

**Ганна НОСОВА**

кандидат філософських наук, ст. науковий співробітник,  
Інститут філософії НАН України ім.Г.С. Сковороди,  
відділ соціальних проблем етносу та нації

ORCID: 0000-0002-3846-7832

Email: ayun@ukr.net

## **ПОЛІТИКА ВИЗНАННЯ В УКРАЇНІ: ФІЛОСОФСЬКІ ВИТОКИ ТА УКРАЇНСЬКІ ВИКЛИКИ**

**Анотація.** У статті здійснюється комплексний аналіз теорії політики визнання в межах сучасної політичної філософії та її релевантності для українського суспільного розвитку в умовах масштабних трансформацій, зумовлених постколоніальним спадком та повномасштабною війною після 2022 року. Розкривається концептуальна еволюція політики визнання, яка бере витоки у філософії Г.В.Ф. Гегеля, що трактував визнання як основу формування самосвідомості та міжсуб'єктних відносин, і далі розвивається в роботах Ч. Тейлора, який наголошував на необхідності суспільного підтвердження культурних ідентичностей, А. Гоннета, котрий визначав взаємне визнання ключовою умовою соціальної інтеграції та гідності, та Н. Фрейзер, що пропонує поєднання визнання з матеріальним перерозподілом як передумовою справедливості.

У цьому контексті проаналізовано українські реалії, де політика визнання формується на перетині процесів деколонізації, відновлення історичної пам'яті, формування спільної громадянської ідентичності та реагування на гострі соціальні виклики війни. Особлива увага приділяється соціальним групам, для яких питання визнання є критичними: ветеранам, внутрішньо переміщеним особам, національним меншинам, родинам загиблих, волонтерам та іншим спільнотам, що відіграють значущу роль у теперішньому суспільному житті. Виявлено суперечність між декларативним характером державної риторики щодо інклюзивності та соціальної підтримки, і реальним доступом цих груп до ресурсів і механізмів визнання, що проявляється у бюрократичних бар'єрах, нерівномірності реалізації політик та відсутності послідовної державної стратегії.

У статті наголошено на необхідності балансу між політикою рівності, що забезпечує загальні умови належності та громадянської солідарності, та політикою відмінності, яка гарантує визнання культурних, етнічних та соціальних особливостей різних груп. Зазначено, що в умовах воєнного стану пріоритет консолідації та національної єдності є закономірним, проте у довгостроковій перспективі надмірна уніфікація може призвести до обмеження плюралізму та звуження демократичного простору. Тому аргументовано, що післявоєнна Україна потребуватиме моделі політики визнання, яка поєднуватиме етичний принцип взаємності, соціально-економічний принцип справедливості та принцип політичної участі, забезпечуючи не лише формальне визнання, а й реальні механізми включення та підтримки. Запропонований підхід дозволяє розглядати культурну різноманітність як ресурс національної стійкості, що сприятиме побудові демократичної, відкритої та справедливої держави.

**Ключові слова:** соціальна інтеграція, культурна різноманітність, постколоніальна трансформація історичної пам'яті, політика рівності чи політика відмінності, соціальні виклики війни, постколоніалізм, ідентичність, національна консолідація, вразливі групи.

**Hanna NOSOVA**

Candidate of Philosophical Sciences,  
Senior Research Fellow,

H. Skovoroda Institute of Philosophy, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine,  
Department of Social Problems of Ethnos and Nation

## **THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION IN UKRAINE: PHILOSOPHICAL ORIGINS AND UKRAINIAN CHALLENGES**

**Abstract.** This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the theory of the politics of recognition within the framework of contemporary political philosophy and examines its relevance to Ukraine's societal development amid large-scale transformations shaped by its postcolonial legacy and the full-scale war after 2022. The conceptual evolution of the politics of recognition is revealed as originating in the philosophy of G.W.F. Hegel, who understood recognition as the foundation of self-consciousness and intersubjective relations, and subsequently developing in the works of C. Taylor, who emphasized the necessity of public affirmation of cultural identities; A. Honneth, who viewed

