



VIKTORIYA ZAKREVSKAYA

A Bid for Cultural Recognition as an Argument in Strategic Policy Making on the International Level: Human Rights and 'Traditional Values'

As a panel description on human rights and traditional values states, on September 21st 2012 the Human Rights Council (HRC) in UN passed a highly controversial draft resolution under the heading “Promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of traditional values of humankind: best practices.” With the US and EU being resolutely opposed to this document on the ground of masking human rights abuses under the vague concept of traditional values, there are countries like Russia, China, Syria etc., which supported proposed initiative. Given that this particular

document has broader political context in a process of bargaining between states, can we claim that cultural diversity and politics of recognition applies to states as much as to individuals and is a matter of international politics?

If we look at activities at the UN Human Rights council as a more integral part of international political agenda, one might say that countries supporting the resolution might have had broader strategic reasons to adopt it.

To name just a few examples, the urgency of uprising in Syria and positions of Russia and China at the UN security Council go far beyond the question of Syria itself but rather re-articulates foreign and security policy priorities of two powers. Thus, Resolu-

tion adds to a necessary legal and administrative ground for further positional steps.

Further, The US Magnitsky law¹, which imposed a sanctions regime tackling high-ranked politicians in Russia reportedly responsible for serious abuses of human rights, has created a certain amount of re-action from Russia. These contra-steps are tackling problems in the area of human rights experienced in democratic states of the EU and the US, and are calling for better accountability². Moreover, introduction of the institute of Special Rapporteur on Human rights in countries of concern (such as , f.x. Syria, Belarus, Pakistan, etc,) adds to aforementioned re-actional behavior of states in international politics.

The question is whether this bid for equal partnership and 'cultural

recognition' in the area of human rights has serious effect on international policy-making? Which challenges does it pose? Might there be a threat to incumbent predominantly neo-liberal international regime?

The presentation is not aiming at answering these questions, it rather aims at inspiration through prolific discussion among participants.

¹ S. 1039 (112th): Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act of 2012, which imposed sanctions on persons responsible for the detention, abuse, or death of Sergei Magnitsky, for the conspiracy to defraud the Russian Federation of taxes on corporate profits through fraudulent transactions and lawsuits against Hermitage, and for other gross violations of human rights in the Russian Federation, and for other purposes. For full text with amendments follow: <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/112/s1039/text>

² See f.x. reports on human rights violations in the EU, or in the US prepared by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/F6501F42C40A25EE44257ACC004971FC

OR <http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/ns-dgpcp.nsf/8f29680344080938432569ea00361529/2ab49ff642baf0c244257aa000254663>