

# **Africana Studia**

REVISTA INTERNACIONAL DE ESTUDOS AFRICANOS  
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF AFRICAN STUDIES

**Centro de Estudos Africanos**  
Universidade do Porto

## **AFRICANA STUDIA**

**Revista Internacional de Estudos Africanos/ International Journal of African Studies**

**Email:** africanastudia@letras.up.pt

**N.º de registo:** 124732

**Depósito legal:** 138153/99

**ISSN:** 0874-2375

**Editor/Entidade proprietária:** Centro de Estudos Africanos da Universidade do Porto  
FLUP – Via Panorâmica s/n – 4150-564 Porto

**Email:** ceaup@letras.up.pt

**NIF da entidade proprietária:** 504045466

**Director:** Maciel Morais Santos (ceaup@letras.up.pt)

**Secretariado:** Carla Delgado

**Revisão gráfica e de textos:** Henriqueta Antunes

**Sede da Redação:** FLUP – Via Panorâmica s/n – 4150-564 Porto

**Tiragem:** 200 exemplares

**Periodicidade:** Semestral

**Design capa:** Sersilito

**Execução gráfica:** Sersilito-Empresa Gráfica, Lda.

**Conselho científico/Advisory Board:** Adriano Vasco Rodrigues (CEAUP); Alexander Keese (U. Genève/CEAUP); Ana Maria Brito (FLUP); Augusto Nascimento (FLUL); Collette Dubois (U. Aix-en-Provence); Dmitri Bondarenko (Instituto de Estudos Africanos – Moscovo); Eduardo Costa Dias (CEA-ISCTE); Eduardo Medeiros (U. Évora); Emmanuel Tchoumtchoua (U. Douala); Fernando Afonso (Unilab/CEAUP); Jean Gormo (U. Maroua/CEAUP); Joana Pereira Leite (CESA-ISEG); João Garcia (FLUP); José Carlos Venâncio (U. Beira Interior); Malyne Newitt (King's College); Manuel Rodrigues de Areia (U. Coimbra); Manzambi V. Fernandes (Faculdade de Letras e Ciências Sociais de Luanda)/CEAUP); Martin Rupiya (UNISA-Pretória); Michel Cahen (IEP–U. Bordéus IV); Mohammed Nadir (CEAUP); Nizar Tadjiti (U. Tetouan/CEAUP); Paul Nugent (U. Edimburgo); Paulo de Carvalho (Faculdade de Letras e Ciências Sociais de Luanda); Philip Havik, (IHMT); Suzanne Daveau (U. Lisboa) e Roland Afungang (CEAUP).

**Conselho editorial/Editorial Board:** Ana Maria Guedes, Anabela Gonzalez Reis, Celina Silva, Flora Oliveira, Francisco Topa, Isabel Lourenço, Jaime Guedes, Jorge Ribeiro, Maciel Santos, Mourad Aty e Pedro Pinto Leite.

**Venda online:** <http://www.africanos.eu/ceaup/loja.php>

**Advertência:** Proibida a reprodução total ou parcial do conteúdo desta publicação (na versão em papel ou eletrónica) sem autorização prévia por escrito do CEAUP.

*Africana Studia* é uma revista publicada com arbitragem científica.

*Africana Studia* é uma revista da rede Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies (AEGIS).

**Capa:** Acampamento Boujdour, Tindouf. Foto: Carmo Matos, 2018.



# Africana Studia

REVISTA INTERNACIONAL DE ESTUDOS AFRICANOS  
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF AFRICAN STUDIES

N.º 29 – 1.º semestre – 2018

## Índice

Editorial .....	5
-----------------	---

### Saara Ocidental – as políticas do impasse

#### Atores diretos e indiretos

Sahara Ocidental: conflito diplomático (1991-2010) e os presumíveis interesses de Marrocos .....	11
<b>Pedro Ferreira</b>	
Explaining Algeria's Nationalist Foreign Policy on the Western Sahara Conflict . . . .	31
<b>Abdelhak Elaggoune e Mourad Aty</b>	
Western Sahara and the United States: Clientelism and exceptionalism in Africa's last colony .....	39
<b>Jeffrey J. Smith</b>	
The United States and the question of Western Sahara: A low priority in US Foreign Policy .....	55
<b>Yahia H. Zoubir</b>	
What role for the European Union in the Western Sahara Conflict? .....	65
<b>Carolina Jiménez Sánchez</b>	
The Western Sahara never ending story: A case of organized hypocrisy .....	79
<b>Rui Alexandre Novais</b>	
The African Union policies towards the Western Sahara .....	91
<b>Sidi Omar</b>	
The Arab League and the Western Sahara Conflict: The politics of a sheer neglect . . .	103
<b>Belkacem Iratni</b>	

#### Observadores emergentes

South Africa's Position on the Western Sahara and the right of Self-determination: An Afro-decolonial analysis. ....	117
<b>Siphamandla Zondi</b>	
China's Non-interference Policy towards Western Sahara Conflict .....	131
<b>Wu Wanjun e Pedro Sobral</b>	
China's Balancing Act in the Western Sahara Conflict. ....	145
<b>Hang Zhou</b>	

The dynamics shaping Turkish African Policy and Turkey's Approach towards the Western Sahara Conflict. ....	157
<b>Abdurrahim Sıradağ</b>	
Le Mexique et les limites de la politique étrangère des grands principes à travers le cas de la RASD. ....	169
<b>Mohamed Badine El Yattioui</b>	
<b>A RASD e a área lusófona</b>	
Portugal e o conflito do Saara – contributo para o estudo da 1.ª década. ....	183
<b>Maciel Santos</b>	
O longo sequestro de pescadores portugueses em 1980 – Lisboa negocia de má-fé e engana a Frente Polisário. ....	205
<b>Jorge Ribeiro</b>	
O dia-a-dia da Polisário há 40 anos pelo primeiro repórter português na RASD. ....	211
<b>Luís Alberto Ferreira</b>	
Sahara Ocidental, entre a ambiguidade internacional e o idealismo angolano. ....	221
<b>Issau Agostinho</b>	
À margem da margem: a retórica brasileira para não reconhecer a República Árabe Saaraui Democrática (RASD). ....	237
<b>Renatho Costa e Rodrigo Duque Estrada</b>	
Para Timor-Leste, a independência do Sahara Ocidental é fundamental. ....	255
<b>Dionísio Babo Soares</b>	
<b>Problemáticas do Saara Ocidental</b>	
Modernization and tradition in the Western Sahara, the Sahrawi Constitution. ....	263
<b>Claudia Barona Castañeda e Jorge Gamaliel Arenas Basurto</b>	
Can public opinion about Western Sahara's Cause be revealed by Social Media data analysis? .....	277
<b>Ana Maria Guedes</b>	
<b>Entrevistas</b>	
Jatri Aduh. ....	291
<b>Entrevista conducida por Maciel Santos y M. Fadel Sweyah</b>	
Salama Brahim El-Bachir. ....	297
<b>Entrevista conducida por Maciel Santos y M. Fadel Sweyah</b>	
<b>Notas de leitura</b>	
À la table des Seigneurs.....	303
<b>René Pélissier</b>	
<b>Resumos</b> .....	327
<b>Legendas das ilustrações</b> .....	346

O primeiro objetivo deste número é contribuir para trazer alguma visibilidade e, esperamos, compreensão, ao impasse que à escala mundial pesa sobre o mais antigo conflito colonial em África.

As políticas de impasse num conflito com mais de quarenta anos não implicam apenas um arrastamento de reuniões e resoluções nos edifícios com ar condicionado das Nações Unidas. Impactam igualmente uma população – a saharai – que vive dividida por um muro militar de 2 720 km: nos campos de refugiados no sul da Argélia, nos territórios libertados sob controlo da RASD (República Árabe Saharai Democrática), na chamada “prisão a céu aberto” sob ocupação marroquina, na diáspora em busca de trabalho e/ou em fuga.

Durante a última década mesmo a perceção da opinião pública sobre este impasse tendeu a diminuir – por raridade de desenvolvimentos noticiáveis e pela ação combinada do filtro de Marrocos, que os *media* dominantes nos estados europeus em geral seguem. Nesta parte do mundo não são notícia as violações quotidianas da Convenção de Genebra, da Convenção contra a tortura e maus tratos, das resoluções das Nações Unidas, do Tribunal Internacional e do Tribunal de Justiça Europeia.

O critério seguido foi simples: mobilizamos especialistas das políticas externas dos estados e organizações multilaterais que intervêm diretamente no conflito (os chamados atores diretos), dos principais aliados desses estados (atores indiretos) e de algumas das potências emergentes que “observam”, com maior ou menor abstinência de atos.

A complexidade e a duração deste conflito justificaram que, para casos como o dos Estados Unidos e a China, se apresentasse aqui mais do que uma síntese. Como se verá, os artigos de J. Smith/Zoubir tratam diferentes dimensões da política americana, habitualmente com interesses contraditórios. Também os dois artigos sobre o estado desta questão na China focam diferentemente o mundo chinês – da visibilidade académica aos interesses comerciais dominantes. Em contrapartida, para outros casos – como os de alguns dos principais aliados europeus de Marrocos (França ou a Espanha) – certamente se nota a falta de um tratamento especial, complementar ao que se apresenta sobre o conjunto da União Europeia.

Uma coisa é certa: não se procurou nem resultou deste critério qualquer uniformidade de posições relativamente a este conflito por parte dos especialistas convidados. Em alguns artigos, como por exemplo, os relativos às políticas mexicanas ou angolanas, o ponto de vista adotado aproxima-se mesmo da *real politik* que o esforço editorial deste número pretende confrontar. Mas a intenção era essa porque denunciar o impasse implicava trazer à luz o que o explica. Voluntária ou involuntariamente, os nossos autores assim procederam.

A última secção do dossier cumpre um segundo objetivo: inventariar a pequena caixa negra das políticas dos países da CPLP. Uma imagem exagerada? É conhecido o apoio

de Angola e de Timor, por exemplo – mas como tem evoluído e como se tem traduzido? Relativamente a Portugal, é também conhecido o paralelismo que a sua situação de ex-metrópole em Timor teve com a de Espanha no Saara, no mesmo ano de 1975. Mas há um conhecimento público deficiente sobre o contexto dos interesses e das políticas portuguesas – muito diferentes nos dois casos – ao longo das décadas seguintes. O mesmo se pode dizer relativamente às posições e ambiguidades do Brasil, que atravessam vários regimes.

Dois pequenos esclarecimentos sobre outras particularidades deste número.

Contrariamente ao que é prática na *Africana Studia*, a secção de debate (Problemáticas) tem relação com o tema do dossier. Não tratando diretamente da diplomacia das potências, foca-se em outras dimensões da realidade saharai: na sua organização política e do estado da opinião pública. Invertemos assim a ordem de apresentação desta secção, que habitualmente segue a entrevista. De novo se poderá ver, especialmente no artigo sobre os textos constitucionais saharai a pluralidade de opiniões aqui reunidas.

A entrevista que habitualmente publicamos na sequência dos *dossiers* propõe-se contribuir trazendo testemunhos de investigadores ou de fontes primárias. Neste número incluímos duas entrevistas. Não pareceu exagerado dar a conhecer duas organizações que por mais desconhecidas e inverosímeis que possam parecer a norte do Mediterrâneo são reais no Saara ocidental: o seu parlamento e a sua central sindical. Ambas mostram que a geopolítica e os interesses “económicos” não têm de nenhuma forma enfraquecido a vontade do povo saharai, que nos territórios ocupados resistem de forma não violenta respeitando o acordo de cessar-fogo desde 1991.

Esta nota editorial cumpre um terceiro objetivo, puramente interno: lembrar um investigador português, prematuramente falecido no ano de arranque deste projeto editorial. Presente nas fases iniciais deste trabalho, sempre ativo em muitos outros, Jaime Guedes (1960-2018) colaborou muitas vezes com a *Africana Studia*. Não podemos aqui prestar mais do que uma breve evocação a um lúcido e generoso observador *participante*, que com conhecimento do terreno testemunhou muitas vezes as realidades que aqui se descrevem.

Isabel Lourenço\*  
Maciel Santos\*\*

---

\* CEAUP.

\*\* CEAUP.

# Saara Ocidental – as políticas do impasse

Onde fica o Saara Ocidental?  
Onde vive o povo Saharaui?







## *Atores diretos e indiretos*









# Sahara Ocidental: conflito diplomático (1991-2010) e os presumíveis interesses de Marrocos

Pedro Ferreira\*

pp. 11-29

## 1. O Conflito Diplomático (1991-2010)

### 1.1. O papel da OUA e o envolvimento das Nações Unidas

Após a retirada de Espanha, o Sahara ficou dividido numa administração bipartida entre Marrocos e Mauritânia, conforme ficara acordado no *Madrid Agreement*. É então a partir deste momento, em inícios de 1976, que a Organização da Unidade Africana (OUA) se envolve na questão do Sahara, pois recorde-se que Marrocos tinha invadido o Sahara durante as negociações do *Madrid Agreement*, situação que violava algumas condições da carta que instituiu e regia a OUA, a nível de alguns dos seus objetivos e princípios. Basicamente os valores inscritos na carta pela qual a OUA se orientava procuravam fomentar o progresso através da cooperação entre estados africanos, tentando erradicar simultaneamente e de uma forma progressiva todas as colónias existentes em África (OUA, 1963). Uma vez envolvida nesta questão, a OUA assume assim a condução do processo de referendo<sup>1</sup> até meados de 1984, altura em que Marrocos abandona esta organização<sup>2</sup>, como forma de protesto pela admissão da República Árabe Saharaui Democrática (RASD) (Heyns, 1998: 369). É também em 1984 que as Nações Unidas, aproveitando o trabalho já realizado pela OUA, intervêm no processo, tomando o seu comando e fazendo esforços para que Marrocos e Frente Polisário iniciassem conversações, o que caso tivesse acontecido facilitaria certamente não só a organização do processo de referendo mas também o fim da guerra e a consequente paz (Zunes e Mundy, 2010: 179-180). Contudo, e apesar dos esforços encetados dentro da OUA para que as partes dialogassem, tal situação parecia ser praticamente impossível devido à intransigente posição de Marrocos, que chegou inclusivamente a boicotar alguns dos encontros da organização. Assim, e para além de recusar reconhecer a RASD, o rei Hassan II declinava também a possibilidade de se encontrar pessoalmente com líderes da Polisário, chegando inclusivamente a afirmar que tal seria escusado, pois “There is nothing to negotiate because Western Sahara is Moroccan territory” (Jensen, 2005: 36).

Obviamente que toda esta situação colocava a OUA numa posição delicada, pois, se por um lado no seio da organização se era maioritariamente favorável à autodeterminação do povo sarauí, por outro lado Marrocos era um membro da OUA que contava com

\* Mestrado UBI.

<sup>1</sup> Refira-se aqui que foi a OUA a primeira entidade a obter o consentimento do rei Hassan II, com vista à realização de um processo de referendo.

<sup>2</sup> Marrocos foi novamente admitido na União Africana em janeiro de 2017.

“... twenty-one supporting members...”, que corroboravam a intenção do rei Hassan II em anexar o Sahara (Ohaegbulam, 2004: 119). Todavia, este abandono não afrouxou as intenções de Marrocos em ficar com o Sahara, pois numa fase anterior a este encontro, em 1982, quando anunciada a admissão da RASD na OUA, a atual União Africana (UA), o ministro dos negócios estrangeiros de Marrocos, M’hamed Boucetta, tinha já afirmado que “for us the Polisário (RASD) does not exist either legally or internationally. We will never recognise the Polisário.” (Zunes e Mundy, 2010: 177).

Apesar de todos os esforços de Marrocos, a verdade é que a RASD acabaria mesmo por ser admitida no seio da OUA, em 22 de fevereiro de 1982. A autodeterminação do povo saaraui foi, ao longo dos anos, uma causa apoiada pela OUA, tendo inclusivamente o então presidente da RASD, Mohammed Abdelaziz, sido eleito duas vezes consecutivas para vice-presidente da organização. Até 1982, as Nações Unidas pouco ou nada tinham interferido na questão do Sahara. As únicas intervenções de alguma relevância que lhe são conhecidas até este momento datam de outubro de 1975, quando o TIJ se pronunciou sobre a questão do Sahara a pedido de Marrocos e, posteriormente, no mesmo ano em novembro, a pedido do representante de Espanha nas Nações Unidas, Jaime de Piniés, que numa carta ao conselho de segurança das Nações Unidas pedia a urgente intervenção do conselho de segurança na questão da *Green March*.

Mais recentemente, a posição interventiva das Nações Unidas parece no entanto ter começado a mudar. Quando Marrocos abandonou a OUA em 1984, Pérez de Cuéllar, secretário-geral das Nações Unidas, tentou uma aproximação entre as partes conflitantes, tendo-se porém deparado com a inflexibilidade do rei de Marrocos, que continuava a não querer negociar pessoalmente com líderes da Frente Polisário. Posteriormente em 1986, Pérez de Cuéllar visita Marrocos, obtendo novamente o consentimento do rei Hassan II para que deste modo fossem retomados os ideais de referendo. Recorde-se aqui que a primeira proposta de referendo da OUA nunca avançou oficialmente, não apenas devido às elevadas tensões entre as partes, mas também devido à falta de dimensão da OUA para o fazer. Contudo, nesta nova proposta de referendo as Nações Unidas não desperdiçaram o trabalho realizado pela OUA, aproveitando assim as propostas do anterior projeto e também os dados apurados por Espanha nos censos de 1974, de modo a poder definir-se o eleitorado.

### 1.2. O *sim* ao referendo, os desentendimentos nas Nações Unidas e o primeiro face a face entre o rei Hassan II e a Frente Polisário

Em setembro de 1988 e após estar há sensivelmente quatro anos em negociações individuais e diretas com Argélia, Marrocos e Frente Polisário, o secretário-geral das Nações Unidas, Pérez de Cuéllar<sup>3</sup>, comunicou ao conselho de segurança que Marrocos e a Frente Polisário tinham aceiteado a ideia de realizar e colaborar no processo do referendo, embora tivessem também enumerado uma série de preocupações, que foram mantidas em segredo pelo próprio Pérez de Cuéllar<sup>4</sup>. Refira-se aqui que o conflito se encontrava por esta altura num verdadeiro *military stalemate*, e a solução do *winner takes all* oferecida através do referendo parecia ser suficientemente aliciante para que Marrocos e Frente Polisário aceitassem entrar em negociações (Jensen, 2005: 45).

<sup>3</sup> De acordo com a obra *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism and Conflict Irresolution*, Pérez de Cuéllar encontrou-se 132 vezes com responsáveis marroquinos, 128 vezes com responsáveis argelinos e apenas 33 vezes com responsáveis saaraui (Idem: 181).

<sup>4</sup> A este propósito, leia-se “Neither Morocco nor the Frente Polisário chose to add publicly to their original “agreement in principle”, nor to subtract from reservations already expressed. Nothing was signed” (Jensen, 2005: 43).

Porém, apesar de ambas as partes estarem dispostas a negociar e a aceitar a proposta de referendo, revelavam também uma grande desconfiança relativamente ao mesmo, chegando inclusivamente um diplomata africano<sup>5</sup> a afirmar que “Both parties are serious about this agreement since they are tired of war, but both have a hidden agenda if the referendum doesn’t go their way”. Será ainda importante referir que Pérez de Cuéllar, nas negociações que manteve com cada uma das partes, se encontrou mais vezes com responsáveis de Marrocos e da Argélia que com membros da Polisário. Embora este tipo de atitude possa não parecer muito correta e pouco neutral, o secretário-geral das Nações Unidas acabou por se justificar dizendo “I repeatedly found that the best way to obtain greater flexibility from Polisário was through President Chadli [Algeria] or members of his government” (Zunes e Mundy, 2010: 181).

Contudo, e embora desconhecendo em pormenor o teor das propostas apresentadas às partes, o conselho de segurança aprova a prossecução do referendo e nomeia Hector Espiell, um advogado uruguaio, que seria o primeiro representante especial das Nações Unidas para a missão no Sahara. Assim, e ao contrário de outras missões das Nações Unidas, Espiell trabalharia diretamente com Pérez de Cuéllar, evitando assim que a informação passasse quer pelo departamento de assuntos políticos quer pelo departamento de manutenção da paz. Ainda nesta altura, e embora o rei Hassan II tivesse inicialmente aceitado as condições apresentadas pelas Nações Unidas para a realização do referendo, colocava agora um novo problema, que se relacionava com o facto de quem deveria ou não ser autorizado a votar (Jensen, 2005: 59-71). No seguimento desta ideia o secretário-geral das Nações Unidas, Pérez de Cuéllar, propôs ao rei marroquino a inclusão de uma terceira hipótese no referendo, onde seria perguntado ao povo sarauí se aceitariam viver sob a soberania de Marrocos, mas com um grau significativo de autonomia<sup>6</sup>. Contrariamente àquilo que se esperaria, o rei Hassan II recusou esta ideia, fundamentando que uma situação deste género serviria de inspiração para que outras províncias de Marrocos requeressem junto do governo um processo semelhante, o que poria em causa a soberania do reino de Marrocos. Deste modo, esta opção nunca chegou a avançar (Zunes e Mundy, 2010: 180). Não deixa porém de causar alguma estranheza o facto de Hassan II se ter mostrado disponível por duas vezes consecutivas para a realização de um referendo sobre a questão do Sahara, inicialmente junto da OUA e numa fase posterior junto das Nações Unidas. Todavia, esta atitude do rei de Marrocos tem na sua base uma justificação bastante plausível. Após ter criado vários problemas diplomáticos no seio da OUA, boicotando vários encontros da organização e já depois de ter abandonado a mesma, Marrocos compreendeu que o isolacionismo diplomático e o protesto não correspondiam à forma mais adequada de lidar com este assunto. Assim, e caso manifestasse vontade de cooperar, tal como se veio a verificar, Marrocos adiará temporariamente o reconhecimento da RASD por outras nações, ganhando assim algum tempo para tentar atingir o seu objetivo primordial, ou seja, a anexação definitiva e oficial do Sahara, que se afiguraria cada vez mais difícil à medida que a RASD fosse sendo reconhecida por um maior número de estados.

Assim, e juntamente com a aparente vontade de Marrocos em colaborar, o processo de paz parecia estar nesta altura bem encaminhado. Deste modo, em janeiro de 1989 o rei Hassan II, pressionado pelos seus aliados, aceitou encontrar-se pela primeira vez com responsáveis da Polisário (Miyares, s.d.: 13). Porém este encontro revelar-se-ia breve e não muito saudável, arruinando completamente futuras conversações entre as partes (Jensen, 2005: 103). Nesta altura também a Argélia, na esperança de que esta reunião entre a Frente Polisário

<sup>5</sup> Esta declaração foi obtida por Stephen Zunes numa entrevista a um diplomata africano, que no entanto devido às elevadas tensões que se faziam sentir, optou por permanecer no anonimato.

<sup>6</sup> Num estilo semelhante ao da comunidade autónoma do País Basco, em Espanha.

e Marrocos tivesse um desfecho positivo, decidiu restabelecer relações diplomáticas com o governo de Rabat pela primeira vez depois do conflito de 1963<sup>7</sup>. Todavia, e depois de o encontro entre as partes ter servido apenas para agudizar tensões, a Frente Polisário quis mostrar que estava disposta a regressar à luta armada a qualquer momento e, desta forma, encetou uma série de ataques que causaram um número significativo de baixas nas Forças Reais Armadas de Marrocos (FAR). Estas iniciativas militares tiveram resposta semelhante das FAR, com vários ataques em agosto de 1991 (Zunes e Mundy, 2010: 182-183).

### 1.3. O programa MINURSO, o *D-Day* e as desconfianças da Frente Polisário

Falhadas as negociações entre Marrocos e Frente Polisário, em junho de 1989, Pérez de Cuéllar, acompanhado pelo novo representante das Nações Unidas para a missão no Sahara, o suíço Johannes Manz, visita a Argélia e a Mauritânia, na tentativa de que estes estados exercessem algum tipo de influência junto de Marrocos e da Polisário (Pazzanita, 2006: 259). Assim, e com o processo negocial comprometido, o secretário-geral das Nações Unidas tentou uma vez mais promover um encontro onde estivessem presentes representantes da Frente Polisário e de Marrocos juntamente com uma comissão técnica das Nações Unidas, situação que visava sensibilizar as partes para a importância da continuação do processo negocial. Consequentemente, em junho de 1990 e no seguimento desta reunião, Pérez de Cuéllar entregou finalmente um plano detalhado ao conselho de segurança, que definia variadíssimos aspetos relacionados com a tentativa de resolução desta questão. Apesar das reservas que Marrocos e a Frente Polisário apresentaram a Pérez de Cuéllar relativamente ao referendo, na resolução 690, datada de 29 de abril de 1991, o conselho de Segurança autorizaria finalmente a missão das Nações Unidas para esta região, a MINURSO<sup>8</sup> (ONU, 1991: 35).

