

# Challenges of Interreligious Relations in Georgia through the Prism of Interreligious Dialogue: Identification and Analysis of the Monomodel, Intermodel, and Multimodel

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## ABSTRACT

In recent years, the role of religion in conflict resolution and peacebuilding has gained significant attention, especially in a globalized world where interreligious dialogue plays a crucial role. Georgia, as a multicultural and multi-religious country, provides a unique context for studying these dynamics. This study explores three models of interreligious dialogue: Monomodel, Multimodel, and Intermodel. The Monomodel emphasizes the dominance of a single religion, the Multimodel reflects the coexistence of various groups with limited interaction, and the Intermodel promotes active collaboration and shared values. These models illustrate the complexity of interreligious relations in Georgia, where diverse religious communities coexist. Over the past decade, there has been a growing interest in the role of religion in fostering peace, as shown by the study's analysis of religious discourses through sociological methods. Our research from 2015 to 2023 highlights that while Monomodel and Multimodel approaches are present, the development of the Intermodel is crucial for promoting inclusive cooperation and equality, fostering peaceful coexistence in a diverse society like Georgia.

## 1. Religion and Secularization in Post-Soviet Georgia

### 1.1. Post-Soviet Religious Landscape in Georgia

Following its independence in 1991, Georgia underwent significant social and political transformations. One of the most notable changes was the resurgence of religious identity, which had been suppressed during the Soviet era. During this period, state atheism prevailed, and religious practices were either discouraged or prohibited. However, with independence came the revival of religious traditions, leading to a more prominent role for religion in public life. The Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) regained a central place in society after independence. During the Soviet period, the GOC operated underground, continuing religious practices in secret. Upon Georgia's independence, the Church became a dominant institution, shaping national identity and influencing politics. The Church's involvement in education, healthcare, and social services has contributed to its continued relevance, though its influence remains contested, particularly by minority religious groups. Alongside the Orthodox Church, other religious communities have also seen a resurgence. These include Muslim communities, Armenian Apostolic Christians, Catholics, Evangelicals, and smaller Eastern Orthodox denominations. While the presence of these groups has increased, they continue to face challenges related to marginalization, discrimination, and limited visibility within the broader Georgian society.

As a central element of Georgian identity, the Georgian Orthodox Church sought to provide continuity for the diaspora and stability for those remaining within the country. Post-Soviet Georgia experienced a religious revival, with the GOC re-establishing its influence as a moral authority and social institution. According to Kukhianidze (2011), the Church filled the void left by the Soviet state, offering a source of unity and resilience for Georgians faced with economic and social uncertainties. Its emphasis on cultural and spiritual continuity became crucial in reinforcing Georgian identity, both domestically and abroad (Grdzeldidze, 2010).

The Church also established connections with diaspora communities, providing spiritual services in migration hubs and supporting Georgian-language religious materials to help maintain cultural ties (Tabatadze, 2016). By reinforcing religious and cultural practices, the Church mitigated some of the

isolation and cultural dislocation felt by Georgian migrants in foreign countries, facilitating social networks that enhanced both solidarity and resilience.

### **1.2. Religious Identity and State-Society Relations**

The relationship between the state and religion in post-Soviet Georgia has been shaped by a mix of secular and religious influences. Despite constitutional guarantees of religious freedom, the dominance of the Georgian Orthodox Church has led to tensions between secularism and religious dominance. Georgia's Constitution guarantees freedom of religion and separates church and state. However, the constitutional recognition of the Georgian Orthodox Church as the "primary faith" has led to a de facto privileged status for Orthodoxy. This has created a discrepancy between legal principles and practical implementation, as state policies often favor Orthodox traditions, sidelining minority religious groups. For example, minority religious communities face difficulties in accessing public spaces for worship and participating in civic life. Secularism has struggled to gain a foothold in post-Soviet Georgia, primarily due to the enduring influence of the GOC. In rural areas, where Orthodox traditions are deeply entrenched, the influence of religion is more pronounced, limiting the space for secular values and minority religious expressions. This discrepancy presents a challenge for those advocating for secular governance and the equal treatment of all religious groups.

