

Dependence Limits Strategy

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This editorial was originally published in CounterPunch [counterpunch.org] in July 2014 and has been edited and updated for publication in the Fourth World Journal.

In the run-up to the September 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples at UN headquarters in New York, propaganda inundated the infosphere, lending an atmosphere of pandemonium, and leaving many hopeless about the prospects for conflict resolution between Fourth World nations and modern states. For a few, though, widespread hopelessness within the Indigenous Peoples Movement, the human rights movement and the environmental movement is good.

Principles of Psywar

With the advent of the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Indigenous Peoples Movement required the linking of national, regional, and local movement resources through a process of dialogue and integration. The involvement of moral authorities and civil society organizations helped to assure the proper movement emphasis on moral sanction, central to constructing new relationships between nations and states. But moral sanction alone is insufficient to constrain reactionary political violence and official repression. That will require continuous research, analysis, and investigation — the civil society equivalent of wartime intelligence operations — in order to weather the psychological warfare associated with the disease of dominion.

Psychological warfare, according to Paul Linebarger of the School of Advanced International Studies, is a continuous process not controlled by laws, usages, and customs of war — covert, often disguised as the voice of

institutions and media — a non-violent persuasion waged before, during, and after war.

Most countries, notes Linebarger, suffer from ideological confusion—an instability of basic beliefs. “In states anxious to promote a fixed mentality, the entire population lives under conditions approximating the psychological side of war. Allegiance in war,” says Linebarger, “is a matter of ideology, not of opinion.” Coordinated propaganda machines, he observes, include psywar, public relations, general news, and public education. “Psywar,” he warns, “has in private media facilities, in an open society, a constantly refreshed source of new material that, when selectively censored, can prevent non-governmental materials from circulating.”

Mainstream Media and the Corporate Agenda

Mainstream media, when it mentions conflicts between indigenous nations and modern states, portrays these conflicts as challenges to be resolved by assimilating indigenous cultures into market systems. Extinguishing Fourth World sovereignty, annihilating Fourth World resources, and coercing Fourth World leaders; this is the corporate agenda mainstream media support.

When these conflicts cannot be ignored, mainstream media looks for compromised NGOs to speak for indigenous peoples, thereby marginalizing indigenous intellectuals, diplomats, and governing authorities—a mass communications tactic examined under the concept of [Netwar](#). While mainstream media informs, it does not make information comprehensible; what it leaves out is essential to knowledge that allows readers to form their own judgment, rather than consume corporate distortions and state propaganda.

A Free Authentic Life

As Kalle Lasn, publisher of *Adbusters Magazine* said when interviewed in the July 2001 issue of *The Sun*, “It’s impossible to live a free authentic life in America today ... Our emotions, personalities, and core values have become programmed.” Lasn, a former advertising executive for thirty years, understands the power of propaganda as advertising. He also understands the keys to undermining this corrupting influence—persistent ridicule, and appeals to conscience.

Antonio Gramsci, writing in *Prison Notebooks*, observes that, “Civil society operates without ‘sanctions’ or compulsory ‘obligations’, but nevertheless exerts a collective pressure and obtains objective results in the form of an evolution of customs, ways of thinking and acting, and morality. The eclipse of a way of living and thinking cannot take place without a crisis.” Civil society today, I would argue, exists in a perpetual state of crisis — some fabricated and some real — that, with the advent of alternative media, desktop publishing, and Internet communication, offers an unprecedented opportunity to begin this eclipse.

As Gramsci observed from prison in 1930s Fascist Italy, “If the ruling class has lost its consensus, i.e. is no longer leading but only dominant, exercising coercive force alone, this means the great masses have become detached from their traditional ideologies and no longer believe what they used to [thus] the exercise of force to prevent new ideologies from imposing themselves leads to skepticism and a new arrangement—a new culture.” If the Indigenous Peoples Movement is to succeed in creating a new culture based on mutual respect, the ways of thinking of the old culture must be strategically challenged.

Theater of War

In doing graduate research for the thesis

included in my second book, I developed a [curricular proposal](#) that incorporated the study of psychological warfare as a key component of effective social activism. The more I observe discussion online about social conflict now taking place on the Internet and public airwaves, the more I realize how widespread and entrenched the misunderstanding of the nature of this conflict is, and in turn how important it is for those engaged in this process to acquaint themselves with at least the basic principles if not tactics of psywar. For those unable to access the classic texts on this topic — *Psychological Warfare* by Paul Linebarger, and *The Science of Coercion* by Christopher Simpson — I’ll try to outline them here.

For starters, there are two things to keep in mind: the target audience, and the purpose of the message. In a theater of war — physical or psychological — there are combatants and non-combatants and at least two sides, as well as many interests. In communicating social transformation, psywar will be employed at different times and in different ways depending on the audience targeted and what the message transmitter is attempting to affect.

