

# Modernising Relations between Indigenous People and States

the impact of policies, arising from colonisation, on Aboriginal self-determination

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## War or Peace?

### Points

1. Relations between states and Indigenous Peoples have reached a critical stage in development. After 500 years, physical subjugation is all but complete.

2. The passing of the period of subjugation does not mean an end to hostilities.

3. In Australia the 'frontier' situation was generally understood by Aboriginal people, soldiers, authorities, settlers, missionaries and others that there existed a war situation, albeit without any official declaration of war being announced.

4. War is declared, engagement in battle commences, combat dispositions change over time and place, the opposition is subdued, victory is won or lost and surrender is acknowledged. In Australia, this is not clear. There was no finalisation of the combat period, there is no treaty and Aboriginal people still maintain they have not surrendered their sovereignty.

5. While the activity of conflict can be very unclear because of its volatility, the outcome of conflict is reasonably clear one way or another. While the majority of Aboriginal people in Australia may have mixed opinions about being in a state of war with White Australia, they agree that they and many of their families, relatives and friends do not live in peaceful relations with Western people or systems (law, government authorities - local, State and Federal, social).

"In contemporary Australian society Aboriginal people lack both ideological and economic bases of power - they control neither things nor ideas. Whites control resources, production and distribution." C. Howe, 1982.

6. Does the acceptance of Western political regimes imply surrender? Are they, the regimes, really accepted or are they imposed and attempts to understand and utilise them to their full capacity obstructed?

7. To be under a state of complete bureaucratic, political, economic and administrative dependency (as in the quote above) is to be in a state of being occupied.

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## Governance

### Points:

- 1.** Relations between states and Indigenous Peoples have reached a critical state in development. The period generally referred to as colonialist, roughly speaking the last 500 years, has come to an end, or is coming to an end.
- 2.** The clearest example of colonialism and its logical outcome, is for the institutionalisation of dependency. This is the new phase coming in at the beginning of a new millennium. There are a lot of advantages for the state in keeping the Indigenous population in dependency and some disadvantages too.
- 3.** A dependency relationship in varying forms and degrees currently exists between the states and Indigenous Peoples, in both independent developing countries and in industrialised Western countries.
- 4.** The classic modernisation paradigm, dominant in academic circles from around 1945 to 1965, supported the transfer of technology and the socio-political culture of the developed societies to the 'traditional' societies. Development was defined as economic growth. In many ways dependency is the antithesis of modernisation, but at the level of communication it is a continuation of it. Dependency theory argues that the prevailing conditions in the non-aligned world are not a stage in the evolution toward development, but the result of extant international structures. In other words, whereas the modernisation perspective holds that the causes of underdevelopment lay mainly within the developing nation, dependency theory postulates the reasons for underdevelopment are primarily external to the dependent society. (Jan Servaes)
- 5.** For the state, the prioritisation of economic development over political development for the poor developing nations, is still important as long as the processes fall within a containment context.
- 6.** For rich, Western nations with Indigenous peoples within, sovereignty issues are controlled by weak, outdated agreements/treaties or by the absence of treaties altogether (Australia). Economic development is as described above, only to an even more restricted degree.
- 7.** The lack of appropriate, modern self-governance systems allows human rights abuses and community social problems to flourish.
- 8.** However, the presence of appropriate, modern self-governance systems gives political power to Indigenous people and also supports economic development.