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# Monuments of sorrow: tools for rooting conflicts and peacebuilding on the example of post-Soviet Georgia

**Zarys treści:** Artykuł analizuje „pomniki smutku” w konfliktach gruzińskich. Przedstawiono ogólny opis sytuacji ukazujący główny trend, w którym pomniki pogłębiają granice między społecznościami dotkniętymi konfliktami. Zajmuje to ważne miejsce w tworzeniu stereotypów zachowań w okresach przedkonfliktowych, konfliktowych i pokonfliktowych. Jednocześnie pokazano potencjał „pomników smutku” jako elementów budowania pokoju.

**Outline of contents:** The article analyzes “monuments of sorrow” in Georgian conflicts. The work presents a general description of the situation revealing the main trend, in which monuments are intended to deepen the dividing lines in societies affected by conflict. This practice occupies an important place in the formation of stereotypes of behavior in the periods immediately before, during, and after the conflict. At the same time, the article emphasises the potential of “monuments of sorrow” as elements of peacebuilding.

**Słowa kluczowe:** polityka pamięci, konflikty w Gruzji, pomniki wspólnego smutku, architektura pokoju.

**Key words:** politics of memory, conflicts in Georgia, monuments of common sorrow, peace architecture.

The process of the collapse of the USSR and the restoration of independence in Georgia was accompanied by armed conflicts, the deaths of more than ten thousand inhabitants, the internal displacement of 300,000 people, and more than 2,000 persons going missing or disappearing without a trace.

The problem is that complex and multicomponent conflicts in the territory of Georgia, as well as conflicts in the territories of the former USSR as a whole, are

described on the basis of only one component of the system (ethnic), thereby creating a danger of primitivization (simplification) of their perception and interpretation. For many years these conflicts have deliberately been presented as ethnic, ethno-political, and political-ethnic.

The formation of such definitions, in general, is facilitated by the dominance of aggressive ethnocentric ideologies and the overall way of thinking in post-Soviet societies. In the territory of Georgia there exists a plethora of incompatible ethnocentric movements which have laid foundations for ethnic isolation, nationalism, separatism, and irredentism.

Each of the parties in the conflict is trying to purposefully perpetuate the memory of the dead, producing materials describing the atrocious killings. Mourning days are celebrated, documentary films and movies are created. The pages of the Internet and other media are filled up with information in this vein, which is then disseminated at the international community level and psychologically affects the development of likes and dislikes towards one or another party to the conflict. The massive flow of information is aimed at finding allies and weakening the enemy.

In the divided societies of Georgia, the decision to install “monuments of sorrow” is made concomitantly in parallelly existing social spaces. Thus, they deepen the existing “dividing lines,” which find their reflection in architectural structures.

For the “losing” side (unionists – supporters of united Georgia), these monuments are a symbol of resistance to the occupation of their country; a symbol of “fair revenge”; a symbol of the struggle to restore the territorial integrity of the country.

For the “winning” side (secessionists – supporters of the collapse of Georgia), they are a symbol of the process of forming a new national identity; a symbol of permanent mobilization to protect one’s intragroup interests.

The motivation for the installation of these monuments is explained by the desire to ensure safety. But in reality, this process exacerbates existing threats and creates new ones.

“A distorted perception of each other by people from different groups also plays a significant role in the development of intergroup conflicts. The basis for such a distortion is, again, the group identity itself and the related behavioral features. Thus, group favoritism, that is a predisposition to the members of our ‘own’ group, makes us perceive it as worthy, strong, moral, whereas the ‘other’ group, against this background, must look flawed, inferior, malicious.”<sup>1</sup>

The policy of ethnic reductionism, ethnocentrism or group favoritism is not sufficiently criticized either at the public or, in particular, at the scientific level, which is an indicator of the low level of social responsibility for the ongoing events assumed by scientists.

<sup>1</sup> В.П. Шейнов, *Управление конфликтами*, n.p., 2019, p. 75, <https://www.labirint.ru/books/704920/>.

One of the most important functions of memorial architecture, as a form of collective memory, is to remind people of individuals, their achievements, and important historical events.<sup>2</sup>

The opinions of scientists are divided on the interpretation of the notion of ‘monuments’ versus ‘memorials.’ Some believe that there are very subtle but significant differences between the two terms. In scientific literature, as a rule, they are generally considered identical concepts.<sup>3</sup>

Explanatory dictionaries define monument as “an object that forms part of the cultural heritage of a country, people, and humanity, created to commemorate people or historical events.” A memorial, meanwhile, is a place or monument associated with memory, commemoration of dead people or tragic events, a place where flowers are laid and mourning and commemorative events are held. In the traditional sense, monuments symbolize “triumph” and memorials “personify losses.”<sup>4</sup> This difference is important in conflict and post-conflict societies, for which triumph is inextricably linked to losses.

