

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 21<sup>st</sup> 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"<sup>7</sup>.

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"<sup>8</sup>.

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.

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## 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?

<sup>7</sup>Makei 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).

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

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Minister Makei provided crystal-clear answers to these and other similar questions in his large academic essay titled "Human rights: what and who made them divide the world?"<sup>10</sup> that appeared in a Moscow-based "Russia in Global Affairs" in May 2013. It was indeed an epic essay worthy both of a distinguished historian and a renowned political scientist, neither of which the Minister as a matter of fact was.

As V. Makei used to tell us, his colleagues, what he wanted to do in the article was to delve deeper – into the very origins of some societies and countries that most diverged on human rights with the hope of finding something that would explain their present opposite stances on human rights. So, with this in mind, he decided to analyse China, Russia, Turkey, European countries, and the United States of America.

The choice of sources for the research was really extraordinary. These included, among others, F. Fukuyama's "The origins of political order" (2011), N. Ferguson's "Civilisation: the West and the rest" (2011), S. P. Huntington's "The clash of civilisations and the remaking of world order" (1996), A. M. Schlesinger's "The cycles of American history" (1985), R. Niebuhr's "The irony of American history" (1952), F. Zakaria's "The post-American world and the rise of the rest" (2009).

Looking at this list of sources one cannot help avoiding the conclusion that V. Makei made a deliberate choice in favour of some renowned Western historians and political scientists. It means that from the time he conceived the idea of an article he saw the West as his primary audience. He certainly wanted to demonstrate that his work was not biased against the West. What is even more, he was keen to say to his audience in the West that they may dislike his article's conclusions, but these conclusions were entirely based on the findings of some of the West's most renowned academic figures.

The article itself is a well structured piece consisting of an introduction, a concise historical overview and a number of chapters devoted to the abovementioned countries and regions. In the beginning V. Makei clearly sets out the problem: "No other issue on the international agenda appears currently to be as much divisive and politicised as human rights. Indeed, international relations have been increasingly viewed and conducted through the prism of human rights. Some countries, more than others, have come to assume the mantle of human rights "defenders", and make political and economic relationships with other states contingent on the latter's observance of those human rights "standards", in which the former group allegedly excels"<sup>11</sup>.

The author argues that it is an "ideological" approach, because some countries try to prove that they are better and more worthy in something than others. At the same time, this "human rights bickering" presents

a dangerous phenomenon, not least because it distracts the world's attention from ever-rising transnational challenges like, among others, climate change.

The Minister states that the human rights debate is mainly about the primacy of specific categories of human rights. While in rhetoric all countries support the equality of all human rights categories, the practice, however, is different, as the industrially advanced nations traditionally put a very high premium on individual civil and political rights, whereas developing states advocate the supreme nature of collective economic, social and cultural rights.

Building on his sources, V. Makei convincingly demonstrates that the above division traces its origin far back to the specific historical development of particular societies, which, in turn, came to shape their contemporary governance structures and attitudes on human rights. So, diverse ultimate and proximate factors like, among others, geography, climate, resource and human endowment, historically served to forge China and Russia as centralised and collectivist societies, while the same, similar or other factors, however, when at play in Western Europe and North America, produced in the latter two parts of the world a kind of societies that put a premium on the opposites – on individualism and power decentralisation.

This point, in turn, allows V. Makei to make a key conclusion, which is: "If we can just better appreciate each other's historical circumstances of development, we will certainly be able to better understand each other's current approaches to human rights, and, hopefully, find ways to bridge the differences stemming from the human rights discourse that at present seem irreconcilable"<sup>12</sup>.

Indeed, if countries' attitudes have been historically constructed, they certainly cannot be easily changed. Therefore, the practice with human rights debate over the past two decades proves that an exercise of that kind was absolutely futile, because it is impossible to force some countries to change what has acquired over centuries strong indigenous cultural, religious, and other foundations.

Importantly, arguing against the West's human-rights crusade V. Makei never says that some countries are better than others. His point rather is that there are no ideal countries and that each can learn something from others. Therefore, the way to move the global human rights agenda forward is through cooperation, which can best be organised in the framework of the abovementioned Universal periodic review.

