

## (IM)POSSIBLE TOLERANCE. A PARADOX FROM WITHIN MULTICULTURAL SOCIETIES

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### **Abstract:**

This paper deals with the principle of tolerance in our contemporary society in the attempt to highlight limits and paradoxes in the various aspects of minority issues. From this point of view, the first part of the paper discusses Kymlicka's contribution to multiculturalism with regard to national minorities and immigrant communities, while the second part confronts his Theory of Minority Rights with Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and circle of humanity. Therefore, this paper aims at shifting the discourse over tolerance-related minority issues from a top-down approach toward an analysis of how tolerance is allowed to be performed. Thus, Gramsci's philosophy of praxis is employed to disentangle moral and cultural set of values and norms within which both principle of tolerance and performativity of toleration are established and, in parallel, to reflect on reasons why others are not allowed to be performed.

**Key words:** tolerance, minority issues, Kymlicka, Gramsci, circle of humanity.

Three decades after Francis Fukuyama proclaimed the *end of history*,<sup>1</sup> return to imagined communities and continuously politicised struggles for the readjustment of maps and territories have led to the resurgence of regionalism and nationalism from Western to Eastern Europe. Along with such strong revival of identity-related ambitions, the con-

temporary phenomenon of populism has also opened the door to new challenges for liberal democracies, challenges in which peculiar struggles for dignity and inclusion have turned out to trigger resentment among both minority and majoritarian cultural systems. Marine Le Pen's recent "slip" regarding Muslims at prayer occupying the streets like Germans did between 1940 and 1944,<sup>2</sup> or the former Turkish Minister Davutoglu's statement "*Yes, We are the new Ottomans*" made while in Bulgaria,<sup>3</sup> are instructive in this sense.

As a matter of fact, contemporary societies show how policies for avoiding marginalisation and tackling cultural misunderstandings have utterly failed. Among others, the ambitions of liberal humanitarianism to fully grant integration for newcomers (e.g., asylum seekers and refugees) have paradoxically turned out to disadvantage both immigrant communities for not preserving their status of different people into the larger society<sup>4</sup> and increase fear among majority members at the same time. In parallel, the post-1989 transition period across Central Eastern Europe has not succeeded so far to combine recognition and inclusion of minority groups with full-fledged democracy standards. On the contrary, today's growth of identitarian rhetoric that expresses fear and rejection of the foreign in the

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, (New York: The Free Press, 1992).

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<sup>2</sup> Jacques Rancière, "The Populism That Is Not to Be Found" in *What is A People?*, Alain Badiou *et al.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016): 100.

<sup>3</sup> Clive Leview-Sawyer, *Bulgaria: Politics and Protests in the 21st Century* (Sofia: Riva, 2015), 110.

<sup>4</sup> Sadri Khiari, "The People and the Third People" in *What is A People?* Alain Badiou *et al.*, 96.

whole of Europe has taken vernacularly place by leaving subalterns behind, and majority members scared of such phenomena of marginalisation in turn.<sup>5</sup> Paradoxically, despite the fact that majoritarian cultural systems may remark how recognition of minority groups was granted and even excessively allocated, it should be pointed out how a wide range of ethno-cultural minorities remain so excluded and reduced to subaltern positions that they can no longer offer a meaningful and comprehensive degree of co-existence. Perhaps all of these are the result of having assumed that, implicitly or explicitly, all individuals will achieve their freedom and equality within the larger culture and exclusion will disappear once the modern states, over time, become “nation-states”<sup>6</sup> and liberal democracy becomes, after a long transition, inclusive and deliberatively participatory. In turn, assumptions that minority groups would (and should) culturally integrate themselves by sharing a common language and national identity, have simply been proven wrong. Similar to the Guernica Paradox—namely, “bombarding for humanity”<sup>7</sup> over liberal peace-building strategies<sup>8</sup>—identity group claims have definitely put the fundamental values of our contemporary society at risk. Within this, a “tolerance paradox” has unfolded itself through the recent decisions of States to deny or restrict those minority rights they should protect and stand for due to security reasons and suspicion against disloyal groups.

Under these circumstances, this paper aims to introduce a different angle of philosophical investigation for a further and potential re-examination of models of toleration and the principle of tolerance over majority-minority relations. With the idea to tackle issues anew, thus starting from scratch, I shall leave room for a new understanding of tolerance itself which I consider to be people’s everyday ability and willingness to coexist and live with the Other. Rather than simply supporting a public mechanism through which minority members may have the chance to stand out individually in order to refuse

disloyal attitudes of the community of which they are members, I analyse Will Kymlicka’s “liberal multiculturalism” to pinpoint major concerns about the subject-matter. Hence, while I argue with Kymlicka’s approach due to its mainly “majoritarian” perspectives, I consider his contribution as an attempt to pave the way toward a philosophically balanced win-win strategy aiming to first soften the present-day crisis and, secondly, to avoid potential turmoil *from within* multicultural societies.

