

Petra Koccn

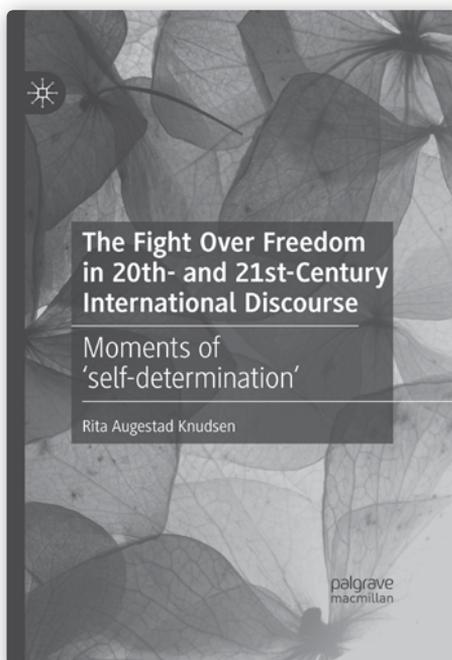
Rita Augestad Knudsen
THE FIGHT OVER FREEDOM IN 20-th AND 21-st CENTURY
INTERNATIONAL DISCOURSE: MOMENTS
OF 'SELF-DETERMINATION'

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In her upcoming book, Rita Augestad Knudsen, a senior researcher focusing on counter-terrorism and anti-radicalization at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and the managing director of the Consortium for Research on Terrorism and International Crime, discusses self-determination through some of the key historical moments, while probing the underlying values of freedom guiding the political discussions.

The research pins the stretch of the World War I and its early aftermath as the first key moment of self-determination. It is then when the two competing ideas of freedom as equality and freedom as peace are developed, the echoes of which can still be found in today's international and domestic setting as well as in the discourse.

A radical idea of freedom, a variant of Marxism, which emphasized freedom as equality, was forwarded by Russia. Vladimir Lenin, its profound advocate asserted that a political unit is only truly free when it is released



from oppression or any other type of dependence. This goal should be pursued regardless of the means necessary, which at times meant supporting violent uprisings and armed hostilities. Lenin saw this as a fight of the proletariat against the *bourgeoisie*, which would lead to the ultimate goal of internationalist socialism.

His goals were not retained in the

later calls for freedom, however, the underlying motivation of achieving international equality was. The idea of freedom as equality was again used as the main legitimating standard by political units seeking self-determination in the 20th and 21st centuries. Organized political groups would seek to manifest their goal either by the creation of a new State or by secession and the joining of an existing State. The concept caused significant tensions due to its apparent support for violence and was seen as a threat to the existing world order.

As a response to the radical idea, a liberal-conservative approach was developed, whose most vocal supporter was American president Woodrow Wilson. The primary aim of his approach was to pacify and water down the radical rhetoric due to the fear of it sparking mass unrest among the stateless minorities and others wishing to live in a different political regime. A common conception among the liberal-conservatives was that self-determination through new statehood would lead to anarchy and chaos.

Therefore, the competing idea put forward by Wilson supported freedom as peace. Its principal goals were a stable international order and respect for existing states' sovereignty. More specifically in his context, this meant freedom from interference into internal matters and free trade. With this, Wilson removed the radical tone from the idea of freedom and attempted to detach from

it the option of self-determination through the creation of new states. The only time this would be acceptable is when such new statehood is more likely to contribute to international peace and order than the existing status quo. Meaning, only in exceptional circumstances, when a people are severely interfered with or oppressed, and consequently, the continued existence of such a situation presents a threat to stability. Certain scholars call self-determination as a last resort remedy against oppression, a remedial self-determination.

The next important moment covered in the research, arose right after the war, when Wilson and the League of Nations adopted the mandate system as an expression of the self-determination of their time. The arrangement was put in place to assist the mandated peoples, who were deemed not 'mature' enough for self-governing. It was presented as a positive relationship between the mandatory - a member state of the League, and the mandate - a body politic that did not live up to the League's somewhat arbitrary standards of peaceful adherence to the law. The system significantly obstructed the mandated peoples' independence by excluding them from the governance of their state affairs, until they are determined to have reached a sufficient 'maturity'.

