in a reflection on his/her own story (this technique is borrowed from in narrative inquiry, Bates 2004; Ollerenshaw and Creswell 2002; Wang and Geale 2015) by acknowledging his/her intelligence and probing deeper in what s/he says. The respondent is not anymore a passive source of data, from which a researcher extracts his/her desired information. The respondent starts by narrating his/her stories and telling his/her observations or opinions on the topics of the questions, then the researcher has to discuss with him/her on some topics to explore and clarify them more. Hence, follow-up questions are critical for a successful interview (Savin-Baden and Niekerk 2007).

Practically speaking, the researcher should prepare a guideline of the semi-structured interviews by writing down the main questions, and by familiarizing her/himself with the main themes and their operationalized terms in order to explain them properly and constantly for all respondents when it is necessary (see Appendix B). As the respondents speak and answer the questions, the researcher can – and indeed has to – ask follow-up questions to incite the respondents to clarify more and explain better and deeper their stances. The follow-up questions must be open questions (Hollway and Jefferson 1997) in order to ignite the respondents to speak more and

"truely" reflect on themselves.

The interviews' guideline is provided in Appendix C.

3.1.2 Collecting Facebook Posts: Meso-level Analysis

Social media, especially Facebook, is widely used by Salamiyah inhabitants (and Syrians as well), and various Facebook public accounts are informally utilized by the Ba'ath Party Branch (the ruling party in Syria) in Salamiyah to deliver daily life news and major news (e.g., the news on battles, Israeli strikes, etc.) to the citizens.[2] Opponent people from Salamiyah (either they are inside the city or abroad) also had run Facebook accounts to criticize the regime before their pages were closed. Besides that, few Facebook accounts are placed in between the previous two clear-cut categories; they are neither totally pro-regime nor entirely opponent.

Analyzing Facebook accounts will help us to understand the "milieu," in which Salamiyah people act, function, and form their understandings of the current civil war. This "milieu" is precious for this research because it impinges on everyday life such that sometimes *only* Facebook delivers the necessary information to people (e.g., battles close to the city, locations of distributing humanitarian aids, and the like) since formal media outlets are either untrusted or do not cover this type of nuanced and detailed information[3]. Hence, Salamiyah people are widely immersed in reading Facebook accounts to manage their daily life or to know what is going on in the city (especially for those who are refugees abroad). As a result, they are exposed to the ways these various Facebook accounts "frame" the daily and the major (e.g., the civil war itself) issues. In other words, Facebook could be considered as an online medium of social representations.

On the other hand, Facebook represents the meso-level of the society in Salamiyah. Since these pages I will analyze are public pages, and they are designed to "talk" to people, then they try to – in a way or another – impact the people and to reflect the reality (maybe to change it). They also reflect people opinions, otherwise they will lose their followers. Besides that, these pages are almost run by semi-official or non-official "institutions," such as the Ba'ath Party Branch in Salamiyah for the pro-regime accounts, and intellectuals' groups that manage their own neutral Facebook

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[2]This information is supported by an interview with an NGOs' leader.

[3]Interview with an NGOs' leader

pages (however, someone cannot prove that since the neutral and the opponent pages' admins are kept anonymous, but my knowledge of Salamiyah society pushes me to think in this way). All these factors justify why we can consider Facebook pages as representative of the meso-level.

3.2 The Research Universe and the Sample

3.2.1 The Research Universe

The research universe of this thesis is Salamiyah City, Syria. Salamiyah City lies close to the center of Syria and it is considered as the stronghold area of Ismaili minority in Syria and in the Middle East. Ismaili sect is a branch of Shia Muslims; its members live in various countries around the world; they believe in a living Imam who – they believe – descends back to Ali Bin Abi Taleb (the cousin of Prophet Mohammad) and to Fatimid Empire's Caliphates; and their general teachings are different from the mainstream of both Shia and Sunni Islamic traditions as they focus on *esoteric* meanings of Quran. There is only one Imam at one time, and they count now 49 (the first Imam in Ali Bin Abi Taleb). The current Imam is Aga Khan IV, who runs besides his work as an Imam the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). Generally, Ismaili women do not put on headscarves, men and women do not fast in Ramadan, and they do not do pilgrim in Macca[4].

No official statistics exist on Ismailis who live in Salamiyah City. However, people estimate then to be 150.000 or 200.000 ones [5], composing around 70 percent of the city inhabitants, while the remaining 30 percent consists of Sunni people in addition to a small portion of Alawite people. All of the city's population is Arab, with very few Kurdish, Armenian, and Caucasian inhabitants.

Temporally, the scope of this thesis is limited between 2011 and the end of 2019.

The research universe, fits into the research question and goals because of a set of factors presented as follows. Firstly, changing the relationship between the Self

[4]The Institute of Ismaili Studies: https://iis.ac.uk/.

[5]Interview with an NGO's leader.

and the Other (in terms of the identity's boundary) is a basic dimension of identity change, and Othering is a main pillar of any civil war. The city's inhabitants provide us with a good opportunity to study the Self-Other relationship (or the identity boundary). At the level of "inside" the city, Ismaili, Sunni, and Alawite individuals interact with each other, while Ismaili individuals form the majority (70 percent) of the "inner" space of the city. At the level of "outside" the city, we see that Salamiyah is surrounded by Sunni cities and Sunni rural areas. The city floats in space of a majority of Sunni people. The Other, then, is multiple. An Ismaili individual – for example – can have multiple Others, with whom s/he can directly interact: Sunni-Other *inside* the city; Sunni-Other *outside* the city; and an Alawite-Other *inside* the city. The same is to be said for other individuals from Salamiyah City. A Sunni individual can have an Ismaili-Other, an Alawite- Other (both *inside* the city), and a Sunni-Other *outside* the city. In the case of the multiple-Other, the Self has 3 alternatives: to distance all Others; to create a "coalition" (i.e., to reduce the thickness of the Self's boundary) only with some Others; and to create a coalition with all Others in a way or another. While having one Other (instead of multiple) in a context of war will not create a wide room for us to check the identity boundary's change since the Other is almost *the* abhorrent enemy. It will be fixedly defined and distanced from the Self as long as the civil war is flaming. For example, we can think of Idlib City, which is inhabited by majority of Sunni people. There is only one Other – compared to Salamiyah City[6] – who is the Alawite living next to them, to the west (in the Syrian coast). The identity boundary in this case is not expected to vary, contrary to the situation of Salamiyah City.

Secondly, Salamiyah people have experienced the war in different ways (killings, kidnappings, arrests, and rocketing), but the city has not been destroyed as other cities. This case makes the city suitable to study the effect of the war on its people. Had the city been destroyed to a wide extent by the ongoing war, little room would have been left to study identity change and ontological security since the mere "physical security" will be persistent and prioritized over any other types of security. Ethically speaking, a researcher cannot question people whose homes are leveled to the ground and those who escape death sleeping in the open about their ontological security and identity change (hence, Idlib City for example is not suitable for this research).

To mention only few scars of the war on the Salamiyah's society: Salamiyah City falls under the ISIS and al-Nusra Front (al-Qaeda branch) siege from west and east (2013-

[6] Someone may argue that within each sect in Salamiyah (Alawite, Sunni, etc.) there is various Others, which is true. However, this categorization is priori designed and it follows the conventional lines that demarcate an ethnic identity from another. During data analysis, potential, various Others could be revealed.

2017); they bombed the city with rockets and mortars in many occasions, causing tens of casualties and deaths. ISIS also perpetrated two massacres in near villages of the city (2015 and 2017), whose victims were Ismaili, Alawite, and some Sunni people. On the other hand, people in the city have suffered from arbitrary arrests perpetrated by the regime, and from kidnappings perpetrated by the paramilitary (Fakher El-Dein, Shabo, and Mirza 2015; Mirza and al Khateeb 2015).

Thirdly, city's inhabitants participated in demonstrations against the regime in 2011 and 2012, while a notable bulk of the inhabitants have joined the Syrian army and the paramilitary (known as Shabiha). Many people have emigrated to Turkey, Europe, Canada, and the other Arabic countries such as Lebanon and Iraq. Therefore, the researcher can find pro-regime, neutral, and anti-regime individuals to interview them, in principle (I will discuss this issue in detail below).

In sum, the research universe is Salamiyah City's inhabitants who have been born or lived in Salamiyah for relatively a long time before and/or during the war; either they are still in the city or they are refugees. Neither their sectarian belongings, nor their political attitudes do matter in terms of defining the research universe.[7]

3.2.2 The Research Sample

The research sample was purposive and designed by using the snowballing technique. The researcher met the first respondents using his own social network and by getting help from some NGOs' leaders in Salamiyah. The researcher is from Salamiyah, so building a trustful relationship with the respondents was not that arduous. Besides that, the Consent Form (see Appendix D) made the respondents feel more comfortable as their personal information is highly secured. The first respondents guided me to others and so on until I interviewed 32 persons between March and April, 2020. All the interviews were held via WhatsApp application because all the interviewees were living in Europe as refugees or students, and others were visiting their relatives in Europe or in Istanbul, so I interviewed them via WhatsApp when they were waiting in airports. Those who were living in Europe at the time of the interviews were labelled as individuals living in Europe, while those who were visiting their relatives (either in Istanbul or in Europe) were labelled as individuals living in

[7]Several NGOs' leaders in the city have advised the researcher not to confine his sample to one sect because such a deed will be almost confusing and difficult. That is, many people could be "officially" Ismaili, for example, but they may define themselves as atheists, communists, and so on. Additionally, many families have mixed belongings such as one brother is a Sunni while his sister is an Ismaili.

Salamiyah because they came soon back to the city (some of then spent less than 15 days in Istanbul or Europe, and some of them were captured for few days due to the Covid-19 pandemic).

The researcher sought to make the sample representative to the research universe as much as possible. The sample included: 9 individuals who were living in Salamiyah (they were interviewed when they visited their relatives abroad); and 23 individuals who were living as refugees or students in Europe. Regarding the gender, 11 women and 21 men were interviewed. 26 participants belong to Isamili families (regardless of there beliefs at the time of the interviews), 3 participants are Qadmousi (branch of Shia), and 3 are Sunni. 23 participants had studied after they finished the highs school in universities or high institutes, and 9 of them did not finish the high school or did not continue studying after it. However, all of them got the basic learning. Regarding the political stances, 16 ones expressed clearly that they were opponents, while the rest were not that clear in expressing their political stances explicitly as opponents (they blamed both the regime and the opposition); however, no one was supporter of the regime. The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 7 hours, and all the interviews were recorded, stored in the researcher's computer, and analyzed later using the Microsoft Expression Web 4 software. The names of the participants were kept anonymous, and only aliases were used according to the following coding system. Each alias has three units: the first one is either F (for female) or M (for male); the second unit is the age of the participant (e.g., 40, 30); and the last unit is the place of residence, E for those who were living in Europe and S for those who were living in Salamiyah. For example, M57E stands for a male, who was aged 57 years at the time of the interview, and was living in Europe.

With respect to the sample of the Facebook posts, I collected around 1000 posts from 12 Facebook public accounts according to a set of criteria between February 2019 and March 2020: (1) all the Facebook accounts, which their posts were collected, covered news from Salamiyah city mainly; (2) they defined themselves as Facebook pages representing the city; and (3) published news that were related to the public affairs at different levels: political, social, economic, and everyday life events. Thus, Facebook accounts that defined themselves as representing Salamiyah but did not tackle public affairs (such as Facebook pages publishing only songs) were excluded from the sample. It is important to mention that the sample of the posts was designed as purposive; everyday I was reviewing what these pages published, and taking screenshots using the Evernote software.

Collecting the posts was conducted according to certain criteria as well, not all posts were collected. The post has to include social, political, economic, or meaning-

system (e.g., discussing marriage vs. “adultery”) dimensions. Thus, a post discussing a religious meaning or a political meaning was included in the Facebook sample, but a post that mentioned condolences to a lay person was not. Regarding the everyday events, a post that included something on the economic crisis (e.g., boycott of sugar) was included because it signaled a collective action, i.e., it embedded political and social dimension. Also, since this study is qualitative, repeated posts were not included (this study does not primarily care about the frequentness of the posts). For example, a post published in 12 / 2 / 2019 on the battles in Idlib was included, but a post on the same topic and with the same “frame” in 20/2/2019 was not, if both posts were published in the same Facebook account. No personal comments were included in this Facebook sample, and only the posts that were written in the public pages were targeted.

Table 3.1 The Facebook Pages

The name of the page	Description	The number of the followers
Salamiyah Ehbaria	Criticizes the government and the opposition	30.000
Salamiyah Hadath	Pro-regime	20.000
Salamiyah Now	Criticizes the government, supports the army	100.000
Ahbar Salamiyah and Rief	Pro-regime	16.000
Wikileaks Salamiyah	Criticizes the regime (sometimes) but does not support the opposition	12.000
Barai Sharqi	Pro-regime	40.000
Salamiyah Haqiqa	Criticizes the regime (sometimes) but does not support the opposition	16.000
Ahbar Salamiyah	Pro-regime	16.000
Salamiyah Mubasher	Pro-regime	700.000
Salamiyah 24	Criticizes the government and supports the army	20.000
SAWA Group	Supports the regime and criticizes the government	22.000
The Media Body for Salamiyah and its Suburb	Opposition	4.000

3.3 Analysing the Data and the Limitation

The collected data were analyzed thematically. In light of the theoretical background that was introduced in the Literature Review chapter, I used the thematic analysis method to analyze the data (Clarke and Braun 2017; Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006; Tuckett 2005). Themes are repeatable meanings or patterned signs or ideas that appear in the data. In this thesis, themes were detected, and linked to each other to build a whole meaningful thematic picture. For example, under the “big” theme of legitimacy (on which I asked the participants), I searched for repeatable ideas and patterned notions that the participants mentioned during the interviews; when I found them, sub-themes of legitimacy were revealed. When the first themes were determined, I continued the analysis digging for other themes (every theme appeared changed the other themes) until no other themes could be detected.

The methodology used in this thesis is not without shortcomings and challenges. Qualitative and thematic analysis generally suffers from lacking the external validity, i.e., we cannot easily generalize the research findings out of the research universe and perhaps the research sample, because this type of methodology depends essentially on subjective analysis (Josselson 2006). Besides that, an individual narrative is highly affected by the researcher who conducts the interview. The narrative is in its nature a story told to someone. Therefore, how the narrator perceives the researcher will impact how s/he will narrate (Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann 2000; Mankowski and Rappaport 1995). The narrator would exercise a bias in depicting his/her own collective group according to how s/he thinks of the researcher: an enemy or a friend (Sahdra and Ross 2007).

Also, I expect that if the researcher conducted an interview with the same narrator in two different spans of time, the researcher would likely get two different narratives. Narratives change every time they are told, especially when we are interested in nuanced details (Bsumeister and Newman 1995). This case challenges the internal validity of this method.

4. DISCUSSION

The main research question in this thesis is: What is the relation between ontological security and identity change during civil war? In order to answer this question, two sub-questions have to be tackled firstly. The first sub-question explores how a society changes as it endorses a civil war. Thus, we need, first of all, to answer the sub-question: What are the changes happening during a civil war in a given society? In doing so, this thesis will explore the case of the Salamiyah society (a city in Syria) in the midst of the current civil war.

The second sub-question we have to deal with is identity and identity change during the war. Identity is important because changes that are observed in identities (either collective or individual) are not easily erasable after the war ends. Someone may argue that the changes traced down in a society suffering a war are temporarily emerging, and when the war ends, these changes will disappear. Hence, we need to trace the changes that are triggered in a society by a civil war in the identities of its collectives and individuals because a change in an identity is not easily erased when the context is altered. I called these changes *sedimented* changes in the literature review chapter, which I will explore more in depth in this chapter.

Identity theories, which will be used to answer the second sub-question, do not inherently incorporate the structural dimensions into analyzing and conceptualizing identity and identity's changes, while ontological security theory inherently does (to varying extents). Therefore, I will use the mainstream ontological security theory, as depicted in the literature review, and trying to develop the adjusted model of ontological security as this thesis suggests in order to bring the identity and structure together; hence answering the main research question by using the ontological security concepts.

Since this thesis adopts complexity as an epistemological stance, showing the interaction between the collective/meso-level (data collected from public Facebook pages and groups) and individual/micro-level (data collected by interviews) is critical and worthy. Therefore, I will start by analyzing the meso-level, which will also help us

to answer the first sub-question.

