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Tolerance as the core-concept of the national reconciliation

‘Tolerance, inter-cultural dialogue and respect for diversity are more essential than ever in a world where people are becoming more and more closely interconnected.’

(Kofi Annan, Former Secretary-General of the United Nation)

Generally speaking, the most prominent twenty-first-century scholars and analysts have given their emphasis to the vital role of tolerance, respect for diversity and democratic governing; beyond this, tolerance has been recognized today as a preeminent characteristic of combating all forms of discrimination (racist, gender-based, religious, etc.), what is more, the lack of tolerance has almost always become the starting point for armed conflicts. A plethora of studies has confirmed the benefits of maintenance and development of tolerant, mutually dependent inter-personal relations. In this context, in the age of glocalization the importance of tolerance becomes ever more imperative, inasmuch as it is considered to be a solution to address injustice, unfairness, inequality and prejudice. To conclude, tolerance is essential for democracy and civilized life, whilst its absence brings crimes and terrorism to society.

Keywords: *tolerance, multicultural communities, glocalization, ethnic, cultural and religious diversity, Ukraine, Chernivtsi, national reconciliation*

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Taking a tolerant stance is one of the most formidable challenges citizens face in a state-of-the-art globalized society. All over the globe, intergroup tensions, religious hostilities and ethnic conflict have increased and these conflicts alongside with problems of poverty that have accelerated migration, resulted in increasing number of refugees in countries that used to be mono-cultural. Consequently, more recently multiculturalism has become a social condition that is much visible in every walk of a human's life. In this context, cultural diversity is supposed to be an excellent opportunity to educate young generation for harmony of cultures which is perceived as culture of tolerance and peace.

Dealing with cultural diversity has not always implied shaping and developing attitudes of tolerance, respect and understanding towards others. As long as traditions and practices of intolerance and social exclusion are not counteracted on a global level, social cohesion in society is endangered. It has also become clear that religion is an influential resource in people's lives and is seen to shape the actions of groups in society. The United Nations has emphasized on significance of dialogue based on principles of tolerance and dignity¹.

It should be stressed, that human communities have a natural tendency to define their identities by distinguishing themselves from others. This phenomenon can have positive outcomes such as respect for diversity as well as negative consequences such as hostility or abhorrence because of one group's seeing its' superiority and pre-eminence. Actually, history has shown that no group, religion, ideology or culture has a monopoly of truth, beauty and good; there is not a better or true culture, but there are thousands of them. In the age of *glocalization* (a portmanteau word of *globalization* and *localization*: the term "glocal" refers to the individual, group, division, unit, organisation, and community which is willing and able to "think globally and act locally"), 'we can affirm that the globalized approach with its international legal protection of cultural heritage is contributing positively to advancing the knowledge and appreciation of the various cultures of humanity, but it is not leading to any kind of standardization or uniformity nor any hegemony of one culture over another'².

Employing recently collected survey data, this study finds that there are no better nations or ethnic groups, but there are many diverse nations and ethnic groups in the world. Despite that, looking at different cultures, it can be said that they share many common grounds and values; significantly, tolerance is one of them and underlies in the appreciation of diversity and the ability to live and let others live. It is the ability to exercise a fair and objective attitude towards those whose opinions, practices, religion, nationality differ from one's own. Tolerance is often defined as the ability to accept the values and beliefs of others that poses dilemma, but how is it possible to ask people to accept all other peoples' values and practices when they might believe that some of those ideas and behavior are wrong? ...Tolerance is a controversial topic by way of being debated throughout the history as corruptive and constructive at the same time. Tolerance is said to be indispensable for any decent society. It has been recognized today as crucial characteristic in pluralist, multicultural communities which are seeking to be free of oppression, violence and discrimination³.

According to MEP Eugen Freund, tolerance is 'the core issue' of our society. "In particular the conflicts of the present – in the Middle East, but also in the *Ukraine* – clearly show that the lack of tolerance is almost always the starting point for armed conflicts. In this context, in times of globalization and individualization the importance of tolerance will become ever more important. Without accepting or even tolerating conflicting beliefs the concept of Western democracy cannot function"⁴.

It is of paramount importance that Ukraine as a distinctive multi-lingual nation-state with poly-ethnic makeup, poly-mentality, multiculturalism and multi-confessionalism serves as a cross-border locally and as a communicative subsystem globally. *Currently Ukraine is in its right way of developing internal discourse for vigorous inter-ethnic communication for its national unity, and yielding its own values.*

Taking into consideration the historical prerequisites of Ukraine's establishment as an independent state, *the objective of our investigation* is to discuss the problem of tolerance as the core-concept of Ukraine's national reconciliation, specifically under the current circumstances of its regional differences and Russia's war hostilities (in particular Russia's waging out hybrid warfare against Ukraine).