Alderman and Dwyer do not consider this division as significant. For Kulišić and Tudman, the “very essence of the monument lies in its relationship between the present and the memory, in other words, in its anthropological function.”<sup>5</sup>

Shein Avital makes note of the common etymological Latin root of the words ‘monument’ and ‘memorial.’ “A monument refers to those objects that bring back to mind, through representation, events or stories that otherwise would remain forgotten. And a memorial functions as a physical extension of memory itself.”<sup>6</sup> She draws attention to the fact that both terms define the way in which we recall the past, how we construct / reconstruct it; if the etymology of the words is the same, the question arises whether we should make a distinction between them. However, she also notes that for some authors, differentiating the definitions of monuments and memorials is important. She gives the example of a work by Maya Lin, who believes that monuments and memorials have disparate functions – “the first stands detached and works to inform or educate its audience, while the latter engages the individual, encouraging introspection and self-evaluation.” Memorials, unlike monuments, can be perceived as more complex structures.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> F. Bellentani, M. Panico, “The meanings of monuments and memorials: toward a semiotic approach,” *Punctum*, 2, 2016, no. 1, pp. 28–46.

<sup>3</sup> A. Shein, *Monuments As A National Practice: The Dilemmas Of Liberal Nationalism* (Doctoral dissertation), 2007.

<sup>4</sup> D.H. Alderman, O.J. Dwyer, “Memorials and Monuments,” in: *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, ed. R. Kitchin, N. Thrift, vol. 7, 2009, pp. 51–58.

<sup>5</sup> M. Kulišić, M. Tudman, “Monument as a Form of Collective Memory and Public Knowledge,” *INFuture2009: “Digital Resources and Knowledge Sharing”*, 2009, pp. 126–127.

<sup>6</sup> A. Shein, op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 42–43.

For the purposes of the present article, we consider the concepts of monuments and memorials as identical and will henceforth base our considerations on the definition of monument.

## Monuments as part of the politics of national memory and identity

Politics of memory, first and foremost, refers to the efforts of the state “aimed at the adoption of certain ideas about the collective past and the formation of the supporting cultural infrastructure, educational policy, and, in some cases, legislative regulations as well.”<sup>8</sup>

In English-language discourse, we also find another variant of the term – “remembrance policy,” which is “a complex of narratives and interpretations presented to influence citizens’ attitudes, behaviours, beliefs and identities.”<sup>9</sup>

Participants in the processes that shape the politics of memory (ideologists, architects, sculptors, etc.) are interested in constructing and reinforcing such memory of the past that best serves current political interests. Thus, “historical politics is primarily used to legitimize the actions of the existing government, and the politics of memory – to form a collective identity that is designed to support this activity.” To pursue the politics of memory, states create a whole range of structures “reproducing national and/or ethnic identity.”<sup>10</sup>

Being one of the most important tools for the formation of the political identity of a particular community, the politics of memory uses various symbols to ingrain “memories for the future.”<sup>11</sup> The minds of people and their memory become permeated with specific symbols that create different, and sometimes diametrically opposite, understandings of specific historical events in different groups involved in particular conflicts.

In the context of conflicts, these political symbols include: the name and typology of conflicts; names of territories (toponymy); start or end dates of the conflict; dates of commemorating triumph and mourning. One of the manifestations of the politics of memory is the creation and placement of monuments in the public space.

Monuments are a subsystem of the policy of national memory and identity. Along with other forms, monuments are aimed at creating or maintaining certain

<sup>8</sup> О.Ю. Малинова, “Политика памяти как область символической политики,” in: *Методологические вопросы изучения политики памяти, Сборник научных трудов*, ed. А.И. Миллера, Д.В. Ефременко, Москва– Санкт-Петербург, 2018, p.

<sup>9</sup> P. Wawrzyński, “The Government’s Remembrance Policy: Five Theoretical Hypotheses,” *Polish Political Science Yearbook*, 46, 2017, no. 1, p. 294.

<sup>10</sup> А. Семячко, “Политика памяти: как и зачем государства формируют свою историю,” *Теории и практики*, <https://special.theoryandpractice.ru/politics-of-memory>.

<sup>11</sup> О.Ю. Малинова, op. cit.

political attitudes.<sup>12</sup> Political groups use a monument-raising policy to selectively emphasize or memorialize individual events from their historical past.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, when analyzing individual architectural structures which have a memory-forming function, it is important to understand what goals, interests and motivations the participants of this process have.

