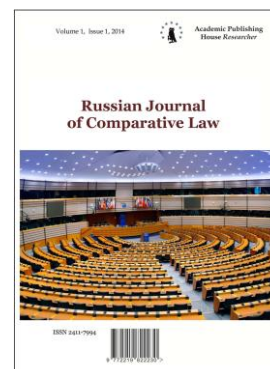


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## The Concept of «Tolerance»: Lingvo-Legal Rationale for the Need to Amend UN documents in English and Russian

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### Abstract

The analysis of UN and UNESCO documents in Russian and English revealed the clear content contradictions of the concept of "tolerance" and its analogues. These contradictions in the English-language documents of the UN and UNESCO indicate signs of the UN superficial approach in relation to the idea of "tolerance" and its promotion as a whole. In addition the UN documents in Russian-language version do not contain a single approach to the translation of the word "tolerance" from the UN working languages into Russian. This fact creates additional difficulties for understanding the idea of tolerance by readers of UN documents in Russian, including scientists and politicians. The article shows that the effectiveness of promoting the idea of tolerance will continue to decline if the contradictions in the UN and UNESCO documents related to the concept of "tolerance" will not be eliminate. The main purpose of the article is to substantiate the amend UN documents in order to eliminate the contradictions related to the concept of "tolerance" and its foreign-language counterparts in the UN and UNESCO documents. The article contains both such substantiation and an approach to making the amendments in the UN documents as a whole and in their Russian-language versions as well.

**Keywords:** tolerance, basic meaning, optimal principle of the relationship, UN, UNESCO, immanent characteristics, declaration of principles of tolerance, "terpimost'", "tolerantnost'".

### 1. Introduction

Universal human rights take priority over human rights defined by the characteristics of religious, racial, gender, political, linguistic, national, territorial and other belonging that divides people into groups (hereinafter referred to as «immanent characteristics»). That is why harmony is important in relations between people with different «immanent characteristics», which is called upon to ensure by the international political and legal institute, designated in the working languages (*Rules of Procedure, 1946*) of the United Nations (hereinafter – the UN) by the terms «tolerance» and «la tolerance», as well as their foreign-language counterparts. The same terms are also used to denote the principle of relationships between people with various «immanent characteristics» that is optimal from the UN point of view.

The events of 2020 showed the inefficiency of the functioning of the institute "tolerance". One of the reasons for this, in our opinion, is the inconsistency of the UN documents containing the term "tolerance" and its foreign-language counterparts. This, at the very least, prevents people from being informed about the real content and significance of the idea of "tolerance".

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The main purpose of the article is to substantiate the amend UN documents in order to eliminate the contradictions related to the concept of "tolerance" and its foreign-language counterparts in the UN and UNESCO documents.

## 2. Materials and methods

2.1. The main sources for writing this article became the official documents of the UN and UNESCO in English and in Russian, well-known events of 2020, materials of the Russian science publications.

2.2. The study used the basic methods of cognition: the problem-chronological, historical and situational, systemic, linguo-legal and the method of comparative law. Author's arguments are based on problem-chronological approach. The use of historical and situational method allows to reproduce the historical variability of the approach of the UN and UNESCO to characterizing the content of the concept of "tolerance". The linguo-legal method allows to choose the optimal Russian-language concept, corresponding in its meaning to the English-language concept of "tolerance". Method of comparative law shows the difference in the characteristics of the content of the concept of "tolerance" in the documents of the UN and UNESCO. A systematic method makes it possible to supplement the linguo and legal analysis of the concept of "tolerance" in the documents of the UN and UNESCO with elements of an intersectoral, sociological, managerial and psychological approach.

## 3. Discussion

A comparative analysis of the content of the Resolutions of the UN General Assembly (hereinafter – the UN GA) related to the concept of "tolerance" led to the discovery of two contradictions in the UN and UNESCO documents that need to be overcome.

### 3.1. *The first of contradiction in the UN and UNESCO documents*

This contradiction in the UN and UNESCO documents concerns their content in all six official languages of the UN. The contradiction are as follows. In the UN documents the meaning of "tolerance" is not consistent with its meaning in the UNESCO Special Declaration where the characteristic and the content of this concept as the optimal principle of the relationship between people and groups of people with different «immanent characteristics» (hereinafter – the "optimal principle of the relationship"). Consider the current situation and a typical example.

