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Human rights, Minority rights and non-violence action



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A goal of the project is to ensure an early detection of nascent signs of conflicts in Georgian education establishments. These conflicts may stem from violent and discriminatory grounds and further fuel up radicalization and intolerance among students.

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Table of Content

TABLE OF CONTENT	3
HUMAN RIGHTS	4
CHALLENGES TO GEORGIA'S DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT	7
MINORITIES	9
INTERNATIONAL MECHANISMS FOR MINORITY PROTECTION	10
MINORITY PROTECTION: CHALLENGES OF THE TODAY	11
NON-VIOLENCE	13
WHAT IS MEANT BY NON-VIOLENT ACTION?	14
WHAT ARE SOURCES OF POWER?	15
REFERENCES	17

Human Rights

A notion of human rights derives from the natural concept doctrine the integral and inherent part of which is the concept of human dignity (which is different from personal/individual dignity). Dignity originates from the nature of the mankind and shall be accorded to every individual starting from infants to seasoned criminals. Therefore, the goal of human rights is to let the individual maintain his/her own dignity.

The concept of human rights stems from two origins. According to the first one, every individual is accorded with inviolable and unalienable rights just because they are humans. These moral rights derive from human nature of every individual.

The second origin of the concept of human rights is legal rights which are established by those law-making processes taking place both at national and international levels. A foundation of these rights lies in the consent of the individual who owns them.

Thus human rights are some of the normative structured qualities of the individual's personality, which express their freedom but at the same time, are indivisible and critical means and prerequisite for human life, relationships with the society, the state and other individuals.

Mastering of human rights culture allows individuals to assess political regimes, effectiveness of humanitarian and social agenda of the state, moral and legal culture of political leader, phenomenology of law. Recognition of inherent nature of human rights loosens overly strong ties connecting individuals and states and allows the former to have their rights protected from all kinds of interference.

Human rights are present to positively contribute to the greater consolidation of the society and diminishing of political tension as they are consensual and based on the harm principle ('my freedom should not restrict the freedom of others'). This lays the foundation for moral nature of human rights which are based on categories of kindness and absolute welfare.

Human rights are individual rights with the exception of the peoples' right to self-determination. From a chronological point of view, protection of human rights becomes a necessity when a natural society transforms into civil society. The development of which is a result of political associations and adoption of a constitution.

Development and adoption of human rights help us determine a type and a stage of civilization since relations between individuals and the state is one of the most important indicators of a nature of civilization and determines whether the state is judicative or not.

Therefore, the human rights theory sets forth those principles that are considered the base point of values for the modern world. The development of these principle took many years throughout history and represent an indivisible part of human culture. These principles include:

- Human rights are inherent (innate). Therefore, they are natural, indivisible and inalienable.
- Human rights are supreme values while the responsibility to respect, realize and protect these rights lies with the state
- Human rights are a means for controlling power, curtailing the state's total power so that incumbent authorities do not step beyond boundaries of freedom demarcated by human rights
- Protection of rights and freedoms are incompatible with any kind of discrimination based on any ground
- Realization of one's rights and freedoms shall not violate rights and restrict freedoms of others'
- Fundamental rights and freedoms shall be universal and applicable to every individual throughout the entire territory of the state
- Human rights are universal and based on equality. They are accorded to every person under the jurisdiction of any given state
- Personal, political, economic, social, and cultural rights and freedoms are equally valuable without any hierarchy observed in them

- Collective rights are indivisible from individual rights. The former shall not contradict individual rights. Nor should they restrict the status of the individual's rights.
- Human rights are regulated by the law
- Human rights and freedoms may be subjected to restrictions on grounds that are set forth in constitutions and international legal acts. Conditions for restriction include threats to state, public and constitutional order, public health, and threats to rights and legal interests of others. Temporary restrictions over rights and freedoms may be imposed in the events of emergency relief or belligerency. Such restrictions shall be commensurate to the situation serve as basis for the restriction and shall be terminated immediately after the situation gets back to normal.

It should be kept in mind that the protection of human rights requires certain economic and social foundation.