Porém, e quando o conselho de segurança autorizou a criação da MINURSO, ficaram também definidas as várias condições para levar a cabo esta iniciativa, assim como um *D-Day*, onde se materializaria em definitivo o cessar-fogo. Paralelamente, a votação do referendo teria lugar algumas semanas após este *D-Day*, servindo o restante tempo da missão para se apurarem os resultados e pôr em prática a decisão tomada (Jensen, 2005: 43). Então, e caso o referendo fosse favorável ao povo sarauí, Marrocos teria de abandonar definitivamente o Sahara, antes de se dar por concluída a MINURSO. Porém, e caso a votação do referendo fosse favorável a Marrocos, a Frente Polisário desmantelar-se-ia e colocaria um ponto final na sua luta pela autodeterminação, sendo desta maneira obrigada a aceitar o resultado ditado pelo referendo (ONU, 2000: 4-5).

Todavia, e muito embora as Nações Unidas estivessem agora a trabalhar no desenvolvimento da MINURSO, os responsáveis da Frente Polisário mantinham ainda algumas reservas relativamente a todo este processo. Uma das preocupações dos homens da Polisário estava relacionada com o facto de as Nações Unidas terem destinado apenas cerca de 17 000 militares para controlarem aproximadamente 65 000 membros das FAR, durante este período de tempo. Contudo, e apesar do previamente mencionado, a Frente Polisário revelava ainda outra grande preocupação, relacionada com a observação e controlo do referendo. A Polisário pretendia a presença de estados neutros enquanto observadores independentes, uma vez que suspeitava em certa medida da imparcialidade das Nações Unidas no processo, principalmente devido ao facto de os dois grandes aliados de Marrocos, EUA e França, serem membros permanentes do conselho de segurança (Zunes e Mundy, 2010: 186).

<sup>7</sup> Em alusão à *Sand War*.

<sup>8</sup> Do Francês: Mission des Nations Unies pour l'organisation d'un referendum au Sahara Occidental.

#### 1.4. Os erros cometidos por Pérez de Cuéllar e a implementação da MINURSO

Tendo em conta as elevadas tensões que se viviam desde 1975 entre Marrocos e Frente Polisário, seria certamente de esperar que com a intervenção das Nações Unidas e com a proposta de referendo se resolvesse definitivamente este problema, para assim poder ser atingida a paz nesta região do norte de África. Contudo, durante a organização do processo de referendo, Pérez de Cuéllar cometera alguns erros que posteriormente viriam a pôr em causa não só o referendo, como também o próprio cessar-fogo. Para começar, o secretário-geral das Nações Unidas, durante as negociações individuais que manteve com Argélia, Marrocos e Frente Polisário, teve claramente uma atitude discriminatória para com o povo sarauí, como se viu atrás, omitindo informações relevantes no âmbito das próprias Nações Unidas (Zunes e Mundy, 2010: 181).

Parece provado até aqui que o procedimento de Pérez de Cuéllar não estava de facto a ser o mais apropriado. No entanto, e tendo em conta toda a sua intervenção no processo, o maior erro cometido por Pérez de Cuéllar foi o de avançar com a proposta de referendo para o conselho de segurança, sem que primeiro tivesse devidamente esclarecido Marrocos e a Polisário sobre todas as reservas por eles apresentadas. Desta forma e devido aos sucessivos desacertos do secretário-geral das Nações Unidas, a situação parecia estar novamente a descontrolar-se e era agora Marrocos quem aparecia com imposições, exigindo em janeiro de 1991 que todas as guerrilhas da Polisário se retirassem do Sahara durante a realização do referendo, rumando em direção à Argélia, onde permaneceriam até à conclusão de todo este processo. Obviamente, os líderes da Polisário refutaram completamente esta demanda marroquina, o que deu origem a que em agosto de 1991 as FAR transpusessem a *Great Wall* e atacassem posições militares da Frente Polisário. No seguimento destes ataques e apercebendo-se que a situação estava novamente descontrolada, Pérez de Cuéllar resolve tomar medidas, comunicando de forma autónoma que o cessar-fogo se materializaria em definitivo no dia 6 de setembro de 1991, anunciando também que as Nações Unidas mobilizariam militares rumo a esta região para controlar as hostilidades e, sobretudo, para evitar o início de uma nova fase de conflito armado (ONU, 2000: 4-5).

É então, pouco tempo depois da decisão tomada por Pérez de Cuéllar e no seguimento do início do cessar-fogo, que a MINURSO começa a movimentar-se para proceder à sua implementação no Sahara. Todavia, este processo viria a revelar-se bastante difícil e problemático, devido ao comportamento inadequado e pouco diplomático de Marrocos. Primeiramente no porto de Agadir, Marrocos dificultou a ação de descarga de materiais dos navios das Nações Unidas, bloqueando em simultâneo as principais estradas do país em direção ao Sahara. Seguidamente, Marrocos não concedeu autorização de entrada no país a diversos jornalistas, visitantes, diplomatas europeus e responsáveis do ACNUR, não permitindo também que a comissão de identificação nomeada pelas

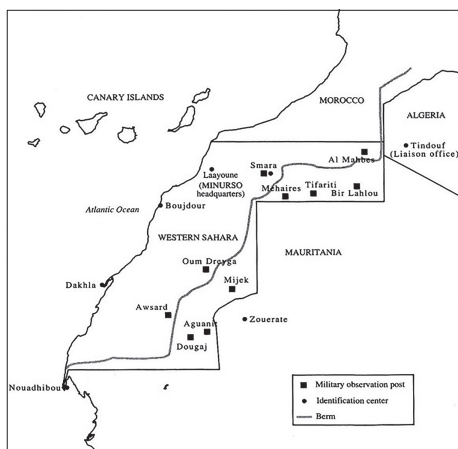


Ilustração 01 – Implementação da MINURSO no Sahara. Fonte: Jensen, 2005: 75.

Nações Unidas tivesse completa liberdade de movimentos, pois os “MINURSO staff members living in the Moroccan – controlled Western Sahara are under permanent surveillance. The MINURSO staff are housed primary in three hotels... all of which are heavily guarded... every single Moroccan employed in these hotels works for the secret service – the receptionists, the waiters, the bartenders; they are here to watch and listen” (HRW, 1995).

Adicionalmente, Marrocos recusou ainda remover as FAR do Sahara durante a presença da MINURSO. Por outro lado, e contrariamente a Marrocos, a Frente Polisário evidenciava um comportamento positivo, descontraido e voluntarioso, o que permitia à MINURSO, segundo o comandante Armand Roy<sup>9</sup>, “to establish a climate of trust”. Porém, Armand Roy não foi o único a enaltecer a atitude dos membros da Polisário. Também elementos ligados ao departamento de manutenção de paz das Nações Unidas relataram: “Moroccan interference in nearly every sphere of MINURSO’s activities. In contrast, the soldiers in the field until recently received a Great deal of cooperation and assistance from Polisário” (Zunes e Mundy, 2010: 195).

### 1.5. A nova estratégia de Marrocos e a sucessão de Pérez de Cuéllar

Como previamente constatado, Marrocos estava a colocar entraves à implementação da MINURSO. Adicionalmente, e vendo que a sua atitude de oposição não bastaria para condicionar suficientemente a ação da MINURSO, o rei Hassan II, em setembro de 1991, anuncia uma “second Green March”, situação que ameaçava o próprio processo de referendo (EUR, 2002: 810). Sensivelmente pela mesma altura, o rei Hassan II, visivelmente preocupado com o desenrolar dos acontecimentos, encarrega o então ministro do interior marroquino, Driss Basri, de delinear uma estratégia que permitisse a Marrocos ganhar o referendo. Consequentemente, Driss Basri apresentou à comissão de identificação da MINURSO uma lista com 183 196 nomes de possíveis eleitores, na tentativa de que todos estes nomes fossem aceites, pois desta forma Marrocos ganharia com relativa facilidade o referendo, uma vez que a Polisário tinha, em procedimento semelhante, proposto apenas 42 337 pessoas.

Quem não mostrava nenhum tipo de contentamento com toda esta situação eram os líderes da Polisário, que começavam a ficar cada vez mais impacientes com a atitude de Marrocos. Contudo, a indignação no seio da Polisário redobrou quando no dia 1 de janeiro de 1992 Boutros Boutros-Ghali, um conhecido aliado de Marrocos dentro da OUA, sucede a Pérez de Cuéllar e é apresentado como o novo secretário-geral das Nações Unidas. A eleição de Boutros-Ghali estava longe de tranquilizar os sarauí: dentro da OUA, o Egipto com Boutros-Ghali como seu ministro dos negócios estrangeiros havia sido um dos países que mais apoio tinha concedido a Marrocos nesta questão. Como se não bastasse, Boutros-Ghali nomeou o paquistanês Sahabzada Yaqub-Khan, amigo próximo do rei Hassan II, igualmente ex-ministro dos negócios estrangeiros de um país pró-Marrocos e apoiado pelos EUA, outro dos grandes aliados dos marroquinos, para novo representante especial para o Sahara. Toda esta situação não agradava minimamente ao Presidente da RASD, Mohammed Abdelaziz, que via assim cada vez mais distante o objetivo de autodeterminação do povo sarauí, chegando inclusivamente a afirmar que “I see no other way out but a return to war” (*Idem*: 197).

É de facto importante ter tudo isto em linha de conta, já para não falar na falta de atitude e de contundência das Nações Unidas para com a inadequada postura de Marrocos em todo este conflito (Zunes e Mundy, 2010: 197).

<sup>9</sup> O canadiano Armand Roy era por esta altura o comandante da unidade militar da MINURSO.



### 1.6. A ação de Boutros-Ghali e as conclusões da Human Rights Watch

Depois de nomeado para representante especial para o Sahara por Boutros-Ghali, Saha-bzda Yaqub-Khan tentou durante o ano de 1992 sensibilizar tanto Marrocos como a Frente Polisário para a necessidade de prosseguir negociações. Contudo, o seu aparente esforço revelar-se-ia infrutífero, visto que não obteve grande *feedback* nem por parte de responsáveis marroquinos, nem por parte de líderes sarauís. Desta forma, no início de 1993 Boutros-Ghali resolve intervir mais diretamente e apresenta também, ele próprio, novas propostas para avançar. Porém, e apesar de o novo secretário-geral ter definido o mês de maio de 1993 como limite máximo para Marrocos e a Frente Polisário se manifestarem, a verdade é que nenhuma parte o fez. Posteriormente e no seguimento da falta de tomada de posição das partes, Boutros-Ghali autonomamente resolve dar seguimento à anterior proposta de referendo, aproveitando os censos apurados por Espanha em 1974 e alargando os critérios de identificação precedentemente definidos por Pérez de Cuéllar (*Idem*).

Contudo, e ainda que Boutros-Ghali tivesse tentado arranjar uma solução para o conflito entre Marrocos e a Frente Polisário, a verdade é que a sua ação não foi muito bem-sucedida. Havia neste processo vários diferendos entre marroquinos e sarauís, o que tornava praticamente impossível encontrar uma solução que agradasse a ambas as partes. Assim, e tendo noção do estado em que se encontrava o diferendo diplomático, Boutros-Ghali resolve em 1995 comunicar ao conselho de segurança que não tinha qualquer esperança que o referendo algum dia se chegasse a realizar. No seio das Nações Unidas começava também a sentir-se nesta altura que a MINURSO estava cada vez mais condicionada, especialmente devido à conduta inapropriada de Marrocos. A este respeito Douglas Dryden, representante militar dos EUA para a MINURSO, chegou a proferir as seguintes palavras: “...serious discrepancies were reported. The atmosphere at the MINURSO Force Headquarters in Laayoune [al-'Ayun] is practically a siege mentality.... The mission is not allowed to function independently, but as a creature of the Moroccans... Telephones were tapped. Mail was tampered with. Rooms of MINURSO personnel were searched” (ONU, 1997).

Todavia, as acusações à postura do governo marroquino durante este período não cessariam por aqui. Também a Human Rights Watch (HRW), após ter investigado a MINURSO, concluiu que “Morocco, which is the stronger of the two parties both militarily and diplomatically, has regularly engaged in a conduct that has obstructed and compromised the fairness of the referendum process”. No mesmo relatório, a HRW chegou também à conclusão de que Marrocos tinha obviamente uma estratégia para ganhar o referendo, que podemos constatar nas seguintes palavras: “Testimony from members of MINURSO’s identification commission indicates that many of the applicants proposed by Morocco and identified so far have no documents proving links to the Western Sahara, do not speak the Hassaniya dialect of the region, are not familiar with tribal structure of the region and have clearly memorized answers to the factual and biographical questions posed by the identification commission” (*Idem*).

### 1.7. A entrada de Kofi Annan e a assinatura do *Houston Agreement*

Em inícios de 1996, a MINURSO atravessava um dos piores momentos desde a sua implementação. Desta forma, em outubro deste ano, todos os centros de identificação tinham sido fechados e a grande maioria do pessoal das Nações Unidas tinha abandonado a região. Recorde-se que nesta altura o processo de identificação que conduziria ao referendo estava longe de ser concluído, sendo que a MINURSO, tal como a ação de Boutros-Ghali,

pareciam estar cada vez mais condenadas ao insucesso (*Idem*: 205). Muito provavelmente, a MINURSO estava agora nesta situação devido às inapropriadas decisões, quer de Pérez de Cuéllar, quer de Boutros-Ghali, mas principalmente devido à falta de um mediador com estatuto.

O decréscimo de influência de Boutros-Ghali era notório e em 1 de janeiro de 1997, tal como esperado, o egípcio é sucedido pelo ganhês Kofi Annan<sup>10</sup> (*Idem*: 24-27). Sem tempo a perder, o novo secretário-geral das Nações Unidas procurou logo numa das suas primeiras ações inteirar-se de uma forma mais aprofundada de toda a situação, começando a procurar alternativas à anterior proposta de referendo. Kofi Annan acreditava profundamente que para que Marrocos e Frente Polisário chegassem a um entendimento seria necessária a presença de um mediador com algum estatuto perante ambas as partes. Deste modo, em março de 1997 Kofi Annan contacta James Baker, conhecido político norte-americano, convidando-o para assumir as referidas funções. Este convite de Kofi Annan revelava alguma perspicácia, uma vez que James Baker tinha estado diretamente envolvido na Guerra do Golfo. De referir ainda que a nomeação de James Baker era também muito simbólica, pois os EUA, apesar de terem sido aliados de Marrocos durante o conflito armado, tinham adotado desde o cessar-fogo em 1991 uma posição de aparente neutralidade em relação a este conflito, naquele que parecia ser um sinal positivo para o povo sarauí (*Idem*: 45-48).

Tal como seria de esperar, James Baker não perdeu tempo e depressa procurou iniciar negociações não apenas com as partes, mas também com diplomatas argelinos. Baker procurava evitar cometer erros idênticos aos de Pérez de Cuéllar, tentando em simultâneo comprometer as partes a um acordo oficial escrito. Assim vários encontros foram mantidos e em setembro de 1997, em Houston, líderes da Polisário e de Marrocos comprometeram-se pela primeira vez em simultâneo por escrito, num ato que ficaria conhecido como *Houston Agreement*<sup>11</sup> (EUR, 2002: 812; Pazzanita, 2006: 204-206). No entanto, e apesar do aparente clima de otimismo que então se vivia graças aos inéditos avanços logrados por James Baker, Anna Theofilopoulou, uma funcionária das Nações Unidas, acabaria por proferir, mais tarde, algumas palavras que vinham contradizer o ambiente que se vivia: “Nobody on the Baker team really believed that the UN would sail towards the implementation of the settlement plan. After the parties had locked themselves in, it was a question of who would back away from their commitments first” (Zunes e Mundy, 2010: 209).

### 1.8. O fracasso dos *Houston Agreements* e a ascensão de Mohammed VI

Com vista a cumprir o acordo estabelecido por James Baker em Houston com Marrocos e Frente Polisário, a MINURSO procedeu à reabertura de centros de identificação, para apurar definitivamente quem podia ou não votar no referendo. Também nesta altura, Kofi Annan anuncia que Charles Dunbar passaria a ocupar o lugar de Erik Jensen como novo representante especial para o Sahara. Todavia, e apesar de todos os esforços realizados por James Baker e Kofi Annan para que a situação pudesse ser finalmente resolvida surgem, pouco tempo depois da reabertura dos centros de identificação, novos problemas. Em

<sup>10</sup> Quando assumiu o posto de secretário-geral das Nações Unidas, Kofi Annan era já funcionário da organização, onde chefiava o departamento de manutenção da paz. Foi Nobel da Paz em 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Esta primeira fase do *Houston Agreement* ficou também conhecida como *Baker I, Framework Agreement* ou ainda *Houston Accords*. Curiosamente e apesar de Marrocos estar a criar dificuldades à ação da MINURSO, foram os sarauís apoiados pela Argélia que acabariam por recusar este *Baker I*, pois esta proposta oferecia ao povo sarauí alguma autonomia dentro da soberania de Marrocos, e não a independência, como os sarauís tanto pretendiam. Aceitando esta proposta o Sahara continuaria a ser controlado por Marrocos, a nível das relações externas, política de defesa e alguns assuntos internos. Devido a esta decisão do povo sarauí, em 2001 quase se voltou à guerra, quando as FAR atravessaram a *Great Wall*, para preparar o *Paris-Dakar Rally* de 2001.



janeiro de 1998, cerca de 13 000 cidadãos não convocados, originários de grupos tribais<sup>12</sup> (Shelley, 2004: 140) com “the apparent active encouragement and logistical support of the Morocco government” (Dunbar, 2000: 531), apresentam-se nos centros de identificação da MINURSO, naquilo que constituía uma clara violação dos *Houston Agreements*, tal como reportou Robin Kinloch, o novo diretor da comissão de identificação.

Devido ao acumular de problemas relacionados com a comissão de identificação, alegadamente causados pela interferência de Marrocos, em março de 1999 Charles Dunbar recusa prolongar o seu contrato, fruto da falta de apoio e de força do sistema internacional bem como das entidades competentes. Segundo Dunbar, Marrocos estava nesta altura a conseguir desacreditar a comissão de identificação, situação que tornava praticamente impossível a realização de um referendo. Porém, e apesar dos recentes desenvolvimentos não serem favoráveis à ação da MINURSO, Kofi Annan e James Baker acreditavam ainda nesta altura que era possível resolver este problema e, neste seguimento, William Eagleton é nomeado em finais de maio de 1999 como o novo representante especial para o Sahara (Pazzanita, 2006: 105). Não obstante esta nova nomeação, o governo marroquino continuava a “inundar” a comissão de identificação da MINURSO com novos nomes, sempre na esperança de conseguir um maior número de votantes favoráveis, no que ao referendo diz respeito. A juntar a toda esta situação, em 23 de julho de 1999 a inesperada morte do rei Hassan II leva ao poder o seu filho Mohammed VI, o que acabou por se constituir como mais um ponto negativo para as aspirações do povo sarauí, pois países como França e EUA concluíram que não era tempo de pressionar o novo rei marroquino com este género de questões (Zunes e Mundy, 2010: 212).

Desta forma, em finais de 2000 a MINURSO estava praticamente descredibilizada. Porém, e embora a comunidade internacional apresentasse grande pessimismo relativamente à MINURSO, Kofi Annan e James Baker continuavam a acreditar. Assim, contando com o apoio do conselho de segurança e de Kofi Annan, Baker apresentou em inícios de 2003 um segundo plano com base nos *Houston Agreements*, plano este que todos os envolvidos<sup>13</sup> aceitaram com prontidão. No entanto, esta nova tentativa de Baker parecia condenada à partida, uma vez que esta renovada proposta apresentada às partes pretendia discutir diretamente e de vez a integração ou independência do Sahara, situação que não agradava propriamente a Marrocos (Miyares, s.d.: 22). Corria então o ano de 2004, quando Marrocos, após recusar a *Baker II* devido ao facto de este incluir a hipótese da independência do Sahara, apresenta uma contraproposta<sup>14</sup> a James Baker, que na realidade oferecia ainda menos autonomia ao povo sarauí do que o *Baker I*.

Nesta fase, com todos os recentes desenvolvimentos, Kofi Annan e James Baker apresentaram ao conselho de segurança duas opções: comprometer as partes a seguir em frente com a possibilidade de referendo ou desistir e admitir o fracasso da MINURSO. O Conselho de Segurança, por seu lado, decidiu manter a MINURSO, tendo como objetivo principal “to achieve a mutually acceptable political solution”. Consequentemente e não obstante as Nações Unidas, presumivelmente, continuarem a acreditar ser possível obter um acordo entre o Sahara e Marrocos, James Baker, no dia 1 de junho de 2004, demitiu-se de mediador para a questão do Sahara, cargo que mantinha desde 1997. Segundo Baker: “...the Security Council is not willing to move... Then I don’t know where the solution comes from...” (*Idem*: 239-240).

<sup>12</sup> Em 1974, aquando da realização dos censos apurados por Espanha, foram identificados 88 categorias de diferentes grupos tribais (Shelley, 2004: 140).

<sup>13</sup> Leia-se: Marrocos, Frente Polisário e Argélia.

<sup>14</sup> Intitulada: *draft Autonomy status*.

### 1.9. A entrada de Ban Ki-Moon como novo secretário-geral das Nações Unidas

Após a saída de James Baker em junho de 2004, a questão do Sahara começava a ficar cada vez mais complicada. Sem ninguém no papel de mediador e com todas as possibilidades de resolução exploradas, ainda que sem sucesso, a Frente Polisário, juntamente com a Argélia, continuava a recusar qualquer tipo de diálogo até que Marrocos comunicasse que estaria disposto a aceitar as condições do *Baker II*. Neste período, em que a França continuava a apoiar diplomaticamente Marrocos e onde os EUA pareciam começar a querer afastar-se desta problemática, eis que surge um súbito interesse por parte de Espanha em acompanhar e envolver-se novamente na questão do Sahara. É precisamente neste momento e também devido a pressões de Espanha junto das Nações Unidas, que um novo responsável pela MINURSO, Álvaro de Soto, é nomeado, juntamente com o novo representante especial para o Sahara, William Swing (*Idem*: 239-240).

Todavia a Frente Polisário, na esperança de pressionar Marrocos, tenta aproximar-se do governo norte-americano, na busca de um novo mediador com força e prestígio suficientes para tentar resolver toda esta problemática. Porém os EUA reagiram negativamente a esta abordagem, argumentando que se James Baker não tinha conseguido resolver o problema, dificilmente mais alguém o conseguiria. Para além disto, em Washington também não era bem aceite a ideia de a Polisário e a Argélia recusarem encontrar-se com Álvaro de Soto. Repare-se que se até ao momento a Frente Polisário era algo hostil à presença dos EUA, a verdade é que a partir deste momento os líderes saraús começavam a tomar consciência de que a situação seria cada vez mais difícil de resolver, tentando em 2004 e 2005 aproximar-se do governo norte-americano.

Em 2005, algum tempo antes do fim do seu mandato, Kofi Annan nomeou um diplomata holandês, Peter Van Walsum, como enviado pessoal para a questão do Sahara (Pazzanita, 2006: 48). Walsum, numa das suas primeiras incursões na região, depressa percebeu que Marrocos e a Frente Polisário mantinham uma postura que pouco ou nada fazia antever a chegada a um acordo. Na mesma senda, o novo enviado especial para o Sahara, o italiano Bastagli, concluía também que o Conselho de Segurança não pressionava suficientemente Marrocos. Pouco tempo depois, o rei Mohammed VI revelava que o assunto relativo à autonomia do Sahara estava a ser debatido internamente e que em breve Marrocos apresentaria uma nova proposta às Nações Unidas. Porém, também esta iniciativa acabaria por fracassar, visto que Marrocos falhou o prazo em que prometeu apresentar a referida solução, sendo que por outro lado o Conselho de Segurança exigia a Marrocos que expusesse, numa primeira fase e detalhadamente, o referido plano a Peter Walsum.

