

### **Political tolerance as one of the foundations of democracy**

**Abstract.** Presented research paper explores the basis of political tolerance while forming a democratic state. Political tolerance, or the willingness to extend procedural liberties such as free speech and association to unpopular or disliked individuals or groups, has long been viewed as essential for a stable and effective democratic system. Political Intolerance exists everywhere, even in USA, but constantly educating people and enacting appropriate laws help to keep the society on the right track. Although, tolerance has long been identified as a crucial feature of liberal democracies. The lack of political tolerance suggests that democracy is nothing more than a thin layer of varnish that can be easily scraped away. Lack of political tolerance is a problem everywhere. Democracy upholds that members of the society should treat each other and be treated as equals. It's like an acceptance and respect of the other. In wide view political tolerance means accepting and respecting the basic rights and civil liberties of persons and groups whose points and views are different from one's own. Furthermore, people have responsibility to practice political tolerance in their words and actions. This article is dedicated to this research.

**Key words:** Democracy, Political Tolerance, Political Correctness, Just State, Society.

**Introduction.** In the context of developing democracies, the task of evaluating the effects of civic education on tolerance is especially urgent. Much research in the new democracies of Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Latin America and South Africa has documented the generally low levels of tolerance and support for minority rights after the emergence of democratic institutions.<sup>1</sup> The idea of democracy has only replaced the ideological vacuum left after communism, and although many changes and reforms have been implemented, some developing countries still face significant challenges. It must be said that from the various forms of government, democracy is the least harmful. There are many types of state structures, which differ from each other, both in terms of institutional characteristics, as well as in the ideas, values and behaviors prevalent in society. Democracy is a state structure in which the attitudes and habits of the people are of decisive importance in terms of the direction of political processes and the development of the state, since democracy itself literally means the rule of the people. Although the attitudes of the people have some weight in all types of states, the most important element in democracy is the participation and active position of citizens in the processes. The basis of a democratic state is freedom, the main principle of which, in turn, is that everyone participates in the process of governance and is governed. The larger and stronger the middle class in the state, the closer it is to democracy, since the best political unity is made up of middle-class citizens. In such a society, people share egalitarian and participatory orientations.

Democracy is the most preferred and most supported form in the majority of countries, although in many cases this support is superficial and related to social desirability and generally accepted opinions. In order for democracy to develop, the relevant mandate must come from the masses, and if the support for democracy is superficial, there is no demand for the development of relevant processes. On the other hand, when people support democratic values, which are primarily related to gender equality, tolerance and participation, and their daily life reflects the values of self-expression accordingly, we can talk about a high level of democratic development. Both democratic and authoritarian regimes can be legitimate to the extent that the values and beliefs held by the masses are consistent with it. Although freedom is an important value for everyone, but it is not always first and foremost. Depending on the economic and social situation in the society, other basic needs may be higher. Orientations related to freedom and self-expression become dominant when more basic needs are satisfied. That is why the development of emancipatory values is related to modernization. It is the result of meeting the needs of economic and physical security and increasing the level of education. Therefore, the legitimacy of the democratic regime is related to the values spread among the masses. The most important factor for the development of democracy is the development of relevant values, although some researchers believe that democratic institutions develop first and only after that and as a result do emancipatory values develop. Tolerant stances tend to be associated with high education, elite social status, younger age, mostly secular religiosity and, to a lesser extent, gender. Individuals who demonstrate low levels of dogmatism and authoritarianism and high levels of interpersonal trust also tend to be more tolerant. Stable, longer-enduring democracies tend to provide an environment that supports tolerance. However, conflict, and particularly conflict that threatens one's group identity, tends to decrease individual levels of tolerance.