Although minority members have an individual “exit strategy” to relinquish rights they hold as members of minority communities, they belong to (in my opinion) liberal defences of such freedom, and autonomy shows a paradox for the action of the neutral role of the Liberal State. Concerning tolerance-related issues, it is not my final aim to systematically criticise or dismiss Kymlicka’s contribution to multiculturalism. Rather, I shall reconsider the philosophical angle of investigation, focusing on the everyday performativity of people toward the *alien*—viz. the *Other*—within a model of tolerance allowed by our contemporary liberal societies. In this regard, I introduce Gramsci’s theory of hegemony with the aim to unravel those hierarchically imposed power structures allowing a certain performativity of toleration toward the Other while denying others. Because of this, I contrast the old-fashioned paradigm of toleration based on the idea to soften potential clashes between the harmful and hostile neighboring exterior which threatens the interior segment of people in the host-State. In fact, I shall demonstrate this by first employing Gramsci’s theory of hegemony, followed by his *circle of humanity*, thus deconstructing the cultural and political hegemonic structures within which certain degrees of tolerance are stabilized. To conclude, I will point out how the realm of everydayness is a more authentic field for a philosophical investigation over tolerance, rather than top-down, theoretical normative, or descriptive approaches which remain far from real-life.

### On Immigrant and National Minorities

Across multiple influential publications, Kymlicka asserts that the demand for group rights is often phrased in terms of tolerance<sup>9</sup>, pointing also to the need for diverse forms of tolerance. In this regard, he pays particular attention to two specific models of toleration in connection with religion and

<sup>5</sup> Jacques Rancière, “The Populism That Is Not to Be Found,” 101.

<sup>6</sup> Will Kymlicka and Ruth Rubio Marín, “Liberalism and Minority Rights,” *Ratio Juris Journal* 12, no 2. (June 1999):135.

<sup>7</sup> See Geoffrey Robertson, *Crimes Against Humanity. The Struggle For Global Justice* (New York: The New Press, 2006)

<sup>8</sup> See Elisa Randazzo, “Changing Narrative? Shifting Discursive Conceptualisations of Post-Conflict Peace-Building” (PhD diss., University of Westminster, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Will Kymlicka, “Two Models of Pluralism and Tolerance,” *Analyse & Kritik* 13 (January 1992): 39.

religious communities. In general, Kymlicka's political philosophy seeks to guarantee integration and inclusion to all sub-groups regardless of their ethno-cultural features and territories they live in. In other words, his attempts to channel marginalised and unrecognised groups into a roadmap aimed at softening clashes and guaranteeing rights in the larger society follow up Charles Taylor's *Politics of Recognition* and Michael Sandel's communitarianism.

By doing so, Kymlicka differentiates national minorities from immigrant communities along ethno-cultural lines in the attempt to facilitate policy making to allocate minority rights and increase cultural understanding *among* and *within* diverse populations, avoiding negative impact on the long-term Western tradition of political liberalism.<sup>10</sup> In particular, allocation of specific-group rights cannot contrast the individual freedom of conscience and autonomy of individuals since they are foundational.<sup>11</sup> Regardless of national minorities or immigrant communities, tolerance toward minority groups can only be endorsed *as long as* minority groups desire to survive in a culturally distinct society because of their right to maintain membership in a distinct culture and continuing to develop that culture in the same way members of majority cultures are able to develop theirs. This "*as long as*" is clearly the degree of tolerance within which minority desires to live culturally distinct lives within the larger society cannot inherently connect the desire to maintain a distinct societal culture with a self-organized form of isolation<sup>12</sup>.

