

POLITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF TOLERANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LIBERAL PARADIGM

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Abstract: This article provides a political analysis of the category of tolerance based on a liberal approach. Additionally, particular emphasis is placed on the role and significance of political tolerance within the contemporary system of international relations.

Keywords: tolerance, international relations, liberalism, John Locke, paradigm, multiculturalism.

Introduction. One of the striking features of the modern era is the blending of cultural, confessional, and ethnic traditions resulting from migration, globalization, and human integration. In an era where international relations are expanding and becoming increasingly complex on a global scale, the need to develop the factor of tolerance within the system of international relations is growing.

The principle of tolerance is one of the crucial pillars of today's modern society. It serves as a vital factor not only in stabilizing interpersonal relations but also in the effective establishment of political and legal systems. Political and legal frameworks hold special significance in the implementation and development of the principle of tolerance. The primary objective of this scientific article is to analyze the politico-legal foundations of the principle of tolerance and to enhance its practical significance.

Analysis and Findings. The concept of tolerance in political and philosophical sciences is considered ambiguous, highly complex, and multidimensional, with no definitive consensus existing among scholars. Tolerance is viewed variously as a moral principle, a model of behavior, or a form of individual or social relationship within societal manifestations. Regardless of the diversity of these approaches, defining the concept of tolerance requires studying the history of political thought, examining the shifts and continuities in defending this idea, and observing the evolution of the toleration process itself.

The term "tolerance" was first introduced into scientific discourse in the mid-20th century by the British immunologist Peter Brian Medawar. Initially, the concept was utilized to denote the capacity of an organism's immune system to tolerate transplanted foreign cells [1]. Subsequently, this term began to be actively employed across various other disciplines.

The first historical-political manifestation of tolerance was religious tolerance, the principle of which was established by the Peace of Westphalia (1648). This treaty laid the foundation for religious equality by granting equal rights to Lutherans, Calvinists, and Catholics throughout Germany [2].

In the theoretical and practical application of the category of tolerance, contemporary scholars rely on the definition provided in the "Declaration of Principles on Tolerance," proclaimed at the 28th session of the UNESCO General Conference in Paris on November 16, 1995. The document defines tolerance as follows:

"Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace" [3].

By the late 17th century, the category of tolerance began to be investigated by several scholars. In contemporary political and philosophical thought, the concept of tolerance is primarily interpreted through the lenses of liberal and multicultural paradigms. While both approaches view tolerance as a vital concept that ensures social stability and civic harmony, they attribute different theoretical foundations and substance to it.

The liberal paradigm interprets tolerance primarily through the prism of individual liberties, diversity of thought, and freedom of conscience and belief. According to this approach, the state must act as a neutral arbiter that protects the freedom of diverse beliefs, worldviews, and ideological stances within society without interfering in them. In liberal thought, tolerance is the constitutional, legal, and moral cornerstone of a free society.

Historically, this idea found a solid theoretical foundation in the works of John Locke. In his famous *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689), he articulated the following:

"The toleration of those that differ from others in matters of religion is so agreeable to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to the genuine reason of mankind, that it seems monstrous for men to be blind to so clear a light... I esteem that toleration to be the chief characteristical mark of the true Church" [4].

John Locke further emphasizes: *"If the state attempts to establish control over the spiritual life of man, it marks the beginning of tyranny."* He views tolerance as a principle that counters coercion in the religious sphere and safeguards human freedom of conscience.

The French thinker Voltaire (1694–1778) was a prominent advocate of the idea of tolerance. In fact, an aphorism that has come to epitomize the core essence of the theory of tolerance is widely attributed to Voltaire: *"I detest what you write, but I would give my life to make it possible for you to continue to write"* [5].

In the subsequent stage of development, John Stuart Mill intertwined tolerance with free thought and discussion. In his treatise *On Liberty* (1859), he argued that:

"The peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error" [6].

He advanced the "harm principle" concept, asserting that individual autonomy should only be restricted if it causes harm to others. This principle remains one of the most critical criteria of tolerance within the liberal domain.

Among contemporary liberal philosophers, John Rawls, in his work *Political Liberalism* [7], recognizes the pluralism of thoughts, beliefs, and values as a natural condition of a democratic society and explains how political justice can be maintained within such a diverse community. Introducing the concept of "reasonable pluralism," he argues that even though citizens hold divergent comprehensive worldviews, they can still achieve consensus regarding political institutions and basic liberties.

According to Rawls, the political order should not be built upon a specific ideology or religion, but rather on shared political principles that all "reasonable" citizens can accept. This approach is termed an "overlapping consensus." Within this framework, each citizen can agree to the same political principles from the standpoint of their own personal doctrines. Tolerance holds a central place here; in political liberalism, the state is interpreted as a neutral institution free from religious or philosophical bias, approaching all citizens with equal liberty and respect.

Susan Mendus highlights the possibilities and limits of tolerance within the liberal approach. In her work *Toleration and the Limits of Liberalism* (1989), she argues that "toleration cannot be without limits; in particular, granting infinite tolerance to self-defeating—that is, intolerant—views jeopardizes the very existence of a liberal society" [8].

Thus, the liberal paradigm conceptualizes tolerance as an idea rooted in individual liberty, safeguarding personal rights and minimizing state intervention. This approach is recognized as one of the foundational principles of the political architecture of modern democratic societies. However, critics of this approach point out some of its vulnerabilities. In their view, the principle of absolute freedom can sometimes lead to negative consequences, potentially causing the erosion of shared values and moral norms within society. Crucially, the defense of extremist ideas and beliefs under the guise of "freedom of expression" exposes the practical flaws of the liberal model of tolerance. This, in turn, demonstrates the need for a delicate balance between tolerance and security.

While the liberal approach interprets tolerance from the perspective of individual freedoms, the multicultural paradigm links tolerance to the recognition of cultural diversity and the acknowledgment of the right to self-expression for ethnic, religious, and confessional groups. This approach emerged in the second half of the 20th century, particularly during the period when multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies began to develop in Europe and North America; it is based on interpreting tolerance not only within the scope of individual liberties but also within the framework of group rights. Within multiculturalism, tolerance is not merely a willingness to compromise, but it encompasses the principles of valuing difference, respecting cultural identities, and incorporating them into the process of social integration.

Conclusion. Based on the analytical processes of the opinions and reflections mentioned above, we have formulated the following definition for the phenomenon of tolerance: Tolerance is a conscious, moral, and political stance of individuals, groups, and societies aimed at recognizing and respecting religious, cultural, ethnic, social, and political diversity, as well as fostering a peaceful, stable, and just social order based on the principles of mutual compromise and inclusiveness. It is not merely passive endurance, but a dynamic process that serves to enhance active cooperation, social recognition, and civic solidarity, implying the maintenance of a legal and moral balance between personal freedoms and group rights.

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