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Abstract and Keywords

Human rights historians have made two erroneous arguments concerning self-determination: first, that anticolonial movements used the discourse of self-determination primarily for instrumental goals, and to achieve broader goals, eg, economic development, racial equality. Second, that, by the 1960s, self-determination's fiercest advocates in the Global South had reduced the principle cum-right 'to the receipt of statehood and perpetual non-intervention thereafter,' diluting its liberal, democratic implications. Both arguments, this chapter argues, oversimplify the myriad ways in which a variety of state and non-state actors deployed self-determination claims to envision sovereignty and human rights in the era of decolonization, where self-determination was a form of claim making about the nature and scope of post-colonial rights and sovereignty, an open-ended, rather than a fixed, concept. This essay focuses on UN debates, over the status of self-determination as a human right, among colonial powers and anti-colonial activists concerning the proper 'form' that self-determination could/ should take.

Keywords: Self-determination, human rights, decolonization, nationalism, revolution, non-alignment, war, United States

Introduction

Speaking on the eve of Ghana's independence in November 1956, Gold Coast Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah proclaimed to his future countrymen that 'if we can make a success of our independence, we shall have made an incalculable contribution towards freedom and progress throughout Africa. We must show that it is possible for Africans to rule themselves, to establish a progressive and independent state and to preserve their national unity. The struggle for self-determination which was started by our forebears is in our time coming to a successful end.'[1] Nkrumah's vision of self-determination through a unitary government, however, was not the only one on offer. Members of the National Liberation Movement (NLM), a mass political organization founded in 1954 and claiming to represent the force of Asante nationalism, denounced the 'black imperialism' of Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP) and advanced a competing demand for national self-determination, either through secession or the creation of an Asante autonomous region, before being taken over by more moderate nationalist forces who transformed it into a conventional political party.[2]

The struggle over the shape that a future Ghana (or some other political formation) might take highlights the simple fact that there was no common understanding of the idea of 'self-determination,' the demand voiced by countless anticolonial movements and activists from the end of the First World War until well into the 1970s, when the era of formal European colonialism shuddered to a close. Like human rights more broadly, the meaning of self-determination as a human right in the 1960s and 1970s was fractured and contested along lines that transcended neat East–West or North–South divides. It emerged from political, ideological, and sometimes even military conflict, with a multiplicity of actors seeking to enlarge or constrain it to suit their own purposes.

Historians of human rights have thus far made two erroneous arguments concerning self-determination. First, they have argued that anticolonial movements used the discourse of self-determination primarily for instrumental goals (and primarily in instrumental fora), and as merely one arrow in a quiver of tactics for achieving broader goals, including economic development and racial equality. 'Outside the United Nations,' Jan Eckel has argued, 'it was never applied more than tentatively … part of a more general "subaltern" logic with which political and social groups in the colonies used metropolitan discourses in order to employ them against the colonial powers and demand that the latter practice what they preach.'

Second, they have insisted that self-determination's fiercest advocates in the Global South by the 1960s had reduced the principle cum-right 'to the receipt of statehood and perpetual non-intervention thereafter,' thereby irrevocably diluting its liberal, democratic implications.[3] Both arguments, this chapter argues, oversimplify the myriad ways in which a variety of state and non-state actors deployed self-determination claims to envision sovereignty and human rights in the era of decolonization. Self-determination, in other words, was a form of claim making about the nature and scope of post-colonial

rights and sovereignty, an open-ended contest rather than a fixed concept. To illustrate these claims, this essay focuses on UN debates over the status of self-determination as a human right, debates among colonial powers and anti-colonial activists concerning the proper 'form' of self-determination could and should take—including possible federation, secession or non-self-government—and debates over the nature and scope of 'economic self-determination.'

Origins and Institutionalization

Historians have traced the origins of ideas about self-determination to the French Declaration of the Rights of Man, the American Declaration of Independence, nineteenth-century German philosophy, and late nineteenth-century Marxism. Early twentieth-century radicals and nationalists were among the first to frame self-determination in anticolonial terms as the right to independence from imperial rule.

US President Woodrow Wilson helped to popularize self-determination as a way of voicing sovereignty claims when he suggested at the end of the First World War that people subjected to imperial governance had the right to self-rule. His words helped to galvanize many activists, who appropriated it to lend legitimacy to the anticolonial protests and revolts which erupted amidst wartime political and economic dislocation.[4] Anticolonial radicals, however, often couched their demands in the context of a broader critique of capitalism and imperialism and the economic exploitation they entailed. Wilson, on the other hand, viewed self-determination in liberal terms, as first and foremost a political act that would create independent nation-states, but only for those considered fit for self-rule in racial or civilizational terms. Wilson's vision also posed a challenge for anticolonial leaders who sought transnational solidarities and framed their claims, as some Muslim activists did, in religious, rather than ethnic or nationalist terms.