There is an inextricable link between how individual groups define themselves in the modern world, and what these groups remember and how they define themselves in the past.<sup>14</sup>

Memory in general, and its expression in the form of monuments, contributes to the preservation of old identities and/or the construction of new ones.

The close connection between memory and identity is determined by the fact that the past becomes controversial. This is especially true in cases where the identities formed by one group are not taken into account or opposed and come into conflict with the identity of another group.

“People’s ability to commemorate the past in certain ways is limited by competition and conflict with other people wishing to narrate the past in a different way. The potential struggle and contest over whose conception of the past will prevail constitutes the politics of memory. In this respect, memorials and monuments are places for social actors and groups to debate and negotiate the right to decide what is remembered and what version of the past will be made visible to the public.”<sup>15</sup>

In the analysis of collective memory, Malinova puts forward the following theoretical assumption: “in modern, complex societies, the memory of historical events is heterogeneous: the identities of its constituent groups are based on different historical myths, which is potentially a basis for conflict.”<sup>16</sup>

## Categories of monuments

Depending on the scale or composition of the audience to which they are addressed and/or the interests which they express, monuments can be divided into group monuments (ethnic, religious, etc.), intergroup monuments (national), and supra-group monuments (supranational).

<sup>12</sup> F. Bellentani, M. Panico, op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid; B. Zelizer, “Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies,” *Critical Studies of Mass Communication*, 12, 1995, pp. 213–239; I. Hay, A. Hughes, M. Tutton, “Monuments, Memory and Marginalisation in Adelaide’s Prince Henry Gardens,” *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, 86, 2004, no. 3, pp. 201–216.

<sup>14</sup> D.H. Alderman, O.J. Dwyer, op. cit.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>16</sup> О.Ю. Малинова, op. cit.

**Group monuments** – this category of commemorative architecture is focused on serving the interests of and representing in the public space a small group of people united on some level (ethnicity, religion, membership in a professional group, etc.).

**Intergroup – national monuments** are an instrument of national policy. Shein considers “a national monument to be a monument that forms part of the national discourse [...] contribut[ing] to the creation and maintenance of the idea of a ‘nation.’” In her opinion, national monuments are distinguished from other monuments by “their conscious effort to speak to members of the nation.” Therefore, the monument itself will make sense and have a significance for those people who perceive themselves as part of the nation.<sup>17</sup>

Shein also identifies four types of national monuments, depending on what they “monumentalize”:<sup>18</sup>

- Founding monuments – as a rule, they are monuments that are dedicated to specific historic events which either the society as a whole or the ruling political elite considers significant for a given nation. This is often expressed in the form of war memorials in which “victory or defeat is represented as an event that fundamentally changed the nation.”<sup>19</sup> Here it should be noted that a similar approach is used at the level of group monuments, when one ethnic or ideological group, precisely through the monumentalization of certain dates, tries to distinguish itself and emphasize its own, separate history. Founding monuments and hero monuments are especially frequently used as a tool to enhance national “identity.”
- Hero monuments – monuments perpetuating the memory of those national heroes who laid the foundation of a nation, contributed to its formation or its revival. This form of national monuments is considered one of the most common.
- Value monuments – monuments that symbolize certain values, ideas that are considered important for a particular nation.
- Object monuments – in accordance with the name, these are monuments that pay tribute to certain objects. In contrast to the above three, this is a rather rare type of national monument.

**Supragroup monuments** – supranational monuments have a supranational audience, for example humanity as a whole. They have global significance and are important for the entire human community, no matter the country of residence. There are also supranational monuments created at an intermediate level, for example monuments to the pan-European past.

Monuments/memorials dedicated to peace and reconciliation are widely represented in memorial architecture. Monuments to peace have a variety of forms –

<sup>17</sup> A. Shein, op. cit.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

arches, sculptures, monumental compositions, memorial parks (Monument against War and Fascism and for Peace, Hiroshima Peace Memorial).

In 1990, the *Good Conquers Evil* monument by the sculptor Zurab Tsereteli was installed near the UN headquarters in New York, created from fragments of dismantled American and Soviet missiles Pershing-2 and SS-20 symbolizing the end of the Cold War. In 1992, the first monument in the world dedicated to peacekeepers and peacemaking operations was unveiled in Ottawa. It was erected in memory of the 110,000 Canadian troops participating in UN peacemaking operations since 1948.

Peacemaker monuments are of particular interest for this article. When the parties to the conflict have an understanding of each other, they perceive victims in the context of general trauma, general grief and the general losses that they suffered. In this case, the motivation for installing “monuments of sorrow” changes. Unlike in the previous approach, they take a different, peacemaking – intergroup value. Commemorative architecture in the form of monuments of sorrow, having exactly the same semantic meaning in the framework of this article, can also be described as peacemaker monuments. However, they can belong to the category of intergroup and/or supragroup monuments.

