Chapter 1
Theorizing the Monumentscape

The number of war memorials in Ukraine is staggering. By the mid-1980s, one official account already mentioned a figure of over 40,000 monuments related to the Great Patriotic War of 1941–45.[1] That is an average of ten thousand for every year the war had lasted, according to the official Soviet chronology, or for every decade that had passed since the war ended. Since then, as we will see in detail in the next chapter, many more have been added, honoring not just the Second World War but also other conflicts, most importantly the war in the Donbas region since 2014, known in Ukraine as the Anti-Terrorist Operation or ATO.[2]

How can existing theories of monuments help us make sense of a situation where war memorials are so ubiquitous? And how can the Ukrainian case, and in particular the treatment of war memorials by the Russian invaders, help us think more generally about monuments?

After all, Ukraine is not unique. Vast numbers of war memorials can also be found in other post-Soviet countries—especially those, like Belarus or Moldova, that were entirely occupied during the Second World War and saw some of the heaviest fighting. And if we use a broad definition of what constitutes a war memorial, even a country like the United

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[1] Jonathan Brunstedt, *The Soviet Myth of World War II: Patriotic Memory and the Russian Question in the USSR* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 9. In 1992, the historian Dmytro Chobit mentioned the number of 42,900 Great Patriotic War memorials in Ukraine. See Dmytro Chobit, "Nadzdohaniaiuchy viky," *Holos Ukraïny*, October 2, 1992, cited in Liebich, Myshlovska, and Sereda, "The Ukrainian Past and Present," 82.

[2] The term "anti-terrorist operation" or ATO technically refers to the period between April 14, 2014, and April 30, 2018, after which the actions of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the Russian-occupied parts of the Donets'k and Luhan'sk regions were renamed the Joint Forces Operation (*Operatsiia ob'iednanykh syl* or OOS). However, the latter term was not taken up in public discourse, and we have not encountered any instances of it being used on memorials.

Kingdom, which has not seen foreign occupation in centuries, has over 100,000 of them.[3]

However, the literature on monuments in general, and on war memorials in particular, tends to be structured around individual case studies. Authors usually start with large memorials whose significance transcends their location—those installed in large cities or at especially well-known sites of battle or extermination. Case studies of a handful of second-tier sites sometimes complement the picture.[4] It is often assumed that by studying the largest memorials, we can learn something that is true of memorials in general, at least those of a certain type.

Yet in Ukraine, as elsewhere, the vast majority of war memorials are located in small towns or rural areas. This is all the more true of the areas of the country occupied by Russia in 2022, which included few large cities. Within the occupied territories, the invaders interacted with war memorials in almost every district they occupied, not just with a few select monuments in particularly symbolic locations. In fact, their rationale for the invasion referenced Soviet war memorials in general, promising to restore respect for such memorials across Ukraine. As we shall argue, the very ubiquity of war memorials is integral to their role in establishing a link between territory and memory, reflecting a more general "territorialization of memory."[5] In addition, as this book will demonstrate, there has been considerable variation in Russian monument policies: their treatment of war memorials has varied between locations and has evolved over time, especially over the first year of the invasion, which is the main focus of our study. Thus, in order to provide a meaningful account of the role of war memorials in the Russian war on Ukraine, it is not enough to focus on a few select memorials or on the most conspicuous events, such as monument toppling.

In light of this, our approach to war memorials draws upon two conceptual strands that weave through much of the international literature on monuments, though they are rarely put center stage. On the one hand, there is the sense that monuments cannot be understood individually, that

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3   "War Memorials Register," Imperial War Museums, https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials.
4   A good example is Gavriel David Rosenfeld and Paul B. Jaskot, eds., *Beyond Berlin: Twelve German Cities Confront the Nazi Past*, Social History, Popular Culture, and Politics in Germany (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008).
5   Anthony D. Smith, "Culture, Community and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism," *International Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1996): 445–58.

their meaning derives from their relationship with other monuments and, more broadly, with their wider material and social context—their place in a landscape, or, as we term it, the *monumentscape*. On the other hand, there is the idea that a monument's meaning, and often enough the monument itself, changes over time, and thus monuments, like people, have their own *biographies*.

Writing a collective biography of war memorials

The latter point is perhaps more obvious, not least thanks to prominent interventions by scholars of monuments such as James E. Young. "[T]raditionally," Young writes, "the monument has been defined as that which by its seemingly land-anchored permanence could also guarantee the permanence of a particular idea or memory attached to it. In this conception, the monument would remain essentially impervious to time and change, a perpetual witness-relic to a person, event, or epoch." Accounts of monuments have often focused on the eventful and often controversial stories of their planning and construction, as if the interesting part of a monument's life ended there, turning it into an object of "heritage" with a fixed meaning.[6] "In what might be called 'biographies' of Holocaust memorial sites," Young, in his now classic study *The Texture of Memory*, tried to "reinvigorate otherwise amnesiac stone settings with a record of their own lives in the public mind, with our memory of their past, present, and future."[7] We have increasingly come to accept the idea that the meaning and uses of memorials change over time—an idea that was in essence already formulated by Maurice Halbwachs, one of the founding figures of memory studies.[8] Those

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6   This is an instance of what Wulf Kansteiner called the "problem of reception in memory studies"—the bias toward studying the creation of memory messages rather than their reception. See Wulf Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies," *History and Theory* 41, no. 2 (2002): 192.