European and US leaders at the Paris Peace Conference rejected the expansive self-determination claims of anticolonial activists while colonial officials and armies put down their revolts, but this hardly settled the matter. During the interwar period a wide range of groups and movements continued to frame their aspirations and demands in these terms, though some adopted the language of Marxism rather than anticolonial liberaliam. Self-determination lacked legal standing in international law and remained ill-defined, and was thus open to appropriation and redefinition to suit diverse needs. Anticolonial activists in League of Nations Mandate Territories, Pan-African and Pan-Asian thinkers, and African-American Communists in the southern United States kept the idea alive and in circulation.[5]

Charter and Covenants

As had been the case two decades before, the outbreak of war in Europe and Asia in the late 1930s and the temporary collapse of European empires galvanized anticolonial activists everywhere, many of whom again loudly demanded self-rule. Hoping to motivate British and US citizens, and perhaps dampen these anticolonial calls, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and US President Franklin Roosevelt in August 1941 jointly proclaimed the Atlantic Charter (the 'Charter'), which pledged the Allied powers to 'respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live' and 'see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them'.[6]

Anticolonial activists seized upon the Charter's promises to describe and lend legitimacy to their ongoing struggles, but also recognized its limits. The African National Congress in 1943 concluded that the Charter reaffirmed the principle of self-determination, and applied both to colonies and to peoples subjected to minority rule. The Charter's call for postwar economic cooperation and equal access to raw materials for all nations, however, seemed 'likely to bring about a continuation of the exploitation of African resources to the detriment of her indigenous inhabitants and the enrichment of foreigners'.[7] Two years later, as he declared Vietnam's independence, Ho Chi Minh declared, 'We are convinced that the Allied nations, which at Tehran and San Francisco have acknowledged the principles of self-determination and equality of nations, will not refuse to acknowledge the independence of Vietnam'.[8]

The United States sought after 1941 to embrace self-determination as a basic principle of global order, while simultaneously narrowing its scope and meaning. In doing so, US officials, scholars, and others advanced a limited vision self-determination as popular self-rule, rather than as a right held by all colonized peoples. Britain, like most colonial powers, insisted that 'rights' inhered in individuals and not in collectively identified 'peoples,' that self-determination was a principle, not a right, and that this principle imposed no legal obligation on states.

Both powers, therefore, worked to delete references to self-determination in the United Nations Charter, before bowing under strong pressure from Latin American and non-western states. Anticolonial movements, many postcolonial states, and their socialist allies offered a more radical vision of self-determination encompassing economic as well as political sovereignty, embracing national liberation as a means to achieve it, and predicated on full and rapid decolonization of European empires.

For example, most anti-colonial movements and their post-colonial brethren recognized that the achievement of political self-determination did not guarantee economic sovereignty. The issue was of course central to the hopes of states emerging from colonialism or dominated by foreign firms for autonomous development that would lead to their integration with the world economy on fairer terms. This meant, first and

foremost, challenging the continued control of their economies by former colonial powers, foreign firms, multilateral institutions that shaped the framework for the disbursement of development assistance, and a global trading and legal system that favored the needs of advanced industrial economies and the companies residing in them over those countries dependent on producing primary products. Over the course of the next four decades a wide range of actors, from anticolonial leaders in Asia and Africa to Latin American diplomats to African American and Native American activists, would deploy claims to economic self-determination as a political principle, a human right, and as a way of envisioning sovereignty in an increasingly integrated world economy.

Debates over the scope and meaning of self-determination raised a series of thorny questions, especially for anticolonial activists: Was self-determination a principle or a right, and if so, for whom: individuals, ethnic or national groups, all peoples living within the boundaries of a former colonial territory, or something else entirely? Was it primarily an act (as of decolonization) or a process (of democratic self-rule), and was it confined to politics or did it also encompass economic and cultural life? Furthermore, did it encompass the right to secede from establish states?[9]

These questions were of existential importance for anticolonial movements, many of which claimed to represent ethnically and culturally heterogeneous territories with restive minorities that themselves sought self-determination. The 1948 UNDHR did not resolve these debates because it excluded self-determination as a human right, an important reason why anti-colonial movements seized on the latter and not the former as the ideological framework for national liberation struggles. Beginning in the early 1950s, however, non-western states sought to institutionalize its status in the UN human rights machinery, working through the Human Rights Commission and the General Assembly's Third (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) and Fourth (Special Political and Decolonization) Committees.[10]