The mandate system demonstrated the degree to which the idea of freedom as peace could restrict freedom

as equality. A controversial decision concerned Albania, in 1912 already an independent state that was still placed under the mandate system after the war. It was not until in 1920, when Albania overthrew the provisional government, that it was again recognized as an independent state.

During the same moment in the history of self-determination, in 1920, the Aaland Islands wished to secede from Finland to unify with Sweden, with whom they shared more cultural similarities. This sparked an international discourse, involving the League because of its potential threat to stability in the region. The League of Nations' international lawyers elucidated on their understanding of self-determination, by stating that the clear goal of this concept is the creation of a new state, or a unification with an existing one. Interestingly, this elaboration is according to the radical idea of freedom. However, the end decision was differently based on the liberal-conservative viewpoint, that as the Aaland Islanders were not being oppressed by force, they do not have a legitimate right to self-determination. Instead, they ought to be satisfied with internal minority rights which, at that point, were not directly connected to self-determination. Later in history, this would come to be called internal self-determination.

Following the tragedy of the World War II, the Organization of the United Nations was established, providing the main platform for the con-

tinuation of discussions. Indeed, already in the 1950s, in yet another key moment in the development of self-determination, a call was made in the General Assembly, for the independence of nations subjugated to the 'outdated' colonial regimes. Again, the echoes of the ideas of freedom put forward by Wilson and Lenin were heard in the Assembly. This time, it was clear, that the liberal-conservative idea was dominant and preferred. Likely to appease the opposing parties, the states previously favouring the radical idea, adjusted their position to come closer to the liberal-conservative. They modified their support of achieving statehood regardless of means, by bringing to attention, that freedom of colonial states would benefit the global peace. Accordingly, the continuation of the regime would only incite further violence and internal insurgencies. Their shared goal of peace had merited wide support in the Assembly, culminating in the 1960s adoption of the Decolonisation Declaration. Though, the Declaration had also narrowed the reach of self-determination, arguably precluding political groups outside the colonialist regime from making a call for independence.

It was not until, in 2008, a group of representatives of the Kosovo nation, issued a Declaration of Independence, that the understanding of self-determination as a creation of states, was again in the high-level political arena. The belief of many was that Kosovo declaring independence

was illegitimate or illegal. However, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), in its much-awaited Advisory opinion in 2010, stated that there is nothing in international law to make such a declaration illegal. The ICJ explained that when declaring independence, the representatives of Kosovo had stepped outside their current political framework and have established a new one. With this, it is implied that a claim for independence may result in a new state, possibly leading to the radical goal of achieving sovereign equality in international relations. The Court implicitly acknowledged the radical idea as legitimate, if its role is to prevent further unrest and is in line with achieving global peace and stability.

However, many issues remain, before a State can truly become independent. Several UN members that supported Kosovo's independence also supported intense involvement of the international community, after the establishment of a liberated Kosovo. A few even asserted the latter as a condition for the first. Indeed, a particularly invasive UN territorial administration was set up in Kosovo, alongside missions of the EU, NATO, and the OSCE, even be-

fore it declared independence.

The author points out a critical observation towards the international presences and highlights some similarities between today's international community involvement and the past colonial systems and trusteeships. This is an issue that is very much relevant today in Kosovo as well as in other parts of the world, where there is strong involvement by international organizations. To add, the book presents some of the more common grievances of the locals, subject to international territorial administration, which also sheds light on the perceived legitimacy of international organizations currently deployed in Kosovo or the lack of it.

Certainly, this research on self-determination contributes keen insight into the historical, political, and legal background governing the concept in key moments in history, in particularly during the previous hundred years. It indicates that self-determination remains a highly important concept, which is subject to changes through time, while at the same, retaining its core underlying ideas of freedom in many aspects unchanged.