7   James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 9. Compare also Robin Wagner-Pacifici and Barry Schwartz, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past," *The American Journal of Sociology* 97, no. 2 (1991): 376–420. On the more general idea of biographies of things, albeit with a focus on movable objects, see Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

8   Maurice Halbwachs, *La topographie légendaire des Évangiles en Terre Sainte: étude de mémoire collective* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1941). For an impressive biographical study of two statues in ancient Athens, see Vincent Azoulay, *Les Tyrannicides d'Athènes: vie et mort de deux statues* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2014).

most familiar with monuments in present-day Western countries, where forbidding standards of heritage protection often set a high bar for alterations, might be forgiven for assuming that such change primarily concerns their "lives in the public mind" rather than their physical substance. Thus, scholars have sometimes focused on changing perceptions and uses of monuments, on the "choreography of history and memory,"[9] looking in particular at "the space surrounding a statue not only as a symbolic boundary that anchors our perception, but more importantly as a performative stage that invites the audience's actions toward a statue."[10] But as this book will show by drawing on the Ukrainian case, the outward appearance of monuments can also undergo constant change: their sacred status does not necessarily make them immune to repeated reconstructions and transformations, with the emphasis on "repeated": "a closer examination of the history of any object shows that the bad treatments in question take place in a long series of interventions of which they may or may not be the final ones."[11] Perhaps counterintuitively, these modifications often start earlier, and are easier to spot, in peripheral areas than in the center.

Where our approach departs from previous monument biographies is that ours is an exercise in *collective* biography. Biographers of monuments have typically zoomed in on particularly central or significant memorials that are often the focus of national or even international attention, just as there are more biographies of prominent men and women than of comparatively unknown people. Our study, in contrast, looks at a particularly eventful period in the lives not of one or a handful of monuments but of many memorials of a particular type. Our argument is that this can shed at least as much light on important changes as can a focus on a few select sites. In an oft-quoted essay from 1936, Robert Musil, writing about solitary statues, stated that "the most conspicuous thing about monuments is that you don't notice them." Yet two paragraphs later he conceded that this does not apply to monuments that constitute an "association, such as the Bismarck monuments spread across all of Germany."[12]

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9   Suhi Choi, *Embattled Memories: Contested Meanings in Korean War Memorials* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 2014), 69.

10 Choi, *Embattled Memories*, 74.

11 Dario Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), 25.

12 Robert Musil, "Denkmale," in *Nachlass zu Lebzeiten*, ed. Fred Lönker (Munich: Anaconda, 2023), 62, 63.

There is a more technical way of expressing this and thinking about how changes in the physical appearance of monuments affect their social lives. This is encapsulated in the term "investment in forms," first proposed by sociologist Laurent Thévenot in a seminal paper in 1984.[13] Thévenot observed that the way we perceive and evaluate a situation is often governed by uncertainty. Orientation on which elements of a situation are relevant for action is provided by conventions—agreed upon modes of interpretation that put the otherwise unconnected elements of a situation in a recognizable form. These conventions are not just there; we need to invest time and effort to create them. One way to do this is to modify the physical environment and establish markers that are coded in a certain way. We behave differently in a bank building or a disco, and bulletproof glass or strobe lights are there to remind us of what is appropriate in each environment. The same goes for war memorials: what we do around them depends on a number of physical—primarily visual—cues and how we have learned to respond to them. As we will see in the next chapter, whether we experience a war memorial as sacred, familiar, or profane and how we act around it can have much to do with the materials it is made from and the elements included in it, both by the original designers and by those effecting later modifications. In order for such investments in form to become legible to a large number of people, they need to be repeated across multiple locations.

Thus, our study offers a biography that is collective rather than individual and physical as well as intellectual. In looking at the changes that affected war memorials in Ukraine in 2022–23, and in delving into earlier developments in both Ukraine and Russia that affected these changes, we seek not simply to sum up the lives of many individual monuments but to investigate a monument landscape, or, as we shall call it, a monumentscape.

Monumentscapes

How do we make most sense of "the simultaneous gesture every monument makes to both landscape and memory"?[14]

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13 Laurent Thévenot, "Rules and Implements: Investment in Forms," trans. Jill Forbes, *Social Science Information* 23, no. 1 (1984): 1–45.

14 Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 298.

The concept of a "monument landscape" (*Denkmallandschaft*) was introduced by the German art historian and heritage specialist Tilmann Breuer in a 1983 essay[15] and later refined. He did not intend it to designate the sum of all (intentional or unintentional) monuments in a given area. Rather, the term pointed to the connections between monuments and their surrounding areas. "Connection" is the key term here: as Breuer pointed out, "it is the very linking of objects that can be an achievement worth memorializing."[16]

Breuer started from the premise that all monuments exist in social context, and each monument has what he called an "effect-reference space" (*Wirkungsbezugsraum*).[17] The natural or urban landscapes visually dominated by large monuments are examples of such spaces. Breuer speaks of monument landscapes when spaces are physically structured by monuments: entire parks built to highlight symbolically important constructions, as in the city of Potsdam, residence of the Prussian kings; landscapes transformed to suit the needs of a village, city, castle, or industrial facility that sits at its center. Breuer applied the term particularly to places where "there is such a high concentration of objects of historical relevance that we can unequivocally speak of a monument landscape."[18] However, he also argued that generally, "our starting point should no longer be the individual monument that stands in isolation from its surroundings, but rather the cultural landscape as a whole, which includes clusters of monument landscapes."[19] In the broadest perspective, the entire planet has become an ensemble of cultural landscapes, and "every description of the Earth is thus a study of monuments."[20]

15　Tilmann Breuer, "Denkmallandschaft: Ein Grenzbegriff und seine Grenzen," *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Denkmalpflege*, nos. 3–4 (1983): 75–82.

16　Breuer, "Denkmallandschaft," 75.

17　Tilmann Breuer, "Naturlandschaft, Kulturlandschaft, Denkmallandschaft," in *Historische Kulturlandschaften: Internationale Tagung veranstaltet vom Deutschen Nationalkomitee von ICOMOS in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Europarat und dem Landschaftsverband Rheinland—Rheinisches Amt für Denkmalpflege, Abtei Brauweiler, 10.–17. Mai 1992*, ICOMOS—Hefte des Deutschen Nationalkomitees, XI (Munich: Lipp, 1993), 15. Breuer's text was republished alongside English and French translations as Tilmann Breuer, "Natural Landscape, Cultural Landscape, Monument Landscape," in "Heritage without Borders," ed. Sigrid Brandt, Jörg Haspel, and John Ziesemer, *Monumenta* IV (2020): 159–72. In what follows, we sometimes cite and sometimes modify this English translation to bring out the meaning of the German concepts more clearly.