Mounting support within the UN General Assembly for self-determination was reflected in a string of landmark resolutions. In 1950, Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan sponsored a UN resolution requesting the Human Rights Commission to 'study ways and means which would ensure the right of peoples and nations to self-determination', and the next year these same countries, joined by Burma, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, the Philippines, Syria and Yemen, voted in favour of adding to the proposed human rights covenants a provision stating that 'all peoples have the right to self-determination'.[11] It soon became clear that, despite the opposition of the US and other Western nations a majority of non-Western and newly independent countries supported inclusion of a right to self-determination in the human rights covenants, and that they envisioned extending far beyond mere politics to include economic and cultural sovereignty.

In 1960, a coalition of African and Asian states in the General Assembly secured passage of the landmark Resolution on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The Declaration formally established self-determination as 'the legal foundation

for the establishment of the sovereign state from the colonial territory' while rejecting arguments about primitivism and backwardness as a basis for continued colonial rule, though countries of all ideological stripes continued to make them.[12]

Five years later the UN adopted the legally binding International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, linking Apartheid with decolonization and self-determination and breaching an opening in the wall of state sovereignty though which a generation of human rights NGOs would later enter. The following year, culminating a decade of negotiations, the General Assembly adopted the Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article I of which began with the famous phrase: 'All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development'.[13]

The institutionalization of self-determination in the UN machinery was the product, not the cause, of the dramatic wave of decolonization and the transformation of the UN made possible by an expanded membership. While the General Assembly and its newly independent members voted overwhelmingly in favour of both human rights covenants, many Western and European states did not. Britain, like most colonial powers, insisted that 'rights' inhered in individuals and not collectively identified 'peoples,' that self-determination was a principle, not a right, and that this principle imposed no legal obligation on states.[14] The dramatic shift in the membership of the General Assembly, however, forced a reconsideration of imperial powers' views, or at least the optics surrounding them, as debates about self-determination began 'affecting the legitimacy of empire,' thus contributing 'to making colonial rule untenable'.[15]

Shortly after approving the human rights covenants (the overwhelming votes for which gave them the whiff, if not the substance, of international law), the General Assembly began considering what eventually became the 1970 'Declaration of the Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in Accordance with the Charter of the United Nations'.[16] Surveying the political landscape among the nations of the Nonaligned Movement, the British Foreign Office now concluded 'that we have more to gain than lose from conceding the existence of some form of right to self-determination'. Perhaps more important, London sensed that recognition of a 'right' to self-determination would not impose substantive new burdens on it or other 'perplexed proprietors of tiny territories,' almost all of which would likely retain close trade, political, and security ties to colonial metropoles even if they became independent.[17] The 1970 'Declaration of the Principles of International Law' marked a turning point in the evolution of self-determination claims, simultaneously expanding and telescoping them. It extended the definition of self-determination from an act of colonial emancipation to a process linked to representative government, one that could be equally applied to South Africa under Apartheid and the states of Eastern Europe under Soviet domination.

Self-determination and Decolonization

More relevant for the US and Britain—those 'indefatigable collector[s] of bits and pieces of empire'—the Declaration also stated that self-determination could take forms other than independence, including 'the free association or integration with an independent State or the emergence into any other political status freely determined by a people', widening the scope of possible outcomes beyond those envisioned by anti-colonial movements. 'It is our long-standing position', US Secretary of State William Rogers later argued, 'that independence is only one of several possible outcomes of [a] process of self-determination', a position that the US and Britain used to endorse the variety of arrangements that they envisioned for non-self-governing and trust territories such as Micronesia, Guam, the British Virgin Islands, and other small or island states.[18]

The Forms of Self-Determination

As historians such as Fred Cooper remind us, the nation-state was not the inevitable result of the decolonization process. 'What our gaze backward from the era of independence fails to appreciate—or belittles', he argues, 'is another form of politics in Africa in the 1940s and 1950s: an effort not to escape empire, but to transform it' through federation or other political configurations.[19] Colonial and anticolonial leaders as well as metropolitan officials envisioned self-determination taking many possible forms according to perceived ethnic, religious, racial, geographic, administrative, or linguistic realities. In the immediate postwar period, anticolonial leaders in India, Indonesia, and Philippines, as well as other large colonies with heterogeneous populations, often demanded that self-determination result in the creation of unitary nation-states conforming to previous colonial boundaries. Restive ethnic, racial, or linguistic minorities, predictably, resisted the siren song of strong, centralized states and in Aceh, West New Guinea, Mindanao, Pakistan, and elsewhere sought federation, outright independence, or significant autonomy.