Todavia, e apesar de todas as constatações averiguadas, em finais de 2005 John Bolton, que até ao momento tinha desempenhado as funções de assessor de James Baker, é nomeado como embaixador dos EUA nas Nações Unidas. Esta nomeação parecia estar a criar uma nova dinâmica na questão do Sahara, que depressa esmoreceu, pois Bolton perspicazmente percebeu que a França iria bloquear qualquer tentativa no Conselho de Segurança que colocasse em causa a integridade do reino de Marrocos. Deste modo e sem muito a fazer devido às mais diversas condicionantes, Bolton acaba por sair do lugar em finais de 2006, sem alcançar qualquer tipo de êxito. Chegados a 2007, é a vez de Ban Ki-Moon ocupar o lugar de secretário-geral das Nações Unidas, numa altura em que Marrocos estava prestes a apresentar a tão discutida proposta de autonomia para o Sahara<sup>15</sup>, já ante-

<sup>15</sup> A proposta de autonomia de Marrocos para o Sahara, o *Saharan Autonomous Region*, oferecia ao povo sarauí não mais que uma certa autonomia a nível executivo, judicial e legislativo, e não a independência total e definitiva relativamente a Marrocos, tal como era pretendido pelos saraús. Deste modo e aceitando esta proposta, o Sahara continuaria a não ser mais que uma região sob o domínio do reino de Marrocos (*Idem*: 244).

riormente falada durante a era de Peter Walsum. Também nesta fase a Frente Polisário, numa clara tentativa de chamar a atenção do secretário-geral das Nações Unidas, envia a Ban Ki-Moon uma série de propostas alternativas ao *Baker II*, hipótese que, lembre-se, Marrocos tinha recusado. Contudo e voltando um pouco atrás, diga-se em prol da verdade, que a proposta que Marrocos tinha para o Sahara, o *Saharan Autonomous Region*, não teve uma vez mais qualquer resultado, nem sortiu qualquer efeito (*Idem*: 243-244).

## 2. Os presumíveis interesses de Marrocos

### 2.1. A questão do *Greater Morocco*

Nos últimos anos, a história da nação marroquina tem ficado diretamente ligada à ideia do *Greater Morocco*. Esta conceção tem a sua origem por volta de 1950 quando Allal el-Fassi, líder do Istiqlal<sup>16</sup>, entendeu que o império marroquino se estendia muito para além dos limites territoriais logrados depois da independência de Marrocos, quer de Espanha, quer da França. Assim, dentro do Istiqlal, onde a ideologia do *Greater Morocco* ganhou inicialmente forma, entendia-se que os limites territoriais do reino marroquino abrangiam, para além do próprio Marrocos, uma área territorial que compreendia ainda todo o espaço do Sahara e da Mauritânia, os enclaves espanhóis de Ceuta e Melilla, bem como parte da Argélia e do Mali.

Seguindo a ideia aprofundada dentro do partido de Allal el-Fassi, o sultão marroquino à data, Mohammed V, rapidamente se entusiasmou com a ideia de poder expandir as fronteiras de Marrocos, bem como com a possibilidade de aumentar a sua popularidade e o poder do seu sultanado. Porém, e apesar de todas estas perspetivas expansionistas dos sucessivos monarcas marroquinos, diga-se de passagem que nem tudo sempre correu como esperado. Para tal facto muito contribuíram a derrota com a independência da Mauritânia, a impetuosidade da Argélia e a abnegação do povo sarauí, que foram ao longo destes últimos anos aqueles que mais indignados se mostraram, rejeitando e opondo-se sempre ao expansionismo marroquino.

Relativamente ao caso da Argélia, os factos remontam já a outubro de 1963, altura em que Marrocos tentou controlar militarmente toda a região de Béchar e de Tindouf, o que motivou um período de guerra de aproximadamente um mês entre as duas nações. Porém, o que Marrocos não contava era que a resistência da Argélia se revelasse tão forte. Diga-se de passagem que, quando a *Sand War* deflagrou em 1963, a Argélia era já independente da França, país com o qual enriqueceu os seus conhecimentos militares, para além de ser já nesta altura um grande produtor e exportador de petróleo e gás natural, o que dava orçamento suficiente aos cofres argelinos para investir em armamento, comprado em grandes quantidades à URSS. Deste modo e devido a tão grande oposição argelina, Marrocos acabou por não conseguir tomar nem a região de Béchar nem a região de Tindouf. O conflito armado acabou por se resolver com a intervenção da OUA e da Liga Árabe, através da assinatura de um acordo<sup>17</sup> de paz onde ficou estabelecida também uma zona desmilitarizada (Goldstein, 1992: 161-163). Contudo, e apesar de restabelecida a paz entre Marrocos e Argélia, através de um cessar-fogo, a verdade é que as relações diplomáticas entre ambos não voltaram a normalizar-se completamente. Refira-se também que desde então a fronteira de Marrocos com a Argélia se mantém fechada.

<sup>16</sup> Fundado em 1944 pela mão de Allal el-Fassi, o Istiqlal Party é ainda hoje um partido de centro-direita da política marroquina. O seu atual líder é Nizar Baraka.

<sup>17</sup> *Bamako Agreement*, assinado em 30 de outubro de 1963, em Bamako, capital do Mali (Brecher; Wilkenfeld, 2000: 438).

Avançando alguns anos e no que diz respeito à resistência ao expansionismo marroquino, a situação entre Marrocos e o Sahara é bastante diferente da contenda ocorrida entre Marrocos e a Argélia, principalmente por três grandes motivos:

- Enquanto que o conflito entre Marrocos e a Argélia começou e terminou durante outubro de 1963, não chegando a durar um mês, o conflito entre Marrocos e o Sahara iniciou-se em 1975 e mantêm-se até hoje (2018), contabilizando até ao momento um total aproximado de 40 anos;
- Quando Marrocos invadiu a Argélia com intenção de tomar Béchar e Tindouf, encontrou uma oposição muito forte de um país com disponibilidade financeira para investir em armamento e, por conseguinte, um opositor à altura. Por esse motivo, Marrocos nunca controlou qualquer região ou área pertencente à Argélia. No Sahara aconteceu precisamente o contrário: Marrocos entrou para não mais sair até ao momento. Desde a invasão até aos dias de hoje, Marrocos tem controlado a quase plenitude do território sarauí e tirado proveito económico dessa mesma ocupação, assunto este que será abordado com superior detalhe mais adiante;
- Em 1963, quando da invasão argelina, a Argélia já era um país independente, grande produtor e exportador de petróleo e gás natural e com boas relações diplomáticas com a URSS. Em 1975, o Sahara era uma espécie de diamante em bruto, completamente desprotegido, com grandes reservas de fosfato para explorar e com uma promissora costa marítima. Os seus habitantes resumiam-se a algumas tribos nómadas, que viviam de forma rudimentar e que até ao momento tinham estado sob domínio de Espanha. Naturalmente, a capacidade de resposta evidenciada pelos saraúis a uma invasão de terceiros era completamente distinta da capacidade da Argélia.

### 2.1.1. O interesse territorial

Para melhor se analisar e compreender este subcapítulo relativo à questão do interesse territorial, vamos tentar responder de forma clara à seguinte questão: a nível territorial e expandindo o seu país em termos de área através da anexação definitiva do Sahara, o que tem Marrocos efetivamente a ganhar?

Como atrás se refere, em 1956, para Marrocos o Sahara é mais que um território cobiçado pelas reservas de fosfato e pela rentável costa marítima. Há, paralelamente, a questão territorial, a vontade de ir mais além e de expandir as suas fronteiras. A área total de Marrocos é de 446 550 km<sup>2</sup>. De acordo com a mesma fonte, o Sahara apresenta uma área total na ordem dos 266 000 km<sup>2</sup>. Contabilizando o valor total, caso o Sahara fosse incluído na íntegra como uma província marroquina, o reino de Marrocos passaria a dispor de uma área total combinada de 712 550 km<sup>2</sup> (CIA, The World Factbook). Esta ambição de Mohammed V e do Istiqlal não deve ser cegamente censurada, se tivermos em conta que muitas outras nações tiveram, em contextos imediatamente pós-coloniais, o mesmo tipo de procedimento.

Até hoje Marrocos ainda não recuou na ideia de tornar o Sahara como parte integrante da ideia do *Greater Morocco* pois a verdade é que, controlando o Sahara, pode tirar desse facto outras duas importantes vantagens. A saber:

- Tendo o Sahara controlado na sua totalidade, Marrocos passaria a fazer diretamente fronteira com a Mauritânia, outro dos países que esteve sempre nas cogitações marroquinas, de acordo com a ideologia expansionista do *Grande Marrocos*. A Mauritânia, para além de ser um dos maiores países da zona magrebina (área total de 1 030 700 km<sup>2</sup>), faz ainda fronteira com o Mali, o Senegal, o Sahara e a Argélia. Analisando a situação por este prisma, vemos como um Sahara independente representaria um

entreve às ideologias expansionistas de Marrocos, condicionando o acesso de Marrocos a uma maior continentalidade visto que pelo lado da Argélia será difícil para Marrocos alguma vez almejar obter uma porta neste sentido.

## 2.2. O interesse económico

Entramos agora numa outra dimensão que muito pode ajudar a explicar a insistência que Marrocos tem tido nestes últimos anos em relação ao Sahara<sup>18</sup>. Conforme se conhece, o Sahara é um território que, apesar do clima desértico, tem importantes riquezas naturais, como as reservas de fosfato e uma próspera costa marítima. Existem paralelamente indicadores da existência de outros jazigos minerais<sup>19</sup>, incluindo reservas de petróleo e gás natural.

### 2.2.1. A pesca

A riqueza da costa sarauí para a prática da atividade pesqueira é um facto incontestável, ao contrário da legitimidade da atual exploração: “... Western Sahara ... has a seven-hundred kilometer Atlantic coast of strategic importance. The territory also has among the richest fishing waters in the World, which today are illegally exploited by Morocco and members of the European Union” (Zoubir, 2006: 275). No entanto, saber que a costa sarauí é próspera para a pesca não é suficiente para conclusões seguras.

Como se sabe, Marrocos ocupou praticamente toda a costa marítima sarauí. Assim sendo, pretende-se agora apurar quanto é que Marrocos beneficia da ocupação e consequente exploração desta zona. Para apurar tais factos, é necessário recuar até ao dia 28 de fevereiro de 2007, data em que a União Europeia, contra a vontade de um dos seus estados-membros, a Dinamarca, celebrou um acordo de pesca com Marrocos. Este acordo, apesar de algo controverso sob os parâmetros do direito internacional, durou ao dia 25 de fevereiro de 2011. Durante quatro anos e ao abrigo desta parceria, Marrocos recebeu uma quantia aproximada de 36 milhões de euros por ano para autorizar a pesca de navios ligados à União Europeia nas águas da costa sarauí. Ora, tal facto é claramente ilegal: “Western Sahara’s waters belongs to the Saharawi people and not to Morocco. The fact that these resources have actually been controlled by Morocco for thirty years does not modify this qualification. Consequently, the Fisheries Agreement cannot produce any legal effect on the rights relating to the natural resources of Western Sahara. Moreover, because it postulates that Morocco has the right to exploit these resources, the Agreement constitutes, per se, an internationally wrongful act and must thus be denounced or modified” (Chapaux, 2006: 219).

Tal ilegalidade pode também confirmar-se numa resolução<sup>20</sup> da Assembleia Geral das Nações Unidas, onde se salientou “the inalienable right of the peoples to self-determination and independence and to the enjoyment of the natural resources of their Territories, as well as their right to dispose of those resources in their best interest” (ONU, 2005: 3). Refira-se ainda que a grande maioria dos estados presentes, incluindo Marrocos, aceitaram sem qualquer reivindicação o teor desta resolução, tendo sido ainda admitido por responsáveis marroquinos presentes que o povo sarauí tinha o direito aos seus próprios recursos, assim como à sua livre exploração. Porém, e ainda que Marrocos o tenha admitido, a

<sup>18</sup> A este propósito, leia-se “A successful Moroccan integration of the Western Sahara has potentially enormous implications for the Moroccan economy ... territory’s resource base may have been a factor to claim it...” (Shelley, 2004: 36).

<sup>19</sup> Titânio, Urânio e Minério de Ferro.

<sup>20</sup> Nesta resolução falou-se e tratou-se essencialmente dos direitos dos territórios não autónomos.

verdade é que o povo sarauí não tem, desde há trinta anos a esta parte, qualquer controlo nem sobre o seu território, nem tão pouco sobre os seus recursos naturais. Conclui-se que Marrocos tem explorado algo que não é seu e a que não tem qualquer direito, pois o facto de controlar as águas do Sahara não confere aos marroquinos o direito de as explorar, pois Marrocos “is not an administering power”<sup>21</sup>, mas sim um “occupying power”<sup>22</sup> (Chapaux, 2006: 221).

Apesar da ilegalidade do acordo entre União Europeia e Marrocos, no dia 5 de junho de 2011 uma página online (Fishelsewhere) que se dedica essencialmente a acompanhar os desenvolvimentos relacionados com esta problemática dava conta que apesar de Dinamarca, Holanda e Suécia terem votado contra e de o Reino Unido, Chipre, Áustria e Finlândia se terem absterido, o conselho de ministros da União Europeia tinha assinado um protocolo provisório para que o acordo de pescas com Marrocos fosse prorrogado por mais um ano (Fishelsewhere, 2011; *Idem*). Parecia altamente provável que o ilegal acordo entre União Europeia e Marrocos fosse renovado mas no dia 7 de novembro de 2011 o Parlamento Europeu, através de dois comités, rejeitava a renovação do referido acordo de pescas, recusando assim promulgar a anterior decisão provisória tomada pelo conselho de ministros (*Idem*; WRSR, 2011). Assim, ao fim de quase trinta anos e depois de uma tão longa espera, parece finalmente que os atores externos ao conflito, neste caso específico a União Europeia, começaram a tomar noção da realidade e a promulgar decisões que são não apenas boas notícias para o povo sarauí, mas sim decisões que vão ao encontro da justiça e da verdade que o direito internacional procura impor.

### 2.2.2. O fosfato

Depois de analisados os dados relativos à atividade da pesca, chega agora a vez de realizar uma análise mais profunda sobre o fosfato, que não sendo um bem tão valioso como o ouro ou o petróleo, não deixa no entanto de ser um mineral muito importante. O fosfato é um derivado do fósforo, um tipo de pedra que se extrai em determinadas regiões do globo, entre as quais se encontram o Sahara e Marrocos. A utilidade deste mineral é muito abrangente, sendo que entre muitas outras aplicações é utilizado para produzir fertilizantes agrícolas. De acordo com Steven Kauwenbergh<sup>23</sup>, as reservas de fosfato existentes têm-se tornado nos últimos anos um objeto de grande especulação, tudo porque está previsto que até 2034/2035 se atinja o pico de produção deste mineral e consequentemente, a produção de fosfato decrescerá substancialmente. Desde este momento e considerando tais factos, compreende-se rapidamente qual a importância das atuais reservas e, em simultâneo, porque será tão importante para Marrocos controlar o Sahara.

No entanto, saber que a região do Sahara apresenta alguma riqueza a nível de reservas de fosfato, sem sequer falar em quantidades numéricas o mais aproximadas possíveis, tornaria esta pesquisa bastante inconclusiva. De acordo com os dados da USGS apresentados em 2009, Marrocos, juntamente com o Sahara, apresenta indiscutivelmente a maior reserva

<sup>21</sup> Expressão utilizada por Vincent Chapaux, no texto da página 221 da obra *International Law and the Question of Western Sahara*. De referir que este conceito de *administering power* não existe formalmente no seio da lei internacional. Esta espécie de “status” existe apenas quando é reconhecido pelas Nações Unidas, sendo que ao estado ao qual se reconhece este estatuto são oferecidas algumas regalias em troca de outras tantas imposições. Conclui-se portanto que quando as Nações Unidas não reconhecem este estatuto a um determinado estado, este é portanto ilegal. Veja-se o caso de Marrocos no Sahara, o caso da África do Sul na Namíbia, o caso de Israel na Palestina e o também conhecido caso da Indonésia em Timor-Leste.

<sup>22</sup> Expressão utilizada por Vincent Chapaux, no texto da página 221 da obra *International Law and the Question of Western Sahara*.

<sup>23</sup> Steven J. Van Kauwenbergh. Geólogo e cientista principal da divisão de pesquisa e desenvolvimento da IFDC.

de fosfato do mundo, com cerca de 5,700 mmt<sup>24</sup> (Kauwenbergh, 2010: 32). Gharbi tinha já em 1998<sup>25</sup> indicado que o Sahara possuiria uma reserva identificada de fosfato a rondar os 1,100 mmt, valor igual ao apresentado pelos EUA que, segundo os dados apresentados pela USGS em 2009, estão no lote dos cinco países com as maiores reservas de fosfato do mundo (*Idem*: 36). Desta forma, tendo em conta os valores em causa e mesmo sabendo que sem controlar o Sahara Marrocos apresentaria ainda as maiores reservas de fosfato a rondar os 4,600,000 mmt, não deixa de ser óbvio que os valores da reserva de fosfato sarauí são demasiado importantes para não serem considerados e aproveitados, sabendo-se adicionalmente que as reservas de fósforo são, naturalmente, não renováveis: “The Western Sahara possesses huge deposits of phosphates. These reserves could make Western Sahara one of the largest exporters of phosphates in the world” (Zoubir, 2006: 275).

Outra das situações que importa aferir diz respeito ao preço do fosfato. De acordo com os dados apresentados pela página *indexmundi.com* (2011) para o período compreendido entre abril e outubro de 2011, a tendência de então era altista. Conclui-se então que se até aos dias de hoje Marrocos tem insistido em manter-se no Sahara, certamente daqui em diante este interesse e persistência continuarão, uma vez que estas reservas de fosfato são cada vez mais importantes e valiosas.

A questão do fosfato pode no entanto ser vista de uma outra forma. Tal como é do conhecimento público, é no Sahara que podemos encontrar o maior sistema de passadeira rolante de transporte do mundo<sup>26</sup>, ligando as minas de Bou Craa ao porto de El Aiún. Porém, se a construção deste sistema visava o benefício do povo sarauí, desde a ocupação marroquina tudo mudou. É Marrocos quem agora controla e lucra com este sistema, uma vez que todo o material extraído das minas de Bou Craa é levado para o porto de El Aiún, o que permite que num curto espaço de tempo seja transacionado e posto a bordo. Graças a este procedimento, Marrocos consegue exportar com rapidez e relativa facilidade, retirando assim elevados lucros através da exploração de bens, sistemas de transporte e infra-estruturas que não lhe pertencem (WSRW, 2011).

### 2.2.3. O petróleo e o gás natural

De acordo com o artigo académico publicado em 1 de janeiro de 2006 (Olsson) pela Nordic Africa Institute intitulado “The Western Sahara Conflict: The Role of Natural Resources in Decolonization”, o Sahara Ocidental era em 1974 considerado o mais rico território maghrebino.

Apesar de “não existirem dados seguros” sobre a possibilidade da existência de reservas de petróleo e gás natural na região (Pinto Leite, WSRW), a verdade é que nos últimos anos “muitos autores citam as previsões da USGS of World Energy de 2000, que estima a existência de grandes reservas de gás e petróleo nas costas do Sahara e que refere a grande possibilidade de se encontrarem jazidas lucrativas e acessíveis”. A verdade é que também não se sabe qual a dimensão do investimento necessário a realizar, para poder tornar estas explorações lucrativas e proveitosas para as empresas do ramo. Porém, e mesmo com esta ideia de incerteza presente, a verdade é que ao longo dos anos várias companhias pesquisaram no Sahara, sendo que “algumas têm agora contratos com a RASD [caso da Wessex]” (Leite, 2011; Wessex, s.d.).

<sup>24</sup> Unidade de medida: million metric tons, isto é, 1 milhão de toneladas métricas.

<sup>25</sup> Relativamente à reserva de fosfato exclusivamente do Sahara, houve necessidade de recorrer a dados de 1998, visto que depois dessa data, apenas encontrei autores que juntam a reserva de fosfato do Sahara à reserva marroquina.

<sup>26</sup> Superior a 100 km de extensão.



Relacionando tudo aquilo que anteriormente foi dito com o tema específico deste estudo / artigo, parece fazer bastante sentido a ideia de que se o Sahara Ocidental foi desde sempre uma prioridade para os sucessivos reis marroquinos, maior interesse passou por certo a ter depois de Marrocos ter comprovado que neste território poderiam existir as sempre importantes reservas de gás natural e petróleo, à semelhança do que acontece na Argélia e Líbia. Vale uma vez mais referir que estas possíveis explorações constituem um ato ilícito perante o direito internacional, tal como podemos confirmar numa resolução de 1992 das Nações Unidas: “the exploitation and plundering of colonial and non-self-governing territories by foreign economic interests, in violation of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations is a grave threat to the integrity and prosperity of those Territories...” (ONU, 1992).

### 2.3. A questão da identidade

Tal como se tem vindo a observar ao longo deste estudo/artigo, durante os últimos trinta anos, Marrocos tem feito todos os esforços possíveis para manter o Sahara sob o seu domínio e, ao mesmo tempo, tentar que a ordem internacional reconheça formalmente esta situação. No entanto, apesar de Marrocos ter nestes últimos anos mantido a quase integridade do território sarauí sob o seu domínio e daí ter tirado benefícios, a verdade é que até ao momento o TIJ, ainda que reconheça a existência de alguma afinidade histórica, quer da Mauritânia, quer de Marrocos para com o Sahara, conclui em simultâneo que tais laços ou afinidades não estabelecem qualquer direito de soberania que permita qualquer tipo de anexação territorial, relativamente ao Sahara. A este propósito, leia-se “El dictamen del TIJ, que se hace público el 16 de octubre de 1975, afirma que el Sáhara Occidental no puede ser considerado *terra nullis*, pues antes de la colonización española era habitado por pueblos, que si bien nómadas, estaban organizados social y políticamente en tribus, y bajo el mando de jefes competentes para representarlos. Y respecto a las pruebas presentadas por Marruecos para afirmar su soberanía, dictamina que *no se deduce vínculo alguno de soberanía territorial entre este Estado y el Sáhara Occidental. No demuestran que Marruecos haya ejercido una actividad estatal efectiva y exclusiva en el Sáhara Occidental. Indican sin embargo que en el período pertinente existía un vínculo jurídico de fidelidad entre el Sultán (marroquí) y algunos, pero sólo algunos, de los pueblos nómadas del territorio*” (Miyares, s.d.: 8).

Todavia, quando em 16 de outubro de 1975 o TIJ se pronunciou formalmente sobre esta questão, a interpretação do rei de Marrocos, Hassan II, foi numa direção completamente oposta. Se por um lado as palavras do TIJ abriam claramente a porta à autodeterminação do povo sarauí, por outro lado Hassan II, rei de Marrocos à data, via nas mesmas palavras uma confirmação daquilo que sempre quis ouvir. Assim, para os estadistas marroquinos as palavras do TIJ podiam interpretar-se do seguinte modo: “Globally speaking, the advisory opinion given by the International Court of Justice can be summed up in two points: the first one concerns the acknowledgment by the Court of historical ties between Morocco and the provinces of the south (allegiance); the second one is relative to its acknowledgment of the sovereignty that Morocco has over its provinces” (Moroccan Sahara, 2007). Porém, a interpretação dada por Hassan II às palavras do TIJ é, segundo Pedro Pinto Leite da WSRS “completamente absurda”, uma vez que o TIJ foi bem claro ao afirmar que “...the Court’s conclusion is that the materials and information presented to it not establish any tie of territorial sovereignty between the territory of Western Sahara and the Kingdom of Morocco or the Mauritanian entity. Thus the Court has not found legal ties of such a nature as might affect the application of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) in the



decolonization of Western Sahara and, in particular, of the principle of self-determination through the free and genuine expression of the will of the peoples of the Territory” (Leite, 2011; TIJ, 1975).

Posto isto, conclui-se que o TIJ não podia ter sido mais claro. Ao não encontrar afinidades ou laços históricos suficientemente relevantes que justifiquem a anexação do Sahara enquanto território pertencente a Marrocos ou à Mauritânia, o TIJ é no seu parecer bastante claro, ao abrir caminho para a libertação e conseqüente autodeterminação do povo sarauí. Contudo e apesar do TIJ ter reconhecido através de um parecer jurídico em 1975 que os laços ou afinidades históricas entre Marrocos e o Sahara não eram suficientemente relevantes para que se procedesse a uma anexação, a verdade é que ainda nos dias de hoje as palavras proferidas pelo TIJ geram alguma discórdia e discussão. Muito recentemente, numa entrevista de Nuno Rogeiro à então Embaixadora de Marrocos em Portugal em 2011, Karima Benyaich, no programa *Sociedade das Nações*, a Embaixadora marroquina, ainda que reconheça a existência de um problema no Sahara, vai também dizendo que “Desde 1965 ... aliás, 1975, o Tribunal de Haia declarou que o território do Sahara não era *terra de ninguém*. Ou seja, havia relações jurídicas de ligação estreita entre as tribos do Sahara e o rei de Marrocos durante vários decénios. E a grande maioria das nossas monarquias provém dessa região. Foi criada a Frente Polisário com o apoio ... dos nossos vizinhos [em alusão à Argélia]. É um longo processo. Atualmente, o problema foi colocado ao nível das Nações Unidas. Tivemos vários encontros formais e informais e houve alguns progressos, mas Marrocos sempre cumpriu as exigências do secretário-geral das Nações Unidas, como do conselho de segurança e da comunidade internacional. Mostrámos a vontade de encontrar uma solução para este conflito, que coloca em risco toda a região. Marrocos, Argélia, Sahel” (Benyaich, 2011).