## Monuments of sorrow and their categorization

In this paper, we focus our attention on monuments of sorrow. Monuments of sorrow represent a social phenomenon focused on the consolidation of the efforts of a particular community. They occupy an important place in the formation of stereotypes of behavior in all stages of a conflict. A monument of sorrow constitutes a constant cumulative flow of emotionally rich information targeted at specific groups within the society at the local, national and/or international level.

Monuments of sorrow, “[i]n the etymological sense of the term, [are] all the artifacts, of any nature, shape or size, explicitly built for a human group so as to recall and commemorate individuals or events, rites or beliefs that are founded on a genealogy as to their identity. The monument requests and immobilizes by its physical presence a living corporal and organic memory (Choay and Merlin, 1988).”<sup>20</sup>

Sorrow is not only an inner experience. This is what distinguishes it from grief. Grief is what you think and feel inside after the death of a loved one. Mourning or sorrow is the outward expression of these thoughts and feelings. To mourn is to be an active participant of our grief. We all grieve when someone we love dies, but if we want to heal, we must also mourn.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> J.M.V. Leite, “Cultural heritage and monument, a place in memory,” *City & Time* 4, 2009, no. 2, p. 26.

<sup>21</sup> A.D. Wolfelt, “The Journey Through Grief: The Six Needs of Mourning,” *Center for Loss & Life Transition*, 14 December 2016, <https://www.centerforloss.com/2016/12/journey-grief-six-needs-mourning/>.

For societies divided by conflict in the pursuit of a remembrance policy, four possible dynamics of the development of events can be distinguished: confrontation-competition; orientation towards destruction; attempts to find a compromise; focus on cooperation and common peace. Let us consider these strategies using the example of the erection of monuments and memorials in the Georgian society divided by conflicts.

### “Confrontation-competition” strategy

The state policy of Georgia, which to this day has an ethno-nationalist character, cannot yet be transformed into a new policy that puts civil priorities at the forefront.

The conflicts breaking out in the territories of Georgia have not been purely ethno-national, but also ideological. Their reduction to the ethnic component contributes to further escalation. Ethnocentrism is the main barrier for starting the process of socializing “monuments of sorrow” and kickstarting a peace process based on mutual respect and trust.

On the Heroes Square in Tbilisi, you can see the Memorial of Glory to the Fallen in the struggle for the territorial integrity of the country after 1989, unveiled on September 27, 2003. Additional elements of the memorial emphasizing its importance are the guard of honor and the eternal flame. The memorial consists of three walls of white marble 25 meters long and 3 meters high, on which the names of the dead are inscribed in golden letters.

Among the many Georgian surnames, one can also see the names of representatives of other nationalities.<sup>22</sup> Thus, it is obvious that not only ethnic Georgians perished in the fight for the territorial integrity of Georgia, and these conflicts cannot be considered purely interethnic.

“Monuments of sorrow” were installed and continue to be installed on the central square of each locality, regardless of its size, on both sides of the separation line. Some elements of memorial architecture have been placed right in the courtyards of local administration offices, near public buildings or schools. In 2006, for example, the “Memorial to the Fallen in Abkhazia and Samachablo” was opened in the village of Eredvi.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> For example, the name S. Sahakyan is inscribed on the monument. Sumbat Sahakyan, an ethnic Armenian employed at the Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, was shot by Armenians from the village of Labra led by Ardash Avedyan. This case clearly shows that the conflict was ideological in nature, and all ethnic groups living in Abkhazia at that time were divided according to an ideological principle – into supporters and opponents of secession. The surname V. Semenikhin is also visible on the memorial plate. Perhaps this man was an ethnic Russian who fought for a unified and indivisible Georgia. It is possible that he was killed by Russians who fought on the other side.

<sup>23</sup> If look closely at this monument, there are also non-Georgian surnames – Ovsyannikov (Russian) or Tuaevev (Ossetian).



A unique example in this regard is School No. 5 in Tskhinval/i.<sup>24</sup> On the former sports ground of the school there are more than 100 graves of people who died during the war of 1991–1993 and afterwards, as well as during the hostilities in 2008. There is also a chapel and a sculpture titled *The Crying Father*. Only recently (in 2016) was the cemetery separated from the school with a fence made of building blocks. The granite board at the entrance to the cemetery clearly speaks of its ideological orientation, explicitly defining the ethnicity of the perpetrators of the tragedy – “Memorial Cemetery for the Victims of Georgian Aggression.” One of the residents of Tskhinval/i defines the purpose of this cemetery as a reminder of “who is a friend and who is the enemy.” It is noteworthy that the school itself was built in the Soviet years on the site of the old cemetery of the Jewish community of Tskhinvali.

