

19. Human Rights and Democracy

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During 1970s and 80s over 30 countries shifted from authoritarian to democratic political systems.

Causes of this wave of transition:

- Economic development
- Politics and the action of the United states
- The major western European powers
- International institutions

- Countries where Christian and western influences were strong were easily be democratized.
- Democratic prospects in Muslim republics are bleak.
- The collapse of the Soviet Union generated the west the belief that democratic revolution would prevail throughout the world. This encouraged American administration to claim itself as the leader of democratic movement in the world. Promotion of democracy became the major priority of the US government.

- Promotion of human rights and democracy became the criteria of international economic institutions for loan and grants to developing countries. This became a pressure.
- In the mid-nineties, non western civilizations were resistant to this pressure. Hindu. Orthodox, African, Latin American, Islam were resistance to western democratization efforts.

The causes of failure:

- Economic wealth and self confidence of Asian governments
- Change in the power distribution after cold war
- Western influence reduced
- Relation between America and China broke down

- American human right lectures are irrelevant to China economic power: imprudent, irrelevant, laughable and unnecessary. If democracy comes it is because of the efforts of the people here not American effort.
- Human rights resolutions were almost always defeated in UN votes. Many instances are presented.

World conference on Human Rights in Vienna in June 1993 showed two blocs. The issues of the two divisions of countries:

- Universalist vs cultural relativism in human rights
- Political conditionality for economic assistance
- Creation of UN Commissioner for Human Rights
- Participation of non-government human rights organization

Two months before the Vienna conference Asian countries met in Bangkok and endorsed a declaration:

- Human rights must be considered in the local context
- Human rights monitoring violated state Sovereignty
- Conditioning economic assistance was contrary to right to development

- Viena conference was a defeat for the west. It reflected the decline in the power of the west. China became the winner.
- China's major goal then was to secure the 2000 Olympics for Beijing but later defeated in ballot, Sydney won. America and Britain played a role. The apparent reason was human rights issue. The real reason was political, to show western political power.

- Western clout diminished. Paradox of democracy weakens western will to promote democracy in the post cold war world. During the cold war, the west cooperated with the dictators who were anti-communist.
- This partnership produced uneasiness and embarrassment. They were friendly tyrant less than communists. The west's assumption that democratically elected governments will be cooperative and pro-western proved to be false.

- The non-western societies' electoral competition can bring anti-western nationalist and fundamentalist to power.
- Western leaders realize that democratic processes in non-western societies often produce governments unfriendly to the west.
- They both attempt to influence those elections and also lose their enthusiasm for promoting democracy in those societies.