Nonetheless, the numerous challenges of the so-called "century of migrants"<sup>13</sup> brought Kymlicka to distinguish national minorities from communities of newcomers by drawing a line along ethno-cultural features of both minority groups. While members of national minorities belong to distinct cultural groups from the larger society of the State in which they live—territorially concentrated, usually homogeneous, formerly self-governing, institutionally complete, and entitled to those rights of self-governance

which are seen as inherent rights—immigrants compose more heterogeneous communities within the host-State where they seek refuge and humanitarian protection. On the one hand, presence at the time of a State's foundation and prior to the historical experience of self-government, along with common culture, common language, and self-governance through their institutions<sup>14</sup>—all should guarantee rights to self-determination for national minorities. On the other hand, immigrant communities are composed of heterogeneous groups of people who have decided to "voluntarily" move from their country of origin, therefore they cannot campaign for and seek the same cultural and political prospects to which national minorities are entitled. Unlike national minorities, immigrant communities do not possess "societal culture" in the host-State—namely, a set of pre-conditional measures and unique situations. While national minorities can endorse governments and influence the political agenda since they have been (forcedly) incorporated, either by historical conquests or hierarchical power changes, immigrant communities can neither recreate nor claim a set of institutions along with cultural practices and heritage they once had and performed in their countries of origin. After all, even with generosity and toleration (as Kymlicka openly states), immigrant communities represent a small and dispersed minority group across different host-States. Such a distinction has to be clear among lawmakers and international organisations whose work aims at avoiding cultural misunderstandings *among* and *within* immigrant communities. In fact, Kymlicka does not distinguish national minorities from immigrant groups to allocate group rights to the firsts and deny them to the seconds. In my view, Kymlicka wishes to go deeper in identifying ethno-cultural features of immigrant communities in order to not to leave room for banal forms of nationalism and its vernacular politics.<sup>15</sup>

Nonetheless, I consider the whole classification to be problematic because, putting aside the theoretical context, the latter overlooks the real-life ground in which a large number of members belonging to

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<sup>10</sup> See John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993)

<sup>11</sup> Will Kymlicka and Magda Opalski, *Can Liberal Pluralism be Exported? Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000):75.

<sup>12</sup> Will Kymlicka and Magda Opalski, "*Can Liberal Pluralism be Exported?*", 36.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Nail, *The figure of the Migrant* (Boulder: Colorado University Press, 2015)

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<sup>14</sup> "Multiculturalism", Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, last modified August 12, 2016, accessed December 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/multiculturalism/>.

<sup>15</sup> Kymlicka identifies immigrant communities whose members may have (i) the right to become citizen, (ii) those who do not have such right, and (iii) refugees. See also Dmytro Hys, "A Critical Assessment of Will Kymlicka's Theory of Minority Rights: Dilemmas of Liberal Multiculturalism" (Master's Degree Thesis, Winter Fall 2004, Toronto University): 35.

immigrant communities might not have the right to hold citizenship and consider their life completely different from that of the host-State. Perhaps highly conditioned by a Canadian background, Kymlicka considers immigrant communities to be “loose associations” that do not occupy their historical land of origin on the one hand; but, he does not pay much attention to the societal ties such communities are capable to shape once having arrived in the host-State. In so doing, Kymlicka not only tends to simplify the realm of everydayness related particularly to further societal paradigms of coexistence, therefore of tolerance *between* immigrant community and majority members in the “West”—he simplifies the real cultural traumas that (may) affect personal or collective identity of a societal group: dislocations from country of origin to the host-State, which go even beyond all potential inclusion policies, (may) cause fragmentation of the Self and of the Othering<sup>16</sup>.

At first glance, Kymlicka takes for granted the attitude of the majority toward reliance and tolerance for both new-coming and pre-existing Otherness from within its cultural context. When Kymlicka suggests the inclusion of immigrant communities through acquisition of the host-State language, he surprisingly ignores how language *per se* is a vague criterion for being considered a “cultural maker” for acquaintance of a set of cultural signifiers and signified that (most probably) immigrants will neither wholly accept nor unreservedly uphold<sup>17</sup>.

More than language, the above-mentioned distinction should shed light on how tolerance plays a role in the everyday relations of majority and minority communities. Hence, legal restriction upon immigrant groups to claim cultural rights would paradoxically take the risk to trigger marginalisation and exclusion for those who do not succeed in integrating themselves into the larger society. In turn, as Kymlicka points out, the majoritarian cultural system will not reduce its (unconscious) desire to present itself as natural, completed, monolithic and standardised Nation-State. Also, for national minorities—for whom a proposal for self-governing rights aims at ensuring that they will not become outbids

for the greater wealth of outsiders<sup>18</sup> (Kymlicka and Marin, *op. cit.*, p. 137) from neighbouring kin-States—Kymlicka focuses only on federal power distribution. Hence, Kymlicka suggests an *asymmetrical representation*, namely an *asymmetrical power distribution* in the attempt to strengthen the *multicultural character* of a State. Among others, language policy and rights of self-governance are best allocated and protected through a form of multinational federalism, thereby allowing the creation of regional politics in the hands of national minority political organizations along with their substantial (and constitutionally protected) power of self-government.<sup>19</sup> In other words, in Kymlicka’s sense, tolerance should be guaranteed within a federation of generally concentrated peoples or nations whose boundaries have been drawn and their power distributed in such a way that each national group will maintain itself as a distinct and self-government societal culture<sup>20</sup>. Although Kymlicka seems here to suggest a model of toleration by trying to shape social unity and (in the end) a desire to live together, I believe that he overlooks the everyday conditions under which national and immigrant communities will be capable to seek recognition and further coexistence with the majoritarian cultural system. For example, the majority-minority state of affairs in many Eastern European countries is the result of a sediment repository of historical struggles for power and existence which has come to symbolize and signify cultural and political hegemonic hierarchies among societal groups.