The famous American psychotherapist Vamik Volkan, who attended the meetings of the Georgian-Ossetian dialogue, writes the following:

“*The Crying Father* monument was used by South Ossetians not only to keep the mourning process externalized, but also to fuel feelings of revenge. This monument was built to honor the memory of South Ossetians who were killed during the Georgia–South Ossetia War in the early 1990s.”<sup>25</sup>

Volkan mentions that the dwellers of Tskhinval/i themselves claim that the monument poisons the minds of school students and keeps “negative feelings about Georgians alive in the younger generation”; according to them this state of affairs cannot be changed:

“The South Ossetians participating in the dialogue series began to speak of their dilemma: Either remove the graves to another location or build a new school. The first option was unthinkable, because their religious beliefs forbade them to disturb the dead. On the other hand, the South Ossetian authorities, because of their extreme economic difficulties, could not afford to build a new school.”<sup>26</sup>

This problem has not been resolved even today. The school is still working. There is no money for moving it to a new seat. The monument to the “Crying Father” (as V. Volkan writes) has become a concrete symbol of ongoing public mourning. At the same time, neither this monument, nor the chapel or other monuments have turned out to be sufficient to demonstrate grief.

<sup>24</sup> Toponymy also becomes an area of confrontation for societies divided by conflict. In Georgian, the main city of the former South Ossetian Autonomous Region is called Tskhinvali. The *de facto* authorities call it Tskhinval. Spelling the name of the town using “/” is some compromise between the two.

<sup>25</sup> V. Volkan, “What Some Monuments Tell Us About Mourning and Forgiveness,” in: *Taking Wrongs Seriously. Apologies and Reconciliation*, ed. E. Barkan, A. Karn, Stanford, 2006, p. 122.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

Today, a new “monument of sorrow” is being built in Tskhinval/i – a memorial complex in memory of those who died defending South Ossetia during the Georgian aggression in 1989–2008. The cost of the project is about 1 million dollars. This means that the money that could be used to equip a new school or support children who are victims of the war will go towards the construction of a new monument. Moreover, the project is financed from the budget of the Russian Federation.<sup>27</sup>

In the minds of children and in society as a whole, politicians who make such decisions create and “monumentalize” the memory of the war and the hatred of opponents. At the same time, the nationality of the enemy is emphasized – in their opinion, these are Georgians. This time-consuming ritual involves neither forgiveness nor repentance. This process, under certain conditions, carries a hidden threat of renewed waves of violence. Under such circumstances, it is impossible for ethnic Georgians to live in this territory. These actions thus constitute psychological support for the ethnic repression of Georgians as well as representatives of other ethnic groups and the creation of a mono-ethnic Ossetian area.

### “Destruction” strategy

The strategy of destroying the monuments of enemies can be demonstrated by the following examples. Part of the tombstones at the aforementioned memorial near School No. 5 in Tskhinval/i were destroyed during the military operations in August 2008. It is difficult to say whether this was the outcome of deliberate action, because the intense shelling and hostilities resulted in considerable damage to all sorts of areas, including cemeteries, which were used as shelters or battle sites.

The same goes for the “monuments of sorrow” that were toppled or destroyed in Georgian villages. One of the examples was a “monument of sorrow” to the Georgians who were killed by Ossetian secessionists in 1989–1992, located in the courtyard of the local government building in the village of Disevi. The ancient Georgian village of Disevi, with a unique centuries-old history, was looted and burned by marauders, and a Russian military base is now located on its site. And while the relatives of those buried in the cemetery near School No. 5 in Tskhinval/i were able to restore the destroyed tombstones, the residents of Disevi and many other villages are forced to live in exile, not having the opportunity to return to their homes or restore the graves of their loved ones in the near future. They are also unable to visit their cemeteries. And those who try to do so are often taken hostage.

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<sup>27</sup> “В память о защитниках в Южной Осетии возведут мемориальный комплекс,” *Sputnik*, 11 January 2017, [https://sputnik-ossetia.ru/South\\_Ossetia/20170111/3556954.html](https://sputnik-ossetia.ru/South_Ossetia/20170111/3556954.html).

## “Compromise” strategy

The history of commemorative architecture dedicated to the victims of conflicts in Georgia includes some examples of attempts to find compromise.