In terms of treating information as a gage of liberty and democracy, equally alarming is the ambiguous nature of different political, media and think-tank coverage on the internationalization of the struggle inside Ukraine that turned it into a geopolitical tug of war. These changes are reshaping the international landscape. The Ukraine crisis is accelerating power shifts.

To the point, the European Union has considered the importance of Ukraine as an integral part of common European space and elaborated special instruments for development the mutually beneficial relations. The EU and Ukraine have signed bilateral agreements; furthermore, Ukraine has joined different European programs of assistance and cooperation. The main goals of this wide range of documents are to stimulate internal transformation of Ukraine as well as Ukraine's political, economic and social system should be complied with the European one. Kyiv itself has articulated the vital significance of bridging the gaps with Europe and uttered its political will and determination to put reforms into effect aiming to integrate to the EU in ten-fifteen years. It is worth mentioning that Ukrainian case and its status as one of the world powers is a real challenge to the EU.

Additionally, the EU and Ukraine still share borders and are immediate neighbors, recognizing their political and economic interdependence. So, there is a necessity to work together within Ukraine-EU dialogue for creating the area of stability, peace and tolerance, sustainable development and overwhelming social and economic progress on the EU external borders.

Cultural and religious diversity has long been a matter of lived reality in the world. In many conflict situations where religion is often manipulated or exploited, identity is enhanced to sustain the unity of the group which is often used to justify hostility and violence. It is widely believed that people's identity stay forever because of the fact that they are born in a given country. However, identity of a group or individual is not unchangeable; formation of identity is a process of adopting norms which we consider important⁵.

It should be emphasized that the ignorance of regional, religious and cultural diversity in Ukraine gave the rise to political cleavage and direct warfare. The separatists fighting the Western-leaning government in Kiev subscribe to an ideology that includes

a strict adherence to the conservative Russian Orthodox faith. In rebel leaders' speeches and outreach, the Russian Orthodox Church is presented as an inherent part of the culture and history of the Donbass. It is one of the driving forces behind the rebels' greater ambition of building Novorossiia, or New Russia, a territory that includes all of southeastern Ukraine. Religion in eastern Ukraine's nearly yearlong conflict has played such a dominant role in the propaganda that there was a rebel battalion called the Russian Orthodox Army. Russian Cossacks at checkpoints across the region stated they are God's defenders of the Russian people and proudly show the crosses around their necks and copies of gilded icons in their pockets. Thousands of Jews, Muslims and other religious minorities have fled rebel-controlled territories out of fear of the fighting and persecution. Many churches, including the Church of Christ, have been damaged in the shelling and heavy artillery. Before the conflict started in 2014, post-Soviet Ukraine enjoyed roughly 23 years of religious tolerance. When the Soviet Union broke up, a diverse number of believers were able to practice openly after years of being suppressed by the communist government. Greek Catholics, Baptists, evangelicals and Jews opened new churches or reopened shuttered ones⁶.

Describing Kiev as the cradle of east European Christianity, John Paul II appealed for unity and among all Christian Churches. He told worshippers that Ukrainians should strive to create once more the situation that existed before the 1054 Schism which split Christianity into the eastern and western churches. The Pope asked both sides to look to the past to "help restore that situation of communion in which diversity of traditions poses no obstacle to unity in faith and church life"⁷.

By exploring the issues of tolerance and diversity from the perspectives of Ukraine's gaining recognition as a powerful, self-sufficient and absolutely independent state, we came to the conclusion that the national dialogue, laying the foundation for unity of all Ukrainian regions, based on tolerance and common values is the only one that will make Ukraine strong, unified and thriving.

Our strong conviction is that the core-concept of tolerance will also start off the process of national reconciliation. Since, the idea of reconciliation as a balm with the power to heal memory is

the fundamental principle of living together. Towards this end, a number of elite individuals – teachers, journalists, and politicians – must embark upon and lead the rest on a new path towards peace and reconciliation between peoples. They must tread this path courageously, with a ‘Thoughtful Heart and a Loving Mind’⁸.

While focusing on issues of integration, acceptance, tolerance and diversity, we consider the city of Chernivtsi (Czernowitz, Cernăuți, Czerniowce, Chernovtsy) to be of particular importance in fostering the fundamental principle of living in sweet harmony and peace. Historically, it has become the city of a multinational community with ‘the marble cake’ identity, open hearts and loving minds.

It is imperative to underline that Ukraine borders with Moldova and Romania in the South-West. And the south of Chernivtsi is a Ukraine-Romania border. Noteworthy, our city has become the case under study of EUBORDERREGIONS project “European Regions, EU External Borders and the Immediate Neighbours. Analysing Regional Development Options through Policies and Practices of Cross-Border Co-operation”. The 4-year long FP7 research project Chernivtsi (Ukraine) – Iasi (Romania) – Chisinau – EU Border was launched in March 2011, with the main objective to identify challenges to economic, social and territorial cohesion as well as regional development potentials in different borderlands at the EU’s external frontiers⁹.