### **1.3. Secularization and Interfaith Dialogue in Georgia**

As Georgia navigates its post-Soviet identity, secularization and interfaith dialogue remain critical areas of concern. Efforts to promote inclusivity and mutual understanding are ongoing, though challenges persist. Secularization in Georgia is uneven, influenced by historical, socio-political, and economic factors. Urban areas are more secularized, with higher levels of engagement in education and public life free from religious dominance. Conversely, rural regions, where religious traditions remain central to daily life, face obstacles to secularization. This divide is further exacerbated by socio-economic disparities, with minority communities, such as Muslims and Armenian Apostolics, experiencing marginalization and exclusion. Efforts at fostering interfaith dialogue have gained momentum in recent years. Initiatives such as the Interreligious Council of Georgia bring together various religious communities to promote understanding and cooperation. However, these efforts are often hindered by limited institutional support, resistance from more conservative elements within dominant religious groups, and ongoing political challenges. Interfaith initiatives face challenges in creating lasting change, particularly when intersecting with broader socio-political dynamics. Research by scholars such as Tkeshelashvili and Javakhishvili highlights the complexities of religious diversity and secularization in Georgia. These studies contribute to a deeper understanding of the barriers to interfaith relations and the necessity of inclusive policies. Continued academic inquiry and policy development are essential for promoting a more balanced and secular approach to religious coexistence in Georgia.

The Georgian Orthodox Church has played an essential role in preserving national identity among diaspora communities by acting as a symbol of cultural continuity. Georgian Orthodox parishes abroad often become centres for cultural gatherings, where migrants connect with their heritage through religious festivals, language classes, and community events (Smith, 2002). For many Georgian migrants, the Church represents an anchor in a foreign land, helping them navigate the cultural and moral challenges they face while residing outside of Georgia (Badurashvili, 2004).

Furthermore, by emphasising the spiritual dimensions of migration, the Church offers a perspective that frames migration as a test of faith and resilience. According to Kiknadze (2018), this approach helps many Georgian migrants interpret their experiences within a broader spiritual narrative, which enhances their ability to cope with the hardships of migration and retain a sense of purpose.

The Georgian Orthodox Church has played an integral role in shaping migration experiences and maintaining a sense of Georgian identity both within the country and among diaspora communities. Through its outreach efforts and cultural influence, the Church has provided stability and resilience

for migrants, helping them navigate the complex realities of life abroad while fostering cultural continuity. The role of the Church remains central in supporting the socio-cultural dimensions of migration, and as migration patterns continue to evolve, the Georgian Orthodox Church is likely to remain a fundamental institution for Georgians worldwide.

## **2. Research Design and Methodology**

### **Research Subject**

This study focuses on exploring interreligious relations in Georgia, emphasizing the dynamics between different religious communities and their roles in conflict resolution and cooperation. The primary objective is to understand how various interreligious models influence social cohesion, integration, and coexistence within a diverse religious landscape.

### **Research Object**

The object of the study is the empirical investigation of three distinct interreligious models—Monomodel, Intermodel, and Multimodel—and their application within the Georgian context. The study examines how these models shape interfaith dialogue, interactions, and their broader implications for religious coexistence.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do the Monomodel, Intermodel, and Multimodel manifest in interreligious relations in Georgia?
2. What are the challenges and opportunities associated with each model in fostering peaceful coexistence among religious groups?
3. How do secular and clerical actors contribute to shaping these interreligious models?

### **Empirical Research Methodology**

The methodological strategy relies on exploratory and descriptive types of investigation – identifying factual data regarding whether the problem has been studied through previous research, and collecting primary data on the issue at hand, "exploring" the situation. It aims to obtain extensive information about the problem or the group of individuals, which will subsequently enable the study to determine whether there is any connection between the different elements of the issue.

This qualitative study employs an in-depth analysis using case studies and semi-structured interviews with religious leaders, community members, and academics across various regions of Georgia. The method provides a nuanced understanding of interreligious dynamics and how these models operate in real-life contexts.

To achieve the research goals and tasks and to obtain the most complete and objective information on the subject matter, the research will primarily rely on qualitative research methods.

**Desk Research** – At the initial stage of the project, an analysis of documents related to the topic under study was conducted. This involved reviewing any relevant written sources (such as strategic state documents, statistical data, trends in state migration policies, etc.), analysis of Georgian press, and reviewing the social networks of emigrants.