18　Breuer, "Natural Landscape, Cultural Landscape, Monument Landscape," 18.

19　Breuer, "Naturlandschaft, Kulturlandschaft, Denkmallandschaft," 18.

20　Breuer, "Denkmallandschaft," 76.

Breuer's conception of a monument landscape sets a very high definitional bar, one that our discussion in this book inevitably falls short of. We will largely describe what he insists a monument landscape is not: a "region in which certain architectural forms prevail," a "historical landscape," a landscape that frames not just "the past in the present" but continuing historical processes, one that is also a "sacral landscape," understood as a region that experiences the effects of sites considered sacred.[21]

To distinguish our approach from Breuer's while preserving his insights about the social embeddedness of monuments and their connection with territory, we will speak of a "monumentscape." Our understanding of the monumentscape is close to the "memorialscape" which the anthropologist Gillian Carr has defined as referring "to a collection of memorials within a landscape that are inter-related in some way, whether in terms of space, time or event."[22] Carr coined the term to account for "the growing density of memorials and monuments in towns and cities" in Western Europe in the 1970s and 80s.[23] She identified it through ten features:

(a) the relative centrality or marginality of the memorial within the townscape/landscape; (b) the geographical/spatial/historical relationship to other memorials of the same "event" or group; (c) the geographical/spatial/historical relationship to older monuments which commemorate other events; (d) the inter-visibility of memorials to each other; (e) the shape, size, form and material chosen for the memorial; (f) the date at which the memorial was erected; (g) the condition of the memorial (as a sign of care or abandonment); (h) the use or visitation of the memorial; (i) the instigator of the memorial (which has implications of power and agency); and (j) the biography of the memorial.[24]

Carr inscribes the memorialscape into the study of the wider "memory landscape," which is how Rudy Koshar translated the German *Erinnerungslandschaft* and which includes everything from "monuments,

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21 Breuer, "Denkmallandschaft," 76. See also Kenneth Stanley Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (Carlton: Melbourne University Publishing, 2005).
22 Gillian Carr, "Examining the Memorialscape of Occupation and Liberation: A Case Study from the Channel Islands," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 18, no. 2 (2012): 177.
23 Carr, "Examining the Memorialscape," 175.
24 Carr, "Examining the Memorialscape," 177–78.

memorials, and historical buildings to cityscapes, street names, and sites of Nazi atrocities."[25] She is interested in "overarching narratives (and counter-narratives) of the memorialscape." This echoes some of our own concerns: in particular, studying how the Russian narrative of Ukrainian hostility to Great Patriotic War memorials, while false, ended up shaping reality on the ground.

There are three reasons, however, why we speak of a monumentscape rather than a memorialscape.

The first relates to the distinction between—heroic—monuments and—mournful—memorials that is sometimes drawn in the literature on war memory. This distinction arises from the West European context of World War I commemoration, which saw a democratization of war memory and the emergence of distinct forms of mournful rather than celebratory markers of such memory. Those forms of mourning became foundational for the commemoration of World War II: in large swaths of the West, triumphalism became largely taboo and was replaced by mourning and warning. The Soviet tradition of commemorating the Great Patriotic War belatedly took on board many of the features of European World War I commemoration. Yet the distinction between inspiring monuments and sorrowful memorials is difficult to uphold even in Western contexts,[26] and it was always more tenuous and questionable for Soviet war memorials. From the state's perspective, the only good war memorial—even if built atop a mass grave—was one that mobilized visitors for further military and productive feats. In this sense, a war memorial was expected to function in ways not too different from the statue of a leader or cultural figure—as a form of "monumental propaganda," as Vladimir Lenin had designated a short-lived program of monument construction in the early 1920s. As the Soviet state's monopoly on monument building existed in theory rather than practice, mournful war memorials did emerge early on. In the 1960s, when the purposes of war commemoration shifted from mobilization to national and intergenerational cohesion, they became

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25 Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces: Artifacts of German Memory, 1870–1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), xv.

26 "But in fact, the traditional monument (the tombstone) can also be used as a mourning stone for lost loved ones, just as memorials have marked past victories. A statue can be a monument to heroism and a memorial to tragic loss; an obelisk can memorialize a nation's birth and monumentalize leaders fallen before their prime. Insofar as the same object can perform both functions, there may be nothing intrinsic to historical markers that makes them either a monument or a memorial." Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 3.

more common. Yet the distinction never really took hold. The most heroic-looking monuments could serve as venues for ceremonies of mourning. Conversely, mournful memorials became focal points for self-celebration. Victory Day, the high feast of Soviet war commemoration, epitomized this amalgamation, becoming a "celebration with tears in one's eyes" in the words of a famous song from 1975. While the word "memorial" exists in both Ukrainian and Russian, war memorials are usually designated as "monuments" (*pam'iatnyk/pamiatnik*) in both languages. Thus, in our terminology, we follow James E. Young in that we "treat all memory-sites as memorials, the plastic objects within these sites as monuments. A memorial may be a day, a conference, or a space, but it need not be a monument. A monument, on the other hand, is always a kind of memorial."[27]

The second reason has to do with situating the Ukrainian—and more largely the Soviet and post-Soviet—monumentscape in a wider context. Building on the work of one of the authors of this book, the architectural historian Lucia Allais has identified the Soviet mode of war memorial construction as one of at least three modalities of the "meeting of bureaucracy and monumentality."[28] One was the "SS monumental building economy,"[29] involving massive amounts of forced labor; the other was the "liberal international project of monument survival,"[30] in which a "'monument' became redefined, as any architectural object whose modernity lies not in its style or form, but in its capacity to survive destruction,"[31] leading to the emergence of discourse about "heritage" by the 1980s. The third mode was the Soviet way, which at least in theory presupposed "an aesthetic and bureaucratic standardization"[32] with catalogues of standard types of war memorials that were supposed to be built across former battle zones. This view is echoed by Owen Hatherley, for whom the "landscapes of communism" are defined by architectural elements specific to the formerly communist countries, such as the parade-ready boulevards known as magistrales, the *microrayon* housing districts, and the heroic memorial.[33]

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27   Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 3.

