

The Geopolitics of Separatist Movements in Eurasia



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ABSTRACT

Historically, the struggle for global hegemony has seen geographical power centers move from one region to another. In the 15th and 16th centuries, maritime trade and sea power shifted the world's center of weight to the West. At that time Asia entered a period of stagnation. It has been observed that the transition of power is directly associated with the change of control of global production networks and trade routes. In the last quarter of the 20th century, the dynamism in the world economy at long last shifted back towards Asia. It is noteworthy that Western-based powers are now trying to block this development. The intensive efforts by Western powers to prevent the power center from shifting to Asia have turned into fierce competition in the Eurasian region. The forces that are parties to this competition have backed subversive activities as an effort to intervene in the internal affairs of countries with high potential to stand out, to protect their positions and defeat opponents. The forces that can resist similar destructive activities will take an active place in the new international system. Today, the instability created by separatist movements, which we currently observe as one of the most salient destructive activities, is a tool used by the prevailing hegemonic forces to exclude potential rivals in the race for hegemony.

Keywords: Destructive activities, Eurasia, geopolitics, hegemony struggle, international system.

THE STRUGGLE FOR GLOBAL HEGEMONY, experienced in various dimensions in different periods, has often led to a shift of power or control from a state or groups of states in a certain region to other states in another region. This shift is predicated upon a change of control in terms of production networks and trade routes. The countries controlling production networks and trade routes have also acquired leadership within the world system. In the context of the struggle for global hegemony, the end of the 14th century witnessed a power shift towards the West. In the 15th and 16th centuries, due to its power over the seas and maritime trade, the West emerged as the world center of attraction, while Asia entered into a process of inertia. This rise and fall were similar to Ibn Khaldun's depictions back in the 14th century, when a vacan-

cy left by one power was occupied by another within a hegemonic struggle (Khaldun, 1990).¹ Having observed the developments of the 1 20th century, Kennedy put forth a similar view, arguing that, as a result of competition, one power tended to give place to another (Kennedy, 1989). According to Abu Lughod, in the 17th century, the Central Asian–Anatolian–Mediterranean trajectory abandoned its centrality within the world system to the West, and Central Asia was rendered stagnant; as such, the East's regression paved the way for the rise of the West (Abu-Lughod, 1989: 338).²

In the 20th century, as dynamism in the world economy shifted to Asia (Dicken, 1998: 68; Hoge Jr., 2004), a new structure involving numerous power centers came to the fore; that is, the US-UK in the Western hemisphere, Germa-

¹ Regarded by some sociologists as the pioneer of sociology and the founder of the philosophy of history, Ibn Khaldun's (1332–1404) reflections on the rise and fall of societies and states shed light on the studies of many academics who developed theories on this subject in the 20th century. Also, for the process, see Gills & Frank, 1996a; Frank, 1978.

² Also see Frank, 1990.

In the last quarter of the 20th century, with the emergence of Eurasian areas of geopolitical competition, a new process began in military-political-economic rivalry over geographical areas with strategic resources.

ny in Europe, the Russian Federation in Western Asia, and China in Eastern Asia (Schaffer, 1998; Pant, 2004; Achcar, 2004; “Russia/China/India Axis”, 2005: 8). In the Cold War era following World War II, as the hegemonic power with access to the most significant financial profits in certain regions, the United States, along with its main allies (e.g. the UK and Israel), tried to develop new policies to secure hegemony. A 1992 Pentagon report points to alternative power centers as risk factors, and in an anxious tone, urges that preventing the emergence of potential future global rivals should be a major focus for US strategy (Tyler, 1992; New York Times, 1992). Thus, especially in regions that offered prospective economic alternatives with energy resources and energy transfer routes, the US committed destructive acts, explicitly or implicitly supporting the provoking of separatist groups.

Various Dimensions of Geopolitical Competition

At the onset of the 20th century, Western imperialists paid close attention to the relationship between region and politics (Hudson, 1977). During the Cold War, a new structure emerged predicated upon the US-USSR struggle for control over strategic world resources and regions. In this era, major regions controlled by these two states indicated the presence of two basic units

(Cohen, 1973; Cohen, 1992). With the dissolution of the USSR, the governments in Moscow encountered difficulties in controlling Russia’s own geographical area, which became adjacent to the US’s regional geopolitical subunit field. Moscow’s “Nearby Abroad” thus became “Nearby Abroad” of the US, being incorporated into Washington’s area of interest due to the race for newly opened markets. This development paved the way for a process of profound geopolitical competition.