«Tolerance» as a concept, expressing the views of the UN about the "optimal principle of the relationship" included in the UN Charter from 26.06.1945, where the preamble, reads: «We the peoples of the UN determined ... to practice "tolerance" ...» ([Charter, 1945](#)). In the paragraph 6 of the special UN GA Resolution No. 48/126 of 14.02.1994 "United Nations Year for Tolerance" (hereinafter referred to as "Resolution 48/126"), it is stated that the UN GA "... Requests the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to prepare, in accordance with its General Conference resolution 5.6, a declaration on tolerance" ([United Nations Year, 1994](#)). Pursuant to paragraph 6 of "Resolution 48/126", on 16 November 1995, UNESCO adopted the "Declaration of Principles of Tolerance" (hereinafter referred to as the "Declaration"), which characterizes tolerance in detail as «the optimal principle of the relationships». Paragraph 1.1 of the "Declaration" offers a definitional characterization of the concept of "tolerance". Here, in particular, it is stated that «tolerance» is «... respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human» ([Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, 1995](#)). The meaning of the concept of "tolerance" in the "Declaration" can be called the basic one (hereinafter referred to as "basic meaning"). Note that the concept of "respect" is included as an element in the "basic meaning" of "tolerance".

Also note that the meaning of "tolerance" in most UN documents differs from the «basic meaning». For example, UN GA Resolution № 69/312 of 06.07.2015 (hereinafter referred to as "Resolution 69/312") contains the text: "...encouraging tolerance, respect, dialogue and cooperation..." ([United Nations Alliance, 2015](#)). As ones can see the meaning of the concept of "tolerance" in the example does not correspond to the "basic meaning" of the concept. If we assume the opposite, then the homogeneity of such members of a sentence as "tolerance" and "respect" in this sentence is excluded. To confirm, let us replace "tolerance" in the "Resolution 69/312" with the definition of the concept of "tolerance" from the "basic meaning", followed by a rearrangement of the sentence members. As the "simulated" phrase we have the next combination of words: "...

encouraging *respect, respect, acceptance, appreciation, dialogue and cooperation ...*". The phraseological absurdity of the "simulated" phrase is obvious, since the noun "respect" is included twice in this phrase as homogeneous member of the sentence. The mismatch between the "basic meaning" and the "current meaning" of the concept of "tolerance" in the "Resolution 69/312" is also obvious. The mismatch between the "basic meaning" and the "current meaning" of the concept of "tolerance" in the "Resolution 69/312" is also obvious.

Note that this example is typical. So, we found more than eighty official UN documents adopted after the adoption of the "Declaration", in which the current meaning of the concept of "tolerance" does not correspond to the "basic meaning".

So far, we consider it possible to talk about the reasons for this mismatch only hypothetically. However, despite the fact that these reasons are hypothetical, they, in our opinion, might be combined into two mutually exclusive groups.

*The first group* of hypothetical causes is based on the «human factor». Among them are hypothetically he stereotypical thinking, bad faith and illiteracy, etc. of UN documents drafters, combined with total indifference of controlling officials to the content of documents. The existence of such reasons is supported, for example, by the fact that the old patterns of using the concept of "tolerance" in UN documents adopted before 1995 have been transferred unchanged to documents adopted after 1995. Typical is the UN GA Resolution № 36/55 of 25.11.1981 (hereinafter referred to as "Resolution 36/55"), which, in particular, states: «... Considering that it is essential to promote understanding, tolerance and respect in matters relating ...» ([Declaration on the Elimination, 1981](#)). If we compare "Resolution 36/55", adopted before 1995, and "Resolution 69/312", adopted after 1995, then the immutability of the logical patterns of using the concept of "tolerance" is obvious.

