

have important effects in reducing the level of delinquency and other problem behaviors and improving the life chances of children who otherwise would not benefit from self-control (Greenwood 2002). On the other hand, the theory predicts that efforts to control crime by targeting adolescents or adults by policing and incarceration will be ineffective, since they inevitably come too late in the developmental process. As control theory predicts, the evidence appears to support the notion that variation in the practices of the criminal justice system has only negligible effects on individual criminal tendencies and on the crime rate overall (Gottfredson & Hirschi 2003).

SEE ALSO: Crime, Life Course Theory of; Crime, Social Control Theory of; Criminology; Juvenile Delinquency; Social Learning Theory

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## self-determination

*Daniele Conversi*

Self-determination is a principle in international law that a people ought to be able to determine its own future and political status free from external interference. It hence embodies the right for all peoples to decide their own political, economic, and cultural development.

The principle was first implemented on European soil following the post-World War I collapse of the dynastic Central European empires (Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman). It was zealously fostered by the president of the United States, Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924), thus becoming the cornerstone for the entire post-World War I order heralding the beginning of the “American century.” Accordingly, the boundaries of newly formed states had to be made congruent with “existing” ethnonational divisions. In order to achieve this goal, each self-determined unit had ideally to be conceived as an internally homogeneous entity. On the other hand, wherever possible, oppressed minorities should be granted the same right. Although the original idea was to establish a more stable world order, the effect was just the opposite, to increase European disorder, since all newly created entities included numerous minorities in their midst. The resulting convulsions became propitious for the consolidation of the United States as the hegemonic power at the global level.

Some of the new states, like Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia (both established in 1918), lacked clear majorities. Subsequently, incipient fascist movements began to use this principle to exploit the presence of “stranded” minorities in what had suddenly become “foreign lands.” German, Italian, and Hungarian irredentists wished to apply the very Wilsonian principle of self-determination to their “unredeemed” kin minorities on strict nationality lines. They strove to reunite entire ethnic diasporas within their respective *Heimaten*.

Among other things, Woodrow Wilson’s 14 Points mandated that “the peoples of Austria-Hungary . . . should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development,” while the “nationalities . . . under Turkish rule

should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development.” All these changes threatened to undo the tattered fabric of European and Ottoman pluri-ethnic and multireligious societies, indeed, that is what they achieved.

Given the later rise of aggressive nationalism, particularly irredentism and Nazi-fascism, the failure of this project was global in terms of international security, human rights, and the maintenance of peace. Like all attempts at “reordering the world” characteristic of totalitarian ideologies, it entailed tragic human costs, even though these had been largely unanticipated. However, while the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires were being dissolved, Russia could save part of its territorial integrity by adopting the political praxis of Marxism-Leninism. The Constitution of the Soviet Union formally recognized the right to self-determination of its constituent Republics. This was a move initially envisioned by V. I. Lenin to capture the support of regional elites and hence assure the continuation of the “empire,” although with a different name. Lenin had theorized about the need to use self-determination as an avenue to integrate the empire’s nationalities into the new socialist order (Connor 1994 [1967]). But this legal principle was never fully put into practice due to the extremely centralized character of Soviet party politics.

After World War II, decolonization unleashed a second wave of self-determination claims, spreading the doctrine further. When the UN Charter was ratified in 1951, the signatories included a clause on the right of peoples to self-determination. Accordingly, all former colonies, that is, those which were already on the map prior to 1939, should be allowed to achieve sovereignty within their existing boundaries. Indeed, the doctrine of *uti possidetis* (from late Latin, “as you now possess”) mandated that the states emerging from decolonization had to inherit the colonial administrative borders that existed at the time of independence. This term originally referred to a militaristic principle of international law allowing a belligerent to retain the captured territory it occupied at the termination of hostilities. In its decolonization form, the doctrine of *uti possidetis* was first applied in

Latin America in the 1820s when the Spanish empire began to crumble.

Imperial powers, emerging elites, and “realist” politicians wished to restrict the concept to existing colonial possessions and fiercely opposed its application to entire nationalities. In this way, fully fledged UN member governments could uphold the principle of “non-interference” in their internal affairs together with a strenuous defense of their state’s territorial integrity. Their main rationale was provided by the supposed threat emanating from secessionist movements and epitomized by the ill-fated partition between India and Pakistan in 1947. But the major obstacle to a wider implementation of the principle was the Cold War’s freeze on all conflicts beyond the logic of mutually opposed blocs. The unchallenged dogma was then that self-determination should never apply to ethnic groups or stateless nations. This consensus was only broken by the secession of Bangladesh (1971), when India succeeded in attracting the support of the international community. On the other hand, the Federation of Malaysia willingly allowed Singapore to secede in 1965. The right to self-determination is solemnly upheld by the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights (1970), the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976).

A third wave of self-determination spread by the end of the Cold War, with German unification (1990), the breakup of former socialist “federations” (1990–3), and, finally, the independence of Eritrea (1993) and East Timor (1999). More recently, the concept has been used throughout the world by indigenous peoples, stateless nations, minorities, and sovereign states alike, but in a looser and more flexible way.

The principle of self-determination is rooted in British liberal thought, particularly in John Stuart Mill’s idea of representative government (Connor 1994 [1967]). Mill notoriously argued that in a country which consists of several nationalities, free institutions of a representative government are “next to impossible” (Mill 1977 [1861]: 361). In this way, the door was left open for the advent of modern-day ethnic intolerance. The western liberal principle of “one nation, one state” deeply influenced Eastern European

political thought during the period of state building, just at a moment when German ethnicism and French Jacobinism were providing the inspiring models for national mobilization. Both liberals and Marxists had failed to deal with the issue of ethnic dissent because the European nation-state provided the unique empirical referent for their political theories.