In the last quarter of the 20th century, with the emergence of Eurasian areas of geopolitical competition, a new process began in military-political-economic rivalry over geographical areas with strategic resources. In the Cold War era, geopolitical discussions largely focused on the competition between the US and the Soviet Union as they sought to control world strategic resources (Mamadough, 2000; Taylor, 1993: 330; Tuathail, Dalby & Routledge, 1998; O’Sullivan, 1986).³

In the first quarter of the 21st century, new developments in Eurasia led to an increase in geopolitical competition in this region. States aiming to be part of this competition for controlling the region’s geopolitical areas embarked on an intense quest to find the most effective methods to achieve their goals. Seizing these processes of political uncertainty, especially pronounced in Eurasia, some separatist leaders took action to gain international support.

Although some define Eurasia as consisting only of certain Central Asian and neighboring countries, there are also studies that treat the whole region between China and Ukraine-Romania-Hungary as part of Eurasia (Abu-Lughod, 1989: 343–345; Hambly, 1969: xi; Adshead,

³ For a different approach to the relationship between geography and politics, see O’Loughlin, 2000.

1993: 3). These assessments define the Eurasian region in terms of its function in world history. Considering its role within the world system, Gills and Frank (1996b: 86) discussed Eurasia in tandem with the regions of China, India, and the Persian and Roman Empires. In fact, taking into account its historical role within the world system, Eurasia may well be recognized as the region surrounded by China, India, the Russian Federation, and Turkey.

Prior to his visit to South Asia in March 2000, then US president Bill Clinton declared that the region would possess the world's largest economic potential in the coming 50 years (*L.A. Times*, 2000).⁴ As oppressive actions justified on the grounds of such concepts as democracy and human rights were being imposed on countries such as China, J. K. Galbraith (1999: 15) made the following statement: "China does not have a Western style democracy, yet it can sustain basic needs for over one billion people". Zbigniew Brzezinski (1997a: 23), the National Security Advisor for then US President Jimmy Carter (1977–1981), regarded countries such as Russia and China as threats to US hegemony. Back then, Russia and China were often indicated as potential rivals in Eurasia (Achcar, 1998: 103).

In certain areas, central hegemonic states that are substantially dominant within the international system can overlook redefinitions of national boundaries in line with their own interests, unless a separatist movement threatens stability.

In the wake of the Cold War, and after the September 11 attacks in 2001, the US started to face difficulties in gaining control over natural gas and petroleum reserves in the nascent regions of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. It thus engaged in efforts to prevent its exclusion from transportation of resources around the Caspian basin (i.e. to the West via Russia, to the East via China, to the South via Iran).⁵ Following this goal, the US embarked on a strategy that put its mark on the last quarter of the 20th century, attempting to seize control over certain regions of Eurasia by manipulating separatist, ethnic, and religious movements. In tackling geopolitical problems, Washington's governance approach is known to resort to "controlled" instability as a tool for overcoming obstacles in the way of its hegemony. For this purpose, the US employs direct (military, etc.) or indirect (manipulating separatist groups, etc.) interventions, using internal instabilities as legitimizing pretexts when needed (Escobar, 2002).⁶

In the post-Cold War era, uncertainties in social and international systems have been regarded by separatist-ethnic group leaders as opportunities to provide social mobilization and, if possible, to find their own countries via procuring international support. In certain areas, central hegemonic states that are substantially dominant within the international system can overlook redefinitions of national boundaries in line with their own interests, unless a separatist movement threatens stability. Here, the essential goal is to seize control over present (or prospective) markets or engaging in efforts to obtain a share of them.

⁴ The former foreign secretary James Baker also characterizes this area as the world's most dynamic region.

⁵ For the subject of alternative pipelines, see., Amirahmadi, 2000; Miles, 1999.

⁶ Vidal posits that the September 11 attack can be regarded as the onset of such a legitimization process. See Vidal, 2002.