Assim, e analisando as palavras de Karima Benyaich, fica no ar a ideia de que o tema Sahara Ocidental continua a causar incómodo aos diplomatas marroquinos. Nesta perspetiva, Marrocos não estará então a cometer nenhum tipo de ilegalidade relativamente à situação que se encontra neste momento no Sahara. No entanto, e olhando para tudo o que já foi debatido ao nível das Nações Unidas, conclusões da HRW, pareceres do TIJ e opiniões de diversas individualidades que estiveram no terreno, as palavras da diplomata marroquina apenas poderão ser certamente classificadas como “politicamente corretas” e não muito mais que isso, pois, a nível do direito internacional, desde há muito que se sabe que Marrocos não detém qualquer tipo de direito que lhe confira algum género de poder administrativo sobre o Sahara.

### **Considerações finais sobre o contexto do conflito**

Como se sabe, apesar de envolver de uma forma direta o Sahara e Marrocos, este conflito abrange ainda vários estados terceiros, aliados de um e outro campo.

Contudo, e apesar de até ao momento se terem feito algumas considerações relativamente ao papel de terceiros neste conflito, o que este artigo se propõe analisar são os presumíveis interesses de Marrocos no Sahara. Ao longo do mesmo foram enunciados e analisados alguns desses alegados interesses, que poderão explicar as diversas ações marroquinas ao longo dos últimos anos. Conclui-se assim que existem motivos de grande interesse para Marrocos, de dimensão económica, histórica e política.

## Referências bibliográficas

### Documentos oficiais

- ONU (2000), Relatório do secretário-geral ao conselho de segurança sobre a situação relativa ao Sahara Ocidental, em 17 de fevereiro. [Consult. 15.dez.2011]. Disponível em: <http://daccess-ddsny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/301/87/IMG/N0030187.pdf?OpenElement>.
- \_\_\_\_ (1991), Resolução A/RES/45/266 da Assembleia Geral, sobre o orçamento para a MINURSO, em 17 de maio. [Consult. 18.dez.2011]. Disponível em: <http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/r45.htm>.
- \_\_\_\_ (1991), Resolução A/RES/46/64 da Assembleia Geral, sobre atividades de interesses económicos estrangeiros que impedem a implementação da Declaração sobre a concessão de Independência aos Países e Povos Coloniais nos territórios sobre domínio colonial e os esforços para eliminar o colonialismo, o apartheid e a discriminação Racial na África Austral, em 16 de novembro. [Consult. 23.jan.2012]. Disponível em: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/46/a46r064.htm>.
- OUA (1963), Carta que dá origem à Organização de Unidade Africana, atual União Africana, assinada em Addis Abeba, em 25 de maio. [Consult. 22.dez.2011]. Disponível em [77 http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/OAU\\_Charter\\_1963.pdf](http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/OAU_Charter_1963.pdf).

### Fontes secundárias

- EUR (2002), *The Middle East and North Africa 2003*, Middle East and North Africa Series, 49<sup>th</sup> Edition, vol. 5. London and New York: Routledge.
- Goldstein, Erik (1992), *Wars and Peace Treaties: 1816 to 1991*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Heyns, Christof (2001), *Human Rights Law in Africa 1998*. New York: Springer.
- Jensen, Erik (2005), *Western Sahara: Anatomy of a Stalemate*. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.
- Ohaegbulam, Festus (2004), *U.S. Policy in Postcolonial Africa: Four Study Cases in Conflict Resolution*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Pazzanita, Anthony (2006), *Historical Dictionary of Western Sahara: third edition*. Maryland: Scarecrow Press, INC.
- Shelley, Toby (2004), *Endgame in the Western Sahara: What future for Africa's Last colony?* London and New York: Zed Books.
- Zunes, Stephen; Mundy, Jacob (2010), *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism and Conflict Irresolution*. New York: Syracuse University Press.

### Publicações periódicas

- Dunbar, Charles (2000), *Saharan Stasis: Status and Future Prospects of the Western Sahara Conflict*. Middle East Institute.
- Miyares, Águeda Mera (s.d.), "Sáhara Occidental" *Institut des Drets Humans de Catalunya*, pp. 7-35.
- Olsson, Claes (ed.) (2006), "The Western Sahara Conflict: The Role of Natural Resources in Decolonization" *Current African Issues*. 2-30. Kaufman, Robert (2006), "Morgenthau's Unrealistic Realism" *Yale Journal of International Affairs*, pp. 24-27.
- Kauwenbergh, Steven J. Van (2010), "World Phosphate Rock Reserves and Resources" *IFDC: Principal Scientist Research and Development Division*, pp. 7-36.

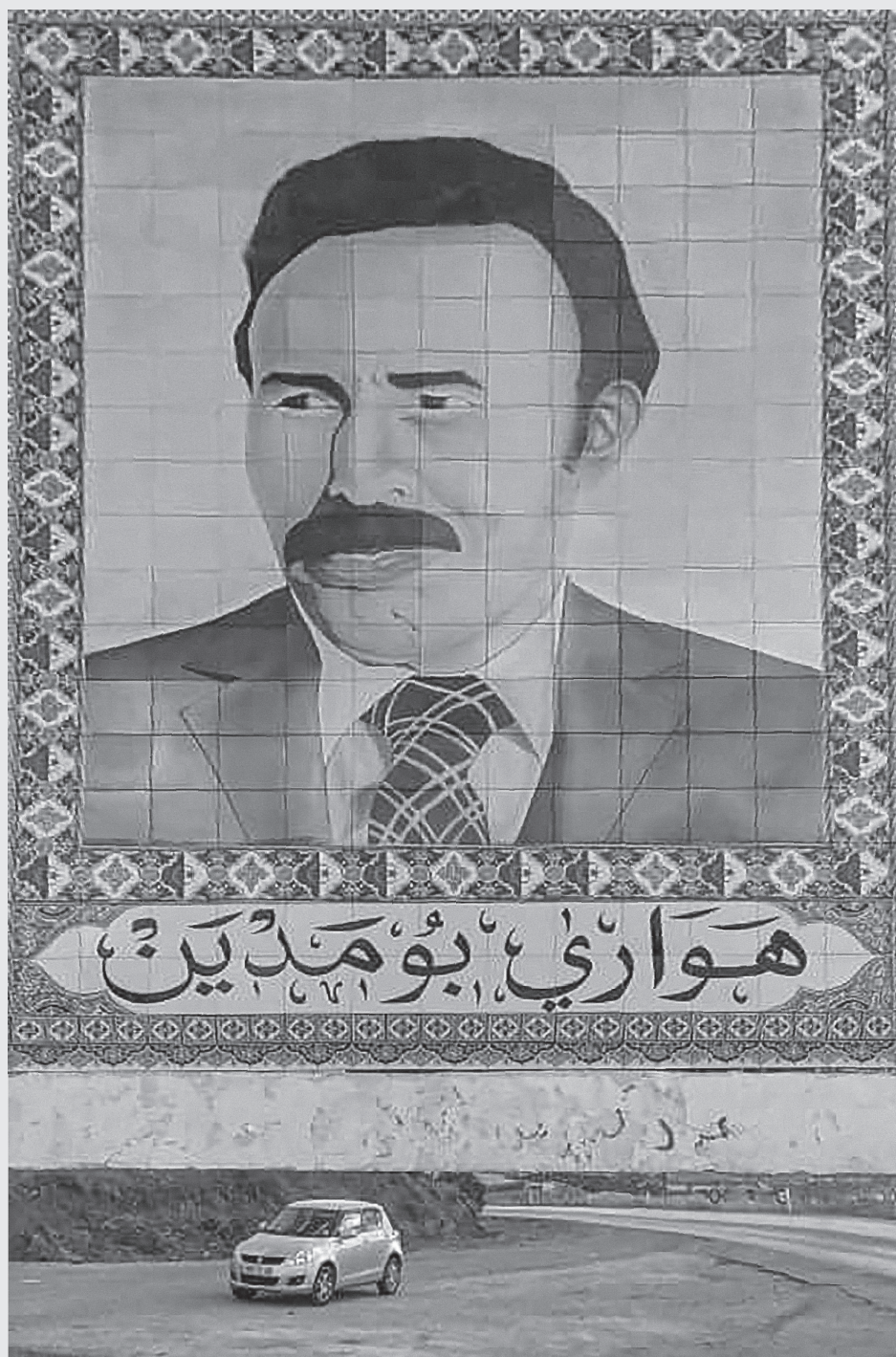
### Fontes internet

- Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook "Western Sahara". [Consult. 17.nov.2011]. Disponível em: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/wi.html>.

- \_\_\_\_\_, The World Factbook “Morocco”. [Consult. 17.nov.2011]. Disponível em: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>.
- \_\_\_\_\_, The World Factbook “Mauritania”. [Consult. 17.nov.2011]. Disponível em: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mr.html>.
- Comissão Europeia, “Acordo de Pesca entre União Europeia e Marrocos”. [Consult. 19.dez.2011]. Disponível em: [http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/international/agreements/morocco/index\\_en.ht%20m](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/international/agreements/morocco/index_en.ht%20m).
- FishElsewhere, “EU Council formally adopts one-year extension of EU – Morocco fish deal”. [Consult. 17.out.2011]. Disponível em: <http://www.fishelsewhere.eu/a140x1311>.
- \_\_\_\_\_, “Slipt EU Council decides to renew Eu-Morocco fish pact”. [Consult. 17.out.2011]. Disponível em: <http://www.fishelsewhere.eu/a140x1304>.
- Humans Right Watch (1995), “Keeping it Secret: The United Nations Operation in the Western Sahara”. [Consult. 20.dez.2011]. Disponível em: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a7e28.html>.
- IndexMundi, “Rock Phosphate Monthly Price – Euro per Metric Ton”. [Consult. 20.dez.2011]. Disponível em: <http://www.indexmundi.com/commodities/?commodity=rockphosphate&currency=eur>.
- Moroccan Sahara, “An Analytic Reading of the Advisory Opinion Relative to the Question of The Moroccan Sahara”. [Consult. 15.dez.2011]. Disponível em: <http://www.moroccansahara.net/page.php?IDA=110>.
- New York Times, “Morocco, Defending Claim in the Desert, Exerts a Hand on Neighbor’s Vote”. [Consult. 20.dez.2011]. Disponível em: <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/03/05/world/morocco-defending-claim-in-thedesert-exerts-a-hand-on-neighbor-s-vote.html?scp=1&sq=western+sahara&st=nyt>.
- Western Sahara Resource Watch, “Two Eu Parliament committees reject EU – Morocco Fish Pact”. [Consult. 8.nov.2011]. Disponível em: <http://www.wsrw.org/a105x2163>.
- \_\_\_\_\_, “The phosphate exports”. [Consult. 21.dez.2011]. Disponível em: <http://www.wsrw.org/a117x521>.
- Wessex Exploration, “Worldwide Oil And Gas Exploration”. [Consult. 21.dez.2011]. Disponível em: <http://www.wessexexploration.com/>.

## Entrevistas

- Leite, Pedro Pinto (2011), Entrevista Pessoal. São Paio do Mondego, Portugal. Secretário-Geral da Western Sahara Resource Watch, 7 de agosto de 2011.
- Benyaich, Karima (2011), Lisboa. Embaixadora de Marrocos em Portugal em entrevista a Nuno Rogeiro, no programa Sociedade das Nações, 16 de maio. [Consult. 26.ago.2011]. Disponível em: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wataHHln07o>.



# Explaining Algeria's Nationalist Foreign Policy on the Western Sahara Conflict

Abdelhak Elaggoune\* and Mourad Aty\*\*

pp. 31-38

## Introduction

Many assumptions have been advanced to explain Algeria's involvement in the Western Sahara dispute. On one hand, some policy analysts have mostly assumed that the active role played by Algeria in this North African conflict is for reasons of rivalry with its western neighbour Morocco for regional dominance as well as for strategic factors. On the other hand, other observers assumed that Algeria's Western Sahara policy is a product of its national ideology which gave birth to a revolutionary foreign policy conceived to fight Western colonialism, denounce and oppose neo-colonialism and imperialism. This stance dominated and shaped Algeria's foreign policy conduct since its independence not only in Cuba, Palestine, Vietnam, but in the Western Sahara and in many other spots around the globe.

Beyond doubt, the two assumptions underlie Algeria's Western Sahara policy and, hence, they cannot be neglected. Jacob Mundy (2010) argues that both must be equally taken into account when explaining Algeria's involvement in the dispute (1). To him, "Motives derived completely from either ideology or material interests cannot sufficiently explain the complete pattern of Algerian behaviour in the conflict, yet both are impossible to ignore" (3). Yahia Zoubir (1997) sees the conflict between Algeria and Morocco following the latter's expansion in the Western Sahara as a struggle for hegemony (43-61). Given the ideological thinking that prevailed for more than five decades within the Algerian decision-making elite, this paper favours the ideological factor in explaining Algeria's Western Sahara policy.

Viewed as a whole, the foreign policy that Algeria followed from the middle of the 1970s especially towards the Western Sahara problem reflects a consistent conception of the country's national ideology. The latter was the product of the sad colonial experience which compelled the Algerians to perceive themselves as a revolutionary state with a moral obligation to fight Western colonialism, condemn and combat neo-colonialism and imperialism (Roughton, 1969: 433). In this logic, the Algerian foreign policy towards the Western Sahara problem can be understood only if one realizes that the principles and the factors that impacted modern Algeria's revolutionary foreign policy have their origins in an exceptionally violent anti-colonial struggle.

\* Université 8 Mai 1945, Guelma.

\*\* Université 8 Mai 1945, Guelma; CEAUP.



Not too much scholarly work has been written on the ideological motives behind Algeria's backing and defence of the demands of the Western Sahara in its goal for independence from Morocco. Some of the chapters or papers that focus on Algeria's position on the Western Sahara conflict can be found in works such as Zoubir, Y. (2010) "The Western Sahara Conflict: Regional and International Repercussions", Zunes, S. and Mundy, J. (2010) *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism and Conflict (Ir)resolution*, Michael D. Jacobs. (2012) "Hegemonic Rivalry in the Maghreb: Algeria and Morocco in the Western Sahara Conflict", Spector, Samuel J. (2009) "Western Sahara and the Self-determination Debate" and Jacob Mundy's "Algeria and the Western Sahara Dispute".

The evolution of Algeria's activist foreign policy behaviour towards the Western Sahara conflict remains insufficiently explained. The objective of the present work is therefore to fill in part of this gap by providing convincing answers to these questions: Why is Algeria involved in this dispute? And why have its leaders demonstrated a revolutionary nationalist anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist foreign policy where Algeria remained deeply attached to the idea of self-determination? Overall, the paper explains how Algeria's foreign policy ideological guiding principles have always underlined its position towards the conflict more than any other political or economic reasons. In the first place, however, the focus will be on the conflict between Morocco and the *Polisario* over the territory and how Algeria, which remained extremely fond of the idea of self-determination and widely supported subjugated peoples everywhere in the world, has challenged Rabat's expansionist interests.

## Background to the conflict over the Western Sahara

Though many previous colonial territories got their independence in the 1970s, there is nowadays one colony in the African continent that has not got its independence, namely the Western Sahara. A former Spanish colony since 1884, the Western Sahara, which was declared as a non-self-governing territory in 1963 by the United Nations (UN), did not become independent when Spain retreated in 1975 (Spector, 2009: 35-37). The first UN Resolution 2229 on this territory was adopted by the United Nations in 1966 and called Spain to organize a referendum under UN auspices on the territory's right to self-determination (Marks, 1976: 3-13).

The issue of self-determination has been essential to the Western Sahara ever since the United Nations passed its Resolution on the territory in December 1966 (Schöldtz and Wrangle, 2006: 22). Turning a blind eye to this and later UN resolutions and pressures from African countries in particular, Morocco invaded the territory and has governed it ever since (Wohlgemuth, 2006: 9). From an Algerian point of view and human rights international organizations' stance, the occupation of the territory is both a breach of the right to self-determination of the Saharawi people and a violation of human rights and the cause of thousands of Saharawis living in refugee camps in Algeria.

Subsequent to the Madrid agreement in 1975, the territory was ceded to Morocco and Mauritania, with the latter renouncing its acquisition in 1979. Claiming the territory through historical links, Morocco invaded, occupied, and annexed the Western Sahara despite the decision of the International Court of Justice that Morocco has no legal claim on the territory; and the request of the UN Security Council that Morocco must withdraw from the former Spanish colony (Maghraoui, 2003: 115). Since then, the *Polisario* engaged in a conflict with Morocco over the right of Western Sahara to self-determination and its illegal occupation (124).

The Popular Front for the Liberation of *Saguia al-Hamra and Rio de Oro* (*Polisario*) was founded in 1973 to declare the Sahrawi longing for independence. It established an independent government in exile from Algeria in 1976 that was recognized by many governments and gained a seat in the Organization of African Union (OAU) in 1982, which led Morocco to withdraw from the OAU in protest (Ben-Meir, 2010: 63-86). The Sahrawi leaders claim that under international law, as a former colony, the Western Sahara should have been granted independence. Established in and assisted by Algeria, which is highly motivated by a nationalist foreign policy, the Polisário launched constant attacks on Moroccan forces until a 1991 cease-fire was brokered by the United Nations (Boukhars, 2012: 11). The two belligerents signed an agreement that called for a concluding vote on independence, autonomy or some other form of governance supervised by the UN (Zunes and Mundy, 2010: 25).

Yet, negotiations over the voting lists between the Polisário and Morocco in 1994 and 2000 thwarted any potential solution by means of vote. A further attempt to bring both parties of the conflict to an agreement on a solution by vote for integration, autonomy or independence was made in 2003 by former US Secretary of State James Baker, serving as a special UN envoy on Western Sahara. Again, despite the agreement of the Polisario and Algeria on the terms of Baker's proposal, Morocco totally rejected it (Simanowitz, 2009: 303).

Following Morocco's offer of autonomy for the Western Sahara in August 2010 and the country's July 2011 constitution (Boukhars, 2012: 11) which were seen as potential steps toward a solution, nine rounds of talks between the two sides were held in 2012 under the supervision of UN Envoy Christopher Ross to Western Sahara. The discussions, which meant to reduce differences over any kind of governance settlement with Algeria and Mauritania as observers, ended without any obvious agreement. Other talks were also held under the supervision of Horst Koehler as the Western Sahara envoy in December 2018 and March 2019 involving Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco, and the Polisário Front, yet again no practical lasting solution was reached.

Both, Morocco and the *Polisário*, remained committed to press on their own positions for a future solution (Arieff, 2013: 13). In the absence of any possible solution, the *Polisario* organized a number of insurgencies in 2005 and 2010 and during and after the Arab Spring Movement of 2011 as a new form of uprising against the Moroccan occupation and abuse of human rights instead of armed conflict (Zunes and Mundy, 2010: 38). Morocco continued to push its agenda for integrating Western Sahara under its sovereignty because of the support it has constantly received from its allies in the United States and France. As an important ally to Morocco, Washington has always stood against a Polisario vote on independence because this would damage the Moroccan monarchy (Zoubir, 2009: 984). France also defended the Moroccan claims within the Security Council and advocated a solution allowing Sahrawi autonomy under Rabat's sovereignty with no option of self-determination (Zunes and Mundy, 2010: 72).

Algeria saw the Moroccan takeover of the territory since 1975 as a violation of international law. Algerian officials firmly believe that the Western Sahara is not a part of Morocco and as such Rabat has no legal claim to it. They judge that the Sahrawi have the right to self-determination, and they are entitled to create a fully sovereign state. As a result, Morocco has no legal right to dispose of the natural resources of Western Sahara for its own benefit. Therefore, Algiers has always worked to challenge Moroccan claims on the Western Sahara territory and to back the *Polisario* and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) as the legitimate power over the territory. It has constantly defended its support for the Polisario cause and helped the SADR to obtain admission to the OAU

and its successor the African Union. It also persuaded other countries to recognize the *Polisario* as the official representative of the Sahrawi (Benabdallah, 2009: 421). During all this time, the parties to the conflict have never been able to attain a commonly acceptable resolution. Morocco upholds its sovereignty over the territory. The Polisario continues to challenge the Moroccan occupation and to fight for independence, and its faithful backer, Algeria, prioritizes international law and the Sahrawi people's right for self-determination and supports a referendum on self-determination. Given the two adversaries' conflicting positions, reality suggests that they will not soon settle their divergences over the Western Sahara issue.

### **Explaining Algeria's concern in the Western Sahara Dispute**

Regardless of the different assumptions of rivalry and ambitions of hegemony between Algeria and Morocco (Jacobs, 2012: 1-73), Algeria's role in the conflict can be attributed to its deep-rooted nationalist foreign policy, in particular the principle of self-determination of colonized peoples that Algerian policymakers have always championed under successive post-independence Algerian governments. Writing on Algeria's position in the conflict, Jacob Mundy (2010) says: "Algerian leaders [saw] in Polisario clear parallels with their struggle for independence". He adds that "Support to Western Saharan resistance is thus not only consistent with Algeria's national values, but also its history" (3-4). To understand Algeria's position in the conflict, it is significant to provide an analysis of the country's radical and anti-imperialist foreign policy practised following its independence.

### **An overview of Algeria's Foreign Policy**

It is commonly held that a compelling explanation of the foreign policy orientation of any country cannot be well understood without an examination of its determinants and guiding principles. Such an examination must, if only by way of background, take into consideration the past, for history itself often determines the boundaries within which current politics evolve. In the case of Algeria, colonial history gave rise to many determinants which still exercise significant influence on Algerian foreign policy: factors whose origins lie in the past but which continue to impact contemporary policy.

The roots of independent Algeria's foreign policy are commonly attributed to the impact of the extremely revolutionary national ideology acquired as a result of the sufferings endured by the Algerians in their resistance to and struggle against the French occupation. It is also an effect of the experience acquired by the Algerian diplomacy during wartime, as well as to the indifference of Western powers, particularly the United States, towards Algeria's revolutionary war against the French (Stone, 1997: 228 – 229).

Algeria's foreign policy constants include the right to decolonization, non-intervention in domestic affairs and sovereign equality of states and the struggle against the domination of the colonialist and imperialist powers worldwide (Ait-Chaalal, 2002: 66). It was also based on the rejection of the Cold War rigid bipolar structure, the mobilization of support for self-determination, and the integrity of borders (Grimaud, 1984: 146-50). Taken together, these attributes contributed to shaping Algeria's foreign policy orientation and the motives that influenced its efforts in establishing its political and economic sovereignty and leadership in a world dominated by Cold War concerns as well as Third World activism.

From 1962 and under successive governments, Algeria shaped its image as the emblem of revolution, giving aid and diplomatic backing to national liberation movements in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia (Rocherieux, 2001: 31). Its position in international



and regional summits was often friendly towards China and the Soviet Union and aggressive towards the West which represented colonialism, imperialism and economic dominance of Third World underdeveloped countries (Nelson, 1986: 87).

The early foreign policy activism, under the governments of Ben Bella and Boumediene, was driven by the struggle against Western colonialism and imperialism, and by great efforts to assert Algeria's national sovereignty and achieve its socio-economic development (Naylor, 2000: 47). Under Bendjedid, however, the economic and political constraints that Algeria faced in the mid-1980s accelerated the country's diminished global ambitions, restricted its diplomacy on its immediate neighbourhood, and made Algeria's foreign policy less ideological and less confrontational (Belkaid, 2009: 337-340).

In the 1990s, however, it became evident that Algeria could not continue to conduct its foreign policy on the same ideological principles it embraced since it gained independence in 1962. Several factors led to a weakened commitment to an activist foreign policy in Algeria's international relations. The end of colonial occupation in Africa, the fragmentation of the Non-Aligned movement, the opposition of the industrialised world to the new economic order championed by Algeria, and the failure of its own economic paradigm led to an obvious change in the country's foreign policy course (Haddad, 2012: 328).

