



LEADING NEWS SOURCE FOR TURKEY AND THE REGION

HOME | TURKEY | ECONOMY | WORLD | SPORTS | LIFE | ARTS/CULTURE | OPINION | VIDEO | PHOTO | **Hürriyet** | Radikal[®]

Search

Q Login | Become a member | I forgot my password

OPINION Contributor

A declaration of dependence?

HDN | 12/22/2010 12:00:00 AM | ERIC GRYNAVISKI - HARRIS MYLONAS

The Kosovo declaration addresses narrow international rules and wide channels of power; it does not address the universal conscience of the world.

In 2008, Kosovo declared its independence; on July 22, the International Court of Justice ruled that its declaration was legal. In many parts of the West, especially in Washington, this news was greeted with applause. Reading the Kosovo Declaration of Independence, however, one is amazed at the ability of politicians and pundits to compare it to the United States' Declaration. Joe Biden even goes so far as to compare the Kosovo Prime Minister to George Washington.

In many ways, the situation in Kosovo is analogous to that experienced in the colonies. The colonies were stuck between the influence of France and Britain, just as Kosovo is caught between Russia – Serbia's protector – and the U.S. Furthermore, the colonies were aware that dissolving their ties to Britain risked igniting separations throughout the world, just as the Kosovo declaration might be a precedent for such declarations elsewhere.

Yet, the way in which the U.S. declared independence is drastically different from the Kosovo has. The Kosovo declaration is short, addresses specific United Nations plans for the composition of government, and thanks NATO for its past help. What's notable is what's missing: unlike the U.S. Declaration of Independence it does not justify its secession.

Those who signed the U.S. declaration, aware of the danger that secession would cause, explained: "Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes... [But, given the specific abuses of the King, it is the colonies'] right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security."

Instead of justifying secession through an appeal to rights, the Kosovo declaration narrowly and legalistically justifies its special status. When the U.S. declaration lists twenty-six specific and irrefutable grievances with England, the Kosovo declaration provides no grievance whatsoever. The U.S. declaration is couched in a sophisticated moral and political theory in order to show that any individual can endorse its conclusions; the Kosovo declaration is couched in narrow legalisms designed to provide political cover for the western powers that recognize it.

These are not minor differences. Jefferson thought it right that a declaration of independence makes claims on the conscience of the world, outlining the case for independence and enshrining it in a single compelling statement: "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation." The Kosovo declaration skirts debate, does not make a case for powers to recognize or support it, and represents an international system in which power, not conscience, rules. The U.S. declaration sparked a global debate over the rights of peoples; the Kosovo declaration is sparking a trivial debate over the correct interpretation of a U.N. Security Council Resolution.

In light of the NATO involvement in the Balkans during the late 1990s, U.S. support for Kosovo's independence is not surprising. Historically, the U.S. has traditionally backed self-determination movements and independence through de facto recognition. The U.S. supported the French declaration of Independence in 1793, the Greek in the early 19th century – and many more – under the Monroe Doctrine. But this principled position of the U.S. did not last. In the last century, the U.S. has refused to recognize



MOST POPULAR

- Israel blames Iran for mission attacks
- Turkey posts record current account deficit
- Turkmen incumbent wins big
- Anonymous hacks Turkish satellite provider
- Turkish teenagers' biggest hindrance to love
- Two Turkish soldiers, 16 PKK militants killed in clashes
- Turkey's top boss: Ankara power clash 'horrifying'

MOST COMMENTED

- Turkish rage at 'yes' from French Senate
- I may not go to France again if 'genocide' bill passes: Erdoğan
- PM Erdoğan mocks Paul Auster, calls him 'ignorant'
- Turkish Foreign Ministry condemns Perry's remarks
- 'Honor killings' rule out US-Turkish ties, presidential hopeful says
- One in five young Germans unaware of Auschwitz: poll
- Sex consensual as rape victim didn't scream, Turkish court rules
- At least free speech exists in Israel, Auster tells Turkish PM

de facto states in Central and Latin America in order to discourage potential rebels and delegitimate Communist regimes. For different reasons, the U.S. did not recognize conquests made by fascist Italy and Germany, as well as by Stalin, before and during World War II. Today, the U.S. refuses to recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia, but intensely supports Kosovo’s independence. In other words, over time, principled foreign policy soon enough gave way to Realpolitik and pragmatism.

Turkish missiles over Brussels, Paris, Berlin, Rome (and others)

Greek PM Papademos at IMF’s door to secure swap agreement

In 1953, President Eisenhower declared: “Any nation’s right to a form of government and an economic system of its choosing is inalienable. Any nation’s attempt to dictate to other nations their form of government is indefensible.” Unfortunately, today’s rhetoric does not match reality. Russia and the United States accuse each other of manufacturing independence movements and then guaranteeing their security until de facto independence is secured. Russia accuses of the U.S. of doing this in Kosovo and the U.S. returns the “favor” in the cases of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Our point is not that Albanians in Kosovo have no case to make but rather that they have not made their case. The misplaced and even dangerous triumphalism with which western media greeted the ICJ ruling sends the wrong message to aspiring secessionists. The Kosovo declaration addresses narrow international rules and wide channels of power; it does not address the universal conscience of the world. No one can endorse the document because there is nothing to endorse: no cause, no claim, and no challenge to the Serbian government. If the U.S. declaration of independence was the beginning of the growth of an international community that supports self-determination and democratization, the Kosovo declaration represents the failure of the international community to move beyond power politics, disguising Realpolitik with international law. Is this the international system we aspire to?

*Eric Grynawski and Harris Mylonas are assistant professors of Political Science at the George Washington University.

0

0

TURKEY

- Politics
- Ankara Whispers
- Rights
- Green
- Local

ECONOMY

- Macro
- Business
- Finance
- Labor
- Energy
- Tourism

WORLD

- Europe
- Mideast
- Eurasia
- Balkans
- Caucasus
- Asia
- Africa
- America
- International

SPORTS

- Football
- Basketball
- Volleyball
- Tennis
- Golf
- Motorsports
- Others

LIFE

- Health
- Science
- Technology
- Religion
- Fashion
- Eatery
- Animals
- Travel

ARTS/CULTURE

- Cinema
- Music
- Stage
- Exhibitions
- Books
- Open Buffet

OPINION
VIDEO
PHOTO

- About the Newsroom
- Letters to the Editor
- Advertise in Daily News
- Work With Us