

GLOBAL POLITICS

The President of the Republic of Belarus A. Lukashenko has on a number of occasions clearly stated that Belarus is not a global power and, thus, harbors no global ambitions. Notwithstanding, Belarus has always sought to make positive contribution to the evolution of global politics. Up to date, our key input in that field is still associated with the President's initiative, which he unveiled in his statement at the United Nations summit in New York in September 2005. The initiative came to be known under the title of recognition of the diversity of ways towards progressive development.

What was the initiative about? In a nutshell, the President's initiative provided a response to the negative dynamics that began to dominate world politics since the late 1990s. It was the time when the United States of America along with its allies, apparently emboldened by a "victory" in the Cold War, embarked on an ambitious policy, which, by the way, ran in violation of international law, of regime change in some countries that were not to the US' liking.

By means of his initiative the President essentially said that a Western-style uniformity around the globe that the United States with its allies sought to achieve was not a way forward for the world, because the world has always been diverse and people in various countries would resist any attempt to impose on them any form of uniformity that has been alien to their historically constructed ways of life. Therefore, the way for the world to progress in its development was through its diversity, through recognition and promotion of that diversity.

Unlike some other international initiatives of Belarus, this one was not limited to a set of specific targets or timeframes. As conceived, it was a conceptual initiative that provided an overarching timeless guidance to the foreign service of Belarus. Since its promulgation Belarusian diplomats did their best to advance the initiative internationally, mainly by reflecting it in some outcome documents adopted at major international events. However, it fell to V. Makei to furnish an elaborate narrative of the initiative, which the Minister presented in his very large academic essay titled "Emerging global system: embracing Diversity-Politik and partnerships"² that was published in the "European Journal of Management and Public Policy" in 2012.

What strikes most people once they look at the article is a catchy play of words in the title. Indeed, many readers surely wonder about the meaning the author imputes to his term of "Diversity-Politik", which very much reminds everyone of the famous term of "Realpolitik" used by practitioners in international relations since the times of O. von Bismarck. It should become clear to everyone who finished reading the piece that the play of words was deliberate. What V. Makei surely wanted thus

to hint at was that Realpolitik defined global politics in the past, whereas Diversity-Politik must steer world politics in the future.

The article is both a historical and theoretical study, as it presents a journey into history through the lens of theories of international relations. The author contends that it was primarily the two theories of international relations – realism and liberalism – that helped to account for much of what happened in global politics over a past few centuries. V. Makei's point of departure is the Westphalian treaties of 1648 that essentially established the modern system of states.

The minister then proceeds to meticulously demonstrate that world politics from mid-17th century right up to the end of the Cold War was driven by policies associated with the realist theoretical school, whereas in a far shorter period of a couple of decades at the turn of the current millennium it was guided by policies inspired by the liberal theory with its key component of a democratic peace.

V. Makei's next key point is that the Westphalian system was a concentrated system with concentrated actors and threats, whereas today's world is in the process of becoming a "diffused" system with "diffused" actors and threats. In his view, both realism and liberalism in their ongoing discourse overlooked this paradigm shift in international relations. As a result, the policies that both theories recommend are wrong. In this regard, he states the following vital argument: "The "diffused" threats clearly indicate one thing. If states continue with their traditional foreign policy tools like balancing, wars, sanctions, regime change, "democracy" promotion and the like, mankind is likely to be ultimately overrun by multiple threats and modern "barbarians" (by whom he means non-state actors)"³.

According to V. Makei, the emerging world needs a different set of instruments. He thinks the system of diverse actors, values, and threats demands policies that recognise and respond to its increasingly diverse nature. Hence comes his suggestion to call such a set of policies as Diversity-Politik. He explains that in contrast to Realpolitik that sought to pursue national interests at the expense of others in a zero-sum game, Diversity-Politik should be geared towards the pursuit of such interests in a win-win manner.

The Minister goes on to suggest that the concept should be realised through the instrument of global partnerships. He specifies that a partnership is a new form of co-operation in terms of both its purpose and its membership. It is a particular form best suited for managing the "diffused" world. Partnerships are structures that, in most cases, should include all positive stakeholders of today's world – countries, international

²Makei V. V. Emerging global system: embracing Diversity-Politik and partnerships // J. Manag. Public Policy. 2012. Vol. 12, No. 2. P. 49–70.