Moreover, the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, on which Algeria relied for much-needed economic, military, and political support, the near financial bankruptcy of Algeria and its descent into a bloody internal conflict, all stood for new challenges for the Algerian foreign policy. All of a sudden, the Algerian authorities were deprived of the financial means or even the time to deal with global affairs (Cavatorta, 2012: 16-21).

Regardless of the differences in their foreign policy orientations, the successive Algerian leaders pursued the same ideological commitment towards the Western Sahara issue since its illegal occupation by Morocco in 1975. The option that the Algerian leaders like Boumediene and Bendjedid had in common is the perception of Morocco as an expansionist state and the support of a referendum on self-determination of the Sahrawi and the Polisario movement in their struggle to create an independent Sahrawi state (Zoubir, 2007: 160-1). Moreover, despite the obvious vigour and high measure of pragmatism that marked Algeria's foreign policy under Bouteflika and despite the rapprochement with many Western nations, Algeria's diplomacy remained to some extent structured on some ideological components that guided its foreign relations since independence (Spencer, 2012: 4).

Thus, though President Bouteflika made some concessions to espouse new pragmatic ways of political thinking and acting, he nonetheless persisted in the ideologies of non-interference, and sovereignty. For a man like Bouteflika, a veteran of the war of independence and a celebrity in the Third World camp, self-determination and non-intervention remain closely linked. Algeria's views on self-determination, for instance, remained constant as was reaffirmed by its persistent refusal to compromise on the Western Sahara conflict (Belkaid, 2009: 341-344).

### **Explaining the influence of ideology on Algeria's Foreign Policy**

Alexis Arieff (2012) assumed that: "The legacy of Algeria's anti-colonial struggle contributes to Algerian leaders' desire to prevent direct foreign intervention, their residual scepticism of French intentions, and Algeria's positions on regional affairs, including a non-interventionist stance" (1). Building on this assumption, one can admit that no far reaching variations in the Algerian foreign policy could be expected from Boumediene, Bendjedid, Boudiaf, Kafi, Zeroual or Bouteflika. Being among the chief architects of Algeria's nationalist foreign policy

during the Algerian revolution and after independence, their known attitudes to foreign policy suggested continuity in “the doctrines, principles and practices that drove the foreign policy of the government since independence in 1962” (Boukhars, 2013: 21).

Therefore, how can we explain these leaders’ ostensible activism in their foreign policymaking? It appears to be logical to admit that the conduct of the Algerian officials’ foreign policy cannot be explained without reference to their formative years and political socialisation, their personal beliefs and goals as well as their past experience, and the evolving national and international circumstances in which they ruled. Taken together, these factors may provide a reasonable and an objective elucidation to the underlying motives behind the continuity in these Presidents’ conduct of a nationalist foreign policy.

### **Formative years and political socialisation**

All the presidents who ruled independent Algeria were born and lived through the colonial years. Their formative experiences happened under the same constraints, and were the product of the trauma of the French colonization of Algeria, and of the Algerian revolution. It was particularly the French occupation of Algeria that would mould their personalities. War life implanted in them the inclination to determination, self-reliance and persistent struggle. This period ingrained in them the roots of their later attitudes of deep suspicion and long-lasting antagonism toward France and also toward the United States and the Western establishment as a whole.

These presidents’ revolutionary nature is the product of a combination of elements derived from their early experiences as revolutionary militants in the Algerian War of Liberation in the 1950s and early 1960s. Undoubtedly, for them the war years were an insightful experience, comprising many years as young soldiers under arms in a harsh environment. They fashioned their viewpoints of the world and especially moulded their visions of the purpose of political power and state-building.

Given these experiences, the development of a revolutionary character and resultant beliefs toward the political world seems predictable. These presidents’ formative experiences and revolutionary credentials partly explain why under their leadership Algeria’s foreign policy remained somewhat committed to anti-Western policies. These attitudes were confirmed when Algeria continued to reject Western meddling in its own affairs, and interference in other independent countries’ sovereignty even under the umbrella of humanitarian assistance. It also explains why Algeria remained totally committed to the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination.

### **Conclusion**

There is no reason to totally vilify the assumption that Algeria’s stake in the Western Sahara dispute is to prevent Morocco from controlling the Western Sahara territory to see its main rival remain weak. Equally important is the supposition that Algeria’s support for the SADR is basically a matter of principle, that of helping a liberation movement. Seen from this angle, it is logical to assert that the Algerian officials’ formative years and political socialisation are contributing factors in Algeria’s foreign policy behaviour in the Western Sahara issue.

It is an illusion to believe that the determinants of Algeria’s foreign policy will considerably change with the upcoming generational change in the Algerian military and political leadership. The reason is that patriotism, love and pride of one’s country are characteristics that are deeply entrenched in the Algerian personality and mentality of even post-independence generations.

One may, therefore, venture to assume that even forthcoming administrations will remain strongly committed to the established uncompromising stance over the principle of self-determination; otherwise the Algerian foreign policy will lose one of its significant components. Thus, frictions with Morocco in respect to the Western Sahara dispute will not be settled as long as the Sahrawi people remain attached to their right of self-independence; and Rabat continues to treat Western Sahara as its protectorate and the Sahrawi people as its colonial subjects.

## Bibliographic references

- Ait-Chaalal, Amine (2012), "Western Sahara." *Congressional Research Service*. Web. 25 Nov. 2018.
- \_\_\_\_\_(2002), "L'Algérie depuis 1962: retour sur une histoire contrastée." *Revue internationale et stratégique*, Vol. 2, N.º 46, pp. 61-72.
- Arieff, Alexis (2013), *Algeria: Current Issues*. Congressional Research Service Report RS21532, pp. 1-17. Web. 15 Oct. 2018.
- Belkaid, Akram (2009), "La Diplomatie algérienne à la recherche de son âge d'or." *Politique étrangère*, 2, pp. 337-344.
- Benabdallah, Karima (2009), "The Position of the European Union on the Western Sahara Conflict." *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 17 (3), pp. 417-435.
- Ben-Meir, Yossef (2010), "Morocco's Regionalization 'Roadmap' and the Western Sahara." *International Journal on World Peace*, 27 (2), pp. 63-86.
- Boukhars, Anouar (2013), "Algerian Foreign Policy in the Context of the Arab Spring." *CTC Sentinel, OP-ED*, Vol. 6, Issue 1, pp. 17-21.
- \_\_\_\_\_(2012), "Simmering Discontent in the Western Sahara". *Middle East*, pp. 1-23.
- Cavatorta, Francesco (2012), "La reconfiguration, des structures de pouvoir en Algérie. Entre le national et l'international." *Revue Tiers Monde*, N.º 210, pp. 13-29.
- Grimaud, Nicole (1984), *La politique extérieure de l'Algérie*. Paris: Karthala.
- Haddad, Said (2012), "Entre volontarisme et alignement: quelques réflexions autour de la politique africaine de l'Algérie." *Dynamiques Internationales*, N.º 7, pp. 323-339.
- Jacobs, Michael D. (2012), "Hegemonic Rivalry in the Maghreb: Algeria and Morocco in the Western Sahara Conflict." *Graduate Theses and Dissertations*, pp. 1-73. Web. 21 Dec. 2018.
- Maghraoui, Abdeslam (2003), "Ambiguities of Sovereignty: Morocco, The Hague and the Western Sahara Dispute." *Mediterranean Politics*, 8 (1), pp. 113-126.
- Marks, Thomas A. (1976), "Spanish Sahara - Background to the Conflict." *African Affairs*, 75 (298), pp. 3-13.
- Mundy, Jacob (2010), "Algeria and the Western Sahara Dispute". *The Maghreb Centre Journal*, Issue 1, pp. 1-14.
- Naylor, Phillip C. (2000), *France and Algeria: A History of Decolonization and Transformation*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press.
- Nelson, Harold D. (1986), *Algeria, a Country Study*. 4<sup>th</sup> (Ed.) Washington D.C.: The American University.
- Rocherieux, Julien (2001), "L'évolution de l'Algérie depuis l'Indépendence." *Sud/Nord*, Vol. 1, N.º 14, pp. 27-50.
- Roughton, Richard A. (1969), "Algeria and the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War." *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 23, N.º 4, pp. 433-444.
- Schöldtz, Magnus and Wrangé, Pål (2006), "Swedish Foreign Policy on the Western Sahara Conflict". Faculty of Law, Stockholm University Research Paper N.º 21, pp. 22-24. Web. 16 Feb. 2019.

- Simanowitz, Stefan (2009), "Not One Grain of Sand: International Law and the Conflict in Western Sahara." *Contemporary Review*, 291, pp. 299-305.
- Spector, Samuel J. (2009), "Western Sahara and the Self-determination Debate." *Middle East Quarterly*, 16 (3), pp. 33-43.
- Spencer, Claire (2012), "Strategic Posture Review: Algeria." *World Politics Review*, pp. 1-10.
- Stone, Martin (1997), *The Agony of Algeria*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Tlemçani, Rachid (2008), "Algeria under Bouteflika: Civil Strife and National Reconciliation." *Carnegie Papers*, N.º 7, pp. 1-17.
- Wohlgemuth, Lennart (2006), "Introduction." *The Western Sahara Conflict: The Role of Natural Resources in Decolonization*. Ed. Claes Olsson. *Current African Issues*, N.º 33, p. 9. Web. 12 Nov. 2018.
- Zoubir, Yahia H. (2010), "The Western Sahara Conflict: Regional and International Repercussions." *Concerned African Scholar Bulletin*, Bulletin 85 (US Militarization of the Sahara-Sahel: Security, Space and Imperialism). Web. 6 Oct. 2018.
- (2009). "The United States and Maghreb-Sahel Security." *International Affairs*, 85 (5), pp. 977-995.
- (2007), "Stalemate in Western Sahara: Ending International Legality". *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 14, N.º 4, pp. 158-177.
- (1997), "In Search of Hegemony: The Western Sahara in Algerian-Moroccan Relations". *Journal of Algerian Studies*, Issue 2, pp. 43-61.
- Zunes, S. and Mundy, J. (2010), *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism and Conflict (Ir)resolution*. Syracuse University Press. Ebook.

# Western Sahara and the United States: Clientelism and exceptionalism in Africa's last colony

Jeffrey J. Smith\*

PP. 39-54

## 1. Introduction

In a Westphalian international order the United States arguably ranks as the most audacious case of decolonization. During an 18<sup>th</sup> century age of empire and yet-to-be conceived political, human rights and legal norms, the American experiment in self-determination set an immediate stage for Haiti and Latin America to escape colonialism and it continues to be an example followed today. The United States (the US) as proclaimed guardian of the emancipation of peoples should be a powerful force in the case of Western Sahara, Africa's last colony. But it is not. The reason is no surprise. In the modern era of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, the US has sometimes failed to support self-determination in a principled manner. American exceptionalism – the self-assumed mission to pursue a universal freedom of peoples, until recently a part of the country's international relations – could yet be reasserted but in the case of Western Sahara it has been alloyed with clientelism and self-interest.

Western Sahara may be the last case of decolonization in Africa, where the organized international community and legal norms favor the Saharawi right of self-determination but when it comes to assessing the role of the US, the recent cases of Timor-Leste (East Timor) and Namibia must be recalled. All three were the most protracted and more violent among those of a project of UN *Charter* inspired decolonization. The three cases are examples where the US chose to not employ its influence with client states where those states persisted in the occupation of colonies originally created by European powers. As discussed below in the case of Western Sahara, several factors explain such an American passivity. They include the politics of a Cold War with the Soviet Union, America's perceptions of the Global South, the pursuit of national security objectives through military and trading alliances, and a mostly constant acceptance of a leading role for the United Nations (the UN) in matters of decolonization.

This article is intended to contribute to a discursive analysis in the present edition of *Africana Studia* by examining the history, political economy and prospects of US involvement in what the UN calls the “question” of Western Sahara. US involvement has been previously considered by others, notably Hodges (1983), Damis (1985), Shelley (2004), and Zunes and Mundy (2010). However, the passage of time together with events in the Middle East and North Africa after the 2011 Arab Spring, US diplomatic assessments available after 2010

---

\* Faculty of Law, McGill University, Montreal; The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, Ottawa.



from sources such as Wikileaks, combined with a changed and uncertain US foreign policy, demand new appraisal. This article traces an historical path, examining US conduct and statements pertaining to Western Sahara in the context of the country's relationships with the leading parties: Morocco, Algeria, France, the UN, and Spain, and a limited involvement with others including Mauritania, the African Union, the European Union and the former Soviet Union. From the outset the US engaged the Saharawi people least of all, for several years after the 1975 invasion of Western Sahara rejecting even low-level diplomatic contacts with their national liberation movement, the Polisario Front.<sup>1</sup> The article concludes with an assessment of the prospects for US engagement in the coming years.

## 2. Client state decolonization: The US and Spanish Sahara before 1975

In the future, 20<sup>th</sup> century decolonization will be considered remarkable – given the success of self-determination of formerly non-self-governing peoples – because of three things. The first is the speed with which the organized international community achieved unanimity for the UN to oversee such an emancipation project and for the emergence of legal norms that reinforced its legitimacy. Thirty years after the UN *Charter* and fifteen years after the impetus of UN General Assembly Resolution 1514, by 1975 decolonization was nearing completion. Only the difficult cases, those of Spain's reluctance and of neighbour-state occupation of former colonies (Namibia and Timor-Leste, as noted), remained.<sup>2</sup> A second remarkable artefact of the era was the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the US, which did not impede the pace of self-determination of non-self-governing peoples. A third successful feature was oversight by the UN organization, where states in the setting of the General Assembly collectively identified and directed decolonization in specific cases. The three factors reinforced each other, the US and the Soviet Union in their own ways claiming the desirability of ending colonialism behind the façade of the UN while pursuing relationships with new and existing allied and would-be client states.

America's position toward Spanish Sahara, as it then was, can thus be accounted for. It offered no particular response when the UN General Assembly listed Spanish Sahara for decolonization in 1965.<sup>3</sup> That was because Spain alone was responsible to meet the General Assembly's request and during the latter decades of the Franco regime the country's foreign policy went unquestioned by the US as a reliable ally.<sup>4</sup> The American relationship with states of the Maghreb after their independence – Algeria, Mauritania and Morocco – was in its early stages.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, during the 1960s northwest Africa did not have the strategic considerations it presents today, including problems of trans-Sahel

<sup>1</sup> The Polisario Front (the Popular Front for the Liberation of Sakiet el-Hamra and Río de Oro) was created in 1973 in direct response to Spain's reluctance to decolonize the Spanish Sahara, acquired in 1885 following the Congress of Berlin. It is the Polisario Front that the US and the UN (and others) accept as the representative organization of the Saharawi people for the purpose of self-determination. The US does not recognize the democratically elected Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (the SADR) and refrains from using such a style even in internal diplomatic communications. In this article, Saharawi refers to the original inhabitants of Western Sahara (as the territory has been known since 1975) and their descendants today. The territory is referred to as Spanish Sahara until the time of Spanish withdrawal between 14 November 1975 and 26 February 1976.

<sup>2</sup> Western Sahara, Advisory Opinion, ICJ Reports 1975, 12. The Court confirmed the right for non-self-governing peoples to freely choose their political status, including the option of independence. *Ibid.*, paragraphs 54-59.

<sup>3</sup> UN General Assembly Resolution 2072 (XX), Question of Ifni and Western Sahara (16 December 1965). The resolution "urgently requested" Spain to "immediately take all necessary measures for the liberation of ... Spanish Sahara from colonial domination."

<sup>4</sup> Spain would join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1982.

<sup>5</sup> Morocco would rely on its historic relationship with the US, dating to the early 1800s, if insubstantial during the French colonial period, in its efforts to influence the US about Western Sahara.

human migration, Islamist radicalization, and civil society conflict in North African countries following the Arab Spring.

It was Spain's 1973 promise to the Saharawi people of a change in their territory's status to autonomy, pointing to eventual independence, which set the stage for US involvement. Spain's long-delayed acceptance of Saharawi self-determination was confirmed after meetings of the Organization of African Unity (the OAU) in May 1973 and the Non-Aligned Movement in Algiers that September which called on Spain to decolonize the Sahara. "Franco's [September 1973] proposals were duly endorsed by the [Saharawi] Djemaa at a session held on November 13-15, 1973, and in accordance with the new policy, Spain abstained in the UN General Assembly's vote on Resolution 3162 on December 14, instead of casting a negative vote as in December 1972."<sup>6</sup> (Hodges, 1983: 168) Spain's commitment to decolonizing the Sahara forced the matter for Mauritania and Morocco, each advancing their interests to the Sahara. In May 1974 the US understood Mauritania's concerns as follows:

*Mauritanian Foreign Minister Mouknass summoned me on urgent basis early May 31 (A) to register Mauritania's government vigoros [sic] objection to Spanish assertion contained in recent letter to UN [Secretary-General] that [government of Spain] would, in absence of other solution, set date for its departure from Sahara and would hand over power to entity chosen unilaterally by it; and (B) to request [US government] to intervene as great power and as friend of Spain with Spanish authorities to convey [Mauritania's] displeasure ...*

*Government of Mauritania approach on Spanish Sahara is sharp break with past practice. This is first time foreign minister has initiated discussion with embassy, has solicited US support for Mauritania position, or has requested US involvement. [...]*

*In response, I noted [US government] had traditionally taken position of strict neutrality on substance of Sahara dispute, but had and would continue to urge four most directly interested states (all of whom are our good friends) to work toward reasonable and above all peaceful solution to difficult problem.<sup>7</sup> (US diplomatic telegram, 31 May 1974).*

Morocco, too, was now asserting a would-be historic claim to the Sahara. "On July 16, 1974, the king summoned political leaders to a special conference to plan a diplomatic blitzkrieg of the world's capitals ... to put Morocco's views of the Western Saharan problem to governments throughout the world." (Hodges, 1983: 180) This caused Spain to respond in a letter on 20 August to the UN Secretary-General "that it would hold a referendum under UN auspices in the first six months of 1975." (Hodges, 1983: 170) Such a step was intolerable to Mauritania and Morocco. Therefore, in December 1974 the two states secured the support of others to have the General Assembly refer the status of Spanish Sahara to the International Court of Justice (the ICJ) for an advisory opinion. The ICJ was asked whether at the time of colonial acquisition the territory was *terra nullius* and, should it not have been, if there were "legal ties" between the territory and Mauritania and Morocco.<sup>8</sup> (UN General Assembly Resolution 3292 (XXIX)) The US was publicly silent, taking no apparent interest in the case. America's view was that the affair was a matter for the four states directly concerned and not, it can be added, of much concern for the Saharawi people.

<sup>6</sup> In December 1972 the vote for the General Assembly's annual resolution to request decolonization of Spanish Sahara was 84 (in favour) - 10 (against) - 26 (abstaining). In December 1973 it was 108-0-23.

<sup>7</sup> It was clear Mauritania was contemplating the UN General Assembly would refer the matter of territorial claims to the Spanish Sahara to the International Court of Justice.

<sup>8</sup> The resolution vote was 87-0-43, with Spain among those which abstained. "Most states, however, were more than pleased to have the Saharan dispute shunted off to the World Court. Most Arab states, besides, were now giving strong support to Morocco." (Hodges, 1983: 185).

In August 1975 the US embassy in Mauritania reported to the State Department that Morocco and Mauritania had an “oral understanding” to partition Spanish Sahara. This was before the ICJ was to issue its advisory opinion and while the General Assembly awaited the report of a mission sent to the territory to assess the prospect of Saharawi self-determination. “Although [Mauritania] and [Morocco] may have agreed in general terms on division of Sahara at approximately 26<sup>th</sup> parallel, we seriously doubt agreement has been reached on precise partition line or even on criteria to be used eventually in locating exact location of border.” (US diplomatic telegram, 6 August 1975)<sup>9</sup>. October was the moment of consequence for the United States: only now was it understood that Western Sahara might be taken by force. The US embassy in Rabat observed on 1 October: “Our reporting of late on Sahara has pointed to confluence of events of which timing governed largely by UNGA/ICJ processes and king’s self-imposed year-end deadline for resolving matter ... If ICJ opinion disputes [Morocco’s] claims to sovereignty, some military response by [Morocco] likewise predictable.” (US diplomatic telegram, 1 October 1975). The embassy added “there may be difficult choices for the U.S. A Spanish request, for example, for UN supervision of referendum or even UN guarantees for its forces during its withdrawal would probably be resisted by [Morocco].” (*Ibid.*) It was, at mid-month, the report of the General Assembly’s visiting mission and the ICJ’s release of its advisory opinion which caused Mauritania and Morocco to act. The Court’s opinion met with no US response to the finding that Mauritania and Morocco did not have “any” territorial claim to the territory and that the Saharawi people had the right to self-determination (Western Sahara Advisory Opinion, paragraph 162). The following report from its embassy in Mauritania is telling of America’s position at the time:

*If we are going to back away from eloquent re-statement of U.S. dedication to self-determination which Ambassador White made a few days ago in New York and begin, for pragmatic geopolitical reasons, to support takeover of Sahara by interested parties, we had better embark on major effort to make absolutely sure that takeover is in fact a Mauritanian-Moroccan partition and not a unilateral Moroccan annexation ... public and private statements coming out of Rabat, New York, and Marrakesh this past week suggest very strongly that Moroccans have no intention of honoring agreement they made with Mauritians to divvy up Sahara. [...]*

*If the [US government] decides that the developing Sahara situation now requires us to abandon our previous stance of strict neutrality among parties and to begin, in order to insure a peaceful resolution of problem, to support actively one of the protagonists – Morocco, we should in return insist that King Hassan pursue a resolution of the Sahara problem which maximizes chances of general international acceptance and minimizes possibility of further regional instability and potential conflict. Partition, yes; annexation, no (US diplomatic telegram, 23 October 1975).*

This explanation of the US position was consistent with the country’s support for a consensus resolution in the Security Council on 22 October. The resolution reaffirmed the application of UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 “and all other relevant General Assembly resolutions” to Western Sahara, directed the Secretary-General to consult with the parties and appealed for “restraint and moderation” (UN Security Council Resolution 377 (1975)). America’s mission at the UN noted it “fully associated” itself with a call for “restraint on the part of all the parties concerned” (US diplomatic telegram, 23 October 1975).

<sup>9</sup> “[Deputy Chief of US Mission] noted that both countries are claiming, either implicitly [*sic*] or explicitly, entire Western Sahara and asked how there could be a ‘common position’ on future of territory.” *Ibid.* at paragraph 2.

On the eve of invasion, the United States chose to limit its influence on the question of Western Sahara. Its stated position was one of strict neutrality. There appeared to be no global implications for the US in how Spain would relinquish its colony; Madrid's responsibility for an orderly decolonization would go unchallenged. The other states concerned, principally Morocco, were understood to be aligned with the US. In addition, the US made no connection of the dispute in the Sahara to its role in the Middle East in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The US also refrained from suggesting international law should be respected, including the ICJ's conclusions and the requirement of the UN *Charter* for states to respect territorial integrity. Least of all did the US acknowledge the Saharawi people's aspiration to be free from colonial domination, as the following observation of the US embassy in Rabat made clear:

*An independent Sahara. Question of how [US government] should view the possibility of creation independet [sic] Sahara has been rasied [sic] before and we have made known our views ... We do not feel it is in U.S. interest to see created in region a state whose existence would inevitably generate contention and pose security problems - although Moroccan/Mauritania absorption of this territory would by no means free it entirely from subsequent contention by both internal and external interests. Putting aside for the moment terms of eventual ICJ advisory opinion, and despite some possible economic policy reservations over substantial new phosphate marketing power that would accrue to an enlarged Morocco, purely practical aspects of the matter lead us to conclude that Moroccan and Mauritanian sovereignty over Sahara preferable to an independent state of questionable longevity and open to outside influences potentially inimical to U.S. (US diplomatic telegram, 1 October 1975)<sup>10</sup>.*

Not until the 1997 appointment of James A. Baker III, a former US Secretary of State, as UN envoy for Western Sahara would American foreign policy contemplate the possibility of Saharawi independence and, even then, there would be no public statement or position expressed.