In fact, a renowned American psychologist Abraham Maslow developed the following classification of human needs:

1. Physiological needs – these are requirements for human survival e.g. food, water, clothing, offspring. If these needs are not satisfied, the human body cannot function optimally
2. Safety needs - protection from the enemy, poverty, sickness. If these needs are not satisfied, human psyche cannot function properly
3. Love and belongingness needs - love, friendship, attention, care. If these needs are not met, interpersonal relations are disrupted
4. Esteem needs – recognition, achievements, status, and reputation. If these needs are not satisfied, regulation of human behavior is derailed. The individual is no longer considered a full member of the society.
5. Self-actualization needs – realizing personal potential (human capital), self-fulfilment, seeking personal growth, and a desire to become everything one is capable of becoming. It is linked to a person's spiritual world. Failure to meet this need damages the person's creativity as a result of which s/he is unlikely to create something new.

Therefore, not only we should eliminate root causes of poverty, but also revisit economic relations between developed and developing countries. Human rights can be protected only with abundance of production and fair distribution. Even in theory, we can hardly imagine a country which is sunk in poverty but whose citizens are still fully capable to exercise their civil rights.

In countries affected by the third wave of democratization, the development of civil society has been hampered by a series of unresolved problems including but not limited to:

- Dependence on external sources of funding
- Inadequate spread of information and communication technologies
- Underdeveloped social capital
- Segregation of population on the grounds of ethnicity and religion
- Insufficient guarantees for the protection of constitutional rights.

These problems (in particular, violations of civic rights and freedoms) in turn are caused by underdeveloped constitutionalism and judicial state. Even though these rights are enshrined by constitutions of 'third wave democracies', their effective implementation raises many questions and are thought to be inconducive to democratic developments of respective states. As for external aide, 'world democratic revolution' may create enabling environment for democratization, however, it is very likely to fail prerequisites for democracy in any given country.

Human rights in Georgia

In spite of numerous violations of human rights, it is widely believed that human rights are very much compatible with the Georgian culture and concerns that human rights and liberal values are conceptually incoherent with centuries-old Georgian culture are irrelevant (*Human Rights and Georgian Culture*. The Centre for Development and Cooperation – The Pluralism Centre, Tbilisi, 2004. Edited by Levan Berdzenishvili).

The following facts provide solid arguments for the above said:

- In Ancient Kartli Armenian, Georgian, Assyrian, Jewish, the Khazar and Greek languages enjoyed the equal status with people speaking either of these languages having an equal opportunity to development. It was only after Parnavaz's reform – the introduction of Georgian alphabet, that Georgian language gain precedence over other languages
- Even though King Parnavaz introduced a cult of warrior Armaz, he never restricted already worshiped cults of Gats and Gaim. Moreover, in the 3rd century King Revi prohibited human sacrifice to god of Armaz.
- In Georgia of XI century it was widely believed that those who spoke Georgian, felt belonging to the Georgian culture and demonstrated respect to the Georgian statehood and served for wellbeing of the Georgian people, would be qualified as Georgian. Therefore, in XI century Georgians disregarded kinship as the decisive indicator of ethnicity while political and cultural aspects were regarded critical for self-identification.
- According to chronicles, state-wide elections were conducted in 571 as a result of which Guaram Kurapatat is said to become a ruler of the country. There is no other case known to or recorded in the medieval history.
- Equality between women and men, inviolability of personal property and right to inheritance confirmed in the Life of Serapion of Zarzma are unique for a feudal state of that time. These phenomena had emerged later on in the Western Europe (XIII – XIV cc) and Russia (XVIII).
- David the Builder was the first Georgian politician who separated judicial and executive branches of authority by setting up a supreme court of appeals managed by a chancellor. The institute was further strengthened and developed by King Vakhtang VI and Erekle II.
- A program developed by Kurtlu-Arslan in the 12th century envisaged the engagement of various groups in public management secured by setting up an electoral body 'karavi' (tent). The initiative also aimed at restricting the King's power to only executive powers. The King would not be able to confirm the appointment of a nominee for a court position without a prior consent from Karavi members. Even though the program failed, the Medieval Georgia can still take pride in having death penalty abolished in the 80s of XII century.
- Although similar in many ways, Georgian vassalship had a strong feature which made it distinct from European feudalism: European feudals managed criminal and civil courts and justice, while their Georgian counterparts had no right to try their vassals in court as the latter were subjects to royal courts. It is apparent that justice and statesmanship was well advanced in the Medieval Georgia.
- Norms protecting personal integrity, entitlement to property, right to inheritance and women's rights are woven in many monuments of Georgian justice. At the same time, measures of punishment are cruel, but still lenient when compared to those of Europe and Russia.
- Georgian literature reflects on human rights and freedoms: Shota Rustaveli, Sulikhan-Saba Orbeliani, Davit Guramishvili, Vazha-Pshavela, Ilia, Nikoloz Baratashvili to name the few.
- *Georgian Literacy Society* was the very first and truly national non-governmental organization which waked the path towards the supreme right for the Georgian nation – the right to self-determination.