One failed attempt at compromise, which became an indicator of the intransigence of the parties representing the interests of various nationalist groups, was the question of establishing a monument in Tskhinval/i to commemorate the victims of the tragedy of April 9, 1989. That day, the Soviet army used tanks and poison gas to suppress a demonstration of thousands of peaceful civilians in Tbilisi held in support of the independence of Georgia. As a result of the Soviet intervention, 16 participants of the demonstration were killed on the spot and three soon died in hospital, while about three hundred people were injured or disabled. After the tragedy of April 9, the process of establishing monuments to the victims of this tragedy began in all cities of Georgia, including Tskhinval/i. However, the monument was never installed because the parties could not agree on which side and in what order the inscriptions should be arranged in Georgian, Ossetian and Russian language.<sup>28</sup> It is noteworthy that the decision was made not by the erstwhile official authorities of Georgia, but by representatives of the informal nationalist public organizations “People’s Front of Georgia” and “Adamon Nykhas” (informal Ossetian organization).

“Memorials of sorrow” related to post-Soviet conflicts and wars in Georgia have been installed both in Georgia and abroad, including in Western Europe.

In June 1995, a monument showing the flag of separatist Abkhazia was installed in the Scottish city of Kilmarnock (it had become a twin town of Sukhumi back in the Soviet times, in 1989) with the support of the well-known lobbyist for Abkhazian secessionism and professor of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London, George Hewitt. The inscription on the monument read: “In memory of those from our twin town of Sukhumi who died in the Abkhazian-Georgian conflict, 1992–1993.” Twenty-two years later, Georgian diplomats demanded to have the monument dismantled, citing an inaccuracy in the inscription. The memorial was indeed taken down, but it was later restored to the site, accompanied by a special information board with the following inscription:

“This memorial was put up by the Council of Kilmarnock and Loudoun in deference to the memory of people who died in the wars in the Caucasus in 1992–1993. There are still unresolved conflicts in the region. Our town was twinned with Sukhumi during the war. We, the inhabitants of Kilmarnock, are indirectly associated with this unresolved conflict. In 2017, the memorial became a subject of controversy for a number of people affected by

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<sup>28</sup> In this paper, we adhere to the principle of the alphabet, and list the languages in alphabetical order. Unfortunately at that time, the groups of radicals discussing the creation of the monument did not have information about this generally accepted international technology.

the conflict and the war. The memorial contains symbols and wording that do not reflect the position of any of the parties. It does not constitute a political statement. The memorial stands here to honor the memory of all the people who have fallen as victims of the war. It unequivocally expresses memory and sympathy towards all Sukhumi families who have lost relatives, civilians or fighters, regardless of their ethnic origin or political position. We are waiting for the times when the parties will find a mutually agreed course to resolve the conflict peacefully.”<sup>29</sup>

If the Ambassador of Georgia to the UK (for that time), Mrs. Tamara Beruchashvili, had not directed the public’s attention to the political nature of this memorial, the information board would have never been placed at the site, to some extent taking into account the interests of the conflicting parties. Whether they want it or not, the “board” and the “stone” coexist peacefully next to each other.

### “Common Peace” strategy

The collective memory of victims allows societies to unite and make amends, continue the work begun by them (the dead), or simply do good in their memory. Based on this presumption, tens of thousands of memorial projects and charitable organizations are being created in the world, taking a worthy position in the global civil society system. This is an example of a positive transformation of sorrow. Victims (dead and surviving) become part of a post-war society.

German historian and cultural expert Alleyda Assman makes interesting notes about this process in the essay *The Long Shadow of the Past: Memorial Culture and Historical Politics* (2014). “At the end of the war, the nation faces the task of including the fallen in the community of survivors. By ‘preserving’ those who died in the collective memory, the nation strengthens the consciousness of its own identity.”<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, our societies imbue “monuments of sorrow” with aggression. They seem to hide behind them from the intended enemy. This is an indicator of the domination of psychological terror and the corresponding fear.

Responsibility for this state of affairs is shared among teachers, educators, scholars, religious, public and political figures, as the only solution to the problem they see is provoking a new war and educating new generations in the spirit of militarism, ethnocentrism and misanthropy. “The monument ought to be the place of collective (social) life that we can conceive of and imagine. This is because monuments project a conception of the world, on the ground (Lefebvre, 1970: 33).”<sup>31</sup> However, the very concept of peace can be perceived differently by the parties

<sup>29</sup> В. Шария, “Памятник погибшим сухумцам в Шотландии: поставлена ли точка?,” *Эхо Кавказ*, 19 February 2019, <https://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/29779131.html>.

<sup>30</sup> А. Ассман, *Длинная тень прошлого. Мемориальная культура и историческая политика*, transl. Б. Хлебников, Москва, 2014, p.