*The second group* of hypothetical reasons for the mismatch between the meaning of the concept of "tolerance" in the "Declaration" and the meaning of the concept of "tolerance" the UN documents adopted after 1995 is based on the "documentary-hierarchical factor". The relevant explanation of UN officials may be as follows. "Resolution 48/126", which contains the request of the UN GA to UNESCO for the development of a "Declaration", formally concerns only the year of "tolerance" in 1995 and therefore is not taken into account in the documents, adopted after 1995. The "Declaration" by itself is also not taken into account, since it is not formally a UN document. That is why the concept of "tolerance" is used in UN documents in the sense that corresponds to the "UN Charter". With the approach described, the use of such homogeneous terms as respect, acceptance, recognition, correct understanding, etc., next to the term "tolerance" in the wording of UN documents, seems absolutely appropriate. In our opinion, the hypothetical causes of this group are closer to explaining the current situation. So, even the assumption of the possibility of the existence of the first group of causes seems inappropriate, while ignoring the "basic meaning" is consistent with the formal legal approach, although, in our opinion, with some absolutization of the significance of legism.

Meanwhile, whatever the reasons, the obsolete meaning of "tolerance" in the UN documents significantly reduces the positive social potential, which could be in the case of blanket "binding" of the concept of "tolerance" in UN documents to the description and meaning of "tolerance" in "Declaration". There are also prerequisites for evaluating the UN position about the "optimal principle of the relations" as not worthy of attention, since this position contradicts the "Declaration". In addition, there is obvious damage to the idea of "tolerance" itself, as coming from a clearly inconsistent subject (UN). This makes it possible for opponents of the idea to promote other principles, including those based on tension, of relations between carriers of various «immanent characteristics».

We also may talk about an extremely low level of information support for the idea of "tolerance", limited in UN documents by a semantic "reference" only to the UN Charter. This level is much lower than the possible level with the systematic promotion of the content of "Resolution 48/126" and "Declaration". For example, in the above-mentioned "Resolution 69/312", only the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are mentioned among the basic documents for modern civilization. At the same time, the "Declaration", which fully reveals the concept of "tolerance" as the "optimal principle of the relationship" between all people and all groups of people, is not mentioned. Thus, the meaning of the concept of "tolerance" in Resolution

48/126 " in connection with the reference only to the UN Charter from the standpoint of modern knowledge is incomplete.

In general, it can be concluded that today the UN does not provide an information basis for the proper institutionalization of the optimal principle of relations described in the "Declaration", which creates obstacles to its implementation. This negative circumstance was fully manifested in the "pandemic" 2020, including in a number of countries of the "first world", as a lot of conflicts based on differences in «immanent characteristics» of people and their groups.

In our opinion, the necessary measure to correct the situation is to reflect the idea of "tolerance" in its "basic meaning" in UN documents. To do this, it would be appropriate to supplement all UN documents adopted after 1995 with a reference to the "Declaration" as an element of the system of documents about the basis of a civilized world order. At the same time, the meaning of the concept of "tolerance" in the UN documents of this period should be brought into line with the "basic meaning" of the concept. Also, taking into account that UNESCO's formal status is lower than the UN status, in order to increase the level of rating significance of the "optimal principle of the relations", it might be worth adopting a special resolution of the UN GA on the approval of the "Universal Declaration of Tolerance", based on the content of the "Declaration".

### *3.2. The second contradiction in the UN and UNESCO documents*

This contradiction in the documents concerns the use of the concept of "tolerance" in the Russian-language versions of documents. In them as the analog of the English-language concept of "tolerance" both the concept of «tolerantnost'» and the concept of «terpimost'» are used.

It should be noted that such an ambiguity arose only with the adoption of UN GA Resolution No. 73/128 of 12.12.2018 "Enlightenment and Religious Tolerance" (hereinafter referred to as "Resolution 73/128"). So, until December 2018, that is, during the seventy-three years of the UN's existence, the term "tolerance" in the English-language versions of the UN documents corresponded to only the term «terpimost'» in the Russian-language versions. As for the "Declaration", the term «tolerance» in its English version also corresponds to the term «terpimost'» in the Russian version of the document. Thus, for the first time in the UN history in the Russian version of "Resolution 73/128", the term «tolerantnost'» was used as an Russian analogue of the English term "tolerance" ([Enlightenment, 2018](#)).