The creation of the United Nations Trusteeship System, and the forging of a multi-layered system of semi-sovereignty by the United States and other imperial powers after 1945 vividly illustrates the open-endedness of the project of self-determination. As the war drew to a close, US planners sought to balance the need to support European allies, acknowledge anticolonial nationalism, and sort out the geopolitical implications of Washington's now-dominant international position. A primary concern was the fate of thousands of bases acquired during the war, now central to postwar planning and to the War Department's emerging vision of 'defense in depth'.[20] The San Francisco conference established a Trusteeship Council to oversee the disposition of former Japanese and German colonies in Africa and the Pacific, as well as territories falling under the authority of the League of Nations Mandates Commission, such as Southwest Africa.

The mandate of the Trusteeship Council was to administer Trust territories and 'promote the political, economic and social advancement of the Territories and their development towards self-government and self-determination'.[21] Although most anticolonial movements thought this meant independence, the Western powers, with the US in the lead, envisioned a layered conception of sovereignty, with eventual independence envisioned for most formal colonies, but only 'progressive development toward self-government' for 'dependencies' such as Guam and the Pacific Island Trust Territories.[22] The US, which dominated the UN until the early 1960s, offered highly qualified support for self-determination, exempting the British, French, and Dutch from trusteeship arrangements regarding India, Indochina, and Indonesia, and embracing civilizational discourses that stressed the tutelary function of colonial powers toward their backward subjects.[23]

The Trusteeship Council nevertheless became the focus of efforts by NGOs such as the International League for the Rights of Man, the American Committee on Africa, and the British-based Movement for Colonial Freedom, all of which pressed the Council to accelerate progress toward self-government in the trust territories. In addition, 'hundreds of African nationalists from the UN Trust Territories' bombarded the Trusteeship council with tens of thousands of petitions in the 1950s, suggesting the degree to which they viewed the UN as a crucial site for deploying self-determination claims.[24]

During the long period of postwar decolonization many anticolonial leaders and their former colonial masters internalized what one commentator called the 'bigness bias,' believing that small countries were 'militarily vulnerable, politically weak, [and] economically unviable'.[25] This fear helps to explain the support for schemes of federation, which proliferated among small decolonizing states, as well as among great powers such as the US and the UK, which viewed small states as sources of instability and potential geopolitical conflict. They were joined, though for different reasons, by anticolonial leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, who 'condemned any expression of the right to self-determination which was on a small scale, and blamed it on neo-colonial influences'.[26] Academic economists and political scientists, moreover, were 'obsessed with the need for large internal markets to promote economic development in the third world,' and believed that small states, especially those dependent upon resource exports, could never create balanced, independent economies.[27] A decade later, explosive economic growth among tiny East Asian states such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan put some of these concerns to rest. But federation remained an appealing alternative vision of self-determination for smaller territories in the West Indies, Indian Ocean, island Southeast Asia, Central Africa, and the South and Central Pacific (as well as the imperial powers that controlled them).[28]

Secession

While the US and its European allies, China, the Soviet bloc, and the nations of the postcolonial world often violently disagreed on the nature and scope of self-determination after 1945, there was something approaching genuine international consensus on the danger of secession. Much of the burgeoning social science literature on self-determination in the 1960s and 1970s focused on this question, which lay at the heart of the post-colonial settlements and the emergence of independent states from the remnants of former colonial territories.[29]

Prior to 1945, scholars such as Alfred Cobban evinced a cautious optimism about the prospects for self-determination as a principle that might ease the path from colonialism to self-government, though many western observers framed their understanding of self-determination in liberal, individual terms as little more than representative self-government. Even the worrying signs of early partition crises in Palestine and India did not significantly dampen such enthusiasm.[30] As UN member states moved to condemn colonialism and enshrine self-determination as a human right in the early 1960s, however, so too did worries that cascading self-determination claims within anticolonial movements might lead to increased pressure for secession.[31] The UN, with African members in the lead, repeatedly condemned attempts by secessionist movements to redraw the borders of often fragile multi-ethnic states, and explicitly or tacitly authorized the Congo, Nigeria, and other countries threatened by such movements to take whatever actions necessary to preserve their territorial integrity.[32]

The rapid decolonization of much of Africa in the early 1960s forced many of the most pressing questions concerning the nature and limits of self-determination to the surface. At the founding conference of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, anticolonial leaders heatedly debated whether the Pan-African ideals of unity, anti-colonialism, and self-determination required the maintenance of colonial borders or their dissolution in favor of a Pan-African federation or some other formation. The OAU eventually took a strong and unequivocal stance in favour of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states and the preservation of existing borders, partly out of fear of state fragmentation, and partly at the insistence of smaller states fearful of border disputes with and territorial claims by their larger neighbors.

