

# TEACHING SENSITIVE HISTORY

# CONFLICTS IN THE POST-SOVIET SPACE

Pedagogical Guide



# Teaching Sensitive History: Conflicts in the Post-Soviet Space

Case Studies from Armenia,  
Georgia and Moldova

Pedagogical Guide

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# Introduction

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Since 2020, the Confronting Memories programme has dedicated itself to providing a networking platform and space for history teachers and educators across Europe to exchange differing perspectives on the history of the 20th and 21st centuries, thereby broadening perspectives on the interpretation of history as a whole. Over the last three years we have worked with over 80 history educators to create materials designed to promote multiperspectivity and values-based history teaching.

Since the beginning of the full-scale war in Ukraine in 2022, many projects have dealt with the issue of education in countries with a Soviet past, looking primarily at why education is important in preventing future conflicts, but few have looked beyond the end of the war and asked what tools and methods could be used to teach about the war itself. Through a series of exchange-based workshops in 2023, we sought answers to this difficult question by focusing on other conflicts, specifically in Armenia, Georgia, and Moldova. While promoting multiperspective history education in the Eastern Partnership region, we introduced new perspectives, pedagogical methodologies, and audiences into our programme.

The conflicts presented in this pedagogical guide are sensitive because they are so fresh in the collective memories of people from all sides: there are still people alive who directly experienced one conflict or another, whether as soldiers, victims, children, or people who have lost a loved one. Furthermore, in school curricula and textbooks, these conflicts are often taught with a strong focus on military-political history (if they are taught at all), putting forward the viewpoint of the regime in power at that moment.

In the summer of 2023, teachers from Armenia, Georgia and Moldova took part in workshops led by a facilitator from Bosnia & Herzegovina, a country which has first-hand experience of conflict in recent decades. The facilitator has been working extremely hard to create new materials in her country that can be used to teach about the very complex Yugoslav Wars, while trying to avoid controversies based on nationality and move away from military-political education towards a more social/societal approach. This approach formed the basis of the workshops, which prepared the teachers to create their own lesson materials on sensitive topics in their countries.

Our materials are designed to be as practical as possible, which is why they are all made by history teachers and educators themselves, with the consultation and support of a professional team of pedagogical experts. After the workshops, the teachers worked in national teams

to develop their materials, trying to present the topics in novel ways and incorporate multiperspectivity. We define multiperspectivity as the recognition of various contemporary or present-day interpretations of a specific historical event, or period, as well as the evolution of different perspectives over time. Multiperspectivity from different national perspectives is not always possible, and we shall see examples of societal multiperspectivity, for example, showing how different social groups responded to a certain event.

Based on principles outlined by the Council of Europe, it is important as part of the Confronting Memories programme to incorporate the teaching of appropriate attitudes and values and to connect history teaching to the present day. This includes respect for human rights and dignity, the value of cultural diversity, an openness to other beliefs and practices, civic-mindedness, and responsibility. The teachers who worked on this guide learned to include these competences to create lesson materials that provide students with the skills to ask critical questions.

The guide is a ready-to-use resource not limited to teachers who come from conflict or war zones, or for teachers living in a country that has recently experienced conflict; it is also designed for educators beyond these regions. It provides concise information on the local contexts in Armenia, Georgia, and Moldova before presenting the three model lesson activities on the long persisting Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (1988-present), the Georgian coup d'état (1991-92) and the War on the Dniester (1992).

The lesson plan developed by the Armenian teachers, using the example of the border village of Movses, illustrates how the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which started in 1988, has disrupted and impacted every aspect of life along the border of an international conflict zone. Students will greatly benefit from understanding the conflict from the perspective of the periphery and not the centre, focusing on people who live in one of the places most affected by the conflict. It will allow educators and students alike to consider not only the official, top-down, political, and ideological perspective of the conflict, but also the perspective of the most vulnerable.

The teachers from Georgia decided to develop a lesson on the Georgian coup d'état (1991-92) and the ensuing Civil War, a conflict that remains an under-studied and sensitive topic in Georgian society, with contrasting opinions among different local stakeholders. While such positions represent the opinions of Georgian historians and the wider public, there has yet to be any large-scale historiographical study of the conflict. Because of this, it is difficult to teach about the Georgian Civil War in state schools: there is no objective view of the conflict free of political influence or propaganda. The problem is compounded by the presence of incomplete and episodic information on the subject in the history curriculum and textbooks. Learning about this event will enhance the understanding of the broader Georgian Civil War of 1991-93.

In the case of Moldova, the teachers developed lesson material on the Transnistria War of 1992, which remains the most sensitive and controversial topic in Moldovan society and is still not treated adequately in schools. As part of this project, desirable outcomes of quality education in schools in Moldova and Transnistria are to include the promotion of democratic values and the rule of law, and history education will hopefully play an important role in securing a sustainable peace to this frozen conflict. By looking at various aspects of the conflict, from the political to the economic and social, the lesson plan shows the effect of the conflict on both sides of the Dniester and asks students to do their own research on its legacy in their immediate surroundings.

The guide is available in the respective national languages of the teachers who made it – Armenian, Georgian, and Moldovan – and in English, so that it can be used by a wider community of international educators. This guide and other lesson materials can be accessed and downloaded for free from the *Confronting Memories* website.

# The Nagorno- Karabakh Conflict (1988-present)



# Background and Context

## Lusine Kharatyan

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**1** Artsakh is the historical name of the 10th province of Mets Hayk (Greater Armenia), an ancient state in the Armenian Highlands. Historically, Artsakh included the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, and the term is currently widely used by Armenians to refer to Nagorno-Karabakh. In February 2017, the de facto Nagorno-Karabakh Republic was officially renamed the 'Republic of Artsakh' in the new constitution adopted by its Armenian population.

**2** These clashes are mostly known as Armenian-Tatar clashes or massacres, as the ethnonym 'Azerbaijani' was first introduced in the 1939 USSR Census. Before that, the sources and literature, as well as the censuses, referred to Turkic-speaking Muslims of the South Caucasus by different terms, such as 'Muslims', 'Turks' and 'Caucasian Tatars'.

**3** Further examples include, but are not limited to, the Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Ossetian conflicts, as well as the Transnistrian conflicts.

The Nagorno-Karabakh or Artsakh<sup>1</sup> conflict is one of the longest-standing and most violent conflicts to take place on the territory of the former USSR. Over the years, it has claimed thousands of lives in Armenia and Azerbaijan, and displaced over a million people, with Azerbaijanis fleeing Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and its surrounding regions, and Armenians fleeing their residences in Azerbaijan and, more recently, Nagorno-Karabakh. The conflict is often said to have started in the 1980s, but its origins can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century. Between 1905 and 1920 there were inter-ethnic clashes between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in different areas of the South Caucasus, first during the Tsarist period (1905-1907), and again during the short-lived existence of the first Armenian and Azerbaijani Republics (1918-1920).<sup>2</sup> After the subsequent establishment of Soviet rule, borders in the South Caucasus were redrawn in accordance with Soviet nationality policy, which also assigned varying degrees of autonomy to different ethnic groups and created ethnically different enclaves within national republics. Thus in 1923, Nagorno-Karabakh with its majority Armenian population was handed over to Azerbaijan and granted the status of "Autonomous Oblast" within the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (AzSSR). The oblast was called the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO). As the processes leading to the collapse of the USSR later proved, this Soviet nationality policy had great potential for conflict.<sup>3</sup>

The modern conflict began in 1988, when the ethnic Armenian residents of the NKAO, encouraged by Gorbachev's policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, demanded the transfer of the oblast from Soviet Azerbaijan to Soviet Armenia.

During the Soviet period, the demography of the oblast had changed, with a decline in the number of Armenians and an increase in the number of Azerbaijanis. Armenians also reported discrimination against them by Azerbaijani authorities (New York Times, 1977). Thus, Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh perceived *perestroika* as an opportunity to legally express their wish to unite with the Armenian SSR in early 1988. At the same time, a widespread "Karabakh movement" was launched in the Armenian SSR in support of Karabakh Armenians. This movement also called for the unification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia.

In response to these developments, organised pogroms of Armenians took place in the city of Sumgait in Azerbaijan on 27-29 February 1988. Some scholars contend that the Sumgait pogroms awakened memories of the 1915 Armenian Genocide (Abrahamian, 2006;

Marutyan, 2009).<sup>4</sup> These memories, it is argued, helped Armenians to think beyond paradigms of the Soviet present and to break the influence of Soviet propaganda, and became the basis for revolutionary transformations leading to Armenia's independence (Marutyan, 2009). In this way, the issues of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Armenian Genocide were closely intertwined and later became the cornerstones for the construction of the Armenian nation-state.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, Nagorno-Karabakh was a defining feature for Azerbaijan's nation building, as the territorial integrity of what constituted Soviet Azerbaijan was crucial for the independent Republic of Azerbaijan.

Thus the stage was set for the first modern Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which eventually became a two-sided military conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. The dissolution of the Soviet Union was on its way. Azerbaijan announced its independence on August 30, 1991. In response to this, Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians adopted a declaration on September 2 announcing the establishment of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh (NKR). The situation rapidly escalated into a full-scale war. Azerbaijani armed forces started an almost non-stop shelling of the Armenian settlements of Nagorno-Karabakh, while Armenians of the region, along with volunteers from Armenia and the Armenian diaspora, started arming themselves and forming self-defence groups. One of the most tragic events of the first Karabakh war is considered the Khojaly/Khojalu massacre in February 1992, where hundreds of Azerbaijani civilians were shot dead, captured or became refugees (De Waal, 2013). The revenge was the massacre of Armenian civilians of Maragha village in April of the same year.

The war lasted two years, from 1992 to 1994, and ended in a fragile ceasefire brokered by Russia in May 1994. The former NKAO, along with its seven adjacent districts on the territory of Azerbaijan, came under the control of Armenian forces.

After the end of the First Nagorno-Karabakh War, a de-facto Armenian state was established on the territory of the former NKAO. The unrecognised Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh (NKR), later renamed the Republic of Artsakh, with its capital in Stepanakert, had national symbols, legislative, executive and judicial branches of power, as well as an army.

The ceasefire formally remained in force until September 2020, though there were intermittent skirmishes, clashes, and ceasefire violations throughout these years along the Karabakh line of contact, but particularly along the Armenian-Azerbaijani state border, even though there was a peace process under the OSCE Minsk group, co-chaired by France, the Russian Federation and the United States. The most intense fighting during this period happened in April 2016 and lasted for four days, leaving both sides with hundreds of casualties.

The region descended into full-fledged warfare once again with an Azerbaijani attack on 27 September 2020. This was the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, which lasted 44 days and ended on 9 November with a Russia-brokered ceasefire and a trilateral announcement by the Prime Minister of Armenia and the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Russia.

4

The 1915 Armenian Genocide in Ottoman Turkey and its memory is the main source of collective trauma for Armenians. As it has never been recognised by the perpetrator, Turkey, Armenians feel constantly under that same threat. The issue of Karabakh has been closely linked to the genocide: in the Armenian perception and narrative, Azerbaijanis are related to Turks, and are even called "Turks" in vernacular Armenian. Moreover, the current Azerbaijani state is allied with Turkey, and massacres of Armenians took place in Baku in 1918 and in Shushi, Karabakh, in 1920. Thus Armenians collectively consider that both Turkey and Azerbaijan want there to be no Armenia or Armenians between their two Turkic nations.

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Adopted on 23 August 1990, Armenia's Declaration of Independence expresses the united will of the people in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, thus establishing the independent state on behalf of both groups. It has a special provision, stating that "[t]he Republic of Armenia stands in support of the task of achieving international recognition of the 1915 Genocide in Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia."

**Self-proclaimed Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) and adjacent districts after the First Nagorno-Karabakh War.**

Author: Evan Centanni, Political Geography Now, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://www.polgeonow.com/2018/01/artsakh-name-change-nagorno-karabakh.html>, accessed 14 February 2024.



Under the terms of the ceasefire, Azerbaijan regained control over the seven districts around Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as a significant portion of Nagorno-Karabakh itself. In accordance with the announcement, Russian peacekeeping forces were deployed to what remained of the de facto Republic of Artsakh to protect its civilian Armenian population and the Lachin corridor, the only route connecting the Republic to Armenia and the rest of the world. The 9 November announcement stated that the peacekeepers would stay in Artsakh for five years. However, on 12 December 2022, the Azerbaijani Government launched a blockade of the Lachin corridor under the guise of environmental protests. During the period of the blockade, there were numerous statements by different international organisations warning of the possibility of a genocide (International Association of Genocide Scholars, 2022; Lemkin Institute, 2023).

Artsakh remained under siege for the following nine months until 19 September 2023, when Azerbaijani forces attacked its remaining territory under what was announced as an “anti-terrorist operation”. The operation lasted 24 hours and resulted in the full capitulation of local Armenian defence forces. Five days later, Baku opened the Lachin corridor, allowing the surviving Armenians to flee to Armenia. As a result, over 100,000 – or nearly its entire Armenian population at the time – were forcibly displaced from their homes and remain so to this day.

It should be noted that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a defining master narrative for Armenia as well as for Azerbaijan. Not only does it touch upon every aspect of life in Armenia, from international relations to strategic alliances, security and militarisation to basic commodity prices, demography, economics and social welfare, but it also affects

almost every family: many have lost family members in the wars. Therefore, socio-politically it is extremely sensitive and needs a carefully designed and well thought through pedagogical approach for teaching the topic in a multiperspective manner.

