

people expecting an unpleasant event are more likely to choose to engage in another unpleasant activity during the waiting period if they change their beliefs about themselves, such as thinking that they are brave or that they deserve to suffer. If they change their beliefs about the situation, such as thinking it will not be so bad after all, they are less likely to engage in an unpleasant activity during the waiting period.

CLINICAL DISORDERS AND TREATMENT

All clinical disorders could be considered as forms of self-defeating behaviors. A "self-defeating personality disorder" was considered briefly by the American Psychiatric Association, drawn largely from characteristics that had been noted by clinicians since Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) as masochistic. The criteria for the proposed self-defeating personality disorder, however, overlapped too much with those for dysthymic disorder (depression) and other personality disorders, such as dependent personality. Furthermore, feminists were concerned that women who

SELF-DETERMINATION

Self-determination, in the most general sense, refers to the capacity to control one's own destiny, free of interference by others. Historically, the right to self-determination has meant the right of a subjugated nation or colonized population to establish a sovereign, independent state—to secede from a multinational state or to dissolve colonial ties of dependency to an imperial "mother country." It has also been invoked in support of demands for local autonomy or self-government at the sub-state level as a means to preserve the culture or safeguard the security of national or aboriginal minorities. Since the 1960s, however, many social movement activists (particularly proponents of a postmodernist "politics of identity") have sought to invest the principle with a much looser meaning.

NATIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION

The concept of national self-determination is a modern one, despite the fact that struggles by subjugated peoples

against occupation, colonialism, and enslavement have occurred for many thousands of years. Its advent was predicated on the prior emergence of such defining features of capitalist modernity as the discourse on rights, the ideology of nationalism, and the European nation-state system.

A nation-state is a form of state power in which territorial sovereignty is ostensibly exercised on behalf of a specific nation—a relatively homogeneous aggregation of people who typically share a common language, economic life, and cultural tradition as an “imagined community” (to use Benedict Anderson’s expression). The nation-building projects of modern European states were undertaken to strengthen their positions relative to major rivals and often involved attempts to unify and homogenize the population within the borders of the nation-state, usually through coerced assimilation or “ethnic cleansing” (including forced population transfers and genocide in some circumstances). For several of the major European powers, it also involved the conquest and colonial subjugation of other, far-flung territories and peoples with the aim of consolidating empires whose purpose was to enrich and empower the imperial nation-state or “mother country.” Political domination, military subjugation, and economic exploitation of colonies stimulated the emergence of anti-imperialist movements and nationalist projects within colonized populations otherwise divided along tribal, religious, and linguistic lines.

Independence struggles by the colonial possessions of the major imperial powers began long before the term *self-determination* came into use. The first such struggle was waged against Britain by several of its “settler colonies” in North America, and its success resulted in the founding of the United States of America in 1776. Encouraged by revolutionary events in France, the black population of Haiti rose up against French rule in the 1790s, eventually establishing an independent republic in 1804. By the late nineteenth century, Spain had lost most of its colonial possessions in the Americas. The success of these New World independence struggles heightened the nationalist aspirations of subjugated nationalities in the multinational states—the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian empires—that dominated much of Eurasia and the Middle East prior to World War I.

Within the imperial nations themselves, few supported the right to self-determination of national minorities at home or colonized peoples abroad. The major exception before 1914 was the international socialist movement. Thus, Karl Marx argued that English wage workers could never achieve their emancipation as a class so long as they remained complicit in the national oppression of the Irish. At its 1896 congress, the Marxist Second International adopted a resolution affirming the right of all nations to self-determination.