Here I agree with Seyila Benhabib and her criticism by remarking how such a distinction between national and immigrant minority groups is possible to draw along ethno-cultural features on the one hand, but it overlooks everyday attitude of people toward Otherness on the other hand.

Within the vacuum which makes Kymlicka’s theory highly descriptive but not normative, the Canadian philosopher came to affirm that the Ottoman Millet system was the most developed form of the group rights model in terms of religious tolerance (Kymlicka, *op. cit.*, p.38). Although he does not stand for it, as a Rawlsian and supporter of the neutrality of the liberal State in defence of individual

<sup>16</sup> Alexandra Glavanakova, *Trans-Cultural Imaginings. Translating the Other, Translating the Self in Narratives About Migration and Terrorism* (Sofia: Critique and Humanism Publishing House), 114.

<sup>17</sup> Glavanakova, *Trans-Cultural Imaginings*, 111.

<sup>18</sup> Will Kymlicka and Ruth Rubio Marín, *Liberalism and Minority Rights*, 137.

<sup>19</sup> Kymlicka and Marín, *Liberalism and Minority Rights*, 40.

<sup>20</sup> Will Kymlicka and Magda Opalski *Can Liberal Pluralism be Exported?* 269.

liberty within plural societies, Kymlicka highlights the many regimes, including contemporary democracies such as Canada, the United States, and Great Britain, have asked for and reproduced implementation of Millet-style model. In fact, it is not surprising that some Muslim leaders have called for a Millet-style system in Britain, one which would allow Muslims to govern themselves according to their own laws regarding education and family status. Kymlicka is here aware of the cultural paradox and political challenge the State faces by trying to balance itself in defence of liberal values and allocation of group rights that often deny liberal principle of individual freedom of conscience the same liberal State stands for.

The paradox here is twofold. First, any kind of denials or restrictions of group rights against national minorities and immigrant communities cannot be justified by the State through the prism of its liberal values, viz. what John Rawls legitimates as *benign neglect*. Paradoxically, Rawls's and Kymlicka's idea of political liberalism (which stands for recognition of specific marginalised groups) cannot be justified while the State denies or restricts opportunities it stands for. Hence, *justifications* and *consequences* of a potentially imposed benign neglect over a minority practice cannot be entirely neutral in the sense of equally denying claims and restricting performativity of some cultural rights. In practice, it would not be possible for the State to handle disloyal behavior of a specific minority group in identifying dissident voices that from within succeed in remaining free to question, revise or reject communitarian practices and values.

In particular, if we affirm that each individual differs in which cultural elements she decides to choose, adopt, or internalize<sup>21</sup>, differentiations in personal experiences of cultural exchange and interaction *inside* and *outside* the community she belongs to, we should agree that each human subject can lead herself to multiple interpretations of values and practices. In turn, it would be hard for the State to act properly with the purpose to recognise and allocate group rights only according to internal dissidents who reject disloyalty while trying to protect isolationist and illiberal communities they belong to. This would lead the State to cease its liberal principle of non-interference since the benign neglect would come to force by valuing cases differently and only then acting accordingly.

Second, recognition of diverse forms of religious toleration—which Kymlicka supports *as long as they* are plausible—would be difficult to achieve in practice. For example, it would be almost impossible for the State to restrict specific-group rights to those Muslims asking for self-governance regarding family law and schooling system while identifying liberal Muslims who have signed a *fatwa*<sup>22</sup> issued against the Islamic State in order to guarantee protection of their cultural rights in support of liberal values. In fact, minority groups cannot be understood as monolithic from within, but as minorities within which sub-groups intersect. What are the possibilities for recognizing and protecting the rights of LBGTQI+ Muslims who desire to continue their worship in spite of facing threats for having questioned orthodox interpretations of Islamic doctrine, such as heresy or apostasy? More than ever, minority groups are “under fire” due to intersectional aspects that are turning rigidly old-fashioned parameters of labelling such social groups into more dynamic segment of the population.