While insisting on the 'inalienable right of all people to control their own destiny', the OAU Charter placed respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity among its founding principles.[33] This was a reasonable stance given the ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity of many postcolonial states and the often arbitrary definition of colonial borders, both of which raised the spectre that acknowledging a right of secession might lead to the unraveling of the postcolonial African system. One Kenyan official told an OAU Summit Conference in 1963 that 'the principle of self-determination has relevance where

foreign domination is the issue. It has no relevance where the issue is territorial disintegration by dissident citizens'.[34]

The OAU's stance reflected the deep unease spawned by the Congolese civil war (1961–1963) and the attempted secession of Katanga province, justified by Moise Tshombe 'on the basis of the universally recognized right to self-determination'.[35] The secessionist State of Katanga, indirectly backed by numerous Western governments and mining firms, was defeated in January 1963, just a few months before the OAU's formation. Many African leaders saw the Katanga secession as an attempt by former colonial powers to foster the emergence of weak post-colonial states, and postcolonial self-determination (at least as described by them) as a mask for the promotion of imperial and commercial interests.[36] The Nigerian civil war (1967–1970) and the attempted secession of Biafra raised similar questions about whether a self-identified minority could secede from a recognized state, and when—if ever—state-sponsored violence might legitimize state dissolution.[37]

The Limits of Self-determination

By the 1960s, international law broadly recognized a right to self-determination for most non-self-governing territories, including colonies and trust territories. A wide range of states, however, continued to insist that some places were too small, too backward, or too primitive to merit self-determination leading to independence, though the 1960 decolonization declaration specifically renounced such assertions as justifications for continued colonial rule. The US, the UK, and France all rejected independence for Pacific islands they claimed as 'strategic trust territories,' military bases, or sites of nuclear testing, stressing their obligations towards 'primitive' peoples and favouring association and other forms of semi-sovereignty. Where possible, Western officials would hold consultations or other measures designed to provide the appearance of self-rule. Elsewhere, as in Diego Garcia, the US government negotiated with the British to build an air base and simply expelled the native population, in order to 'remove the possibility that use of the islands could be hampered by external pressures for self-determination'.[38]

The belief that some places were too small or backward to merit self-determination in some cases helped to legitimize postcolonial aggression. In 1961 India invaded the tiny Portuguese colony of Goa, quickly conquering and annexing the territory to general agreement from its postcolonial brethren and the Socialist bloc. Western governments such as the US, which denounced the Indian takeover, reversed position a year later when Indonesia threatened war with the Netherlands in order to 'recover' the former Dutch territory of West New Guinea (later known as West Irian or West Papua). President John F. Kennedy helped broker a 1962 agreement turning the territory over to Jakarta pending a UN-sponsored act of self-determination. Indonesia organized the so-called Act of Free Choice under UN auspices in 1969, leaving nothing to chance in what is now widely regarded as a fraudulent process. Indonesian, US, and Australian officials, however, almost uniformly agreed that Papuans were too tribal and too primitive to merit self-government, rendering integration with Indonesia the only conceivable outcome. One US official wrote that 'the stone age Papuans cannot be prepared for meaningful self-determination during any feasible UN trusteeship period; the problem will not sit that long'.[39]

The tropes of size, primitivism, and backwardness also underlay Western support for Indonesia's 1975 invasion and occupation of the Portuguese territory of East Timor. Western diplomats, while affirming East Timor's rights in principle, repeatedly rejected them in practice, effectively ruling out independence and framing self-determination squarely in the context of integration with Indonesia. Developmental discourses, moreover, provided a shorthand for dismissing Timor as too small and primitive to merit self-government. Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs argued in 1974 that, though it had the right to self-determination, 'Portuguese Timor is not at present a viable economic entity and … would have no capability in the short term to handle a self-governing or independent status'.[40] New Zealand's Ambassador mused that 'considered as human

stock they are not at all impressive'—despite the efforts of anthropologists and activists to argue that East Timor was a viable independent state.[41] Indonesian President Suharto agreed, telling US President Gerald Ford in a few months later that the Portuguese colony 'would hardly be viable' and that 'the only way' to decolonize 'is to integrate into Indonesia'.[42]

After Indonesia's invasion, Western governments voted consistently against UN General Assembly resolutions rejecting Indonesia's annexation of East Timor and reaffirming its right to self-determination, and worked to remove East Timor from the agenda of the UN decolonization committee. The Western position was at odds with that of a divided non-aligned movement, which twice voted in favour of resolutions reaffirming East Timor's right to self-determination and calling for speedy independence for the territory.[43]