*mutual recognition as a key condition for social integration and human dignity; and N. Fraser, who proposes combining recognition with material redistribution as a prerequisite for justice.*

*Against this background, the article examines the Ukrainian context, in which the politics of recognition is shaped at the intersection of decolonization processes, the restoration of historical memory, the formation of a shared civic identity, and responses to acute social challenges caused by war. Particular attention is paid to social groups for whom the issue of recognition is critical, including veterans, internally displaced persons, national minorities, families of fallen soldiers, volunteers, and other communities that play a significant role in contemporary public life. The research identifies a tension between the declarative nature of state rhetoric regarding inclusivity and social support and the actual access of these groups to resources and mechanisms of recognition, manifested in bureaucratic barriers, uneven implementation of policies, and the absence of a coherent state strategy.*

*The article emphasizes the need to balance a politics of equality, which ensures common conditions of belonging and civic solidarity, with a politics of difference, which guarantees the recognition of cultural, ethnic, and social particularities of diverse groups. While the prioritization of consolidation and national unity under wartime conditions is justified, in the long-term perspective excessive homogenization may restrict pluralism and narrow democratic space. Therefore, it is argued that post-war Ukraine requires a model of the politics of recognition that combines the ethical principle of reciprocity, the socio-economic principle of justice, and the principle of political participation, ensuring not only formal recognition but also effective mechanisms of inclusion and support. Such an approach allows cultural diversity to be viewed as a resource of national resilience, contributing to the construction of a democratic, open, and just state.*

*Keywords: social integration, cultural diversity, post-colonial transformation historical memory, politics of equality versus politics of difference, social challenges of war, post-colonialism, identity, national consolidation, vulnerable groups.*

#### **Philosophical foundations: from G.V.F. Hegel to the present**

The issue of recognition in contemporary political philosophy goes far beyond the formal norms of human rights or the redistribution of resources; it encompasses those symbolic and moral practices that determine how society renders certain identities visible and valuable. For Ukraine, this problem has particular significance. The combination of postcolonial trauma, the pursuit of national consolidation, and the large-scale social transformations caused by the full-scale war after 2022 move the question of recognition from the theoretical domain into the sphere of existential imperatives — from the rights of linguistic and ethnic communities to the respect and social rehabilitation of veterans, internally displaced persons, and people with disabilities. Therefore, it becomes necessary to return to the philosophical origins of the theory of recognition, to determine how it is represented in Ukrainian public and academic discourse, and to critically assess to what extent formal norms are realized in practice.

The historical source of the modern concept of recognition can already be found in the work of G.V.F. Hegel, particularly in the “master–slave” dialectic of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel demonstrates that self-consciousness is formed through mutual recognition: a one-sided act cannot create genuine freedom, since the constitution of the “self” requires an interlocutor who also acknowledges it [1, p. 134]. In this sense, the notion of recognition in the Hegelian framework is fundamental, as it elucidates the way in which interpersonal relations become the source of political and moral subjectivity.

Charles Taylor, drawing on Hegel’s legacy, formulated a politico-ethical theory of recognition that emphasizes the formation of identity within interpersonal and institutional practices of recognition or misrecognition. Taylor insists that claims for specific cultural recognition possess intrinsic value, for

misrecognition inflicts genuine moral harm (for instance, in his essay *The Politics of Recognition*). He argues that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others [9]. It is precisely this political stance — recognition of difference as an autonomous political demand — that Taylor considers indispensable for a democratic order, especially where the dominant culture may marginalize other identities [3, p. 75].