4.1 Changes in Salamiyah Society during the Civil War at the Meso-Level

In the literature, duration of civil war has been depicted as a function of three elements or factors: survival, cultural/meaningful features of the society, and actors or the civil war parties. The three factors can be sketched out and put together as follows. Violence during civil war becomes *institutionalized* through organizations, such as paramilitary groups, which start to spread violence in the society, and also the already existing institutions become more violent such as using violent languages and corroborating harsher masculine values.[1]

This type of institutionalized violence, hand in hand with violence applied by the state and the rebels, leads to changes in the social norms, the expected behaviors in the public spheres, and changes in the personal values as well. These changes ensue because groups and individuals adapt to the new circumstances, seeking survival at the physical level and seeking consistence at the meaning-system level. The conflict parties imbue the society with conflict ethos, i.e., a master narrative, aiming at changing the mind-set of people regarding the war. Hence, meaning-system at the collective and the individual levels changes. All these changes, finally, result as observable sediments in both collective and individual identities and in the society structure (meaningful or symbolic dimension, power relations, and legitimacy). The new emerging actors challenge the omnipresent power-holder, the state, and thus, the state's legitimacy could be changed, and new legitimized actors or entities emerge. Analyzing the Facebook posts can provide us with the necessary data on such changes at the meso-level.

[1] For example, theories of continuum violence argue that a continuum spectrum of violence bridges violence in everyday life (e.g., domestic violence) and violence in the battle ground (Celik 2016; Krause 2015; Viveros-Vigoya 2016).

4.1.1 Threats and Struggling for Survival

Patently, civil war imposes direct, physical threats to life and uproots the stability of communities in terms of the economic activities, the traditional power relations and the like. Therefore, we need, firstly, to depict these direct effects of civil war.

Analyzing the various Facebook posts reveals three types of threats to the collectives experiencing a civil war: enemy(ies), paramilitary, and the economic crisis. Besides these three specifics, a fourth type of threats unfolded: an unbearable situation and helplessness, whereby we cannot find a specific reference to a specific type of threat; rather, the situation as a whole is provoked as a bad, menacing, abhorrent situation. In response to these threats, various reactive narratives are found. In what follows, these threats and related responses will be depicted and analyzed.

4.1.1.1 The Enemy

Because of the fact that all the Facebook pages, except for one anti-regime Facebook page, are either pro-regime or neutral, the enemy is almost always bounded to the oppositions. Sometimes, however, the enemy is not clearly addressed, but it is left as an amorphous entity although the opposition or the rebels are implicitly recalled to be in the background of this amorphous enemy. In response to the enemy and the imposed threat it poses, the Syrian (governmental) military is immediately invoked in the narrative. In other words, both the Syrian military and the enemy are two wedded themes, which are never split from each other. Although Salamiyah City was far away from any battle front during the period of collecting the data, we see that military is praised as the glorified protector against terror.

For example, a post from Salamiyah-Hadath Facebook page shows how much soldiers sacrifice to protect civilians (signified by a child) from the enemy, which is not clearly addressed in this post (Figure 4.1).

> - To where are you going dad? [A child asks]
>
> - I am going to buy a safe night for you. [The father replies]
>
> - Do you have money, dad?
>
> - I will buy it with my blood.

Figure 4.1 Terrorism and the Role of Military- Terrorists are amorphous

Another post (from Salamiyah-Now Page) shows a group of soldiers shaping with their bodies a Christmas Tree, which could be understood as a symbol against the enemy, who is the Islamist opposition (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 Christmas Tree Facing Islamists

Military men are sometimes glorified not only by their role in protecting “us” from the terrorist opponents, but also by showing their superiority over the lazy civilians, who do everything to avert the military service. The following post from Salamiyah-Huna is a case in point, naming the enemy clearly as ISIS and the armed rebels:

> O civilian, listen! There is always a soldier whom you do not want to take into your car when you see him awaiting on a road. Listen, thanks to this soldier, your sister, mother, and wife are not taken hostages to be fucked by ISIS and the armed groups... This soldier is hungry and tired, poor and his shoes are mudded. This soldier did not steal your homes when the army liberalized your villages from ISIS because he knows that these homes belong to his brothers in Syria.

Few other "neutral" pages, however, present the military as a threat, not as a protector. For example, the following post (Figure 4.3) compares between the army of other countries, staying outside the home, and the army of Syria, occupying the home and ousting the civilians outside. However, no one of these neutral pages glorifies the rebels and the opposition because – more likely – Islamists dominate the oppositions and Ismaili people will not welcome such oppositions.

Figure 4.3 Military is a Threat

In sum, military is represented as a protector against the enemy which is the rebels, or as a protector against the enemy that does not have a clear shape or object. In the former case, the military could be interpreted as a *functional state apparatus*, while in the latter as a *value* by its own (glory). However, military is also represented as a threat per se because it functions in the wrong way (by occupying civilians' homes, Figure 4.3). It is worthy to note that the enemy, when it is explicitly

named, is labeled as ISIS, rebels, opposition, terrorists, Jabhat al-Nusra (the al-Qaeda branch). It seems that all of these actors form *one* enemy–Other, not multiple ones, in the Facebook pages. This type of simplifying the enemy, the opposition, could be interpreted as a way to simplify the conflict itself; this war is between two groups (the patriotic or the regime supporters and the the rebels), and only one group is "good" (us, the patriotic), while the other group (them, the rebels) is "bad." The enemy is rhetorically "made" bad by consciously or unconsciously conflating multiple actors together, ISIS with the Free Syrian Army, for example.

4.1.1.2 Paramilitary

Paramilitary, which is the pro-regime militias, has been created since 2011 in Salamiyah. When it is negatively represented, as a threat, it is called Shabiha, which means literally "ghosts," and associated with bad terms, such as smuggling, kidnapping, and looting. The paramilitary is called the National Defense Apparatus when it is positively represented, however.

By some, paramilitary is widely represented as a source of unsafety, threat, and chaos in the city as a post from Salamiyah Ehbariah reads:

> "Paramilitary members are thieves generally, and they just steal money, loot resources [. . .] they are not heroes. They became very rich. Can you become rich while you are fighting in battles?"

Another post from Salamiyah al-Hadath mentions a specific accident that paramilitary's members were responsible for. A gang of young people got engaged in a street fight with each other, and one of them threw a grenade; as a result, a young man – who was passing by – was killed. This event enflamed a huge debate in the city. The post clearly condemns the paramilitary and the no-reaction of the state (police) towards them.

> "Those who carry up weapons without thoughts will be burglars. Those paramilitary members are the real terrorists; the state deliberately does nothing to stop them or to arrest them, in spite of the many warrants against them."

To face this type of threat, we find two types of calls or imploring claims, which I will call *mobilizing narrative*. The first is celebrating the state when the police arrests some paramilitary members by announcing their names or the first letters of their names and saluting the police officers who did the arresting. The second is calling for the Ba'ath Battalion (which indeed is another branch of the paramilitary, but totally run by the ruler party) to impose security in the city. For example, a post from Salamiyah al-Hadath reads, "Ba'ath Battalions will keep control over the city to fight against the troublemakers [paramilitary], and some actions such as firing into the air at night."

We also find another type of response to the paramilitary threat, which I will call *descriptive narrative*. Contrary to the mobilizing narrative, descriptive narrative just claims about the paramilitary without asking for solutions or mobilizing any actors to deal with this threat. In other words, the descriptive narrative does not imply any survival strategy at the rhetoric level.

4.1.1.3 Economic Threats

The war and the economic embargo that is imposed on the regime by many international actors, especially the US, have left a significant damage on the economy. Suffering is clearly expressed in the Facebook pages. For example, you can find many posts describing how much the Syrian Pound (Lira in Arabic) is valueless now, such as: "Two million *Lira* should be your salary to eat fruit [The average salary is 50.000 Lira]," and, "All people now think of suicide."

In response to this economic crisis, as life seems to be impossible, we can find a theme that promotes resistance against those who imposed the economic embargo. For example, Barai Sharqi page posted:

> "You [international actors] cut water, food, oil... it is OK, but I will never surrender my dignity to a betrayer Kurdish [who are supported by the US] or whatever [. . .] I can resist hunger, but I will protect my dignity."

Another response towards the economic crisis is *blaming* the regime and its government, and calling for *defying* them (instead of defying the US). Salamiyah Ehbaria used the demonstrations in Lebanon (2019) to call for a similar collective action in

Syria, “What is the solution for the economic crisis? General strike and overthrowing them ALL [the officials] as Lebanese people said: [by] all, we mean all. Because all of them are corrupted.” Other posts try to mobilize emigrants/refugees to remit money to Syria in order to support the value of the Syrian Lira. Barai Sharqi page, for example, posed:

> “The migrants will help us to support Lira [they mean the economy], they can transfer 50 dollars and that will be helpful. As our men were lions on the fronts, the migrants will be the best supporters.”

All these posts form a mobilizing narrative, similarly to the mobilizing narrative in the previous threat. Many other posts, however, are only descriptive narratives. They describe the economic situation without narrating a possible action to fight it.

4.1.1.4 Helplessness

This type of threat is neither reduced nor is it confined to a specific threat, such as the economic crisis or the enemy. It is rather about the whole situation, the life conditions, and circumstances as they became – after 9 years of the war – unbearable and nothing can be done to face them. The situation is described as saturated with debilitation and tiredness; the Syrians are seen as exhausted, damaged, and suffocated. The following post from Salamiyah al-Haqiqa describes, “Syrians citizens are surrounded from all sides,” as the picture shows (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4 Debilitation

Another post from Salamiyah Mubashar describes the situation of the Syrians by using a photo (shown in Figure 4.5) as a signifier; the annotated text explains:

> "The mother of this girl is dead, her father is imprisoned. She smelled nitrocellulose adhesive, and threw herself in Barada River [in Damascus]. A soldier, whose leg is wounded, is using his walking stick to pull her out of the river basin."

Figure 4.5 Debilitation

The general situation is, then, ultimately unbearable; citizens are the only victims who can do nothing but to weep their fate. In front of this heavy, tough situation, only descriptive narrative is found.

4.1.2 Conflict Ethos

Conflict ethos is a basic and essential pillar of any conflict because it explains the unprecedented violence and justifies the war. Men do not go to fight only with arms and weapons, but be backed with master narratives that can justify their death and harming of the enemies. Two main sub-categories are identified in this regard. The conflict ethos of the Syrian civil war has been represented by spinning narratives on: (1) why this war happened; and (2) the Self-image.

4.1.2.1 Why this War

Each party in a conflict struggles to impose only its own explanation of the war (e.g., Adisonmez and Onursal 2020). Put differently, every conflict ethos addresses the question of why people go to war and what their fight is about from a normative perspective. From the Facebook pages, we can identify four narratives on such questions: (1) the war is a plot against Syria and the ruler Ba'ath party; (2) the war happened because of the brutal actions conducted by the Islamist oppositions; (3) the war happened because Syria (as a country) could not develop a national morality; and (4) this war is a result of the manipulations by the international and regional powers. I will explain these narratives (sub-conflict ethos) one by one.

When the conflict is explained as a *plot against Syria*, it is usually attached to the Ba'ath Party's narrative. Ba'ath Party argues that it has a mission to rebuild one Arab Nation, and in doing so, it is fought by essential enemies (e.g., Israel). "This war against Syria is partly targeting the Ba'ath party and its principles," a post from Salamiyah al-Hadath reads. These enemies sometimes are presented as the Islamists, non-Arab countries (usually Turkey), and the Jews who established Israel. The following post from Salamiyah al-Hadath can be considered as an example to this understanding:

> "Ba'ath party is interweaved into our society, and it has sacrificed to keep our home and the Arab Ummah [nation] protected [. . .] we will still march behind our leader, and the Leader of the Party, the Arab Leader, the great Bashar Assad, to whom we sacrifice our souls. Now we are fighting against the new Ottoman invasion in this war."

According to this narrative, this war is not a civil war; rather it is a national war to protect the Arab soul, represented by the Ba'ath Party.

Other narratives focus more on the role of the *opposition*, delegitimizing their positions, because they attack the state and the civilians. Therefore, they argue that the state was enforced to use violence to protect the civilians. A post from Shabaka Salamiyah and Reif reads, "How did the war happen? they [the opponents] stoned a soldier [. . .] they, the peaceful demonstrators, killed other innocent governmental employees." Moreover, when the opposition is Islamist, that means that the state has to fight it because Islamists are Zionists in their essence, as this post from Salamiyah Huna argues:

> "This is not a revolution, it is a plot woven by the Zionists and the imperials against Syria. What is the substitute of the regime? Islamists? Wahhabis and the Muslim Brotherhood. Those who have left the country and call for democracy are the sons of whores."

The third type of narratives on explaining the civil war attributes it to the *failure of having a healthy state or a national community.* The state is mainly to blame because it failed to achieve its tasks. This explanation is more structural and digs deeper into the "morality" of being Syrian. In this regard, a post from Salamiyah al-Haqiqa explains:

> "The reason of this war is that we failed to establish a political regime that protects the rights; we failed to make any development; and properly plan the economy. All of that happened because of some 'ideological' doctrines that prevented us from making a good life."

In line with this type of narratives, the failure of the state is attributed to the flawed morality of the people. "Why is this war? Because we do not listen to each other. We need to integrate the Other into our system by force," a post from Salamiyah Ehbaria reads.

The fourth and final narrative about the conflict is one that attributes it to the *international and regional conflict over the Syrian lands.* According to this narrative, Syria (as a state and a people) does not have its destiny. It is worthy to note that this narrative represents both the Syrian state's allies (Russia) and the enemies (e.g., the US and Turkey) at the same footing. For example, it is common to read a post such as: "The US, France, Britain, and Russia are trying to recreate the Middle

East. Do not believe that they fight against terrorism."

In sum, there is no one single conflict ethos narrative explaining why this war is fought. Moreover, the various narratives of the causations of the current conflict swage between asserting the essential, superior identity of Syria as led by the Pan-Arabist Party to presenting Syria as a doll manipulated by others; partly because "we," the Syrians and the state, failed to create a healthy national community. The identity in these narratives is always Syrian (not Ismaili, for example); it can be classified as: (1) *Hero-Self* bleeding and standing strongly against essential enemies; (2) *Plagued-Self* failing to build strong country and strong morality that bring Syrians together; and (3) *Agent-less-Self* that is manipulated as a doll by other powers.

4.1.2.2 Self-Image and Collective Identity

In the Facebook pages, the Self is represented at two levels: the *Syrian Self* or Syrian identity and the *Salamiyah Self* or Salamiyah collective identity. However, only the former is represented in terms of the war-related themes and topics. In other words, Salamiyah Self is represented as isolated from the war theme(s). It is interesting that the Salamiyah Self is almost *positively* represented, sometimes as a nostalgic topic, while the Syrian Self is represented both *negatively* and *positively* only in relation to the war.

The positive presentation of the Syrian Self is confined to two themes: the first is achieved only by comparing the Syrian Self to others, such as the Arabs of the Gulf, who are pictured as degraded, and the second is built by praising the sacrifice of the Syrian soldiers. Put differently, the Syrian Self is good because it is better than degraded Others and because of the generous sacrifice during the war. This limited way of creating a positive image of the Self will become important when it is compared to how Salamiyah Self is represented.

The following post is an example of how the Syrian Self is represented as superior to the uneducated, uncivilized Arabs of the Gulf. However, this Self is not put in a comparison with westerners, Turks or Israelis.

> "A Syrian teacher in Arab Gulf comes into his classroom and finds someone that has written the following: Syrian + Falafel =? The teacher writes: Syrian + Falafel = Professor teaching you, doctor curing you, etc. Then he writes: Arab Gulf person - Oil=?"

This post is trying to say that the Syrians are famous only by making Falafel, which the teacher takes as an offense and responds by saying that Falafel has made professors from Syrians, but you, the Arab Gulf citizens, are equal nothing when the oil runs out.

The Syrian Self is also resistant. It can bear sanctions and stands against the war by unlimited attitudes towards *sacrifice*. A common post reads, "Syrians teach the world the art of resistance [attached a photo of Trump. He is angry and saying, 'Syrians drive me crazy.']"

Other narratives depict the Syrian Self negatively. Contrary to the positive image of this Self, the negative narratives of the Syrian Self vary a lot. While there are 2 types of posts describing the Syrian Self as positive, there are multiple types negatively representing the Syrian Self. Two examples will be given below.