³Ibid.

organisations, civil society, academic community, private sector, etc. The ordering principle of partnerships goes beyond shared ideas and interests to embrace also the recognition of the world's growing diversity.

Surely, in anticipating a question on how partnerships can be established and put into operation, V. Makei proposes to contemplate the process as evolutionary. He advances the point that it would be harder to establish global partnerships on security issues insofar as states far too often think in terms of parochial national interests, but much easier to set up partnerships in non-security areas providing a specific example of the Global partnership against trafficking in persons as an effectively functioning entity in which Belarus assumes a great deal of leadership.

What is also striking about this article is V. Makei's own realism and foresight, which he displayed there. Indeed, he sounds very realistic about his ambitious vision saying in effect that "implementing the ideas of Diversity-Politik and partnerships certainly requires a revolution in the minds of today's politicians"⁴. Likewise, with the benefit of hindsight we can say today that some of his musings proved truly prophetic indeed: "Diversity in itself is not a cause for conflict, but may result in one under certain circumstances. The real culprit in that case would be those who ignore the diversity and its importance, and continue to believe that only they possess the truth of governance and try to foist it on others"⁵.

The Minister's article triggered a host of activities by the foreign service of Belarus to advance the idea of Diversity-Politik by means of establishing thematic global partnerships. As mentioned above, Belarus has already been in the vanguard of a partnership against human trafficking, but we came up with proposals to set up partnerships in other areas like, among others, energy, youth, traditional family values, middle-income countries, Chernobyl. What is more, during the negotiations of the future 2030 sustainable development agenda Belarus consistently promoted the line that the future agenda should be implemented by means of thematic global partnerships.

That is exactly how the 2030 agenda has been implemented since 2015 worldwide. Yet, a global partnership was not established in one particular and the most vital area, which V. Makei foresaw as the most problematic – the realm of international security. As a result, since the mid-past decade global politics entered a downward spiral that ultimately brought about a conflict in Ukraine.

It was in the context of that conflict that V. Makei wrote another comprehensive piece on global politics titled "Liberal international order (LIO): can it be saved in today's non-hegemonic world?"⁶, which was published in "Russia in Global Affairs" in November 2022, just a few days before the author's sudden death.

In the article's introductory chapter the Minister makes it clear why he decided to undertake the effort at all. It was because the conflict in Ukraine, even more so than some previous events, raised in the global discourse the issue of the current international order's sustainability. Like in his article on the topic of diversity, in the latest one V. Makei demonstrates the same level of historical conceptualisation through which he seeks to arrive at conclusions and recommendations that would be pertinent for today.

Curiously, the author approaches the work lying ahead of him with some degree of sarcasm when he notes that as the debate about the LIO pits the so-called democracies against autocracies, he makes a humble attempt to contribute to the debate from the perspective of an "autocratic" state insofar as Belarus, which Minister of foreign affairs the author is, has the "honour" of being assigned to this group by the West.

V. Makei begins by challenging the conventional wisdom about the LIO's origin. His point is that in "technical" terms the order indeed was launched in the wake of World War II, but in "functional" terms it traces its roots to deeper times in the past. He supports this argument with a reference to the concept of the dual revolution invented by British critical historian E. Hobsbawm in his "The age of revolution" (1962), by which the British writer meant the British Industrial Revolution that occurred at the end of the 18th century and the French Revolution of 1789.

V. Makei's main point is that the key elements that define today's LIO – liberalism, free trade and democracy – have been produced by the dual revolution at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. The Minister argues further that the dual revolution produced the two separate tracks – economic and political – which a century and a half later found their reflection in the LIO. V. Makei contends that the problem with the LIO lies precisely in its dual nature, which current political commentators scrutinising the LIO topic overlook.

The Minister goes on that the LIO's real problem is with its "democratic" track, because Western countries seek to impose their specific political domestic form of governance, that is, "democracy", on the rest of the world. V. Makei explains this trend by the West's adherence to the democratic peace theory.

V. Makei had previously touched on the theory in his essay on diversity. In the current piece he provides a more comprehensive narrative on how the theory is realised in practice. In particular, he contends that the democratic peace became a key tool in the US foreign policy arsenal, while its implementation serves only to polarise the world.

