Chapter X

The Dokdo Dispute in Perspective and Avenues for Resolution

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I. Territorial Disputes-Homeland and Peripheral

This chapter will proceed on the basis that there are different kinds of territorial disputes which can be classified according to levels of commitment and intensity on the part of the disputants. The varying degree of commitment the disputants bring into the dispute will have a bearing on its resolution, as disputes of high intensity will be much more difficult to resolve than those of low intensity. Intensity and commitment can be measured in various ways and for the purpose of this chapter a classification of territorial disputes is proposed according to the distinction between homeland and peripheral. The term “homeland” was used by the ethno-nationalist writer Walker Connor to describe the feeling of belonging that exists between people and their sacred soil, the land of their ancestors, the native land, the cradle of the nation.1 Nations, tribes and ethnicities have, for the most part, identified with particular homelands which they have settled since time immemorial. In the modern era the Western derived states system was extended to embrace the world through colonization which meant that national and ethnic homelands had to be defined in terms of states. This required a clear demarcation of borders where previously territory was separated by frontiers which permitted considerable ambiguity. In the concept of the nation-state, a single homeland was to be incorporated in a single state, but the reality for many states, particularly those in the developing world, was several homelands in one state or state borders that divided homelands. State building created new instabilities and conflicts based on the mismatch of states and homelands. The term peripheral refers to territory which was not considered part of the homeland proper but was located in the frontier. It was not settled

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by homeland people, nor was it part of their mythology or folklore, though they may have had some contact with it. Maritime territory including rocks and islands which were never included in the homeland of a people and which were regarded as part of a maritime frontier assumed economic importance as a consequence of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Negotiated in 1958, UNCLOS-1 prompted states to define their maritime borders according to certain accepted principles to support extended claims to resources. UNCLOS-2, which was agreed to in December 1982, formalized the principle according to which states were allowed to claim exclusive economic zones (EEZ) and continental shelves. The result was complicated and overlapping claims in some areas and disputes which were then appropriated for nationalist causes.

1. The Homeland

Territorial disputes involving the homeland or its definition arouse very powerful emotions and have justified the resort to war and conflict. When national values are threatened, those who advocate compromise or negotiation are accused of betrayal and a nationalist momentum arises which locks both sides into a prolonged dispute. Such disputes often result in an agonistic test of wills with several possible outcomes that do not resolve the issue; there may be a military victory by one side and a desire for revenge on the other side, or both sides may exhaust themselves and a stalemate ensues, or external intervention by the U.N. or a regional body or alliance such as NATO may impose a settlement which is temporary at best. The conflict then lies dormant and may be revived in the future. Examples of such conflicts include the Beijing–Taiwan dispute which is essentially concerned with a definition of the Han Chinese homeland which the Taiwanese activists explicitly reject. Serbia regards Kosovo as homeland territory. It was considered as the cradle of the Serbian nation in the 14th century which was subsequently conquered by the Turks and settled by Albanian Muslims. Kosovo was separated from Serbia by the United States (U.S.) and the European Union (E.U.) as punishment for its aggression in 1999. With E.U. and U.S. encouragement, Kosovo declared independence in February 2008 to which Serbia cannot be reconciled. Cyprus is a case of the clash of homelands as neither the majority Greeks nor minority Turks could live with each other without conflict. Intermittent crises erupted in 1958 and 1964 which resulted in the deployment of a British and U.N. peacekeeping force. After a Greek coup d’état in July 1974, which was intended to unite the island with Greece,

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