A post from Wikileaks Salamiyah describes how Syria is dead now and no one wants to bury it:

> "Firstly, we need to mercifully bury the Syrian national dignity, which is dead amidst the interests, the hatred, and greed, but no one wants to bury it, none wants to pay the costs of the burial or carry upon his shoulders the sin of this burial. Our country became a yard that is exploited by everyone. Death, poverty, and damage haunt every Syrian now. The bounties of Syria have become the bank check in the Imperial and Zionist banks; everyone [namely, the Syrian officials] flags out the banner of fighting, but no one does. Syrians kill each other for the sake of the foreigners: Russia, Iran, the US, Turkey... The national institutions and resources are sold cheaply, and no hope is left for the next generations. Only sectarianism and corruption are left for us. Our fate is decided out of Syria, by the US, Russia, and Turkey... Sorry Syria, the beloved, we are now only numbers on the death lists, humanitarian aid lists, detainees and enforced disappeared persons lists, refugees lists, and we are numbers on the list of job-seekers."

Another post from Salamiyah Ehbaria describes how much the Syrians are not ethical:

> "After the last earthquake in Japan, people returned to police centers huge amounts of money that they found in corpses' pockets. If that had happened in our country, only stealing will thrive."

On the other hand, Salamiyah Self is not confined to the war when it is narrated. Sometimes, it goes deeper and earlier in history. Salamiyah Self is an Ismaili city, which historically and recently is distinguished from other cities in Syria as this post shows, "[. . .] and after the independence [of Syria], it [Salamiyah] became the best city in Syria in education thanks to Imam Sultan Muhammad [the 48th Imam of Ismaili]."[2] Another post from Sawa Group celebrates the cooperation between people of Salamiyah, "A group of teachers are ready to give private lesson for free or symbolic fees."

This image of Salamiyah Self is also boosted by celebrating and praising the current Ismaili Imam's thoughts. For example, some posts represent Imam's thoughts as calling for diversity, tolerance, and helping all regardless of their identities. A posts from Salamiyah Wikileaks Facebook reads:

> "Imam is a person who works for all, regardless of their religions, race. He calls for love and tolerance to all; he spreads tolerance; he does not work in politics because he knows how dirty it is. He tries to protect and glorifies the human lives by deeds not merely speeches; he gives a good example of Islam; he calls to celebrate the intellect and to help others, all others."

They sometimes go further by shedding light on and diffusing Ismaili beliefs, which differ radically from the mainstream Islam. The following post from Salamiyah 24 denies the Hell and Heaven, adopting the esoteric interpretation of Ismailism and referring to this interpretation as Jalaluddin Rumi's.[3] "Hell and Heaven are here. Do not think of them as existing up there. Every time we love, we enter the heaven, and every time we hate, we are burnt in hell."

This positive Ismaili-related identity of Salamiyah counters the war narrative in Syria, as this post reads from Salamiyah Ehbaria, with an attached photo of the Ismaili Imam, "They are busy with death, with annihilation; we are busy with survival. They kindle war, we kindle peace. Peace upon Syria and all the world." Although "they" is not clear in its reference, this post implies that the Ismaili people support peace, while "others," whoever they are, know only killing. Then, peace, not war, is what the Ismailis should seek.

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[2]There is only one Ismaili Imam at one time. Every Imam before his death has to nominate either his son or his grandson as the next Imam. All Ismaili Imams are – believed to be – linearly descended from the first Imam, who is Ali bin Abi Talep. The current Imam is the fourty-ninth one, and his name is Karim Shah Aga Khan IV.

[3]However, the researcher does not know whether this quotation is true or not.

Beside this positive image of the Salamiyah Self, it is very common to show a discrimination conducted by the government (and sometimes the state) against this city, without showing a reason. A post argues, "The government, with the power-holders, do not want to reward the city for its sacrifice in the war and its standing with the state; thus, the government refused to build factories near the city for no reasons but discrimination."

Contrary to the negative image of the Syrian Self, which is decaying to ashes, Salamiyah Self is represented in light of nostalgia to an intimate past. A post reads, "In the past, Salamiyah was [unified as if it were] one family. Now, it is not the case: in weddings, people try to show off by bringing the most expensive wine [instead of showing solidarity]." We can interpret such posts as that the Syrian Self is decaying consciously or unconsciously at the narrative level (as represented in the Facebook). That is, at best, this Self is good when it is bleeding (sacrificing) and when it is compared to others who – allegedly – are uneducated. At worst, the nature of this Self is disappearing; Syrians are bad morally and Syria itself is buried, it is finished. Contrary to this image, Salamiyah Self is, at worst, a topic of a nostalgic memory of an intimate social relations and a strong social capital. And, it is at best an Ismaili City that once formed an empire (Fatimid). In other words, Salamiyah Self is – more than the Syrian Self – stands by itself and not confined to others nor to the war narrative.

4.1.3 The State Legitimacy

This part will discuss how the state legitimacy (the idea that the regime is righteous and the state's apparatuses are trusted)[4] is affected by the current conflict as it is depicted in the Facebook pages. It is very prevalent that state legitimacy is predominantly anchored in the personality of the president, Bashar Assad, and his father Hafez Assad. Personal cult is what legitimizes the state, and exaggerating the praise of Bashar Assad is a common rhetoric such as describing him "the lord of the world." A post from Salamiyah al-Hadath shows this exaggeration in the following quote: "Hafez Assad, the greatest man of this Ummah (the Arabs), the Leader, the Founder, the Eternal forever in our hearts."

Another post was written by a journalist from Salamiyah and published across many

[4]For more discussion about legitimacy, see (Gilley 2006; Kratochwil 2006; Stillman 1974; Topal 2009; Van der Toorn, Tyler, and Jost 2011; Weatherford 1992).

pages after Syrians have criticized the government's decision of renting Tartous Port to Russia, which has been seen as an action of selling the home:

> "After the decision of renting the Port to Russia, swarms of ravens started to voice badly. O stupid! This is a way to avert the severe economic sanction. All states' ports are run by private companies. And, do not think that our 'leadership' core would make this decision if it were not useful for the people and home. Our trust in our leadership core is great. The coming days will prove that. Allah, may you protect and take care of my lord, the president."

Beside the prevalent personal cult as a source of legitimizing the state, few posts pointing to the state's efforts to counter corruption as a proof of legitimization. For example, posts were celebrating the state confiscating of the wealth of Rami Mahlouf, the president's cousin. However, this type of legitimization is still essentially based on the personal cult as the following past from Salamiyah al-Hadath shows:

> "[Quoting a president's saying] The Comrade, Doctor, the General Secretary of the Ba'ath Party said, 'corruption is the biggest challenge for every state. The administrative and financial corruption stems out from the ethical corruption. Both of them lead to a more dangerous corruption, which is the patriotic corruption steering someone to sale his home to who pays more. We need to crash every corrupted person with an iron fist.' "

Against this legitimizing rhetoric, there is a significant delegitimizing rhetoric with various reasons and various types. Some narratives delegitimize the state *itself*, not the government due to the bad economic performance or general dysfunctions. Rather it is the state itself (which is not a clear concept, and seems to be melted with the notion of home) is stripped from its acceptance by the Syrian people due to the whole structure of autocracy as this post from Salamiyah Wikileaks shows by quoting Magout, who is a famous poet and writer from Salamiyah:

> " 'Home is sold only for 5 Lira.' Magout wrote a book titled 'I will betray my Home.' Which Home someone may publicly betray? It is the home of the tyrants, while the real home is the home of the free people. Those who betray a home of a tyrant are truly devoting themselves to the human beings."

Other narratives of delegitimization are centered around the failure of the regime to protect the honor of Syria, the home, especially in vein of the frequent Israeli airstrikes. This type of delegitimizing narrative differs from the previous one by specifying a clear reason and a specific object of delegitimization: the regime failed to protect our home (while home, in the previous narrative is melted with the state and the regime by an enrooted fear). Put differently, this type of delegitimizing narrative admits a home to be protected, while the previous delegitimizing narrative does not admit such a home (since the home is gone with fear). For example, a post from Salamiyah Ehbaria ironically states, "Syria will avenge the Israeli airstrike ... by bombing Idlib [a province in Syria]." And another post from Salamiyah Wikileaks reads, "They [the regime] have given up the remnant of Eli Cohen's corpse [a famous Israeli spy who was executed in the 1960s] to Israel in return of nothing. It is a shame."

Another type of delegitimizing narrative is stemmed out from the dysfunctional economic performance and the corruption of the government, and it is clearly named: the government, not the regime, is dysfunctional. It is very common to read a post such as: "After 8 years of the war, the government still hires, firstly, the officials' relatives in the public positions!" Additionally, this type of delegitimization is expanded to the flaws in the government's performance in terms of providing security and controlling the paramilitary, as the following quote from Barai Sharqi argues: "After defeating the ISIS and liberalizing the suburb, the authority does not allow the people to come back to their villages because of corruption, they [corrupted officials] want to steal and exploit [the lands]."

In sum, we see that legitimizing the state is weaved, almost, around one reason: personal cult of the president, while the delegitimizing narratives swing from delegitimizing the *idea of* home (by denying Syria as home, it is gone, dead) and the existence of the state itself, through delegitimizing the regime because it does not protect "our" honor, to delegitimizing the government for specific reasons, such as the failed economic performance.

4.1.4 Power Relations

Power relations, in this part, refers to how those who control power in Syria and Salamiyah are seen in the Facebook pages. Usually, power is depicted as the ability to impose threat or control over the body, for example by arresting, and controlling knowledge and the source of information (Giddens 1991; Hinkin and Schriesheim 1989; Pierro, Cicero, and Raven 2008; Van der Toorn, Tyler, and Jost 2011). It is surprising that the military is not represented as a power-holder, rather it is seen as poor and devoted for protecting home. It is exploited by those who have power. During the period of analysis, there was a campaign, covered by the Facebook pages, imploring the president to end the obligatory military service for those who have served for six or seven years. This campaign was embarked on by soldiers themselves, and it is common to see planks held by a child calling for his father return from the front as a photo or a Facebook post.

Even the most radical stance against the military, which pictures it as a problem not a solution, does not narrate it as a power-holder in Salamiyah, at least. It can be a de facto power-holder in the provinces where it fights (as the post below shows in Idlib where the soldiers are stealing people's goods), but not in Salamiyah, which is a city out of direct clashes since 2017. However, it is worthy to note that even the pro-regime pages do not deny lootings committed in the "liberated" areas, and explicitly they condemn it. One of the Facebook groups (SAWA), for example, clearly says that it does not advertise any looted goods and the goods – to be advertised – should have a clear source.

Figure 4.6 Syrian Army Steals Civilians' Goods when it Imposes its Control on their Villages (Source: Hiea I'lamiyah)

In sum, and in terms of Salamiyah's social and political space, military is like "us," poor and pure; steals like us and bleeds like us, "we," the civilians. No power is held by it, so it implores the president to end the soldier's services begging its "mercy," although no hope is there: "My Lord, Mr. President, you are our only hope. We need to finish our military service," is a common post.

The state itself (even in the vaguest terms) has no power in specific events. For example, when it is related to paramilitary, it seems that the state can do nothing, and that is why not only police but also the Ba'ath Battalion (another branch of paramilitary) is called to control these paramilitary members. Sometimes, however, police arrest few paramilitary leaders and the Facebook pages celebrate that.

4.1.5 Reflection on the Meso-Level Narratives

In this part, I seek to build a whole picture of the collective/meso-level narratives; that is, I will try to explain how these different and multiple categories are connected together and how we can understand the duration of civil war phenomenon by digging into the meso-level narratives.

First of all, tangible threats, not *abstract* entities (such as identity), menace the *everyday life* and these threats are almost congruently represented in the various Facebook pages. Some threats invoke mobilizing narratives; *viz.*, survival strategies that are implored to save "us" from the threats. Other threats, however, do not. They are simply narrated through descriptive narratives, whereby no way of surviving is seen.

Military is widely narrated as successful in countering the enemy and protecting the civilians from them (military as a functional state apparatus), or it is glorified by its own without explicitly mentioning its function (the military as a value on its own). Military is seen also as a pure giver, devoted for "us," and it occupies a low rank in the power relations spectrum, suppressed by the "state" and/or the corrupted government. Moreover, when the causes of the war are narrated (conflict ethos), sometimes a Hero-Self emerges bleeding, suffering, and roaring in pain in order to protect the Arab Ummah. The actualization of this Hero-Self is the military, which has a lot of martyrs. This actual Hero-Self encapsulates a significant part of narrating the Self, the identity: Syrian-Self is partly a bleeding Self. The military, then, becomes an essential ingredient of narrating "our" identity, the Syrian identity.

This combination of "pure," "devoted," "repressed in the power relations," "the bleeding Hero-Self," of "being Syrian" into one entity, which is the military, results in contradictions. The Self, as a collective identity, is represented as the Syrian Self and the Salamiyah Self. The former is represented only in relation to the war; it does not exist in the narratives out of the war frame, contrary to the latter. The Syrian Self, also, is positively seen *only* when it is compared to the Other, the degraded Other (it is seen as poor, bleeding, and suffering when it is represented by its own without bounding it to the Other). Then, the military (which forms or embodies this bleeding) is very essential in actualizing and creating the Syrian Self as I will try to explain.

In order to establish the war as a narrative frame onto which the Syrian Self is "positively" built, the war should be narrated as a duty, an honor for protecting the Syrian existence. The war must not be seen as a mistake, a result of the failed state,

or a game played by international and regional powers while "we," the Syrians, are not more than a doll. Building the narrative of war as an honor is what the conflict ethos struggles to do. However, we saw that the conflict ethos fails to establish one hegemonic narrative on the war. When the war is narrated, three main narratives emerge: the war is due to our plagued-Self (the state failed to create a national morality); the war is due to our agent-less-Self (the war is nothing more than a play between international powers); and the war is a plot against the great Syria, Ba'ath Party, and against the Arab Ummah (nation) launched by essential enemies (e.g., Jews, Ottomans, etc.). Against these essential enemies, our Hero-Self is fighting, bleeding, which is only actualized by the military. This last sub-conflict ethos is *only* what can build a positive Syrian Self, therefore. Who actualizes this "positive" sub-conflict ethos? The military. However, this only pillar of the Syrian Self (military) – as positively represented by its own (not bounded to the derogated Other) – is poor, has no power; it is like "us," repressed and implores the "state" and Ba'ath Party to help.

These inconsistencies between the first and second arguments (military as essential to the positive Self and its weakness, simultaneously) make the Salamiyah Self appear as a solution to avoid this contradiction. Salamiyah Self, compared to the Syrian Self, is much wider (it is not confined to the frame of the war) and it has its own positive values without being bounded to a derogated Other and without making it bleed and suffer. In other words, the Salamiyah Self is *thicker* and more complex than the Syrian Self. I interpret this thick identity as a salvation of the inconsistency plaguing the Syrian Self; a space to which the narrator escapes to find a positive, coherent Self s/he can adopt. At the same time, this inconsistency could explain, I argue, the representation of the Syrian Self as dead.

In this line, we see also that the legitimizing narrative is *thin*; it is (almost) solely confined to the personal cult. The president is the only source of legitimization, and he, the super hero, the sacred man, never errs. On the contrary, the delegitimizing narrative is very much thicker; the home/state itself is delegitimized alongside with the regime and the government. The reasons of this delegitimization vary from authoritarianism that destroyed the feeling of being Syrian, through the coward regime which does not react to the frequent Israeli airstrikes, to the miserable performance of the government. This wide or thick delegitimizing narrative is logical since the other threats (paramilitary, economic crisis, the situation of helplessness) are not solved and there is no *one* survival/mobilizing narrative about them. Rather, we see that a descriptive narrative about these threats is prevalent. Thus, who is to be legitimized, who is called to be the saver? No one. On the other hand, the scattered power relations mean that the state itself is weak, and implicitly the "adored" tyrant

is such. That is why the delegitimizing narrative is thicker and more complex than the legitimizing one. Simply, there is a lot to be said on delegitimization than on legitimization.

Another note can be useful to support the interpretation presented above. The narrative of war against the essential enemies and – accordingly – the Syrian Self which bleeds to protect the Arab Ummha are indeed full with false assumptions. In order to protect the Arab Ummah, you should like this Ummah, which is not the case as these examples from Barai Sharqi show: "O Arab Ummha! Fuck you"; "[Arabs are] a group of animals. An Ummah whom all nations mock"; and:

> "Teach your children that the conqueror of Homs is the Leader, the Prince of martyrs, the Hero Ali Hozam [a Syrian soldier], and let your legends [namely, Khalid bin Walid, a very important symbol of Arabs and Muslims] go to hell. And, teach them that the Tiger Suhil Hasan's [a Syrian officer] victories have passed all the Islamic concurrences that lost Spain. And, teach them that Fadi Zidan [a Syrian soldier] who has stood bravely in front of a tank is more important than Abbas Bin Fernas [an Islamic scientist who is considered to be the first person who tried to fly], who fly for his own personal glory."