### Disentangling (In-)Tolerance

Kymlicka's approach towards minority groups seems generally plausible as it strengthens his philosophical argumentation in *Multicultural Citizenship* without raising, at least in theory, major concerns. While I consider Kymlicka's theory a serious attempt to soften cultural misunderstanding in societies that are (without any doubt) on the verge of radically changing, I dispute Kymlicka's taking-for-granted the potential implementation of his theoretical framework on the ground. We should agree on the fact that post-1989 deterioration of highly ideological messages for subalterns across Western Europe in parallel with the three-decade long demise of the Eastern Bloc have paradoxically left room for the rise of illiberal forms of democracy along the majoritarian cultural lines rather than minority claims. For example, Kymlicka and others have begun to sustain approaches that have never won ground but instead gripped, and perhaps purposefully developed, over politics in vernacular<sup>23</sup>. Return to modern forms of nationalism bolstered negative

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<sup>22</sup> Within the tradition of the Islamic law (sharia), a *fatwa* is a nonbinding legal opinion regarding a specific issue raised by a qualified jurist in order to address a private manner or also a specific aspect of governance.

<sup>23</sup> See Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship. A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

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<sup>21</sup> Glavanakova, *Trans-Cultural Imaginings*, 47.

attitudes toward Otherness, feeding upon each other in what experts name in terms of population. To this end, as I have stated above, there is an extreme need to (re-)examine and (re-)consider how forms of tolerance and models of toleration would pursue realisation. In my view, we should restart from a reconsideration of the everyday practices of tolerance rather than, as Kymlicka has done, trying to modulate or set up models of toleration which remain paradoxically far from the real life which people face by living together.

Here, not only liberals have failed in their attempts to readjust societies by imposing values of tolerance and mutual respect, but it is also the leftist approach from the radical to the liberal spectrum that has utterly failed in defending what they proclaim to defend and stand. For example, Jean-Luc Melançon's recent proposal to defend French minorities within a people considered "one and indivisible" in France turns out to be a different form of assimilation within the institutional framework constituting the French State, its dominant culture, its "national" history, and its norms<sup>24</sup>. What Khiari notices through the prism of a culturally unbiased assumption of the Left Front had been noticed by Antonio Gramsci, who had highlighted how the State presents itself in the language and culture of its specific epoch and therefore imposed its cultural hegemony over civil society in tandem with its hierarchically political hegemony. In addition, Kymlicka also anticipated how such assumptions came to be misleading for Marxists as much as liberals. To put it into philosophical speculation, Kymlicka notes that just as how Mill said that the Quebecois should accept assimilation into the majority English-speaking culture of Canada, so Marx said the Czech should integrate into German culture<sup>25</sup>. Thus, not only liberal models of toleration but also leftist consideration, which should be ideologically alternative to liberal suggestion, process along assimilation policies that signify in concrete terms the exclusion of the excluded. While liberals maintain their perverse incentive to destroy national minority cultures<sup>26</sup>, leftists have so far contributed to preserving the status of noncitizens from subaltern groups due

to their ambition to "integrate" them into the "one people"<sup>27</sup>.

For the purpose of this paper, I finally want to analyse what Kymlicka refers to as "societal culture" in comparison to the so-called theory of hegemony that the above-mentioned Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, developed at the beginning of the 20th century. In fact, similar to Kymlicka, Gramsci was sensitive to questions of cultural differences, speaking up for the South Italian peasantry denied from the result of Italy's modern statehood development, or for Ottoman Armenians in the struggle for their claim to land against the pan-Turkic nationalism at the edge of Ottoman Empire collapse.

Through the prism of Gramsci's *theory of hegemony*, a contrast of philosophical approaches with Kymlicka arises. By trying to (re)define tolerance and how its limits constantly unfold in contemporary liberal democracies, tolerance can be (re)considered through Gramsci's *philosophy of praxis* whose application over a potential model *of-and-for* toleration would focus on the performativity of tolerance rather than a top-down approach over majority-minority relations, as that of Kymlicka seems to be. In my view, the philosophical contribution of Antonio Gramsci to culture and subalterns suggests how to address "tolerance" *from within* the broadly differentiated forms of political as well as cultural hegemony. While the first relates to the material power of dominant ruling elites, the second is much subtler form of control over society which can be formed within what Gramsci identifies in the realm of ideology. Within this, certain moral values and practices of tolerance are known because reflective production of the cultural hegemony, which allows specific forms of toleration instead of others in order to recognise societal groups and maintain other into subaltern positions.