The principle indicates the aspiration of a group (the “*self*”) to freely “determine” its own political structure. But in order for the “*self*” to be “determined,” someone must first determine who the “*self*” is – or establish who are the people to be “determined.” The exercise of this right presupposes a previous process of “boundary definition” and “group recognition” (Conversi 1997). As Ivor Jennings (1956: 56) pointed out: “On the surface, it seemed reasonable: let the people decide. It was in fact ridiculous because the people cannot decide until somebody decides who are the people.” This is referred to as the concept’s paradoxical *indeterminacy* (Moore 1998). The principle remained often impossible to implement and, when attempted, it frequently led to further chaos and conflict.

The concept of self-determination is often placed in opposition to that of *territorial integrity*, with which it is thought to be incompatible. However, self-determination does not necessarily imply political separation, sovereignty, or secession. Many movements for national liberation, regional autonomy, and indigenous rights refer to self-determination as a broad umbrella term which allows for a vast array of possibilities based on the recognition of collective rights. Calls for self-determination can often be settled relatively easily with concessions of regional autonomy and/or cultural rights. Secession would work as a practical tool with high moral value if it could provide an avenue for ethnic or religious minorities to escape their persecution by dominant elites. However, the achievement of statehood through political separation does not always result in an improvement in either economic or human rights. Less drastic tools, short of independence, are available and can be implemented to address calls for self-determination.

Contrary to self-determination, *secession* is considered a capital sin in international politics. It is sternly resisted by states and governments

worldwide for obvious reasons. In the US its prejudicial connotation also derives from the negative myth of the Civil War, when 11 Southern states attempted to secede by forming the “Confederate States of America” (1861–5). This myth still reverberates in US foreign policy’s general hostility to secession. The initial refusal to recognize the independence of Slovenia and Croatia as they came under attack from the Yugoslav army (1991–2) and George Bush’s condemnation of Ukraine’s secessionist drive in 1990 stem both from *realpolitik* and from this anti-secessionist legacy. However, this attitude was tempered by the US support for the independence of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, which had been illegally annexed by the Soviet Union in 1943 as a consequence of the secret Hitler–Stalin Pact (Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact, August 23, 1939).

The right to self-determination of peoples remains a cardinal principle in international law. On the one hand, denying this principle would flagrantly violate the companion principle of democracy – a contradiction disregarded in the early 1990s when the West failed to couple the two concepts as Yugoslavia disintegrated. On the other hand, the capacity of every people to take advantage of this concept is minimized by the unprecedented invasiveness of sweeping “external” forces, such as global law, consumerism, Americanization, and ecological disaster. The unbridled power of multinational companies often exceeds that of supposedly “sovereign” states. In an increasingly interdependent world, where megacorporations command greater resources than many single countries, the concept of self-determination might become irrelevant for human development unless it can contain the most destructive aspects of globalization.

SEE ALSO: Boundaries (Racial/Ethnic); Decolonization; Diaspora; Indigenous Movements; Mill, John Stuart; Nation-State and Nationalism; Nationalism

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outcomes can also influence higher order ones. (Note that *identity* and *ideal self* are listed to acknowledge that self-concept is composed of more than self-esteem, but the former, and related concepts, are beyond the scope of this entry.)

Self may be defined sociologically as an organized and interactive system of thoughts, feelings, identities, and motives that (1) is born of self-reflexivity and language, (2) people attribute to themselves, and (3) characterizes specific human beings. Psychologists tend to conceptualize the self as a set of cognitive representations indicating a person’s personality traits, organized by linkages, across representations created by personal experience or biography. It is sometimes extended to include things besides trait attributes, such as social roles and even identities. In this case, the self is a cognitive structure incorporating such elements as intelligent, persistent, excitable, and truthful, or middle class, Jewish, female, and Canadian.

Self-concept is how we imagine and perceive our self. It is inextricably tied to the “I–me” dialectic expounded by James and Mead. Self-concept may be defined as the totality of an individual’s thoughts and feelings about a particular object – his or her self. It includes cognition and emotion, since it is both an object of perception and reflection and an emotional response to those perceptions. As a product of its own objectification, self-concept entails a particular person (i.e., subject, “knower,” or

## self-esteem, theories of

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Self-esteem refers to the overall positive or negative attitude an individual takes toward himself or herself. Understanding self-esteem also requires awareness of related terms, especially *self* and *self-concept*, along with an appreciation of their similarities and differences. Figure 1 illustrates how self, self-concept, and self-esteem are causally related, and the outcomes typically associated with self-esteem. Although hierarchical in terms of abstractness and general causality, lower order concepts and

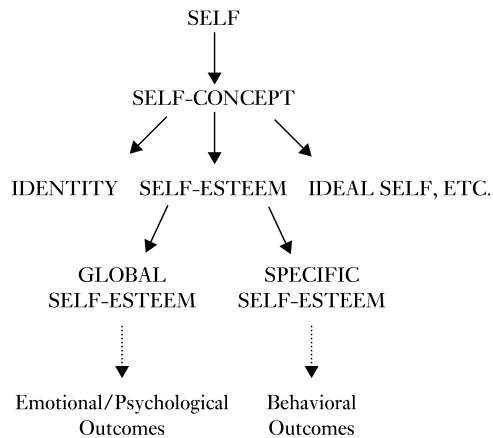


Figure 1 Outcomes associated with self-esteem.