From the very beginning of the conflict, peaceful life on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan was disrupted. Even after the 1994 ceasefire, border regions were never peaceful places, particularly in the north-east of Armenia in Tavush province. Throughout the entire period of the relative peace, from 1994 until now, the villages along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border in Tavush were never considered to be secure. The villagers could not cultivate most of their land, there were reported cases of livestock damage or border-crossing, residents were kidnapped from their homes, and from time to time there were shootings. The lesson plan developed by the Armenian teachers using the example of the village of Movses in Tavush illustrates how the war disrupts and affects every aspect of life on the border in a conflict zone.

Students will greatly benefit from looking at the conflict from the perspective of the periphery and not the centre, from the perspective of someone who lives in one of the most conflict-affected places. It will allow us to have not only the official, top-down, political, and ideological perspective on the conflict, but also to look at it from the perspective of the most vulnerable. In turn, this will develop students' critical thinking skills, as well as their ability to utilise different sources to better understand an issue or a situation.

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# Learning Activity

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## Life in a Border Village: A Case Study

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Age	15 (Grade 9)
Time	90 min
Key question	How has the war affected different areas of life in the border village of Movses?

Life in a border village is always very different from life in a city away from the border, and those differences become much more visible during a time of war. It is the people who live here that feel the harshness of war first-hand and have to deal with military violence and an unsafe atmosphere in the very place where they live. The harshness and instability of wartime affect all age groups and concern all spheres of life, including demography, economy, education, and lifestyle. This lesson focuses on changes that have taken place in border areas of Armenia over the past three decades.

Nagorno-Karabakh was granted to Azerbaijan by the Soviet powers in 1923, and until 1991 it was an autonomous region in the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (AzSSR). While the region witnessed conflict in the early years of the twentieth century, the modern Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) conflict can be said to have started in 1988, just before the collapse of the Soviet Union. The people of Nagorno-Karabakh demanded that the region be made a part of the Armenian SSR, and made legal, constitutional moves towards achieving that aim.<sup>1</sup> Although the Soviet census of 1989 indicated that 77% of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh was Armenian and 21% Azerbaijani, the Armenians' wishes were rejected by both the Soviet Union and Azerbaijan; the latter eventually launched war against Nagorno-Karabakh in 1991, attacking other Armenian regions at the same time. The Republic of Nagorno-

<sup>1</sup> The Nagorno-Karabakh Council of People's Deputies voted in favour of uniting the region with Armenia, and a referendum was held (boycotted by the Azerbaijani population of Nagorno-Karabakh), in which an overwhelming majority voted in favour of unification with Armenia.

Karabakh was proclaimed the same year. The Armenian side won the first war, signing a ceasefire agreement in 1994. A peace treaty, however, was never signed, and military actions continued for many years thereafter. Escalations in 2016, 2020 and 2023 made the lives of ordinary people in the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh and in the bordering villages of Armenia unbearable. As a result of the most recent escalation in September 2023, Nagorno-Karabakh was forced to accept the rule of Azerbaijan because of severe losses.

During this lesson, students will analyse primary and secondary sources, working in groups, each of which will focus on one sphere of life and will cover a part of the conflict period. The groups will also assess the influence of the war on a given age group: children, youth, adults, or older people. Through a world café activity, students will comment on one another's work and offer suggestions for improvement. Teachers are encouraged to present and explain peer assessment criteria to the students in order to get constructive criticism from other groups. The homework will be a reasoned essay on the changes in the life of a border village during wartime, viewed from the perspective of one age group of their choice. The lesson is a case study of Movses village in the Tavush region of Armenia.

## Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Compare and contrast primary sources and, based on them, discover and describe the main changes in the lives of people living in the conflict border area.
- Explain the impact of war from the point of view of direct participants, thereby developing empathy towards them.
- Assess the impact of conflicts on people's lives, and form personal opinions.

## Pedagogical recommendations

For a successful lesson, students are expected to be familiar with the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and the general events of the period 1988 to 2023. To provide essential background to the conflicts, at the beginning of the lesson the teacher will hand out a short introductory text covering the events of 1988 to 2023.

The lesson is a case study of life in a border village in Armenia. Hence, the teacher will need to use a variety of primary and secondary sources to promote critical thinking among the students and to encourage unbiased and well-supported conclusions.



For well-organised group work and successful in-group cooperation, teachers are encouraged to form balanced groups at the start of the lesson, taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of each student.

After Stage II (discussion, analysis and preparation of their materials), students are expected to walk around and comment on the work of their peers from other groups (Stage III). 'World café' is a technique that needs to be clearly explained to the students to avoid chaos. To ensure that all work is done within a set amount of time, teachers are encouraged to use simple timers (available online).

For the peer assessment activity to be successful, the teacher should present the criteria of success before the group work begins so that the students are certain of the requirements. See Appendix II for the peer assessment criteria; peer assessment is part of Stage III.

Teachers are encouraged to organise the class discussion (Stage IV) in the spirit of equal participation and to ensure that each student has the opportunity to speak up.

## Activities

### Stage I

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Greeting

5 minutes

### Stage II

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Group work

40 minutes

Students are divided into 4 groups based on the sphere of life they will analyse:

- Demography
- Economy
- Education
- Lifestyle

All groups are handed out a short introduction to the conflict. After studying it, the groups start working on the main sources. The groups are given a selection of sources (Appendix I) representing all three decades of Armenian independence and the duration of the active conflict (1991-2023). The sources contain information on the demography, economy, education, and lifestyle of Movses. Each group studies all the given sources. They make conclusions on changes to life in the village during the period and write down their findings on their posters.



### Stage III

World café

25 minutes

A world café activity is conducted. All the posters are hung on the wall, and the groups of students are asked to take a walk around the classroom, spending 5 minutes at each poster, acquainting themselves with its contents and writing suggestions on sticky notes. They will use the peer assessment criteria (Appendix II). The suggestions can be both questions about the topic and improvements the students deem necessary.

After finishing work on one poster, students move to the next one.

The groups will spend 20 minutes examining the posters of other groups, and then a further five minutes to make quick improvements on their own posters based on the suggestions of their peers.

### Stage IV

Class discussion

20 minutes

There is a class discussion on the key question. Already acquainted with the changes in each sphere of life, students discuss the overall changes in the village of Movses throughout the period, thus answering the key question.

## Assessment

As noted above, peer assessment will be used during the lesson. The students will be given criteria (See Appendix II) to assess the work of the other groups and to make constructive suggestions.

## Homework

The homework will be a reasoned essay answering the key question (see above) from the perspective of the group of people of their choice: children, youth, adults, or older people.

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## Glossary

Autonomous region – an area of a country that has a degree of autonomy or freedom from an external authority, e.g. Nagorno-Karabakh in Soviet Azerbaijan.

Aygepar – a border village in Armenia neighbouring the village Movses.

Berd – a community and district in north-eastern Armenia where the village Movses is located.

Dost – a person who is close to, and committed to, another; a related person or nation.

Paros system – the system of state financial support to people in need in the Republic of Armenia.

# Source packs

## Group 1 Demography

**Source A** The population of Shamshadin (currently Berd) district, including Movses, 1989

Nationality	Number	Percentage
Armenians	32,820	99.5%
Russians	66	0.2%
Azerbaijanis	55	0.2%
Ukrainians	13	0.1%
Yazidis	10	0.1%
Other	21	0.1%
Total	32,985	100%

Source: '1989 Census of the USSR', *National Statistics Committee*, Yerevan.

**Source B** Ararat Avalyan, head of Movses, speaks about the villagers, 19 May 2014

*By 2014, the long-running conflicts had driven many young people away from Movses, leaving a village population of which over half were pensioners. In May 2014, the Movses village head spoke about this situation, speculating on whether the young people would ever return, and who might fund the development of local communities in anticipation of/to encourage any such return.*

“I don't know if people who have left will return or not. What conditions should we create in order to encourage those who left to return? Maybe if peace is established, the state will use military expenses for the development of communities? Today, the people make demands of the government, not taking into account that this country is really at war. Indeed, military spending is high. They feel that only in one case – when our people retaliate against the Azerbaijanis – will people be happy. After peace is established, some will come back: for the love of their home, their birthplace, their homeland, their country, to be there for their parents.”

Source: Hakobyan, T (2014) 'The Village of Movses in the Enemy's Palm', *Civilnet News Agency*, 19 May, <http://tinyurl.com/488d9z5v>, accessed 10 October 2023.

## Source C

## Demography of Movses, 2016

<b>Total inhabitants</b>	<b>1905</b>
Female	1022
Male	883
Including:	
Pensioners	685
Schoolchildren	125
0–6-year-olds	62
Orphans	8
Disabled children	6
Veterans of the Great Patriotic War (WWII)	5

Source: Mikayelyan, H. (2017) *Societal Perceptions of the Conflict in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh*, Caucasus Institute: Yerevan.

The village has 928 households, 52 of which are included in the Paros system.

## Source D

## 'The school of the village Movses will have 122 students this year, once it had 1200', 25 August 2016

Source: Hakobyan, T. (2016) 'The school of the village Movses will have 122 students this year, once it had 1200', *Civilnet News Agency*, 25 August, <http://tinyurl.com/mr45yk77>, accessed 10 October 2023.

"This September 1, 122 students will go to school in the border village of Movses. Two years ago, the number of students in this school was more than 160. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, this school had 1,200 students. Within the past 40-45 years, the number of students at Movses school has decreased tenfold."

## Source E

## Population of Berd district as of 1 January 2022

Source: Berdcity.am (2023) 'ID of The Berd Community of Tavush Region of The Republic of Armenia', <https://www.berdcity.am/Pages/CustomPage/?CustomPageID=722b890c-cc0b-4c5d-bdf2-30fbeb4291>, accessed 10 October 2023.

<b>Overall population</b>	<b>31,695</b>
Nationality	Armenian
Number of registered births	2,953
Number of deaths	2,084
Number of households	40,057
Number of pensioners	4,958

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## Source F

### 'What Children in Border Villages Dream about', 17-year-old girl from Movses, 19 July 2015

Source: Hakobyan, A. (2015) 'What Children in Border Villages Dream About', *BlogNews News Agency*, [https://blognews.am/arm/news/287709/?fb\\_comment\\_id=863533820404460\\_865707523520423](https://blognews.am/arm/news/287709/?fb_comment_id=863533820404460_865707523520423), 19 July, accessed 10 October 2023.

"It doesn't matter what happens. The most important thing is peace; peace and the growth of the population of the village. We, our fathers and mothers, maintain the border just like the soldiers. Our fathers and brothers should not leave Armenia to find work. And if there are many of us and we don't leave the village, you know, the enemy will stay where he is and he won't even think of crossing the border..."

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## Source G

### A 40-year-old woman from Movses, Tavush region, Armenia

Source: Mikayelyan, H. (2017) *Societal Perceptions of the Conflict in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh*, Caucasus Institute: Yerevan, p.6.

"It is not true that our children are nervous because of shelling. The kindergarten has been renovated, and now no shots can be heard from inside it. If the children are outside and hear shots, they go inside. An additional wall is being built in front of the kindergarten to protect it from bullets. Our children are fine, happy, and well fed. The Armenian Foundation provides the kindergarten with food, furniture, and everything we need."

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## YOUR TASK

Analyse the given sources and make a poster answering the following questions.

- 1 What changes did the demographic profile of Movses undergo in 1989-2022? Pay attention to the following areas:
  - a Population size,
  - b Gender and age composition,
  - c Birth and death ratio
  - d Ethnicity.
- 2 According to the sources and your knowledge of the conflict, what factors influenced the change in the demographic profile of Movses?

# Group 2 Economy

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## Source A

A 60-year-old male, Movses, Tavush province, Armenia

“There are not enough jobs in the village. It’s dying, people are leaving. We were suffocated by taxes, and then the former Prime Minister visited our village and promised to abolish them. He kept his promise and now it’s a little bit easier. A person living here [in the border region] should be the centre of [the government’s] attention. They must appreciate that we stay here. There are no factories anymore. In Soviet times there were 36 factories in the region.”

Source: Mikayelyan, H. (2017) *Societal Perceptions of the Conflict in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh*, Caucasus Institute: Yerevan, p.6.

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## Source B

What did the counting show?

“As of 1 January 1993, in comparison with the same period in 1992, the number of cattle decreased by 3,300. It is not a secret that such a sharp decline in the number of livestock is a direct result of the imperfect mechanism of privatisation, because of which a mass slaughter of the number of livestock has happened and is still going on not only in the region but also in the republic in general.”

Source: Dokholyan, A. (1993) ‘The Border: A Fighter Does Not Get Weak’, *Aygabat Newspaper*, N4, <https://tert.nla.am/archive/NLA%20TERT/Aygabac/1993/4.pdf>, 12 February, accessed 10 October 2023.