However, we should not forget shameful pages of our history:

- One of the most heinous forms of human rights violations recorded in Georgia is the trade with humans - sale of kidnapped captives in the late medieval centuries.
- David the Builder routinely violated human rights by tasking the clergy to break the seal of confession and spy on behalf of the state
- Patriarch Anton ordered copies of the Knight in Panther's Skin (printed by Vakhtang VI) to be thrown in river Mtkvari. By this act Anton tried to prevent the spread of Knight in Panther's Skin among communities as 'evil' and 'blasphemous' literature.
- Sulkhani-Saba Orbeliani was insulted and humiliated by Orthodox monks for adopting Catholicism for political reasons.

The following quotation well summarizes the Georgian paradoxes in the field of human rights protection: 'explicit disobedience to laws imposed by invaders and metropolis over the course of many centuries and demonstrated nonchalance and dismissiveness have indeed contributed to the deterioration of a culture of law-abidance. However, the same traits have improved the degree of freedom as indelible value of the Georgian individualism. From this very perspective, Georgian society cannot be regarded as European (poor law-obedience, underdeveloped culture of working ethics, poor quality of civil education etc). However, it cannot be regarded as an Asian society either (challenging authority, distinct individualism, strong tendency towards deserialization¹ etc).

On the other hand, the same authors believe that if we shed the key feature of our society – that is its hypocrisy 'developed historically as fairly justifiable protection mechanism', we should admit that we will have to face new dangers: individualism transformed into wilfulness, egocentrism and anti-social behaviour, desacralization distorted as frivolity, cynicism and nihilism. Likewise, challenging authority could as well grow into avanturism, irresponsibility and false pretence. From such perspective, in contrast to 'pessimists who believe Georgian society to be lagging behind, or, optimists, who perceive the Georgian society as almost lagging behind with respect to the protection of human rights. Lack of regulations have allowed the people in power to exploit the common people.

That is why effective measures need to be taken in order to restore and renew those core values which had nourished Georgia throughout its old history, and at the same time, adopt a new set of values which are to rescue the country for the upcoming stretch of history. We need to come to an agreement over what needs to be given up and what to be kept so that we can successfully cope in the surroundings of imaginary and real enemies.

Challenges to Georgia's democratic development

The Public Defender's Office is an institution which was set up and tasked to effectively protect human rights and freedoms, detect and respond to violations of rights and take measures for the restoration of violated rights. The Public Defender's Office oversees work of state and local authorities, as well as public officials and organizations/agencies in order to ensure the protection of human rights and freedoms. In addition to the oversight, the Public Defender evaluates acts of local and national importance as well as issues recommendations and proposals.

¹ Sacred – pure, associated with religious cults and rites, customary (Civil Education Glossary. Available at: <http://www.nplg.gov.ge/gwdict/index.php?a=term&d=6&t=23521> Last accessed: 3 June 2018

The Public Defender's Office carries out awareness campaigns on human rights and freedoms, delivers educational-informational events both to general public as well as staff at state institutions including public and high rank officials.

The Public Defender of Georgia submits a six-month report to the Parliament of Georgia.

The Public Defender's Office is accessible to all citizens of Georgia. Reports on the violation of rights and freedoms can be conveyed to the Public Defender's Office and support requested through a hotline. A respective division is responsible for obtaining necessary information about the report and respond adequately should it confirm the presence of the violation.