History reveals that, when an unstable environment generated by separatist-ethnic conflicts and rifts induced by such movements threatens the economic and strategic interests of hegemonic states and their allies on national or international levels, these states watch for an occasion to directly or indirectly interfere. Regardless of whether or not such an intervention has the potential to contribute to desired goals, such intervention would become inevitable (Touval, 1992: 272; Daalder, 1996). In turn, separatist and ethnic movements generally welcome external state interventions, based on economic and political grounds they reckoned on beforehand. Thus, using the increasing opportunities for communication, they try to attract the attention of governmental and nongovernmental organizations to garner their prospective support (Premdas, 1991: 13).

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, obstacles to US hegemony in the region diminished and Washington sought to exclude other states competing for hegemony. Frank and Jaber (1991: 46) indicate that interventions in the Middle East by the US and its allies were oriented towards preserving US hegemony in regions with rich petroleum resources. As this region held the world's most important petroleum deposits, the revenues of regional states had also major significance for Western countries (MEED, 1985: 39).⁷

Accordingly, controlling this region has been a necessity for preserving US global hegemony. Moreover, certain petroleum-producing Middle Eastern countries constitute the wor-

ld's most important buyers of arms; they procure their defense tools and services primarily from Western markets (Anderson & Rashidian, 1991: 55–71; Smith, 1990: 13–15; Wright, 2003). In the coming years, Middle Eastern countries are expected to spend billions of dollars on armaments. This fact reveals the extent of their contribution to Western defense industries and thereby economies, which have been lurching since the end of the Cold War (MEED, 1995a: 12; MEED, 1995b: 5).⁸

With the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the Soviet Union as a rival, an important obstacle was removed for the US to intervene in Iraq. Thus, the US, with the support of some social, regional and international allies, succeeded in preserving its hegemony by backing separatist-ethnic groups and creating a Kurdish area in northern Iraq. During this enterprise, Washington attempted to shape the region according to its economic, military and geostrategic calculations. However, local, regional and international factors obstructed the structure desired by the US.

The Conundrum of Separatism

The rise of separatist and ethnic movements at the end of the 20th century revealed how crises in social, regional and international systems provide a suitable environment for separatist leaders to organize internal and external support for their own interests (Heraklides, 1992: 40–42). In the wake of the Cold War, some states and organizations showed an unprecedented interest

7 Germany's exports to Iran and Saudi Arabia reached an annual amount of \$3 billion (see MEED, 1984: 62). Between 1980 and 1984, France's weapons sales to Iraq reached \$5 billion (see Ismael, 1986: 194). During the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq, Iraq spent \$178 billion on weaponry, while Iran spent \$81 billion. The US and UK were the main sellers to Iraq (see Gibson, 1990: 8–9).

8 In the wake of the Gulf War, in 1993, the US's biggest arms deals were with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Saudi Arabia ordered \$9.5 billion worth of warplanes from the McDonnell Douglas company, while Kuwait made a \$2.2 billion deal with the General Dynamics firm to buy battle tanks (see Johar & Bahgat, 1995:180).

in defending the human rights of minorities. These states and organizations, in turn, devoted strong efforts to assessing the opportunities that these issues could offer them within the Eurasian region (Malek, 1989). As at the end of the Gulf War, developments in this region brought many separatist-ethnic movements to international attention (Gunter, 1993: 313; Freedman, 1991: 201–202; Bölükbaşı, 1991; *The Times*, 1991; *International Herald Tribune*, 1991; *Sunday Times*, 1991; *Newsweek*, 1991). United Nations Security Council Resolution 688 (adopted on April 5, 1991), intended to contribute to international peace and security, also paved the way for interventions in the internal affairs of states that seriously violated human rights (Moynihan, 1993: 67–68). Leaders of ethnic-separatist movements, regarding this development as an opportunity, raised their demands for preserving their cultural, linguistic and ethnic identities, and pushed for autonomy or the building of federations.

In the first quarter of the 21st century, Eurasia, geopolitically prioritized by the West, has been the region where separatist-ethnic movements have been exploited most intensely.

When a separatist-ethnic movement arose in a “peripheral” country, certain core countries tried to act as intermediaries to find solutions, or alternatively to impose their own solutions. Inequalities in economic and military power can facilitate the imposition of certain outcomes in favor of core states. This situation has formed within a framework of local, regional or great-power competition or cooperation (Nagel, 1993: 103,108,110; Entessar, 1984).

