Research Report

Leiden Model United Nations 2017
~ fresh ideas, new solutions ~

Forum: *Special Conference*
Issue: *National borders versus ethnic boundaries*

Position: *President*

Introduction

In today's globalized world, traditional ethnic and national boundaries are losing their relevance towards cultural diversity. A growing number of anthropologists and sociologists write about the separation of territory and culture.Others wonder whether globalization, has created, even in the most remote regions, consciousness and some degree of mediated experience of the global world.

This may result not only in the formation of a new level of world culture, but also in the reduction of cultural traditions and singularity. As the importance of physical boundaries diminishes in everyday communication, it is also becoming possible to build and maintain ethnic ties in new forms.

Definition of Key Terms

Borders
Geographic boundaries of political entities or legal jurisdictions, such as governments, sovereign states, federated states, and other subnational entities. Borders are established through agreements between political or social entities that control those areas; the creation of these agreements is called boundary delimitation. Some borders—such as a state's internal administrative border, or inter-state borders within the Schengen Area—are often open and completely unguarded. Other borders are partially or fully controlled, and may be crossed legally only at designated border checkpoints and border zones may be controlled.

Ethnicity
A category of people who identify with each other based on similarities such as common ancestry, language, society, culture or nation. Ethnicity is often an inherited status based on the society in which one lives. Membership of an ethnic group tends to be defined by a shared cultural heritage and ancestry.

General Overview

For example Africa is divided into 54 countries however if the borders were set according to the ethnicities around the continent, Africa would have about 2000 countries. The map shows how the countries have straight vertical and horizontal lines as boundaries despite the fact that Africa is the most diverse place in the world. Its boundaries do not depend on ethnicity since Europe's arbitrary post-colonial borders left Africans bunched into countries that don't represent their heritage, a contradiction that still troubles them today.
But Africa is not the only place where this problem could occur. There are several peoples in minority position throughout Europe.

Europe has a troubled history when it comes to minorities. During the exterminations and ethnic cleansings of the 20th Century, Europe's diversity came under attack, and millions of people belonging to minority groups were killed or expelled from national borders. Nevertheless, at no point in Europe's history have states had completely homogeneous populations.
Today, there are some 60 million people from ethnic and religious minorities living in the European Union, representing roughly 12% of the total EU population. Exact definitions of what constitutes a "minority" are difficult to agree (some countries, such as France, do not officially recognise the existence of minorities), however the scholars Christoph Pan and Beate Sibylle Pfeil have estimated there are 87 distinct "peoples of Europe".

The problem lies behind political negotiations and the validity of historical defeats in the past centuries. It is hard to decide whether it would be better with different borders or with different laws applied to people from the same ethnicity but from another country. Also the loss of traditions and cultural heritages or the suppression of diverse ethnicities are things that should not be forgotten or considered collateral damage. It is a cause worth fighting for.

Appendix/Appendices

Sources:

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