In addition to the Public Defender's Institute, the following non-governmental organizations also carry out activities in defense of human rights and freedoms:

Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center (EMC), Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), Open Society – Georgia Foundation (OSGF), International Society for Free Elections and Democracy (ISFED), Transparency International – Georgia (TI), Civil Development Agency (Cida), Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), Economic Policy Research Center (EPRC), Article 42 of the Constitution, Public Movement Multinational Georgia, Human Rights Centre and others.

What are those potential challenges that Georgia may face in its way towards democratic development? What problems need to be overcome so that Georgia's progress is irreversible and effective?

First of all, Georgia needs to get rid of the following remains of grave historical heritage (determined by Turkish-Iranian and Russian imperial as well as Soviet realities) traced in mentality and behavior of both individuals and wider public:

- Anarchical aspirations (lack of order, disobedience to the law, impetuosity, infantilism, recklessness, etc)
- Proclivity to confrontation (radicalism, grudge, turning a blind eye to others' interests, freeriding, indifference towards means to an end, etc)
- Authority (authoritative-administrative vision, centralism, delayed processes of developing accountability mechanisms for authorities etc)
- Populism (mass manipulation by making false promises – playing out a card on poor aspirations of individuals, exerting pressure by means of an image of the enemy, shifting attention from political issues to social problems, political performances etc).

Evidently, due to such state of mind, the majority of political parties were established without rethinking values, or not for the purpose of serving the nation or protecting noble values. These political parties have been created by the government and represent a consolidated network of the clientelist nomenclature, or a group united around a charismatic leader or is governed by foreign actors. Therefore, all of them dissolve, disintegrate and disappear in no time. The narrow understanding of the notion of politics (which is perceived as the process of seizing and maintaining power rather than an influence over processes and institutions) does not allow an end to interminable confrontations between power-hungry groups fighting for personal or clan gains by misusing power in their hands and make political processes healthier. A tendency of boiling down democracy to Tbilisi's elite democracy that took place in the post-Soviet period, still lives on as a result of which greater part of the society, who are not members of either political parties or non-governmental organizations, can be disengaged from political processes. This situation also accounts for low turnout at the elections, which has been on a decrease for the past few years. Considering the presence of political pluralism

and civic freedom as signs of Georgia's political system, is a visual illusion which is not backed up by the government.

Georgia has failed to escape an oligarchic political system based on one dominant force in which economy and the state work for the few. A middle class and small business, a guarantor of political stability are yet to develop in Georgia and overcome artificial barriers. Political assassinations and suicides, ideological-conceptual falsifications, party-political prostitution (frequent changing of parties, factions and confrontations with old friends), unprotected small business and overwhelming business party-bureaucratic control, sham elections, scandalous media campaigns, political-cultural Russian influence or aggressive provincialism is just an external illustration of the ignored human being – undervalued life, individualism and happiness. At the same time, a chance for democracy in Georgia lies in each individual - in his or her political consciousness and civic integrity.

Minorities

In modern law, 'minority' denotes a group of individuals who reside in a country of other ethnic background (ethnic minority), faith (religious minority) or race (racial minority). There may be other types of minorities (e.g. linguistic, sexual etc) as well.

'Minority is a group, which, as a rule, is outnumbered by the rest of the country's population. Members of such group, even though holding citizenship of a given country, may have different ethnic background, religion or speak language that is different from that of the dominant group. Minority communities tend to have a strong feeling of solidarity and desire to preserve their own culture, traditions, religion or language. Sometimes dominant groups may be treated as minorities.

The status of minority is not determined by the size of the group or community, but by the presence of certain characteristics and discrimination. These distinct features include:

1. Minority groups are in a comparatively disadvantageous position
2. Minority groups can be identified by the presence of distinct features
3. Members of the minority groups perceive themselves as minorities and are convinced in their uniqueness
4. By choice or necessity, members of minority groups prefer to marry within the groups

Minorities may be divided into two categories:

1. Minorities whose members demand equality with the dominant group, or in other words, total absence of discrimination
2. Minorities, who in addition to total absence of discrimination, also call for special conditions. In most cases such conditions may include:
 - Access to quality school education in their own language and in accordance to their traditions
 - Ensure the preservation of minority cultures through opening and maintaining schools, libraries, museums, media outlets and other cultural and educational establishments
 - Create adequate conditions for the use of minority languages (either orally or in writing) in legislature, courts, bodies or governance. This also includes daily conversations.
 - Ensure respect for customary and family law, a status of a member of the minority group, their religious rituals and interests
 - Ensure an autonomy to a certain degree