Up to this point of analysis, we see that two types of narrative unfold: thick and thin narratives. Thick narrative refers to complex narrative that says multiple things at the same time; it is rich with themes or concepts and can be read or interpreted in various ways because it is based on multiple premises. On the other hand, thin narrative says one thing at a time; it is simple, narrow, and represents the reality in a tough way, such as black and white. In thin narratives, a reader can easily extract only one premise lurking behind its logic. The delegitimizing narrative, the Salamiyah Self narrative, the survival narrative are all thick; while legitimizing narrative, Syrian Self narrative, and the threats narrative are thin.

This distinction between thin and thick narratives is inspired by many scholars. For example, Abend (2011) establishes a distinction between thick morality and thin morality; Franzosi, De Fazio, and Vicari (2012) distinguish between simple series of actor – verb (action) – object and multiple series in newspaper narratives; Strömbom (2014) discusses thin and thick recognition of the Other; and De Groot, Goodson, and Veugelers (2014) elaborate on thick understanding of democracy as a complex system and thin understanding of it as a simple political system. All of these examples show that thick narrative is more positive, more complex, and can deal with the reality better.

I argue that tracing thick and thin narratives during civil war may be useful because of three reasons. Firstly, the co-existence of thick and thin narratives "proves" that civil war is not simply a dispute spring up only across two shores of the battle front. Indeed, the battle front, the fighting, or the conflict between, say, the government and the rebels occupies only a part among many other disputes in a civil war. As the analysis shows, there are disputes everywhere: in legitimacy, in power relations, in conceptualizing the Self, etc. During a civil war, disputes and cleavages diffuse among the society and across its layers in all directions; they are never limited to a dispute between two conflicting parties. This understanding is in line with what is theoretically argued in the literature review: Civil war is inner structural transformations in a society and it is not simply a rebellion emerging suddenly. Thick narrative is *what enables the multiple disputes to spring up in the society.* Thirdly, thick narrative is aligned with positive cognitive notions contrary to thin narratives as the literature shows. Accordingly, does a thick narrative support ontological security more than thin narratives or not? I will come back to this question after ending the analysis of the individuals' narratives, because this question may help us to bridge the meso- and micro-levels of analysis.

4.2 Changes during the Civil War at the Individual Level

The thesis seeks to probe into the changes that are endorsed by individuals during the civil war after analyzing the changes at the meso-level. The aim is to understand how individuals adapt to, interact with, and are impacted by a civil war while it is happening; *viz.*, how individuals change during a civil war compared to the pre-war era is what sought to be discussed. Such possible changes between pre- and during-civil war eruption will be studied throughout the lens of individual identity: how individuals' identities change, and why.

Ontological security framework is adopted in order to systematically explain the changes in individual identity. That is, on the one hand, change in identity is believed to be a source of threats and anxiety (ontological *in*security), and on the other hand, we know that a civil war imposes myriad and strenuous strains and impacts on individual identities (changes in norms, meaning-system, othering, etc.); therefore, we need to unearth how individuals "manage" their identities during civil wars in relation to their ontological security statuses. In other words, the civil war–identity change–ontological security nexus is probed into. Drawing on the ontological secu-

rity frameworks (both the mainstream and the adjusted model), three domains are demarcated to study this nexus. They are: *everyday activity* (action, and interaction with others); *structure* (legitimacy, power relations, and social representation,thanks to Giddens); and *Self* (self-identity and agency). While identity theories apparently focus more on the last domain (Self), ontological security framework as depicted in the literature review focuses more on the interaction between all of these three domains as they will be briefly summarized below.

The interviews held with individuals from Salamiyah City help us to check the differences between the pre-war and during war periods along these three domains. Therefore, the changes in identity and ontological security of individuals will unfold. In this vein, it is worthy to note that, in this section, how an individual reports his/her identity's *change*(s) is what matters more than (but not instead of) what his/her identity is/was. Before analyzing the interviews, it would be useful to briefly recall the concepts and theories that are used to demarcate both of identity and ontological security.

Individual identity should not be understood as an antipode of collective identity, rather an individual conceptualizes his/her identity by incorporating personal features (e.g., personal goals, values, and cognitive skills to form his/her meaning system) and collective features (e.g., meanings that are inherent in the collective of belonging). Identity Process Theory (IPT) amply shows this inseparability between the personal and collective identities when individual identity is studied. IPT also provides us with a useful conceptual framework to comprehend how individuals continuously form their identities. IPT determines seven identity principles that every individual seeks to sustain a "high" status. These principles are: self-continuity, self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-consistency, self-distinctiveness, purpose-in-life, and belonging (to a group). Individual is always engaged in forming his/her identity in order to maintain these principles or some of them; sometimes, however, individual has to sacrifice some principles in order to keep others. The overall mechanism beyond these principles is that individual needs to keep his psychological well-being "intact," supported, and protected as s/he changes his/her identity.

Besides the IPT theory, Mercia Model is used to shed light on the formation of individual identity in a closer way. Individual identity according to Mercia Model changes along four statuses: (1) diffusion which means that a person does not care about his/her identity and his/her conceptualization of the Self; (2) foreclosure which means that a person adopts without a deep thinking the identity s/he inherits from his family or in-group; (3) moratorium referring to endeavors to explore values and meanings that can be adopted by an individual to form his/her identity without

deciding yet who s/he is; and (4) achievement which alludes to building a strong identity after conducting a laborious effort to explore the possible components of identity. The first two statuses are labeled as regressive identity statuses, such that they do not provide an individual with a strong ego and s/he will be more vulnerable to trauma and shocks when a crisis happens (e.g., civil war). On the contrary, the latter two statuses are labeled as progressive statuses because they provide an individual with a strong ego and with a complex-self that shelters him/her from radical, uprooting changes and traumatic events.

Individual identity, finally, changes because every individual is immersed into various social representations that are continuously formed and re-formed among the collective(s) s/he belongs to and interacts with. Therefore, we need to check what the collective, in which individuals live, includes of attributes, meaning-systems, values, and so on. That is why analyzing the meso-level is important. Individuals do not create their own identities in void, rather they recompose them from “elements” that exist in the collective milieu. The discussion of identity in the Literature Review chapter ended by arguing that change is a natural part of identity, and it is not – per se – a threat. Self-continuity and change are not two opposite poles.

Ontological security is depicted in the literature review in two ways. Firstly, I summarized and sought to systematically (as much as possible) determine the “components” of ontological security theories as they appear in scholarship generally, and I call this “tenet”: the mainstream ontological security framework. The mainstream ontological security framework depicts that an individual is ontologically secure when his/her identity is continuous, so his/her self-narrative is not interrupted; his/her Self or reflecting on his/her identity is consistent, and no contradictions are endorsed within the Self; and – in line with these two points – the routine of individual is not radically interrupted as well. In few words, the mainstream ontological security is concerned with no-change in the Self and its narrative.

Secondly, this thesis seeks to contribute to the debate on ontological security by suggesting that continuity of the self-narrative is not the cornerstone of ontological security (especially when self-continuity is seen as equivalent to no-change), but the expressive relationship between a being and the world is what demarcates ontological security status. Simply put, if someone changes his/her identity perception, s/he is not necessarily ontologically insecure. I call this conceptual model of ontological security: adjusted model. This model can be seen as an extension of Flockhart (2016) work.

According to the epistemological and ontological stance of *ontic structural realism*, the relation between a being and the world exists prior to the existence of that

being and the world (relation exists priori to relata, and relata supervene after the existence of the relation). To simplify, there is no world without beings, neither is there a being without the world; they exist together thanks to the relation that creates them and links them; and finally, neither the world nor a being exists prior to the other, the relation between them is what exists prior to both of them, making them manifest.

This (constitutive) relation between a being and the world is the anchor of ontological security in the adjusted model. It is not, then, the continuity or the routine of a being which ontologically securitizes the being's Self. Drawing on this short introduction, the being—world relation is ontologically secure if and only if it "enables" both the being and the world to be "expressed" or manifest as much as possible; neither the being is engulfed on its own denying or fearing the world, nor the world absorbs the being into itself, annihilating the distinctive beings' selves. The being's Self echoes its own voice and enriches the world with its own distinctive features as well as the world thrives as multiple different Selves are voiced into its own entity. Thus, ontological security is labeled as an expressive zone.

Since imagining a relation as priori existing to the relata is difficult, Figure 2.12 above helps us to understand the ontological security relation. The inner circle stands for the absolute "place," whereby only "me," but nothing else exists. The being (and its Self) is foreclosed on its own as a fortress preventing any effects from the world, from others to penetrate the heavy impermeable walls. This inner circle, accordingly, represents toughness, self-anchoring, self-omnipresence. The outer circle, on the other hand, stands for the absolute "time," whereby every other and every different entity exits but "me." The world is omnipresent, analogous to the open, non-walled space, in where the being's Self is not distinguished form others. The outer circle represents, therefore, amorphousness, absolute equality, without any borders, whatever these borders are.

Ontological security is the expressive zone between the inner and the outer circles; the wider this expressive zone is, the more the relation between the being and the world is ontologically secure. The expressive zone is wide when the inner circle is small as much as possible and the outer circle is big; i.e., the being's Self has its own strong conceptualized and robust "foothold" and the world is rich and enables the Selves of multiple beings to be expressed. Ontological insecurity, on the other hand, has two types. When the outer circle recedes to the inner circle, the Self blocks the world and refuses to be opened to Others in order to keep its own realm closed to its own existence (Type I). The second type (Type II) holds when the inner circle expands to the outer circle; i.e., when the world absorbs the being's Self, and

nothing pertaining to the being' Self is sustained since everything is mutual.

Analyzing the interviews revealed three main categories demarcating the ontological security of individuals: everyday activity, action space, and Self.

4.2.1 Everyday Activity

Everyday activity refers to the daily movements, actions, and interactions of an individual with others and with his/her social milieu. It is space of actualizing the Self and agency of an individual: working to make money, traveling to enjoy various social or economic activities, running voluntary projects to influence the society, having free time to read books are all examples of activities that form the everyday activity. Giddens (1991) asserts the role of *routine* in sustaining ontological security and agency of an individual; Giddens's conceptualization of routine is a *type* of the everyday activity, which – in other words – points to the actual (physical) bio space of an individual to be active or to express him/herself across time and place.

Civil war impacts the everyday activity in various ways. The analysis of the interviews shows that individuals before the war have endorsed three types of everyday activity: *restricted*, *routinized*, and *developing* activities.

Some individuals expressed their activity as restricted when they believe that they have the potential ability to act in a better way had the conditions been different. They are restricted from doing actions they believe they can do, or from having an effective interaction with others if the contexts in which they live were different. In other words, their Selves and agencies are refrained from actualizing their potential abilities. More importantly, they can easily define the cause(s) of this refrainment.

M57E[5] is a man in his 50s living in Europe as a refuge when I interviewed him. He was a political activist and a pro-human rights defender in Syria; therefore, he was restricted by the regime and its security apparatuses. He described how his *fear* from the security apparatuses restricted his everyday activity, such that this fear prevented him from performing what he believed he could do. He said:

> "My life, my daily life was restricted by [political] fear. I was terrified all along my life. I did not care about my rights; I just wanted not to be

[5] M/F stands for male/female, the number refers to the age, and E/S refers to the place of settlement, Europe or Salamiyah. If another letter is added such as "a" or "b," then it is meant only to distinguish similar aliases from each other.

> terrified. A soldier could beat you in a street and you could do nothing. I do not exaggerate. I was terrified [he reasserts with a bold voice]."

Another participant, F50S, is a woman in her 50s living in Salamiyah. She was married to a Sunni conservative man when she was 18 years old and had given birth to 6 children. She belonged to an Ismaili family, but later her husband enforced her to bend to conservative Sunni life styles. She did not specify what the issues that she had to obey and follow, but during her narration she gave a glance:

> "I was a housewife and I have 6 children. I got married when I was 18 years old. I did not work because my husband's income was good . . . I had to take care of my children because I wanted them to achieve my dreams, the dreams that I could not make . . . he [husband] became religious and committed to the religion . . . he did not force me to pray, for example, but I obeyed him in some issues that I was convinced with . . . and some problems happened between us . . . but eventually, you had to obey or to be divorced . . . I chose to continue [with the marriage]."

Taking into our account that the fertility rate in Salamiyah is about 3 children for each woman (even for F50S's age groups[6]), and what she mentioned about her relations with her husband, it seems that she was enforced to stay at home to only take care of her children. In other words, her everyday activity was restricted due to masculine normative power in the society.

F33E's (a woman in her 30s, living in Europe during the interview) narrative on her everyday activity shows how it was restricted due to a weak ego. When she was in her 20s, she managed her program in Damascus University where she was an undergraduate student in a way allowing for her to spend all week days in Salamiyah except for one day. She did not want to leave Salamiyah and change her everyday life in Salamiyah although studying and living in Damascus would have given her a strong experience. Moreover, her sister suggested that she can take her to Europe to complete her study, but F33E refused and stopped learning English to block any chance for visa.

> "I did not have the courage to leave Salamiyah . . . I even stopped studying English not to go abroad. I was studying in the university, and I tried a lot not to leave Salamiyah by choosing all of my lectures in the

[6] An interview with M, who works in the health care sector.

> same day. . . I was very active in Salamiyah, and I was working with the Ismaili Council . . . I mean, I was going out a lot and moving a lot inside Salamiyah."

Some other individuals reported a routinized everyday activity. It means that an individual acts and functions in the daily life in a routinized and repetitive way. More importantly, she or he lives everyday as it is expected; i.e., as it is drawn by the routine which is created and embedded in the social, economic, and even political structure. An individual does not seek to challenge this routine, no matter whether s/he is happy or not. Contrary to the restricted type of everyday activity, the routinized type does not allude to potential ability that is restricted.

M40S, a man in his 40s living in Salamiyah, described his experience of routinized everyday activity before the war as an inertia sphere in which he was living. " Besides some readings, I was almost in a status of inertia," he said. M40S annotated negative feelings to this inertia, everyday activity, while F30E (an Ismaili woman in her 30s, living in Europe as a refugee) was happy before the war with the routinized everyday life. She had a normal life, and this normal life was – simply – happy (for M40S, the normal life is inertia not a happy life). She said:

> "I was living in Homs . . . and I studied in a Christian school [the schools also accepts non-Christians]. Expect very few religious accidents, we shared all events with the Christian people. So, I did not care about religion. I finished the high school and got a good tertiary education . . . and during my study in the university, my life was very nice . . . normal . . . I had great friends . . . We were having nice days and we are still friends until now."

Similarly, M40Eb, who is a man in his 40s and living in Europe as a refugee at the time of the interview, experienced routinized everyday activities before the war and he was happy. He used the word "normal," as F30E did, in order to describe this routine. "It [my life] was a normal life, everything was normal . . . I was an employee and had another private job. I had a wide social network . . . and I was happy with that," he said.

Finally, other individuals narrated their everyday activities before the war as developing activities. This type of everyday activity means that an individual struggles to widen her or his own "bio" area, to widen her or his ability of mobility; to enhance her or his action in the life in terms of strengthening her or his job, education, the impact s/he has on the society; or to enrich her or his Self even by changing

and challenging the routine. *Struggle* is the main theme in this type of everyday activity. That is, every endeavor to widen or strength the everyday life needs efforts to be achieved. As a feature of this struggle, we see that some individuals sacrifice certain aspects of their lives for the sake of a better life in the future or to satisfy their understanding of themselves. What distinguishes this type from the routinized everyday activity is the fact that the latter does not imply or indicate a development in job, education, or the personal life generally.

