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Introduction

Intercultural dialogue is extremely important for Belarus.

It is the only instrument to both «open» our society, our thinking and our mentality and to make our traditional values sustainable and popular.

As a dialogue of cultures, intercultural dialogue can, on the one hand, actualize the issues of national culture and language, which is extremely important for Belarus. On the other hand, it can open up the boundaries of provincialism, backwardness, closeness, and isolation.

As a modern universal value and democratic manner of communication and interaction where human rights and first — and foremost the right to life, equality and freedom — play the most important role, intercultural dialogue introduces Belarus to the best achievements of mankind.

With its reliance on dialogical thinking, intercultural dialogue can be implemented in Belarus as a public and social dialogue — the basis of any democracy and a way to build solidarity and unity of the contemporary Belarusian society.

As a strategy of European cultural policy with its aim is to support and enhance cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue contributes to a more active involvement of Belarus — a European country historically and culturally — in the European and broader Western processes.

As an urgent issue in international practice and research, intercultural dialogue offers a way to integrate Belarusian social sciences into the global progressive mainstream, especially American and European.

As an attributive feature of the Belarusian tradition with its multicultural and democratic character of the legal history, intercultural dialogue should be studied and developed in Belarus more intensively. Of course, it requires deep expertise, and not only intercultural. It is necessary to apply the most modern systemic, interdisciplinary, and integrated approaches, including in terms of a research methodology. It is also important to use of international experience, practice and active partnership.

European and American paradigms of intercultural dialogue have both similarities and differences.

American interculturalism relies on the rich ethnographic material of many nations of the world. On this basis, universal approaches are developed.

The universal character of interculturalism, intercultural dialogue as the manifestation of equality of all people before God and the law — regardless of race, religion, gender, or anything else — laid the foundation of American freedom and democracy, as well as the American state.

American ideology emphasizes the salience of personal freedom. However, it is not so acutely aware of the need for social justice as some European countries. The minimum standard of life in the USA is so high that there is no need to limit the freedom of the capable, the strong and the rich for handing out charity for the inept, the weak, and the poor.

The American phenomena of harmony of national integrity and multiculturalism, freedom and human dignity, civil rights and equality, welfare state, quality of life and culture are unique in the world.

The American federalism combines the benefits of diversity and the delegation of functions with the possibility of a single, unified action for the purposes of the whole Union. Until today, the only developed state of such type and quality is the USA.



If the European paradigm of intercultural dialogue is mainly focused on multiculturalism (providing a strong system of social, cultural and other rights of different groups of people, including ethnic minorities and immigrants) and the leveling of its negative consequences, the American version of multiculturalism has never failed. It has flourished for centuries. It has formed the United States. Today, representatives of any ethnic groups in the United States are first and foremost proud of being Americans!

The American paradigm of intercultural dialogue is determined by global approaches. In comparison with the European paradigm, it relies much more on the dialogue of civilizations and cultural-historical types, as it was elaborated on by Huntington, Toffler, or Fukuyama. Globalism is increasingly becoming a characteristic of the American worldview.

If the European sphere of intercultural dialogue today primarily concerns topics such as immigration, a new cultural community in Europe, EU enlargement, etc., the American paradigm focuses on such topics as strategies to counter polarization in the U.S. and the world, new forms of international education and tourism, worldviews of different peoples of the Americas and their relationship to the Western society.

The key to the American success is openness, willingness and desire to adopt the best in the world. It is also the trust in the unknown. It is belief that it is possible to implement everything that contributes to social progress and better development of human qualities. It is the reliance on the principles of liberty given by God. That is the most reliable support that people have.

This book offers the answers to intriguing questions — what are the similarities between such different countries as the US and Belarus? and why is the American experience of intercultural dialogue is so important for us?

Enjoy!