Axel Honneth shifted the focus from metaphysical identities to the socio-psychological field of recognition practices. In his conception, the “struggle for recognition” is not merely an ethical issue but also an explanatory model of social conflicts. He distinguishes several spheres of recognition — love, rights, and solidarity — through which individuals achieve social integrity; the denial or degradation of these forms generates social struggle and demands for justice [2, p. 102], [7, p. 351-364]

The development of the politics of recognition through its critique

The politics of recognition, conceptually formulated by Charles Taylor, has become a central subject of debate within theories of multiculturalism and contemporary social philosophy. Its key idea—that a just society must not only guarantee formal equality but also acknowledge the uniqueness of cultural identities, historical experiences, and collective practices of the groups inhabiting it—has been subjected to multifaceted criticism.

Axel Honneth simultaneously acknowledges its limitations in the political sphere while further developing the concept of recognition within his own philosophical framework. He notes that recognition cannot be an end in itself; rather, it must serve as an instrument for cultivating mutual respect grounded in shared social norms. Excessive fragmentation, inherent in certain forms of the politics of recognition, can undermine social

solidarity, transforming society into a constellation of self-enclosed groups.

Nancy Fraser, in her seminal essay “From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a ‘Post-Socialist’ Age” (New Left Review, 1995), questioned the one-sidedness of approaches focused exclusively on the cultural dimension of recognition. In her view, modern democratic societies have witnessed a gradual shift of focus from issues of material redistribution—access to resources, labor, and social support—to matters of symbolic recognition of identity, culture, or status. This tendency, Fraser warns, narrows the concept of justice, reducing it to a struggle for prestige and public acknowledgment, while real economic inequalities remain unaddressed [5, p. 85].

In an interview Fraser observes that the three dimensions of justice she proposes—redistribution, recognition and representation—must all be addressed to overcome structural asymmetries. [6]. Fraser does not deny the importance of recognition as a moral and political principle; however, she emphasizes that it cannot be considered in isolation from socio-economic structures. The dichotomy she introduced, “redistribution versus recognition”, delineates two dimensions of justice that must remain interconnected. The first, the economic dimension, concerns the redistribution of resources and opportunities to eliminate social inequality; the second, the cultural dimension, presupposes the recognition of dignity, authenticity, and cultural diversity. The separation of one dimension from the other, according to Fraser, generates the risk of cultural essentialism, in which groups fix their identities as immutable rather than seeking forms of political agency and participation.

Fraser also warns that excessive emphasis on symbolic recognition can contribute to the depoliticization of social justice, as public discourse becomes preoccupied solely with identities and cultural differences, pushing questions of income inequality, access to resources, class barriers, and power relations to the periphery. As a result, the politics of recognition, instead of promoting emancipation, may inadvertently legitimize existing hierarchies by masking economic injustice under the rhetoric of tolerance.

Fraser proposes a two-dimensional model of justice, in which cultural recognition and economic redistribution are regarded as equally significant and mutually dependent dimensions of emancipation. Only a balance between them, she argues, can ensure genuine social equality in post-socialist and globalized societies.

The well-known debate between Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth in political philosophy demonstrated that the politics of recognition cannot exist independently of socio-economic policy. This intellectual exchange, articulated in their joint work “Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange” (2003), outlined two distinct perspectives: Honneth emphasized the moral-communicative dimension of recognition, while Fraser insisted on the necessity of integrating it with the material aspects of justice.

The politics of recognition has faced criticism not only from conservative thinkers but also from leftist intellectuals. In particular, Slavoj Žižek argues that contemporary “politics of recognition” can paradoxically reproduce inequality by introducing what he calls a “soft totalitarianism of tolerance”—a condition in which social struggle is replaced by symbolic gestures, while economic problems are silenced beneath the surface of cultural debates. Žižek maintains that this form of multiculturalism often proves convenient for the neoliberal system, as it demonstrates humanitarianism without any real redistribution of power or resources [10].

Some theorists contend that the politics of recognition may lead to ethnic particularism, compelling the state to balance among numerous competing claims instead of reinforcing universal principles of equality. In this way, pluralism risks generating new lines of division and societal fragmentation, thereby weakening the shared and universal foundations that unite citizens into a political community.