Under these circumstances, the supremacy of hierarchically hegemonic groups performs itself through "domination," an intellectual and moral form of leadership, thereby maintaining specific aspects of everyday life in which they are trapped. Hence, it should be questioned *to what extent*, and most importantly *how*, our full-fledged democratic States (our majoritarian cultural system of which they are composed) are supposed to fully grant access to minority groups to the public realm. So far, liberal democracies have justified restriction to minority groups and forced them to relinquish their

<sup>24</sup> Khiari, "The People and the Third People," 96.

<sup>25</sup> Kymlicka and Marin, "Liberalism and Minority Rights," 136.

<sup>26</sup> Kymlicka and Marin, "Liberalism and Minority Rights," 140.

<sup>27</sup> Khiari, "The People and the Third People," 96.

claims to guarantee sufficient levels of security in our time of terrorism and suspicion over Islam, or also tackling in advance potential turmoil that might impinge on and erupt from within the society.

It might be worth expressing how liberal values and principles continue to animate an old-fashioned struggle for liberalism and democracy against disloyal and undemocratic behaviour. However, liberal democracies—whose *de jure* model of tolerance vanishes on a passive acceptance and ratification of international conventions and legal documents within national legal frameworks—have ceased to even do so. The Bulgarian case related to the Istanbul Convention is self-explanatory. As a result, tolerance-related issues, such as levels of marginalisation and exclusion that minorities have never stopped to face, have become more visible. In fact, among other facets of our society, tolerance is today performed according to a set of moral values and practices whose political and intellectual manifestations take roots within nodal points that hegemonic power structure continue to regulate, and around which political correctness and masked defence of liberal values have anchored political discourses and cultural practices.

Hegemony is not here understood colloquially, viz. acceptance by the majority of orthodox Marxists. In Gramsci's sense, "hegemony" refers to neither domination nor "a state of being owned by someone/something," but it provides a lens through which to look deeply within both cultural and political power structures and thereby to understand how societal practices are driven in order to (not) respond to a specific phenomenon. According to Gramsci, hegemony is thus a *perspective of opportunities* for achieving reparation<sup>28</sup>, *if and only if* culturally imposed ethical values and everyday practices (of toleration) can disentangle themselves from the hegemonic order in which they are trapped, and finally being introduced into the *circle of humanity*. With regard to the majority's tolerance toward practices and values of minority cultures—and vice versa—Gramsci's only opportunity to sustain a tolerant discourse in parallel to a model of toleration does not depend on the collapse of all particularities through a non-mediated and drastic dissolution of the society without reconciliation, as Marx sup-

posed. It will thus depend on equal interactions of two poles of mediation<sup>29</sup>—namely, of a mutually perspective *from* and *to* majority and minority perspectives whose capacity to tolerate will leave none behind. Contrary to the orthodox Marxist interpretation of societal emancipation, Gramsci's suggestion for a political medium would thus become the only one condition of emancipation in society, in which mediations between majority and minority groups arise in order to contrast exclusion from the circle of humanity. In fact, as Gramsci stated, the more a community remains alienated and detached from a *circle of humanity*, the more its existence is threatened<sup>30</sup>. By following the anti-orthodox Marxist conception of "classes"—or groups of individuals under the banner of "classes" which are not concrete and objective group identities—tolerance can be performed in the field of everydayness. This, in my opinion, has some direct and indirect connection with Gramsci's "cultural hegemony".

Gramsci's *circle of humanity* is the space *of* and *for* tolerance, rather than Kymlicka's *societal culture*, which shows meaningful ways of understanding life across a full range of human activities, including those of social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life. It encompasses the public and private spheres but remain territorially concentrated and based on a shared language<sup>31</sup>. Despite the fact the *societal culture* highlights how everyday practices are centrally paramount to recognize and mutually respect cultures, I agree with Benhabib's criticism concerning Kymlicka: a *societal culture* cannot remain far from changes in the light of a large number of cultural beliefs, significations, symbolizations, and incorporable everyday practices that overlap between majority and minority culture (Benhabib, 2006).

Whether or not for Kymlicka cultural interchange does not undermine the claim that there are distinct societal cultures,<sup>32</sup> as Benhabib criticized<sup>33</sup>, Gramsci's approach over hegemonic power structures throws better light on the imposed cultural and political (pre-)disposition toward a specific phenomenon, such as tolerance. With regard to it, the notion

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<sup>28</sup> Smbat Hovhannisyan and Narek Mkrtchyan, "The Theory of Hegemony and the Armenian Genocide" in *Gramsci's Circle of Humanity and Armenia*, Smbat Hovhannisyan et al. (Yerevan: Armenian Association of World History):110.