### 1. **Political idea of tolerance for creating a just state**

In peace, people have the chance to develop socially, economically and emotionally. Tolerance creates a society in which people can feel valued and respected, and in which there is a place for all people. Tolerance is important because it is an aspect of a healthy and vibrant society. It is the only way a politically, religiously, economically diverse country can function and use each difference so that its people thrive and not suffer. In the conditions of globalization, when people of different languages, beliefs, cultures, religions live together and the world has become multicultural and diverse, establishing tolerance and harmony is very important and crucial, and mutual respect is vital. Without tolerance and harmony, long-term peace in society cannot be maintained, and loyalty to one another cannot be established. Lack of tolerance leads to fighting, violence and finally, it destroys peace and security in society. Political intolerance is engendered by a willingness to restrict the rights of a disliked person or group based on their differing views. It represents a threat to democracy since it discriminates against and may even silence certain parts of the population. Intolerance creates a conformist culture and a closed society, which narrows citizens' perceptions of politics and shapes their subsequent behavior.<sup>2</sup>

The problem of tolerance is the subject of attention of many scientists, and in each of them this term is filled with its own specific content. Thus, in terms of ethics, tolerance represents the norm of

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2 Democracy and political tolerance, see: <https://bit.ly/3ncCWST> [27.03.2023].

civilized compromise between competing cultures and the willingness to accept other views.<sup>3</sup> In political science, tolerance is the government's willingness to allow dissent in society.<sup>4</sup> From a philosophical standpoint, tolerance emerges as a worldview category that reflects a universal rule of active attitude towards others. The following definition is given in the new philosophical encyclopedia: tolerance is a quality that characterizes the attitude towards another person as an equally worthy person and which is expressed in the conscious suppression of the feeling of discomfort towards the other person.<sup>5</sup> Tolerance can be manifested in different ways, in different cases and at different times. A person may not completely agree with others on anything from religion to politics, but at the same time respect those who have different ideas and views.<sup>6</sup> The problem of inequality, the solution of which is often called tolerance, is multi-layered and political in nature. The concept of intolerance cannot comprehensively explain the oppression of religious, cultural, ethnic or other minority groups. This concept limits oppression to subjective attitudes and beliefs and is therefore superficial.<sup>7</sup> Oppression of different social groups includes at least several - structural, ideological, institutional and interpersonal layers. Accordingly, the liberation of oppressed social groups implies a comprehensive description of the systemic and structural causes of oppression, understanding and transformation of the mechanisms that generate discrimination, social violence, control and marginalization. Often, when discussing the legal and social situation of oppressed groups due to identity, the problems of social or economic inequality, cultural exclusion due to identity in general and specifically, and the need to put them on the political agenda, are left out of attention. The concept of tolerance leaves oppressive social structures and their political configurations intact and focuses only on the attitudes and beliefs of individuals.<sup>8</sup> However, people's intolerant behavior reflects their experiences of injustice, inequality and exploitation, which cannot be solved by changing the individual attitudes of private individuals. For this, it is crucial to achieve structural changes at the political, social, and economic levels and to set the goal of all-round emancipation of the oppressed groups.<sup>9</sup>

The concept of tolerance sees the possibility of change in human behavior and coexistence between different groups essentially in the repressive function of the state and the pragmatism of security protection. According to the idea of tolerance, people do not violate the social order because of the expected punishment, and „tolerating others“ is essentially justified by this interest. This approach to social coexistence sees people as atomized subjects based on the interest of self-preservation. By producing repressive order and politics based on individual survival, it complicates the construction of an equal, inclusive and just society. An inclusive and just society means a society in which the voice of all oppressed groups directly involved in public policy is heard in the universal judgment, and public

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3 Ibid.

4 Hu F., Lee I., Democratic Systems Increase Outgroup Tolerance Through Opinion Sharing and Voting: An International Perspective, *Front Psychol*, 2018, 3.

5 Peffley M., Rohrschneider R., Democratization and Political Tolerance in Seventeen Countries: A Multi-Level Model of Democratic Learning, *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 56, 2003, 243-257.

6 Hu F., Lee I., Democratic Systems Increase Outgroup Tolerance Through Opinion Sharing and Voting: An International Perspective, *Front Psychol*, 2018, 7.

7 Sullivan J., Piereson J., Marcus G., An Alternative Conceptualization of Political Tolerance: Illusory Increases 1950s-1970s, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 73, 1979, 781-794.