28   Lucia Allais, *Designs of Destruction: The Making of Monuments in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 5.

29   Allais, *Designs of Destruction*, 5, quoting Paul Jaskot.

30   Allais, *Designs of Destruction*, 5.

31   Allais, *Designs of Destruction*, 2.

32   Allais, *Designs of Destruction*, 5.

33   Owen Hatherley, *Landscapes of Communism* (London: Penguin Allen Lane, 2015).

In reality, there was a great deal of variation on the ground, determined by a plethora of actors who modified or ignored the standard-issue designs. In addition, the need to take local specificities into account for both commemorative and propagandistic purposes led to numerous nonstandard monuments being commissioned by the state starting as early as the 1950s.

In fact, the specificity of the Soviet mode of monumentality, seen in global context, lay only partly in uniformity and standardization, which were always circumscribed. At least to the same extent, it resided in a specific attitude toward monument survival and continuity, one that differed from the one that Allais has identified for liberal internationalism. As Julie Deschepper has argued, Soviet preservationism was predicated on the idea that a monument could and should, if necessary, be improved, even if that involved modifying or destroying its material substance and building it anew.[34] If the twentieth-century liberal monument was defined by its capacity to survive destruction, the Soviet monument was defined by its ability to emerge from destruction better than it was before. Thus the Soviet tradition positioned itself squarely at one extreme of the debate, which, since the nineteenth century, had pitted "restorationists" against "preservationists." If, for the preservationists, the monument was a kind of historical document that had to be treated with utmost care, for the Soviet-style restorationists monuments were more like history textbooks, constantly revised and updated to reflect the latest vision of the past. In terms of another long-running distinction, they were icons rather than documents.

As with the liberal internationalist order of monument preservation, this implies considering monuments as more than individual sites: "Instead of being singular, monuments were nodes in a networked plurality"[35]—in our case, a plurality of war memorials collectively testifying to Soviet war heroism. At every stage, in other words, an individual war memorial had to conform to a certain idea of what a war memorial should look like. In the 1960s, this meant replacing earlier constructions with more "modern"-looking memorials, sometimes leading later observ-

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34 Julie Deschepper, "Between Future and Eternity: A Soviet Conception of Heritage," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 25, no. 5 (2019): 491–506. See also her forthcoming book: Julie Deschepper, *Le temps du patrimoine soviétique: Une histoire matérielle de la Russie* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2024).

35 Allais, *Designs of Destruction*, 4.

ers to deny the very existence of the many memorials built in Ukraine before that decade.[36] During the Russian attack on Ukraine, as we shall see, it implied, for example, adding eternal flames to war memorials where none had burned before, simply because the presence of an eternal flame had become part of the idea of a proper war memorial. This logic was applied not only to war memorials but to monuments more generally, which is why it is important to see what Carr calls the memorialscape as part of the wider monumentscape.

However, there is a third and more general reason for speaking of monumentscapes, which brings us back to Breuer's idea of the cultural landscape as a whole. Some memory scholars tend to downplay the relevance of war memorials in defining a landscape: "Landscape, in any case, is little touched by human concerns for memory: give or take a few centuries, and the battlefields will be ordinary meadows; the memorials insisting on the reality of the deaths that took place will become illegible and crumble away."[37] Yet in a shorter-term perspective, things are very different, not to mention the consensus among historians of landscapes that, since the dawn of the Anthropocene at the latest, they have been shaped by human activity in ways that are crucial if not always self-evident.[38] Martin Pollack has coined the term "contaminated landscapes" to designate landscapes that are outwardly inconspicuous yet conceal traces of past atrocities.[39] Thus even seemingly innocuous landscapes can be entangled in crucial ways with activities that are relevant to "human concerns for memory." This is all the more true of landscapes strewn with deliberately erected memorial markers.

To understand this, it is helpful to consider that what constitutes a landscape is always in the eye of the beholder. The way we map even a "natural" landscape, the features we identify as belonging to it, is never neutral or innocent. As James E. Young notes, "Nature is defined by the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel as 'not only plant and ani-

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36 See, for example, Yuliya Yurchuk, "Reordering of Meaningful Worlds: Memory of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in Post-Soviet Ukraine," (PhD diss., Stockholm University, 2014), 60.

37 Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, eds., *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 12.

38 Hansjörg Küster, *Geschichte der Landschaft in Mitteleuropa: von der Eiszeit bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: Beck, 1995).

39 Martin Pollack, *Kontaminierte Landschaften* (St. Pölten: Residenz, 2014).

mal life, but also the landscapes and relics of the country's past.'"[40] Since the map is never identical to the territory it depicts, maps—whether physical or mental—always single out particular elements to include. What counts as a monument, or a war memorial, will vary across times and places. Conversely, monuments—or a lack thereof—can play a role in what we perceive a landscape to consist of. In the Soviet Union after the Second World War, the presence of war memorials gradually became central to marking a territory as Soviet—stressing that it had been liberated from foreign invaders or had sent its sons and daughters to liberate others. War memorials also came to mediate regional identities and emotional connections to local landscapes.[41] As successive antireligious campaigns greatly reduced the number of churches and other sites of worship, war memorials—following the principle that "a sacred space is never empty"[42]—came to supplant them as ritual sites in a Soviet secular religion increasingly centered on the cult of the Great Patriotic War, a tendency that continued at least in some regions of Ukraine after 1991. The fall of the Soviet Union reduced the symbolic standing of Lenin statues, the other altars of Sovietness, for many of the country's residents, leaving war memorials as the only widely accepted sacred landmarks dating from the Soviet period, now rivaled and strongly influenced by markers of new-found Christian (and other) faith.

In trying to explain the ease with which Ukraine's independence was accepted even in seemingly Russified regions of the country, Fabian Baumann has argued that expressions of banal Ukrainian nationalism were widespread in Soviet Ukraine not only in the form of trite bureaucratic tropes but also in visual representations of the republic, such as drawings of its outline.[43] One might add that banal Soviet imperialism—

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40 Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 220. Compare the famous "Nine points on monumentality" manifesto from 1943 that starts with the words "Monuments are human landmarks" and goes on to imagine a situation where "Man-made landscapes would be correlated with human landscapes." José-Luis Sert, Fernand Léger, and Sigfried Giedion, "Nine Points on Monumentality," in *Architecture You and Me: The Diary of a Development*, by Sigfried Giedion (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 48–51.