Some commentators believe that 'three characteristics of minority groups, are key features and we may 'rewrite' them in the following way:

1. Minority group is identified based on distinct features characteristic to this particular group
2. Minority group is well aware of such signs and features and perceives them positively, as unlike the dominant group, their uniqueness stem from such signs and features
3. Treatment of minorities contains apparent signs of discrimination. Minority groups are often subject to pressure at a social or legal level by the dominant group

As for the fourth sign, it is more of a strategy adopted by minorities and prompted by a survival instinct, than a feature in its own right. It is inevitable – by marrying fellow members of the group, minority communities more easily maintain their linguistic as well as ethnic and cultural identities. Therefore, it is a manifestation of the survival instinct rather than a sign’.

According to the civil encyclopedic dictionary, ‘there is no commonly agreed definition of a term ‘national minority’. However, the definition below seems to be less contented among many scholars of the field: ‘a national minority is non-dominant part of the population residing permanently in the country. National minorities have their distinctive ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics and are willing to preserve their uniqueness’.

According to this definition, **minority** is a group of individuals who reside permanently in a country, but do not represent a dominant group. The Former has its own distinctive signs – either ethnic, religious or linguistic. Members of the minority group are aware of their unique identity and are willing to preserve it. The last bit of the definition, more specifically the part concerning the desire of minority group members to maintain their uniqueness, is the key here. We may further elaborate this phrase and rewrite it in a following manner: **The minority groups recognize their uniqueness, perceive it as a positive feature and are willing to preserve this uniqueness by keeping special features.** Therefore, newly formulated phrase can be incorporated in a list of characteristics provided by the Human Rights Dictionary to replace the fourth characteristics- **‘by choice or necessity, members of the minority groups marry other members of their community’**, since this act is more of a strategy adopted by minority groups in order to **preserve their uniqueness.**

International mechanisms for minority protection

The first minority protection mechanism – the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (adopted by the General Assembly of the UN on 16 December 1966) took effect on 23 March 1976. Pursuant to Article 27 of the Covenant ‘in those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language’.

Mechanisms for the protection of minority rights were particularly strengthened in the 20th century when a powerful organization such as the United States adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The Declaration establishes such ground principles as the enjoyment of equal rights and prohibition of discrimination against every person. Article 2 of the Declaration reads as follows:

‘Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty’.

The UN Charter created a precedent which gave momentum to various prominent legal acts including the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965). Among the most important safeguards provided by the abovementioned declaration are the right to every individual to be recognized as a person before the law everywhere, equal treatment and equal protection.

The process of granting minorities broader rights took off in 1989 when the representatives of member states of Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe adopted a concluding document at the Vienna meeting. The document was further incorporated and elaborated in the Charter of Paris adopted in 1990. By adopting this document, the member states legalized rights that had been granted to minorities but remained formally unrecognized.

The Charter of Paris is acclaimed in the world as a 'new era of democracy, peace and unity'. 'we affirm that ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities will be protected and that persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to express, preserve and develop that identity without any discrimination and in full equality before the law.' – reads the Charter of Paris.

The Charter of Paris was signed by the majority of OSCE member states and it took effect in 1990. By that time more than 150 country were enlisted members of the UN with the majority of them also joining the Charter.

In spite of serious efforts, there had been no mechanism to protect and establish the rights of minorities living all over the world. The first attempt to address this gap was the adoption of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities on 1 February 1995 in Strasbourg. Countries which have ratified similar documents are bound to fulfil respective requirement and harmonize their legislation with norms and principles set forth in these documents.

Despite the presence of numerous domestic and international protection mechanisms, many problems related to safeguarding the rights of minorities are yet to be addressed. Some of the direst problems include countless conflicts raging all over the world. Some of actions have long been qualified as international crimes and measures have been taken to eliminate them.

One of the hottest conflicts in the world was manifested in racial discrimination. Segregation is an international crime which aims at isolating racial groups and their members from public life.