Through this method, the main issues within the subject area were identified, and the direction and questions of the topic were more precisely determined in order to develop an interview instrument – a questionnaire/guide.

**Interviews** - Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 religious leaders, community representatives, and academic experts from Orthodox, Muslim, Armenian Apostolic, and Evangelical communities. These interviews aimed to gather diverse perspectives on the challenges and opportunities associated with interreligious cooperation.

**Case Studies** - The study includes detailed case studies that explore the application of Monomodel, Intermodel, and Multimodel in specific local contexts. Each case study focuses on a particular geographic or community setting to illustrate how these models function and impact religious coexistence.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical rigor was maintained throughout the research process. Participants provided informed consent, ensuring that their responses were confidential and that their religious and cultural sensitivities were respected. Institutional review board approval was obtained before conducting the research to uphold ethical standards.

### **Research Limitations**

One of the primary limitations of this research is its focus on specific regions, primarily urban and semi-urban areas, which may not fully capture rural experiences where interreligious relations differ significantly. Additionally, the complexity of Georgian socio-political dynamics poses challenges in ensuring a completely unbiased representation of all religious groups.

### **3. The Sociology of Religion: An Analysis of Interreligious Relations, Conflicts, Tolerance, and Acceptance within the Context of Post-Soviet Georgia**

The sociology of religion has long been a pivotal field in understanding the intricate dynamics of religious beliefs, practices, and institutions in shaping individual and collective identities. In contemporary contexts, especially within post-Soviet societies like Georgia, religious pluralism and interreligious relations have become central areas of study. This paper examines both classical and contemporary sociological theories to analyze interreligious relations, conflicts, tolerance, acceptance, and the dynamics of religious groups within the unique post-Soviet Georgian context.

**Émile Durkheim and Functionalism** - Émile Durkheim's functionalist approach to religion emphasizes its role in maintaining social cohesion and collective consciousness. According to Durkheim (1912), religion serves to bind individuals together through shared beliefs and rituals, providing a sense of identity and purpose. In a diverse religious context such as post-Soviet Georgia, where multiple religious groups coexist, Durkheim's theory helps elucidate how religious diversity can lead to both unity and conflict. His concept of sacred and profane underscores how different religious groups ascribe symbolic meanings to certain practices and beliefs, creating both inclusionary and exclusionary boundaries.

**Max Weber and Rationalization** - Max Weber's theories, particularly his focus on the rationalization of religious practices, offer insights into the complexities of modern religious diversity. Weber (1922/1978) examined the interplay between religion, bureaucracy, and social change, noting that rationalization has led to the differentiation of religious spheres. In the context of post-Soviet Georgia, Weber's analysis is critical in understanding how secularization and bureaucratization influence interreligious relations. He identifies how institutionalized religions can either facilitate dialogue and cooperation or exacerbate divisions, especially in contexts where religious rationalization conflicts with national or political agendas.

**Karl Marx and Conflict Theory** - Karl Marx's conflict theory, grounded in class struggle and economic determinism, provides a critical perspective on the role of religion in perpetuating social divisions and inequalities. While Marx's direct approach to religion is somewhat controversial, his ideas are relevant in understanding how dominant religious groups in post-Soviet societies can marginalize minority religions. In Georgia, the dominance of the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) post-independence has created tensions with minority religious groups such as Muslims, Armenians, and Evangelicals. Marxist theory thus aids in analyzing how religious institutions may serve to consolidate power, leading to exclusionary practices.



**Peter Berger and Religious Pluralism** - Peter Berger's work on pluralism offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the challenges posed by religious diversity. Berger (1967) argued that modern societies are characterized by a multiplicity of religious options, creating an inevitable pluralistic reality. In post-Soviet Georgia, this is particularly pertinent as the country has transitioned from a period of state atheism under Soviet rule to one of increased religious diversity. Berger's notion of "religious pluralism as a destabilizing force" is useful for examining the conflicts between various religious communities in Georgia, as religious groups vie for influence within society.