41 Gabowitsch, "Visuals in History Textbooks."

42 Victoria Smolkin, *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty: A History of Soviet Atheism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

43 Fabian Baumann, "'Well-Known and Sincerely Loved': Banal Nationalism, Republican Pride, and Symbolic Ethnicity in Late Soviet Ukraine," *Slavic Review*, forthcoming.

expressing attachment to the entire Union—was no less present.[44] The cult of the Great Patriotic War, and in particular its memorials, combined elements of both.

Thus, depending on the observer and the situation, war memorials can mark a territory both as Soviet and as Ukrainian, as sacred and as familiar. They are Soviet because they celebrate the heroism of Soviet soldiers, and Ukrainian because they have come to be enmeshed with local identities and could be reinterpreted as standing for the liberation of Ukraine in particular. They are sacred by virtue of being associated with holy days of war commemoration, such as Victory Day, and familiar as naturalized parts of the landscape, which, as we shall see in the next chapter, have become thoroughly domesticated by local residents.

To the Russian invaders, the Ukrainianness and local familiarity of memorials were largely invisible. They saw memorials to the Great Patriotic War as sacred embodiments of Sovietness, which in Russia much more strongly than in Ukraine has been reinterpreted as an expression of national—in this case: Russian—identity. Thus the Russians saw war memorials as physical proof of a landscape's intrinsic Sovietness and, by extension, its affiliation with Russia as the undisputed guardian of the Soviet legacy.

Russia's tools for mapping this monumentscape were imperfect: its soldiers do not appear to have used the available online or print directories that attempt to list war memorials and other monuments by region, the way both Axis and Allied forces in the Second World War used Baedeker guides to target, or avoid targeting, cultural monuments. Expecting a three-day conquest with little resistance, the Russians do not seem to have mapped monuments out in advance at all, or indeed made any maps of targets to avoid. Unlike the Allied Monuments Men in the Second World War and more like the Axis Powers, they viewed the territory they were conquering as one to be looted, transformed, and Russified rather than preserved or salvaged.

Yet war memorials were an exception in that, rhetorically at least, they were singled out for protection. At the same time, focusing on monuments helped the occupiers to reimagine the Ukrainian landscape as a set of

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44 For the notion of "banal imperialism," see Krishan Kumar, "Empire, Nation, and National Identities," in *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Andrew Thompson (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 298–329.

manageable and familiar points rather than as a vast, ungovernable, and unexpectedly unfamiliar horizontal expanse.

What, in our case, turns a collection of monuments into a monumentscape, then, are at least two things. On the one hand, it is the family resemblance between different monuments, in this case, between different war memorials. While they do not all follow a standard pattern, the similarities between them are significant enough and provided invading Russian soldiers with a sense of familiarity, of orientation in a landscape that was otherwise less familiar than expected—a point to which we will return in the conclusion. On the other hand, it is the sense that every monument in a monumentscape should be an element in a network. This network is symbolic and narrative, commemorating not just local heroism and sacrifice but that of a larger collective, however defined. Yet it is also material: as Allais argues with regard to the US Monuments Men in the Second World War, "oscillation between protecting a monument's concrete form and its transmissible content was constitutive of monuments protection."[45]

Contesting the monumentscape:
From "disputed territories" to imperial irredentism

This view of the monumentscape can help us gain a new perspective on the nexus between memory, heritage, and territorial domination or conflict. We believe that studying Russia's treatment of war memorials in occupied Ukraine can serve to advance at least two recent scholarly discussions that focus on these themes.

One line of inquiry has concerned the relationship between memory, heritage, and disputed territories. Scholars from the DisTerrMem project have studied post-conflict societies and the role of nation states and regional and diasporic organizations in managing memories of disputed territories. Their work has focused on post-conflict situations and peacebuilding or reconciliation efforts in Europe, the Caucasus, and South Asia. They have argued for an agonistic framework that would leave space for different rival memories connected to specific places instead of trying to

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45   Allais, *Designs of Destruction*, 76.

merge them in a single overarching "cosmopolitan" narrative.[46] While accommodating a battle of ideas about the proper management of memories and heritage sites, the basic idea of agonism is that such conflict should be respectful: "democratic conflict should not involve seeing others as enemies to be destroyed, but rather as adversaries whose ideas may be fought, even fiercely, but whose right to exist and to defend those ideas should never be called into question."[47] The idea of agonism has some value for thinking about the management of Soviet war memorials on territories that are not directly touched by war, and we will return to it in the conclusion. However, it clearly has limited purchase in situations of ongoing military conflict, such as Russia's attack on Ukraine, which is premised precisely on denying that country the very right to exist. We need accounts not simply of disputed heritage but of heritage at war—not least because the potential of heritage to provoke, justify, and structure military conflict will always hang as a threat over attempts to pacify its management through agonistic approaches. (Not to mention that the notion of "disputed territories" doesn't really fit the Russian-Ukrainian war: from the Russian perspective, whatever territories its soldiers managed to occupy became, by that token, "disputed."[48])

The second line of inquiry concerns the nexus between heritage, (post-) colonialism, and imperialism. The literature about colonialism and its aftereffects remains dominated by contributions from or about countries colonized by West European maritime powers. This also goes for interest in post-colonialism and heritage;[49] when Central and Eastern Europe are discussed, it is usually in relation to their implication in Western imperial projects.[50] A large part of the discussion is devoted to the colonial-era

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46   See https://web.archive.org/web/20240406061234/https://www.disterrmem.eu/.

47   Shauna Robertson, "Agonistic Memory: A Brief Introduction," *DisTerrMem* (blog), May 8, 2020, https://web.archive.org/web/20211121203616/https://www.disterrmem.eu/blog/agonistic-memory-a-brief-introduction.