Being the Ukrainian, in particular, the resident of Chernivtsi, I can’t but mention its paramount importance in fostering tolerance, harmony and unity values. To historically backtrack one of the oldest cities in Ukraine – Chernivtsi, we figured out that it was founded in the 12th century. Throughout its evolution and development, it has become a fascinating mix of all the different cultures that have converged on the region: Ukrainian, Jewish, Romanian, German, Polish, Moldavian, Armenian and Russian.

A famous European figure, deputy of the European Parliament, Doctor Otto von Habsburg in his work entitled “Chernivtsi, or what it means to be tolerant” described the picture of an ideal town, a home to multiethnic and multi-religious citizens. “In Chernivtsi, there was a synthesis of national consciousness and of something higher... so to speak, European attitude. Here, it was proved that various peoples... could be united in the framework of common culture...”

For centuries Chernivtsi has been formed as a multinational and multicultural city under the influence of historical events. *Tolerance* has always been one of the main city's features. Different nationalities, religions, and political beliefs have never prevented Chernivtsi citizens from living in harmony and mutual understanding. The motto "Viribus Unitis" ("Joint Efforts") has been adorning the flag of Chernivtsi since 1908 not accidentally. One could hear people speaking five languages in the streets: German, Romanian, Polish, Yiddish and Ukrainian. Armenians, Czechs, Hungarians and Russians lived here and made a significant contribution to the economy and culture. Each community traditionally had its own national cultural houses – elegant buildings in the downtown. Every religious confession built and maintained its temples. Decades-long life in this diversity of nationalities, cultures and religions created a special breed of Europeans in Chernivtsi – a proud community that has called itself Chernivtsi citizens¹⁰.

What is more, Chernivtsi has seen several national flags over the course of the last century, emblems of its tumultuous and difficult past. The city used to be under Romanian rule; prior to World War I, Czernowitz was the capital of the Bukowina, a Hapsburg crown colony, on the Eastern edge of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Renowned as a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic city, some see Czernowitz, as a kind of cosmopolitan ideal, where Romanians, Ukrainians, ethnic Germans, Jews, and Poles shared life¹¹.

As a border city whose political allegiance changed four times over the course of the twentieth century, Chernivtsi is wracked by confusions of nationalism, nationality, ethnicity and religious identity. These conflicting layers of cultural belonging add to the complexities – and possibilities – of memory-work – including reconciliation, ignorance and silence. Independence opened up space for new historical inquiry, but it also exacerbated Ukraine's historical frictions, expressed in long-standing ethnic, religious, linguistic, and economic tensions¹².

While the past divides Ukrainians, the common vision of the future may reconcile them. The common vision of the future may be ensured through the elaboration of the state policy on tolerance and national unity, which should engage representatives of all

Ukrainian regions in the national dialogue. The Kiev-government should learn from the wisdom of American philosopher and peace-maker Eric Hoffer stating: “A war is won only after you turned your enemy into a friend.” The world needs diversity and regional responsibility to be peaceful. Canada, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria or Germany could be the best practices to be profited.

Afore-done research enables us to understand that the governance perspective should acknowledge that any state, and therefore, the government as well, still plays an essential role both because of its authority, the resources which its institutions have gathered as well as the trust, which some levels of government still command. However, from the perspective of governance it is essential for the state not to command or use authority but to guide and steer. Because of its institutional resources, the state is able to identify powerful actors and develop linkages between them to achieve the desired goals. Tolerance is a solution to address injustice, unfairness, inequality and prejudice and it is commonly believed that a good moral person is *tolerant and tolerance* is essential for democracy and civilized life and its absence brings crimes and terrorism to a society. The finding of this study will have important policy implications for Ukrainian’s relevantly young democracy and will also hold significant theoretical implications for the study of political tolerance under threats.

Footnotes:

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Толерантність як ключовий концепт національного примирення

Варто наголосити, що провідні науковці та експерти XXI століття артикулюють свою увагу на таких важливих концептах як толерантність, повага до різноманітності та демократичні принципи урядування. Разом з тим, нині толерантність є рушійною силою у боротьбі з усіма формами дискримінації (расовою, гендерною, релігійною тощо). Нині толерантність апіорі повинна бути найсуттєвішою характерною рисою плюралістичних, ба-

гатокультурних спільнот, які прагнуть бути вільними від будь-якого утиску, насильства і дискримінації. Разом з тим, концепт толерантності виступає важливим конструктом глокалізації. Позаяк, толерантність є досить суттєвою умовою сталого розвитку демократії та цивілізованого життя, а її відсутність призводить до злочинності та тероризму у світі.

Ключові слова: толерантність, багатокультурні спільноти, глокалізація, етнічне, культурне та релігійне розмаїття, Україна, Чернівці, національне примирення.

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