In the first quarter of the 21st century, Eurasia, geopolitically prioritized by the West, has been the region where separatist-ethnic movements have been exploited most intensely. The Western world, exhibiting solidarity among prominent states, has continued to directly or indirectly intervene in separatist-ethnic activities, according to its own interests.⁹

Touval 9 (1992: 272) states that international powers withdrew from taking important steps to find solutions to certain conflicts that seem to clash with their interests. Anthony Lake (1994), the national security advisor to Bill Clinton, made the following statement regarding interventions in Iraq, Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda: “Let’s be clear. Preserving peace is not the center of the US foreign policy or defense policy. The main mission of our military forces is not to organize peace operations but to win wars” (Lake, 1994).

Between 1991 and 1995, Washington preferred to stand off from the conflict in Yugoslavia, leaving involvement to European countries. In the middle of 1995, the Clinton administration decided to intervene in developments in Balkans, due to concerns that nonintervention would shake NATO’s efficiency and prestige in the broader European region (Art, 1998/1999: 108–109; Holbrooke, 1998: 356–360). Thus, it might be said that NATO operated to detain Russia, to keep the US in Europe and to bring Germany under control. Similarly, the presence of natural gas resources in the East Timor Sea attracted the interest of Western and Australian companies, leading to the formation of a UN peacekeeping force to keeping the provoked instability under control. This move ultimately resulted in the recognition of East Timor’s independence by the UN (Nel-

⁹ Regarding the US attitude to the Yugoslavian conflict, the US Secretary of State of the period stated that for the first time since 1930, the US deliberately withdrew from a crisis in the Balkans due to its changing interests. (see Binder, 1992).

son, 1991; Glassman, 2003: 272; Anderson, 2006: 63–67; Schofield, 2005: 262–277; Cotton, 2005; Pietsch, 2010; Dickens, 2001).

Separatist-ethnic movements such as the IRA (Irish Republican Army) in the Northern Ireland region of the United Kingdom and ETA (Euskadi ta Askatasuna—Basque Homeland and Liberty) in Spain did not receive any toleration from Western developed countries. For these regions, London and Madrid’s demands were prioritized. Conversely, in the Middle East, Western imperialist centers continued to use separatist groups as “pawns” to take advantage of regional and international developments (Hiltermann, 1992: 620–622).¹⁰



The terrorist attack against the police station in the Lukiang Town of Sinciang Uygur Autonomous Region organized by separatist movements in 2013 (Xinhua).

The US is also known to support groups such as the YPG (People Protection Troops) organically connected with the PKK in Syria (Reuters, 2019). Similar developments had also occurred in the past. For instance, in 1962, Mullah Mustafa Barzani gave the following statement to the New York Times: “First let the US provide us with mil-

itary support and help us become an autonomous region. Then, we shall become your loyal friend in the Middle East” (Shareef, 2014: 138).

Explicit or implicit support to separatist movements was, moreover, linked to certain conditions, rendering some separatist movements rather vulnerable to negative developments within their regions (Smith, 1981: 198–199). The US regarded some groups as threats to the regional order deemed important for controlling energy resources vital to Western markets’ stability. The threats coming from these groups were also combated via regional cooperation (Freedman, 1991: 205, 208). Yet in the past,

its hegemonic status notwithstanding, the US failed to obtain Turkey’s support in realizing its plans for Iraq (Hashim, 1995: 47–49; Reich, 1991).

In the wake of the Gulf War, the Kurdish rebellion in Iraq was encouraged to destabilize the Baghdad government. Nonetheless, to keep it from falling under Iran’s regional influence, the US preferred a centralist Iraqi state over a disintegrated one (Frank & Jaber, 1991: 59–61; Gurr, 1993: 22, fn. 20; Muzaffar, 1993: 77–96). While separatist-ethnic Kurdish nationalism threatened the territorial integrity of states in the region, this was also accompanied by these states’ diplomatic and military interventions. Turkey, in this sense, militarily intervened in northern Iraq and Syria. Wary of their future effect, Iran, too, became involved in regional developments. Ankara continued meeting with Iraqi and Syrian representatives, whenever it saw this as fitting Turkey’s interests (Azadi, 1992; Milliyet, 1994).