48   A point made by Tatiana Zhurzhenko in the discussion after her keynote lecture "The Politics of Memory in the Ukrainian-Russian Conflict: From the Orange Revolution to the Annexation of Crimea to Russia's Full-Scale invasion" at the 2nd PoSoCoMeS conference in Tallinn, September 20, 2023.

49   Kynan Gentry, *History, Heritage, and Colonialism: Historical Consciousness, Britishness, and Cultural Identity in New Zealand, 1870–1940*, Studies in Imperialism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015); *(Post)Colonialism and Cultural Heritage: International Debates at the Humboldt Forum* (Munich: Hanser, 2021).

50   Britta Timm Knudsen et al., eds., *Decolonizing Colonial Heritage: New Agendas, Actors and Practices in and beyond Europe*, Critical Heritages of Europe (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2022).

theft of cultural heritage and the question of restitution. When imperial heritage itself is critiqued for its post-colonial effects, it is typically for its role in perpetuating colonial-era identities and forms of domination, not for its potential to legitimize imperial reconquest. More recently, the discussion about both post-coloniality and decoloniality in reference to the former Soviet Union has moved from a sophisticated but niche academic debate[51] to a much larger stage, but much of it concerns language, literature, and contemporary art rather than heritage.

Yet the case of the maritime empires can hardly count as paradigmatic for the role of heritage in post-imperial situations more generally. Unlike the typically gradual loss of overseas colonies by the West European powers, the demise of the three big European-Eurasian land-based empires in 1917/18 led to the dissolution of entire states, including the political collapse and social transformation of the metropolis. Only one of the three continued in modified form (the Soviet Union replacing the Russian Empire) and engaged in some imperial reconquest during the Second World War, before collapsing in turn in 1991. Post-Habsburg and post-Ottoman history is full of cases of irredentism that involved disputes over cultural heritage and in particular the vestiges and markers of past wars. The same goes for post-Soviet history. Post-imperial policies have also involved military action and national homogenization (including through heritage) of ethnic margins that formally remained part of the truncated metropolis (Kurdish territories in Turkey; Chechnya). However, with the exception of the Second World War, the long post-imperial history of the land-based empires has never involved former imperial centers seeking to reconquer lands and reconstitute their empires. This is what makes the Russian invasion of Ukraine since 2014 so unique.

Russia's attack on Ukraine has rightly been described as imperialist and colonialist. For our purposes, however, it is most helpful to designate it as an act of attempted imperial reconquest, or imperialist irredentism. Irredentism can be defined most generally as "a policy of advocating the restoration to a country of any territory formerly belonging to

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51 For postcolonial approaches, see Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization* (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2011) and the *Postcolonial Perspectives on Eastern Europe* book series edited by Dirk Uffelmann, Alfred Gall, and Mirja Lecke and published by Peter Lang. For decolonial approaches, see Madina Tlostanova, *What Does It Mean to Be Post-Soviet? Decolonial Art from the Ruins of the Soviet Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).

it."[52] This has become the norm in justifications of wars of conquest: "the public discourse of territorial expansionism," as Alexander B. Murphy writes, "is essentially a call for restitution of that which was improperly taken away."[53] However, Russia's particular variety of irredentism is imperial in that its arguments for forcibly altering state borders go beyond the claim that the territories it seeks to conquer are populated by ethnic Russians. The Russian regime maintains that the present-day Russian state has a claim to territories formerly controlled by the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union *qua* these territories' imperial history. Conversely, Russia's attack is also part of the long story of Russian imperial collapse. Furthermore, what makes the Russian invasion a case of imperial irredentism is the underlying idea that empires, or great powers, have the right to treat "mere" nation states as buffer zones; hence, the repeated Russian claims that Ukrainian statehood and sovereignty are somehow not real.

The role of memory and heritage in territorial disputes is often described in terms of conflict between two different ethnonational communities, each of which has their own vision of which community a territory belongs to, and why. However, situations of imperial irredentism complicate matters further: rather than simply claiming Ukrainian territory, and its monuments, for the Russians as an ethnic group rather than the Ukrainians, Russia asserted that it had a *shared* history with Ukraine, as evidenced by monuments, yet claimed for itself the sole right to interpret the meaning of that shared history. In practice, as we will show in this book, ethnonationalist irredentism and imperialist irredentism tended to merge, with some monument policies aiming to erase all traces of Ukrainianness and others accommodating it as part of a shared history as long as it remained subordinated to Russian visions of a Soviet and imperial past.

ICONOCLASM OR HERITAGE PROTECTION?

Another conceptual point needs to be addressed here.

At first glance, our study may be seen as relating primarily to iconoclasm, the destruction of images. Indeed, one of the first things the

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52 According to the Oxford Languages dictionary embedded in Google's search engine.
53 Alexander B. Murphy, "Historical Justifications for Territorial Claims," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 80, no. 4 (1990): 533.

Russian invaders did during their advance into Ukraine was to destroy monuments such as those honoring the dead of earlier Ukrainian resistance against Russia or those displaying symbols of Ukrainian statehood. However, as this book will show, that was only one among many facets of Russia's interaction with Ukrainian war memorials, and by no means the most prominent one. Nor did the Russian soldiers, unlike many iconoclasts throughout the ages, act out of a general opposition to images or a mistrust of all representation. They were not out to destroy all war memorials, just those of a certain type. Indeed, protecting monuments was a much more prominent part of their discourse than destroying them. Thus, in their own understanding at least, they were engaged in iconorestorationism rather than iconoclasm. Their justifications for doing so were often muddled: Russian public discourse was primarily outraged by the destruction of straightforwardly communist statuary such as Lenin statues, and by acts of removal of war memorials in countries other than Ukraine, such as Poland and Estonia. Yet in the occupied Ukrainian territories they ended up interacting mostly with war memorials, which had in fact been left largely untouched by previous waves of Ukrainian decommunization. Having believed their own propaganda about Ukrainian "Nazis" removing Soviet war memorials, the occupiers now had to devise original ways of rebuilding monuments that were in no need of restoration, as we detail in chapter 4. Overall, their monument policies were more "reconstructive" than "deconstructive," their vandalism, in a distinction proposed by Charles de Montalembert in 1833, more "restorative" than "destructive."[54]

Still, restoring monuments to what the occupiers thought of as their previous condition required removing everything considered to adulterate that authentic state. In addition, the Russian invasion and its attendant monument policies caused iconoclastic responses on the Ukrainian side: as discussed in chapter 6, the large-scale Russian attack led to a wave of monument removal on free Ukrainian territory that targeted monuments seen as Soviet or Russian. This makes observations on past instances of iconoclasm relevant to our case.