Apartheid is a form of racial discrimination marked with some of the most cruel and inhuman policies and mechanisms set in motion by dominant national groups. Apartheid tore apart in the Republic of South Africa up until the 1990s. During Apartheid migrants from Europe created a system under which people of color of Africa, Asia and other continent (80% of the entire population) were kept in so called bantustans and concentration camps and subjected to degrading sets of rules and education system specifically designed for them.

Ethnic cleansing is one of the most dangerous crimes against human rights subjected to international law. Some of the cruelest examples of such crime was a genocide of Jews, Roma groups and other minorities by the Nazi Germany and its allies during 1933-1945 labelled as Holocaust in the history of the world. According to internationally recognized official data the Holocaust claimed more than 6 million lives of Jews.

Minority protection: challenges of the today

Not everyone recognizes the necessity of minority rights. Some believe that anti-discrimination law suffices for this matter. This vision dominated the international community for quite some time.

The difference between minority rights and anti-discrimination is illustrated by the following examples: ensuring that minorities have equal access to ballot box just like members of a dominant group, is an anti-discrimination measure, while granting certain number of parliamentary seats to minorities, or setting up self-governance institutes in areas populated by minorities, are considered minority rights. Using a language of the minority group or the basic individual right to freedom of speech is an anti-discriminatory act whereas restriction of freedom of speech in a minority language will cause discrimination in exercising this right. Likewise, pressing governments to issue road signs, public education or tax declaration forms in minority languages is the minority right.

After the Second World War it became evident that a human rights-based approach was not sufficient to yield results that would enable minority groups to preserve their culture and use their language for instance in public establishments (schools, courts or media) and enjoy certain forms of local or regional autonomy. Without the enjoyment of these rights, communities and regional cultures stretching over hundreds of years would fail to survive national and assimilative policies of larger states. The fact that a general framework of human rights could not protect minorities from long-term assimilative policies was deemed as sad limitation to some, but many found this circumstance deeply disturbing.

Early 1990s saw some efforts to grant minorities certain rights both at global and regional levels. The UN addressed the gap at a global level by adopting the Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992) and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (2007). In 1992 the Council of Europe operating at a regional level adopted the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages followed by the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities adopted in 1995. The introduction of these standards has resolved a number of issues. However, lack of consensus about the rights of minorities and underdeveloped mechanisms for implementation and monitoring of these rights, continue to remain a challenge. Even though minority rights are widely recognized as a legitimate component of human rights law, they nevertheless require further elaboration and stronger consensus.

However, developed theoretical grounds may be, the questions as to whether or not minority rights are in fact protected, or if they have helped strengthen the concept of democratic citizenship or defuse violent ethnic conflicts or undermine secessionist sentiments, still beg an answer.

Answering these questions is no easy task partially because these norms are still new. However, it has become apparent that the mankind still faces intricate and unresolved challenges. The first refers to a category of minority rights. The UN framework operates in two parallel tracks: one covers indigenous communities to support their autonomy and protect the right to self-determination, while the other concerns minorities in general and is based on the rights for culture.

UN officials believe that there are three key differences between minorities and indigenous people which justifies the presence of these three directions: (a) while minorities seek institutional integration, indigenous peoples try to maintain a certain degree of institutional separateness (b) while minorities seek individual rights, indigenous communities seek collectively-exercised rights (c) while minorities seek non-discrimination, indigenous peoples seek self-government.

In fact, some minority groups share the aspiration of indigenous peoples for autonomy and self-governance. The longest fights for autonomy known to the world history involves groups that are considered more of minorities rather than indigenous groups. Such minority groups are Scottish, Catalan, Chechen, Kosovar Albanians, Kurds, the Kashmirian, the Tibetan and Tamil.

The European Commission has ruled that national minorities do not have rights of internal self-determination and consequently, ideas about autonomy have disappeared from the debates around European standards of minority rights. From this perspective, the minority rights project should be seen both as success as well as an unfinished task.

There are a number of reasons for this turn away from autonomy. There was enormous resistance to recognizing a right to autonomy both within the established Western democracies and even more within the post-communist countries of Eastern and Central Europe. Some of this resistance was based on prejudice against minorities, but some of it was based on legitimate fears about the potentially destabilizing effects of autonomy regimes, particularly where boundaries were still contested, and where liberal-democratic institutions were not well entrenched.