In Russia, Vladimir Lenin saw the aspirations of the oppressed nationalities of what he called the czarist “prison house of peoples” as integral to the broader struggle for democracy, insisting that the only way to forge working-class unity across national lines was to combat “great Russian chauvinism” and recognize the right of Ukrainians, Georgians, and other nationalities to establish their own independent states. However, Lenin distinguished between recognizing the *right* to self-determination and actually advocating independence. The right to self-determination, he wrote, is similar to the right to divorce; one can affirm the right without advising the action. After the victory of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, Lenin established the right of nations to self-determination as a fundamental programmatic plank of the Third (Communist) International, advocating national liberation struggles in the colonial world and waging an unsuccessful, deathbed struggle against the Russian chauvinist policies of Joseph Stalin and his acolytes in 1923. The subsequent consolidation of bureaucratic rule under Stalin transformed the Soviet Union into a Russian-dominated multinational state in which the right of the constituent, nationally based republics to secede was extinguished.

At the end of World War I, the principle of national self-determination found a new ostensible champion in the American president Woodrow Wilson, acquiring currency, for the first time, in liberal political discourse. “‘Self determination’ is not a mere phrase,” Wilson declared in 1918, “it is an imperative principle of action which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril” (Moynihan 1994, pp.78-79). But Wilson soon qualified his support for the idea, recognizing the dangers that the principle could pose to European stability. Subsequently, U.S. advocacy of the right of national self-determination proved inconsistent. After World War II, the United Nations, under American leadership, upheld a principle of international law that affirmed the right of colonies to independence from overseas empires but that recognized no right of secession for national minorities within established states.

In the post-World War II era, formal political independence was achieved by the great majority of former colonies in Africa, Asia, and the Western Hemisphere, opening the way, in most cases, to their neocolonial economic and political subjugation by the great powers. However, the demand for self-determination continued to be vigorously asserted by Northern Irish Republicans and Scots in the United Kingdom, Québécois in Canada, Basques in Spain, Tamils in Sri Lanka, and by many would-be nationalist movements operating within the hundreds and perhaps thousands of “imagined communities” that had defined themselves as nations. Under the watchword of self-determination, the 1990s saw the rapid

breakup of the Soviet Union and the Yugoslav federation and the emergence of a plethora of new nation-states in Europe and Asia.

The dispossessed status of the Palestinian people, resulting from the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 and the consolidation of a Hebrew-speaking nation on territory claimed by both Jews and Palestinians as a homeland, remains an intractable national problem at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Here the question arises: Under what conditions can two "interpenetrated peoples" reconcile their mutually conflicting claims to self-determination?

SELF-DETERMINATION AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY

The radical ferment of the 1960s inspired a much looser definition of the concept of self-determination, such that it was often used to describe the aspirations of any group confronting putatively oppressive treatment. The original impetus to this redefinition was provided by the 1960s Black Power movement in the United States. Reacting against the liberal, integrationist perspective of the mainstream Civil Rights movement, many African American activists (notably Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, and the Black Panthers) embraced black nationalism. Having defined African Americans as an "oppressed nation" or as an "internal colony" (however problematically), these activists proclaimed the right of the black population to various forms of "self-determination"—sometimes through proposals for "separation" from "White America" but more commonly through demands for "black control of the black community." It is notable that few of these schemes were implemented—their most enduring legacy probably being black studies programs in higher education.

The stage was thus set for the emergence of a decidedly amorphous notion of self-determination, one with which other marginalized or oppressed sectors could easily identify. The concept was also extended to notions of "empowering" individual victims of abuse or poverty through community organizing. Self-determination merged with the broader notion of "liberation" and was invoked by activists who championed not only the rights but also the unique identities of racial and ethnic minorities, women, gays, and the disabled. Indeed, for many advocates of a postmodern "politics of identity," self-determination became virtually synonymous with unfettered expression of sectoral identity based not only on nationality but on gender, race, or sexual orientation as well.

SEE ALSO *Anticolonial Movements; Autonomy; Black Power; Colonialism; Colony, Internal; Communalism; Dependency Theory; Indigenous Rights; Lenin, Vladimir Ilitch; Liberation; Marx, Karl; Minorities;*

Nationalism and Nationality; Palestinians; Politics, Identity; Secession; Separatism; United Nations

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