<sup>29</sup> See Ammon Cheskin, *Russian Speakers in Post-Soviet Latvia. Discursive Identity Strategies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016):46-47.

<sup>30</sup> Smbat Hovhannisyan and Narek Mkrtchyan, "The Theory of Hegemony and the Armenian Genocide", 129.

<sup>31</sup> Seyla Benhabib, *Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002): 76.

<sup>32</sup> Kymlicka, "Multicultural Citizenship," 105.

<sup>33</sup> Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture*.

of hegemony is thus more than a useful category to look at contemporary models of toleration, or lack of it. In times of uncertainty in which majoritarian cultural systems show illiberal attitudes through people's lost capacity to live together with Others, such an absence of willingness mirrors both intellectual and societal set of values and norms whose political articulation, historical consolidation and cultural imposition have taken roots around hegemonic nodal points. The latter are (clearly) recognizable with regard to much-discussed scenario of immigrant communities in Western Europe and beyond (Spain, France, Italy, Germany, and the US) as much as across the Central East Europe (e.g., Poland, Hungary, Serbia, Bulgaria, and recently Ukraine) over national minorities' states of affairs.

Under these circumstances, it could be easy to justify the whole state of affairs through "members vs. rights" dilemma. In retrospect, it could be even easier to affirm that liberal States and West-style democracies could welcome a higher number of immigrants *if* the latter would be less committed to seeking multicultural rights, such as access to citizenship. It could be also legitimate to state that Southeast European national minorities could best achieve recognition *insofar as* they show readiness to relinquish self-governing rights in contested territories in respect of those repositories of historical struggles that have culturally influenced majority cultural systems. However, here, I think that rather than trying to passively analyse the *status quo*, or questioning the long-term effect on the acceptance of a model of toleration of illiberal norms and practices, it is first worth retrieving what type of tolerance liberal democracies want to respond to. More likely, within which boundaries everyday practices of tolerance will be allowed to be performed, and how (il-)liberal democracies will defend them to be applied over real-life situations.

In order to understand so, it should be investigated how hegemonic nodal points culturally imposing themselves over society shape a set of both values and norms to maintain division between subaltern and ruling groups<sup>34</sup>. Because of this, understanding how *hegemony* dominates and denies transformation of society means to be capable to disentangle those moral and intellectual values (e.g., nodal points) *around-and-within* which contemporary

models of toleration are allowed to be performed while others are not. In other words, unravelling hegemonic blocs means to understand the *logic* of hegemony—namely, how hegemony imposes itself over society.

To give an example, I want to refer back to Kymlicka's positive consideration of the Millet-style system. By doing so, I think that he lacks understanding of conjunctural points of the Millet system around which everyday capability among diverse communities to tolerate Others did not refer to the real state of affairs on the ground. This would therefore explain how the long-term legacy of the Millet-style system has historically left room for other cultural and political hegemonic power structures to arise which, from literature to history, continue to have negative references toward national minority and immigrant communities in the Ottoman successor States. In fact, without this deep understanding, identification of what Kymlicka labels as the best model of religious tolerance could also overlook how the Ottoman principle of tolerance was allowed to be performed only on the surface of interethnic and interfaith relations among the Ottoman population. In Gramsci's sense, we should look deeply at the Ottoman hegemonic blocs to understand the Turkic Ottoman-run system. Toleration did not fully grant recognition and coexistence indeed. On the contrary, tolerance was superficially based on an intellectual willingness of the dominant religious group to coexist with others<sup>35</sup>. This is why, in my opinion, Kymlicka overlooks how Ottoman domination really functioned, which can be similarly combined with the way the Church ruled in the Middle Age<sup>36</sup>.

With regard to the Ottoman model of toleration, tolerance could not trigger—if really legitimized within the diverse population—those historically proven high level of conversions to Islam occurring among non-Muslim communities that wanted to avoid discrimination in terms of taxation policy or pursuing interests that Turkish Ottomans secured for equal groups to balance their domestic affairs. If the Ottoman model of tolerance would be studied by looking through the hegemonic power structure, as Gramsci would suggest, it would be easier to under-

<sup>34</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selection from Prison Notebooks*, ed. and transl. by Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart. Independent Radical Publishing, 1971): 111.

<sup>35</sup> See Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society* (New York: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1982a): 1-3.

