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I believe promoting efforts for Inter-cultural, Inter-Religious and Inter-Ethnic understanding certainly measure up to challenges that should be addressed as being part of the processes of globalization.

I admit that it's hard to predict how quick these processes may bring any positive results for the sake of mankind but anyway the process itself is positive in the sense that along with other positive things it will produce kind of pressure on theologies to be subject to changes or reconsideration.

I remember my stay at the US when each Sunday morning I used to watch on TV a religious program where a young guy presented his speech convincing believers to adapt their secular life to the religious values or to do the contrary, adapt their religiosity to the requirements of their daily lives. In other words he was calling on people to live up to the standards commonly accepted or let say religiously generated. When I listened to him I had really hard time distinguishing between what he preached on behalf of Christianity and what Islam says in its theoretical version. In fact it is the globalization that helps change some interpretations existing in religious practices. As for Islam it has great potential for interpretations in favor of promoting efforts for Inter-cultural, Inter-Religious and Inter-Ethnic Understanding. Koran reads: "*O mankind, we have created you from a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you with God is that who is the most full of belief. Verily, God is all-knowing, all-aware*".

I represent Azerbaijan Center for Religion and Democracy which is functioning since 1998. It has held variety of events aiming at the fulfillment of its goals which consist of further improving religious enlightening work among the population of Azerbaijan, propagating the Islamic values in a scientific way with the purpose to help create climate of Understanding between those who practice their religion in daily life and those whose religious life could be viewed as relatively passive. Our concept on how to place Islam in Azerbaijan society provides for gross religionization of population and establishment of a perception mechanism of religious instructions that would limit Islam with moral and cultural spheres and separate it from politics. Religious interpretations of Koranic logic are targeted at religious justification of generally accepted values of democracy, human freedoms and ect. We deeply believe that provoking in a positive way a certain shift in the religious conscience of Muslims towards perceiving the values of democracy as religiously generated or justified ones and thus not alien or forcedly planted from abroad can help serve also the noble goals for Inter-religious Understanding issues as part of fulfillment of religious duties of Muslim communities.

I am the author of Koranic translation in Azeri and basing on the Koranic philosophy I have to note that you will find not that much deep-rooted differences between Islam and Christianity if you look at both of them at the level of doctrines they produce. The matter is that both are advocating monotheism. Moreover, Koranic text says that this holy book was sent down and

revealed by God through His angel Gabriel as a confirmation of previous Holy Scriptures, including Old and New Testaments. I would refer to the Koranic instruction on how to get into dialogue with people who seemingly represent other faiths but in fact share the same divine values as those who are considered as believers surrendering to God's will. It reads: "When you talk to people of the Scripture except for those who do wrong say to them "We believe in that which has been revealed to you. Our God and your God is One and to Him we are submitting".

I want also to refer to the value which is believed to be belonging to Christianity. It reads in the Bible: "*Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you. Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you...*" What can make this value as a divine one in the mind of Muslims as well is that if they look at Koran itself rather than listen to clergies who seem to be not that interested in true interpretation of the similar Koranic verse which reads: "*The good deed and evil deed cannot be equal. Repel the evil with one which is better, the verily he, between whom and you there was enmity, will become as though he was a close friend*". By the way and unfortunately, most of Islamic theologians continue to follow the principle of prevailing power of some verses over others that must allegedly be considered as "having lost their power". Taking departure from this point the above mentioned verse is recommended by some of theologians not to be followed by Muslims as it allegedly has become invalid. In this regard again I would say the more inter-religious understanding promotion efforts will be put in place the more chances this process might produce for new theological initiatives.

The importance of this is conditioned by the fact that the religious values are getting more and more space in lives of people in particular ex-Soviet countries where the societies are rapidly de-secularizing. According to newly surveys conducted by sociologists. This trend is powerind demands that religion play a larger role in national life. The negative side of this trend is that it raises the levels of religious intolerance among the believers towards other faiths, the thing that hides in itself potential for possible violence on the ground of religious discrepancies. For example, in a survey of almost 3000 Russian citizens conducted in 2005, two sociologists asked Russians identified as Orthodox whether Muslim groups should be allowed to open a mosque in their communities or otherwise to display their commitment to Islam in public. Only 30% said that Muslims should have such opportunities, with even small numbers saying that Jews and Christians should have the chance to practice their faith in public. Russia's Muslims were more tolerant of the rights of the Orthodox, but almost equally intolerant of others.

In the USA a growing proportion of Americans are expressing unfavorable views of Islam, and a majority now say that Muslims are disproportionately prone to violence, according to a new Washington Post ABS News poll. The poll found that nearly half of Americans – 46 % have a negative view of Islam, seven percentage points higher than in the tense months after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade center and the Pentagon.

Taking all this into consideration I would say there is no other way to do our best as political, cultural and religious actors to overcome these tendencies if we really want to benefit from advantages revealed by globalization for the sake of our nations.

Again I want to refer to Koranic verses which clearly support our long term vision about this: "*There is no compulsion in religion*"; "*Let him who please believe, and let him who please disbelieve*"; "*O mankind, we have created you from a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you with God is that who is the most full of belief. Verily, God is all-knowing, all-aware*". God bless you all! Amen!