M32E is a man in his 30s who was living in Europe as a refugee at the time of the interview. He clearly described the type of developed everyday activity before the war; that is, he preferred to stay in Damascus in spite of the difficulties he had there, while he could easily live in Salamiyah in a comfortable way. Additionally, he preferred to work as a fake doctor in order to keep his ability to move highly, although working as an employee was better for him economically but not better in terms of mobility (which was more important for his plans). His decision to struggle emanates from his desire to enhance his life in the future even by sacrificing temporarily. He said:

> "I was planning to continue my life as any person: to build home, to establish a career in Damascus because it is better than Salamiyah. And, also I was planning to marry my girlfriend. I was not planning to go abroad, or to study outside Syria. My dreams were the dreams of 80 percent of the youth in Syria before the war. However, life was difficult especially during the [tertiary] study. Sometimes I worked as an annual worker, and other times I was working as a doctor. I preferred to live in Damascus more than Salamiyah because I liked to have a wide social ties, and to have many social activities, although in Damascus, my economic situation was very bad compared to my life in Salamiyah. The ability of mobility was good and important for me. Therefore, I preferred to work as a fake Doctor not as an employee although working as an employee was economically better for me.
>
> The Researcher: How did you work as a doctor and you did not study medicine?
>
> – I worked using my friend's name who was a doctor and worked in marketing medical products. This work provided me with ability to move around very well."

F60S is a female Marxist teacher in her 50s, who was living in Salamiyah at the time of the interview. She said that she has worked in Salamiyah's schools for years. At the first glance, her everyday activity before the war seems to be routinized; she was working a teacher which is a very routinized job. However, a deeper probing

into her narrative shows that her everyday life before the war was indeed developing because she was *struggling* to influence the social milieu with her ideas in spite of the significant difficulties.

> "We had good relationships with our friends. . . we were talking about policies and discussing public issues a lot. I was trying to implement my ideas [in the work], for example, by cleaning the school with the students to educate them how to cooperate. Teaching was my way to apply my values. I was very effective in terms of impacting the students and until now my old students contact me. Although I was not responsible officially on the psychological support, I was doing that a lot in my school. Students were coming to me asking for help, not to the psychological consultant."

After the war's outbreak, however, some participants reported that their everyday activity transformed from restricted to developing activity, which – at the first glance – contradicts our expectations in a context of civil war.

M57E is a man in his 50s who was living as a refugee in Europe at the time of the interview. He expressed explicitly that he was feeling free, and the fears that were ambushing him all the time in Syria before the war and after its outbreak (he was afraid of arresting because he was an active opponent) disappeared. He now could do what was difficult in Salamiyah (his jobs were not mentioned to keep him anonymous).

> "[After the war outbreak] the war restricted my mobility for a wide extent such that I was afraid of being arrested all the time. However, after migration to Europe, I became more free to act and interact. For example, I am now free from fear in terms of the everyday life."

F33E, who was living in Europe at the time of the interview (she is not a refugee), has a similar experience to M57E. Her everyday life activity was restricted due to her weak ego and her fear to leave Salamiyah, her physical cocoon. However, her father pushed her to leave after the war, because – at the beginning of the war – kidnapping was prevalent in Salamiyah and women were a clear target. After fleeing the country to Emirates, she finally was accepted in a university in Europe for her master study. She finished her study few months before the interview and was working in Europe when I interviewed her. She explained her story:

> "Because of kidnapping of women in Salamiyah, my father did not allow for me to go out of home. So, I had to leave Salamiyah to the Emirates. [There] I got a deep depression, I became no one . . . all my social relations disappeared. I missed the life that I had in Syria. I had worked for 4 years in the Emirates, but I was sad. I am happier here in Europe. It [Europe] is another type of exile. . . it is better than Dubai, but it is still difficult, because I am feeling that I am alone and far away from my family. It is very difficult; I was writing my thesis while I was crying."

Both F33E and M57E are enabled in Europe to have developing everyday activities that they could not have in Salamiyah before migration, and before the war. The war played a direct role in pushing them to flee Syria; they found themselves in Europe where the "system" or the structure in Europe kindled their potentials. Their everyday activity now is developing because both of them struggle: while M57E diffuses his ideas through his work and develops himself, F33E stands the difficult life and isolation in Europe to develop herself and her skills.

Emigrating to Europe is not an omnipresent "cause" of the transformation from restricted to developing everyday activities. F50S (the woman who is married to a Sunni man), for example, endorsed a transformation in her everyday activity from restricted to developing although she still lives in Salamiyah. She never worked out of her home before the war, and her agency was totally anchored into her children as she was living in a patriarchal family. However, her husband was arrested after the war and disappeared since 2013, so she found herself enforced to work in his shop, and more importantly to face the patriarchal extended family which – as she glanced – was not welcoming her to take her husband's shop. She annotated positive meanings to her experience as someone becoming independent and strong, and she regretted that she did not persist to work before the war.

> "My husband was arrested in 2013, and then disappeared, and my children are [until now] studying in the university. I started working in my husband's shop after his arrest. It was the first time that I had ever worked. After the arrest of my husband, we could not move easily inside Salamiyah; the children's father was taking them inside the city, in the car . . . now I cannot. Our mobility has shrunk a lot in Salamiyah. [Nevertheless] now, my work in my husband's shop has given me strength . . . I feel that I became productive . . . it was really good . . . someone must be strong to protect himself [she used "him" not herself] and his children [she means from the extended family]."

Another participant transformed from restricted to developing everyday activity

although the dominant patriarchal man was not absent after the war – as the case of F50S – but rather he became stronger. F35S is a woman, who was in her 30s, living in Salamiyah at the time of interview. She was restricted to act and interact with others because of a patriarchal family. However, only a brother was helping her to be more free. Her agency was conditioned on his existence; thus, she did not "possess" her own agency and independent Self. After the war, her "good" brother fled the country to Europe, and she found herself alone in front of her tough, patriarchal brother. Her situation became worse after her divorce as she became "stigmatized." The war created significant obstacles in her life as her good brother was enforced to flee the country and the other patriarchal brother was wounded during a battle and became more patriarchal than before (as he feels almost disabled). In spite of all of these difficulties, she started to rely on herself, to challenge all these difficulties to act and interact within the society by her own.

> "My brother was taking me to different social and art activities; I was protected by him [before the war]. Now, I just think to emigrate even crawling. I just want to escape. The economic situation is incredible. Very harsh. Very bad. The very simple things such as tissues are now very luxurious and affluent things. However, and in spite of that, now there are many cultural hubs that are run in Salamiyah even more than those before the war. Now, I am working in a theater as well in spite of my tough brother who wants to prevent me."

Europe, contrary to what presented above, is perceived by some participants as a place of routine which is annotated negatively. Some individuals had developing everyday activities before the war, but their migration to Europe turned these activities into routinized.

M50E is a man, who was in his 30s and living in Europe as a refugee during the interview. He was very active in his life before the war, and he had all conditions to have a developing everyday activity; he was studying, working, and also politically active seeking to influence the society and change it into democracy. However, his daily life activity changed into a restricted one after the war due to the fear of intelligent security, and then, after fleeing the country to Europe, it became routinized which he hates. He said that he felt safe in Europe but entrapped into a meaningless routine that he had to obey. This routine transformed him from a political activist to merely a worker.

> "I was working in the political field. You know . . . the civil society

> was very active. So, we were working with NGOs and also with Human Rights Organizations. I participated in sit-ins, in some demonstrations in 2004 and before 2004. They were very timid activities, however. What was called Damascus-Declaration has formed a strong platform for Salamiyah people to participate in the political activities calling for democracy and enforcing the role of human rights and civil society. I was working in this atmosphere. I continued studying . . . and my life was active, politically and socially. . . we were, for example, publishing remarks promoting human rights.
>
> [After the war] I was arrested. Then, after my release, I hid until I left Salamiyah. Friends have disappeared. The social ties have decayed. 2013, that year was very bad . . . they started severe arresting campaigns, and some people started to die under torture. [After living in Europe] in Europe here, I am just a worker. From a political activist to a worker."

Before reflecting on this analysis, needless to say that many other individuals expressed a transformation to a restricted everyday activity in Salamiyah as someone can easily expect in the context of a civil war. For example, M40S, who described his daily life before the war as a life of inertia (routinized), described the everyday activity after the war as restricted due to fear. He nicely conceptualized his daily life as a zone shrinking to the current, instantaneous moment of his existence whereby the next moment is not guaranteed. His everyday activity was "instantiated" without a root, neither in his willing to be developed nor in the society's structure to be routinized.

> "[After the war] I was in the heart of death, at least psychologically. I accepted it, and losing hope became a source of happiness. When you are immersed in the details of everyday life, your intellect does not help you. Someone may be alive, and suddenly dies. Look at my sister for example. She was going to her work. She was killed. Disappeared. So, I think that living the moment is the only right thing to do."

This analysis shows that neither Europe nor Salamiyah (i.e., the place per se) is what determines the type of everyday activity. As presented above, some individuals transformed from a restricted to a developing everyday activity when they fled to Europe while others experienced the opposite (more precisely from developing to routinized everyday activity). Similarly, in Salamiyah, some individuals were experiencing restricted everyday activity before the war and transformed to developing one after the war, while others transformed to a restricted activity. Therefore, I may cautiously conclude that individuals' personal features or aspects play a crucial role

in this regard more than the place/structure itself.

Besides that, a pattern of transformation to a developing everyday activity ensues. Those whose activities were restricted before the war (regardless of their social, educational, and economic statuses) and found themselves – after the war's outbreak – harshly threatened to lose everything struggled to improve their everyday activity. This pattern appears only with women participants, which indeed supports this conclusion. Women (such as F50S and F35S) found themselves in front of a huge threat that could destroy their selves and agencies. For example, F50S was enforced to improve her activity, otherwise her children would starve. In few words, individuals can improve their everyday activity to a developing one if they feel that they are ambushed with significant threats. If, on the other hand, a little surviving window is opened for these individuals (e.g., emigrating to Europe), they may surrender to a restricted or routinized everyday activity. The latter case may explain why some participants transformed from developing to routinized activities in Europe: They were psychologically tired, and they did not face a threat of arrest or hunger in Europe (although they are not happy with the routine), hence, they simply gave up to the current structure and the routine. Those who transformed to developing activities in Europe are "lucky" in terms of finding jobs that helped them to develop their agencies and skills, as someone may conclude initially from the interviews.

Regarding the adjusted model of ontological security, we can see that developing everyday activity boosts a wide expressive zone between an individual and the world; that is, an individual diffuses his/her idea, activity-laden notions, and meanings through his/her activity. Thus, s/he influences the others and the structure; s/he voices him/herself within the atmosphere of the world. However, the restricted everyday activity boosts ontological insecurity because it hinders the expressive relations between an individual and the world. The individual's Self is engulfed onto itself (Type I) living (or it is enforced to live) into its own foreclosed realm. The routinized everyday activity also *tends* to boost ontological insecurity because it weakens the Self of an individual and strengthens the world, such that the latter "devours" the former (Type II).

The participants' narratives show that the developing activity was associated with bride, happiness, and with tiredness sometimes. It was clearly shown that individuals *choose* to be in a developing everyday activity in spite of the tiredness because they want to widen their "bio" areas. In other words, they want to widen the expressive zone. On the contrary, the restricted and routinized everyday activities are associated – sometimes – with negative feelings and with agency-less-ness. Even those who were "satisfied" psychologically with their routinized or restricted every-

day activities became happier and more satisfied with the developing activity when they transformed to it after the war (the case of F50S, for example).

Drawing on these notes, breaking down and radically uprooting the *routine* does not necessarily trigger ontological insecurity as the mainstream ontological security framework argues (thanks to this interruption in the routine, some individuals transform to a developing activity (Flockhart 2016; Gustafsson and Krickel-Choi 2020)). To elaborate more on this point, another narrative of a participant will be useful.

M27E is a man who was in his late 20s and living in Europe as a refugee at the time of the interview. He had a routinized activity before the war and was happy with it: “I had a normal life; I was studying, and working. And, I had a good career, so I was happy, also I had a wide array of social relations.” After the war, he fled Salamiyah to Europe, where he endorsed a harsh working environment, yet he was happy, as he explained: “I hate the routine [here in Europe]; from work to home, and vice versa . . . but this routine gives you meaning of life.” His usage of routine in this context does not have the same semantic meaning of my usage of it in this thesis. In M27E’s narrative, it means a struggle; he develops his career which is difficult, hence, he experiences a developing activity now (his career is not mentioned to keep him anonymous).

This example shows that although M27E was happy with the routinized everyday activity in Salamiyah before the war and although he was tired in Europe, his life had a meaning. This is to say, routine may not be taken for granted as the only anchor of ontological security. I may argue according to the adjusted model that M27E is more ontologically secure now (in Europe) than his case before the war; the developing everyday activity has a wider expressive zone than the routinized one.

In sum, the various types of everyday activity have different “values” of the expressive zone: developing everyday activity has a *high* value of the expressive zone; restricted everyday activity has a *low* value; and routinized everyday activity has a *moderate* value (because some individuals, who experienced a routinized type of everyday activity, were happy and other not).

4.2.2 Action Space

Action space can be understood as the meta-everyday activity, and is close to Giddens's concept of structure. Action space is the set of factors that enables or hampers an individual from being active in the world. An individual may express him/herself "perfectly" in the social world when a set of factors are met, and s/he may withdraw or feels that s/he is suppressed otherwise. In what follows, I will elucidate how the respondents expressed the action space. Mainly, two categories unfolded: *open action space*, which refers to a set of factors making an individual active in the social world where s/he lives; and *closed action space*, which refers to a set of factors enfeebling an individual's ability to activate him/herself in the social world.

Some respondents were acting in Salamiyah, before the war, in an open action space, such that they could diffuse their ideas, could try to influence the society, and actualized their ideals and potentials. The social relations they had, their jobs, or the knowledge they obtained helped them to "find" themselves in an open action space. For example, F60S, who was a woman in her 60s living in Salamiyah at the time of the interview, was working as a teacher in a local school, and she had a good relationship with her students, which enabled her to be active. In other words, her career and her good relations with the students made her work in an open action space, in spite of the obstacles imposed by the Ba'ath Party. She explained:

> "For example, I made a questionnaire for students about [the following question:] 'how do you want your teachers and family to deal with you.' The school refused to use this questionnaire. You know . . . the Ba'ath [ideology]. So, I forgot it and did not repeat it. 3 years later, I met the same students again when they came to the high school, and they told me that they liked the questionnaire idea – 3 years ago – and then I repeated this questionnaire again and had continued using it every year [before the war]."

Another respondent, M55E (a man in his 50s, living in Salamiyah at the time of the interview) was also acting, performing himself in an open action space. He was developing a project to interpret the Quran by using the esoteric Ismaili teachings. He could influence many people, and he was satisfied with this project. What helped him to be active in such a way is that he was not seriously fought by the Ismaili Council (the official body representing Ismaili people). Additionally, Salamiyah's atmosphere was seen by him as unique, intellectual, and fertile to receive any new ideas. He said:

> "Policy is a pandemic, I have decided that for a long time. This project [re-interpreting Quran] was welcomed by the people of Salamiyah . . . I was working on it intensively although people-in-charge in the Ismaili Council did not help me, but they did not negatively affect me. Simply, they found this project as menacing to their knowledge-power . . .
>
> Salamiyah had different features from other cities in Syria. Salamiyah had no barriers preventing freedom. Of course you had to respect the norms, but these norms were more advanced than other [Syrian] cities. For example, our women can lead the prayers [in the Ismaili traditions] and in Salamiyah every Ismaili may have a different understanding of the God."

Other respondents were living in a closed action space, whereby they found no reason to act, or they were suppressed to perform their Selves. In other words, their agencies were restricted and suffocated not to be active in the social world for multiple reasons. M42S (a man in his 40s who was living in Salamiyah at the time of the interview) explained that he was not interested in the public issues. He was focusing primarily on himself, his education, and his career. Salamiyah as a social space of potential action did not mean a lot to him; he simply was not interested in being active in the social world. He attributed that to the fear or poverty, hence, focusing on work and education was essential to him to avert poverty in the future as he explained to me.

> "I was very much focusing on my education and my career. I was not interested in social issues. I was isolating myself, you can say . . . confined only to my education and my career. When someone asks me, I was defining myself as a person from Salamiyah, but I was not religious, and not interested in knowing the religion [the Ismailism] which Salamiyah is known for."

Another individual M57E (a man in his 50s, who was living in Europe at the time of the interview) is a human rights defender. He said that he was restricted in Salamiyah before the war due to terror, to fear of being harmed by the regime. The fear ambushed him in a closed action space. He did not know his rights as a human since everything was existing at the bay of death. Acting, therefore, as an expression of being alive is a dance with death. He said:

> "We were in fear, in terror. We were terrified [he asserted]. You feel that you were always a target. Before the revolution, we did not enjoy [or know] any rights. So, we could not understand the rights, and hence,

> the legitimacy because we do not experience these rights. The revolution happened to re-take the rights; which rights? I did not know. But what I know that I had no rights, I did not have the right of life. Only death had the legitimacy. If someone invited you to food and poisoned you, you could not sue him. I did not know and I could not get my rights. Neither did the judiciary nor others sustained our rights . . . the state had no institution; terror annihilated every institution. I was terrified all along my life. I did not care about my rights, I just wanted not to be terrified."