### 3. Invasion, acquiescence and the mis-prediction of success

The invasion of Spanish Sahara by the armed forces of Mauritania and Morocco began immediately after the ICJ's advisory opinion. These were small-scale incursions intended to secure later advances into the territory and cause Spain to withdraw, its civil and military presence in the territory already limited. (Hodges, 1983: 210-219) Morocco's November 6 "Green March" met with no protest by the US or other states, and domestically ensured public approval for King Hassan to "recover" the Sahara. The ICJ's advice to the General Assembly was waning, the affair moving into a Security Council that would become the forum to resolve the question of Western Sahara in later years. "Once the March had been announced, the king knew he would be running serious political risks if he decided to call it off. There could be no turning back, he said on November 30." (Hodges, 1983: 214) On 2 November, US Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger directed the US embassy in Rabat to inform King Hassan that "[w]e are encouraging the Spanish government to continue negotiations with you ... In particular we would encourage you to give serious consideration to the proposals by Secretary General Waldheim."<sup>11</sup> (US diplomatic telegram, 2 November 1975).

<sup>10</sup> The high water mark of US support for Saharawi self-determination at the time would be indirectly expressed in the Security Council's 22 October resolution, above, which affirmed UN General Assembly Resolution 1514.

<sup>11</sup> "While Spanish warnings ... are no doubt taken seriously by [Morocco], there is a heavy dose of oriental fatalism in Morocco's Sahara policy and king seems determined to play out game to its conclusion. At same time, king wants to

History reveals that the Green March was successful not only for its domestic political result in Morocco, but as a means of pressure on Spain to negotiate the giving-away of its Saharan colony. This was materially achieved in the Madrid Accords of 14 November<sup>12</sup> (Madrid Accords, 1975). The specific terms of the Accords would not become public for some time, while subsidiary agreements that permitted Spain access to the Saharan ocean fishery and to remain a part owner of the phosphate mining enterprise at Bou Craa would remain secret for decades. However, the US understood the Accords provided for more than a tripartite administration of the territory directed to a goal of self-determination. “Although Moroccans have assured us that separate agreements for transfer of power exist, [the text of the Madrid Accords] makes no mention of transferral of sovereignty or of status of interim administration following Spanish departure from Sahara.” (US diplomatic telegram, 24 November 1975). Pressure on the US to intervene was therefore eased. There was now less possibility of armed conflict between Spain and Morocco, no demands were made by Algeria or the OAU for US intervention, and the Madrid Accords offered a fiction of respect for self-determination while a preferred result of partition was secured. In November, the formal position of the United States found its way into Security Council resolutions requesting the Secretary-General to continue consulting the parties (November 2) and calling on Morocco to withdraw the Green March (November 6).<sup>13</sup> (UN Security Council Resolutions 379 (1975) and 380 (1975)).

The General Assembly next addressed the question of Spanish Sahara, which saw the involvement of the US as debate culminated in early December 1975. Uniquely in a decolonization matter having the guidance of the ICJ, the General Assembly split, issuing two somewhat competing resolutions. General Assembly Resolution 3458A of 10 December took note of the advisory opinion, reaffirmed the right of self-determination and requested the government of Spain to ensure self-determination under UN oversight. Resolution 3458B of the same day was distinctly general in nature, taking note of the Madrid Accords, affirming self-determination and requesting Mauritania, Morocco and Spain “to ensure respect for the freely expressed aspirations of the Saharan populations.” The US voted against the first resolution and supported the second.<sup>14</sup> Under the second resolution, there would be no international supervision of an act of self-determination nor any direction to the UN, including the Secretary-General, to pursue self-determination in the Sahara. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim made a further effort to assess the circumstances, dispatching Sweden’s UN ambassador, Olof Rydbeck, to Western Sahara the following February. He informed the Secretary-General that “a genuine consultation of Saharawi opinion had become impossible.” (Hodges, 1983: 236).

The American response to the invasion of Western Sahara settled into monitoring and pragmatic self-interest. US diplomatic missions and the State Department concluded the Soviet Union had little attraction to the affair and that it was unlikely to offer

---

be a negotiator to the end; while expecting Spaniards to blink first. Nevertheless, Moroccans, as well as diplomatic observers, are still desperately hoping for a *deus ex machina* ... U.S., like France, is still seen in favourable light by king, while USSR is in doghouse. Situation could change with another Security Council examination of Sahara which produced pressures for outsiders to take more concrete and exposed positions.” (US diplomatic telegram, US embassy Rabat to US State Department, 5 November 1975).

<sup>12</sup> The accepted view is that the Accords were illegal because Spain could not unilaterally transfer its responsibility for self-determination in the Sahara. “In general, it can be stated that none of the contracting states were competent to dispose of a territory and of a people alien to them ... Spain was the administrator of the territory, and still is, as stated by the General Assembly [in 1995]” (Soroeta Liceras, 2014: 138-140).

<sup>13</sup> Resolution 380 noted the role of the UN General Assembly in the aftermath of the ICJ advisory opinion.

<sup>14</sup> See the discussion of voting patterns in the UN General Assembly Fourth Committee on December 4, 1975, before the December 10 resolution votes, above, in US diplomatic telegram, 16 December 1975.



assistance to Algeria.<sup>15</sup> The US was careful to express its neutrality, observing in January 1976 to African diplomats that it had “several friends directly involved.” (US diplomatic telegram, 3 January 1976). There was no concern about possible conflict between the states neighboring Western Sahara nor any exhortation on Spain to fulfill its responsibilities requested in General Assembly Resolution 3458A. The scale of Saharawi resistance to invasion from north and south becoming apparent, American diplomats began to discuss the possible use of US arms supplied to Morocco in the conflict:

*Increasing arms shipments to Morocco at this time will, it seem [sic] to us, imply commitment on our part to see Hassan through his Sahara adventure and will at the same time encourage both Algerians and Soviets to expand their military relationship. Hassan acts as though he already has such a commitment, although he does not seem to think he has reciprocal commitment to consult with us before taking actions which may drag us into conflict. As we have noted ... most likely prospect in Sahara seems at moment to be protracted guerilla-type struggle. Capability of Morocco to counter Sahara insurgency, and for that matter of Algerians and Polisario to [mount] it, remains open to question, however, will give him level to come back for more if he feels need to do so and [will] have same effect on Soviet-Algerian relationship. Thus we may find ourselves one day locked into a long struggle in which our national interest is moot, to say the least ... It does not appear that risks involved in major new arms deal with Morocco are worth taking* (US diplomatic telegram, 13 January 1976).

The US embassy in Madrid reported Spain's withdrawal from the Sahara on 26 February. “There is an element of helplessness and frustration in [the Spanish foreign affairs ministry's] description of events as well as considerable resentment to Morocco in particular and some of the Arab countries in general. The Saharan experience ends Spain's colonial presence in Africa.” (US diplomatic telegram, 27 February 1976). In April the US State Department instructed the ambassador in Rabat who was to meet with King Hassan to raise the matter of Western Sahara and “inquire whether [Morocco] intends to extend franchise to inhabitants of portion of Western Sahara which has been integrated into Morocco.” (US diplomatic telegram, 24 April 1976)<sup>16</sup>. As the Saharawi people arrived at Tindouf, built their refugee camps and declared an independent state – which began to acquire recognition from other states, mostly in Africa and unremarked on by the US – a guerilla campaign was mounted to oust the territory's invaders (Hodges, 1983: 241-266). As it became clear in 1977 that Mauritania was having problems resisting armed assaults on the iron ore mines at Zouerat and audacious attacks against Nouakchott, the US position remained constant, concerned with an appearance of neutrality and avoidance of contact with Saharawi officials of the Polisario Front.<sup>17</sup>

In the early years of the conflict, American foreign policy was routinely divided over the sale of arms to Morocco. In 1977 there was a discussion of sending military advisors, while Morocco requested modest numbers of a fixed-wing ground attack aircraft, the OV-10

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* In a 16 December 1975 telegram, UN ambassador Daniel Patrick Moynihan carefully parsed the Soviet bloc voting record. See also US diplomatic telegram 4 November 1975: “Breaking its silence on the events in Spanish Sahara (‘Western Sahara’ is the Russian terminology used) Pravda (Nov 4) reports the adoption of the UNSC resolution instructing SYG Waldheim to undertake consultations with the parties concerned ... This brief item is the first public indication we have had pointing to a Soviet ‘tilt’ toward Algeria, or at least a tilt away from Morocco on this question.”

<sup>16</sup> The telegram appears to be the first indication of a connection between US concerns over Western Sahara and the use of Morocco to influence Arab states in pursuit of peace in the Middle East. “We continue to hope that King Hassan, with the understanding he has always shown for our Middle East efforts, will do everything he can to encourage moderation among the Arab governments.” *Ibid.* at paragraph 2.

<sup>17</sup> “[A visiting Spanish embassy officer] was told by [departmental officers of the US State Department] that there is no repeat no change in U.S. policy of remaining neutral in Saharan conflicts, which U.S. believes must be settled by parties concerned, possibly with mediation efforts of other African countries or international organizations.” US diplomatic telegram, 5 October 1977.

Bronco (Hodges, 1983: 354-360). The Carter administration preferred to not send additional arms to Morocco or particular weapons for use in the Sahara to avoid upsetting international opinion. In March 1978 the Secretary of State wrote to the US embassies (Algeria, France, Mauritania, Spain) and Saudi Arabia, linking pending sales of fighter aircraft to Egypt and Saudi Arabia to arms sales to Morocco. The State Department wished to ensure Congressional approval for the sales to Egypt and Saudi Arabia by avoiding possible disapproval of weapons that might be “used in the Sahara (and presumably Mauritania)”:

*Under the circumstances, I have decided not repeat not to submit the arms request to the Congress at this time. We will, of course, wish to continue our traditional military assistance relationship under the terms of our 1960 agreement. In this respect it will be necessary, in communicating our negative response on the purchase of new military equipment intended for use in the Sahara, to remind the [government of Morocco] that the equipment previously acquired from us under the terms of our bilateral agreement is for use solely for the defense of territory which the U.S. recognizes as under formal Moroccan sovereignty (US diplomatic telegram, 7 March 1978).*

By 1978 it was clear to the United States that Mauritania was fighting a failing war, unable to defend against Polisario attacks in its Tiris al-Gharbia province of Western Sahara and with an increasingly weak government. In July that year, the US embassy in Nouakchott reported:

*With new Mauritanian regime in process of setting its policy for Sahara conflict, it is difficult for us to say with [certainty] how Mauritania will react towards amendment of arms accord to permit use of U.S.-supplied weapons outside Morocco's 1960 borders. Mauritanian leaders have given us clear directions that they want to end the war, new leadership also seems prepared to make concessions, notable [sic] on direct negotiations with Polisário, that previous regime would not have accepted (US diplomatic telegram, 15 July 1978).*

In July 1979 the US embassy noted the persuasive effect on Mauritania of a Polisario attack on the garrison at Tichla, a short distance inside Western Sahara. “Polisario seems to have chosen first anniversary of its ceasefire with Mauritania to underscore its dissatisfaction with Mauritanian regime’s refusal to recognize Sahraoui Republic and to withdraw from Mauritanian portion of Western Sahara” (US diplomatic telegram, 12 July 1979). On 5 August at Algiers, the Polisario Front and the government of Mauritania concluded a peace treaty; Mauritania admitting its claim to the Sahara had been wrong and committing to withdraw from the territory (Mauritano-Sahraoui agreement, 1979). Morocco then moved to occupy the southern part of Western Sahara, although the continuing attacks by Polisario Front forces revealed it had overstretched in the territory (US diplomatic telegram, 13 September 1979). These developments met with equanimity from the US, which offered no response about the long-term implications of Morocco occupying much of Western Sahara. The Carter administration was instead concerned about the stability of the Hassan regime and a need to rely on Morocco as a moderate intermediary in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In late 1979, the US reversed its position on arms sales to the kingdom, the Pentagon announcing a sale of fighter and ground attack aircraft, and helicopter gunships a few months later. (Hodges, 1983: 358) More support for Morocco began with the new Reagan administration in 1981. “A remarkable succession of high-ranking U.S. officials began calling on King Hassan.” (*Ibid.*, 359). The year revealed Morocco’s tenuous hold on Western Sahara, its garrison in the south at Guelta Zemmur overrun by Polisario forces in March and again in October when several Moroccan aircraft were shot down. With

the berm's construction started in late 1980 and Laayoune and the phosphate mine at Bou Craa enclosed behind it the following May and a year later to the coast at Boujdour, Morocco was at risk of relinquishing much of the Sahara. "While increasing arms sales to Morocco, the Carter and Reagan administration recognized that Hassan could not win an outright victory in Western Sahara in purely military terms ... The idea was to signal to Polisario and Algeria that the U.S. would not allow Morocco to be driven out of Western Sahara." (Hodges, 1983: 361).

#### 4. The stalemate of the 1980s and the 1991 Settlement Plan

After 1982 the risk of defeat for Morocco began to wane. The principal reason for what became a stalemate between the opposing forces was Morocco's extension of the berm in stages further south and inland. By 1988 the berm was a continuous fortified line 2700 kilometres long, dividing the territory diagonally. Its effectiveness as a defensive structure that Polisario forces could not breach was ensured by a heavy garrisoning of Moroccan soldiers at emplacements every six kilometres and with millions of landmines along its inland strip. America's concerns for its ally over what was manifestly now an annexation project could subside.

On the diplomatic front, efforts by the UN had also diminished after the frenetic activity of 1975. As with Timor-Leste and Namibia, Western Sahara was a matter for annual review and drafting of resolutions by the General Assembly's Fourth Committee, the Assembly's adopted resolutions becoming more anodyne with passing years. Meanwhile, in 1981 the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Assembly agreed to a resolution calling for a ceasefire and establishing an Implementation Committee to work with the UN toward Saharawi self-determination (AHG Resolution 103 (1981)). 1983 brought further impetus in the OAU, with a resolution that restated the 1981 terms including direct negotiations between the parties toward a self-determination referendum supervised by the OAU and the UN (AHG Resolution 104 (1983)). The OAU resolutions influenced discussion in the UN General Assembly. In Resolution 40/50 of 2 December 1985, the General Assembly affirmed the 1983 OAU resolution "which establishes ways and means for a just and definitive political solution to the Western Sahara conflict".<sup>18</sup> (UN General Assembly Resolution 40/50 (1985)). It was UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar who oversaw negotiations toward an agreed UN conduct of a self-determination referendum for the Saharawi people. The elements of the referendum plan culminated in a resolution of the UN Security Council in June 1990 with implementing details in an April 1991 resolution.<sup>19</sup> For its part, the US supported what had been negotiated under UN auspices and therefore at least contemplated the possibility of an independent Saharawi state. The Settlement Plan came into effect in September 1991. A referendum was to follow 35 weeks later, an unrealistic timeline given the state of occupation of Western Sahara, its geography, a large Saharawi refugee population at Tindouf, and the challenges of identifying who was entitled to vote. (However, in 1999 a referendum in Timor-Leste would be accomplished in less time.) The Settlement Plan did give the United States the advantage of ensuring the question of Western Sahara remained in the Security Council. The UN General Assembly had sometimes been an unruly horse for the US when dealing with Western Sahara. Henceforth, the creation of a UN presence in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to organize a

<sup>18</sup> The vote in the General Assembly for the resolution was 96-7-39. The US abstained from voting. For a discussion of the OAU-UN process from 1981 until 1991, see Zunes and Mundy, pp. 169-190.

<sup>19</sup> See UN Security Council Resolutions, "The Situation Concerning Western Sahara" S/21360 (18 June 1990) and S/22464 (29 April 1991).

referendum and the requirement for routine Security Council review and funding approval for such a mission would reduce the General Assembly to a passive role, one that has been largely confined to making unobjectionable annual resolutions for self-determination.

## 5. America's neutrality: The Baker Plans and 2004 impasse

After 1991 the United States assumed a more neutral posture toward Western Sahara. There were other pressing foreign policy matters in the aftermath of the Cold War and UN administration of voter identification in the Sahara was a slow process. Indeed, 1992 brought no UN Security Council resolution touching on the conflict or the Settlement Plan. However, the Security Council's resolutions from 1993 through 1997 reflect growing impatience over the slow pace of voter identification and acceptance by the parties. A 1995 resolution exhorted Morocco to overcome the delay in its vetting of would-be registrants. (UN Security Council Resolution 1017 (1995)). The United States supported the resolution.<sup>20</sup> In early 1997 the UN Secretary-General appointed former US Secretary of State James A. Baker III as special envoy for Western Sahara. The choice of Baker was logical. An American attempt to arrange direct talks between Morocco and the Polisario Front in 1996 had been unsuccessful (Zunes and Mundy, 2010: 205). "In many ways, [Baker's appointment] was better than direct State Department mediation because U.S. influence was being exercised through an independent agent of the UN secretary-general rather than directly by Washington." (*Ibid.*, 207) In the seven years of Baker's involvement, no US foreign policy position on Western Sahara appears to have been directly pursued through his efforts. However, it is clear that the US wished for resolution and supported the principle of self-determination, especially in a second 2003 proposal negotiated by Baker later rejected by Morocco. "When he had taken the position in 1997, he had brought with him the explicit backing of the U.S. government." (*Ibid.*, 238).

In 2004 American neutrality was seemingly confirmed by a declaration that the recently negotiated Morocco-US free trade agreement did not extend to Western Sahara's territory. This was short-lived, however. The perceived exigencies of the American war on terror tended to promote alignment with Morocco:

*Several months after Baker's resignation, on November 19, 2004, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage told Aljazeera ... that the United States supported what he called 'the territorial integrity of Morocco,' with respect to Western Sahara. Although this description was not yet the administration's explicit policy, Armitage has articulated the essence of U.S. policy since 1975." (Zunes and Mundy, 2010: 239).*

The United States continued to exercise quiet diplomacy in the aftermath of Baker's resignation. There was concern about statements from Polisario officials that a resumption of hostilities was possible. The US "had made known to the [government of Algeria] and the Polisario that Polisario threats and renewed armed struggle were unacceptable and counterproductive."<sup>21</sup> (US diplomatic telegram, 15 June 2005) At this point, the US considered UN-led diplomatic efforts to hold limited promise: "Absent signs of flexibility from Algeria and Morocco, the naming of a Personal Envoy would lead to an impasse over the Envoy's mandate, thus setting back rapprochement efforts." (*Ibid.*) As 2005 drew on, the US position evolved to asking Morocco to offer a form of autonomy plan further to what the kingdom rejected from James Baker in 2004:

<sup>20</sup> On such delays, see Zunes and Mundy, 191-218.

<sup>21</sup> In 2005 the US confirmed to Algerian officials that the US government had "no intention at this time of designating the Polisario as a terrorist organization." US diplomatic telegram, 24 July 2005.

*We believe that a central message from [new UN envoy Peter] Van Walsum to the Moroccans, as he takes up his mandate, is to press the [government of Morocco] for an expansion of their previous concept of autonomy ... Since there appears to be substantial consensus within the [US government] and elsewhere that autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty is the best political solution to the Western Sahara conflict, the international community needs to force Morocco's hand to produce a credible plan that can serve as the basis for negotiations.*<sup>22</sup> (US diplomatic telegram, 23 September 2005).

On 11 April 2007 Morocco delivered its autonomy plan to the UN. It was hailed by the State Department's under-secretary for political affairs Nicolas Burns as "a serious and credible proposal to provide real autonomy for the Western Sahara". (*Agence France Press*, April 11, 2007) However, the US had been involved in at least the final stages of drafting the plan: "King Mohamed VI had agreed to the word changes proposed by U/S Burns, and [Morocco's UN] Ambassador Sahel had presented the revised Moroccan proposal to SYG Ban this morning." (US diplomatic telegram, 11 April 2007)<sup>23</sup>. In a meeting the same day the US ambassador to the UN committed to Morocco's foreign minister that the US "would draw the conclusion that Morocco's plan was the best solution" if, in two months', time the Polisario Front refused to be "constructive". (*Ibid.*) In later discussions with the US ambassador to Algeria, the Saharawi ambassador to Algeria, Mohamed Beissat observed that an American mediator in the wake of the April proposals "was now out of the question given the U.S. alignment with Moroccan views." (US diplomatic telegram, 8 May 2007). Over the following 18 months until the Obama administration came into office and the UN appointed a new envoy for Western Sahara there would be little engagement by the US.<sup>24</sup>

## 6. America at the margin? Autonomy and obduracy since 2007

Since 2009 America's involvement with Western Sahara has been, until recently, at its lowest ebb since 1975. During these years US diplomacy offered no initiatives to the parties or to the Group of Friends, including Algeria, Mauritania and Spain. The matter of Western Sahara was for oversight by the UN Secretariat, *i.e.* the Secretary-General along with routine annual decisions by the Security Council to renew MINURSO.

Three things explain American passivity in the years after the parties' proposals of 2007. A first is that the US enjoyed good relations with Algeria and Morocco as principals to any negotiation that would take place, followed at some distance by Spain, that country's successive governments after 2009 declining meaningful participation. The US remained in occasional contact with Saharawi officials in Algiers or through the Algerian ministry of foreign affairs, in preference to Polisario Front contacts at the UN in New York and Washington.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the US did not need to work beyond the parties or pursue fresh initiatives given what then appeared to be the available ground of negotiation.

<sup>22</sup> Zunes and Mundy observe a split in the US approach following the Baker era, between UN ambassador John Bolton and Elliot Abrams of the National Security Council, with the pro-Moroccan Abrams prevailing by early 2007. (Zunes and Mundy, 242-243) An extensive discussion of Ambassador Bolton's views can be found in US diplomatic telegram of 18 May 2006.

<sup>23</sup> The US ambassador to the UN noted to Ambassador Sahel of Morocco that the Polisario Front's submission of a proposal on 10 April could complicate matters in the UN Secretariat. "Morocco could count on US support, and we would work very closely with the French in following up immediately with the [Secretary-General]." *Ibid.*, paragraph 13.

<sup>24</sup> US diplomacy during these months was directed to getting the parties to negotiate directly, including under the oversight of UN envoy Peter Van Walsum. The US pushed for the Polisario Front to negotiate on the basis of Morocco's autonomy plan. See *e.g.* US diplomatic telegram, US embassy Algiers to US Secretary of State, 23 October 2007.

<sup>25</sup> The records of such latter contacts in leaked US diplomatic cables published by Wikileaks for the period 2003-2010 is strikingly minimal. The State Department appears to have made no sustained effort to exert influence on Saharawi officials in the US or other than through the government of Algeria.



A second factor that reinforced American passivity was the appointment of Christopher Ross as UN envoy. His term, as with James Baker, until he resigned in 2018 would be unsuccessful. However, the aftermath of Morocco's 2007 proposal combined with a Saharawi insistence that the second Baker Plan must apply, meant the choice of Ross was appropriate. A former US ambassador to Algeria, he came with extensive knowledge of the region and was trusted by Algeria and the Polisario Front's leadership. He would also have substantial backing from UN Secretary-General Ban-ki Moon. Well regarded by the US State Department, Ross was a reliable figure whose presence allowed the US to step back from an active role. Moreover, his initial efforts to bring the parties together met with positive support. This took the form of limited scale talks on specific matters toward a working relationship or as a basis for more difficult discussions. A gathering of each party's officials in Geneva in November 2010 was typical. With a respected mediator brought along by Ross, the meeting addressed what could be done in the short term to govern natural resource development in Western Sahara.

A third aspect of America's reduced direct interest resulted from the parties themselves, because of their limited engagement of each others' positions, including the 1991 Settlement Plan, the Baker Plans, and the 2007 proposals. No initiatives were proposed by other parties and the Security Council exerted no fresh compulsion on Morocco and the Polisario Front. In these years after 2009, it became apparent that the field of negotiation no longer included the earlier plans but was about the extent to which Morocco's 2007 autonomy proposal was tolerable. This was a dynamic that could not be altered even by pronounced American influence. In a December 2009 meeting with the US ambassador to South Africa, a senior government official called for a resumption of America's engagement: "The U.S. had been engaged some years ago, *inter alia* through the Baker Plan, but since 9/11 had been diverted by its desire to work with Morocco on antiterrorism issues, he said. In the Obama administration there had been no apparent movement toward a re-involvement with the Western Sahara." (US diplomatic telegram, 7 December 2009).