Likewise, the US considers the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (Eastern Turkistan) significant as it has geopolitical goals there. Xinjiang is China’s most important gateway to Pakistan and thus to the Indian Ocean. In the 1970s,

¹⁰ According to the PKK leader Ocalan, the war between Iran and Iraq provided a suitable environment for social and national movements in the region (see Ocalan, 1992: 296. Also see Olson, 1992).

the US-UK front favored India against Pakistan, providing it with nuclear-weapons technology; after that, the intimacy between Pakistan and China began. The US, then, reckoned that China's access to the Indian Ocean could be prevented via Xinjiang's detachment or by perpetuating the conflict there.

The US is known to directly or indirectly support separatist demands in Xinjiang, to provoke the Uyghurs and to support the "East Turkistan Government in Exile" and the "Uyghur American Association" based in the US. The National Endowment for Democracy, founded in 1983 under President Ronald Reagan to extend US-style democracy, and supported by the US Congress, is known to help the Uyghur Human Rights Project.

The rapprochement between China and Pakistan (Malik, 2011: 3–5) served to balance India as an ally of the US and the UK. It should also be considered that, for China, the Xinjiang region is an important corridor for accessing energy resources, especially in the Caspian basin (Van Wie Davis, 2008: 9). The 935-km pipeline between Kazakhstan and the Xinjiang Autonomous Region was completed in December 2005 (Raballand & Genté, 2008: 16). The US is known to directly or indirectly support separatist demands in Xinjiang, to provoke the Uyghurs and to support the "East Turkistan Government in Exile" and the "Uyghur American Association" based in the US. The National Endowment for Democracy, founded in 1983 under President Ronald Reagan to extend US-style democracy, and supported by the US Congress, is known to help the Uyghur Human Rights Project. Radio

Free Asia (an extension of Radio of Free Europe or RFE, which was founded to produce propaganda against the Soviet Union), and human rights organization such as the London-based Amnesty International and the US-based Human Rights Watch, are also known to support separatists by disseminating information (Debatata, 2010: 55–73; Millward, 2004: 22–28).

To prevent China from becoming an alternative economic power center, the US and the West in general are involved in activities to induce disorder in Xinjiang area. They have also sought to support social provocations to disrupt relations between Beijing and Hong Kong (a trade center transferred from the UK to China), so that the latter can continue acting as the operation center of UK-based Western capital. By creating disorder in the area, the US and its allies also aimed to prevent transfer of underground resources in the Caspian region to Western markets via Russia. This transfer takes place via the pipeline through Chechnya in northern Caucasia (Brzezinski, 1997b: 140). Accordingly, Zbigniew Brzezinski (1997c: 57) had stated that the US should support the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline for its own interests.

As Washington aims to control energy resources via the pipeline through Azerbaijan, Turkey and Georgia, the completion of NATO's expansion into Georgia and Azerbaijan would also ensure the military protection of energy resources. Another containment policy against the Russian Federation was also on the agenda. In the first quarter of the 20th century, the UK feared Bolshevik Russia's influence being extended to the south and intended to build a barrier against this. Halford Mackinder raised concerns about the British Empire's future and sought measures to protect it (Blouet, 2004: 328). To this end, he prepared a report stressing the importance of the



Map showing the infrastructure pipeline, railway and transportation corridor of China and Central Asian regions.

Khazar-Caucasian region as a barrier (O’Hara & Heffernan, 2006: 66). India was also regarded by London as part of this barrier against Russia (O’Hara & Heffernan, 2006: 67).

In his book entitled *Diplomacy*, the former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (1994: 814) pointed out that Mackinder designated Russia as Eurasia’s geopolitical hearth. The policy advocated by Brzezinski and Kissinger for creating buffer states around Russia to limit its activities was put into practice in the last quarter of the 20th century (Lieven, 1999: 309). Graham Fuller (1994: 130), a former vice president of the US National Information Council and an official at RAND Research Foundation, defined the Khazar-Black Sea line as Russia’s economic area of influence, and indicated that preventing Russia’s expansion was a national interest for the US. In his work *Strategic Depth*, Prof. A. Davutoglu wrote the following: “A cooperation among Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan against Russia regarding the Caspian Sea, must be one of the bases of Turkey’s Middle East policy” (Davudođlu, 2001: 181).