Minority rights remains a taboo project in post-colonial countries of Asia, Africa and Middle East where state minority issues remain heavily 'securitized', treated as issues of state security rather than as issues of human rights and democratic debate. Minorities are seen as potentially disloyal fifth columns who might collaborate with neighboring enemy states.

Support for minority rights varies not only by region, but also by different types of group. While there has been an impressive level of international support for the claims of indigenous peoples, there has been much less support for the claims of national minorities, and even less for the rights of immigrants and refugees. While indigenous peoples are widely seen as weak and innocent victims who pose no threat to the larger state, other types of minorities are often seen as either posing a dangerous threat to break up the country (national minorities) or as undesirable and undeserving outsiders who do not belong (migrants).

Non-violence

When you protest peacefully or work for social changes without resorting to violence that is non-violence. Even though the tradition of nonviolence may be traced back to the ancient norms found in Daoism, Buddhism and Judaism, as well as in the philosophy of the New Testament and some resistance movements against Roman imperial directives, it was within the past millennium that it became an integral part of public awareness and political organization.

Nonviolence is a principle, a personal value system, or a way of life. People who practice nonviolence live their lives harming as few other people (or animals) as possible. Many political protesters use nonviolence as a tactic during demonstrations as a form of civil disobedience. Once Gandhi used the word nonviolence in this way in 1920, the word became associated with social and political activism.

The following three elements are at the core of Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence: 1) self-improvement (efforts of an individual towards improvement), 2) constructive programme (a specific type of work to set up a new social order with a specific purpose, and 3) resistance campaign against evils, such as the cast system and British colonial exploitation.

Fundamental principles of Martin Luther King's philosophy of nonviolence are described in his first work 'Stride Toward Freedom: the Montgomery Story'. These six principles are:

1. Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people. It is active nonviolent resistance to evil. It is aggressive spiritually, mentally and emotionally.
2. Nonviolence seeks to win friendship and understanding. The end result of nonviolence is redemption

3. Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice not people. Nonviolence recognizes that evildoers are also victims and aims to defeat the evil practices and not the people.
4. Nonviolence teaches that suffering can educate and transform the society better. Nonviolence accepts suffering without retaliation. Unearned suffering is redemptive and has tremendous educational and transforming possibilities.
5. Nonviolence chooses love instead of hate. Nonviolence resists violence of the spirit as well as the body. Nonviolent love is spontaneous, unmotivated, unselfish and creative.
6. Nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice. The nonviolent resister has deep faith that justice will eventually win. Nonviolence believes that God is a God of justice.

These six principles guide the steps for social and interpersonal change:

1. Information gathering: To understand and articulate an issue, problem or injustice faced by a person, a community, or an institution research into the issue is crucial. You must investigate and gather all vital information from all sides of the argument so as to increase your understanding of the problem. You must recognise the opponents' views and opinions.
2. Education: It is essential to inform others, including your opposition, about your issue. This minimizes misunderstanding and gains you support and sympathy.
3. Personal commitment: Daily check and affirm your faith in the philosophy and methods of nonviolence. Eliminate hidden motives and prepare yourself to accept suffering, if necessary, in your work for justice.
4. Discussion/negotiation: Using grace, humour and intelligence, confront the other party with a list of injustices and a plan for addressing and resolving these injustices. Look for what is positive in every action and statement the opposition makes. Do not seek to humiliate the opponent but to call forth the good in the opponent.
5. Direct action: These are actions taken when the opponent is unwilling to enter into, or remain in, discussion/negotiation. These actions impose a 'creative tension' into the conflict, supplying moral pressure on your opponent to work with you in resolving the injustice.
6. Reconciliation: Nonviolence seeks friendship and understanding with the opponent. Nonviolence does not seek to defeat the opponent. Nonviolence is directed against evil systems, forces, oppressive policies, unjust acts, but not again persons. Through reasoned compromise, both sides resolve the injustice with a plan of action. Each act of reconciliation is one step close to the 'Beloved Community'.

What is meant by non-violent action?