Thus, the politics of recognition—which originates in Hegel’s dialectic of self-consciousness and develops through the ideas of Charles Taylor, Axel Honneth, and Nancy Fraser—forms, so to speak, a four-dimensional analytical framework. In Hegel, recognition functions as the condition for the realization of freedom through mutual acknowledgment between subjects. Taylor transferred this idea into the political domain, emphasizing the importance of cultural autonomy and the right to difference within modern multicultural states. Honneth, extending this tradition, demonstrated that forms of recognition encompass not only legal but also socio-emotional dimensions—love, respect, and solidarity—without which a just society is impossible. Nancy Fraser, in turn, reminded us that the struggle for recognition must remain inseparable from the struggle for economic justice: symbolic approval without material redistribution does not eliminate structural inequalities.

This integrated perspective offers valuable tools for analyzing the Ukrainian context, where issues of identity, dignity, and social protection intertwine with the economic and institutional challenges brought about by war.

The Ukrainian specificity: postcolonial memory, war, and emerging demands for recognition

In Ukraine, the issue of recognition unfolds simultaneously across several dimensions — those of historical memory, language policy, the rights of national and religious minorities, and, since 2022, in the sphere of recognition of veterans, internally displaced persons, and individuals with war-related injuries (including disabilities). These diverse demands often intersect and sometimes come into conflict, while the task of the politics of recognition is to develop mechanisms that allow for the preservation of national solidarity without stigmatizing particular groups.

Ukraine’s experience of colonial domination — both imperial and Soviet — has produced historical traumas with symbolic and political dimensions. Processes such as decommunization, derussification,

the restoration of historical toponymy, and the opening of archives are not merely commemorative practices but also attempts to restore recognition to historical subjects who were systematically marginalized. At the same time, such processes may generate tensions within the politics of recognition concerning linguistic and ethnic minorities, particularly when the reconfiguration of national memory is not accompanied by guarantees of cultural autonomy.

A postcolonial approach helps to reveal that when the state or society officially recognizes the “historical legitimacy” of a particular narrative — for instance, acknowledging that a specific culture or group was previously oppressed and now deserves the restoration of justice — this does not automatically ensure equality. On the contrary, such recognition may create the risk of a new assimilative pressure: instead of the old dominant culture, a “new norm” emerges to which all are expected to conform. To prevent the reproduction of past patterns of domination, additional policies are required — those that protect diversity and prevent the new “correct” narrative from becoming an instrument of coercion [8].

The full-scale Russian invasion of 2022 radically transformed the political landscape, producing numerous new groups seeking recognition, many of which had previously remained on the margins of public policy. These include veterans (particularly those wounded in combat), internally displaced persons, volunteers, and women who joined military service. However, various reports record persistent systemic difficulties in ensuring recognition for these categories. Such difficulties encompass critical aspects such as rehabilitation, the complex process of obtaining official status, and limited access to essential social services. Collectively, these barriers generate among the affected individuals a widespread sense of non-recognition by both the state and society [4].

#### ***The main social groups in need of recognition in Ukraine***

With the onset of full-scale war, the number of social categories for which the demand for recognition has become particularly urgent has significantly expanded.

National and ethnic minorities — Crimean Tatars, Karaites, Krymchaks, Hungarians, Romanians, Poles, Roma, among others — require recognition in the form of guarantees for the preservation of their languages, cultures, educational rights, political representation, and influence in local governance. For the Crimean Tatars, the issue of recognition carries an additional dimension: it involves not only cultural recognition but also acknowledgment of historical trauma — the 1944 deportation — and the recognition of their rights as an indigenous people, which has recently become a subject of political decisions and commemorative practices. In the case of the Crimean Tatar community, positive examples — the restoration of historical toponymy, public recognition of the deportation, and legislative initiatives — demonstrate elements of a functioning politics of recognition. However, its full realization is

significantly hindered by the ongoing occupation of Crimea and associated security risks.