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## Source C

‘The Difficult Present and the Unclear Future of Movses’, 28 October 2008

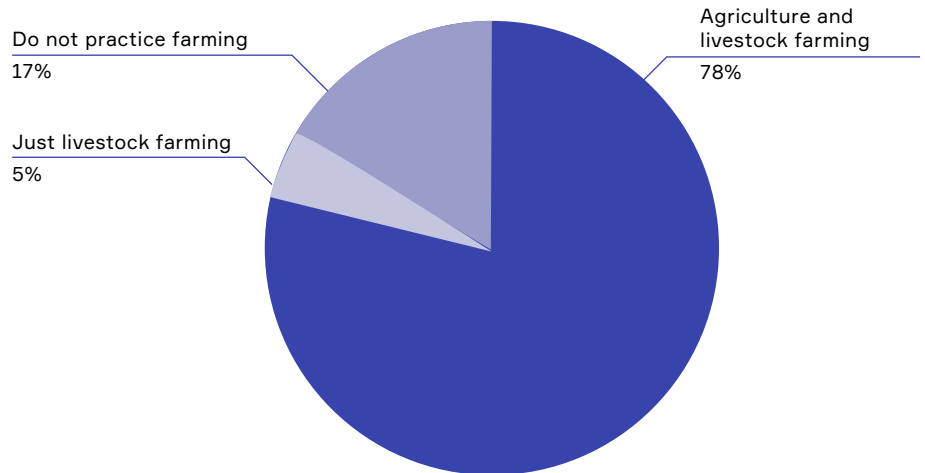
“There are 540 hectares of arable land in the village. Around 200 hectares are surrounded by mines or located in a dangerous zone between Armenian and Azerbaijani positions. Without irrigation, the peasants do not have the opportunity to sell the meagre crops they have grown with difficulty. Only grapes are delivered to the reception point of the Yerevan Cognac Factory operating in Berd. During the Soviet period, the Aygepar canning factory worked in three shifts, and even accepted mulberries from the peasants. A significant part of the youth of Movses has emigrated, and the number of livestock farmers has also decreased. There used to be 1,000 cattle in Movses, now there are 300. The peasants do not want to engage in livestock farming because it is not profitable.”

Source: Sargsyan, V. (2008) ‘The Difficult Present and the Unclear Future of Movses’, *Hetq News Agency*, 28 October, <https://hetq.am/hy/article/52512>, accessed 10 October 2023.

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## Source D

## Percentage of surveyed households engaged in farming in Movses



Source: MPG (Gallup International Association) (2014) 'Analysis and Assessment of Risks Related to Climate Change', p.102.

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## Source E

## 'Textile Production in Movses', 15 August 2017

"The Movses Textile Factory operated in the village from 1988 to 1992. The building was located 500 metres from the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, in the former hospital building (the hospital was closed in 1976), and as a result, it was damaged in the war. The factory produced children's clothes which were exported throughout the USSR. In 1992, the factory was badly damaged and closed down. Most of the villagers worked in the Movses Factory; even former residents of Movses moved back to the village from Yerevan to work there."

Source: Lurer News Agency (2017) 'Textile Production in Movses', 15 August, <http://tinyurl.com/y5w65sdt>, accessed 10 October 2023.

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## YOUR TASK

Analyse the given sources and make a poster answering the following questions.

- 1 What branches did the economy of Movses consist of before and after the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict erupted?
- 2 How did the conflict affect the development of Movses' economy?
- 3 What age group (children, youth, adults, older people) do you think was most impacted by economic changes in Movses in the period 1988 to 2017 and why?

# Group 3 Education

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## Source A

‘Let the desired peace arrive’, 1 July 1994

“The performance “Farewell to the Kindergarten” by children leaving the Movses kindergarten took place a few days ago. The kindergarten is in a village that for a long time was the target of shelling, and even now the danger of an enemy attack hangs in the air. That is why the event of that day was important: not only because the children were saying goodbye to their early childhood and becoming schoolchildren, but also because in those alarming days, they gained the knowledge with which to enter the new world under the thunder of guns.”

Source: Badalyan, A. (1994) ‘Let the Desired Peace Arrive’, *Aygabatz Newspaper*, <https://tert.nla.am/archive/NLA%20TERT/Aygabac/1994/23.pdf>, 1 July, accessed 10 October 2023.

## Source B

‘Children are being transferred from schools in border villages’, 2 September 2014

“In the last five years, the number of school-aged children in the village has been decreasing. Currently, the number of students in the school is 132. According to the director of the school, the emigration of the ‘90s had a great impact on their number; there are almost no young people left in the village. The families did not leave Armenia, but moved from Movses to other areas of the republic.”

Source: Medialab Newsroom-Laboratory (2014) ‘Children Are Being transferred from Schools in Border Villages’, 2 September, [https://medialab.am/11880/?fbclid=IwAR0q4sYXTEG-nUwatoxUSIUJw9Z7za6s-94d3T\\_07xiSxZysm-0Lyp\\_17XFUf4](https://medialab.am/11880/?fbclid=IwAR0q4sYXTEG-nUwatoxUSIUJw9Z7za6s-94d3T_07xiSxZysm-0Lyp_17XFUf4), accessed 10 October 2023.

## Source C

‘Students of the border village of Movses will practise robotics’, 19 December 2018

“With the support of the Stepan Gishyan charity foundation, students of the border village of Movses of Tavush region will be able to make robots and implement three-dimensional modelling. In the ‘Armat’ laboratory, which was established two years ago in Movses, secondary school students learned programming, but they did not succeed in making robots, because they did not have the appropriate devices. Now they will use the knowledge and skills acquired in the laboratory to manage robots.”

Source: Armbanks News Agency (2018) ‘Students of the Border Village of Movses will Practise Robotics’, 19 December, <http://www.armbanks.am/hy/2018/12/19/117927/>, accessed 10 October 2023.

## Source D

‘A child living in the border area must receive a good education’, 29 November 2017

“There is no performance hall in the school of Movses village. The school’s former furnace room has recently been renovated with funding from the International Committee of the Red Cross and turned into a safe room, which is of great importance for the school in the border village. The shelter, with an area of 60 square metres, is

Source: Muradyan, L. (2017) ‘A Child Living in the Border Area Must Receive a Good Education’, *Armenian Public Radio*, 29 November, accessed 10 October 2023.



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designed to accommodate 139 people. The area is small, but the plan is, temporarily, to organise school events in the shelter. In the school of Movses village, the first skill children are taught is shooting. Last year, the children of the village took 3rd place in the national shooting competitions, and this year they came 4th.”

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## Source E

### A 40-Year-Old Woman from Movses, Tavush region, Armenia

Source: H. Mikayelyan (2017) *Societal Perceptions of the Conflict in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh*, Caucasus Institute: Yerevan, p.6.

“It is not true that our children are nervous because of shelling. The kindergarten has been renovated, and now no shots can be heard from inside it. If the children are outside and hear shots, they go inside. An additional wall is being built in front of the kindergarten to protect it from bullets. Our children are fine, happy, and well fed. The Armenian Foundation provides the kindergarten with food, furniture, and everything we need.”

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## Source F

A wall has been erected in place of the windows of the school in Movses to protect it from shooting and shelling.



Photo: Javahir Badalyan, a school student from Movses, August 2023.

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**YOUR TASK**

Analyse the given sources and make a poster answering the following questions.

- 1 In what circumstances do the children of Movses village receive education in kindergarten and school?
- 2 What effect did the war have on the educational environment of the children in the village? How have priorities changed?
- 3 What educational prospects do the children of Movses village have?

# Group 4 Lifestyle

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## Source A

‘The Border: A Fighter Does Not Get Weak’,  
12 February 1993

Source: Dokholyan, A. (1993) ‘The Border: A Fighter Does Not Get Weak’, *Aygabat* Newspaper, <https://tert.nla.am/archive/NLA%20TERT/Aygabac/1993/4.pdf>, 12 February, accessed 10 October 2023.

“The feeling of war was apparent right at the Yerevan bus station. There was no transport going to Tavush. A number of people had gathered in the small room of the bus station. They had come by bus from Movses and were waiting for it to arrive and take them back. ‘Eh, who needs us? Our children are here, our husbands are at the border, and we are like homeless people on the roads,’ a young woman said, waving her hand. The bus arrived. We made our way to Ijevan, from where a new road had been opened through the mountains to Tavush. The road was so narrow that two cars could barely pass each other in the 50km-long forested mountain pass. A truck approached from the other direction, groaning under its load. This road is the only one connecting Tavush to the republic.”

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## Source B

‘All will be well’, Head of Movses, 2020

Source: Poghosyan, G. (2020) ‘All Will Be Well’, *Hayzinvor*, <http://www.hayzinvor.am/78401.html>, accessed 10 October 2023.

“It goes without saying that we will not be able to live side by side with an open border. There should be either a third party, like Russia in Soviet times, to exert pressure on both parties, or military forces guarding the border. We will not be able to trust each other again. It’s true that before the war we had Azerbaijani friends. We called them ‘dost’. Armenians and Azerbaijanis used to visit each other’s homes. In our village shop, Azerbaijani women from the neighbouring village were served first because they’d had to walk a long way. After what they did and what we went through, we cannot be friends again.”

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## Source C

‘All will be well’, Head of Movses, 2020

Source: Poghosyan, G. (2020) ‘All Will Be Well’, *Hayzinvor*, <http://www.hayzinvor.am/78401.html>, accessed 10 October 2023.

“20 percent of the houses in Movses village are already empty. No one lives there. Most of the young people have moved away from the village; after six o’clock you will see five or six people on the streets. Some of the wives in Movses are also ready to leave the country to find work, if Russia grants them citizenship easily enough. I want to go too. Why should I stay? I can’t live under the threat of a bullet. Even schoolchildren, if you ask them, will say: ‘When I finish school, I’ll go to Russia.’ If my son gets citizenship, I’ll go and join him as soon as I can.”

“In 2013, by the decision of the Movses Village Council, the second Saturday of August was designated ‘Village Day’. The Vice-governor of Tavush Region highlighted the importance of holding the event in the border village where, despite the proximity of enemies, the heroic people of Tavush live and work. Celebrating Village Day, the people of Movses emphasise their attachment to their native land. Not only have they not left their homeland, but they also direct efforts made by former villagers, now living abroad, to solve the problems of the village.”



Source: Mtad.am (2017) 'Movses Celebrated Village Day', 14 August, <http://tavush.mtad.am/news/item/2017/08/14/movses/>, accessed 10 October 2023.

Source: Badalyan, A. (2011) 'Locked Doors and Bullet Tracks Are Everywhere Here', *Arevik*, 26 June, <http://tinyurl.com/dfaksyfw>, accessed 10 October 2023.

"The Cultural Centre of the village, built in the 1950s, is a unique architectural structure. During the war and in the following years, a military unit was stationed in the Cultural Centre. Just a few years ago, the military unit moved to the neighbouring village, and the residents started thinking about renovating the Cultural Centre. They applied to the relevant bodies; 100 million drams were allocated (around €236,000). The Palace of Culture was thoroughly renovated. 'We are preparing to organise concerts here. Finally, young people will have a place to gather,' says the village head."

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**YOUR TASK**

Analyse the given sources and make a poster answering the following questions.

- 1 How has life in Movses adapted to war conditions?
- 2 What changes did ideas about a peaceful way of life undergo before and after the war (i.e. the First Nagorno-Karabakh War)?
- 3 In what ways did the war affect the employment and lifestyle of the village youth?

# Peer assessment criteria

Criterion	Questions to consider	Points and comments
Content Relevance 1-5	<p>→ Is the content of the poster relevant to the topic or subject matter?</p> <p>→ Does the poster effectively convey key messages or information?</p>	
Clarity of Message 1-5	<p>→ Is the main message or purpose of the poster easy to understand?</p> <p>→ Are visuals and text used to enhance the clarity of the message?</p> <p>→ Is the language clear?</p>	
Organisation and Structure 1-5	<p>→ Is the poster well-organised with a logical flow?</p> <p>→ Are there clear transitions between sections?</p>	
Creativity 1-5	<p>→ Does the poster demonstrate creative thinking?</p> <p>→ Are there unique elements or ideas that make the poster stand out?</p>	
Adherence to Guidelines 1-5	<p>→ Does the poster follow the specific guidelines and requirements provided by the assignment?</p>	

# Georgian coup d'état (1991-92)

# Background and Context

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and Freedom of Informa-  
tion, Tbilisi, Georgia

The Georgian coup d'état, also known as the Tbilisi War, or the Putsch of 1991–1992, was an important event in the context of the Georgian Civil War. The coup still captures the attention of Georgian historians and the public, yet there has been no separate fundamental study of this issue in Georgian historiography. The sources mostly rely on the reports of individual historians, politicians, political scientists, journalists, and eyewitnesses that present a fragmented picture of what transpired in the Georgian capital in 1991-92. The conflict took place in the central district of Tbilisi, largely on one central street, Rustaveli Avenue, and can be considered an important event not only for the future development of Georgia but also from a geostrategic point of view in the context of the distribution of spheres of influence between Russia and the West.

In the most common narrative, the event has been preserved as a coup through military intervention. An alternative narrative states that the confrontation and armed conflict developed due to the government's deviation from a democratic path of development and its attempts to establish an authoritarian ruling style. Both sides often agree on one point: that the events of 1991-92 were not necessarily civil, but a Russian-Georgian confrontation; the Russian secret service managed to sow chaos in the country.

Russia expected to be given international recognition as a guarantor of peace and stability in the region, and gave post-Soviet countries that had regained their independence 'Near Abroad' status, emphasising that independent countries should maintain proximity and close ties with Russia (Toal, 2016). In instances where republics did not follow the path dictated by Russia, divide and rule tactics were employed and ethnic conflicts fuelled. In the case of Georgia, Russia utilised two levers simultaneously: the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and the Autonomous District of South Ossetia.

Various other factors also played a significant role in the outbreak of conflict: the immaturity of the country's political elite; agents of Russian influence (including the KGB itself); the Soviet *nomenklatura* and former high-ranking officials within the country; and the social and economic problems that arose after the collapse of the USSR. The policy pursued by the country's president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, created fertile ground for Russian-backed separatists to escalate conflicts. As historian Stephen Jones (2013, p. 14) writes: "Georgians in 1991 were confused as to what sort of nation they wanted – a traditional community based on romantic conceptions of ethnic solidarity, harmony, the family and historical longevity, or a heterogeneous and 'secular' nation ready to tolerate internal territorial allegiances and integration with a pluralised modern Europe. The tension between these two visions underlay Georgia's civil war in 1991."