After the outbreak of the war, many individuals experienced transformations to a closed or open action spaces regardless of their types of action space before the war. M57E, for example, transformed from experiencing a closed action space due to fear to experiencing an open action space that is "created" by the "revolution." He actively participated in the demonstrations against the regime, and attributed positive values and meanings to this collective action (the demonstrations) and to Salamiyah City as an intellectual, civilized city to which he was proud to belong. In sum, after the war broke out, he found himself acting in an open action space allowing for him to preform and actualize himself in a way that he could not do before the war. He explained in detail:

> "There was a huge response of millions of people [the demonstration], resonating with the desire to make a change in all Syrian cities. The basic norm [of the demonstrators] was to sustain the peaceful feature of the demonstrations although the regime started to kill people. The [demonstrations'] leaders, the coordinators across Syria, have decided that the demonstrations must stay peaceful, in spite of the incentives to carry up weapons. Even when the Free Syrian Army was formed by the soldiers and officers, who were working with the Syrian Army and then defected, it was basically trying to protect the demonstrators [not topple down the regime by violence.]"
>
> "The Researcher: Do you think the majority of those people – in Salamiyah – who have participated in the demonstrations were Ismaili? And, were not the Ismailis afraid of the revolution as the majority of the 'revolutionaries' were/are Sunni?
>
> -No. They were not afraid. Salamiyah, after 40 years of this ruling regime, was harmed; it was neither supported nor protected by the regime. Salamiyah, historically, was a political spot of resistance against the regime. Most of the people in Salamiyah belonged to the leftist powers, politically. Most of the political powers in Salamiyah indeed established the political life in Syria . . . I mean the people in Salamiyah were mainly engaged in these powers. These powers [the political parties] were assassinated by Hafez Assad, later. And, they [Salamiyah people]

> considered Hafez Assad as the assassin of this active political life. So, in Salamiyah, there was an awareness that fostered our belonging to the nation [Syria] above belonging to the sectarian group [Ismaili].
>
> The Researcher: But you say something interesting. Sociologists can expect that authoritarian countries/states may not help to develop a national belonging, and sectarian or tribal belongings are above or more important than the national one, especially in times of crisis!
>
> -I do not want to describe Salamiyah as an Ismaili city. Because the religion and the social awareness were different. The social awareness distinguished the society in terms of how much it [the people in the city] was reading [books], joining parties and so on."

Others, on the other hand, experienced a transformation from an open action space to a closed one after the war. M55E, who was working on the project of re-interpreting the Quran in light of the esoteric teachings of Ismailism and experiencing an open action space transformed to endure a closed space after the war. This change happened because he lost his belief and his pride of Salamiyah society and its people. He was arrested after the war, and when he was released people did not pay attention to him, which negatively impacted him.

> "I told people in Salamiyah that I am emigrating not because of fear but because I hate you. Salamiyah will never return to the case of intellectuality that it had before the war, so I will not go back. Brotherhood decayed after the war. In the same family, disputes were erecting . . . and no discussion was formed to solve them. . . hatred only . . . people became selfish. Even my old friends did not visit me when I was released from the prison. I discovered that they were exploitative."

Other individuals experienced a closed action space before and after the war. M50E (a man, who was living in Europe at the time of the interview) said that he did not think to be active in the public sphere because every action for people is a waste of time; hence, he was focusing only on his own family, withdrawing totally from the society. Interestingly, he described Syria as an "ugly" place, which implies that he was living in a place he hated. This ugly place is an aesthetic expression of the closed action space since no one desires to work in an ugly, hated place. He stated:

> "Any action you wanted to do for the society [in Salamiyah, before the war] was a waste of time; everyone in the society thought that he was the most important and the smartest one. Also, security [people] is the only power-holders in Salamiyah before and after the war and they control

> everything . . .
>
> The tragedy in my life is that I was born under an era called the Ba'ath [ideology and rule]. Every time I come back to home from the Soviet Union or from Saudi Arabia I found that our home is the worst . . . it is highly polluted at all levels . . . everything is ugly [not *was*, but is which points to something perpetual]."

Finally, it is obvious that the open action space provides wide expressive zone; i.e., it represents an ontologically secure relation between a being (individual) and the world. An individual in an open action space can express him/herself well, and his/her identity and agency-related "uniqueness" is more likely to manifest in the world, which will be enriched with multiple actions, in turn. On the contrary, the closed action space provides a narrow expressive zone, and a low value of ontological security of the relation between a being and the world.

4.2.3 Self-identity

After interrogating the everyday activity and the action space, self-identity is left as the last dimension that demarcate the ontological security relation between a being and the world. In this part, I will discuss how the participants reported their identities and how the war impacted them. While doing so, I will compare between the three theoretical models: the identity theories, the mainstream of ontological security, and the adjusted model of ontological security as it is unfolding.

Before stepping into the analysis, it is important to introduce three concepts because they are not set forth in the literature review: cosmopolitanism, universalism, and negative identity. Cosmopolitan identity, or cosmopolitanism, refers to a disposition adopted by the Self towards Others, all different Others in the world. A cosmopolitan Self does not only and simply tolerate Others, but it celebrates the differences and joyfully searches for more differences as a source of its own thriving. All human beings, in this vein, are seen as equal in their humanity and worthy because of, not in spite of, diversity and differences. Hence, cosmopolitanism does not uproot the local, particular identities; quite the reverse. Cosmopolitanism is a call for celebrating diversity, which necessarily implies particular, local identities (Abizadeh 2005; Corpus Ong 2009; Gustafson 2009; Holliday 2010; Karlberg 2008; Pichler 2009; Saroglou and Mathijsen 2007; Schiller, Darieva, and Gruner-Domic 2011; Skrbis, Kendall, and Woodward 2004). Cosmopolitanism, furthermore, is a moral stance

such that it does not passively celebrate the different Others, but shows active solidarity with them since we all belong to the same planet and our struggle is one (Durante 2014; Vieten 2006). It manifests at the everyday life level (Skrbis and Woodward 2007) as a social and cultural capital possessed by the individual (Daskalaki 2012; Skrbis, Woodward, and Bean 2014), and is not confined to elite thinking or macro-level discourses. Thanks to internet and social media, people in remote, isolated cities, such as Salamiyah, can be cosmopolitan even without travelling or trading (Kwak, Poor, and Skoric 2006; McEwan and Sobre-Denton 2011; Schiller, Darieva, and Gruner-Domic 2011).

Universalism, on the other hand, is inherently different from cosmopolitanism. Universalism is a concept evoking rights for all people regardless of their particular identities, cultures, or races (Lott 2000); however, universalism eliminates particular identities, such that one over-arching universal identity, a hegemonic culture will prevail (Sayyid 1998). That is, universal identity is an expression of *failed* particular identities, and it is adopted to cover the distorted particular belongings. Universalism emerges "[as] an incomplete horizon suturing a dislocated particular identity" (Laclau 1992). In this vein, universalism is the opposite of cosmopolitanism since the former apprehends particulars as threats to one thriving humanity, while the latter celebrates these diverse particulars as the source of such thriving.

It is worthy to note that a damaged particular identity leads to universalism and it may also lead to cosmopolitanism (Chin 2006): When someone feels that her or his identity or the collective meaning to which s/he belongs is dotted with contradictions, s/he abandons this belonging and re-addresses him/herself with cosmopolitan identity according to (Chin, 2006) or with universalism according to (La-clau, 1992). This note brings us to elaborate on negative identity.

Negative identity is a psychological concept referring to internalizing negative attributes into the Self, such as racist stigma, homophobia, etc. If a person includes these negative attributes into her or his Self, s/he loses her/his self-esteem, hope, and satisfaction of life (Bals et al. 2010; Flanders et al. 2016; Kappler, Hancock, and Plante 2013; Mashiach-Eizenberg et al. 2013). After explaining these three concepts, I will analyze the participants' identities as they were reported in the interviews.

The participants expressed six categories of identity as I will explain them below: active humanitarian, Ismaili, leftist, passive humanitarian, amorphous, and non-reflexive.

Some participants expressed their identities as *active humanitarianism*, which is very close to the cosmopolitanism concept. The participants, in this thesis, have

not used the concept of cosmopolitanism but they used “humanitarianism,” (*insani*, in Arabic) so I adopted their own words. Additionally, I found that the adjective “active” is useful because it asserts the struggle and the effortful disposition towards the humanity. Believing in humanitarianism is not, in this case, an escape of a failed or disappointing local identity. M57E gives us a clear expression of active humanitarianism as he expressed:

> “[Before the war] my identity was formed by my readings. It is about humanitarianism [*insani*]. It meant that what is done at the particular level must impact the collective level or the whole. I thought that if you have a will to do [something], then you can do.”

On the other hand, some participants expressed what can be called as *passive humanitarianism*, which is closer to universalism conceptually. Individuals of passive humanitarianism withdraw from their particular identities as they think that they are false identities, and engulf their belief-systems and Selves into the notions of one human species. All cultures and races are nothing more than superficial (and sometime harmful) boundaries dividing us. Accordingly, human beings are either merely biological entities evolving as all biological creatures (such that there is no boundary between a dog in Syria and a dog in Argentina) or they are physical powers. Therefore, an individual can do nothing at the collective level since s/he is limited by this super power (collective biological or collective physical).[7] M50E has never belonged to any particular identity and until the time of the interview, he was seeing human beings as powers looming into this universe. His goals were very limited to his own family as he said.

> “I am human, all human beings are the same . . . we all are powers in these universe. I just wanted to live in dignity and to be tolerant towards others and my omnipresent goal was to educate and raise my daughters in a good way [before the war].”

Other participants are *leftists* since Salamiyah is inhabited with notable leftist powers. They belonged to the Marxist or other leftist ideologies; some of them were organized formally in these parties while others were not because being a member in a leftist party could cost a Syrian years of his/her life in prison. F60S was raised

[7] Both passive humanitarianism and active humanitarianism are transcendental universal understanding of the world. However, it is worthy to note that this understanding does not necessarily stem out from spirituality.

up within a communist family, who was their neighbor, because her mother was busy and her father was dead. This family affected her and she became leftist. Later she was married to a leftist person and both of them – still – incorporate the Marxist principles in their life. She said:

> "I am leftist, Marxist, not religious, but I like Ismailism; however, I am not proud [of being Ismaili]. I and my husband were believing in a good and thriving society . . . and I was applying the Marxist ideas in my teaching and my work."

Ismaili is the other type of identity that was reported by the participants. F56E, who was a woman in her 50s living in Europe as a refugee when I interviewed her, had endorsed multiple identifications before she upheld an Ismaili identity although her family was Ismaili. She was, in other words, searching for an identity especially that she was repressed by some people from Salamiyah (because she was rich and they were poor leftists) and by her mother.

> "I was building my female identity after being suppressed [by my mother]. . . it was very important to feel again as a beautiful woman. At that time, I was not believing in Ismailism and in any religion, but I was believing in God. It was an inner conflict, and I was thinking that the Imam is not sacred and he is not the source of wisdom . . . Later, I started believing in Ismailism again because of a special experience."

Notwithstanding these previous clear identities, I found that some participants expressed an *amorphous* identity; an identity that is not formulated yet, but the individual is *aware* of this amorphousness. M40S expressed clearly this type of identity before the war:

> "My beliefs were oscillating between a thing and its antipode. This was happening according to the psychological state and the readings. They [the beliefs] were not ideas that I believed in, they were corresponding to the psychological status. Immediate responses. I was adopting to these ideas to relieve myself of pressures and impasse."

Finally, some individuals were*non-reflexive*; they did not reflect on their Selves, usually, because they do not care about knowing and expressing who they are, or because they want to escape from contradictions and conflicts of identifications.

Hence, their identities are blurry. It is observed that the non-reflexive individuals focus intensively on practical goals and assign significant heft of their lives on achieving material, daily goals. M40Eb, a man who was living in Europe at the time of interview, did not think before of describing his identity although he belongs to an Ismaili family. For him, being good – in the common sense – in dealing with people is enough to identify himself. he asserted, "Working was all my life . . . and I was dreaming to have a farm and to have everything there, to live in it with my wife and my children. Religion for me is how you deal with people, simply." Similarly, M31E (he belongs to an Ismaili family) did not reflect on himself since he was isolated from the society in Salamiyah. "My goal was to attain a good education; I did not belong to anything . . . I was feeling that I am ousted from the society." M27E belongs to a Sunni family, and when I was trying to push him to give me an identification of himself, he defined himself as a person who was laughing a lot; i.e., he could not have a clear conceptualization of himself.

> "I am Sunni, Muslim but all my friends are Ismaili. I do not care about religion . . . and I drink alcohol . . .
>
> The Researcher: So, again who were you [before the war]?
>
> [silence] hmm . . . I was happy, laughing a lot, now that changed [in Europe], now I do not laugh as I got used to do."

Regarding the expressive zone, we can see that active humanitarian, leftist, and Ismaili are clear identities (and they can be classified in the achievement status of Marcia Model because it seems that the participants have developed these identities after making efforts to explore possible identities and to commit to them). They provide individuals with a strong and clear Self that can identify itself and interact with the world without being absorbed by it. Hence, they foster wide expressive zone. However, amorphous and non-reflexive identities as not formed yet, so the Self will be weak without its own "home" that distinguishes it in the world from others. Hence, they foster a narrow expressive zone. Finally, we can consider passive humanitarianism as in-between in terms of the expressive zone (having a moderate value); it is a clear identity, but it implies a withdrawal and agentless-ness.

In what follows, I will present how the war impacted the participants' identities, if any. While doing so, I will compare how the identity theories (especially IPT), mainstream ontological security, and the adjusted model approach the ensuing changes in individuals' identities.

M29E was an Ismaili before the war, and he proudly described thoughts of Ismailism

as follows:

> "Ismaili religion taught us how to think and it does not have rigid instructions . . . it taught us a method [not a list of dos and do nots] . . . In Syria, I was feeling more comfortable when I was hanging out with Salamiyah [Ismaili] people."

However, after he emigrated to Europe after the war, he changed radically. When I asked him about his identity and how he conceptualized himself, he answered:

> "Now, I belong to myself. I am focusing on myself, on my future. I belong to nothing but myself. My belonging is to my future . . . to make a family, have a good job, etc. My identity is related to what I am doing [namely, to work and everyday life]. I do not care about belonging seriously. I will not go back to Salamiyah, but maybe I will go back to Syria to invest if that is possible. But, not to Salamiyah. I will not go back at all. Never. In Salamiyah, people do not support investment."

M29E abandoned belonging to the Ismaili identity and became non-reflexive; identity does not matter for him, only working and daily goals matter, which is a common feature of non-reflexive individuals (he is not amorphous because amorphousness implies searching for a new identity and endorsing a formulation of the identity not careless-ness). Identity Process Theory[8] in M29E's case may not provide us with a satisfying explanation for why he made this transformation in his identity. He assigned more heft to the principle of self-efficacy (by asserting the importance of work and future), but – objectively, from the researcher's viewpoint – there is no reason to sacrifice other principles such as belonging since there is no contradiction between his belonging and self-efficacy principles. IPT expects individuals to sacrifice some identity principles when they cannot keep all of them highly maintained, which is not the case of M29E. Moreover, even if he hated Salamiyah as a source of collective identity, he had lived for a long time in Damascus and was Ismaili, and many Ismaili people live in Europe, so he has all reasons to sustain his belonging. So we do not know why he became non-reflexive according to the identity theories. Indeed, according to the *basic assumptions* of identity theories, M29E became void of mean-

[8]The seven principles of identity are important here to discuss the psychological well-being; they are: self-esteem, self-continuity, self-efficacy, self-consistency, belonging to a group, purpose-in-life, and self-distinctiveness. People may sacrifice some principles for the sake of supporting others; see for example, (Bardi et al. 2014; Breakwell 2010, 2014*b*; Jaspal 2013; Jaspal and Breakwell 2014; Jaspal and Cinnirella 2010*a*, 2012; Jetten et al. 2015; Mitha, Adatia, and Jaspal 2017; Ryeng, Kroger, and Martinussen 2013; Vignoles, Chryssochoou, and Breakwell 2000, 2002).

ings, which is nothing more than losing identity (identity is a struggle for meaning, a process of self-awareness as Erikson and Marcia have stressed (*cf.* Cieciuch and Topolewska 2017)). The identity theories (and particularly IPT) face difficulties in explaining this case especially that he is happy and seems to be satisfied with his own job in Europe as he told me.