8 Rohrschneider R., *Political Tolerance*, Oxford Academic, 1999, 107-137.

9 Sullivan J., Piereson J., Marcus G., An Alternative Conceptualization of Political Tolerance: Illusory Increases 1950s-1970s, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 73, 1979, 785.

and social goods are equally distributed among these groups. Such an inclusive policy creates a sense of collectivity, social stability and identification with the existing political and social system. It is the judgment-based, inclusive political process that allows social groups to understand the interconnectedness of their own different types of oppression, to find commonalities, and thus creates a political and emotional platform for solidarity. Social groups need to respect each other not just for security pragmatism, but to build a more just society, where different groups bring their own specific experiences of oppression and the resources to make even more just policies. At the same time, such a political space creates an opportunity for mutual exchange of positive knowledge formed in religious and cultural knowledge systems and creation of new, publicly usable knowledge.<sup>10</sup> The viability of any political society is achieved through tolerance of other people, nations or cultures that differ in their values and lifestyles. This is one of the prerequisites for harmony and peace in the modern world. The progress of tolerance in the world community is an indicator of the maturity of the political, legal, psychological and ecological culture, the moral height of the nation, its public awareness. Tolerance remains one of the most controversial values of modern society. But this contradiction does not diminish its importance, but reflects the complexity of the world in which modern man is destined to live. Democratic societies offer opportunities for people to learn about different opinions without actual interactions. For example, people can learn different perspectives by hearing the speeches of the representatives of other groups in the media, in public, or from demonstrations. People may become more tolerant, when they are exposed to new ideas, opinions, and beliefs of other groups than when they are not argued that the exposure to diverse opinions in mass media or publications may provide an incentive for individuals to lessen their reliance on established beliefs and increase their abilities to deal with dissenting ideas.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. Tolerance bases according to Constitution of Georgia

Ever since John Locke's A Letter Concerning Toleration and John Stuart Mill's On Liberty, the concept of political tolerance has enjoyed a tremendous deal of intellectual scrutiny in the modern era. Whether or not individuals are willing to "put up" with other individuals and groups and thus respect their civil liberties is an important problem in discussing the viability of modern democracies. The importance of political tolerance is due to the fact that it is considered to be one of the key virtues of the modern era. It is held to be the moral principle that mediates between the competing moral claims of individuals and communities alike. Political tolerance, then, is thought to contain specific obligations that if individuals and communities fulfill will result in a peaceful, civil, and ultimately more democratic society. Consequently, much intellectual energy has been devoted to clarify just what tolerance means and what are the duties that it imposes on society and its members.<sup>12</sup> A viable contribution to the discussion regarding the etiology of political tolerance is the consideration of the cultural and sociological bases for tolerant and intolerant attitudes and behavior.<sup>13</sup>

The bases of tolerance are declared by the constitutions. In particular, according to Article 11 of