<sup>31</sup> J.M.V. Leite, op. cit., p. 26.

to the conflict. Each has its own perception of strategic well-being and peace. And the difference in these perceptions may represent the essence of intergroup conflict itself.

Monuments are an architectural reflection of real politics and, as a rule, express the opinion of the dominant ethno-nationalist majority in a given location. Those who dare to express a different opinion are intimidated by the majority with repressions and terror.

As the Georgian psychologist N. Sarjveladze points out in his article:

“S. Moscovici and S. Faucheux distinguish three modalities of social phenomena (Faucheux C., Moscovici S. 1971; Moscovici, 1976): 1) normalization, i.e. mutual compromise between members of the group (M. Sherif et al.); 2) conformism, i.e. the obedience of the individual to the social majority (S. Ash et al.); 3) innovation, i.e. the influence of the minority on the majority and thus the change in the social norms and rules previously fixed in the majority group.”<sup>32</sup>

As we can see, out of the three modalities listed above, it is conformism which has so far dominated in Georgia – obedience to the majority opinion. It is not easy to change the opinion of the majority, if it has an obvious and destructive character, but it is possible. And for this, innovations<sup>33</sup> and/or normalization<sup>34</sup> are needed. In both cases, strengthening mutual empathy is helpful.

The realization of the fact that the other party suffered similar injuries creates a positive psychotherapeutic effect. It does not necessarily bring us joy to know that others feel bad. However, it gives us a hope that if they have also suffered, they can understand our experiences. This is a resource for restoring communication, and therefore for starting the process of conflict resolution.

In the process of long-term field observations and research conducted in the conflict areas of the Caucasus, we were able to note that the strongest and most constructive ties were developed between the mothers (parents in general) of the dead and / or missing military personnel. United by common sorrow, they not only created the basis for solving their individual or narrow group problems, but by setting a positive example, they strengthened the basis for peace initiatives in other related problematic dimensions.

The reason for the high level of culture of mutual understanding among the mothers of fallen soldiers is first and foremost social sanctity, which is part of the Caucasian traditional culture. They are more protected from possible repressions by the dominant majority and thus may deviate from group norms settled

<sup>32</sup> Н.И Сарджвеладзе, “Изучение некоторых процессов в группе методом фиксированной установки,” *Вопросы психологии*, 1, 1987, p. 148, <http://www.voppsy.ru/issues/1987/871/871148.htm#a9>.

<sup>33</sup> L.A. Coser, “Social Conflict and the Theory of Social Change,” *The British Journal of Sociology*, 8, 1957, no. 3, pp. 197–207.

<sup>34</sup> M. Sherif, “Experiments in Group Conflict,” *Scientific American*, 195, 1956, pp. 54–59.

by the majority. For example, one such rule where they show a low level of conformism is the pressure to cut off any contacts with the enemy.

Their experience can also be effectively used in innovative peacemaking policy. This optimism is supported by substantive actions. The initiative of Nineli Andriadze, leader of the Georgian movement “Molodini” (“Expectancy”) which unites the parents of the missing, led to the creation of the Museum of Missing Persons (the only such facility in the world), providing information about the missing from all sides of the conflict.

The movement is currently discussing the idea of creating and installing a Monument of Common Sorrow. After all, many of the missing have not yet been found.

As the example of the “Molodini” movement shows, the creation and installation of such symbols does not necessarily have to be a two-sided initiative and can originate from only one side of the conflict. All similar undertakings are based on the manifestation of goodwill. They are aimed at strengthening trust between the parties of the conflict. This marks the beginning of the process of reestablishing broken ties between the opposing sides.

Such initiatives influence the social dynamics by relaxing norms established by the majority and dictated by the aggressive minority. Thereby, they open opportunities for expanding the peacemaking process with other humanitarian groups that are ready to violate the norms established by the radicals.

The above example is important because the parents of the missing are also victims and their social efforts also constitute psychological support for themselves. In addition, missing people are a liminal category between the living and the fallen. Their parents cling to the hope that they survived until the last day of their lives.

Another possible way of creating a joint memorial could be to erect a monument to those expelled from Abkhazia. In its history, the region has experienced several waves of mass expulsions of population. The first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was marked by Mohajirism – the forced relocation of the indigenous Caucasian population, mainly to the Ottoman Empire.

Over the years, Mohajirism has also affected parts of the population of Abkhazia, as a result of which hundreds of thousands of people, mainly ethnic Abkhazians, were forcibly resettled to Turkey. After the 1992–1993 war, more than 300,000 people were forced to leave Abkhazia.

## **Monuments as part of the architecture and infrastructure for peace**

Monuments and memorials are part of architecture in the literal sense of the word. In the early 1990s, terms such as “architecture for peacebuilding” and “infrastructure for peace” first appeared in peace studies.