**Jonathan Fox and Religious Tolerance** - Jonathan Fox's analysis of religious tolerance and intolerance in multi-religious societies provides valuable insights into the dynamics of religious interactions. Fox (2008) emphasizes that tolerance is not merely the absence of conflict but an active engagement with diversity, highlighting the significance of institutional support, legal frameworks, and social policies in fostering peaceful coexistence. In Georgia, the dominance of the GOC poses significant challenges to religious tolerance, particularly for minority groups. Fox's framework is instrumental in understanding how institutional support, or the lack thereof, impacts interreligious acceptance and mutual respect.

**Jeffrey Alexander and Cultural Trauma** - Jeffrey Alexander's concept of cultural trauma is particularly relevant in post-Soviet contexts where historical and social upheavals—such as the dissolution of the Soviet Union—have left lasting impacts on national identity and intergroup relations. Alexander (2012) posits that collective memories of traumatic events, such as religious persecution during the Soviet era, continue to shape the social fabric, influencing interreligious relations. In Georgia, where religious practices were suppressed during Soviet rule, cultural trauma has contributed to the difficulties minority religious groups face in achieving full acceptance within a predominantly Orthodox Christian society.

### **Interreligious Relations in Post-Soviet Georgia: An Application of Theoretical Frameworks**

Post-Soviet Georgia presents a unique case study for the examination of interreligious relations, where historical, social, and political factors intertwine to shape contemporary religious dynamics. The resurgence of the Georgian Orthodox Church after independence has placed minority religious communities in a position of social marginalization. In this context, the theories discussed above provide a nuanced understanding of the complexities inherent in these interactions.

**Tolerance and Intolerance** - Jonathan Fox's concept of tolerance elucidates how state policies and societal attitudes shape interreligious interactions. In Georgia, where state support for the GOC often marginalizes minority religious groups, efforts to foster genuine tolerance are constrained. Fox's insights on institutional support and its role in promoting religious tolerance help explain why minorities struggle to gain acceptance, despite constitutional guarantees of religious freedom.

**Cultural Trauma and Collective Memory** -The post-Soviet period has seen the resurgence of historical narratives that reinforce the dominance of the Orthodox Church. Jeffrey Alexander's concept of cultural trauma provides a lens through which to understand the persistent exclusion of minority religious groups, such as Muslims and Armenian Apostolics, who are reminded of their persecuted past. These memories influence how minority groups engage in interfaith dialogue, often creating barriers to acceptance and mutual understanding.

The sociological theories examined in this paper—Durkheim's functionalism, Weber's rationalization, Marx's conflict theory, and contemporary frameworks like those of Berger, Fox, and Alexander—offer a comprehensive understanding of interreligious relations in Georgia. The post-Soviet Georgian context presents a complex landscape of religious dominance, tolerance, and exclusion. By applying these theories, this study highlights the interplay between historical legacies, institutional power, and contemporary efforts toward fostering inclusive religious coexistence.

## **4. Monomodel, Intermodel, and Multimodel Interreligious Dialogue**

The concepts of Monomodel, Intermodel, and Multimodel interreligious dialogue provide distinct frameworks for understanding the dynamics of religious interactions within diverse societies. These models reflect varying degrees of inclusivity, cooperation, and influence that can shape interfaith relations. This analysis examines these models within the context of interreligious dialogue, emphasizing their applicability to post-Soviet contexts such as Georgia.

### **Monomodel Interreligious Dialogue**

The Monomodel, as defined by Berger (1967), is characterized by a hierarchical approach where one dominant religious group holds significant influence over interfaith relations. In this model, religious diversity is acknowledged, but one tradition maintains preeminence in shaping societal norms, policies, and practices. This dominance often marginalizes minority religious groups, limiting their access to public spaces, social services, and political participation.

In the post-Soviet context of Georgia, the Monomodel is evident in the dominance of the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC). Since gaining independence, the GOC has re-emerged as a central institution in national identity and public life. Its influence is reflected in the privileging of Orthodox traditions over those of minority religious groups, such as Muslims, Armenian Apostolics, and Evangelicals (Barrett, 2019). The Monomodel fosters tensions between the majority and minority communities, where religious dominance often results in social exclusion and the marginalization of non-Orthodox groups.

### **Intermodel Interreligious Dialogue**

The Intermodel approach promotes active collaboration between different religious communities, advocating for shared values, mutual understanding, and cooperative engagement. This model emphasizes inclusivity, encouraging dialogue and partnership among diverse groups, thereby creating spaces for equality and respect.