The prerequisites for the conflict were brewing in the country right after the declaration of independence on 9 April 1991. A severe political crisis lasting about six months had preceded the event. On 31 March a referendum was held in which the population voted on whether they wanted to restore independence based on the Independence Act of 26 May 1918. With a turnout of 90.3%, 98.9% answered the question affirmatively. Before the 1991 August Coup in the Soviet Union, various independent institutions began to be established in the country, among them the National Guard. The situation became tense in parallel with the August Coup. The State Committee on the State of Emergency coerced President Gamsakhurdia to abolish the position of the commander of the National Guard. Gamsakhurdia yielded to threats and demands, abolished the position, and changed the National Guard's status to that of an internal army, making it report to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Commander Tengiz Kitovani refused to comply with Zviad Gamsakhurdia's order and stationed guards loyal to him near Tbilisi; Prime Minister Tengiz Sigua resigned from his position. The former 'thief in law'<sup>1</sup> opposed to Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Jaba Ioseliani, was released from prison and later founded the armed paramilitary group 'Mkhedrioni'. The above-mentioned trio united and represented the opposition to the elected president in the coup d'état.

Chaos and uncertainty descended on the country. The opposing parties accused each other of being Russian agents and of acting in Russia's interests (Chikovani et al., 2022: 123). Even today, after many years, it is impossible to know what constitutes historical 'truth' and find clear answers to all the questions raised about this period.

The Belovezha Accords of 8 December 1991 declared that the Soviet Union had effectively ceased to exist and proclaimed the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in its place. On 21 December 1991, the first summit of 11 CIS states was held in Kazakhstan, and the Alma-Ata Protocol was signed. At this time, Georgia stood firmly on its position that it would not join the organisation, a position that was categorically against Russia's goal to preserve the Soviet Union in a new form. At this time, tension and unrest in Georgia reached their peak.

After several unsuccessful negotiations, an armed conflict between the government and the opposition began on 22 December 1991, with Tengiz Kitovani occupying several buildings. The fighting persisted for about 15 days, resulting in over 100 fatalities and approximately 700 injuries. The armed conflict concluded with the victory of the rebels, leading to the departure of President Gamsakhurdia from the country and the Military Council assuming control of the government. Many buildings in the city centre, including the Parliament Building and the Tbilisi Classical Gymnasium, were burned and destroyed.

The violent overthrow of the government of President Gamsakhurdia strained the political situation throughout Georgia and led to a large-scale civil conflict. The Military Council failed to establish order in the country, and in March 1992 invited Eduard Shevardnadze (former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union) from Moscow to bring the country out of a deep crisis with his own diplomatic and

<sup>1</sup> A 'thief in law', in post-Soviet states, is a professional criminal who enjoys an elite position within organised crime circles and who holds authority over members with lower status. It is akin to a Mafia boss.

political experience and through his connections with Russia and the West. At the same time, irreversible processes had already been set in motion by separatist forces in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

On 27 September 1993, the city of Sukhumi in Abkhazia fell, and the Russian-supported Abkhaz separatists made the final turning point in the war towards victory. Three days prior, Gamsakhurdia, who had returned from exile to Samegrelo (a region bordering Abkhazia), organised a demonstration, after which he entered Abkhazia but returned to Samegrelo soon after. His armed supporters established control over several municipalities, including the strategically important port of Poti and the Samtredia railway junction. In October, Shevardnadze asked Moscow for assistance to suppress Gamsakhurdia and his supporters' insurrection. Russian troops helped as requested. The supporters of Gamsakhurdia were soon neutralised because they did not have heavy ammunition and the ability to continue fighting. After that, Gamsakhurdia took refuge in the distant village of Samegrelo together with a few supporters. On 31 December 1993, he died.<sup>2</sup>

All this led to a pro-Russian reorientation of Georgia's foreign policy. In October 1993, Shevardnadze signed Georgia's accession to the Russian-led Commonwealth of Independent States, and in the following year, Tbilisi joined the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty.

The Georgian coup d'état and ensuing Civil War has been ingrained in the collective memory as a negative schema, intensifying the traumatic impact of this event. That is why, 30 years later, this war periodically resurfaces in the present and is experienced as if it happened yesterday (Chikovani et al., 2022: 123).

Therefore, teaching about the Tbilisi Conflict and its effects is a very important part of understanding the past and helping people consider their individual responsibility for the country and its society in the future. Of course, establishing the historical truth and restoring justice is also important. The new generation must clearly understand what transpired in order to take responsibility for the historical past and present. Otherwise, it will be difficult to build a society based on truth and justice.

It is a challenge to teach these events in a public school because there is no common vision among academic historians from which to form an objective picture without political influence and propaganda. This is compounded by the incomplete and episodic information on the subject in the history curriculum and textbooks. There is only a chronological record of this issue, both in the curriculum and in the textbooks, which causes doubt and misunderstanding among certain historians and researchers.<sup>3</sup> Almost 32 years have passed since the beginning of the Civil War, and it is high time for the public and young people interested in modern history to know the real reasons for, and consequences of, this conflict.

The Georgian coup d'état may be a sensitive and traumatic topic for students, especially if their families were directly affected. Teachers need to approach the subject with empathy, and be prepared to provide support for students who may find the topic emotionally challenging.

**2**

The prevalent belief is that suicide is the most likely cause, although a segment of the population thinks that he was murdered. This matter has been under investigation since 2004 by the State Commission and Prosecutor's Office, established by the decree of the President of Georgia. However, the results of the investigation have not yet been published.

**3**

It must be noted that in new textbooks of history and civics education, the conflicts of the '90s and attempts to resolve them have started to appear.

The conflict is a recent event; there might be ongoing tensions or unresolved issues. Teachers must navigate these sensitivities and provide a safe space for discussions, while respecting diverse opinions. Finding appropriate ways to incorporate the topic without overwhelming the curriculum requires careful planning and collaboration between teachers and creators of teaching material and textbooks. Access to reliable and unbiased resources may be limited. Teachers need to ensure they have accurate and up-to-date materials to present a comprehensive understanding of the events.

Adjusting the content to be age-appropriate is crucial. Younger students may struggle with complex geopolitical issues, so educators need to tailor the material to the student's age, maturity, and comprehension levels. For example, to show what the city centre, Rustaveli Avenue, looked like before and after the armed conflict, so that students can recognise the destroyed buildings in the photos.

In addition to scientific material, the 2022 project 'Birth of Georgia,'<sup>4</sup> which has already produced 150 episodes, can be used as a tangible source. In extensive video interviews, individuals who were direct participants in the formation of the modern state of Georgia share their experiences. Of course, memoirs cannot be considered empirical sources since the participants narrate stories from their perspectives. However, by contrasting narratives, it is possible to develop critical thinking and gain insights into events from a multiperspective approach.

## References

Toal, G. (2016) *The Near Abroad: Putin, the West, and the Contest over Ukraine and the Caucasus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chikovani, N., Kakitelashvili, K., Chkhaidze, I., Tsereteli, I. & Ephadze, K. (2022) *Georgia: Trauma and Triumph on the Way to Independence*. Tbilisi: Tbilisi State University Press.

Jones, S. (2013) *Georgia: A Political History since Independence, Part 1: The Best of Times, the Worst of Times: 1985–1995*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

4

See 'Birth of Georgia' YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@dabadeba> (only available in Georgian), accessed 14 February 2024.

# Learning Activity

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## The Freedom that Turned into a Tragedy

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Authors	Levan Bukia, Tbilisi public school No. 87, Tbilisi Lela Kakashvili, Gori public school No. 9, Gori Ekaterine Maisuradze, Gori public school No. 12; Tbilisi public school No. 133, Gori/Tbilisi Tamuna Macharashvili, Tbilisi public school No. 77, Tbilisi Giorgi Labadze, American International School Progress, Tbilisi
Age	17-18
Time	90 min
Key question	How are the events of 1991-1992 in Tbilisi still relevant to us?

The Georgian coup d'état took place in Georgia in 1991-92. In this learning activity, students will read accounts of the conflict from pro-government and opposition perspectives, as well as through the eyes of the general population who were witness to the events. Working both individually and in groups, they will read and analyse historical sources using various methods, helping them to understand not only the events as they happened, but also the causes and consequences of the conflict. Students will discuss the changes of values in society as a result of the conflict, and evaluate how the war affected and continues to affect Georgian society today.

# Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Compare and contrast testimonies of ordinary people in Tbilisi during the conflict.
- Analyse historical sources and identify key consequences of the war on Georgian society.
- Use different types of historical sources and multiple perspectives to justify their opinions and positions on historical events.
- Discuss the values that have changed and been established in Georgian society as a result of the conflict.

## Activities

### Stage I

Brainstorming

10 minutes

The purpose of the activity is to spark students' interest in the lesson topic. The teacher shows the students a news report from 1991<sup>1</sup> (see Appendix I for a transcript) as well as a map of central Tbilisi on Google Maps,<sup>2</sup> explaining that the conflict was limited to Rustaveli Avenue and the surrounding streets. To provide more historical context, depending on the needs of the class, students can also be given the key dates surrounding the Tbilisi War (see Appendix IV).

Students should then answer the following questions:

- How might the conflict have affected civilians in Tbilisi?
- How large-scale do you think the conflict was?
- According to the map and video, which districts and streets of Tbilisi were affected by the battle?

### Stage II

Source analysis

45 minutes

The purpose of this activity is for students to analyse different narratives about the conflict and compare them with one another to form a multiperspective view of the issue.

Students are split into 3 groups. Group 1 works on sources from supporters of the government; group 2 analyses the opinions of opposition supporters; and group 3 analyses the testimonies of eyewitnesses (see Appendix II for source packs). Students should answer the questions assigned to their group. After 20 minutes, each group briefly presents their work and findings (5 minutes per group).

**1**

See 'ABC News 24.12.1991 | Tbilisi, Georgia' on YouTube: [https://youtu.be/Mg5dIAeccQ0g?si=y6ZT-JeBjCD\\_hSwaF](https://youtu.be/Mg5dIAeccQ0g?si=y6ZT-JeBjCD_hSwaF), accessed 14 February 2024.

**2**

See Shota Rustaveli Avenue on Google Maps: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/6QbZ8SYjncf7m5rv9>

### Group 1

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- According to the sources, how does President Gamsakhurdia evaluate the actions of the opposition?
- What caused Georgian society to split in two? How is this phenomenon explained by supporters of the government?
- How did the supporters of the government evaluate the civil conflict?
- What did these people see as a solution?

### Group 2

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- How did supporters of the opposition view the civil conflict? What do they think were the reasons behind it?
- In their opinion, what will be the result of this confrontation? What did they see as a solution?
- What was the main accusation of the opposition against the government?
- In your opinion, were the arguments of the opposition sufficient for an armed confrontation?

### Group 3

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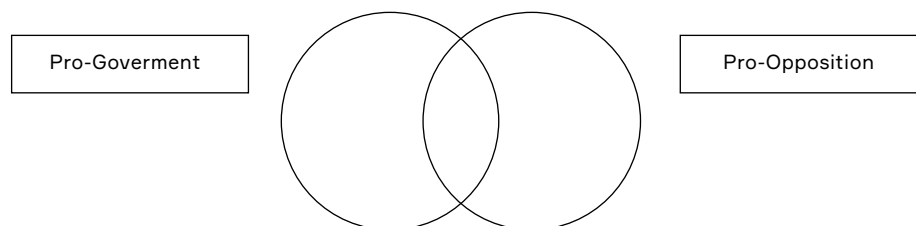
- How do eyewitnesses evaluate the events of 1991-92?
- What are the common values that public figures talk about a few years after the conflict?
- What can these events teach us? What conclusions do the sources allow us to draw?
- In your opinion, was it possible to avoid this conflict or was it inevitable?

### Stage III

Venn diagram

10 minutes

After sharing the presentations, the class completes the Venn diagram. On one side of the Venn diagram, write down 2 or 3 positions of the supporters of the government, i.e. arguments opposing the military action; on the other side, 2 or 3 positions of the opposition supporters justifying the military action. In the centre, write any common opinions both sides had about the conflict. The diagram will help to compare the positions of the parties involved in the conflict.



## Stage IV

Analysis of the presentation of the Civil War  
in Georgian school textbooks

15 minutes

Students should individually read the extracts from Georgian school textbooks (see Appendix III) and separate the facts from the opinions (underline them in different colours). After 10 minutes, they should discuss in small groups which of the texts is biased and why.

## Stage V

Discussion

20 minutes

In class, students should discuss the following questions:

- How can society take steps towards reconciliation?
- From the materials studied in Stage II, would you say that a reconciliation is possible in Georgia over the coup d'état? Explain why (not).
- How are the events of 1991-92 relevant to us today?

## Assessment (homework)

Students should sketch a statue or monument symbolising the reconciliation of the society divided during the coup d'état. Students can present the task virtually or in the form of a model or drawing, and should think about and answer the following questions:

- What would you name your monument?
- What is the symbolism of the monument?
- How would the monument you created be a symbol of reconciliation?

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## Glossary

August Putsch – a failed attempt to oust Mikhail Gorbachev as President of the USSR on 19 August 1991 and keep the Soviet Union together.

Dugout – a strong structure that protects soldiers from artillery and mortar fire.

Guardsman – a member of the Georgian National Guard that fought on the side of the opposition forces during the Tbilisi War. Like the rest of the country, the National Guard was also divided during the conflict.

Mtatsminda – a street and neighbourhood in Tbilisi.

National Movement – the Georgian dissident movement of the second half of the 20th century, the goals of which were Georgia's withdrawal from the Soviet Union and independence.

Rustaveli Avenue – the main street in Tbilisi.

Zviadist - the name given to supporters of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia.