Rachel and Langer define the concept of “architecture for peace” as “the overall design of the peace building process.”<sup>35</sup> The architecture of peacebuilding is enshrined in UN resolutions, and in practice finds expression in the cooperation of the institutional structures of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Fund and the Peacebuilding Support Office.<sup>36</sup>

The concept of infrastructure for peace was formulated by Paul Lederach, who argued that “[b]uilding peace in today’s conflicts calls for long-term commitment to establishing an infrastructure across the levels of society, an infrastructure that empowers the resources of reconciliation from within that society and maximizes the contribution from outside.”<sup>37</sup>

Ulrike Hopp-Nishanka, analyzing the emergence of the concept of infrastructure for peace (I4P), draws attention to the fact that “architecture of peacebuilding” is connected with the “strategic assessment and development of solutions for violent conflicts in accordance with architectural principles” and points out how I4P builds lines of communication between various actors involved in peacebuilding. Infrastructure for peace can be created at any stage of peace building, both at the stages of conflict prevention and in the post-conflict period. Hopp-Nishanka considers objects “like memorials and peace museums” as “components of peace infrastructures if they contribute towards creating a common future.”<sup>38</sup>

## Conclusion

Monuments of sorrow are carriers and distributors of specific information that may be used to retain the cohesion of each of the parties to the conflict. The level of aggression or the level of cooperation between the conflicting parties depends on how and where these monuments are installed, what the main motive for their installation is and who their informational and psychological impact is directed at.

At the same time, monuments can symbolize reconciliation and overall coexistence of conflicting parties. It can be assumed that the stimulation of the process of strengthening the infrastructure for peace, including monuments of sorrow, oriented at achieving common peace and the coexistence of the parties to the conflict, will help to build trust and mutual understanding.

Studies of the “monuments of sorrow” installed in memory of the victims of conflicts in Georgia (including the territories of Abkhazia and the so-called South

<sup>35</sup> L. Reyhler, A. Langer, “Researching Peace Building Architecture,” *Cahiers internationale betrekkingen en vredesonderzoek*, 75, 2006, p. 16.

<sup>36</sup> See: UN Security Council Resolution 2282 (2016) / adopted by the Security Council at its 7680th meeting, on 27 April 2016, S/RES/2282 (2016), <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/827390?ln=en>.

<sup>37</sup> J.P. Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Washington, D.C., 1997, p. xvi.

<sup>38</sup> U. Hopp-Nishanka, “Giving Peace an Address? Reflections on the Potential and Challenges of Creating Peace Infrastructures,” *Berghof Handbook Dialogue Series*, 2013, no. 10, p. 3.

Ossetia / Tskhinval/i region) conducted as part of this research have showed that at this point of time, “monuments of sorrow” have an intragroup meaning expressing the interests of ethnocentric ideological groups.

There is not a single monument of intergroup or supragroup significance (in regards to the historical period under consideration – 1989–2008) which would express the general intergroup grief of any side regarding the victims of armed conflicts in these territories. Importantly, neither are there any monuments of this type erected to commemorate earlier wars. This concerns, for example, the period of the Second World War, as some Georgians fought on the side of Germany.

A potential way out of this situation may be an alternative process – the process of perpetuating the vision of a common injury/trauma. We need new monuments and new symbols that constrain aggression. Such an approach will show that society has acknowledged the mistakes made and expresses its readiness to work to avoid them in the future. When the parties to the conflict have an understanding of each other, they consider the victims in the context of general trauma, general grief and the general losses that they suffered. In this case, the motivation for installing “monuments to sorrow” changes. Unlike with the previous approaches, they take on a different, peacemaking – intergroup value.

The conscious transition from the political symbolism of “monuments to sorrow” (intragroup solidarity) to “monuments of general sorrow” (intergroup and supragroup solidarity) is a strategic resource for peacemaking. However, supporters of this approach are still in a clear minority.

## Abstract

Using recent history of Georgia, we show the specifics and motives of installing monuments of sorrow in order to ingrain the cultural phenomenon of memory of the victims of war in the collective memory of the parties to the conflict. The article identifies four strategies behind erecting monuments: confrontation-competition; orientation towards complete destruction of the enemy; attempts to find a compromise; orientation towards common peace.

Monuments installed in the territory of Georgia (including the territory of the armed conflict zones) during the military conflicts of 1989–2008 are considered as separate cases. Monuments are discussed as a social phenomenon reflecting the behavior of society in the post-war period.

Along with monuments of sorrow oriented towards revenge, the work discusses the prospect of creating monuments oriented towards general empathy of the parties to the conflict in order to create conditions for common peace and collective security.

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