10 Democracy and political tolerance, see: <https://bit.ly/3ncCWST> [27.03.2023].

11 Hu F., Lee I., Democratic Systems Increase Outgroup Tolerance Through Opinion Sharing and Voting: An International

12 Riano G., Political Tolerance, Culture and the Individual, Cedarville University, 2002, 3.

13 Ibid.

the Constitution of Georgia, all people are equal before the law. Discrimination on the basis of race, skin color, sex, origin, ethnic affiliation, language, religion, political or other opinions, social affiliation, property or rank, place of residence or other characteristics is prohibited.<sup>14</sup> The mentioned norm concerns the right to use the social benefits belonging to equality, the preservation of the cultural identity of the languages of the ethnic minorities, provided that it does not violate the rights and legal interests of the general public. Pluralism is one of the main characteristics of modern societies. In a pluralistic society, the diversity of religious and political beliefs is acceptable, as is the lack of compatibility of ideal societies seen by different political parties. For example, in a pluralistic society we will meet both radical socialists and right-wing capitalists; People can choose the beliefs and attitudes that are most acceptable to them. Therefore, a pluralistic society is always facing a challenge: on the one hand, people have personal freedom, but on the other hand, they have to cooperate more actively to reach an agreement. A pluralistic society cannot survive without agreement and concessions.<sup>15</sup> The wisdom of the state lies in the creation of such a mechanism for the inclusion of ethno-confessional groups in the society, so that every nation, by developing and preserving its ethnic characteristics, can show the best qualities to achieve a common goal. Today, when the processes of globalization are actively developing, it is impossible to see this or that situation only from one's own point of view, as all countries, all people are united by a single informational space, the borders between cultures are disappearing. As a result, ethnic cultures strive for self-preservation, try to protect their traditions, values, uniqueness, habits. In these conditions, it is very important for representatives of different ethnic groups, national cultures to respect each other, to strive to understand the specifics of national traditions. Therefore, it is necessary for each person to develop tolerance, therefore, the development of personality should take place in a tolerant way.<sup>16</sup> Political tolerance can only exist in a democratic society. In a true democratic state, every person has the right to have his opinion and express it. On the other hand, just as there is no unlimited human freedom, tolerance must have certain frameworks and limits. There are several basic requirements for tolerance in a modern democratic society: respect for the opinion of the interlocutor, adherence to civilized conflict resolution methods; equality of the parties; respecting the position of the majority; respect for the habits, traditions, culture of the nation or indigenous population; recognition at the state level; Legitimizing the priority of the nation, its language and culture. An immigrant must follow the laws of the country where he came to live for a few days or permanently. On the other hand, the state that accepted the immigrant is obliged to respect the traditions and customs of his nation, his freedom of conscience if it does not violate the laws in force in the country.<sup>17</sup> The ideology of tolerance, in which tolerance is perceived as a universal norm of support for diversity, is the potential for coexistence, social and political interaction, cooperation, mutual assistance and consolidation of different races, nations, religions, states and worldviews. Tolerance is a value that is necessary and fundamental to the realization of human rights and the achievement of peace. Modern democratic society ensures the protection of human rights and freedoms, promotes multiculturalism and maintains a pluralistic bal-

14 Constitution of Georgia, 24/08/1995, Article 11, see: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/30346?publication=36> [27.03.2023].

15 Peffley M., Rohrschneider R., Democratization and Political Tolerance in Seventeen Countries: A Multi-level Model of

16 Ibid.

17 Riano G., Political Tolerance, Culture and the Individual, Cedarville University, 2002, 6.

ance in society.<sup>18</sup> Tolerance is a necessary condition for the creation, existence and development of a harmonious society.

In a democratic system, citizens agree on basic principles, procedures, and rights that allow peaceful settlement of controversial issues. Democracy promotes peace in a pluralistic society because it civilizes all disagreements. Common interest is not determined by one person or party. Common interest is determined based on negotiation and agreement.<sup>19</sup> Under democratic governance, citizens have freedom of conscience, belief and expression. In the exercise of these rights, it is natural that disagreements and conflicts arise. Therefore, negotiation, compromise and search for a solution are processes characteristic of democracy. In a pluralistic democracy, citizens agree on common social rules, which implies agreement on common regulations for conflict resolution, social and political norms. Part of the social contract is the principle of majority. For minorities, this means that their radical views cannot win through the vote. Nevertheless, democracy creates instruments with the help of which the interests of minorities can be protected. In a pluralistic democracy, a radical group may come to the head of the country through elections, whose representatives may try to suppress the voice of opponents. That is why it is necessary that the protection of human rights and freedoms is strengthened by the constitution of a democratic country. Everyone should understand the challenges of a pluralistic society and how to solve them. From this point of view, the unwritten social contract is the most important, because without it, a democratic society cannot exist.<sup>20</sup> Teaching about democratic citizenship and human rights helps students develop the attitudes and skills necessary to be a citizen of a democratic country. The main purpose of the government is to protect human rights and freedoms.<sup>21</sup> The Constitution, which this year is a legal document at the top, and a political document at the bottom this year, is distinguished by its peculiarities of regulation of relations emerging in the sphere of public institutions and politics of the state and multifaceted functional purpose. Many theorists have argued about a democratic state and a regime of democratic state that can be divided by fierce conflicts, can remain stable if citizens remain attached to democratic or constitutional procedures and maintain a willingness to apply such procedures, for example: the right to speak, to run for office, to publish on an equal basis to all, even to those who challenge its way of life. In this instrumental sense, tolerance is understood as valuable because it helps to maintain a stable democratic regime. In addition, since a tolerant regime is generally thought to be a good regime, tolerance is sometimes understood as a good in itself, as an essential characteristic of the good society.<sup>22</sup> There is a very real practical implication to this discussion. Most, if not all, researchers delving into the area of political tolerance assume that democracy is a superior form of government and that political tolerance is a moral good that ought to be defended and incorporated into the personal ethic of democratic citizens. This also seems to be a working assumption of public leaders, politicians, and most citizens. To defend the need for and education in tolerance within a democratic regime, we must have a grasp of its causes so that society can control and facilitate tolerance and eliminate its op-

