



Sharing Dreams, Strengthening Visions

The Right to Self-Determination as a Resource for JustPeace
(An Unrepresented Peoples' Perspective)

Aküm Longchari

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Must a people disappear for us to know they exist?
Mano Dayak, 1949-1995

*To all those who continue
to resiliently struggle and persistently resist
the 'powers that be' in order to
regain their dignity and humanity.*

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Abstract

The question of self-determination has re-entered the center stage of world affairs in the 21st century. While the right of self-determination in the 20th century was for most part clothed in legal language and reduced to a privilege of ‘State-determination,’ the events that the world has witnessed in Kosovo, South Sudan, Egypt, Libya, Burma, Syria over the last ten years indicate the peoples’ increasing desire to recover their self-determining capacities. These emerging trends have created conditions for the 21st century to be a century of ‘peoples-determination’ that is based on their values, dreams and imagination.

The primary reason for this research study comes from the awareness that an unrepresented peoples’ perspective is largely missing from existing literature on self-determination affecting their future. This research will strengthen it by providing a perspective that critically analyzes the State system which has denied the right to self-determination of all peoples. This denial has been the source of protracted and violent conflicts; and by equating the language of self-determination to secession and State sovereignty, it has affectively reduced the capacity of self-determination as a resource for JustPeace.

Through a qualitative research design that used grounded theory and purposive data collection from Naga, Indian and International participants, the results point to an evolving synthesis of self-determination as a shared language. From this synthesis, self-determination emerges as a powerful value, a potent ideology, a relational praxis, and a resource for JustPeace that is essential to a bottom-up approach that calls for a people-centered system where power is shared. This shared language of self-determination as a resource for JustPeace is contextually explored in the Naga struggle for self-determination.

Since, self-determination is a right belonging to peoples, the decisiveness of its praxis remains in peoples’ hearts and minds. For this reason, self-determination will not wither away, and so long as peoples are the *self* that determines the *right*, self-determination will continue to be relevant in the search for humanization. Hence, the unrepresented peoples’ perspective needs to be heard and acknowledged for a meaningful dialogue to occur between States and Peoples.

Key words: Self-determination, unrepresented peoples, right, humanization, praxis, evolving synthesis, shared language, JustPeace, dialogue, conflict transformation, right relationship, shared responsibility.

Candidate's Certification

I certify that the substance of this dissertation has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this dissertation and all sources used have been acknowledged in this dissertation.



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