<sup>36</sup> See Antonio Gramsci, *Selection from Prison Notebooks*.



stand how everyday performativity of interfaith tolerance was lacking because neither able to penetrate people's consciousness nor able to shape real practices of tolerance. In fact, the contrary would not make historical sense in front of the mass-killing and planned ethnic cleansings that Ottoman Turks committed against Christian populations (e.g., Armenians, Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs, Assyrians, etc.) that began even before the collapse of their Empire. From this historical perspective, the Millet-style administration model would be better described through the neologism "sultanism" that Max Weber coined—namely, a curious mixture of modern and patrimonial elements that decayed when they entrenched themselves at the expense of the modern ones. The model of toleration Kymlicka confuses in terms of religious diversity was thereby a clearly hegemonic power instrument of control at the disposal of the Ottomans, whose aim was self-satisfaction through a narrow maximization of taxation and military state system along ethno-religious lines. Among others, the *devshirme* tax (known also as the "blood tax"), was a heart-breaking price to pay for non-Muslim families who were not excluded according to ethnic belonging. It is clear that while Ottoman toleration towards plural confessional laws allowed regulation of personal and collective cases within each Millet, Orthodox Patriarchs remained subaltern in front of the Sultan. Similarly, taxation management was entrusted to the *sihapi* (e.g., Ottoman cavalry corps) and the *zaim* (e.g., military governor of the land tenure of Empire), both appointed by the dominant group because of cultural belonging.

### Conclusion

In contemporary liberal democracies, Kymlicka's attempt to soften clashes within diverse "societal cultures" are prompt to fail on the ground because of his approach to a past model of toleration, such as the Millet-style system mentioned above. Although Kymlicka philosophically distances himself from such a model of toleration by stressing his agreement with John Rawls's political liberalism. However, Kymlicka's list of national minorities, immigrant groups, and others shows the same problem of his positive model for religious toleration.<sup>37</sup> For instance, the assumption that immigrant minorities will always have less readiness than "nation-

people" to integrate themselves into the larger society does not grip on the ground. Recently, the increase of societal ties between Muslim members of national minorities and new-coming immigrant groups are strengthening, and thereby showing the opposite. Also, such a distinction theoretically does not follow any normative approach, thereby remaining highly controversial for the neutral role of the State which should respect and stand for specific-minority rights and (for example) deny them for security purposes. Without any doubts, this affects performativity of toleration and misleads the principle of tolerance itself. Similarly, the Millet-style model of religious toleration, liberal democracies today promote tolerance on the surface of the realm without, as a matter of fact, enforcing everyday practices of tolerance.

According to Gramsci, today's performativity of tolerance has to take root *if and only if* the ideological state apparatus can benefit from certain ways of "equally" recognising and "tolerating" Others without eroding or impinging on the majoritarian cultural system's set of religious beliefs, education, and traditional values. In other words, liberal institutions support and allow a model of toleration along with a notion of tolerance *as long as* they can avoid (trans-)formation that hegemonic power structures might culturally face and need to tackle politically. In this sense, intersectional aspects of gender, ethnic, or racial issues are instructive of how traditional democracies are far from granting recognition even to those worthwhile practices or sets of beliefs that might trigger transformation in the civil society. However, as I have stated above, this liberal model of recognizing and allocating specific-group rights into the larger society is not far from leftist attempts whose theoretical approach grants a full integration of subaltern into "one and indivisible people" without recognizing differences *from within*.

To conclude, what could be understood through the prism of the "paradox of tolerance," it is only one of the large number of paradoxes that affect our contemporary societies in a time of deep crisis which (cyclically) lasts for decades, just as Gramsci had noticed in what he called "organic crisis." This time of ongoing crisis began in the post-1989 era when other Western philosophers had (mistakenly) proclaimed the "end of history." By paraphrasing Gramsci<sup>38</sup>, the "tolerance paradox" of our time results from the exceptional duration of such time of

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<sup>37</sup> See Dmytro. Hys, *A Critical Assessment of Will Kymlicka's Theory of Minority Rights: Dilemmas of Liberal Multiculturalism*.

<sup>38</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selection from Prison Notebooks*, 178.

crisis, which is incurable and shows the fractures of the structural conditions on which our society is based. These structural conditions of contemporary democracies have already revealed themselves even though only political forces—namely, current populist élites—express willingness to conserve and defend in order to cure them, therefore to maintain their positions. Looking beneath the surface of lack of tolerance in the light of cultural differences among a population means to understand how certain notions of tolerance and solidarity are allowed rather than others. If the firsts are permitted through a superficial, or highly ideological approach of liberal humanitarianism, the seconds may (not) indicate a more accurate model of toleration, which would help to better convey a wider, epistemologically accurate, time-sensitive, and locally nuanced picture of power dynamics without overlooking different characteristics *within* and *between* social groups at the same time.

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