The European powers' stance on Timor proved strikingly similar to that regarding the Moroccan and Mauritanian takeover of Spanish Sahara in December 1975, two months after the International Court of Justice ruled that partition and annexation of the territory violated the 'freely expressed will of peoples' there for independence. While repeatedly affirming Western Sahara's right to self-determination, the US, France, the UK, and other European powers expressed their de-facto support for Moroccan and Mauritanian partition of the territory, viewing it as too sparsely populated and primitive to become anything but the object of regional and, potentially, global rivalry.[44] 'Self-determination for 40,000 nomads?' asked Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba. 'Let's not exaggerate'.[45] Though the US and Soviet Union backed Morocco and Algeria, respectively, with weapons and assistance, the chief goal of each was to prevent Western Sahara from escalating into a Cold War conflict. Others, such as the UK (which imported 75% of its phosphate from Morocco) Spain, and France, had longer standing economic and colonial stakes in backing the Moroccan and Mauritanian position.[46] The OAU and Nonaligned Movement were deeply divided on Western Sahara, as on Timor, unable to come to a resolution of the conflict which could reconcile their support for self-determination with broader regional rivalries and ambitions, as well as personal and ideological disputes.[47]

Economic Self-Determination

Debates about the viability of territories such as Western Sahara, West Papua, and East Timor were closely related to questions of economic sovereignty and the control over natural resources, investment, and macroeconomic policy more generally. Anticolonial movements, post-colonial states, and their anxious brethren in many parts of the world recognized that the achievement of political self-determination did not guarantee economic sovereignty. The issue was of course central to the hopes of states emerging from colonialism or dominated by foreign firms for autonomous development that would lead to their integration with the world economy on fairer terms. This meant, first and foremost, challenging the continued control of their economies by former colonial powers, foreign firms, multilateral institutions that shaped the framework for the disbursement of development assistance, and a global trading and legal system that favoured the needs of advanced industrial economies and the companies residing in them over those countries dependent on producing primary products.

The issues at stake were apparent as early as 1947, when the Philippines held a 'parity rights plebiscite' which granted US citizens and corporations equal rights to invest in and exploit the resources of the newly independent country. The vote capped an extraordinarily contentious debate about the conditions and meaning of Philippine decolonization, and a months-long campaign by President Manuel Roxas to persuade the nation that the need for trade with the US trumped the imperatives of colonial nationalism, after decades of dominance by US investors. Many of his countrymen thought they had little choice. US colonial authorities imposed the Parity provisions on the Philippines as a condition of independence, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1946 tied postwar relief payments to passage of a constitutional amendment giving equal rights to US corporations. The Parity provisions barely passed the Philippine senate, and only after the legislature blocked leftists from taking up their seats.[48] But US-based multinational corporations invested in the Philippines exulted in a decision that 'marks the first departure from the readiness of certain underdeveloped nations since the depression to stand on their political sovereignty and invoke the principle of economic self-determination as warrant for ostracizing or confiscating foreign capital or limiting it in the future to a subordinate status'.[49]

Over the next four decades a wide range of actors, from anticolonial leaders in Asia and Africa to Latin American diplomats to African American and Native American activists, would deploy claims to economic self-determination as a political principle, a human right, and as a way of envisioning sovereignty in an increasingly integrated world economy. The 'virtually obsessive repetition' of such claims in both national politics and multilateral forums underpinned many of the most important economic initiatives of the nations of the 'global south' after 1945, from the assertion by many states of 'permanent

sovereignty over natural resources' to calls for a 'New International Economic Order' or a 'right to development'.[50]

As early as 1950, representatives from newly independent and Latin American states began pressing for inclusion of a right to economic self-determination in UN debates over the human rights covenants. Western diplomats, businessmen, and international legal scholars were quick to see the implications of the rising tide of UN resolutions endorsing the right to self-determination.[51] One US official, Dean Acheson, wrote that French officials 'are very much worried about the inclusion of any kind of article on self-determination, no matter how carefully drafted the language might be. They fear that this will lead to economic self-determination of peoples and not be limited to political self-determination alone', and that 'inclusion of the right to self-determination in a treaty might mean the abrogation of treaties and contracts in the economic field'.[52] Western officials did not have to look far for confirmation of these fears. In March 1951, Iran's parliament voted to nationalize the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company after months of bitter negotiations, a move which Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh later explained would not only fund national development but 'ensure respect for our independence and for our right of self-determination' over Iran's resources.[53]