## List of persons

Beria, Lavrenti (1899-1953) – chief of the NKVD under Stalin during WWII. He actively participated in the mass purges from the 1930s onwards.

Gamsakhurdia, Zviad (1939-93) – the first President of Georgia (1991-92). At the end of 1989, he contributed greatly to the implementation of the first multi-party elections in the USSR, and he died in mysterious circumstances on 31 December 1993. Sometimes known as 'Zviadi'.

Ioseliani, Jaba (1926-2003) – a member of the Military Council which ruled Georgia from 6 January until 10 March 1992, when it was replaced by the State Council led by Eduard Shevardnadze. Ioseliani's imprisonment in 1991 led to the protests of 2 September (see Appendix IV: Key Dates, below).

Kitovani, Tengiz (1938-2023) – a member of the Military Council which ruled Georgia from 6 January until 10 March 1992, when it was replaced by the State Council led by Eduard Shevardnadze.

Orjonikidze, Sergo (1886-1937) – Bolshevik revolutionary engaged in revolutionary propaganda among the workers of Tbilisi. He actively participated in the October Revolution in 1917 and the Bolshevik invasions of the Caucasus during the Russian Civil War which ultimately resulted in the absorption of the Caucasian Republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia into the USSR. As a result, he is seen as a traitor to Georgia.

Sigua, Tengiz (1934-2020) – a member of the Military Council which ruled Georgia from 6 January until 10 March 1992, when it was replaced by the State Council led by Eduard Shevardnadze, under whom he became Prime Minister.

Shevardnadze, Eduard (1928-2014) – Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1985-90. He led the Georgian government during the Civil War and was President of Georgia from 1995-2003. Under him, Georgia joined the Commonwealth of Independent States.



# Video transcript

Source: ABC News (1991) 'Tbilisi, Georgia', 24 December, [https://youtu.be/Mg5dIAecq0g?si=y6Z-TJeBJCD\\_hSwaF](https://youtu.be/Mg5dIAecq0g?si=y6Z-TJeBJCD_hSwaF), accessed 6 February 2024.

In Soviet Georgia, while rebel forces were shelling the parliament building in their unrelenting drive to oust the republic's democratically elected leader, President Gamsakhurdia was appealing to the West for help in battling what he called "the terrorists". At least 30 people are dead, more than 250 wounded. Sheila Kast is in the capital city of Tbilisi.

The rebels are using every kind of weapon they can lay hands on to attack what has become President Gamsakhurdia's bunker. They're using everything from AK-47s to small rifles to pistols poked out of armoured personnel carriers. The rebels are well supplied with ammunition. Their shelling is relentless and answered only by sporadic sniper fire from the president's supporters. From the makeshift headquarters the rebels have set up in a tourist hotel, across the street to the government building has become a no-man's land.

It's only on this avenue, the main street of the capital, that a power struggle rages. In the rest of the city and the rest of the Republic, life is normal. Residents of Tbilisi gaze upon the shelling with detached amazement. Big majorities voted for Gamsakhurdia in free elections just last May, and many do not agree with the opposition charge that he has become a dictator. Only a few hundred people have taken up arms on either side.

"It is a putsch, it is not civil war...yet." But residents worry it might become civil war. Both sides in this conflict wanted independence from the old Soviet state, but now there's no sign of an end to this stalemate between the forces of a president who claims authoritarian rule is the only way to set up a new democracy, and rebels who see his brand of democracy as the enemy of their liberties.

# Source packs

## Group 1 Supporters of the government

### Source A

#### Georgians on different sides of the barricades

“Near Government House – rallies and other actions to protect the president continue here. There is a continuous flow of workers from different regions of the republic; workers in various city factories are coming... ‘We are here to protect our president,’ Robert Ugulava told us. ‘From whom, Georgians?’ we asked. ‘Both Orjonikidze and Beria were Georgians, but don’t you remember what they did?’ ‘Are all your opponents like Beria and Orjonikidze?’ ‘I don’t know about that, but when Georgia is one step away from independence, any action organised against the president is similar to the actions of Orjonikidze.’ Eter Mchedliani, a journalist, said: ‘We are supporting our president; supporting, not defending. Zviad Gamsakhurdia doesn’t need our protection, we are protecting the future of Georgia.’”

Source: Kandelaki, E. (1991)  
‘Georgians on different  
sides of the barricades’.  
*Akhalgazrda Iverieli*, 21  
September, N107-108, p.5.

### Source B

#### “Democracy is not anarchy”

“Wasn’t the referendum held to restore Georgia’s independence? The president received a large share of the popular vote: doesn’t this, not to mention the publication in opposition newspapers of articles criticising the government, represent a step towards real democracy? As for the President of the Republic, September’s news once again proved that he is too liberal. Well, which country’s leader would tolerate such a display from armed opposition? At the same time, dubbing Gamsakhurdia a dictator in the eyes of the world community will not bring good results to the opposition and to Georgia in general.”

Source: Todua, T. (1991)  
‘Democracy is not anarchy’.  
*Akhalgazrda Iverieli*, 5  
October, N113-114, p.4.

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## Source C

## A group of three hundred voters

“In the last few days, a group of three hundred voters (the collection of signatures continues) has been persistently urging the President of Georgia through the press and television to immediately dissolve parliament and introduce presidential rule in the republic. ‘Do you support this call or not?’, we asked. Gela Roinishvili, a doctor, said: ‘I believe that Zviad Gamsakhurdia, even after taking full power, will not forget the main thing - the fate of Georgia will directly depend on everything he does. And, no matter what others say, Zviad loves Georgia more than anyone does.’”

Source: *Akhalgazrda Iverieli* (1991), 12 October, N115-117, p.5.

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## Source D

## ‘The rallies continue, the tension is increasing’

“On 7 September, at five o'clock in the evening, on Rustaveli Avenue, in front of Government House, a crowded meeting was held ... President of the Republic Zviad Gamsakhurdia gave a speech at the rally. In his speech, he said that political destabilisation in Georgia is caused by hostile forces which are controlled from Moscow. Moscow does not want Georgia's independence and freedom and is trying to prevent its international recognition in every possible way. The traitors and enemies here are pouring water on the enemy's mill, declared the president. He called on the protesters, all of Georgia, to relentlessly fight and destroy Georgia's enemies and traitors.”

Source: Koridze, T. (1991) ‘The rallies continue, the tension is increasing’. *Droni*, 13 September, N35(51), p.1.

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# Group 2 Supporters of the opposition

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## Source A

### ‘Georgians on different sides of the barricades’

“My father was brought up with songs about Stalin and Beria. I don't want my grandchildren to grow up with Zviadi – that would once again be proof of our slave nature. I will always be immensely proud of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who has done great services to Georgia and the Georgian people. He did a wonderful job of destroying the communist system, but a capable destroyer is not always a good builder.”

Source: Kandelaki, E. (1991)  
‘Georgians on different sides of the barricades’.  
*Akhalgazrda Iverieli*, 21 September, N107-108, p.5.

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## Source B

### Republic Square, 27 December 1991

"You know, we have reached a point where the issue will no longer be resolved through political negotiations and other such peaceful means. The only way to resolve this, to end it, is with guns. Zviad Gamsakhurdia will not resign of his own free will. All means have already been exhausted - ordinary, peaceful, diplomatic, or if you want, oppositional struggle: exhausted." – Anonymous citizen

Source: Kiziria, D. (2018)  
*The Putsch*. Tbilisi: Artanuj Press, p.100.

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## Source C

### ‘The rallies continue, the tension is increasing’

“On 7 September, on Rustaveli Avenue, in front of the Theatre Institute [currently the State Theatre and Film Institute], a rally was held at the initiative of the National Democratic Party of Georgia. Its participants condemned the actions of the government and demanded the resignation of President Gamsakhurdia on the grounds that he is leading Georgia to dictatorship and totalitarianism, noting that as long as the Georgian government implements anti-democratic, anti-people policies, Georgia will not deserve international recognition.”

Source: Koridze, T. (1991)  
‘The rallies continue, the tension is increasing’.  
*Droni*, 13 September, N35(51), p.1.

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## Source D

### Political Stagnation

*As with the rest of the country, the Georgian National Guard was also divided into two camps during the conflict: the pro-President faction; and the pro-Kitovani opposition, who were camped near the State TV and Radio Department.*

“The opposing sides each have their 'taboo' issues, the raising of which, for the time being at least, automatically precludes any negotiation. For the authorities, this is the demand for the resignation of the president, while for the opposition it is the disarming of the guardsmen camped near the building of the State TV and Radio

Source: Chochishvili, G. (1991) 'Political Stagnation'. *Droni*, 4 October, N38(41).

Department [currently the Georgian Public Broadcaster]. In their opinion, disarming the guardsmen would undoubtedly be followed by repression. Moreover, the guardsmen there claim that they, not the guardsmen supporting the President, are the real official National Guard. Therefore, putting forward these two proposals is a waste of time."

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## Source E

## Statement of the National Independence Party of Georgia regarding the situation in Georgia

"[...] taking into account the fact that an authoritarian-dictatorial regime built on immorality and universal hatred has been established in Georgia, in the form of the criminal government of Zviad Gamsakhurdia , ... taking into account the fact that Georgia is still facing aggression from the Soviet Russian Empire, who annexed it and continue to occupy it ... taking into account the fact that on 2 September 1991, the government barbarically broke up a peaceful demonstration and opened fire on the demonstrators, thereby also committing a crime against her own people ... taking all this into account, the National Independence Party of Georgia, as a sign of protest against the general injustice prevailing in Georgia, is starting an indefinite peaceful political strike with the following demands:

1. The resignation of Zviad Gamsakhurdia from the presidency and the abolition of the institution of the presidency prior to an official declaration of the independence of Georgia.
2. The secession of Georgia from the USSR and the full withdrawal of all occupation troops still on Georgian territory.
3. A guarantee of unrestricted freedom of speech and a free press, television and mass media.
4. The initiation of a criminal case against the forces which broke up the demonstration of September 2, 1991."

Source: 'Statement of the National Independence Party of Georgia regarding the situation in Georgia'. *Droeba*, September 1991, N25.

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# Group 3 Eyewitness narratives (representatives of different layers of society)

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## Source A

Paata Bukhrashvili, Professor at Ilia State University, historian

“I witnessed directly the formation of the National Movement. I was already actively involved and participated in protests consciously enough. I am not politically biased, but a representative of the affected Georgian nation. On the initiative of the then president of Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the denationalisation of state property had been declared and the process was supposed to begin, and the secretaries of the Raikom [a Soviet-era local party committee] were angry about it. Besides, Georgia was quite a developed country, with its heavy and light industry, and factories; there was a shipyard in Batumi and Poti. Poti launched a unique submarine. There were machine-building and tank factories, which created economic wealth in the country. Georgia was leaving the Union with an organised economy; all this did not suit Russia's interests, and the secretaries of the Georgian Regional Committee shared the interests of Russia. They wanted to keep their existing privileges. The directors of the factories considered themselves the last directors, and therefore proclaimed those factories as theirs. The ultimate goal of the overthrow of the national government was to prevent Georgia from being freed from the influence of the Russian economy, and the result is visible: Georgia is now tied to the Russian economy. I call this coup a Russian operation. I am still alive, but I feel like I only truly lived for those three years, from November 1988 to December 1991.”

Paata Bukhrashvili (2023),  
Interviewed by Lela  
Kakashvili and Tamuna  
Macharashvili on 14 August,  
Tbilisi, Georgia.

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## Source B

Tamaz Makashvili, official from Gori

“The civil war arose as a result of the split in the National Movement. One part of the population of Georgia followed one part of the national movement, the other part found itself on the other side. Many weaknesses of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia's rule were revealed during that one year [1991]. There was a split in Gamsakhurdia's team. Prime Minister Tengiz Sigua and Defense Minister Tengiz Kitovani opposed him. They started a civil war. On 22 December 1991, the first bullet was fired. Right now there's a discussion about which side fired it, but that may not be of decisive importance. Back then, the majority of the population did not support Zviad Gamsakhurdia, and stood on

Tamaz Makashvili (2023),  
Interviewed by Lela  
Kakashvili and Tamuna  
Macharashvili on 13 August,  
online.

the side of the opposition. As a result of the hostilities, the government was overthrown, and the president fled to Chechnya. With the death of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the controversy seemed to have ended, but the division remained in society: families were divided into Zviadists and non-Zviadists. These were the most difficult, shameful pages of history for our people. At that time, the freedom of the press was being restricted, and the issue of ethnic minorities was acute. Peaceful rallies of the opposition were dispersed by forceful methods: I remember a fire engine drove directly into the ranks of the protesters. But the opposition also made many mistakes. The main mistake was that all this led to a civil war. The opposition wanted a change of power quickly, but we should have at least waited until the elections.”

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## Source C

## Eka Margvelani, teacher

Eka Margvelani (2023),  
Interviewed by Tamuna  
Macharashvili on 15 August,  
Tbilisi, Georgia.

“I was a school student then, and I remember the atmosphere. At that moment I could not understand the facts, what was happening and why, but in any case, the fact that something bad was happening was noticed by everyone, young and old alike. With few exceptions, the largest part of the then elite, famous directors, actors, and TV presenters found themselves in the camp of those opposed to the government. Ordinary people did not want to change the government in such a radical way. The news of the trouble coincided with the winter holidays. I was already in West Georgia, and we were watching the events in Rustaveli on TV. I couldn't believe that in the centre of the city, a conventional war was going on between Georgians, of the kind I had seen in movies, with weapons, gun batteries, machine guns... I remember that we came back to Tbilisi later, after everything had already finished, and when I saw Rustaveli in ruins for the first time, I finally realised that this story had really happened here. Everything was destroyed, the buildings were destroyed. It was all so grey for several years. The place was cleaned, but the buildings were not restored until later, and every time I passed by, I kept thinking, when will they rebuild, shouldn't they build again so that it is not like this anymore, because it reminded me of the war period... Personally, those events left me afraid, and when protests take place today, no matter how peaceful they are, I'm still afraid that the same thing will happen, that they'll start shooting again...”