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54   For the distinction between reconstructive and deconstructive heritage policies, see Peter Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory: A German-Polish Conflict over Land and Culture, 1919–89* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 220–21. For Montalembert's distinction between destructive and restorative vandalism, see Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art*, 23.

In Ancient Greece, the idea of iconoclasm in the modern sense did not exist. Monuments were routinely "updated" to reflect new views, but such modification was not understood or represented as an act of destruction or erasure.[55] In other cultures, however, iconoclasts have typically placed the iconoclastic act itself center stage. In his study of monument destruction in the territory of present-day Iraq throughout the ages, Aaron Tugendhaft writes: "Iconoclasm does not remove images so much as generate new ones. From the French Revolution to the Chinese Cultural Revolution to the recent campaign to remove Confederate monuments in the United States, acts of iconoclasm have survived through the depiction of those acts."[56] Tugendhaft's statement might not be universally applicable—there have also been acts of iconoclasm known to us chiefly through traces of the images destroyed—but it certainly holds true of the destruction of monuments in the Russian war on Ukraine. The destruction was amply documented, and where it was deliberate, the monument topplers on both sides nearly always made sure to document the act. Destruction resulted not simply in empty spaces or orphaned pedestals waiting to support new (or returning old) monuments, but in images of the act of destruction and its immediate aftermath. Like other iconoclasts, those on both sides of the ongoing war preserved images of the toppled monuments through the very act of circulating images (photos and videos) of the act of destruction—and in some cases by taking them to less public locations such as museums or specially arranged open-air displays (though regarding memorials removed by the Russian forces we found only one case where this was not just promised but actually done).

These images always carried an intense emotional charge. They embodied the power of the destroyers to shape public space according to their values and their exhilaration at ridding it of offending symbols. They also placed the toppled monuments at the forefront of debate, with some of them attracting considerably more attention through the act of their demolition than they ever had before. These images are among the sources we have used for our book, as are the even more numerous images of (real

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55 Maurizio Giangiulio, Elena Franchi, and Giorgia Proietti, eds., *Commemorating War and War Dead: Ancient and Modern* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2019). See also Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art*, 26–27.

56 Aaron Tugendhaft, *The Idols of ISIS. From Assyria to the Internet* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 75. For a similar observation see Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art*, 32.

or spurious) monument maintenance or (re-)construction churned out by Russian propaganda.

Much of what Tugendhaft and other scholars of iconoclasm[57] have to say about the global history of the phenomenon also applies to the wave of monument removal that swept the free parts of Ukraine after February 2022. As in virtually all cases of post-socialist iconoclasm, those engaged in removing the remaining public markers of the Russian and Soviet presence never questioned the importance of public monuments per se. They simply sought to replace monuments to perceived oppression and foreign rule with those embodying the nation's sovereignty and struggle for freedom.

These acts of de-Sovietization and de-Russification have already generated much complex debate and scholarship. While we briefly touch upon them, especially insofar as unlike the earlier decommunization campaigns they have targeted some war memorials, our main topic is the treatment of war memorials in the Russian-occupied parts of the country. In some ways, this treatment overlapped with age-old traditions of iconoclasm: like the Qur'ānic prophets, the Russian invaders saw the removal of false idols (such as monuments to Ukraine's struggle against Russia since 2014) as a return to an older state of purity. The twist was that this purity and normalcy was not pictured as a total absence of public monuments, nor even primarily as a blank slate prior to the construction of new ones, as in the ancient Assyrian reliefs that show the smashing of an older king's statue alongside the construction of monuments to the new king.[58] It was quintessentially embodied by existing Soviet memorials to the dead of the Great Patriotic War, which were already more numerous in the now-occupied territories than were post-Soviet Ukrainian monuments referencing other wars. Thus, unlike in many other cases of conquest or revolution, restoration and renovation loomed larger in Russia's treatment of monuments than did outright destruction and replacement. Yet like all reactionaries, the Russians ended up producing something new

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57 Sergiusz Michalski, ed., *Les iconoclasmes* (Strasbourg: Société alsacienne pour le développement de l'histoire de l'art, 1992); Alain Besançon, *L'image interdite: Une histoire intellectuelle de l'iconoclasme* (Paris: Fayard, 1994); Winfried Speitkamp, ed., *Denkmalsturz: Zur Konfliktgeschichte politischer Symbolik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997); Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art*.

58 Tugendhaft, *The Idols of ISIS*, 76–77.

in the name of restoring the old—both materially on the ground and in terms of the images they generated.

There is another important dimension of the wartime treatment of monuments in general and war memorials in particular, beyond their role in shaping public space and infusing it with one set of symbols or another. At least in some situations, monuments serve not just as *representations* of certain figures—be it a Tsar, a writer, a mythical character, or a fallen soldier—but as actual *embodiments* of those figures, as ways to extend their presence into new spaces or beyond death. "Statues are dead people cast in bronze or carved in stone."[59] This is particularly salient in traditionally Orthodox lands where, following Roman and Byzantine traditions, icons have traditionally been seen as physical embodiments of the divine, and images of the emperor or other figures have been treated as ways in which these figures can be present somewhere other than their physical location.[60] Yet at times of iconoclasm in particular, treating a person's effigy as an embodiment of that person is quite common across cultures; indeed, this perception is one of the mainsprings of iconoclasm, which tends to "associate a real figure with its commemorative form."[61]

These observations are relevant to many of the varied ways of interacting with memorials that we describe in this book, beyond iconoclasm. Those who annihilate, wreck, remove, alter, paint, renovate, or expand a memorial are sending a message to others in society—a message about the kind of community they seek to create or destroy and legitimize through symbols. But in addition, they are also interacting with the (mostly) dead, whose presence is embodied in the monuments themselves. They assign them a place in the social hierarchy by elevating, demoting, or humiliating them; they reappropriate and remobilize dead soldiers by changing the decorations on their statues or by rearranging or expanding the list of names over a communal grave; they turn heroes back into

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59 Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change*, The Harriman Lectures (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 5.