This statement seemed to be in line with Washington’s regional plans and was quite similar to the efforts of Mackinder over 110 years ago to preserve British imperialism.

It was predicted that the expanded NATO and the European Union would serve similar geopolitical needs to those of the US (Brzezinski, 1997c: 53). The participation of Ukraine in these organizations was expected to fulfill this goal. However, Moscow succeeded in preventing both of these enterprises. Nireiver, Georgia was seen by the US as a country that could play a complementary role on the Turkey-Azerbaijan line. After President Shevardnadze gave a statement to the *Financial Times*, which indicated Georgia’s wish to enter NATO, the Russian Foreign Ministry declared on October 26, 1999 that NATO’s expansion into Caucasia would not contribute to stability in the European-Atlantic region (Russian Federation/Chechnya, 1999).

Core states do not have the full power to engage in regional operations and shape regional developments in their interests without securing the cooperation of regional powers. In the past,

when needed, Iran and Turkey were able to play significant roles to protect US regional interests (e.g. purging anti-Western Islamic movements in the region). Washington continues its regional and international efforts to diminish Iran's regional influence. As Steinbach (1980: 27) indicates, there is a direct correlation between regional instability and international interests. When targeted states adopt an oppressive orientation against separatist movements' violent acts, the question of human rights violations is often brought up, and is usually used as a pretext for international actors to directly or indirectly participate in developments.¹¹

Imposition of "Human Rights" and "Democracy"

Regarding international interventions, the most important arguments used by the US-led coalition center on the concepts of human rights and democracy. In supporting uprisings in the Arab region, this coalition claimed to be advancing human rights and emancipating people from authoritarian regimes (Nixon, 2011). As Anthony Lake, the US National Security Council Director, stated in 1995: "We are fighting for democracy because the wider its pool, the more security and well-being we will have" (Ikenberry, 1999: 60). By contrast, Brzezinski had indicated that there should be no rush to democratize the Middle East, as an election in Saudi Arabia could result in victory for Usame Bin Ladin (Brzezinski, 2004: 16).

Different parts of the world with different historical experiences to the West have varying approaches in terms of human rights. For example, African thought stresses social harmony and maintenance of order (Okere, 1984: 145–146),¹² while the advance of industrial capitalism in some Western societies usually produced an individualist conception. The traditional Chinese approach prioritizes common rights and responsibilities. However, for a certain period of time, a particular understanding aiming at the salvation of humankind that saw the Western-based arguments as extensions of imperialist plans was also effective, alongside traditional notions ("Notes on the Human", 1979: 17–18).¹³ Due to its own historical experiences, China generally supports human rights campaigns if they are in opposition to imperialism, hegemony, colonialism and racism (Kim, 1979: 161, 484–486, 493). In Islamic thought, based on obeying divine authority, social responsibility precedes individualist quests (Said, 1979: 63–66; Khadduri, 1946: 78–79).

As Habermas posited, the West's own understanding of human rights, which it propagates according to its own liberal internationalism, is "neither the only, nor the best answer" (Habermas & Rehg, 1998: 169). Yet according to liberals, liberal regimes are the best forms to preserve human rights and to serve citizens' interests. While Fukuyama (1992) asserts that liberal states are the best forms in political and civil respects, Kissinger (2001: 252) opines that the

11 From the 1970s onwards, the US clearly declared that it intended to maintain its influence in the Gulf region. According to the Carter Doctrine, while the petroleum industry had to be secured, the region also had to be protected from Soviet influence by safeguarding moderate states there. The factor of petroleum makes the US's struggle to reign in the region inevitable (see Gowan, 1991: 47–48). According to Jahar and Bahgat, as the largest petroleum consumer, the US has explicit interests in procuring petroleum from the Gulf region. Therefore, Washington will not allow any challenge that might threaten US interests in the region (See Johar & Bahgat, 1995: 174. Table 2. Also see Khashan & Harik, 1992: 154).

12 In the Banjul Agreement of June 1981, The Organization of African Union (OAU) prioritized definitions such as national solidarity, independence and harmonious development of the family.