In 1952 alone, the UN General Assembly, ECOSOC Committee, and Human Rights Commission passed half a dozen resolutions explicitly linking economic self-determination, resource sovereignty, human rights, and the needs of developing countries with a majority of Latin American states joining a vanguard led by Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia. On 5 November 1952, Uruguay submitted a draft resolution, later passed largely along North–South lines, which called on member states to respect 'the right of each country to nationalize and freely exploit its natural wealth, as an essential factor of economic independence'.[54]

Debates about the scope and meaning of political and economic self-determination occupied a prominent, but largely ignored role in the work of the UN Human Rights Commission, the ECOSOC Committee and the Decolonization Committee for the remainder of the decade.[55] In September 1954 the UNHRC recommended establishment of a commission (formed in 1958) to survey the right of peoples and nations to 'permanent sovereignty over their natural wealth and resources,' noting that this right formed a 'basic constituent of the right to self-determination.'[56]

In December 1962, after years of often bitter debate, the General Assembly adopted resolution 1803 (XVII), which declared the 'right of peoples and nations to permanent sovereignty over their natural wealth and resources' in the name of national development, further noting that 'creation and strengthening of the inalienable sovereignty of states over their natural wealth and resources reinforces their economic independence.'[57] While Western nations managed to secure reference to the benefits of economic cooperation and the need to honour contractual obligations freely entered into, they viewed the UN's actions as a disaster, capping an extraordinary burst of energy in

which the General Assembly and various committees passed or published more than three dozen resolutions and reports rooting permanent sovereignty over national resources in the right to economic self-determination.

Christopher Dietrich writes that the UN endorsement of the right of Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources 'marked an important transfer of legal power' that was swiftly capitalized upon by a wide range of states in the late 1960s and early 1970s, all of which cited Resolution 1803 and others concerning the right to economic self-determination to justify the nationalization or expropriation of foreign firms and extractive resources; eg, as Iraq did when it began nationalizing its petroleum in 1967 and other OPEC nations did in years to come. Moreover, 'the shift in legitimacy challenged a fundamental tenet of the international political economy'.[58]

Over the course of the next decade a growing number of governments in developing and postcolonial countries launched a bold challenge to the position of Western capital, nationalizing or expropriating natural resources from scores of Western firms.[59] Postcolonial African leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere, who, at the start of the decade, told their fellow anti-colonialists to 'seek ye first the political kingdom', by the end of it were declaring that 'if we are to remain free, if we are to enjoy the benefits of Africa's enormous wealth, we must unite to plan the exploitation of our human and material resources in the interest of all of our people', as a necessary prerequisite for economic self-determination.[60]

Even as they grudgingly moved towards accepting some notion of self-determination as a human right, colonial powers sought to limit its application to the narrowest possible sphere and insure that doing so would not impinge on their economic prerogatives. In other words, self-determination did not imply economic sovereignty.[61] Following passage of the Human Rights Covenants, for example, Australia began considering self-determination and independence for the tiny island territory of Nauru, one of Canberra's few non-self-governing territories. In discussions with the British Colonial Office, Australian officials noted that the only barrier to immediate independence for Nauru was concern about control of the island's rich phosphate deposits. They concluded 'that balance of advantage would be to give Nauruans "independence" in 1968 as part of package deal in which Nauruans would sign a phosphate agreement guaranteeing continuing supply of phosphate' at fixed prices; 'otherwise title to phosphate rights and *nominal* control of the industry would pass into the hands of Nauruans' (emphasis added). Similar concerns informed official Australian discussions in 1975 about the transfer of independence to Papua New Guinea, with its extraordinarily rich copper and gold deposits.[62]

A year later, in March 1974, the UN held its famous sixth special session on economic issues. In his speech at the session, Algerian President Houari Boumedienne highlighted the differences between Wilsonian self-determination and the far more capacious vision of the Third World. Western nations, he charged, 'accepted the principle of self-determination only after having grasped the reins of the world economy' and ensuring

that formal independence would be meaningless.[63] It was here that the Group of 77, led by Iran, issued a declaration of principles for the establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) to accelerate the development of poor countries and close the widening gap between them and the industrialized world.[64]

These efforts continued well into 1970s and 1980s with demands for a New International Economic Order, a UN Charter on the Economic Rights and Duties of States (CERDS), the African Banjul Charter on Human and People's Rights, and insistence on a 'right to development.' They were a far cry from the Wilsonian vision of self-determination of early twentieth century liberals or radicals, and spoke to a profound sense of unease among a wide range of states and movements that political self-determination of peoples might be a chimera in the face of the sovereignty eroding dynamics of global capitalism.[65]

Nationalist leaders, decolonizing movements, and minority and indigenous communities deploying claims to self-determination after 1945 were not advocating a particular development strategy (socialist vs. capitalist, autarchic vs. free trade, etc.) or a particular political formation. Rather, they were insisting that the process of decolonization necessitated not only political but also economic and other forms of sovereignty in order to be meaningful. The persistence and proliferation of self-determination claims after 1945 speaks to the ongoing tensions between the pressures of the world market and the demands of states and communities for meaningful political and economic control, unfolding at different speeds and in different ways in different parts of the world. Demands for self-determination, in other words, became a vernacular for understanding and deploying sovereignty claims in an increasingly integrated world, not merely a process of liquidating empire and achieving formal decolonization.