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## Source D

## Nugzar, eyewitness

“The war in Tbilisi can be called the ‘War of Mtatsminda’, because in other areas of the city, normal life continued, and in the Dezerter Bazaar (a market in Tbilisi), New Year's trade was in full swing. I sat at home and watched continuously for the first days from the balcony of my apartment overlooking Besik Street. They did not shoot at residential houses in the first days. This was after the hail of bullets

started and not a single building was left unscathed in the area surrounding Government House. Our attic caught fire several times and the neighbours put it out. Firefighters stopped attending fires: some people shot at them to keep the fires going for a while longer. At home, the windows were broken in their frames, the balcony door was broken. Only the huge outer load-bearing wall was bullet-proof, and right behind this wall, in the corner of the room, I made a dugout – I put a mattress on the floor, moved the TV and books... Despite the incessant banging of machine guns, casualties were still few as neither side fired on target. At the corner of Besik Street, three guards were standing by the bakery. I talked to them, and they turned out to be Gori people. One of them moved away from the wall for a second, knelt, and fired several times from the corner of Dzmebi Zubalashvilebi Street in the direction of Government House. “Did you hit someone?” asked the other. “No, and thank God, I haven't hit anyone yet.” The war, which decided the fate of Georgia for a long time, and which is still shyly referred to as ‘the events of 1991-92’ in Tbilisi, took place on a total of 2-3 square kilometres, from Zemeli Street to Sololaki. And a small number of the city’s residents, if they still had an interest in what was going on while preparing their New Year's festivities, approached as far as Zemeli Street to see what was going on. They came to look at a literal theatre of war...”

Source: Gachechiladze, G. (2017) 'One Man's Memories of the Tbilisi War', *Ambebi*, 16 September, <http://tinyurl.com/yc3upu7h>, accessed 12 February 2023

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## Source E

## Dato Turashvili, writer

“Not a single problem was a sufficient reason for us to engage in a gunfight with the democratically elected government. That's why I think that there was no justification for that violence, and we are still bitterly reaping the consequences of that irreparable mistake... We also held a rally in the yard of the university and found out there that many people really wanted war in Georgia. When we started talking about peace and an immediate end to the war, the people who came to the rally immediately turned on us. There were only a few people left in front of the university, and Gia Abesadze was the self-sacrificing one among us. Very publicly, he set himself on fire on Rustaveli Avenue, killing himself as a sign of protest. I'm not sure that any other civil war in any other country has had such a victim... However, in the classical sense, the Tbilisi war was not a civil war. It was more like an uprising or a revolution in the classical sense. It was more of a coup, but only in Tbilisi; there was fighting along Rustaveli Avenue, while not too far away, almost in the neighbouring districts, people were living a different life. But even they still came to Rustaveli to see the real war; the Tbilisi war had far more spectators than participants... The international situation was exactly the same as it always is, when you destroy your country yourself and then wait for help from others.”

Source: Turashvili, D. (2012) *Once Upon a Time 1987-1991*. Tbilisi: Bakur Sulakauri Publishing House.



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**Source F****Levan Berdzenishvili, writer, former dissident, opposition supporter**

“Unfortunately, during his presidency, a civil war occurred. Society became divided, with one part developing a strongly negative attitude towards Zviad Gamsakhurdia. However, I’m sure that history will be kind to Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Of course, they will not forget his mistakes; they will not forget that during his time there was a civil confrontation, in which it is impossible for any party not to be guilty... For Zviad Gamsakhurdia, ‘the independence of Georgia was front and centre.’ He was obsessed with this one idea, and that prevented him from seeing the roads leading to this idea as they were - first freedom, then independence; first human rights, then independence, etc. Georgia was more important to him than anything else, and the idea of Georgia’s independence erased all other ideas from his mind!”

Source: Berdzenishvili, L. (2022) *A Story of a Man and a Country*. Tbilisi: Artanuji Publishing House.

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**Source G****Revaz Mishveladze, writer, opposition supporter**

“It turns out that I live in a truly amazing time. There has been a real war between Georgians in Tbilisi for twelve days. Maybe Moscow is leading this operation? About three hundred people have been killed and about five hundred wounded. All the beautiful buildings on Rustaveli Avenue have been demolished. The bank, the first school, the ‘Tbilisi’ hotel, and the artist’s house have been burned. The opposition insists on the resignation of Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Zviadi stubbornly clings to the president’s chair. Georgia is dying. The culprit is the opposition. History will justify Zviad, despite his mistakes.”

Source: Mishveladze, M. (2013) *Twenty-five furious years*. Tbilisi: Palitra L Publishing House.

# Presentation of the Civil War in Georgian school textbooks

## Source A

### 'History of Georgia', 11th grade textbook

"The creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States took place without Georgia. Russia was not able to persuade the national government of Georgia to compromise. Obviously, after the creation of the Commonwealth, Russia, the legal successor of the Soviet Union, did not show goodwill towards the national government of Georgia. This meant that the Georgian government would not receive support from the Commonwealth of Independent States. Foreign complications became a sign of the re-emergence of opposition to the government in Georgia. The opposition should have been more active before the countries of the world recognised the independence of Georgia, because recognition would only strengthen the government of Zviad Gamsakhurdia. On 22 December 1991, armed opposition, which was given hope by Russia's cooperation and practical help, started in Tbilisi. From the end of December 1991 to the end of January 1992 battles were fought in the capital, as a result of which the opposition ('putschists') overthrew the legal government. President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, together with members of the Supreme Council and the government, took refuge first in Armenia and then in Chechnya. Power was taken over by the military council (Jaba Ioseliani, Tengiz Kitovani). The events of December and January in Tbilisi cost the lives of many Georgians. The military coup gave rise to civil war in the country."

Source: Vachnadze, M. & Guruli, V. (2004) *History of Georgia*. Tbilisi: Artanuji Publishing House, p.175-176.

## Source B

### 'Recent History', 12th grade textbook

"The overthrow of the Georgian national government by force was planned after the August 1991 putsch in Moscow. On 22 December 1991 the opposition forces, with the support and help of the Russian troops stationed in Georgia, began to attack the parliament building. Until 6 January 1992 there were battles between the opposition and the supporters of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia in the vicinity of Government House in Tbilisi. [...]"

In December 1991 and January 1992, the legitimate government in Tbilisi was overthrown by military force. The military coup gave rise to civil strife in the country. Supporters of exiled Zviad Gamsakhurdia continued to fight."

Source: Abdaladze, G., Kvitaishbili, N., Kupatadze, B. & Januashvili, K. (2008) *Recent History*. Tbilisi: Publishing House of Georgia Matsne, p.291-2.

“The conflict between the Georgian government and the opposition intensified after the August putsch [in Russia, 1991]. On 2 September 1991, during the visit of a delegation of American congressmen to Tbilisi, an opposition rally was dispersed on Rustaveli Avenue. Anti-government speeches became more frequent. Both sides erected barricades on Rustaveli Avenue. On 25 September 1991, a state of emergency was declared in the capital. Events became irreversible. The rallies turned into military confrontations. On 22 December 1991, the opposition forces, with the help of equipment and ammunition obtained from the Russian military bases located in Georgia, began to attack the Parliament building. The battles between the opposition and the supporters of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia cost the lives of many Georgians. On 6 January 1992, Zviad Gamsakhurdia left Tbilisi with his supporters and took refuge first in Armenia and then in Chechnya. The legal government was overthrown by the use of military force, and the military council (Jaba Ioseliani, Tengiz Kitovani, Tengiz Sigua) took power.

The military coup started a civil war in the country. Supporters of the exiled Zviad Gamsakhurdia continued to fight. The crisis continued to worsen, which created favourable conditions for the Abkhaz and Ossetian separatists. The Georgian intelligentsia proposed bringing Eduard Shevardnadze from Moscow as a way to get the country out of the crisis. In March 1992, Shevardnadze returned to Georgia. The military council transferred power to the state council, whose chairman was Eduard Shevardnadze.”

Source: Abdaladze, G., Kapatadze, B., Akhmeteli, N. & Murglia, N. (2012) *History-12th grade*. Tbilisi: Diogenes Publishing House, p.323-4.

“The military action, which was limited only to the centre of the capital, lasted for several days. More than 100 people were killed and about 550 were wounded. Several important buildings were destroyed: the Kashveti temple was hit by bullets, and the entire residential quarter on Mtatsminda was burned. On 6 January, the president, members of the government, and a number of deputies from the ruling majority left Tbilisi. The Military Council consisting of Tengiz Kitovani, Jaba Ioseliani and Tengiz Sigua took power, declared the government of Zviad Gamsakhurdia overthrown, dissolved the parliament, and suspended the adoption of the constitution.

The overthrow of the government of Zviad Gamsakhurdia was dubbed by the new leaders of the country as “democratic” and a “people’s revolution”. In March 1992, the Military Council brought Eduard Shevardnadze to Georgia. He was a long-time Georgian Communist Party leader, who had been appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union in 1985. He was elected Head of State of Georgia.

On 11 March 2005, the Parliament of Georgia assessed the events of December 1991-January 1992 as an “anti-constitutional armed military coup”. The coup d’état caused a civil war in the country and great damage to the reconstruction process of the state of Georgia.”

Source: Janelidze, O., Tabuashvili, A., Tavadze, L. & Iremashvili, N. (2012) *History of Georgia*. Tbilisi: Klio Publishing House, p.364

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## YOUR TASK

## Read the extracts and answer the questions

- List the most important facts presented in the textbooks.
- What do you think are evaluations and interpretations presented in the textbooks?
- Do you think some of those texts are biased? If yes, which one is the most biased? Justify your answer.

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# Key dates

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1921 – Soviet troops occupy Georgia, and the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic is established. It is incorporated into the USSR in 1922.

1970s – this decade saw a re-emergence of Georgian nationalism and an intensification of the national liberation movement. With *glasnost* and *perestroika* came calls for independence.

9 April 1989 – the ‘April 9 tragedy’ in which Soviet troops crushed an anti-Soviet, pro-independence rally in Tbilisi with gas and weapons.

9 April 1991 – the Georgian Supreme Council unanimously passes the declaration of independence on the 2nd anniversary of the April 9 tragedy. Zviad Gamsakhurdia becomes the first President of the independent country.

18 August 1991 – the first signs of discontent with Gamsakhurdia become apparent when Tengiz Sigua, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and Giorgi Khostaria, Minister of Foreign Affairs, resign their positions to join the opposition.

2 September 1991 – demonstrators, organised by the National Democratic Party to oppose the imprisonment of Jaba Ioseliani, clash with the Ministry of Internal Affairs near the Rustaveli monument in central Tbilisi. Three people are wounded by bullets. Anti-government sentiment intensifies.

11 September 1991 – 27 political parties, formerly opposed to each other, unite with the common demand to remove Gamsakhurdia.

22 December 1991 – The two-week Georgian coup d’état begins.

6 January 1992 – the coup ends with the flight of Gamsakhurdia via armoured car to Chechnya. During the war, 107 people die and 527 are injured. The Military Council forms a provisional government with Sigua as its chairman.

10 March 1992 – Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze arrives in Georgia after being invited to head the State Council. Around this time, Gamsakhurdia returns to Georgia and unsuccessfully tries to return to power.

31 December 1993 – Gamsakhurdia is found dead under mysterious circumstances. Exactly how he died or who killed him remain disputed to this day.

# The War on the Dniester (1992)

# Background and Context

Sergiu Musteață

History and Geography  
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The War on the Dniester, also known as the Transnistria War or the War for the Independence of the Republic of Moldova, took place from 1 March to 21 July 1992, but tensions between the contested region on the left bank of the Dniester (broadly, what became known as Transnistria) and the Republic of Moldova (known in Soviet times as ‘Moldavia’; officially ‘Moldova’ from 1990) existed long before the military conflict, and still exist to this day.

Between October 1924 and August 1940, the modern territory of Transnistria, along with much of the present-day Podilsk region of Ukraine, was part of the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, which was an autonomous republic of the Ukrainian SSR. In June 1940, the Soviet Union annexed Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina from Romania.

In August 1940, the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic was declared a republic of the Soviet Union. It comprised most of Bessarabia, along with modern Transnistria and its capital Tiraspol. Thus Transnistria effectively moved from Ukraine to Moldavia. While at the time this was a move from one part of the USSR to another, the change acquired new significance when in September 1990, against the backdrop of the USSR’s ongoing collapse, Transnistria, not wishing to be part of an independent Moldova, proclaimed itself a state, and so became one of the former USSR’s unrecognised, breakaway republics.

From the first months after seizing Bessarabia, the Soviet authorities began the Sovietisation of the Moldavian administration. Among the first actions was the arrest of people who had held positions within the Romanian administration, for example, members of the local parliament who had voted for the union of Bessarabia with Romania in 1918, and members of Romanian political parties. Most of those arrested were sent to Soviet camps and prisons, and in June 1941, the first wave of organised deportations took place, and around 20,000 Bessarabians were sent to various regions of Siberia and the Kazakh SSR.