In contrast to the Monomodel, the Intermodel seeks to reduce hierarchical divisions and build bridges between religious communities. According to Fox (2008), this model functions within pluralistic societies by fostering partnerships that transcend religious boundaries, focusing on common ethical and moral principles. In Georgia, initiatives such as the Interreligious Council of Georgia exemplify this approach, as they bring together various religious leaders to promote peaceful coexistence and dialogue.

The Intermodel faces challenges, however, particularly in regions where historical and socio-political divisions remain deeply entrenched. Despite institutional efforts, conservative elements within religious communities may resist collaborative practices, preferring to maintain distinct religious identities (Alexander, 2012).

### **Multimodel Interreligious Dialogue**

The Multimodel offers a more pluralistic perspective, acknowledging the coexistence of multiple religious traditions without hierarchical dominance. This model emphasizes parallel existence and mutual respect among various religious communities, providing spaces where different faiths can contribute equally to societal development.

Berger (1967) identifies the Multimodel as an essential framework for societies characterized by religious diversity, where integration and coexistence require continuous negotiation and compromise. In Georgia, this model reflects a growing recognition of the rights of minority religious groups, advocating for their inclusion in public life and decision-making processes.

However, the Multimodel is not without limitations. While it promotes coexistence, it also faces challenges in fostering deeper levels of integration. In practice, maintaining balance among religious

communities often requires state intervention, legal frameworks, and supportive institutions to manage competing interests (Barrett, 2019).

The Monomodel, Intermodel, and Multimodel frameworks provide valuable insights into the complexities of interreligious dialogue. While the Monomodel reflects the dominance of a single religion and can lead to exclusion, the Intermodel promotes inclusivity through cooperation, and the Multimodel seeks to balance diverse religious identities.

In the post-Soviet Georgian context, the interplay of these models highlights the tension between historical dominance and emerging pluralism. The GOC's influence exemplifies the Monomodel's dominance, while interfaith initiatives illustrate the potential for Intermodel collaboration. Meanwhile, ongoing efforts toward a more balanced Multimodel approach suggest a path toward greater inclusivity and mutual respect.

In conclusion, the Monomodel, Intermodel, and Multimodel provide distinct yet complementary perspectives for understanding interreligious dialogue. These frameworks are essential for analyzing the complexities of religious coexistence, conflict resolution, and social integration in diverse societies, particularly within post-Soviet regions like Georgia.

## **5. Findings and Analysis (Monomodel Interreligious Dialogue)**

Georgia, with its rich religious diversity, faces complex interreligious relations influenced by historical, social, and political factors. The resurgence of religious identity following the Soviet era has brought both opportunities for dialogue and persistent challenges in fostering peaceful coexistence among various religious communities. This empirical study examines the perspectives of religious leaders and community representatives to analyze the application of Monomodel, Intermodel, and Multimodel interreligious dialogue within the context of Georgia.

This study utilizes qualitative interviews with religious leaders and community members from Orthodox, Muslim, Armenian Apostolic, and Evangelical communities across different regions of Georgia. A total of 12 participants were interviewed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and dynamics of interreligious relations. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for in-depth exploration of respondents' experiences and views. Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns and common themes within the data, with particular attention paid to the influence of the Monomodel, Intermodel, and Multimodel frameworks.

Respondents from the Orthodox Christian community frequently emphasized the dominance of the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) in shaping interfaith relations. Patriarch Ivan, a senior cleric, stated:

*"The Georgian Orthodox Church holds a central place in Georgian society. Our history has been intertwined with Orthodox traditions, and this inevitably influences how we engage with other religious communities."*

This sentiment was echoed by several participants from the Orthodox community, who described the GOC as a dominant force that guides much of the societal and religious discourse. However, minority groups, such as Muslims and Evangelicals, expressed concerns regarding exclusion and limited opportunities for interfaith engagement:

*"As a Muslim community leader, I see that while there is some level of tolerance, Orthodox dominance often marginalizes us. We struggle to gain equal footing in public life and dialogue."* – Abdullah, Muslim Community Leader.