A fourth factor can be noted. It was the exercise of American diplomacy in the UN Security Council. After 2009 the question of Western Sahara would come to the Security Council only annually. Not until 2018 would the Council renew MINURSO's term for less than a year. Except for Morocco's expulsion from Western Sahara of the civilian contingent of MINURSO after a 2016 visit of Secretary-General Moon to the Tindouf camps and the Saharawi held part of Western Sahara, the Security Council's only controversial matter was the proposed addition of a human rights monitoring mandate to MINURSO. By 2017 this, too, had faded from the agenda, the permanent members of the Security Council unable to agree on such a role. The US had greater issues to negotiate in the Security Council and therefore an additional effort concerning Western Sahara could have been counterproductive. This said, there is no evidence of a connection between Western Sahara and other American priorities in the Security Council. Indeed, the occasional reliance of the US on Morocco as an ally in Arab-Israeli matters and the war on terror declined after 2009.<sup>26</sup>

America's connections with Morocco continued without substantial change in other matters, including for military and counterterrorism exchanges, and the import to Louisiana by a Canadian-owned company of phosphate mineral rock exported from

<sup>26</sup> Morocco, as with Algeria, would continue to be important US contact states to address security in the Sahel, the concern revealed in the years of UN involvement in Mali, being that of al-Qaeda in the Maghreb, AQIM.

occupied Western Sahara.<sup>27</sup> In addition, US diplomacy about Western Sahara has yet to be directed to the African Union after that organization became increasingly outspoken for Saharawi self-determination in 2015. And there has been no US reaction to cases in the European Court of Justice (the CJEU) concerning Western Sahara, noted above, all arriving at the same result as did the ICJ in its 1975 advisory opinion, that “Western Sahara is not part of Morocco.” (Western Sahara Campaign United Kingdom case, 2018, paragraph 64)<sup>28</sup>.

In 2018 what might be called a change of officials took place, which a year later had yet to result in discernable change. A new UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, came to office with considerable experience in the decolonization and independence of Timor-Leste. In turn, he appointed former German President Horst Köhler as UN envoy for Western Sahara. Meanwhile, the Trump administration appointed former US ambassador to the UN John Bolton as National Security Advisor. As he did in 2005-06, Bolton declared that MINURSO and thereby the UN's involvement with Western Sahara should produce results or be ended (Zunes and Mundy, 2010: 243). This sentiment may explain why the Security Council renewed MINURSO's term for six months in April 2018 and again the following October.<sup>29</sup> (UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2440 (2018)) These developments have been sufficient to give the post-2007 negotiating process a modest renewed momentum. That, in turn, has momentarily satisfied American demands for progress.

Any assessment of America's continuing involvement in the question of Western Sahara must take into account US concerns in the wider Middle East and North Africa. Things remain uncertain in the wake of the Arab Spring and continuing disorder of the Syrian civil war, as well as the rise and progressive defeat of *Daesh* (ISIS) in the region. For America, Western Sahara continues to have a subordinate place. It can also be claimed that US diplomacy is in retreat, the present administration in Washington no longer holding high the banner of exceptionalism. Equally, however, it is hardly a moment for Morocco to prevail on its American ally. The kingdom's would-be autonomy plan has languished for more than a decade and, while security in the Maghreb region will continue as a leading point of connection, no new developments are on the horizon sufficient to influence renewed American interest on the Western Sahara-related dimensions of security concerns. Meanwhile, much is occurring in the European Union's relationship with Morocco (and, it should be added, Algeria) where the issue of Western Sahara has confounded matters for most of the 2010s. The US can be reliably predicted to not engage Western Sahara through Brussels. However, it is premature to suggest that America's present role will continue as disinterest or faded concern. The hegemon has not yet left the stage.

<sup>27</sup> The import trade appeared at time of publication to have ended, following the SADR's lawsuits against shipments transiting through Panama (to Canada) and South Africa (to New Zealand) in 2017.

<sup>28</sup> The result in the CJEU was identical to that in 2016 and 2018 decisions in the first cases brought by the Frente Polisario cases. The Polisario Front has since pursued, and received a first instance judgment of the Court, in a case to challenge application of the EU-Morocco aviation services agreement to the territory of Western Sahara.

<sup>29</sup> See October 2018 UN Security Council Report.

## Bibliographic references

### Books

- Damis, J. (1983), *Conflict in Northwest Africa: The Western Sahara Dispute*, Stanford, California: The Hoover Institution.
- Hodges, T. (1983), *Western Sahara: The roots of a desert war*, Westport, Connecticut: Lawrence Hill.
- Shelley, T. (2004), *Endgame in the Western Sahara: What Future for Africa's Last Colony?*, New York: Zed Books.
- Soroeta Licerias, J. (2014), *International Law and the Western Sahara Conflict*, Oisterwijk, The Netherlands: Wolf Legal Publishers.
- Zunes, S. and Mundy, J. (2010), *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism, and Conflict Irresolution*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

### Treaties

- Declaration of Principles (Tripartite (Madrid) Accords (Mauritania/Spain/Morocco)) (14 November 1975), 14 ILM 1512; *Revue Générale de Droit International Public* 80 (1976); 380 (1975 Madrid Accords).
- Mauritano-Sahraoui agreement (in force 10 August 1979), annex to Letter from the Permanent Representative of Mauritania to the UN addressed to the Secretary General dated 18 August 1979 (the 1979 Mauritano-Sahraoui agreement).

### United Nations documents

#### *UN General Assembly*

- 1514 (XV), Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, 14 December 1960.
- 2072 (XX), Question of Ifni and Spanish Sahara, 16 December 1965.
- 2229 (XXI), Question of Ifni and Spanish Sahara, 20 December 1966.
- 3162 (XXVIII), Question of Spanish Sahara, 14 December 1973.
- 3314 (XXIX), Annex, "Definition of Aggression", 14 December 1974.
- 3292 (XXIX), Question of Spanish Sahara, 13 December 1974.
- 40/50, Question of Western Sahara, 2 December 1985.

#### *UN Security Council*

- 377 (1975), The situation concerning Western Sahara, 22 October 1975.
- 379 (1975), The situation concerning Western Sahara, 2 November 1975.
- 380 (1975), The situation concerning Western Sahara, 6 November 1975.
- 21360 (1990), The situation concerning Western Sahara, 18 June 1990.
- 22464 (1991), The situation concerning Western Sahara, 29 April 1991.
- 1017 (1995), The situation concerning Western Sahara, 22 October 1995.
- 2440 (2018), The situation concerning Western Sahara, 31 October 2018.
- S/2018/889 (2018), The Situation concerning Western Sahara, report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council, UN doc. S/2018/889, 3 October 2018.

### Organization of African Unity resolutions

OAU (1981), Resolution on Western Sahara adopted at the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly of Heads of State and Government, 24-27 June 1981 (AHG Resolution 103).

OAU (1983), Peace Plan on Western Sahara, adopted at the 19<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Organization of African Unity, 6-12 June 1983 (AHG Resolution 104).

### International Court of Justice and European Court of Justice decisions

Western Sahara – Advisory Opinion (1975), ICJ Reports, p. 12.

Western Sahara – Campaign UK (2018), Western Sahara Campaign United Kingdom v. Commissioners for Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs UK (Request for a preliminary ruling under Article 267 TFEU from the high Court of Justice), Judgment of the Grand Chamber in Case C-266/16, 2018 CJEU 118 (27 February 2018).

### United States government diplomatic telegrams

United States diplomatic telegrams, as found at: <<https://search.wikileaks.org>>.

US embassy Nouakchott to US State Department (31 May 1974), Canonical ID: 1975NOUAKC01074\_b (declassified 5 July 2006) (accessed 29 January 2019).

\_\_\_\_\_ (6 August 1975), Canonical ID: 1975NOUAKC01593\_b (declassified 6 July 2006) (accessed 29 January 2019).

\_\_\_\_\_ (23 October 1975), Canonical ID: 1975NOUAKC021794\_b (declassified 6 July 2006) (accessed 29 January 2019).

US mission at the UN (New York) to US State Department (23 October 1975), Canonical ID: 1975USUNN05266\_b (declassified 5 July 2006) (accessed 29 January 2019).

US State Department to US embassy Rabat (2 November 1975), Canonical ID: 1975STATE259602\_b (declassified 6 July 2006) (accessed 2 February 2019).

US embassy Rabat to US State Department (1 October 1975), Canonical ID: 1975NOUAKC04714\_b (declassified 6 July 2006) (accessed 29 January 2019).

\_\_\_\_\_ (5 November 1975), Canonical ID: 1975RABAT05369\_b (declassified 6 July 2006) (accessed 2 February 2019).

\_\_\_\_\_ (24 November 1975), Canonical ID: 1975RABAT278207\_b (declassified 5 July 2006) (accessed 2 February 2019).

US UN mission to US State Department (16 December 1975), Canonical ID: 1975USUNN06853\_b (declassified 6 July 2006) (accessed 2 February 2019).

US embassy Moscow to US State Department (4 November 1975), Canonical ID: 1975MOSCOW15900\_b (declassified 6 July 2006) (accessed 2 February 2019).

US embassy Dakar to US State Department (3 January 1976), Canonical ID: 1976DAKAR00029\_b (declassified 4 May 2006) (accessed 2 February 2019).

US embassy Algiers to US State Department (13 January 1976), Canonical ID: 1976ALGIER00064\_b (declassified 4 May 2006) (accessed 29 January 2019).

US embassy Madrid to US State Department (27 February 1976), Canonical ID: 1976MADRID501546\_b (declassified 4 May 2006) (accessed 2 February 2019).

US State Department to US embassy Rabat (24 April 1976), Canonical ID: 1976STATE100364\_b (declassified 4 May 2006) (accessed 29 January 2019).

US State Department to US embassy Madrid (5 October 1977), Canonical ID: 1977STATE239391\_c (declassified 22 May 2009) (accessed 3 February 2019).

US embassy Nouakchott to US State Department (15 July 1978), Canonical ID: 1978NOUAKC01967\_d (declassified 20 March 2014) (accessed 3 February 2019).

\_\_\_\_\_ (12 July 1979), Canonical ID: 1979NOUAKC02508\_e (declassified 20 March 2014 2006) (accessed 3 February 2019).

\_\_\_\_\_ (13 September 1979), Canonical ID: 19795OUAKC03357\_e (declassified 20 March 2014) (accessed 3 February 2019).

US embassy Algiers (15 June 2005), Canonical ID: 05ALGIERS1211\_a (accessed 4 February 2019).

\_\_\_\_\_ (24 July 2005), Canonical ID: 05ALGIERS1542\_a (accessed 4 February 2019).

US embassy Rabat (23 September 2005), Canonical ID: 05RABAT2008\_a (accessed 4 February 2019).

US UN mission New York (18 May 2006), Canonical ID: 06USUNNEWYORK1018\_a (accessed 4 February 2019).

US UN mission New York to US Secretary of State (11 April 2007), Canonical ID: 07USUNNEWYORK283\_a (accessed 4 February 2019).

US embassy Algiers to US State Department (8 May 2007), Canonical ID: 07ALGIERS637\_a (accessed 4 February 2019).

\_\_\_\_\_ (8 May 2007), Canonical ID: 07ALGIERS637\_a (accessed 4 February 2019).

US embassy Algiers to US Secretary of State (23 October 2007), Canonical ID: 07ALGIERS1550\_a (accessed 5 February 2019).

US embassy Pretoria to US State Department (7 December 2009), Canonical ID: 09PRETORIA2507\_a (accessed 5 February 2019).

## Press report

*Agence France Press*, April 11, 2007.



**Ilustração 01** – Assinatura do acordo de Paz entre a Frente Polisário e a Mauritânia (Argel, 05-09-1979).

Fonte: Arquivo RASD



# The United States and the question of Western Sahara: A low priority in US Foreign Policy

Yahia H. Zoubir\*

pp. 55-64

## Introduction

Although falling in the category of intractable conflicts (Kriesberg, 1993) or a 'frozen conflict', Western Sahara remains a potentially explosive regional dispute that continues to elicit little attention largely because its uncompleted decolonization is marginal to the priorities of the three main outside actors, Spain, France and the United States, which have hindered its resolution for separate reasons. Although this article is about US policy (or policies) toward Western Sahara, it is important to point out that France holds the solution should it not threaten to veto, as it did in 2003, every decision at the UN Security Council that is not favorable to Morocco; to put it bluntly, France has too many interests in Morocco and seeks also to prevent Algeria, the Sahrawis' main supporter in the region, from weakening the pro-Western monarchy (Zoubir, 2018; Vermeren, 2015). Since the inception of the conflict in 1975, Morocco has relied on France to protect the monarchy's interests and its illegal occupation of Western Sahara. But the United States has also played an instrumental role in Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara. France and the United States have deliberately hindered the decolonization of this non-autonomous territory owing to their special ties with the Kingdom of Morocco. Given that the conflict took place during the Cold War, the Western camp disregarded the conflict as a decolonization issue or as a rightful nationalist struggle for the Sahrawis' legitimate right to self-determination as inscribed in International Law and UN Resolutions on Western Sahara to this day. Although the former Soviet Union did not support the Polisario Front (Zoubir, 1987), the Western Bloc incorporated Western Sahara into the anti-Western camp. Morocco, in many ways, received Western Sahara as a prize for services rendered to the United States, which, as declassified official US documents have shown gave it the green light to invade the territory (Mundy, 2006). Morocco served Western interests as a proxy in fighting communist/socialist and nationalist forces in various African countries. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Western powers justified support for Morocco under the pretext that Morocco was an important actor in the fight against terrorism and illegal migration to Europe. Spain, the *de jure* administrative power responsible for the territory and its decolonization has forfeited that obligation for reasons of realism (economic and political interests with Morocco).

---

\* Kedge Business School, France.

## The Question of Western Sahara

Before dealing with US policy in Western Sahara, it is important to provide a few important facts which will explain why, despite Western continuing support for Morocco's illegal occupation of the territory, and despite the frozen nature of the conflict, the question still affects regional relations (Algeria-Morocco), international relations (US-Maghreb, France-Maghreb, Spain-Maghreb, United Nations, UN Fourth Commission on Decolonization) and African affairs (African Union, African countries relations with Morocco and with Algeria). In this sense, though frozen, this conflict has not faded away as some protagonists would like it to. The Sahrawi people continue living in exile or under Morocco's occupation in their own land. Tens of thousands live in refugee camps in southwestern Algeria, which has hosted them since Morocco's invasion in 1975, under difficult conditions (scorching temperatures, floods, limited food... ). Despite UN promises to hold a referendum on self-determination for the Sahrawi people, it has failed so far to deliver that promise. The UN has been unable to implement its own settlement plan agreed to by Moroccans and Sahrawis in 1990; the MINURSO (the mission that the UN set to supervise the referendum) has been ineffective and is virtually under Moroccan control. The efforts of UN Secretary-Generals' successive Personal Envoys<sup>1</sup> have been ineffective in brokering a peace deal to unblock the stalemate, which has persisted since the ceasefire in 1991. The stalemate in Western Sahara is not due to disagreement on the number of eligible voters or other technical issues regarding the organization of the referendum; clearly, geopolitical interests account for the irresolution of the conflict (Zunes & Mundy, 2010). In other words, despite the illegality of the occupation and the legitimacy of Sahrawi rights, geopolitical considerations—power politics—have trumped international legality. Because of the geopolitical games, the illegality of the occupation, the violation of Sahrawi rights, and the incapacity of the UN to hold the referendum, have all been put on the backburner.

The International Court of Justice in its November 1975 Advisory Opinion rejected Morocco's claims over the inalienable nature of its 'historical sovereignty' over Western Sahara (International Court of Justice, 1979), a ruling confirmed by the European Court of Justice on 21 December 2016 (Wathelet, 2016). Subsequently, the UN, no matter the occasional subtle alterations, has consistently endorsed the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination, the exercise of which is considered the sole basis for this matter of decolonization to be resolved. In principle, a free and fair referendum that includes the option of full independence is the only instrument through which that right can be exercised; therefore, Western Sahara has remained on the UN's list of Non-Self-Governing Territories (United Nations, 2018). Decolonization of the former Spanish colony was an indisputable objective.

Probably the major impediment to the decolonization of Western Sahara in the 1970s, notwithstanding international legality and UN resolutions, or the regional nature of the conflict, was its emergence at the peak of the Cold War, a time when Algeria was perceived as a Soviet friend, while Morocco was decidedly anchored in the Western camp. The war lasted from 1976 until the 1988 UN-brokered settlement plan and the 1991 ceasefire that Morocco and Polisario agreed to. Throughout that period (1975-1991), Morocco consolidated its colonization of the territory and built sand walls around the areas under its control. The optimism the UN peace plan and the ceasefire generated was short-lived because the referendum scheduled for January 1992 never took place, Morocco having contested the electoral lists of voters and sought to impose new ones to

<sup>1</sup> The current Personal Envoy is former President Horst Köhler, appointed in August 2017.

delay the identification process. The Algerian crisis, which lasted from 1991 to 2000, made it possible for Morocco to get further support from its Western allies, fearful that the wave of Islamist extremism in Algeria would spill over into the kingdom. This explains why both the US and France, with the complicity of successive UN Secretary-Generals (Zoubir & Pazzanita, 1995), supported Morocco's determination not to allow the holding of a free referendum which they knew Sahrawis would win. From 1992 to 1997, the situation remained stalemated despite UN Secretary-General (UNSG) Kofi Annan's appointment in March 1997 of former US Secretary of State James A. Baker as Special Envoy for Western Sahara. Henceforth, Morocco and Polisario held several rounds of negotiations; the last and most important was held in Houston in September 1997 and resulted in an agreement on several significant issues. However, the long-awaited referendum set for December 1998 was chimera, for, despite the completion of the identification process, Morocco used further tactics and demanded that MINURSO include additional voters, a demand that forced the UN to postpone the referendum time and again.

By 2000, it had become increasingly clear that UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, under the pretext that the referendum could not take place before 2002, and with the support of France and the United States, began looking for an alternative to the Settlement Plan, the so called 'third way,' through 'the Draft Framework Agreement,' which left no doubt that it was merely an attempt to circumvent the referendum on self-determination. Soon, the idea of doing away with the option of independence gained favor with the United States and France.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the second proposal was submitted by Baker in 2003, which, though still favorable to Morocco, was accepted by Algeria and Polisario. Morocco rejected the plan not only because it included independence as an option, but also due to fears that regardless of the numerical superiority of Moroccan settlers, Morocco might lose as the settlers might choose independence and live in a republic than under a monarchical system. Moroccan authorities also feared that even some regions in Morocco would also call for independence, although, unlike Western Sahara, they are an integral part of the Kingdom (Zoubir & Darbouche, 2008). Morocco's refusal to endorse the proposal resulted in Baker's resignation and yet another period of deadlock and more despair for the more than 160,000 Sahrawis who live in excruciating conditions in the refugee camps near Tindouf, in southwest Algeria. The impasse also resulted in cyclical uprisings in occupied Western Sahara, where Moroccan authorities used harsh measures to repress peaceful demonstrations (Wilson, 2016).

Under nudging from the United States and support from France, and more subtly from Spain, Morocco submitted to UNSG Ban Ki-Moon on 11 April 2007 an autonomy plan which was neither 'fresh' nor 'historic' as its architects claimed. The plan, whose publicity has rather dwindled in the last few years, remains a mere resuscitation of failed past attempts<sup>3</sup> to impose autonomy to legalize the occupation (Miguel, 2008). While, under UN auspices, a number of rounds of negotiations between Polisario leaders and Moroccan officials have taken place, they failed to produce any breakthrough: Moroccans have refused to negotiate anything other than their autonomy plan, or rather the plan of legal annexation of the territory, while Sahrawis seek to abide by international legality and negotiate the terms of a referendum on self-determination, which includes the option of independence.

2 A senior State Department official told the author in May 2000 in Washington, DC that, 'We knew that Hassan II was not serious about giving Sahrawis any kind of autonomy. However, we believe that this new king [Mohamed VI] is more pragmatic and is likely to make that option possible. The official, though, insisted that 'we don't wish to impose a solution; we just want to explore an alternative that may break the deadlock' (Zoubir Interview, 2000).

3 According to officials interviewed in the 1980s, in 1984 King Hassan II contemplated the German federal model. He also suggested a large autonomy; he declared: 'leave me the stamp and the flag and everything else is negotiable'. When Algerians worked on a proposal, he rejected it. See also Balta, 1990.

When in one of the rounds Polisario officials asked the king's representatives to discuss the content of the proposed autonomy, Moroccans replied that there was nothing to be discussed,<sup>4</sup> thus confirming that the autonomy plan is merely a stratagem to get the Sahrawis to recognize Morocco's sovereignty over the occupied territory.

While the US, at least until quite recently, and France no doubt prefer the autonomy option and have declared so publicly, they have not been able to impose it because of geopolitical constraints, Algeria being an important regional player, but also because they are reluctant to blatantly dispose of some foundations of international law and international relations—the response to Russia's incursion into Georgia in August 2008 is a case in point. Furthermore, regardless of strong US and French support, no country, including these two powers, recognizes the Kingdom's sovereignty over Western Sahara. The self-proclaimed Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) enjoys great support among powerful African states, such as South Africa and Nigeria. It became a member of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1984 and was a founding member in 2002 of the African Union (AU), which succeeded the OAU. Morocco, which had withdrawn from the OAU in 1984, following the SADR's membership admission, joined the AU in 2017.

### Evolution of US Policy toward the Conflict

In view of the way the United States came into existence, in principle, Washington supports the right to self-determination as guaranteed in the UN Charter, and all subsequent UN Resolutions regarding the right to self-determination of the Sahrawi people. But, like France or Spain, political, military and economic interests have determined US position: steadfast support to the Moroccan monarchy, a reliable ally in the Arab world. Like France, the United States has since the inception of the conflict not only sided with Morocco, but, as seen earlier, it was also instrumental in Morocco's colonization of the territory. Although the Sahrawis never sought or received support from the Soviet Union during the Cold War, the United States was concerned that the Soviets would influence the nationalist movement, especially at a time when the USSR was expanding its influence in sub-Saharan Africa (Zoubir, 2009a). Although the conflict was regional in nature and was not related to the East-West confrontation, Washington feared the emergence of a pro-Soviet state. Henry Kissinger had stated clearly that the United States refuses to have another Angola on the Atlantic side of Africa. Subsequently, the United States played a major role in reversing the war over Western Sahara in Morocco's favor through large-scale economic and military aid, military advisors and logistical assistance. During the Cold War, American preoccupation with the survival of the pro-Western monarchy — as guarantor of the United States and Western presence in the area — overrode other regional concerns (Zoubir, 2009b). This, in fact, was acknowledged in August 2004 by James Baker, who stated that US support for Morocco was justified because “in the days of the Cold War [...] the Polisario Front was aligned with Cuba and Libya and some other enemies of the United States, and Morocco was very close to the United States” (Husain, 2004). Besides, Morocco played the role of proxy in Africa on behalf of the West in fighting nationalist forces that received backing from the Soviet Union. Support for Morocco in the US Congress was, and remains, significant, not least because the Kingdom of Morocco is one of the few Arab countries that are friendly to Israel. The Global War on Terror (GWOT) since the attacks of September 11, 2001, has also strengthened Morocco's standing in US policy despite the remarkable improvement in US-Algerian ties. Indeed, since 2001,

4 Interview with Polisario officials who participated in the Manhasset Round.

Algeria has become a key participant in the GWOT in the Maghreb-Sahel region and has developed excellent military, security, political and economic ties with the United States, which now perceives Algeria as a strategic partner in the region (Zoubir, 2009a). In July 2008, for instance, President George W. Bush declared that 'Algeria is a true ally in the war on terrorism and has great potential. The United States of America considers Algeria a key partner today and in the future.' These relationships are expected to increase, given the important role that Algeria presently plays in the Sahel (Zoubir, 2018), and that of its army in fighting the trafficking of arms and the infiltration of fundamentalist groups across its borders. Economic relations were also promising. A key to the interpretation of the renewed economic potential of the North African country could be represented by the visit of John Kerry in Algiers on 2-3 April 2014.