Interestingly, in an effort to form his own conclusions about the future prospects for the LIO the author

⁴Makei V. V. Emerging global system: embracing Diversity-Politik and partnerships // J. Manag. Public Policy. 2012. Vol. 12, No. 2. P. 70.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Makei V. V. Liberal international order: can it be saved in today's non-hegemonic world [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/liberal-international-order/> (date of access: 14.06.2023).

makes reference to A. Gramsci's hegemony theory. He states that the problem with the LIO is structural, because, as history shows, world orders (or rather regional orders if viewed in the historical perspective) thrived when they were underpinned by hegemonic states.

V. Makei's point is that today's discourse on the order takes place at a post-hegemonic time. Thus, those who keep insisting on the possibility of saving the order, which was relevant for a short-lived liberal hegemonic era in the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century, miss the point that a diverse world requires a new kind of international order. Therefore, he answers the question he himself posed in the title of his essay with the following sentence: "The liberal international order as a whole phenomenon cannot be saved for the simple reason that it does not reflect the fact of the world's diversity"⁷.

In accordance with his usual way of writing essays V. Makei cannot do without suggestions. So, he argues that two options are possible. First, the world can be structured along regional orders as used to be the case throughout much of history. Second, a truly global order, even in the absence of a global hegemon, is also possible. The way to proceed is to cultivate such an order, not to impose it. V. Makei wraps up with the idea to draft in the United Nations "a Charter for the World's Diversity in the XXI Century whereby all Member States in a concerted manner would be able to set out some key principles for governing international life in a non-hegemonic and very diverse world"⁸.

All in all, V. Makei's last essay can be fairly viewed as another major contribution to the elaboration and implementation of the President's 2005 initiative on the diversity of ways towards progressive development.

It was not just by means of his academic articles that Minister Makei expressed his views on developments in global politics. This topic has always been paramount in his consideration when the Minister addressed the United Nations General Assembly every year during his tenure. In his last such statement in September 2022, the Minister once again dwelt much on global politics, but admitted that establishing a fair multipolar world requires a "Copernican" paradigm shift in the minds of the West's political mainstream.

Summing up, Minister Makei took the President's initiative on diversity as a "guiding star" for the Belarusian foreign service in all its approaches to global politics. The Minister provided a sophisticated narrative for the initiative in his two large essays on diversity and the LIO. Furthermore, V. Makei came up with many specific proposals which realisation would make the world "safe for diversity", as he himself put in the very end of his article on diversity.

These proposals are bound to be in great demand sooner or later if the world is to steer away from the current turmoil. This specific intellectual legacy of V. Makei will then be properly credited by everyone involved in international relations.

*Y. G. Ambrazevich*⁹

HUMAN RIGHTS

Minister Makei used to say that when he became Minister of foreign affairs of the Republic Belarus in 2012 he had at once grasped that few issues on the global agenda had been as divisive as human rights while at the same time few matters were growing so much in importance worldwide as human rights. Naturally, he was keen to get to the bottom of this purported paradox, especially given the fact that since 2011 the United Nations Human Rights Council began adopting on an annual basis a resolution on the situation of human rights in Belarus.

Like to many other people, the situation with this resolution appeared extremely odd to the Minister. Indeed, on the one hand, anti-Belarus resolutions on human rights were not something new, as the United Nations Human Rights Commission used to adopt such documents in the first half of the previous decade. On the other hand, as part of the reform package in the context of the forthcoming United Nations summit in September 2005, the UN Human Rights Commission was closed down on the grounds that it

was perceived by an overwhelming majority of UN member states as a highly polarised and politicised entity. Therefore, the UN Human Rights Council, which replaced the mentioned commission and came into being in 2006, ostensibly abandoned the practice of politicised country-specific resolutions in favour of relying on the mechanism of the Universal periodic reviews that should be applied to all countries.

Armed with this background knowledge, V. Makei asked a natural question: "What had happened in Belarus in terms of human rights over the past 6–7 years that forced the UN Human Rights Council to revert to the discredited practice of country-specific resolutions of the now defunct commission". The answer was: "Nothing had happened". On the contrary, Belarus has been making steady progress in all dimensions of its internal development. So, the issue of human rights has been clearly politicised by Western countries. But what explained that inclination towards politicisation and what could be done to stop the practice?

⁷Makei V. V. Liberal international order: can it be saved in today's non-hegemonic world [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/liberal-international-order/> (date of access: 14.06.2023).

⁸Ibid.

⁹Yury G. Ambrazevich, deputy Minister of foreign affairs of the Republic of Belarus.
E-mail: y.ambrazevich@mfa.gov.by