18 Chzhen Y., Education and democratization: tolerance of diversity, political engagement and understanding of democracy, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2014, 13-61.

19 Balaban O., Democracy and the Limits of Tolerance, Law and Ethics, Vol. 12, 2004, 349-381.

20 Sullivan J., Piereson J., Marcus G., An Alternative Conceptualization of Political Tolerance: Illusory Increases 1950s-1970s, The American Political Science Review, Vol. 73, 1979, 713.

21 Ibid.

22 Chzhen Y., Education and democratization: tolerance of diversity, political engagement and understanding of democracy, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2014, 13-61.

posite. If demographic and psychological approaches to tolerance tell us that the seat of these attitudes is within the individual alone, society will see its duty as re-educating its citizens and affecting their psychological make-up to produce more tolerant and democratic human beings.<sup>23</sup>

Conclusion. Tolerance underlies many contemporary controversies, yet theorists and political scientists study it in strikingly different ways. The significance of political tolerance cannot be overemphasized. Democracy cannot function successfully in the absence of a political consensus on issues of general social interest, such as peace and security of the country, without taking into consideration tolerance, and especially the political tolerance.<sup>24</sup> Political tolerance is pivotal to institutionalizing democracy in a developing political society. It is pivotal not only because it stands for political pluralism, bi-partism and multi-partism, but also because it necessitates mutual political restraint, dialogue, forbearance and reconciliation. Clearly, tolerance is not a panacea, a clear recipe for social cohesion. Tolerance is a key ingredient to Democracy. It implies acceptance and respect of diversity, pluralism and openness. Democratic societies are by definition “open societies” and “tolerant societies”.<sup>25</sup> Intolerance is a recipe for authoritarianism and an undemocratic policy. In fact, with intolerance even electoral democracies risk to become illiberal. Tolerance, therefore, needs to be the point of reference and convergence for both civil society in all its components and for all political forces. In simple terms, tolerance is the precondition for any constitutional democracy to work.

Today, constitutional, liberal Europe is based on values such as tolerance, cultural, ethnic and political pluralism and acceptance of diversity. Europe is ready to accept all countries - including Serbia and Montenegro - that fully embrace these same values. In addition, political tolerance is one of the main signs of democracy. Unfortunately, we do not find works on political tolerance in Georgian language studies, which undoubtedly represents a huge problem. Without political tolerance, a democratic state cannot function, since the very term tolerance includes widely differentiated human rights. These rights belong to people. The main function of the state and especially the democratic state is the protection of basic human rights and freedoms. As a conclusion, it must be said, that the key indicator of democratic state can be the level of political tolerance.

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23        Manheim K., *The Essentialist Paradox*, to conceive of an act in complete isolation from any other act is about as extreme as to assume that anyone may speak a language which had no previous currency in any human group, 2001, 7-8.

24        Liviga A., *Developing a Culture of Political Tolerance*, 2021, see: <https://bit.ly/3LSS9CY> [27.03.2023].

25        Massari A., *Tolerance is a key ingredient of democracy*, 1999, 2.