13 When reminded of the then US President Clinton's remarks that concerning human rights, China was on the wrong side of history, Zemin (the then President of the Peoples Republic of China) indicated that different countries had different historical and cultural traditions as well as varying levels of economic development. Thus he posited that propositions regarding human rights should be in line with countries' own conditions (see www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/asia/july-dec97/china).

best and most reasonable option for the world lies in an economic and political structure similar to the US style. Yet both of these approaches ignore the peculiarity of economic and social conditions in other countries. This understanding may lead to the conclusion that liberal democracies should make every effort to construct a world order where liberalism is applied everywhere. This approach, in turn, is obviously open to a dangerous interpretation of “liberal imperialism”, meaning that to establish liberal institutions, every method, including power, may be seen as just (Miller, 2000).

Many people working on human rights, especially in wealthy developed Western countries, tend to disregard alternative opinions on universal principles.¹⁴ Discussions on liberties and requirements for human rights can only flourish in cases of mutual agreement (Frost, 1999: 55; Shue, 1996: 35). If parties try to impose their own propositions at the very onset of these discussions, the process will be harder.

The restricted definitions and practices of human rights pursued by developed Western countries (i.e. prioritizing certain political rights rather than basic economic needs) justly provoke doubts in developing peripheral countries (Habermas, 1998: 169). Questions arise regarding what lies behind such definitions and practices. Efforts to internationalize liberal capitalism result in economic predicaments, malfunctions in democracy and an increase in human rights violations (Timur, 1999: 243–244).

Governments that fail to provide basic social, economic and political rights to their citizens inevitably find themselves in a dead end. Rising economic, social and political demands may complicate the provision of balance between

“justice” and “order”. Governments straining to meet demands for basic needs can attempt to repress social reactions by resorting to violence. In such instances, the question of human rights is put into discussion. Apart from being used as a critique of practices that might be performed by security units, such as violence, arbitrary detainment or torture (so that certain individual rights are not violated), the notion of human rights also involves the right to freely express and mobilize for political views, opposition to exploitation, the right to freedom of movement and the right to found associations or unions (Halliday, 1991; Beitz, 1979; O’Neil, 1991). Actors disagree over how to define each of these rights. Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, the formulation of certain social and international norms is needed, based on a consensus that everyone has inviolable rights (Linklater, 1990: 201).

If in the wake of a struggle for minority rights, a successful outcome may boost ethnic group rights at the expense of individual rights, but the latter can find themselves in a new repressive environment.

Many separatist movements have succeeded in attracting the attention of governments and nongovernmental organizations by arguing that the human rights of their own ethnic groups are being violated. Leaders of these separatist movements have claimed to have different identities, and therefore to have suffered discriminatory and unjust policies inflicted by central authorities. To obtain concessions, these figures even demanded embargos against their governments.

¹⁴ Bessis makes the following statement: “It is high time Westerns comprehend that others too can share universal principles without necessarily wishing to resemble them in every aspect” (see Bessis, 2000: 34).

In different periods, countries such as Turkey, Iran, the Russian Federation and China have faced such impositions. When issues such as embargos or aid are brought up, concepts such as democracy and human rights are employed as justifications. Yet according to Conteh-Morgan (1990: 25), the US external aid program has neither fostered human rights nor helped strengthen democracy.

Rather than adopting a concessionary attitude, the government of a certain country may pursue repressive policies which might complicate existing disagreements. Some separatist movements are quite content when central governments respond to violence with violence. After all, these instances bring up claims of human rights violations and attract the attention of international organizations.

The United Nations General Assembly accepted a resolution in December 1992 regarding the rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic minority groups. According to its first article, states are responsible for protecting minorities' national/ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identities in their own regions (Newland, 1993: 92–93). Yet, this article does not discuss the rights of the individual. If in the wake of a struggle for minority rights, a successful outcome may boost ethnic group rights at the expense of individual rights, but the latter can find themselves in a new repressive environment. Minority rights may clash with individuals' rights in certain situations. Securing a minority group's rights via granting it autonomy also means preventing individuals from freely deciding on their futures independent of their ethnic identities. In this way, individuals cannot escape from being imprisoned in yet another undesired environment.