60 Clemena Antonova, *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon: Seeing the World with the Eyes of God* (Farnham; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010); Clemena Antonova, *Visual Thought in Russian Religious Philosophy: Pavel Florensky's Theory of the Icon* (New York: Routledge, 2019); Mischa Gabowitsch, "Emblems of Authority, Symbols of Protest: Crowds and the Materiality of Their Signs," *Social Research* 90, no. 2 (2023): 337–72.

61 Małgorzata Praczyk, "Émotions en action: L'histoire comparative du vandalisme et de la destruction des monuments commémoratifs allemands à Strasbourg et Poznań en 1918 et 1919," in *Les marques du voisinage: l'Alsace et la Posnanie dans l'ombre des influences germaniques*, ed. Maciej Forycki et al. (Poznań: Instytut Historii UAM, 2019), 119.

ordinary people by domesticating a heroic monument and treating it like a family grave.

Yet if iconoclasm is not the main heading under which Russia's treatment of war memorials in the occupied Ukrainian territories can be discussed, then what is? Following Julie Deschepper, we argue that what the invaders engaged in followed a peculiarly Soviet and Russian tradition of heritage management, one that privileges reconstruction and improvement over material preservation and does not shy away from destroying a monument in order to rebuild it better.[62]

Discussions of "heritage" often skip over war memorials. The patriotic messages such memorials usually carry make them too political to fit neatly into this category. Nor do most of them present enough artistic originality to be of much interest to the art historian. Frequently they are relegated to the study of nationalism, propaganda, and political symbolism, which tends to flatten their materiality and consider them only as two-dimensional symbols capable (or incapable) of mobilizing people in the service of patriotic ideas.

In the study of Soviet and post-Soviet monuments in particular, the distinctive features of war memorials have frequently been blurred. Discourse about monument construction and removal often fails to distinguish between statues of political or cultural figures and memorials to dead soldiers, as if they were no more than variants of the same type of political propaganda. In addition, as mentioned above, much discussion has focused on large, well-known memorials in big cities rather than the more numerous ones in small towns and villages. In the case of Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries, local contexts and meanings are often key to understanding how and why war memorials are built, maintained, and modified, and under what conditions they are seen as expressing something authentic. Thus our case puts in relief one of the central tensions implicit in definitions of heritage: that between authenticity and originality.

The impulse to build a war memorial to honor the local fallen is often itself local—that was the case even in the Soviet Union, which despite its vertical political structure never had a single central agency in charge of building war memorials. Yet the expectation that such monuments

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62 Deschepper, "Between Future and Eternity." See also her forthcoming book: Deschepper, *Le temps du patrimoine soviétique: Une histoire matérielle de la Russie.*

will be built is national, as are many of the available forms. Thus, even though they are very different from the standardized statues of leaders, war memorials too are part of the tradition that Alexander Etkind has described as internal colonization or, more largely, the process of nationalization or imperial control, of turning local stories and objects into part of national or imperial history.[63] Empire is a style: if Habsburg rule meant to have a baroque chapel in every village,[64] Soviet rule in its late stages meant that there was no village without a war memorial. The result is often to make war memorials appear standardized, unoriginal, and therefore devoid of local authenticity. Soviet war memorials were simultaneously expressions of local mourning *and* markers of imperial control.

This makes war memorials vulnerable to a loss of perceived value in situations of regime change, such as Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity in 2014. There has been a temptation to see them as no more than artistically worthless expressions of Soviet propaganda, despite their originally protected status. Against this, at least three different strategies have been used to turn them into heritage worth protecting.

One, employed by Ukrainian art historians and preservationists such as the *De Ne De* group ("Here and There"), has been to nationalize and thereby de-Sovietize monuments by stressing that they were designed not by generic Soviet, but by *Ukrainian* Soviet sculptors and architects.[65]

Another, employed by local residents and amply discussed in the next chapter, has been to domesticate monuments. This has been done primarily by altering some aspects of their appearance—adding or highlighting individual names, for example, or painting memorials in multiple colors—and generally extending practices associated with family graves to local war memorials.

The third and most radical approach has been that taken by the Russian invaders. Rather than resituating the significance of war memorials down

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63   Etkind, *Internal Colonization*; Ana Maria Alonso, "The Effects of Truth: Re-Presentations of the Past and the Imagining of Community," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1, no. 1 (1988): 33–57.

64   Robert John Weston Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1550–1700: An Interpretation* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1979). See also Leora Auslander and Tara Zahra, "The Things They Carried: War, Mobility, and Material Culture," in *Objects of War: The Material Culture of Conflict and Displacement*, ed. Leora Auslander and Tara Zahra (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), 9–10.

65   On *De Ne De,* see Oksana Semenyk, "Mistse dlia mista: iak entuziasty nesuť suchasnu kuľturu v malen'ki naseleni punkty Ukraïny," *Platforma*, March 20, 2017, http://projects.platfor.ma/de-ne-de. See also the group's website at https://www.facebook.com/denedenede.

the scale from the imperial to the national to the local, they have resolutely tried to reimpose imperial meanings. In order to do so, they have not hesitated to "improve" monuments when deemed necessary, for example by adding an eternal flame where none had burned before or by adorning a memorial with a Soviet Victory Banner.

That conquest, in this case, has been associated not only with tearing down monuments but also with protecting them (or claiming to do so) must prompt us to rethink the almost automatic association between military conflict and iconoclasm.

These themes will remain with us throughout this book. For now, though, we must first provide more detail about the historical background against which the events of 2022–23 took place.