After a brief period of German occupation during World War II, the Soviet administration began its collectivisation and planned economy models in earnest after 1945; repression and deportations also continued. After the death of Stalin, and de-Stalinisation under Khrushchev, many people were allowed to return home, but found themselves still limited in their rights and considered ‘enemies of the people’. Young Bessarabians continued to be sent all over the Soviet Union to work in industrial facilities or to join the army and fight, for example during the War in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Liberalisation of Moldavian society occurred under Gorbachev: *perestroika* and *glasnost* created ripe conditions for nationalist movements which had been suppressed under previous Soviet leaders, and Romanian cultural and historical values were championed once again in the region. Some, however, particularly those on the left bank of

the Dniester, perceived a possible reunion with Romania as a danger. The tension was particularly raised in the late 1980s, when the Latin alphabet was officially adopted in the Moldavian SSR and Moldovan was adopted as the official language. In September 1990, Transnistria declared itself to be a Soviet Republic - as did the region of Gagauzia. Gorbachev made attempts to keep the whole Moldavian SSR together and within the USSR, but his task was complicated by the fact that the USSR itself was now in its death throes.

Attempting to keep the USSR together, Gorbachev conceived of the 'New Union Treaty', to be signed by all republics. However, the leadership of the Moldavian SSR at the time, along with other Baltic and Caucasian republics, took no part in drafting the treaty and boycotted the subsequent referendum, held in March 1991 and designed to indicate popular support for the project. Lithuania had already declared its independence from the USSR a year earlier, in March 1990, and this had further encouraged national emancipation movements in other republics. Democratic elections took place in Moldova in early 1991 and, in June, the newly elected Moldovan parliament declared its sovereignty. This act caused parliamentary deputies from the left bank of the Dniester to walk out, as they considered this act too pro-Romanian, or anti-Soviet.

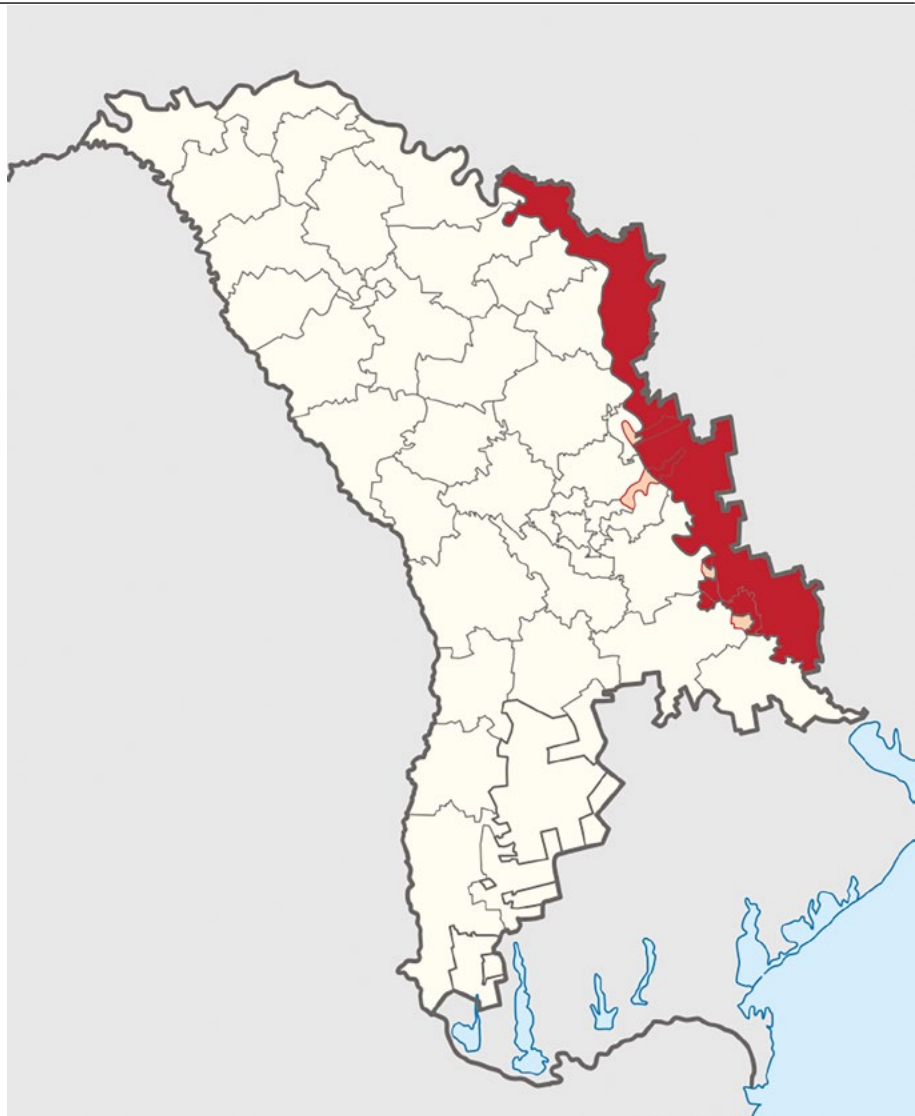
Meanwhile, a dramatic attempt to forcefully maintain the central power of the USSR was made in Moscow in August 1991: this was a failed coup, which was not supported by the majority of the leaders of the Soviet republics, including those in Moldova's capital, Chişinău. The failure of the coup paved the way for Moldova's declaration of independence, which was announced on 27 August 1991.

Consolidating the newly independent state was difficult due to the two separatist regions which were still being supported by Moscow. The Gagauz case was resolved peacefully with the creation of an autonomous region within Moldova, but in Tiraspol, continued narratives of inter-ethnic tensions, Moldova as an aggressor state, and the Romanianisation of the region, meant that the Transnistrian issue developed into a military conflict in the early 1990s. According to Transnistrian historians, Chişinău started the war by attacking the cities of Dubăsari and Bender, where earlier there had been minor clashes between the Moldavian police and the Transnistrian militia (Yakovlev, 1993; Valovoy, 1993; Rudenko, 1995; Babilunga & Bomeshko, 1998, 2005). Other sources maintain that the conflict was provoked by local separatist groups supported by Cossacks from the Russian army. Indisputable is the fact that the separatist forces were supported militarily by the 14th Russian army, which had been stationed there since the Soviet period (Cerba, 2016; Gribincea, 2020). The war caused casualties on both sides of the Dniester, destroyed villages and urban districts, and displaced thousands of people. The hostilities ended with the signing of a ceasefire agreement on 21 July 1992 in Moscow between the president of Moldova, Mircea Snegur, and the president of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin.



Although more than 30 years have passed since the signing of this agreement, the war and its resolution remain open topics in society; the war endures in the media, schools, and collective memory (Serebri-an, 2024). Since the end of the military conflict, the Tiraspol administration has built its own government, military, banking, and educational systems, etc. The negotiations for a peaceful solution and territorial reunification with the Republic of Moldova have failed, and the Tiraspol administration still harbours a desire for independence. Russia stated in 1995 that it would withdraw its army and ammunition from Transnistria, but this process is “delayed” indefinitely; appeals from Moldova to Russia at various meetings of the United Nations, Council of Europe, OSCE, and the EU have not changed the situation, despite Transnistria not being recognised on the international stage. Thus, the state of conflict between Chişinău and Tiraspol remains current, and Russia's war against Ukraine has further complicated the situation in the region, exacerbating concerns about Moscow's territorial ambitions in the region.

Map of Moldova and Transnistria (red). Areas in orange are territorially part of Transnistria but under Moldovan governmental jurisdiction. [File:Transnistria in Moldova \(de-facto\) \(semi-secession\).svg](#). Author: TBUS, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0, accessed 29 January 2024.



Moldovan society remains divided, both territorially and conceptually. Wars are among the most sensitive and controversial topics in society. Contradictory discourse, hate speech, and mutual accusations are among the elements that define the state of mind in Moldova on the subject of the 1992 war. That said, the topic is not treated sufficiently in schools. Anatol Croitoru, a veteran of the war, says that “Children are taught about all wars, but not about the war for our independence” (Serebrian, 2024). In Transnistria on the other hand, the war is one of the main historical narratives presented in school textbooks (Musteață, 2021).

In the lesson plan presented here, the critical analysis of sources and overall balanced approach aims to promote a better understanding of the events of 1992, as well as tolerance and understanding on both sides of the Dniester. But to achieve this objective, the authorities from Chișinău and Tiraspol must agree on a common curriculum and exclude Russian historical narratives and textbooks from Transnistrian schools, which are the main impediments to the promotion of independent and high-quality education. In the same way, themes that promote the discourse of hatred and mistrust must not be taught. Maintaining the current situation will further hinder the possibility of reunification and the development of a truly democratic society.

Teaching sensitive and controversial topics in a critical way will have a direct impact on the education of the young generation, who will be able to overcome the hate speech currently promoted by the separatist regime in Tiraspol. Quality education means promoting democratic values and the rule of law in schools on both banks of the Dniester, and historical education must play an important role in education for sustainable peace, for the reunification of the state, and for the integration of the Republic of Moldova into the European Union.

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# Learning Activity

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## The Impact of the War on the Dniester on the Republic of Moldova

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Age	15-16 years
Time	45 min
Key question	What are the consequences of the War on Dniester for the Republic of Moldova?

This learning activity approaches the various consequences of the War on the Dniester (1992), or the Transnistria War, on the Republic of Moldova since 1992. Students will discover that the war had a major impact on the political, economic, social, and cultural life of the country, and still influences these areas today, on both sides of the Dniester. The pedagogical approach includes working with written historical sources, images, the official positions of international organisations, and historical witnesses. It is also based on a national curricular vision to consolidate the historical past and teach democratic values.

# Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Explain the impact of the War on the Dniester on the Republic of Moldova.
- Evaluate the political, economic, cultural, and social influence of the war on the development of the Republic of Moldova.
- Develop critical skills in recognising and combating disinformation and misinterpretation of the war and other historical events.
- Interpret the consequences of the war on society.

## Pedagogical recommendations

This learning activity is designed on the principle that basic knowledge about the War on the Dniester, including its chronology, causes, the different sides and key personalities involved, has been already assimilated. Thus, the lesson focuses on the consequences of the war, rather than its causes. The approach is designed to illustrate the impact of the war in the short and long term on the politics, economy, society, and culture of the Republic of Moldova, including Transnistria. The perspective of the lesson activity is a national one, but it can also be interpreted from a local point of view, especially in regions close to military operations or directly affected by the war.

In this situation, teachers can take a reflexive approach: it is important to consider the relevance and the traumatic aspect of the event for the individual students in the class. If possible, it is recommended to expand and elaborate the range of problems caused by the war, also in a local context. Finally, and if time allows, teachers are encouraged to approach the culture of memory surrounding the war in different areas of society, e.g. civilians, soldiers, children, refugees, and different professional groups.

## Activities

### Stage I

Introduction to the topic

5 minutes

The teacher shows a map showing the current territorial division of Moldova. The students, together with the teacher, create a brief timeline in which they mark 3-4 major turning points which influenced the formation of such a division between 1989 and 1994.



## Stage II

Source work in groups

25 minutes

Students are split into 3 groups, and each is given a set of source materials to read and analyse (see Appendix I). Groups work simultaneously on their task for 10 minutes, working on the questions below, and then each group has 5 minutes to summarise the sources and to present their work to the others.

### Group 1

Political impact

1. In a table, write down the Moldovan and Transnistrian positions presented by the sources about the war.
2. Evaluate the political impact of the war for the Republic of Moldova. Write your answer.

## Group 2

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### Economic impact

- 1 Analyse the sources attentively and mark the information as proposed below:  

√	information that confirms your knowledge
-	information that contradicts/is different from your knowledge
+	information that is new to you
?	information that is unclear and needs to be elucidated
- 2 Determine the impact of the War on the Dniester on the economy of both sides involved. Write your answers.

## Group 3

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### Cultural impact

- 1 What issues of national identity caused (or escalated) the war?
- 2 What aspects of everyday life are influenced by the issue of script (Latin or Cyrillic) in this region?
- 3 In your opinion, how important is it to have access to education in the native language of a certain group? How far does education shape the identity of a person?
- 4 According to the sources, what are the most important problems that Romanian speaking schools are facing in Transnistria? How can they be solved?

## Stage III

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### Brainstorm

10 minutes

The class works together under the guidance of the teacher, who draws 3 circles on the board with the following titles: “Political consequences”, “Economic consequences” and “Cultural consequences”.

Using their knowledge and the information learned during the lesson, students should formulate short hashtags to explain the consequences of the war in the 3 areas. The teacher writes them in the corresponding circles.

## Stage IV

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### Recommended homework activity

5 minutes

Students are asked to interview a member of their family about the War on the Dniester. The teacher can offer some guiding questions (see Appendix II) and students can ask for clarifications/additional information depending on the answers they get. Through the activity, students should investigate the perception of the war by different social, professional, and age groups. Students can interview other

people they know to be connected with the event. The questions can be adapted to the familial/local context. This activity will ensure that students reflect upon the wider topic outside of the classroom.

## Assessment

During Stage II, the students are given questions and tasks. In answering the questions and fulfilling the tasks, students will use different methods of learning that are focusing on reasoning, critical thinking and evaluation of the sources.

The homework is set in a form that enables students to evaluate different perspectives on the same events and to present them using a multiperspective approach.

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## Glossary

1992 Ceasefire Agreement – a document signed by the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation that stipulated a ceasefire and marked the end of the military conflict.

Left side of the Dniester – a colloquial way to refer to Transnistria, which lies on the left bank of the river Dniester (in the north-south direction of the river's flow).

Planned economy – an economic system in which the state manages the economy and makes all decisions regarding the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.

Promo-LEX – a non-governmental organisation that aims to advance democracy in the Republic of Moldova, including in Transnistria, by promoting and defending human rights, monitoring democratic processes, and strengthening civil society. Promo-LEX, established in 2002, is a not-for-profit and politically independent organisation that operates throughout the country.