Nonviolent action (also sometimes referred to as people power, political defiance, and nonviolent struggle) is a technique of action for applying power in a conflict by using symbolic protests, non-cooperation, and defiance, but not physical violence.

Nonviolent action may involve:

1. Acts of omission – that is, people may refuse to perform acts that they usually perform or are required to do so by law or regulation;
2. Acts of commission – that is, people may perform acts that they do not usually perform, or are forbidden to perform, or
3. A combination of the two

As a technique, therefore, nonviolent action is not passive. It is not inaction. Nonviolent action is action that is nonviolent.

Nonviolent action can and has been used to dismantle dictatorships, block coups d'état, defend against foreign invasions, expel foreign occupation, provide an alternative to violence in extreme ethnic conflicts, challenge unjust social and economic systems develop preserve and extend democratic practices, human rights, civil liberties and freedom of religion and resist genocide.

There are a multitude of specific methods of nonviolent action. Nearly two hundred have been identified do date. Three broad classes of nonviolent methods exist:

1. Nonviolent protest and persuasion
2. Non-cooperation, and
3. Nonvalent intervention.

The following methods fall under the first category: public speeches, picketing, petitions, vigils, performances of plays and music, marches, assemblies of protest or support. The second category encompasses methods such as refusal to pay taxes, civic disobedience, hunger strike and more than fifty types of boycotts and strikes. The third category comprises sit-ins, nonviolent invasion, obstruction of daily activities in the street or other places, setting up new social and economic institutions including parallel government bodies which compete with the sovereignty of the former order.

Nonviolent action works by getting a population to withdraw its support and obedience from the opponents. By getting key groups to withdraw their consent, nonviolent action is able to remove the sources of power for a regime or opponent group.

What are sources of power?

1. Authority—the belief among the people that the regime or opponent is legitimate, and that they have a moral duty to obey it;
2. Human resources—the number and importance of the people and groups that are obeying, cooperating, or providing assistance to the regime or opponent;
3. Skills and knowledge—needed by the regime or opponent to perform specific actions and supplied by the cooperating persons and groups;
4. Intangible factors—psychological and ideological factors that may induce people to obey and assist the regime or opponent;
5. Material resources—the degree to which the rulers' control or have access to property, natural resources, financial resources, the economic system, and means of communication and transportation; and
6. Sanctions—punishments, threatened or applied, against the disobedient and noncooperative to ensure the submission and cooperation that are needed for the regime or opponent to exist and carry out its policies.

All of these sources of power depend on acceptance of the regime or opponent, on the submission and obedience of the population, and on the cooperation of innumerable people and the many institutions of society. When this obedience, acceptance, and support are withdrawn, the regime or opponent can be severely weakened or toppled.

Nonviolent action produces one or more of these four mechanisms of change:

1. Conversion—changes in attitude cause the opponents to voluntarily make concessions;
2. Accommodation—the opponents negotiate and compromise;

3. Nonviolent coercion—the opponents are weakened so much that they are forced to capitulate; and
4. Disintegration—the opponents are weakened to the point where their regime simply falls apart.

‘Nonviolent action’ is a technique of waging conflicts and is identified by the type of action employed. It does not require any specific ethical, moral, or religious beliefs to be used.

‘Nonviolence’ is often used to mean many different phenomena, but generally refers to the absence of violence and to religious, moral, or ethical beliefs that reject violence.

Nonviolent action does not depend on converting your opponents to willingly give in. It can produce powerful coercive effects and can force opponents to concede or can destroy their power.

Nonviolent action does not depend on the assumption that people are inherently “good”. The potentialities of people for both ‘good’ and ‘evil’ are recognized, including the extremes of cruelty and inhumanity.

People using nonviolent action do not have to be pacifists or saints, nor do they need to hold particular religious, moral, or ethical beliefs. Nonviolent action has predominantly and successfully been practiced by ‘ordinary’ people all over the world, including by people who believed violence to be morally acceptable.

Nonviolence and peace are often used interchangeably. In fact, they represent two sides of the same coin. Peace is the end goal that individuals strive to achieve. Peace may be viewed as an ideal condition where society and human beings live in peace. However, societies and human beings have never been nonviolent. Nonviolence is a means to an end. It indicates a method or a way that leads us to peace, or in other words, social justice in its full manifestation.

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