In some cases, governments do not comply with international organizations' definitions of human rights, finding them contradictory with

their own definition (Rady, 1993: 720–722). It is also the case that these interests usually vary dependent on parties' perceptions, and that human rights are defined differently in different times and places. These discussions entail questions about order and justice, because for stability to exist, there must be a balance between the two. What are the criteria of justice? What do we understand by this term? As much as we can be willing to comply with rules, these must be agreed upon and open to constant renegotiation and redefinition when needed. An order where a single understanding has the monopoly on judging others cannot be accepted. No culture can be essentially right or wrong as every system has an inherent basic logic. Each culture possesses at least some truths, yet no culture can be claimed to include all truths.

In an environment where disagreements and oppressive practices continue, achieving economic development becomes increasingly difficult. For economic development to be secured, it is evident that the necessary infrastructure should be put in place, which in turn entails human rights and basic needs as an inseparable whole (Vincent, 1986: 86). In an environment where international rules are generally arranged in line with core states' interests, organizations (e.g. Amnesty International) controlled by these states continue to impose their understanding of human rights on non-Western countries.

Conclusion

Long-term socioeconomic and political unrest has either resulted in the emergence of organized violence or in protest activities seeking to influence central authorities' policies and alter certain legal laws and practices, as in the case of many separatist-ethnic movements. Rawls (1973: 364–368, 371–377) states that, when pos-

sibilities to rectify an unfair practice via legal means die out, certain civil disobedience activities may be justified. By comparison, Habermas (1985: 100) posits that states can expect their citizens to comply with existing laws as long as they are worth following. Such approaches are usually forefronted in the case of non-Western social movements, and frequently when provoked events turn violent, international interventions are enabled.

Those states (e.g. China, the Russian Federation) that are economically and politically in a position to oppose core states' decisions have the capacity to resist any decision against their interests. But states that are economically dependent (due to markets) on traditional hegemonic centers (i.e. the US and its designated allies) find it difficult to do so.

received the support of the US and its designated allies (Premdas, 1991: 19–20). Amnesty International has closely collaborated with the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office over human rights violations in developing countries (Christiansen & Dowding, 1994: 15). For instance, the institution's reports about human rights violations in China were submitted to the British Government and later used by former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1979–1990) as an element of leverage against the Beijing Government (Christiansen & Dowding, 1994: 20–21). Separatist movements, on their part, have tried to abuse such institutions to garner support for their own activities and have placed a priority on fostering their relations with them to act against their central governments.

In an international environment where socioeconomic and political consensus is low, hegemonic powers and their allies also reduce prospects of compromise with separatist movements, while trying to satisfy their demands or impositions. We are in a process which entails efforts to prioritize elements that can facilitate people's access to their basic needs. This process also has the potential to establish an alternative social and international system. Unless a just restructuring of national and international economic and political systems is ensured, social, economic and political inequalities in different parts of the world will continue to threaten regional and international stability.

In order to maintain their military activities in Eurasia, the US and its allies will try to preserve their competitive power in political and economic realms. To this end, they will develop distinct relations with Berlin, Moscow, Beijing, New Delhi and Tokyo while concomitantly trying to prevent cooperation amongst them. The



THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF Human Rights

WHEREAS recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

WHEREAS disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

WHEREAS it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

WHEREAS it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations among nations,

WHEREAS the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have

determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

WHEREAS Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

WHEREAS a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

SIXTY-THIRD THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY **ADOPTS** this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

*The universal declaration of human rights
10 December 1948.*

By influencing national and international public opinion, institutions such as Amnesty International have engaged in impositions, particularly on non-Western governments, for “them to respect human rights to avoid economic and military embargo”. Yet such institutions have only succeeded to the extent that they have

future of Eurasia will directly depend on issues to be prioritized by regional countries.

Competing powers or actors have either opposed various demands or tried to adapt to new developments in case of failure. In the current process, the competing powers and capacities of social and international actors will decide whether the demands of separatist movements, operating on a new level, will succeed or fail.

Efforts to reconfigure the Eurasian region are also accompanied by high costs. These costs are predicted to be laid upon non-Western countries. Yet given the emerging social reactions, here too, difficulties are expected. Moreover, given the efforts of the US and its designated allies to preserve their status, the rising competition in Eurasia will most probably have a distressing quality. 🌱

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