Special attention should be paid to the fact that according to "Resolution 73/128" «tolerance» («tolerantnost'») refers to the relationship of people who differ not only in religious, but also in other «immanent characteristics». Also note that in the UN documents adopted after "Resolution 73/128", the English-language "tolerance", as well as before "Resolution 73/128", corresponds to the Russian-language «terpimost'». Meanwhile, in our opinion, this fact does not affect the characterization of the substance of the second contradiction in the UN documents regarding the use of the concept of "tolerance".

Thus, the concept of "tolerance" in UN documents in English simultaneously corresponds to two different concepts in Russian. The first concept is «terpimost'»; the concept is used in many UN documents in Russian; the content of this concept is described in the Russian version of the "Declaration". The second concept is «tolerantnost'»; the concept is used in "Resolution 73/128"; the content of the concept in the Russian-language segment of UN or UNESCO documents is not characterized; the concept is extended by "Resolution 73/128" to the relationship of all persons and their groups with all kinds of «immanent characteristics».

In this regard, the community of users of UN documents in Russian as a whole raises the question of which of the two concepts – «terpimost'» or «tolerantnost'» – is more suitable for designating the English-language concept «tolerance» as the "optimal principle of the relationships". To answer the question, in our opinion, correctly proceed from the following. Regardless of the Russian-language equivalent of the English-language concept of "tolerance" used in UN documents, the content of the "optimal principle of the relationships" is described in detail in the "Declaration". In this regard, we considered it appropriate to compare some semantic elements of the Russian-language concepts of «terpimost'» and «tolerantnost'» with each other, as well as with the content of the "Declaration". In our opinion, It is that of the concepts that more closely corresponds to the content of the "Declaration", should be considered an adequate Russian-language analogue of "tolerance".



In the Russian-speaking research community, there are three groups of approaches on the relationship between tolerance and tolerance-coincidence, inclusion and difference. For example, A. P. Danilov (Danilov, 2015: 25) and E. N. Yarkova (Yarkova, 2017: 29) consider that the concepts of «terpimost'» and «tolerantnost'» coincide in meaning. I. A. Sternin, pointing out that " ... the «tolerantnost'» is the «terpimost'» ... and the respect for other people's ... beliefs ... " (Sternin, 2014), actually considers «tolerantnost'» as a composite concept that includes «terpimost'» as one of its elements. V.M. Zolotukhin considers that «terpimost'» requires a certain measure of psychological discomfort that is not characteristic of «tolerantnost'» (Zolotukhin, 2003: 99-100) and, thus, distinguishes «terpimost'» and «tolerantnost'». So does A. Rylova, pointing out, in particular, the presence in «terpimost'» " ... non-resistance to unpleasant or unfavorable factors ... «Tolerantnost'» ... consists in approving, supporting the diversity of the world and the right to differ in the difference of people and opinions ..." (Rylova, 2015).

In our opinion, we should agree with those authors who believe that it is necessary to clearly distinguish between the Russian-language concepts of «terpimost'» and «tolerantnost'». Moreover, we consider it is possible to propose our own characteristic by which the concepts of «terpimost'» and «tolerantnost'» can be distinguished. Have been comparing religious «terpimost'» and religious «tolerantnost'», we came to the conclusion that religious «terpimost'» is based on the awareness of one's own religious superiority and this differs it from religious «tolerantnost'». (Kirillov, Sechenova, 2019: 82). We believe that it is acceptable to extrapolate this conclusion, formulated in the analysis of interreligious relations, to the relationship between the carriers of all different immanent characteristics. And therefore we consider that the characteristic feature of «terpimost'» is the awareness of the person of his superiority over the carriers of different immanent characteristics, while «tolerantnost'» excludes such superiority, since «tolerantnost'» is based on the recognition of the equal merits of the carriers of all «immanent characteristics».

Based on the above, the English-language concept of "tolerance", the content of which is described in the "Declaration", corresponds to the Russian-language concept of «tolerantnost'» and does not correspond to the concept of «terpimost'».

It should also be noted that the reference in the Russian-language versions of official UN documents to the encourage of «terpimost'» (United Nations Alliance, 2015), in our opinion, should be considered as propaganda of the superiority of carriers of the «immanent characteristics» over carriers of different «immanent characteristics». Sometimes such propaganda is explicitly prohibited by UN documents (International Convention, 1965). In Russia, such a propaganda is prohibited by article 29 of the RF Constitution (RF Constitution, 1993, 2014, 2020).