From the perspective of mainstream ontological security, I argue that M29E became ontologically insecure after that transformation in identity because his self-narrative was totally disrupted. However, the mainstream ontological security does not provide us with an explanation on why he chose such an insecure transformation. The adjusted model, on the other hand, may reveal why he made such a transformation. According to this model, M29E did not endorse a significant transformation in his ontological security before and after emigration to Europe as I will explain in what follows.

Before the war, he had a clear and well defined identity (wide expressive zone at the identity dimension), and he endorsed relatively an open action space (he was a student, volunteering in the Ismaili Council, and pride of the intellectual atmosphere of Salamiyah), but his everyday activity had a narrower expressive zone as a routinized activity (due the fact that he was a student) compared to his identity's and action space's expressive zone. After he emigrated to Europe, he suddenly had a wider expressive zone at the dimension of everyday activity, transforming from routinized to developing (to a high value of expressive zone); that is, he had his own job and he was developing his work when I interviewed him. In other words, he became ontologically more secure at the dimension of everyday activity. However, he abandoned his "strong" identity becoming non-reflexive; i.e., he became less ontologically secure at the dimension of identity, while the action space – Europe in this case – was still open. In few words, his expressive zone shrunk at the dimension of identity, but expanded at the dimension of everyday activity. This case compensated the "lose" of the expressive zone. Thus, his ontological security did not change radically as the mainstream ontological security framework suggests.

What supports this interpretation is that he said that he is happier in Europe than he was in Syria; this statement does not contradict what the adjusted model shows of his ontological security state (because his expressive zone widened on the everyday activity dimension), while his statement about happiness contradicts the mainstream ontological security since a radical change *only* in identity is enough to make him, totally, insecure ontologically.

Why did he transform his identity to a non-reflexive one then? one possible explanation, driven from the expressiveness idea, could be as follows: He might feel that

remaining an Ismaili implied some sort of contributing to the Ismaili community in Salamiyah, or entailed acting in a way that would keep his Self "expressive" within the Ismaili milieu (Salamiyah collective) as it was before the war. If it was so, then he would be under pressure, and he needed to make laborious efforts to keep the same level of expressiveness – as an Ismaili – in Salamiyah collective because he was physically far away and he did not find any tool to be effective/expressive in Salamiyah (as he was in Europe during the interview). Therefore, and in order to absolve himself from such "burden" and efforts, he chose to strip himself from the Ismaili identity.[9] This explanation has to be taken very cautiously to be developed and tested in further research. However, it is in line with the main assumption beyond the adjusted model of ontological security (and also the mainstream one, to some extent): psychological well-being (happiness) and ontological security are not totally identical; the latter usually entails efforts because it is about widening the expressive zone between the being's Self and the world.

Another case that can help to elaborate more on the difference between the three theoretical frameworks is M33E. M33E had an achieved Ismaili identity; he read, researched on Ismaili doctrine, and worked with Ismaili institutions in Damascus during his tertiary study there before the war. He also had a *sublime* goal, which was establishing a scientific journal explaining the complex physical concepts to people in a simple way. "I was very much believing in Ismailism and I was reading a lot in this regard and also I had a religious position. I was interested a lot in Ismailism," he explained. After the war's outbreak, he was working with the Ismaili Council. He was focusing on helping Ismaili people who lived in Damascus and its suburbs (where Sunni people form the majority); so, he was in a close contact with many of them. In 2012, a very tragic event changed his life and his identity. Islamist rebels attacked a suburb near Damascus (called Adra Amaliyah) where many Ismaili people lived. They kidnapped and killed many Ismaili people who were there including women and children (and – of course – other minorities, especially the Alawite people). M33E, before this event, was warning the Ismaili Council that there were significant indicators of a soon withdrawal of the regime army from Adra Amaliyah to allow the rebels to break into. He was calling the Ismaili Council to take an action in advance to protect these Ismaili people, and he provided the Council with the necessary statistics and information. However, the Ismaili Council did not cooperate with him and refused to listen to him and his evidence. Moreover, some people-in-charge in the Council threatened him to stop working on these issues.

[9] What may support this argument is that he said that he does not belong to Europe as well. Ergo, the "world" for him is still Salamiyah – unconsciously – and he could not keep "widening" the zone between his Self and this world due to the physical distance, then he abandoned this belonging and his identity.

At the night of the rebels' attack on Adra Amaliyah, he received a call from his Ismaili friend, who was living there with her husband. On the phone, she told him while crying, "They [the rebels] killed my husband, and they will rape us . . . pray for us . . . God may help us." This abrupt call propelled him to rethink of the Ismaili doctrine totally and fundamentally. "I thought how the Imam assigned the position of the presidency of the Council to someone who did not care about anything but himself. It means that the Imam is not sacred," M33E said. He started to critically think about religion, and switched from Ismaili to be a skeptic, then to be an atheist. He added:

> "I became non-religious then an atheist. However, I am continuing to study these issues. Even the Imam, I do not think he is sacred anymore . . . After the war, my goal became just to help people. Now in Germany, my only goal is to be non-forgotten, victims' voice should never be forgotten."

He refused to annihilate religious identities of people, although he was an atheist. For him, this is an extreme atheism which is not different from extreme Islamism, as he explained to me. His "sublime" goal after the war (victims should never be forgotten) and his belief in plurality of the one human community (thanks to atheism) figured his identity as an active humanitarian; he belonged to the humanity with its diversity. In sum, he transformed from an Ismaili to an active humanitarian.

The identity theories (especially IPT and Marcia Model) interpret M33E's identity as a movement from an achieved status, a clear identity to another achieved and clear identity that is laboriously ("I am continuing studying [identity–related issues]," he said) carved out when the "old" one was plagued with contradictions and dotted with conflicts between the ideal and the actual. M33E's psychological well-being, accordingly, did not change between before and after the war in terms of his identity change (however, the traumatic event badly affected him). Contrary to the identity theories, the mainstream ontological security would classify him as ontologically insecure because of the radical change from an Ismaili to an atheist/active humanitarian.

The adjusted model, however, is different in analyzing M33E's case. In the early period of his trauma after Adra Amaliyah event and abandoning Ismailism, his expressive zone did not change, and did not become narrower. It is true he changed his identity, but he was still having a clear and well defined identity (unique Self that can easily express itself in the world). Additionally, he actively continued his work to help people who were affected by the war (developing everyday activity, high value of

expressive zone); and his action space was still open because he was acting under the umbrella of the opposition – to some extent – and he had sufficient tools to actualize himself as a "helper" of the victims. Nevertheless, after he emigrated to Europe, his expressive zone deteriorated radically, and he became less ontologically secure but not because of the change in his identity. Rather, his everyday activity changed from developing to routinized, which he hated a lot because this type of activity refrained him from achieving his potential as he explained (narrower expressive zone). Additionally, he experienced a transformation from an open action space (where he could act and fight for his beliefs and ideas) to a closed action space, where he found himself totally paralyzed and hampered from helping those who was helping in Syria due to the physical distance mainly. In sum, the expressive zone was narrow – when I interviewed him – since both of the everyday activity and the action space changed from supplying a wide expressive zone to a narrower one. That is why he became less ontologically secure.

4.2.4 Linkages between the Meso- and Micro-Level

When the narratives at the meso-level/collective level were analyzed using data from the Facebook public pages, two types of narrative imbuing the duration of civil war unfolded: *thick narrative* and *thin narrative*. These two narratives wrap up multiple topics related to the civil war, including identity, conflict ethos, state legitimacy, threats, and surviving rhetoric.

Thin narrative refers to a discursive space that says one or few things at the same time, contrary to thick narrative which refers to a wide and rich discursive space saying multiple things at the same time. The literature that uses thick and thin narrative concepts (or discourses) assigns positive, fruitful cognitive abilities to the thick one and negative, futile cognitive abilities to the thin. The analysis of the meso-level narratives shows similar results: Thick narrative has been created or emerged at the meso-level (most probably, unconsciously) to avert the deep contradictions in the thin narratives. In other words, when the Syrian Self is recalled and invoked in the narratives, it appears full of deep contradictions of the assumptions which are lurking behind this Self; and this Self is narrated only in a narrow, thin way (Syrian Self is bleeding and it is better than the derogated Other; i.e., Arab Gulf). However, when the Salamiyah Self is invoked, it appears free from contradictions and it includes wide and complex ways to be described as a thick narrative (maybe the wide narrative space allows for various representations to seem *different not*

discrepant).

Resting on these observations and on the adjusted model of ontological security, I argue à la the literature of thick/thin narratives and the literature of self-complexity (in psychology) that at the meso-level, thick narrative fosters ontological security more than thin narrative does. Put differently, thick narrative signals ontological security of that collective, while thin narrative indicates ontological insecurity, patently because the former allows for a wider expressive zone than the latter. However, some scholarship of the mainstream ontological security may lead us to think that the thin narrative fosters ontological security more than the thick one because simplifying the Self is a way to sustain a high level of ontological security (since ontological security is mainly based on the idea of continuity or no-change). A simple Self can be kept continuous better than a complex one, especially when this simplicity is stemmed out from Othering.

At this point, a worthy note can be added. In civil war literature, we know that essentialist scholars argue that people hyper-identify themselves with their in-groups. Hence, can we consider the thick narrative of Salamiyah Self, which is contrasted by a thin narrative of the Syrian Self, as a hyper-identification with the in-group in line with the essentialist scholarship? At the first glance that may be right. However, I argue that this is not exactly the case. Narrating the Self of Salamiyah in a thick narrative (and in a positive term compared to the Syrian Self) results from the fact that the Syrian Self is dotted with contradictions as I widely discussed when I analyzed the meso-level. Salamiyah Self is positively represented as a shelter for identity (more than the Syrian) not because of engulfing the Self into the in-group due to fear *per se* (as the essentialists argue), but because the Salamiyah Self allows for a wider array of expressive abilities without falling into contradictions.

Regarding self-identity at the micro-level, the individuals, I met, did not show at all that the Syrian identity is more important than the Salamiyah-identity. Quite the opposite. All interviewees expressed that either they are Ismaili, belonging to Salamiyah and only to Salamiyah (not to Syria), or they are Syrians and Salamiyah-ones. In other words, *every* individual who said that s/he belongs to Syria also said that s/he belongs to Salamiyah but not vice versa. This is in line with the analysis at the meso-level. That is to say an analogy manifested between the meso- and micro-level regarding the identity, which can be interpreted as that the individuals I interviewed tend to associate themselves with an identity that fosters a higher value of ontological security.[10]

[10] The interviews showed that being a leftist or an active humanist, for example, does not contradict belonging to Salamiyah.

However, we need to take this comparison between the micro- and meso-level cautiously because most of the individuals I met are opponents, while most of the Facebook pages are either neutral or pro-regime except one anti-regime, roughly speaking.

5. Conclusion

This thesis probed into the relations between ontological security and identity change during civil war, questioning this relations, and seeking to unearth its nature. In order to discover this relation, which is the main research question, I firstly discussed and analyzed changes that happen during civil war. Since there is a very wide array of such changes, I argued – depending on the relative literature – that tracing changes in individual and collective identities is useful because changes in identity last for a longer time than other types of change. I called the changes in identity "sedimented changes"; changes in identity imply incorporating new norms, meanings, and goals into the personal and collective self, so such changes are not conditioned "temporarily" on the duration of civil wars, and they can last for a long time. Other changes, however, may disappear as soon as the war ends or when their contexts are altered. Regarding identity, I reviewed the literature that has dealt with the topic of identity at the individual (psychological) level, at the collective level, and at the intersection level between the two (Identity Process Theory). In line with some scholars, I argued that change is a "natural" part of identity, and it is not the opposite of "self-continuity." Indeed, it is impossible for someone (or a group) to sustain her (its) identity fixed, non-changeable. Change in identity happens all the time, and maintaining a sense of continuity (which is something discursive in nature) *necessarily implies* making change.

Then I discussed the ontological security framework and found that it can be classified in two wide sub-frameworks. The first one is mainly based on idea of no-change; *viz.*, to be ontologically secure, a being (individual, group, or state) must keep its identity non-changeable. I called this framework the "mainstream ontological security." Patently, this mainstream tenet suggests (implicitly) that change is the opposite of self-continuity, and (explicitly) that change is an exterior quality that can inflict identity or the Self, so the Self can and has to avoid it. The second framework has been less discussed in the literature, and it – contrary to the first one – depicts the idea of change not as an opposite to self-continuity, and argues that change can, indeed, enhance the ontological security state of a being. Change, in this

vein, is an interior quality of identity. This thesis extended the second framework by suggesting the "adjusted model" of ontological security.

Ontological security, in the adjusted model, was defined as an expressive zone demarcating the relation between a being and the world. In order to make this definition understandable, I explained *ontic structural realism.* As an epistemological and ontological stance, ontic structural realism means that relations precede relata in their existence. Relata supervene relations; i.e., they exist only after, ex post, the relations exist. Thus, ontological security, as an expressive zone, is a relation between two relata: a being (e.g., individual) and the world. Both a being and the world exist because they are related to each other through the expressive zone; a being's Self exists and manifests as unique, having its own voice into the world, and the world exists as it is composed of multiple Selves, each has its own voice being echoed into the milieu of the world. When the being's Self and the world are enabled to manifest ultimately (i.e., the relation between them functions perfectly), we say that the expressive zone is wide, and we have a case of ontological security. By contrast, when one of them (either the Self or the world) is prohibited from manifestation ultimately, the expressive zone (the relation between the two relata) is narrow, and we say that we have a case of ontological insecurity. In the case of ontological insecurity (or narrow expressive zone), either a being's Self is engulfed into itself, folded onto its own realm, without an interaction with the world (Type I of ontological insecurity), or the world absorbs the Self into its realm annihilating its own, unique "voice" (Type II of ontological insecurity).

This expressive zone was measured or observed along three dimensions or domains: (1) everyday activity, referring to the physical action, interaction, and mobility of a being in the world; (2) action space, referring to the set of factors that enables or hampers a being from being active in the world, and to express its potentials; and (5) identity, which is about how a being conceptualizes him/herself. Each one of these dimensions can foster a wide or narrow expressive zone, and it can boost an ontologically secure relation or insecure relation between a being and the world.

These theoretical arguments were developed by conducting a qualitative study on Salamiyah City, Syria as the war was still ongoing.

In order to capture the changes during civil war at the meso-/collective level, I analyzed the data that were collected from Salamiyah Facebook pages. The analysis showed many types of threats and – resonating – survival rhetoric. These threats, which are perceived at the meso-level, were: (1) "enemy," referring to the rebels and the opposition; (2) paramilitary causing chaos and turmoil; (3) economic crisis, which is attributed to the failed performance of the government, corruption, and

the international embargo; and (4) “helplessness,” which is a general description of the general, unbearable situation without assigning any specific type of threats. As a response to these threats, two types of narrative unfolded: *mobilizing narrative* and *descriptive narrative*. The former implores certain actors and suggests specific actions to face the threats, for example, by calling the police to arrest paramilitary’s members. The latter, on the other hand, only describes the threat without calling for any action or actor to face the threat; patently, this type of narrative does not believe in any actor (i.e., delegitimizes it) and in any possibility to avert the threat.

The analysis of the meso-level also revealed the “conflict ethos.” The analysis showed no “hegemonic” conflict ethos during the Syrian civil war, while multiple, contradicting narratives were competing to “explain” the current war and to conceptualize the “Self.” For example, some narratives attributed the war to a plot conducted by “essential” enemies (e.g., Israel) against the “great” Ba’ath Party and the Arab Ummah (nation), while other narratives attributed the war to the failed Syrian regime, which could not establish a healthy state and a patriotic identity.

More importantly, I found that two identities were represented in the narratives at the meso-level: Syrian Self and Salamiyah-Self. The Syrian-Self was almost negatively represented, and was usually framed within the discourse of the war (i.e., whenever the Syrian Self was mentioned, the discourse of the war formed the topic of the narrative or the background for it). It was seen as a Self that is “gone,” weak, and exists only when it bleeds and suffers. However, some narratives positively represented the Syrian-Self, but only by comparing it to a degraded Other (e.g., Arab Gulf). Contrary to the Syrian Self, Salamiyah Self seemed to be positively represented: It was not confined to the discourse of the war, it was not compared to Others to show its “greatness,” and it was represented in multiple ways, not in few ways as the Syrian Self.