Separatism – a movement to create an independent state or an autonomous region.



# Source packs

## Group 1 Political impact

### Source A

Mircea Snegur, President of the Republic of Moldova from 1990-96, on the country's position towards the war

Source: Noi.md (2015) 'Mircea Snegur: Conflictul de pe Nistru a fost provocat de separatiști cu sprijinul Rusiei' [Mircea Snegur: The conflict on the Dniester was provoked by separatists with the support of Russia], 3 March, [https://noi.md/md/news\\_id/57156](https://noi.md/md/news_id/57156), accessed 4 October 2023.

“Those who consciously started this conflict did not want international recognition of the Republic of Moldova, they did not want Moldova to join the UN. We did not want this war. On the contrary, we made enormous efforts to resolve differences and misunderstandings peacefully. God and history are our witnesses. Unfortunately, they did not hear us, did not understand us, and chose war. We could not be mere observers of the crimes of local bandits and those who came from Russia.”

### Source B

Extract from the 1992 Ceasefire Agreement<sup>1</sup>

“2.2 Each side taking part in the work of the Committee<sup>2</sup> shall appoint its representatives to it. The Control Committee shall be based in the city of Bender.

2.3 In order to carry out the aforementioned measures, the Control Committee shall have under its authority military contingents which shall be formed on a voluntary basis and shall represent the sides taking part in the implementation of this Agreement. The deployment of these contingents and their use in guaranteeing the cease-fire and security in the zone of conflict shall be in accordance with the decisions of the Control Committee, which shall be taken on the basis of consensus. The numerical strength and status of the military contingents, and the conditions for their deployment in the zone of conflict and their withdrawal from it, shall be established in a separate protocol.”

<sup>1</sup> The signing of the cease-fire agreement on 21 July 1992 took place in the context of the massive involvement of the 14th Army of the Russian Federation with heavy weapons during the War on the Dniester.

<sup>2</sup> According to Article 2.1, the joint Control Committee consists of representatives from the three sides taking part in the settlement: the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine.

Source: United Nations Security Council (1992) 'Agreement on the Principles for a Peaceful Settlement of the Armed Conflict in the Dniester Region of the Republic of Moldova', 21 August, [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/MD%20RU\\_920000\\_AgreementPrinciplesPeacefulSettlementDniesterConflict.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/MD%20RU_920000_AgreementPrinciplesPeacefulSettlementDniesterConflict.pdf), accessed 28 November 2023.

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## Source C

### The stated position of Leonid Manakov, Transnistrian political representative in The Russian Federation, 2022

Source: Newsmaker (2022) 'Leonid Manakov accused Moldova at the UN of violating human rights in Transnistria', 6 October, <https://newsmaker.md/ro/leonid-manakov-a-acuzat-moldova-la-onu-de-incalcarearea-drepturilor-omului-in-transnistria/>, accessed 4 October 2023.

"I call on the international community to make efforts to prevent human rights violations by the Moldovan authorities in Transnistria. We request the Human Rights Council to make an adequate assessment of this destructive approach taken by Moldova and to contribute to the strict observance by Chisinau of all the agreements previously signed with Transnistria."

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## Source D

### A Transnistrian history textbook on the War on the Dniester

Source: Бабилунга Н. В. & Бомешко Б. Г. (2005). *История родного края: Учебник для общеобразовательных учебных заведений. 8-9 кл.* [A history of the native land: Textbook for general education institutions, grades 8-9], Тирасполь: РИО ГИПК, p.283.

"The Romanians, confident in their own forces, began preparations for the union of Moldova with Romania. Under their pressure, on 23 June 1990, the Parliament approved the Declaration of Sovereignty, which proclaimed the illegitimate nature of the act of 2 August 1940 regarding the creation of the Moldovan SSR, which, apparently, was a consequence of the "Soviet occupation" of the Romanian territories of Bessarabia and North Bukovina. By issuing this Declaration, the republic liquidated the form in which it had existed for 50 years. Transnistria obtained the absolutely legitimate right to self-determination, since it was no longer part of the Moldovan SSR."

# Group 2 Economic impact

## Source A

### Considerations on the function of the economy in the Moldovan SSR and Transnistria

Source: Nistor, E. (2017) 'Războiul de pe Nistru: cauze, actori, consecințe' [The Dniester War: Causes, Actors, Consequences], *Geopolitics, History and Population in Eastern Europe*, 10(1), pp.101-111, [https://studium.ugal.ro/ARTICOLE\\_STUDIUM/ARTICOLE%20STUDIUM%2010-S1/1010%20-%20S1%20-%20NISTOR.pdf](https://studium.ugal.ro/ARTICOLE_STUDIUM/ARTICOLE%20STUDIUM%2010-S1/1010%20-%20S1%20-%20NISTOR.pdf), accessed 4 October 2023.

“History teaches us that we learn nothing from history.’ This paradox, formulated by the German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel, sometimes comes to mind when I think about the past and present problems of Moldova and the political responsibility of its leaders. The end of the 1980s was a turning point for all Eastern European states. All political, economic, and military life in the Moldovan SSR and Transnistria was controlled to the maximum by Moscow, listening only to the directives received from the Moscow central bodies; this economic model today is called a directed/planned economy.”

## Source B

### Statistics on the economic impact of the war on both sides of the Dniester.

Source: Platzforma, (2017) '25 de ani de la Războiul de pe Nistru: greșelile Chișinăului de la începutul conflictului transnistrian' [25 years since the War on the Dniester: Chisinau's mistakes since the beginning of the Transnistrian conflict], 6 March, <https://platzforma.md/arhive/36287>, accessed 4 October 2023.

“The armed conflict led to a deterioration of the economic situation on both banks of the Dniester, and contributed to the deepening of the economic crisis which had begun in 1990. The total gross domestic product (produced on both banks of the Dniester) in 1992 decreased by 29% (in 1991 by 17%; in 1993 by 1%). The total volume of industrial production decreased by 27% (in 1991 by 11%; in 1993, no reductions were recorded); the volume of transported goods decreased by 51%.

The activity of many enterprises in the Transnistrian region was paralysed due to the destruction and general economic destabilisation in the conflict zone, especially in the cities of Bender and Dubăsari.

According to data from the Transnistrian side, a total of 218 industrial, transport, and construction enterprises were destroyed or damaged (including 46 enterprises in Bender), 8 km of cable and 35 km of overhead power lines were damaged, 15 km of thermal networks, and 10 electrical stations. In Bender, the production of cables was significantly reduced.

Gas and electricity supplies were interrupted on both banks of the Dniester. The 330-kw and 110-kw electricity transmission lines were disconnected, through which electricity was supplied from the left to the right side of the Dniester.”

## Source C

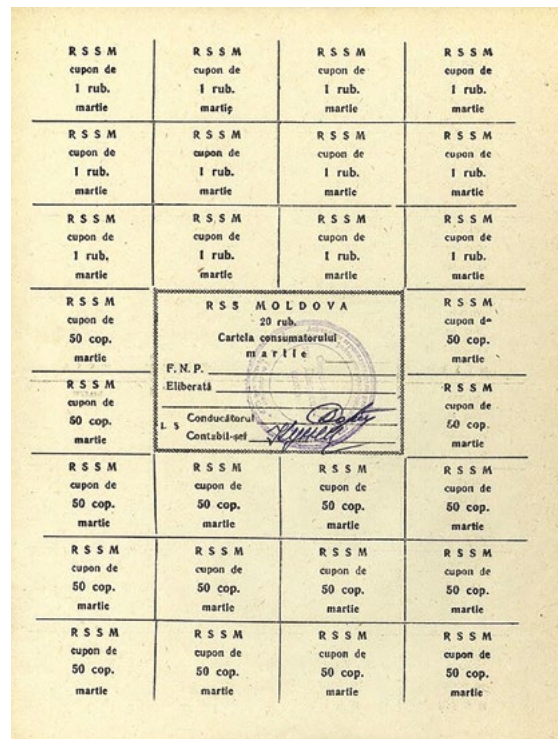
## Introduction of Moldovan national currency (Moldovan leu)

Source: Gorelova, E. & Şelari, G. (2009) *Costurile conflictului transnistrean și beneficiile soluționării lui* [The costs of the Transnistrian conflict and the benefits of its resolution]. Chisinau: CISR, <https://www.cisr-md.org/pdf/Report%20ROM%20Master%20Draft%20vEG.pdf>, accessed 4 October 2023.

“Due to the difficult situation, on 10 June 1992, amid the fighting on the Dniester, coupons were put into circulation. Although the coupons were planned as a temporary measure, they lasted a year and a half almost until the end of 1993, when the Moldovan leu finally debuted. And all this time, along with the coupons, it was also possible to pay in Rubles!”

## Source D

## Examples of Moldovan temporary coupons



Source: Noi.md (2021) 'Această zi în istorie: La 10 iunie 1992 au apărut cupoanele moldovenești' [This day in history: On June 10, 1992, Moldovan coupons appeared], 10 June, <https://noi.md/md/economie/aceasta-zi-in-istorie-la-10-iunie-1992-au-apatut-cupoanele-moldovenești>, accessed 4 October 2023.

## Source E

## Moldovan leu

On 29 November 1993, the national currency - the Moldovan leu - was introduced in the Republic of Moldova. File:MD 1 leu av.jpg, Wikimedia Commons, public domain, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MD\\_1\\_leu\\_av.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MD_1_leu_av.jpg), accessed 5 December 2023.



# Group 3 Cultural impact

## Source A

### Historian Charles King on issues of language and identity in Transnistria

“The conflict in Transnistria has often been described, both in Russia and the West, as an ethnic war between nationalists from Chisinau, determined to unite with Romania, and ethnic Russians from Transnistria who feared being assimilated into an extended Romanian state. The issue that attracted the most attention was the proposal to adopt the Moldovan language as the official language of the republic and switch to the Latin alphabet. In Transnistria, loyalty to the Soviet system was strongest, and it was also here that language reforms threatened to have the greatest impact.

Although the uprising in Transnistria was generally presented as a Slavic uprising against Chisinau's nationalist policies, the real source of the post-1990 violence was at the level of the political elites. The Supreme Soviet of the SSR, gaining courage after the vote in favour of language reform, continued cultural and political reforms. The Transnistrians, considering each of these moves to be Moldova's intention to leave the USSR and unite with Romania, also continued their preparations for secession.”

Source: King, C. (2002) *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia and the Policy of Culture*. Chişinău, Republic of Moldova: Arc Publishing House, pp.190-1.

## Source B

### Statement by the NGO Promo-LEX on the problems of national Moldavian schools in the Transnistrian region.

<sup>1</sup> ‘Solemn squares’ refers to festive displays at the beginning and end of the school year. Children, teachers and parents stand in square formation and sing the Moldovan national anthem and raise the national flag. These activities are prohibited in Transnistria, and for that reason, the ‘solemn squares’ are supervised by the Transnistrian authorities. The Transnistrian authorities also typically cut off the electricity during the events.

Source: IPN (2021) ‘Scolile româneşti din stânga Nistrului se confruntă cu numeroase presiuni, Promo-LEX’ [Romanian schools on the left side of the Dniester are facing numerous pressures, Promo-LEX], 1 September, [https://www.ipn.md/ro/scolile-romanesti-din-stanga-nistrului-se-confrunta-cu-numeroase-7967\\_1084103.html](https://www.ipn.md/ro/scolile-romanesti-din-stanga-nistrului-se-confrunta-cu-numeroase-7967_1084103.html), accessed 4 October 2023.

“The Promo-LEX association notes that, for over three decades, the eight educational institutions with Romanian language teaching in the Transnistrian region have been facing numerous pressures and intimidation from the de facto administration in Tiraspol. The association referred specifically to the lack of a headquarters of their own, and the fact that those they have now are poorly adapted to the educational process; to subpoenas and the risk of enlistment in the so-called Transnistrian army; and challenges in ensuring the free movement of people and goods.

In the Roghi and Corjova secondary schools, the solemn squares<sup>1</sup> are supervised by the local militia. Students and teachers are prohibited from singing the national anthem of the Republic of Moldova and hoisting the state flag. The “Ştefan cel Mare” High School has no headquarters, and students have to travel tens of kilometres every day to get to school.

The Promo-Lex Association noted that the problems and intimidation faced by schools would disappear by themselves if the Russian Federation were to implement the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights regarding violations of the right to education in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova. The Court decided that the Russian Federation is responsible for the violation of human rights in the Transnistrian region, in this case, the right to education, but until now the Russian Federation refuses to implement those judgments.”




# Homework activity worksheet

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Question	Answer
How old were you at the time of the War on the Dniester? What was your occupation?	
How did you find out about the war? How did you feel?	
How was it commented on in your community? How was your community affected by the War? Do you know about any contributions of your community to the War?	
Does it affect you today? What do you think about it today? Have your community or family suffered any losses or lost someone in the war?	

# Your feedback

If you use our materials, we would love to hear from you! Your comments and feedback on the guide and other materials are very welcome. Contact us via: [info@confronting-memories.org](mailto:info@confronting-memories.org)

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Confronting Memories explores the phenomenon of historical memory and how historical events shape countries and societies today, focusing on multiperspective history education. The programme creates a space for meaningful dialogue with diverse perspectives on the history of the 20th and 21st centuries and brings together conflicting views in search of common ground.

The Civil Society Forum e.V. is a network of non-governmental organisations working across Wider Europe. Its vision is to build a civil society beyond borders across the entire continent based on shared values of pluralistic democracy, rule of law, human rights, social and climate justice.

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