In addition, for Russia and the Russian post-imperial territories, the Russian-language concept of «terpimost'» has a negative historical connotation. This applies, for example, to the category of "religious «terpimost'»", which for several centuries was a reflection of religious discrimination (Yakutin, Kniazev, 2010: 21).

Returning to what was said in the first part of the article, we emphasize that the concept of «terpimost'» in the current UN documents in Russian also has no relation to the "basic meaning" of the concept of «terpimost'» from the Russian version of the "Declaration". Therefore, the concept of «terpimost'» in the UN documents in Russian is identified by readers with its "traditional" content, which includes a sense of the person's superiority over the carriers of different «immanent characteristics».

Thus, of the two Russian-language analogues of the concept of "tolerance", the content of the "Declaration" corresponds to the concept of «tolerantnost'». The Russian-language concept of «terpimost'» is incorrect to combine with the English-language concept of "tolerance", since semantically the concept of «terpimost'» includes a sense of personal superiority of a person, excluding the attitude to the carrier of "otherness" as an equal. Therefore, it seems reasonable to replace the term «terpimost'» with the term «tolerantnost'» in the Russian-language versions of all UN documents.

## 4. Results

4.1. The obsolete meaning of "tolerance" in the UN documents significantly reduces the positive social potential, which could be in the case of blanket "binding" of the concept of "tolerance" in UN documents to the description and meaning of "tolerance" in UNESCO "Declaration of Principles of Tolerance". There are also prerequisites for evaluating the UN official

position about the "optimal principle of the relations" as not worthy of attention, since this position contradicts the "Declaration of Principles of Tolerance". In addition, there is obvious damage to the idea of "tolerance" itself. This makes it possible for opponents of the idea to promote other principles, including those based on tension, of relations between carriers of various «immanent characteristics».

4.2. We might talk about an extremely low level of information support for the idea of "tolerance", limited in UN documents by a semantic "reference" only to the UN Charter. In general, UN does not provide an information basis for the proper institutionalization of the optimal principle of relations described in the "Declaration of Principles of Tolerance", which creates obstacles to its implementation. This negative circumstance was fully manifested in the "pandemical" 2020, including in a number of countries of the "first world", as a lot of conflicts based on differences in «immanent characteristics» of people and their groups.

4.3. The necessary measure to correct the situation is to reflect the idea of "tolerance" in its "basic meaning" in UN documents. To do this, it would be appropriate to supplement all UN documents adopted after 1995 with a reference to the "Declaration" as an element of the system of documents about the basis of a civilized world order. Also since the formal status of UNESCO is lower than that of the UN, it may be worth adopting a special resolution of the UN GA on the approval of the "Universal Declaration of Tolerance", based on the content of the UNESCO "Declaration".

4.4. Of the two Russian-language analogues of the concept of "tolerance" presented in the UN and UNESCO documents, only the concept of «tolerantnost'» corresponds (does not contradict) to the content of the "Declaration". The Russian-language concept of «terpimost'», on the opposite, is incorrect to combine with the English-language concept of "tolerance", since semantically the concept of «terpimost'» includes a sense of personal superiority of a person, excluding the attitude to the carrier of "otherness" as an equal. Therefore, it seems reasonable to replace the term «terpimost'» with the term «tolerantnost'» in the Russian-language versions of all UN documents.

## 5. Conclusion

In studying official UN documents containing the concept of "tolerance", we have identified contradictions that, in our opinion, need to be eliminated as soon as possible. Without this, the effectiveness of the functioning of the international political and legal institution of tolerance will remain low, and the idea of tolerance will cease to be perceived as serious by the world community after a while.

The main purpose of the article was to substantiate the amend UN documents in order to eliminate the contradictions related to the concept of "tolerance" and its foreign-language counterparts in the UN and UNESCO documents. The article contains both such substantiation and an approach to making the amendments in the UN documents as a whole and in their Russian-language versions as well. Therefore, we believe that the purpose of the article has been achieved.

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