The article received a wide international acclaim. While some Western diplomats and policymakers provided some brief comments either in agreement or disagreement with the findings, no one dared challenge the

<sup>10</sup>Makei V. V. Human rights: what and who made them divide the world [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/human-rights-what-and-who-made-them-divide-the-world/> (date of access: 14.06.2023).

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

Minister's piece in a similar academic style. It indicates only one thing – that V. Makei has driven his point about human rights discourse absolutely right.

Surely, it was with this logic in mind that the Columbian University in the United States invited V. Makei to deliver a lecture based on his article in September 2013 in New York. The Minister drafted a lengthy text, preparing to give some interesting details in his research that did not find their way in the article. The lecture, regrettably, was not destined to be delivered as the Minister's schedule changed making it impossible for him to be in New York on the arranged day.

Generally, the article served to produce two follow-up developments. First, it reinforced the drive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus to draft reports on violations of human rights in some Western countries. The Ministry began this practice in 2012 as a response to the West's initiative to sponsor a resolution on the situation of human rights in Belarus at the UN Human Rights Council. But, with the clear message from V. Makei that there were no ideal countries on human rights, we, the Ministry's human rights experts were eager to provide sufficient evidence in support of it. Needless to say that V. Makei took a lively interest in all these reports by writing a foreword to each.

Second, it appeared that the Minister's appeal for human rights cooperation has gained some traction in the West, because in 2015 Belarus launched bilateral dialogues on human rights with both the United States of America and the European Union. In the course of the next few years we held a number of such dialogues, which featured frank exchanges and interesting discussions.

We were even discussing with Western counterparts how to wind down the practice of resolutions on the situation of human rights in Belarus at the UN Human Rights Council and arrived at some understanding on how that could be realised. The Minister always provided clear instructions to the delegations of Belarus for these dialogues. His points have consistently been the same: "Belarus always stands ready for dialogue

and cooperation on human rights. But we do not accept any preconditions for dialogue and cooperation. And we have nothing to prove on human rights to the West or justify ourselves"<sup>13</sup>.

To be sure, that nascent human rights cooperation with the West abruptly came to an end in the context of the events surrounding the Presidential election in Belarus, held in August 2020. As it is clear today, the West saw a strategic opportunity through a blitzkrieg-style colour revolution to force both a "regime change" in our country and its geopolitical reorientation towards the West. When it failed in its design, absolutely predictably, the West unleashed a veritable "human rights" storm against Belarus. Indeed, since 2020 the so-called Belarus' case on violations of human rights has been considered at virtually every session of the UN Human Rights Council. Thus, the West once again showed that the issue of human rights was nothing for it but a political instrument.

What comes to mind in this regard is the excellent quotation of American political scientist S. P. Huntington, which V. Makei used in his article: "The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion but rather by its superiority in applying organised violence. Westerners often forget this fact, non-Westerners never do"<sup>14</sup>. Unfortunately, this trend continues in today's tumultuous world. The West is bent on remaking the world in its own image using the issue of human rights as a tool to this end.

Human rights should not be an instrument in the West's geopolitical "great game", which may bring about a global catastrophe. Human rights should serve the purpose of guiding action by the world's countries that seek to improve the lives of their people. Heeding the comprehensive and compelling narrative that Minister Makei has presented in his seminal article on human rights a decade ago may surely help in steering the global human rights discourse in the right direction.

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## COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Perhaps, no other issue on the international agenda has been so much associated with Belarus than the topic of fighting trafficking in persons. Foreign diplomats often used to ask their Belarusian colleagues about what had motivated Belarus to play such a notable role in that area. We answered that undoubtedly it was our recognition of the problem in the late 1990s and the subsequent successful domestic campaign that virtually

eliminated the crime of human trafficking as an issue of serious concern to the public. Importantly, international organisations praised Belarus' achievements back then.

These factors much inspired us to try to do something useful against human trafficking at the international level. So, in his statement at the United Nations summit in 2005 the President of Belarus A. Lukashenko sent a powerful message to the international community

<sup>13</sup>Makei V. V. Human rights: what and who made them divide the world [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/human-rights-what-and-who-made-them-divide-the-world/> (date of access: 14.06.2023).

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

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