In recruiting the uninvolved or uncommitted, the message might convey an urgent threat, a righteous cause, a juicy opportunity, or a chance for revenge. In retaining the involved, a message would likely include an appeal to pride and expectations of victory. In undermining the resolve of the opposition, messages generally try to create doubts about all the above.

Counter-Power in the Network Society

One area often overlooked by novices to psychological warfare, however, is the use of messages crafted and delivered for the purpose of preventing opponents from effectively mobilizing audiences potentially supportive of their views, goals, and objectives. These

strategically developed messages — sometimes overt, sometimes covert — are those most commonly associated with gray and black ops, white being forthright, gray misleading, and black counterfeit.

Understanding these techniques of mass communication — deployed in abundance in politics, campaigns, and advertising today — is essential for those who care about where the world is heading, even if in the end they decide to avoid the field of social conflict themselves. Once educated on the topic, they can at least refrain from unwittingly undermining those with whom they agree. Manuel Castells, in his paper “[Communication, Power and Counter-power in the Network Society](#),” has a lot more to say on this.

The first principle of psywar is never repeat the talking points of your opposition. The second principle is to deny them a platform to misinform. To offer a platform, out of some misguided sense of evenhandedness, is to further the credibility and legitimacy of those who undermine such movements.

Controlling Consciousness

Wall Street's vertical integration of controlling consciousness is based on five components: ownership of media, fabrication of news, integration of advertising with state propaganda, financing of foundations and brokerages, and co-option of NGOs and grassroots groups. While many well-meaning people are channeled into the latter by the concerted collaboration of all the former, the corporate agenda that determines the policies, practices, and projects of these NGOs is anything but benign.

Indeed, the distractions, distortions, and deceit promoted by the scoundrels, malefactors, and curs — working on behalf of Wall Street — to mesmerize the naive in order to lead them astray, pose a lethal threat to Fourth

World peoples and their attempts at self-determination. Pretending otherwise, in order to coddle the credulous, accomplishes nothing noble. Indeed, it only perpetuates misperceptions that urgently need to be shattered.

September 20-26, 2014, in New York City, the Wall Street/NGO convergence around climate change, indigenous peoples' human rights, and corporate derivative philanthropy, promised to be one of the super spectacles of the decade. Shining a light on that shadowy affair is something that simply has to be done.

Fording the River

The omnipresent Ford Foundation is an ideological supporter of the World Bank (a mega co-developer of dams, mining, and plantations in indigenous territories), and a UN Millennium Development Goals supporter — along with Bill Gates and Bill Clinton — who do the same. Co-opting Fourth World peoples is a key objective of their neoliberal privatization project. Taking money from the Ford Foundation is thus equivalent to taking money from Shell Oil, Rio Tinto, or Monsanto.

The Ford Foundation is known for funding NGOs promoting civil rights, while simultaneously supporting the state and corporate neglect of indigenous human rights. Civil rights do not conflict with capitalism, while human rights do.

Anti-Indian organizations in the US believe tribal governments should be abolished, and work toward that end. Their main argument is that civil rights guarantee equality under domestic law, ignoring the fact that international law recognizes the human rights of indigenous nations to make their own laws.

Protecting their territories and properties requires indigenous nations to invoke international law and treaties that supersede domestic civil law. By undermining the implementation of indigenous human rights law, the Ford

Foundation arguably abets racism and religious bigotry against Fourth World peoples.

As indigenous nations and modern states prepared for the UN World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, corporations like Shell Oil and foundations like Ford spread money around to co-opt indigenous activists and NGOs. While this bribery ensured indigenous NGOs would be in attendance at the UN event, these partnerships and dependencies also ensured they would not challenge the capitalist system in anything but moral theatrics.

Indeed, some of the recipients of Ford Foundation money had already demonstrated a willingness to attack Fourth World governing authorities in order to protect their state-approved, foundation-funded privileges at the UN. Ford Foundation-funded brokerages include International Funders for Indigenous Peoples, and the Seventh Generation Fund.

Because the Ford Foundation funds academic institutions, NGOs, and conferences does not mean that anyone actually working at these entities supports neoliberal philosophy. What Ford tries to do is shape public opinion in favor of neoliberalism; supporting capitalist-oriented humanitarianism is essential to that psychological warfare.

Dependence Limits Strategies

George Manuel, chief of the National Indian Brotherhood (known today as the Assembly of First Nations), once remarked, “Assimilation is annihilation.” As president of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples from 1975-1981, Manuel’s work was foundational to the Indigenous Peoples Movement we see today.