The issue of the status of the Ukrainian language, linguistic groups, and the language rights of national minorities constitutes a classical arena in which the politics of recognition manifests itself through legislative changes, educational reforms, and cultural practices. For many citizens, language policy simultaneously represents both a demand for recognition — the right to speak one’s native language — and a mechanism of national consolidation, namely, the support of Ukrainian as the state language. Research indicates that the language problem in Ukraine has a dual character: on one hand, it concerns individual rights and cultural recognition; on the other, it pertains to questions of state security and the construction of a cohesive political community.

Veterans, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and those affected by the war seek both material recognition — in the form of benefits and compensations — and moral recognition of their contribution to national defense and their social reintegration. Civil initiatives and governmental programs partially address these needs, yet problems of coordination, access to services, and persistent stigmatization remain considerable obstacles.

The LGBTQ+ community, in recent years, has become increasingly active in demanding legal recognition of family relations. The key aspects of these demands include the necessity of reliable protection from discrimination and the assurance of adequate representation within social and political institutions.

Religious communities in Ukraine represent another complex sphere of recognition claims, marked by evolving relations among Orthodox churches, debates over autocephaly, and conflicts between religious institutions and the state. These dynamics form a distinct dimension of recognition that intertwines legal, symbolic, and security aspects.

Finally, individuals from socially vulnerable groups — including the elderly, the homeless, victims of domestic violence, and minors deprived of parental care — require official recognition of their difficult life circumstances, accompanied by the provision of appropriate social assistance. Recognition in this context entails not only social protection but also the reaffirmation of human dignity as an essential element of a just society.

#### ***Do the principles of the politics of recognition apply in practice in Ukraine?***

The politics of recognition in Ukraine has been emerging within a complex socio-cultural context that combines processes of decolonization, the rethinking of historical memory, and the establishment of a new civic identity. These issues have been further complicated by the consequences of war. Although, at the level of political rhetoric, the state increasingly employs the language of recognition, in practice this process remains fragmented and often dependent on external or political factors.

An assessment of the implementation of the politics of recognition in Ukraine must rely on two key dimensions: the formal legal and international framework, and the actual accessibility of services, material support, and the subjective feeling of being recognized among different groups of the population.

However, reports by analytical centers and journalistic investigations indicate a substantial gap between declarations and practice. For instance, in the field of minority rights and language policy, although the legislative basis has been strengthened, questions persist regarding the clarity and uniformity of its implementation, especially at the regional level. Numerous media materials and research reports show that veterans in Ukraine face systemic difficulties, with widespread bureaucratic obstacles and lengthy delays in obtaining necessary state assistance. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) also encounter serious challenges in social integration, which manifest through insufficient communication from state institutions and unequal access to housing and employment opportunities.

Formally, Ukraine has created a normative basis for a politics of recognition through developed legislative acts and international commitments. Yet, in practice, the implementation of this framework encounters significant challenges—ranging from limited resources and procedural barriers to uneven enforcement across regions and social groups. Official declarations are present, but the recognition of members of relevant communities often remains incomplete or symbolic rather than substantive.

***Balance: the politics of equality or the politics of difference in Ukraine?***

Which model of society is Ukraine choosing today — a model of unification, emphasizing a shared civic identity and a politics of equality that disregards differences, or a model of recognition, which prioritizes the protection of linguistic, cultural, and historical distinctiveness among various groups?

In the pre-war period, state institutions sought to unify national identity by elevating the status of the Ukrainian language and promoting derussification. At the same time, there was clear pressure from national and linguistic minorities seeking to preserve their linguistic rights, as well as from other social and cultural communities — religious organizations, LGBTQ+ groups, and others — demanding social, legal, and political recognition within the state framework.

After 2022, the priority of national consolidation intensified — an understandable reaction to external aggression. Yet this emphasis on unity has often pushed demands for the recognition of difference to the periphery of the political agenda.

