

Call for Papers

Memory, War, and Social Coherence: Bringing Together and Tearing Apart

June 5-6, 2025

Mikkeli, Finland



In today's Europe, collective memory plays a crucial role in political decision-making (Mälksoo 2015). Conflicting memories increasingly influence international politics, but also national and regional policies. Populist politicians, government agents and individual activists use differing narratives of the past to escalate dormant conflicts and pit ethnic, religious, or linguistic groups against each other. Yet, memory can also be an instrument of reconciliation, helping conflict-ridden societies come together (Zembylas 2012). How societies deal with their past through museums, history books, art and other manifestations of memory culture is highly relevant for understanding how conflicts breed, develop and unravel. The past – real or imagined – is an important element of any contemporary society.

Memory wars can precede, and often escalate during, physical warfare. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 was preceded by a memory war of differing narratives of recent and ancient history (Pakhomenko et al. 2018; Kasianov 2022). The role of memory is no less important in the post-war situation: unresolved memory conflicts complicate transition to peace (Klem 2018). Yet, memory conflicts do not require actual wars or war-like conditions. Societal conflicts caused by inequality, cultural differences or power imbalance can fuel conflicts in which the role of collective memory becomes crucial.

We call for papers examining and exploring various aspects of memory and war. We understand war broadly from world wars to civil wars and regional clashes. The proposed papers can range from individual case studies to methodological considerations. Possible themes include, but are not limited to:

- controversial war memorials and places of remembrance
- the role of history teaching or textbooks in memory conflicts
- populist parties using narratives of war or their aftermath
- postcolonialism and conflicting memories of war
- intersections of memory cultures and politics related to war
- art and literature concerning war and post-war remembrance
- examples of post-war reconciliation

The official conference language is English. The conference is planned as an in-person event.

Keynote speakers: [Georgiy Kasianov](#) (Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin), author of *Memory Crash: Politics of History in and around Ukraine, 1980s–2010s* (2022) and [Michalinos Zembylas](#) (Open University of Cyprus), author of *Emotion and Traumatic Conflict: Reclaiming Healing in Education* (2015).

Applications should include an abstract (300 words) indicating the theme and approach of the proposal (20-minute proposal format), along with a short biography (100 words). Applications should be sent via [this google form](#).

We also welcome other types of contributions like complete panels, roundtables, small workshops and other types of input. In such cases, please contact the organizers directly.

The deadline for submissions is January 7th, 2025. Decisions will be announced in the second half of January.

The conference venue is [Muisti](#) – The Center of War and Peace in Mikkeli, focusing on preserving and displaying experiences of war and promoting peace. During the Second World War, Finnish army headquarters were located in Mikkeli leaving many sites and museums still to be visited. The town of Mikkeli is located in beautiful lakeside Finland and easily accessible by trains from the Helsinki airport.

There will be a modest conference fee to cover lunches and coffee breaks. The fee will be waived for presenters in case new funding opportunities open up.

More information about the conference can be found from the conference website:

<https://sites.uef.fi/war-memories/>

The convenors: Simo Mikkonen and Tamara Polyakova, University of Eastern Finland

[Contact email address](#)

Cover image: John Singer Sargent, *Gassed*, 1919, oil on canvas, Imperial War Museum, London.

References:

Kasianov, G. (2022). *Memory Crash. Politics of History in and around Ukraine, 1980s–2010s*. CEU Press.

Klem, B. (2018). The problem of peace and the meaning of ‘post-war.’ *Conflict, Security & Development*, 18(3).

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Pakhomenko, S., Tryma K., Francis J. (2018). The Russian–Ukrainian War in Donbas. Sayapin et al. *The Use of Force against Ukraine and International Law*. Springer.

Zembylas, M. (2012). Suffering, memory and forgiveness: Derrida, Levinas and the pedagogical challenges of reconciliation in Cyprus. In P. Ahluwalia, S. Atkinson, P. Bishop, P. Christie, R. Hattam & J. Matthews (Eds.), *Reconciliation and pedagogy* (pp. 45–64). New York: Routledge