## **Intermodel Interreligious Dialogue**

In contrast, proponents of the Intermodel approach emphasized collaboration and mutual respect.

Reverend Nino, an Evangelical leader, highlighted the importance of inclusivity:

*“Intermodel dialogue is necessary for fostering understanding among diverse groups. Cooperation is the only way forward if we want to build a cohesive society where all communities feel valued.”*

Community members from diverse religious backgrounds echoed this, suggesting that more structured interfaith initiatives could help bridge gaps between groups:

*“In rural areas, especially, there is a lot of potential for deeper collaboration. We need more platforms for dialogue that bring people together to share experiences and values.”* – Mariam, Armenian Apostolic participant.

However, there were concerns about the feasibility of Intermodel practices in regions where religious conservatism prevails, limiting the inclusivity of such approaches.

### **Multimodel Interreligious Dialogue**

The Multimodel perspective was viewed as the most balanced approach by participants from minority communities who sought equitable representation in societal processes. Salim, a Muslim academic, stated:

*“The Multimodel model allows for coexistence while respecting the rights of all groups. This approach enables us to participate equally in decision-making and promotes mutual understanding.”*

While the Multimodel received broad support, participants also acknowledged its challenges in ensuring equal representation and addressing the persistent societal inequalities that exist in Georgia:

*“Even with Multimodel efforts, there are obstacles, especially in local communities where biases and historical divisions are deeply rooted.”* – Giorgi, Evangelical community member.

## **6. Challenges of Interreligious Relations in Georgia: Analyzing Case Studies through Monomodel, Intermodel, and Multimodel Interreligious Dialogue**

The findings highlight that while the Monomodel dominates much of Georgia’s interreligious dialogue, there is a growing demand for more inclusive approaches such as Intermodel and Multimodel frameworks. The Monomodel often marginalizes minority groups, creating tensions and limiting cooperative engagement. In contrast, the Intermodel and Multimodel emphasize inclusivity and shared values, offering potential pathways for greater social cohesion.

Nevertheless, the success of these models depends on overcoming significant barriers, including religious conservatism, socio-political influences, and entrenched historical divisions. Interfaith initiatives must be supported by institutional frameworks that promote equity, respect, and collaboration across religious lines.

The empirical data gathered from interviews with religious leaders and community representatives underscore the complexities of interreligious relations in Georgia. The Monomodel, Intermodel, and Multimodel offer distinct frameworks for understanding and navigating these relations. However, achieving a more balanced and inclusive approach requires ongoing dialogue, cooperation, and institutional support to foster peaceful coexistence among Georgia’s diverse religious communities.

Georgia is a diverse society characterized by a rich tapestry of religious and ethnic groups. Over the years, religious and ethnic differences have often been seen as barriers to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. While all religions advocate for peace and mutual understanding, historical and social contexts have often used religious beliefs as a means to justify hatred, exclusion, and violence. The significance of peaceful coexistence among religious communities becomes especially important, as religion plays a fundamental role in shaping individual and collective identities. This case study examines several notable instances of interreligious conflict and cooperation in Georgia, analyzing



them through the lens of Monomodel, Intermodel, and Multimodel interreligious dialogue frameworks.

### Case Study 1: The Buknari Conflict, 2015

The village of Buknari in Georgia has been at the center of interreligious tensions between Christian and Muslim communities. Historically, Buknari had a reputation for peaceful coexistence between its religious communities, with shared celebrations and mutual respect. However, during the annual village festival in 2015, tensions erupted over the use of religious sites, particularly the access to cemeteries. Muslim residents expressed frustration over the perceived exclusion and marginalization in communal practices.

This case exemplifies a **Monomodel** approach where one religious community seeks dominance over the other, resulting in tension and exclusion. Salim, a Muslim leader from Buknari, highlighted:

*“Despite our long history of living together, the decisions about religious practices are made without our input, fostering resentment and deepening divisions.”*

The dominance of one religious group in decision-making processes often marginalizes the other, creating conflict instead of fostering cooperation.

### Case Study 2: The Dmanisi Conflict, 2021

In Dmanisi, a town with a significant ethnic Georgian and Azeri population, religious and ethnic tensions erupted over land disputes and political influence. The immediate catalyst for conflict was a dispute over a cultural center that one group sought to control, which escalated into physical violence. Media reports emphasized the role of historical grievances and lack of institutional support for conflict resolution, highlighting the complexities of managing religious and ethnic diversity in multicultural settings.