I interpreted the difference in representing the “patriotic” or national Self (Syria) and the local Self (Salamiyah) as follows. Firstly, I dwelled on the distinction between *thin* and *thick* narratives: The former alludes to a narrow space of discourse, whereby one or few things can be said or are said; while the latter refers to a rich space of the discourse, whereby multiple things can be said or are said. Thin narrative is associated with a futile cognitive quality, while thick narrative is associated with a fruitful cognitive quality. Secondly, I argued that the local Self was represented within a thick narrative during the time of conducting the study because there were many things to be said about it. However, the national Self was represented within a thin narrative because only the war, basically, was the associated topic to it. The local Self was a shelter for the narrators (Facebook pages) to protect and

exercise their identity because the national Self was plagued with contradictions; that is, when the national Self was positively narrated, deep contradictions were immediately emerging.[1] By using ontological security framework, I argued that thick narrative fosters wide expressive zone, contrary to thin narrative. Hence, local identity fostered a higher level of ontological security than the national one. Differently from the essentialist scholarship (which argues that civil war increases in-group identification due to a fear from Others), I argued that narrating the local Self thickly was not due to fear per se, but due to the fact that the national Self was dotted with contradictions. Using the local Self, therefore, was a way to increase the ontological security at the meso-level.

The interviews with individuals and analyzing the collected narratives showed that they have experienced three types of everyday activity: (1) restricted everyday activity, which means that an individual is restricted from achieving his/her potential at the everyday level; (2) routinized everyday activity, referring to repeatable activities that encapsulate individuals; and (3) developing activity, namely, an individual makes a notable effort in order to enhance his/her life and to widen his/her "bio" area. I argued that the first activity provides only a narrow expressive zone, the third one supports a wide expressive zone, while the second one lies in-between (moderate expressive zone). The analysis showed also that some individuals have transformed from restricted everyday activity before the war's eruption to developing activity after the outbreak when their Selves and agencies were harshly harmed by the war, and when only struggling was the way to survive. On the contrary, those who found a window of hope to survive (such as emigration to Europe), have transformed from developing everyday activity to routinized one, which – in turn – harmed their psychological well-being.

The second dimension of the expressive zone is action space, which refers to the environment enabling or hindering an individual from being active in the world where she lives. Open action space means that an individual has the tools, the chance, and the environment's elements that enable her to manifest her agency and Self in the world. She, accordingly, can express herself well achieving her potentials. This type of action space fosters a wide expressive zone, therefore. On the other hand, close action space means that an individual lacks the ability, the tools, the chance, or the environment's elements that are necessary to manifest and express her agency and Self in the world. Thus, this type of action space has a narrow expressive zone.

[1] the positive image of the national Self was a Self that could resist the "enemies," and indeed the army was what actualized this resistance, but it was repressed by the state itself, at the same time. Additionally, the state was seen as an entity that lost its legitimacy, and as a weak state in terms of power

Finally, self-identity is the last dimension of the expressive zone. Analyzing the interviews showed that some individuals had clear, strong, achieved identities (Ismaili, leftist, and active humanitarian), so they could express themselves clearly and they had a unique position in the world; thus, these clear identities fostered a wide expressive zone. Others, however, did not reflect on their Selves (non-reflexive identity) or they did not yet form a clear identity (amorphous identity); in both cases, they had a narrow expressive zone since their Selves did not have their own voices in the world. Some individuals endorsed a clear identity, but this identity pushed them to withdraw from the world, because you can do nothing (passive humanitarian); hence, this identity fostered a moderate expressive zone.

The analysis showed that individuals have transformed from a type of identity to another as the war erupted. The comparison between identity theories, the mainstream ontological security, and the adjusted model of ontological security suggested that these three tenets agree with each other on some cases of transformation in identity and contest on others. More importantly, whereas the mainstream ontological security suggests that an individual endorses an ontologically insecure state when s/he changes his/her identity, the identity theories do not agree in all cases. If such an individual transforms from an achieved, clear identity to another after s/he laboriously carves out the new one, then s/he has a high level of well-being according to the identity theories. The change in identity itself does not matter in this case. The adjusted model, on the other hand, agrees with the identity theories that change per se is not enough to say whether an individual has a higher or lower ontologically secure state (proxied by psychological well-being), but it differs from both the identity theories and the mainstream ontological security by accounting for the other dimensions (everyday activity and action space). Accordingly, I found that some individuals changed their identities without becoming less secure ontologically because they enhanced other dimensions. Moreover, some individuals changed their identities *in order to* increase their ontological security because their old identities did not support an enhancement in the other dimensions of the expressive zone. As an example, someone may change from being X to be Y when X does not help her to have a developing everyday activity and substitutive challenging of power relations (wide expressive zone), while Y does.

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APPENDIX A

A.1 Complexity and Narrative

A.1.1 Complexity

Describing a phenomenon as complex implies that each element (or component, part, variable) of this phenomenon impacts and interacts with the other elements in a non-ignorable way. We cannot *seclude* a specific selected element (variable) of a complex phenomenon, making it *solely* act or vary, keeping the other elements (variables) constant, to check how it impacts the phenomenon as a whole. In a complex phenomenon, there is no room for *"ceteris paribus"* (Jervis 1998; Little 1993). A complex phenomenon should be understood as a whole system, or an organic system; it exists as it is only because every element or ingredient interacts with each other. This quality of complexity (i.e., no ceteris paribus) seriously challenges quantitative methodology, especially the standard regression models (Braumoeller 2003), whereby we assume that only a variable varies while all others are set constant, to check the significance of this sole varying variable.

Complex phenomena also assume that the outcome or dependent variable impacts the associated independent variables via a feedback circuit(s). In standard regression models, independent variables in any model must be "independent"; i.e., they are *not* affected by the outcome or the dependent variable. However, this assumption is not valid in complexity studies. An outcome impacts the independent variables through a feedback process (Byrne 2005; Jervis 1998).

Environment, into which any phenomenon under study exits and functions, is critical as well. There is no phenomenon that exists or functions in void. Environment affects the phenomena acting within it inherently; hence, different environments will affect the "same" phenomenon in different ways (Berger 2019; Jervis 1998). So, the civil war phenomenon should be studied *within* its ambient environment (political, social, economic ... environments) in order to reveal (or control for) the

connections that link this phenomenon to its environment[1] (Byrne 2005).

Complexity-related literature suggests that a researcher needs to analyze a complex phenomenon at three levels: micro-level (Little 1993, 2015); macro-level (Elster 1982), and meso-level (Hedström and Ylikoski 2010; Jepperson and Meyer 2011).

This disaggregation of a complex phenomenon into three levels helps to loosen the complex knot of the mechanisms that give rise to that phenomenon. At the micro-level, researchers collect their data from individuals, focusing on their everyday lives and their banal experiences; nuanced mechanisms are revealed at this level and what is obscured behind the complexity becomes more transparent (e.g., Cederman and Vogt 2017; Gerring 2010; Kalyvas 2012; Pearlman 2015; Tilly 2001).

On the other hand, the macro-level should not be ignored and must not be reduced to be a result of the micro-level's mechanisms. Macro-level's mechanisms have their own, autonomous existence, and –to some extent– they are independent from the micro-level's mechanisms (Elster 1982). Ergo, we need to collect data at the macro-level as well. In other words, we need to collect data on the contexts, the environments, and the circumstances, in which the studied phenomenon takes place.

Finally, meso-level data helps us to connect the macro- and micro-levels together, providing a clear explanation of the phenomenon under study. Indeed, both the micro- and macro-levels interact with each other, and this interaction should be explored in order to have a better understanding of the complexity (Hedström and Ylikoski 2010; Jepperson and Meyer 2011).

A.1.2 Narrative

Narrative is difficult to be defined because of its wide usage. However, someone can propose a comprehensive definition of narrative, which is extracted from relative literature. This definition should be "vast" to capture the most canonical and salient qualities of narrative, which form the main data of this thesis.

A narrative is a story told by an individual (or even a group) to specific audiences or potential listeners. It coalesces *in a meaningful way* the numerous deeds, activities, and inner feelings that the narrator has endorsed or even imagined; by this

[1] Environment is labelled later – similarly to the literature – as macro-level and context-effects.

coalescing narration, some activities are selected due to their importance and others are neglected. The logic behind selecting-neglecting life events is to imbue the narrator's life with meaning and with a suitable interpretation of what s/he has done. Thus, narrative is not a chronicle. It does not merely tell what have happened in a temporal order, but rather it reorders what have happened in a way showing meaningfulness of the outer world and the inner Self. Any narrative, finally, is a story, i.e., it must have a plot, around which the everyday, banal events evolve (Bar-Tal, Oren, and Nets-Zehngut 2014; Brockmeier and Harre 2001; Bruner 1990; Feldman 2001*a*; Hänninen 2004; Nelson and Lindemann 2001; Nerlich and Jaspal 2012).

Narrative does not solely point to the individual- or the micro-level, but also it alludes to the macro-level, reflecting information, events, and meanings from both. Narrative is only formed or created in a zone that brings together a cultural domain, a social domain, and personal experiences (Bruner 1990). Narrative, then, is only possible to exist in the intersect of these three domains. While cultural and social domains represent the collective or the macro-level, the personal experiences represent the micro-level. Cultural domain includes the repertoire of "infinite" possible narratives and cultural elements that could be put into a narrative told by someone. No one can create his/her own "words" or elements of his/her own narrative; everyone borrows his/her narrative's constructing blocks (e.g., themes, descriptions, words, and metaphors) from the cultural repertoire, in which the narrator lives. Social domain refers to the interactions between the individual (the narrator) and the others who belong to his/her in-group(s) and out-groups. Needless to say that an individual accesses to the cultural repertoire via interactions with social entities; either these entities are formal institutions such as schools (Bar-Tal and Rosen 2009), informal gatherings, or other forms of public spheres (Bruner 1990). The personal experience, eventually, fuses these cultural and social dimensions in an almost – but not always – *coherent* whole narrative (Bsumeister and Newman 1995; Hermans 2000; Schank and Abelson 1995). Any narrative, then, represents: (1) the outer world (Bsumeister and Newman 1995); (2) social and collective identities, to which the narrator belongs or *from which s/he distances* him/herself (Bruner 2001; Feldman 2001*b*); and (3) the deep (or even unseen) cultural norms (Nelson and Lindemann 2001). Hence, the macro-level is represented in narrative throughout these elements.

On the other hand, an individual narrator does not only tell his/her personal stories and express his/her own worldview (Feldman 2001*a*), but also s/he reshapes his/her identity every time s/he narrates (Kraus 2006; Mankowski and Rappaport 1995). Put differently, narrative is not only an object expressed in a personal storytelling, but it actualizes the narrator's personality every time it is storied. Hence, it is an

“active” tool to reflect on the micro-level.

Finally, narrating is a process that continuously manages and balances the relationship between the micro-level (including self-identity, self-experience, and the like) and the macro-level (including cultural values, etc.) (Juen 2000; Tappan 2000). Furthermore, to reassert, without this interaction between the micro- and macro-levels, no narrative can be created (Harre 2001; Nelson and Lindemann 2001). It is worthy to note that narrative does not *combine* the complex relationships in a society (between the macro- and micro-levels), but it *fuses* them in an *organic* whole. That is to say, narrative must not be understood as a *merely* reflection upon the objective and subjective reality; rather, reality is reformed continuously by the narrative (through (re)creating the meaning-system, at least). An ontological splitting of narrative from the objective and subjective reality does not make sense according to some narratolgists (Brockmeier and Harre 2001; Schrauf 2000). Ergo, narratives – as data – are themselves parts of the reality more than being reflection upon that reality; thus, analyzing this type of data gives us a deeper and a more “credible” image of the reality that the research is interesting in. To clarify, when someone is asked to express his/her opinion or observations about the reality, then s/he is asked to make a reflection (to varying extents) on this reality. However, when someone is asked to narrate or tell his/her story in relation to the reality, we almost get the reality itself as a narrative, whatever that means.[2]

[2]To make the last paragraph clear, we can think of the reality under question as a hierarchy of levels or orders. Order-0 is the lived, experienced reality, in which individuals act and function, and sometime they are not aware of it and its details especially when it punctuated with routines. Order-1 is the reality as the individuals think of and reflect upon it. Order-2 is the reality as the researcher reformulates it using abstract concepts after extracting these concept (inductively) from order-1 or testing them (deductively) in order-1. Narratives are – of course – placed in order-1, but closer to order-0 compared to answering direct, analytical questions.

APPENDIX B

B.1 The Interviews Questions

(1) Tell me your story, about your life, before the beginning of the war and when it started, 2011?

(2) Focusing on the war breakout and the years later, how did you manage to survive?

(What are the threats, harms that have impacted your life? Can you explain? You, also, may explain the climate of threats generally even if you were not personally harmed.)

(3) Why do you think the war happened?

(What is this war about? How others perceive the war?)

(4) In Salamiyah, before and during the war, and also now, who have the upper hand in terms of power?

(Who seize control over people life; their resources; how can you describe the relationships between you and the power-holders?)

(5) Who is "rightful" now in terms of what is happening in Syria as a whole and in Salamiyah?

(Do you trust the public institutions in Salamiyah, and the governmental institutions in Syria? What are the rules that are followed to manage your relations with the public institutions?)

(6) What is home for you right now, during the war, and before the war?

(7) How have your activities at the everyday base changed before and after the war's breakout?

(8) Can you explain to me your identity? Who are you? To which group(s) do you belong? Again before and after the war if there were any change.

(9) What are the values you believe in? how did they change before and after the war?

(The most important things to you)

(10) What are your goals? Did they change before and after the world, how?

(11) The Other, who is the most distanced from you? it can be the most different and the most abhorrent, who is it? Did it change after and before the war?

(12) What is your worldview? How do you understand or see this world? From which perspectives? Did they change before and after the war?

(13) What is your ideal Self? What is your actual Self? How did it change during the war?

(14) Are you happy economically and psychologically? How has your happiness or self-satisfaction changed before and after the war's eruption?

APPENDIX C

C.1 The Consent Form

Figure C.1 The Consent Form–The First Page

Sabancı University
Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Study Title: Ontological Security and Identity Change during the Syrian Civil War (2011-2019)

Principal Investigator: Prof. Ayse Betul Celik
Co-Investigator: Samer Sharani

Interviewer: Samer Sharani

The purpose of this study:

This research probes into how Syrains in Salamiyah City seek their ontological security (i.e., their psychological, social, and identity security). This research is designed as a Master Thesis.

The specific objectives of the proposed research are summarized as follows:

This research seeks to:

(1) Reveal how people manage their ontological security during civil wars;
(2) Find how individuals' identities have changed during the civil war as mediated by ontological security seeking behaviors.
(3) Suggest micro-level intervening policies to foster ontological security of individuals, as much as possible.

During the interview you will be asked to:
Tell your story or stories during the civil war. How the war changed you; challenged you; how people changed; how you understand the war; how your every-day life; whether and how the legitimacy of the government has changed during the civil war; the activities you do; your psychological state; and whether and how your values, goals, and beliefs changed. The expected duration of the interview is 60-90 minutes.

You may find the following risks or discomfort from participating in this study:
Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. Your name and any specific information that might identify you will be kept anonymous and confidential.

You may find that speaking on political issues is uncomfortable, or mentioning the psychological status may put pressures on you. Please tell the researcher that you are not comfortable in these cases, so you can either stop the interview or change the topic. You may also ask the researcher to delete the voice record if you feel uncomfortable.

You can stop the interview at any point. You can skip any question or comment that you do not like.

All data will be deleted after completing the thesis. There will be no way to match your name and the interview, in principle. Also, you and the other respondents will receive no financial benefits.

If you have questions about the interview, please contact Prof. Ayşe Betül Çelik, Faculty of Art and Social Sciences at Sabanci University, Istanbul Turkey. Phone: (216) 483 9298. Email: bcelik@sabanciuniv.edu Or you can email Samer Sharani, the MA student who has interviewed you on ssharani@sabanciuniv.edu in Arabic.

Note: Be sure that you write to Prof. Çelik in English.

FRG-A410-01-03

Figure C.2 The Consent Form–The Second Page

If you believe that your rights have been violated in any way, please contact Prof. Mehmet Yıldız, Chair of the Research Ethics Committee at Sabancı University at (216) 300-1301 or by email at meyildiz@sabanciuniv.edu.

By signing this consent form, you are indicating your consent to participate in this study. Please note that you can use a nickname if you prefer not to write your real name in this Form.

Signature ______________________________ Date________________

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