Creating financial and psychological dependence facilitates assimilation of indigenous peoples by corporations, church, and state. Chief Manuel’s partner in forming the Center for World Indigenous Studies in 1984,

Rudolph C. Ryser, once noted, “Dependence limits strategies.”

Indeed, dependence on corporations and billionaire philanthropies has corrupted Fourth World leaders, and compromised indigenous activism, something Public Good Project has exposed in its coverage of the [indigenous non-profit industrial complex](#).

Here Come the COPPs

Indigenous lobbyists at the UN have grown so accustomed to the prestige of hobnobbing with UN bureaucrats and diplomats that they have lost sight of what is at stake in the UN process. While indigenous governing authorities struggle to democratize the UN — which has marginalized them, simultaneously with providing a playpen for indigenous NGOs at the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues — the UN bureaucracy has been busy creating the illusion of inclusion.

To wit, the secretariat for the Permanent Forum in Spring 2013 announced the UNPFII Twelfth Session, May 20-31 in New York, would include a “dialogue” with the World Bank. As perhaps the most hostile of UN agencies to the Indigenous Peoples Movement and the implementation of Fourth World sovereignty under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the World Bank generated bags of bromides to use in press releases to impress their foundation funders. How to posture around this topic and others consumed the Indigenous Global Caucus (a.k.a. COPPs—charlatans, opportunists and pious poseurs) that met May 18 and 19 at UN Plaza.

The only potential bright spot in the secretariat announcement was the May 22 meeting with indigenous journalists to “strategize” on the 2014 [World Conference on Indigenous Peoples](#), also held at UN Headquarters in New York. Somehow, though, I don’t think the UN

staff had independent grassroots journalists in mind.

Implementing Indigenous Human Rights

There are several aspects of the UN human rights agenda that contribute to the invisibility of indigenous rights enshrined in the 2007 UN Declaration. First and foremost of the obstacles to implementing the rights of indigenous peoples, has been the refusal of the UN to recognize Fourth World nations as political entities worthy of participation in UN decision-making. If the governing authorities of Fourth World nations remain excluded from UN diplomatic processes, indigenous peoples will remain marginalized from discussions on world issues. As [noted](#) at Intercontinental Cry Magazine, this exclusionary obstacle at the UN has been challenged by 72 American Indian tribes, its removal deemed essential to resolving grievances and eliminating violence against indigenous nations.

Democratizing the international community cannot be limited to the international institutions created by modern states. As indigenous nations assert their human rights of self-determination and self-governance, new institutions are required. This is something Rudolph C. Ryser addresses in his 2012 book, [Indigenous Nations and Modern States](#).

The UN was formed by (and functions to serve the interests of) modern states, not Fourth World nations. Looking at Israel — a state created by the UN — and its ongoing human rights abuses toward the indigenous peoples of Palestine, we can see how the UN has actually been an obstacle to peaceful political development. By acceding to U.S. demands for crippling economic sanctions against Palestine, the UN has undermined their ability to manage their own affairs, in turn creating the desperation and humanitarian crisis to which cynical NGOs often cater. In another example,

the UN — at U.S. urging — approved the Indonesian annexation of West Papua over the protest of Papuan Indigenous peoples, leading to the current [human rights abuses](#) there. As Dr. Ryser remarked, by reinforcing the illusion that the UN can or will relieve the pain from the violence of colonialism, “The UN Human Rights Council stands as one of the significant obstacles to dynamic political development in the Fourth World.”

Given the U.S. influence as a permanent UN Security Council member, and as one of four UN Member States to oppose the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, it is fanciful to think the UN will ever be able to deliver on full human rights implementation for Fourth World nations. That can only happen in a neutral setting, where the diplomatic missions of indigenous nations and modern states come together on an equal footing, to resolve grievances and to negotiate a more democratic, inclusive future.

Since the UN General Assembly declaration in 2007, the UN bureaucracy — in order to provide cover for the REDD Ponzi scheme of carbon-market trading by transnational corporations and investment banks — actively excluded indigenous nations delegates from participating in climate change talks. In Poznan, Copenhagen, and Cancun, the UN repeatedly found new ways to silence indigenous peoples. Dispelling the notion of the UN as an honest broker is critical to understanding the need for new institutions that aren’t controlled by states and markets. Dr. Ryser asserts, “The UN promises to permanently lock these nations into a cage of political subjugation.”

With the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples concluded in September 2014, mainstream media fell all over itself to help the UN and its Member States continue excluding indigenous nations from meaningful participation in world affairs. Breaking the chains of

their subjugation requires ending the silence.

About the Author



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This article may be cited as:

Taber, J. (2015). Dependence Limits Strategy. *Fourth World Journal*, 14(1) pp 25-30.