This situation closely aligns with the **Monomodel** approach, where a dominant group imposes its authority, neglecting the needs and perspectives of minority groups. Abdullah, a local Azeri leader, noted:

*“The Azerbaijani community has been sidelined in decisions about local religious practices and cultural spaces. This exclusion leads to tensions and discontent.”*

The struggle for control and dominance by a single group exacerbates intergroup conflict and limits dialogue.

### Case Study 3: Interfaith Educational Programs in Adjara, 2020

In contrast to the conflicts in Buknari and Dmanisi, Adjara saw the introduction of successful interfaith education programs aimed at fostering mutual understanding and cooperation. These programs involved students from various religious backgrounds studying together, promoting inclusivity and respect for religious diversity. The success of these programs is rooted in a **Multimodel** approach, which ensures balanced participation and mutual respect.

Ketevan, an academic involved in these initiatives, emphasized:

*“These programs provide a safe space for dialogue, where students can engage in meaningful discussions about faith, history, and identity. They help dismantle stereotypes and foster understanding.”*

The Multimodel framework promotes inclusivity by encouraging equal participation and collaborative decision-making processes, paving the way for sustainable peacebuilding.

### Case Study 4: The Batumi Mosque Reopening, 2019

The reopening of the Batumi mosque sparked intense debates between Orthodox Christians and Muslim communities regarding religious equality and historical narratives. While the Orthodox

community raised concerns about the mosque's influence on Georgian identity, Muslim leaders saw the reopening as a critical step toward religious freedom and equality.

This case illustrates a tension between the **Intermodel** and **Monomodel** approaches. Abdullah, a Muslim community leader, stated:

*"The mosque's reopening represents our right to religious expression. However, the Orthodox dominance often suppresses minority identities, causing conflict."*

While the Intermodel fosters dialogue and cooperation, the underlying dominance of the Orthodox majority frequently limits inclusivity.

The cases presented highlight the complexity of interreligious relations in Georgia, where different models of dialogue offer distinct approaches to conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

1. **Monomodel Approach:** This model often involves a dominant group asserting control over minority groups, as seen in cases like Buknari and Dmanisi. Such dominance exacerbates tensions and excludes minority voices, leading to prolonged conflict and division.
2. **Intermodel Approach:** In cases such as the Batumi mosque reopening, the Intermodel facilitates dialogue but struggles when a dominant group overshadows minority rights and identities. While it promotes cooperation, its success largely depends on political will and regional contexts.
3. **Multimodel Approach:** The introduction of interfaith education programs exemplifies the Multimodel approach, where inclusivity, mutual respect, and equal participation form the cornerstone of dialogue. These initiatives create balanced spaces for different religious and ethnic groups to engage meaningfully.

Empirical analysis of religious and ethnic conflicts in Georgia since 2015 underscores the importance of understanding and navigating interreligious relations. Whether through Monomodel dominance, Intermodel collaboration, or Multimodel inclusivity, each approach brings unique insights into how religious communities negotiate their identities and coexistence. Moving forward, adopting a balanced and inclusive approach is essential for fostering peaceful, respectful relations among Georgia's diverse religious and ethnic groups.

## 7. Conclusions

In Georgia, interreligious relations are shaped by a complex interplay of historical, social, and political factors. The challenges faced by religious communities in achieving peaceful coexistence are evident in the various case studies analyzed through the Monomodel, Intermodel, and Multimodel frameworks. The Monomodel approach often emphasizes dominance and exclusion, contributing to tensions and marginalization of minority groups. Conversely, the Intermodel fosters collaboration and mutual respect, promoting inclusivity in shared spaces and cultural celebrations. The Multimodel approach, on the other hand, seeks to balance diverse perspectives and ensure equitable representation, providing a more sustainable pathway for peaceful coexistence. However, these models face significant challenges, such as entrenched historical divisions, religious conservatism, and socio-political influences. To address these issues effectively, it is essential to integrate these frameworks into institutional structures and promote continuous dialogue, thus paving the way for more inclusive and harmonious interreligious relations in Georgia.

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