Notes:

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([2]) Jean Marie Allman, "The Youngmen and the Porcupine: Class, Nationalism and Asante's Struggle for Self-Determination, 1954–57", *The Journal of African History* 31, no. 2 (1990): 263–279.

([3]) Roland Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of International Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 35–59; Jan Eckel, "Human Rights and Decolonization: New Perspectives and Open Questions", *Humanity* 1, no. 1 (Fall 2010): 111–135; "Another response to Jan Eckel", by Roland Burke, 01/28/11, http://www.humanityjournal.org/blog/2011/01/another-response-jan-eckel.

([4]) Manela, Erez. *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

(^{5}) Susan Pederson, *The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

(^{6}) "The Atlantic Charter", 1941–1945. Records of the Office of Government Reports, Record Group 44, NARA.

(^{7}) "'Africans' claims in South Africa", 16 December 1943, http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=4474&t=The, viewed August 19, 2014.

(^{8}) Ho Chi Minh, "Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam", in Ho Chi Minh, ed., *Selected Writings: 1920–1969* (Hanoi, 1973), 53–56.

(^{9}) Roger Normand and Sarah Zaidi. *Human Rights at the UN: The Political History of Universal Justice* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 212–220; Roland Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of International Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 35–59.

(^{10}) Sam Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 84–119; Jean H. Quataert, *Advocating Dignity: Human Rights Mobilizations in Global Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 72.

(^{11}) Department of State Instruction to the US Delegate to the United Nations, April 1951, *FRUS 1951 The United Nations; the Western Hemisphere*, 772–774.

(^{12}) Sam Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 84–119; Jean H. Quataert, *Advocating Dignity: Human Rights Mobilizations in Global Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 72.

(^{13}) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, G.A. Res. 2200, 21 U.N. GAOR Supp. 16, at 49, 53, U.N. Doc. A/6316 (1966); Vernon Van Dyke, "Self-Determination and Minority Rights", *International Studies Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (September 1969): 223–253.

(^{14}) Telegram 415 from UK Foreign Office to UK Mission to the UN, New York, February 22, 1966, CO 936–951, UK National Archives (hereafter UKNA); Note by the Foreign Office, February 25, 1967, FCO 60/46, UN Human Rights Covenants, 1968, UKNA; Note by Foreign Office, Steering Committee on International Organizations, UN Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, February 22, 1967, FCO 60/44-60/49, UKNA.

(^{15}) Eckel, "Human Rights and Decolonization", 127.

(^{16}) "The United Nations, Self-Determination and The Namibia Opinions", *The Yale Law Journal* 82, no. 3 (January 1973): 533, 541; Airgram A-229 from Belgrade to State, September 20, 1963, RG 59 Central Foreign Policy File 1963, Box 4234, NARA; Borislav Blagojevic, "Codification of the Laws of Active and Peaceful Coexistence", *Yugoslav Review of International Affairs* (September 5, 1963): 9–13.

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(^{18}) Emerson, "Self-Determination", *ibid*; Telegram 050616 from State to Paris, "Draft Resolution on Colonialism", March 20, 1976, http://foia.state.gov/SearchColls/Search.asp; Telegram 331 from US Mission UN to State, 3 February 1971, "Future Political Status of Micronesia", Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 300, Agency Files, USUN, Vol. VI, NARA; see also Deanne C. Siemer and Howard P. Willens, *National Security and Self-Determination: United States Policy in Micronesia* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000).

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(^{21}) http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/its.shtml.

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(^{23}) Michael Hunt, *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 196–199; Mark Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam and America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000) 107, 122.

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(^{26}) Painter-Brick, "The right to self-determination: its application to Nigeria", 257.

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(⁴²) "Note on Meeting With [excised]", Note from New Zealand Embassy in Jakarta to Wellington, 5 July 1975, declassified document in author's possession; Memorandum of Conversation, 5 July 1975, NSC Country Files, EAP, Indonesia, Box 6, Gerald Ford Library; Telegram 170357 from State to Jakarta, 18 July 1975, ibid.

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