***What should the Ukrainian politics of recognition look like during and after the war?***

War radically transforms the logic of recognition. In peacetime, the primary task is to protect cultural pluralism; under existential threat, however, the priority shifts toward consolidation — the formation of a unified

civic identity grounded in the shared experience of resistance. The Ukrainian context during the war demonstrates precisely this form of “solidary recognition” — not ethnic or cultural, but existential, where the unifying factor is the collective experience of struggle and sacrifice.

Yet, the politics of recognition in wartime cannot be limited to heroization. It must encompass a broader range of subjects — veterans, internally displaced persons, volunteers, medical workers, educators, families of the fallen, and those who have lost their homes or health. Recognition should be expressed not only in ritualized gratitude but in social justice, access to resources, and guarantees of a dignified life — what Nancy Fraser (1995) called the integration of redistribution and recognition.

Post-war Ukraine will face a dual task: restoring social unity while preserving a space for difference. Excessive unification, justified during wartime, may in peacetime transform into a restriction of pluralism, posing challenges for democratic development.

The politics of recognition in post-war Ukraine should rest on three fundamental principles:

The ethical principle of reciprocity — each social group must be recognized not merely as “other” but as an equal moral subject within a shared community. This aligns with Axel Honneth’s idea of the “struggle for mutual recognition” [6]

The socio-economic principle of justice — recognition must be materially substantiated; respect without decent living conditions becomes a symbolic substitute.

The political principle of participation — recognition entails not only tolerance but active inclusion: the ability to participate in decision-making, policy formation, and defining what it means to “be Ukrainian.”

The Ukrainian state must therefore move toward a politics that not only acknowledges each group’s right to be heard but also creates real opportunities for participation in shaping the shared political future.

Ukraine’s politics of recognition should aim not at division but at strengthening political unity through an awareness of cultural diversity as a resource, not a threat. Only such a model will allow post-war Ukraine to emerge as a modern, open, and deeply national state capable of speaking the language of recognition rather than exclusion.

***Conclusions***

The politics of recognition, formed at the intersection of G. W. F. Hegel’s classical philosophy and contemporary concepts developed by C. Taylor, A. Honneth, and N. Fraser, emerges as a key analytical instrument for understanding transformations in societies experiencing profound historical and political ruptures. Ukraine, which since 2014—and particularly after the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022—has been undergoing a far-reaching re-examination of its identity foundations, value system, and political institutions, represents a striking example of the complexity of

implementing a politics of recognition under conditions of simultaneous struggle for state sovereignty, social consolidation, and democratic freedoms.

The study demonstrates that the Ukrainian experience of the politics of recognition is multidimensional and encompasses several key social groups, including veterans, internally displaced persons, national minorities, Crimean Tatars, volunteers, and citizens affected by occupation or war crimes. The development of recognition policies for these groups unfolds against the backdrop of a historical postcolonial legacy, which determines heightened sensitivity to issues of cultural domination, language policy, and symbolic representation. At the same time, the Ukrainian case illustrates that recognition cannot be reduced to symbolic practices alone, since the societal demand for dignity, memory, and respect is inseparable from social guarantees, economic support, and fair access to resources.

Applying the approaches of Honneth and Fraser reveals that Ukrainian recognition policies face a fundamental dilemma: how to ensure respect for group identities without undermining the principles of general equality or creating conditions for social fragmentation. The persistent gap between declarative commitments and practical implementation remains an urgent challenge, manifested in slow institutional change, insufficient funding of social programs, and difficulties integrating new social statuses into the public sphere.

Therefore, the politics of recognition in Ukraine requires a comprehensive model grounded in the combination of symbolic and material dimensions of justice, in guaranteeing inclusivity without sacrificing national unity, and in sustaining dialogue between the state, civil society, and diverse social groups. Only such an approach can contribute to building stable mechanisms of political and social integration that align with democratic principles, safeguard respect for diversity, and strengthen social solidarity throughout the wartime and post-war reconstruction of the country.

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