While good relations with Algeria resulted in Washington pursuing a relatively more balanced policy toward the conflict, its attachment to Morocco remained unwavering. In the area of economics, Morocco and the United States established a Free Trade Area in 2004 (entered effect in January 2006), and that year Morocco became a major non-NATO ally of the United States. Unsurprisingly, the consequence of such relations is that the United States seeks a political solution that is 'acceptable' to all parties, although this notion of acceptability to all parties is at the heart of the impasse since the protagonists can reject any decision that they deem objectionable. Under the Bush Administration, Morocco urged the United States to impose a solution—one favorable to Morocco—but, in view of its relations with Algeria and other interests, Washington declined such request. However, it also made clear that it would not invoke Chapter VII of the UN Charter to impose a solution to Morocco, as it almost did in 2003 with the Baker Plan II, when dealing with Western Sahara. Because of the close friendship with Morocco, coupled with the need to keep Morocco in the antiterrorist coalition, the United States alleviated Morocco's fears by constantly using language that did not compel the Palace to comply with UN resolutions. For instance, in a letter to King Mohamed VI, George W. Bush had declared that the United States 'understand[s] the sensibility of the Moroccan people on the question of Western Sahara and would not try to impose a solution to this conflict.' This also meant that the United States would not undertake any action that would alienate Algerians either which probably explains why the United States has not included Western Sahara in the free-trade agreement with Morocco. Following Baker's resignation in June 2004, though, the United States seemed to move closer to France's position that Morocco and Algeria should work for rapprochement as a way to create an atmosphere conducive to settlement of the conflict—a view Algerian officials resent because they insist that the conflict is a question of international legality and that the conflict opposes Sahrawis and Moroccans only, Algeria being a mere observer. At the same time, aware that other parties do not always trust Morocco's sincerity in changing its position on this issue, the United States continued pushing for a political solution, repeatedly asking that Morocco make a serious proposal to help solve the conflict. Gordon Gray, deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, declared that, with respect to Western Sahara, the United States continues to seek an acceptable political solution, within the United Nations framework, and has no desire whatsoever to impose a solution [...] The Moroccan government has recently expressed its willingness to write up an autonomy plan for Western Sahara; the United States encouraged Morocco to present a credible proposal so that all parties can analyze it (González de Castejón, 2006). When finally Morocco proposed the autonomy plan in April 2007, the US State Department gave it full support, describing it as 'a serious and credible proposal to provide real autonomy for the Western Sahara'. The United States also encouraged direct negotiations between the two protagonists without preconditions. It is no secret that the



United States was involved in the drafting of the autonomy plan. Indeed, Assistant Secretary of State David C. Welch himself asserted during a hearing in Congress that he had ‘worked with them [Moroccans] on it [autonomy plan]’ (Welch, 2007). While he asserted that the Moroccan proposal ‘represents some serious efforts,’ he downplayed the Sahrawi proposal, stating that it ‘does not seem, in our judgment, to contain new ideas by comparison’. The paradox is that, while Welch rejected the Sahrawi plan because it reiterates the right to self-determination and remains attached to the Settlement Plan, he also says that ‘any settlement of the Western Sahara must also take into account the concerns of the Sahrawi people and be consistent with their right of self-determination’. This is precisely the same contradiction in which the United Nations has found itself. The subterfuge in Welch’s statement, however, is in the fact that this right would be the prerogative not of the United Nations but of Morocco, which ‘has said its proposal would be subject to a vote by the Sahrawi people’. This is implicit recognition of Morocco’s sovereignty over the disputed territory. The deputy permanent representative of the United States, Jackie Wolcott Sanders, confirmed the United States *parti pris* for Morocco’s ‘initiative’ when she declared, following the first round of direct talks, ‘We believe a promising and realistic way forward on the Western Sahara is meaningful autonomy. Morocco’s initiative could provide a realistic framework to begin negotiations on a plan that would provide for real autonomy contingent on the approval of the local population’ (US Department of State, 2007). Of course, such statements are silent as to what would have happened, assuming such consultation had taken place, in the eventuality Sahrawis voted against the autonomy plan. Following the second round of negotiations between Moroccans and Sahrawi nationalists, the State Department reiterated, ‘We believe that meaningful autonomy is a promising and realistic way forward and that the Moroccan initiative could provide a realistic framework for negotiations’. This, in fact, is also the argument that Moroccans sought to impose upon Sahrawis. Indeed, during the talks, Moroccans declared that Sahrawis should accept the kingdom’s ‘autonomy initiative’ because it enjoys the support of the United States and France. This, again, is clearly in contradiction with UN Resolution 1754, which urges the parties to engage in talks without preconditions. The US dilemma is one it has faced since the inception of the conflict: how to reconcile international law with geopolitical interests. While during the Cold War the United States fully backed Morocco because it served as a bulwark against Communism, in the post-9/11 era, it serves as an ally in the Global War on Terror. US officials that the author has interviewed on several occasions assert that “right is on the side of the Sahrawis but realism dictates that we support Morocco.”

For reasons that have yet to be elucidated, the United States stated openly for several years after 2007 that the autonomy proposal is the only viable option, indicating that this is the only solution to the conflict, regardless as to whether this is in violation of international legality. The statement of the Department of State (2008) was unequivocal: ‘An independent Sahrawi state is not a realistic option. In our view, some form of autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty is the only realistic way forward to resolve this longstanding conflict’. True, this judgment was based on the opinion of the UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy Peter Van Walsum following the failure of the fourth round of negotiations in Manhasset, New York (Walsum, 2008). Nevertheless, it was a clear departure from traditional US position, thus leaving no doubt as to its partiality. While US officials declared that ‘neither side was willing to discuss the other’s proposals, leading to an impasse that does not serve the people of the Western Sahara in any way,’ they blatantly favored Morocco’s proposal. Undoubtedly, the weight of Deputy National Security Adviser for Global Democracy Strategy, neo-conservative Elliot Abrams, well-known for his pro-Moroccan views, influenced US policy on this issue. As Clayton E. Swisher (2008), director of programs at the Middle East Institute

in Washington, D.C., observed correctly, Elliot Abrams 'is on the verge of achieving a major US policy shift that would have Washington backing Morocco's unilateral imposition of its so-called Western Sahara Initiative, or autonomy plan upon the indigenous Sahrawi people of Western Sahara' (Swisher, 2007). Indeed, the United States was setting an extremely dangerous precedent: recognizing, albeit implicitly, Morocco's sovereignty amounts to condoning the illegal acquisition of territory by military force. The support that Morocco obtained in the US Congress for the autonomy proposal is indicative of US willingness to breach international norms and legality. Being an important ally in the GWOT has provided the rationale for the United States to legitimize Morocco's illegal occupation of Western Sahara.

### **US Policy toward Western Sahara under Obama**

In contrast to France, the Western Sahara issue is not on the US agenda. In fact, under Barack Obama's presidency, little had changed from George W. Bush's policy. In fact, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton did not hide her support for Morocco. In November 2013, White House spokesman Jay Carney announced that President Obama believes "Morocco's autonomy plan is serious, realistic, and credible. It represents a potential approach that can satisfy the aspirations of the people in the Western Sahara to run their own affairs in peace and dignity." (AFP, 2013). Morocco has strong support within the Pentagon, some segments of the State Department, and from prominent members of both parties in Congress.

President Obama and Moroccan King Mohammed VI met in November 2013. Two days before the summit, Human Rights Watch issued a statement calling on the U.S. president to tell the king that "U.S. support for the reform process in Morocco depends on moving beyond rhetoric and making tangible change." (Human Rights Watch, 2013). Specifically, the human rights group called for "stronger legal protections for rights and an end to impunity for police who use violence and commit other abuses." Instead, according to a White House statement, Obama applauded the Moroccan monarch for "deepening democracy" and "promoting economic progress and human development." Though there have indeed been at least some modest political openings, along with economic liberalization, within Morocco itself, the United States has failed to publicly acknowledge the seriousness of the human rights situation within the occupied Western Sahara. While the State Department's annual report on human rights acknowledges "limitations on the freedom of speech, press, assembly, and association... [and] the use of arbitrary and prolonged detention to quell dissent," the suppression of supporters of self-determination is ruthlessly suppressed, and how security forces have "engaged in torture, beatings, and other mistreatment of detainees" with impunity, a White House statement following the conclusion of the summit pledged that the United States and Morocco would "work together to continue to protect and promote human rights in the territory." (Office of the Press Secretary, 2013).

For the United States, in fact, the main concerns on the Sahrawi issue relate mainly to security aspects in the Maghreb-Sahel region (Zoubir, 2009c): the stability of Morocco, a long-standing ally, as well as a balance in relations with Algeria, which has become an important partner in the fight against terrorism, remain the main components of US policy on this issue. It is unlikely that the United States would favor a referendum in Western Sahara that would, in Washington's view, destabilize the Moroccan monarchy. However, it should be noted that the Moroccan decision, in March 2016, to expel members of the civilian component of MINURSO was very badly received by the United States administration, which supported a Security Council resolution calling for the return of

that component. But, as Washington has done in recent years, it is almost certain that it will once again seek MINURSO to have a mandate for the protection of human rights, will call for negotiations between Moroccans and Sahrawis, but will not take any initiative unless the current status quo prevails and jeopardizes the interests of the United States. However, since 2016 recurrent apprehensions emerge about the possibility of a resurgence of the war between Moroccans and Sahrawis, the fear being that such a war would serve Al Qaeda's expansion in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in the region.

The U.S. assistance to Morocco, though it decreases occasionally, has remained relatively constant. Under the Obama administration, such aid extended to yet other allocations, such as the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), through which Morocco receives military and security assistance.

### Western Sahara under the Trump Administration

Like its predecessors, the Trump Administration has favored a policy that supports the United Nations diplomatic role in seeking to resolve this protracted conflict. Publicly, the United States supports a political solution, preferably through direct negotiations. Some newspaper articles suggested that the United States reiterated the Obama Administration language in support of Morocco's Autonomy Plan as "serious, realistic, and credible" and a "potential approach that could satisfy the aspirations of the people in the Western Sahara to run their own affairs in peace and dignity." However, US position is more nuanced in that it refers to Morocco's autonomy plan as only one possible approach. Amy Tachco, Political Coordinator at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in New York explained US position in a way that perhaps departed from that of previous administrations:

*So this year [2018], the United States has taken a different approach with this renewal [of MINURSO]. Our goal is to send two messages. The first is that there can be no more "business as usual" with MINURSO and Western Sahara. The second is that the time is now to lend our support, our full support for Personal Envoy Kohler in his efforts to facilitate negotiations with the parties.*

*The United States wants to see progress at last in the political process meant to resolve this conflict. That is why we have renewed the MINURSO mandate for six months, instead of one year. Over the next six months we expect that the parties will return to the table and engage Personal Envoy Kohler. We also hope that neighboring states will recognize the special and important role they can play in supporting this negotiating process.*

*The United States emphasizes the need to move forward toward a just, lasting, and mutually acceptable political solution, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. We continue to view Morocco's autonomy plan as serious, credible, and realistic, and it represents one potential approach to satisfy the aspirations of the people in Western Sahara to run their own affairs with peace and dignity [Emphasis added]. We call on the parties to demonstrate their commitment to a realistic, practicable, and enduring political solution based on compromise by resuming negotiations without preconditions and in good faith. Entrenched positions must not stand in the way of progress (Tachco, 2018).*

This position also indicated US fatigue with MINURSO continued existence without achieving its main goal when it was created, which consists unambiguously in the holding of a free and fair referendum. National Security Advisor, John Bolton, who is quite familiar with this conflict is exasperated with the conflict, whose evolution he has followed not only when he was US Ambassador to the UN (2005-2006), but also when he served as Assistant

Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs (1989-1993). In the latter position, he had indicated his support for a free and fair referendum (Bolton, 1998). This explains his frustration with the irresolution of this conflict and the failure of the United Nations to bring this conflict to an end. In December 2018, he insisted on his “frustration,” stating that “I’d like to see this resolved if the parties can agree on the way forward. That’s the preference.” While this is the wish of the National Security Advisor of the president of the United States, it is not certain that the US Government would put this question on top of its foreign policy agenda.

## Bibliographic references

- AFP (2013, November 22), *Morocco's autonomy plan for W. Sahara 'serious, credible,' U.S. says*. Retrieved from Al Arabiya. <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/2013/11/22/Morocco-plan-for-W-Sahara-serious-credible-U-S-.html>.
- Balta, P. (1990), *Le Grand Maghreb: Des indépendances à l'an 2000. Politique étrangère*.
- Bolton, J. (1998), *Resolving the Western Sahara Conflict*. Retrieved from Defense Forum Foundation: <http://www.arso.org/01-2-54.htm>.
- González de Castejón, G. (2006), Entretien avec Gordon Gray. *Revue Afkar/Idées*, 9, pp. 15-17.
- Human Rights Watch (2013, November 20), *US: Obama Should Press Morocco's King on Reforms*. Retrieved from Human Rights Watch: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/11/20/us-obama-should-press-moroccos-king-reforms>.
- Husain, M. (2004, August 19), *Sahara Marathon: Host Interview Transcript, Interview with James Baker*. (US Public Broadcasting television program) Retrieved September 2, 2004, from Wide Angle: [http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/printable/transcript\\_sahara\\_print.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/printable/transcript_sahara_print.html).
- International Court of Justice (1979), *The ICJ Opinion on Western Sahara*. Retrieved from International Court of Justice: <https://www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/61/9467.pdf>.
- Kriesberg, L. (1993), Intractable conflict. *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*, 5, Issue 4, pp. 417-421.
- Miguel, C. R. (2008, January 16), *The 2007 Moroccan Autonomy Plan for Western Sahara: Too many Black Holes*. Retrieved from Grupo de Estudios Estratégicos: <http://gees.org/articulos/the-2007-moroccan-autonomy-plan-for-western-sahara-too-many-black-holes>.
- Mundy, J. (2006), Neutrality or Complicity? The United States and the 1975 Moroccan Takeover of the Spanish Sahara. *Journal of North African Studies*, 11, pp. 275-306.
- Office of the Press Secretary (2013, November 22), *Joint Statement by the United States of America and the Kingdom of Morocco*. Retrieved from The White House: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/22/joint-statement-united-states-america-and-kingdom-morocco>.
- Senior State Department Official (2000, May 5), Zoubir Interview. (Y. H. Zoubir, Interviewer) Washington, D.C.
- Swisher, C. E. (2007, April 13), *Elliot Abrams' Maghreb plot*. Retrieved from United Press International: <https://www.upi.com/Outside-View-Elliot-Abrams-Maghreb-plot/56961176498776/>.
- Tachco, A. (2018, April 27), *Explanation of Vote for MINURSO Renewal*. Retrieved from United States Mission to the United Nations: <https://usun.state.gov/remarks/8413>.
- Theofilopoulou, A. (2007, May 1), *Western Sahara – How to Create a Stalemate*. Retrieved from United States Institute of Peace: <https://www.usip.org/publications/2007/05/western-sahara-how-create-stalemate>.
- United Nations (2018, October 15), *Delegates Welcome Plan by Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for Morocco-Polisario Talks in December, as Fourth Committee Continues Decolonization Debate*. Retrieved from Meetings Coverage and Press Releases: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/gaspd667.doc.htm>.
- US Department of State (2007, August 13), *Office of the Spokesperson, Question Taken at the August 13*. Retrieved from Daily Press Briefing.

- Walsum, P. V. (2008, August 28), *El largo y complejo problema del Sáhara*. Retrieved from El Pais: [https://elpais.com/diario/2008/08/28/opinion/1219874410\\_850215.html](https://elpais.com/diario/2008/08/28/opinion/1219874410_850215.html).
- Wathelet, M. M. (2016, September 13), *Conclusions De L'avocat Général*. Retrieved from InfoCuria – Case Law of the Court of Justice: <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=183273&pageIndex=0&doclang=fr&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=2040114>.
- Welch, D. (2007, June 6), *U.S. Policy Challenges in North Africa, Statement before the US Congress House Foreign Affairs Committee, Washington, D.C.*
- Wilson, A. (2016), Western Sahara: Change under the Radar. In Y. H. Zoubir, & G. White, *North African Politics: Change and Continuity*. London: Routledge.
- Zoubir, Y. H. (2018, April), Algeria and the Sahelian Quandary: The Limits of Containment Security Policy In D. Ghanem-Yazbeck (Ed.), R. Barras Tejado, G. Faleg, Y. Zoubir. Euromesco Joint-Policy. *The Sahel: Europe's African Borders*, 70-95. Retrieved from [https://www.euromesco.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/EuroMeSCo-Joint-Policy-Study-8\\_The\\_Sahel\\_Europe\\_African\\_Border.pdf](https://www.euromesco.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/EuroMeSCo-Joint-Policy-Study-8_The_Sahel_Europe_African_Border.pdf).
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2009), Moscow, the Maghreb and Conflict in the Western Sahara. In Y. H. Zoubir, & D. Volman, *International Dimensions of the Western Sahara Conflict*, pp. 103-125. Westport: Praeger.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2009a), The United States and Algeria: Hostility, Pragmatism, and Partnership. In R. Looney (Ed.), *Handbook of US Middle East Relations*, pp. 219-236. London & New York: Routledge.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2009b), The United States and Morocco: The Long-Lasting Alliance. In R. Looney (Ed.), *Handbook on US Middle East Relations*, pp. 237-248. London & New York: Routledge.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2009c), The United States and Maghreb-Sahel Security. *International Affairs*, 85(5), pp. 977-995.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1987), Soviet Policy toward the Western Sahara Conflict. *Africa Today*, 34(3), pp. 17-32.
- Zoubir, Y. H., & Darbouche, H. (2008, March), Conflicting International Policies and the Western Sahara Stalemate. *The International Spectator*, 43(1), 94.
- Zoubir, Y. H., & Pazzanita, A. G. (1995), The United Nations' Failure in Resolving the Western Sahara Conflict. *The Middle East Journal*, 49(4), pp. 614-628.
- Zoubir, Y. H., & Volman, D. (1993), The New World Order and the Case of the Western Sahara: US Foreign Policy in Transition. *Mediterranean Quarterly*, pp. 108-120.
- Zunes, S., & Mundy, J. (2010), *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism, and Conflict Irresolution*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.



# What role for the European Union in the Western Sahara Conflict?<sup>1</sup>

Carolina Jiménez Sánchez\*

pp. 65-78

## 1. Introduction

The right to self-determination of Sahrawi people has been established by International Law and the United Nations from the beginning of the decolonization process. Moreover, the self-determination of people is a *ius cogens* rule, therefore it is a higher-level standard and has an unwavering content for subjects of International Law, such as sovereign States or International Organizations. Nevertheless, Western Sahara remains as Africa's last colony, administered on the large part by an occupying power. This stalemate in the conflict that occurs from the 1991 ceasefire, has led to a false equation of the positions of both parties, Morocco and POLISARIO Front.

The European Union has emerged as another concerned party, unwilling to become involved but committed to develop a commercial and political relationship with his principal partner in the MENA region: Morocco. This controversial and polarizing relationship could jeopardize the Organization leading principles in its External Action, (i.e., human rights and the respect of the self-determination of people). This procedure could have an adverse effect, thereby contravening rather than reinforcing the Organization's values and previous practices in the EU concerning non-self-governing territories.

This paper will explore the different and latest developments of the ongoing conflict examining the International Community's actions or lack of. It will focus on the action of the European Union in the Western Sahara conflict, through an analysis which falls into three parts: the examination of a largely expected "common position" and its previous attempts, secondly a comparative examination of the policy developed by the EU in other non-self-governing territories and, finally, an examination of the various judicial pronouncements concerning the question of the commercial agreements between Morocco and the EU.

## 2. International Community (in)action

After the stagnation of the peace process in Western Sahara with the breakdown of the Peace Plan, the United Nations ("UN") has been calling for negotiations between the two sides of the conflict, Morocco and POLISARIO Front. In UNSCR 1754 (2007) the Security Council urged negotiations between POLISARIO and Moroccan government<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, the

\* Universidad de Málaga, Spain.

<sup>1</sup> This paper takes part of the research projects: "Las Respuestas del Derecho Internacional y Europeo a los Nuevos Riesgos y Amenaza Contra la Seguridad Humana" (RASEGUR), Plan Nacional de I+D+I (Ref.: DER2015-65906-P) and "Los desafíos de los Derechos Humanos a los nuevos riesgos y amenazas" (EUI2017-85437).

<sup>2</sup> UNSCR 1754 (30 April 2007). [Consult. Jan. 2019]. Available at: [http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/index.asp?symbol=S/RES/1754%20\(2007\)&referer=http://www.un.org/es/sc/documents/resolutions/2007.shtml&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/index.asp?symbol=S/RES/1754%20(2007)&referer=http://www.un.org/es/sc/documents/resolutions/2007.shtml&Lang=E).

nature of the negotiations seems to be directly confronted with the respect of the self-determination principle and the UNGAR 1514 (XV). A self-determination process implies a decision being taken by the people under colonization, because they are the subject of sovereignty in International Law (Barsh, 1994).

After the meetings Manhansset I (2007), II (2007), III (2008) and IV (2010) there was no significant progress. This series of negotiations between the parties, sponsored by the United Nations, changed focus in 2010, when the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Christopher Ross, returned. Although, in 2010, 2011 and 2012 the results were similar and a few points have been accepted, as the coordination of two parties for the cleaning of mines in the territory under control of the POLISARIO. In 2017, the newly elected Special Envoy, Horst Köhler, brings a new impetus and refocuses negotiation efforts making it clear that “no action should be taken, which may constitute a change to the status quo”<sup>3</sup>. So far, the stagnation of the question of Western Sahara persists, and the positions of the parties seem irreconcilable. The POLISARIO Front calls for a self-determination referendum, including the option of independence, however Morocco only offers a limited autonomy for Western Sahara, and a referendum for just two options: integration into the Kingdom of Morocco or limited Autonomy Statute.

International Law has insisted in the necessity of a *good faith* in negotiation processes, and the lack of intention it is liable to result in International Responsibility. The International Court of Justice, in the North Sea Continental Shelf case pointed out that:

*“The Parties were under an obligation to enter into negotiations with a view to arriving at an agreement and not merely to go through a formal process of negotiation as a sort of prior condition for the automatic application of a certain method of delimitation in the absence of agreement; they were so to conduct themselves that the negotiations were meaningful, which would not be the case when one of them insisted upon its own position without contemplating any modification of it. This obligation was merely a special application of a principle underlying all international relations, which was moreover recognized in Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations as one of the methods for the peaceful settlement of international disputes. The Parties were under an obligation to act in such a way that in the particular case, and taking all the circumstances into account, equitable principles were applied”<sup>4</sup>.*

In the 2016 Report of the UN Secretary-General, he expressed

*“regret at the absence of genuine negotiations without preconditions and in good faith to achieve a mutually acceptable political solution, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara”.*

Moreover he claimed that

*“the status quo was no longer an option” and that “the parties had yet to bridge the divide between their mutually exclusive positions and neither party had succeeded in winning over the other party to its proposal and moving towards a solution”<sup>5</sup>.*

The crisis arisen in *Gueguerat* has been a constraint in the process of negotiation in the past three years, even with the efforts of the Secretary General to address the situation proposing an expert mission for this particular. In the 2018 Report, Secretary General welcomed “*the*

<sup>3</sup> Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on Western Sahara [scroll down for French], 19 May 2017. [Consult. Jan. 2019] Available at: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2018-05-19/statement-attributable-spokesman-secretary-general-western-sahara>.

<sup>4</sup> Summary of the Summary of the Judgment of 20 February 1969, North Sea Continental Shelf Case, Judgment of 20 February 1969.

<sup>5</sup> Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara, 19 April 2016, S/2016/355, par. 9 and par. 17.

*positive response of Frente Polisario to (...) proposal to deploy an expert mission as part of this process and strongly encourage Morocco to reconsider this initiative so that both parties can engage in a bona fide discussion on the matter*<sup>6</sup>. The call for direct negotiations has continued with Personal Envoy Horst Köhler. The fragility of MINURSO seems to have been mitigated by conducting a “a strategic review (...) to provide an in-depth analysis of the Mission and recommend measures to improve its mandate delivery”<sup>7</sup> by mid-2018.

It is uncertain whether a series of direct talks will be able to reach a conclusive end to the conflict as important differences still remain between the two parties. Despite the fact that negotiations have been revealed to be clearly inefficient, the Security Council does not seem to have any intentions to attempt other ways of reaching a peaceful settlement of disputes. This position becomes a stagnation of the Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter, whose article 37.2 expresses:

*“If the Security Council deems that the continuance of the dispute is in fact likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, it shall decide whether to take action under Article 36 or to recommend such terms of settlement as it may consider appropriate”.*

After the frustration of Settlement Plan and Peace Plan in 2001, we cannot consider that the conflict is regulated by any valid peace agreement. If both parties are inside a negotiation process, without a peace agreement regulating this process, international institutions have to be careful in the respect of peremptory rules and customary International Law. The United Nations cannot be the sponsor of any negotiation in which *ius cogens* is being dismissed. As we can see in the UN Secretary-General’s 2016 Report<sup>8</sup>, the Moroccan Minister-Delegate for Foreign Affairs stated that the basis of the process “consisted of a political solution that did not bring the status of Western Sahara into question, inasmuch as “the Sahara is already Moroccan”.

### 3. European Union in the middle of Hamada

The conflict in Western Sahara is for the European Union one of those issues that is becoming increasingly complicated without having been foreseen beforehand. This can be proven due to the fact that the European Communities did not pronounce on the matter until 1981.

Today, however, circumstances have changed and forced the European Communities to do so. Especially as the natural resources of the Western Sahara territory seem to be an indispensable commercial line for the European Union as well as continuous source of conflicts. A divergent course of action that the EU has agreed to pass despite the warnings of illegality of several of its institutions (Parliament, CJEU).

The following sections are a review of the political and legal positions maintained on the conflict, as well as the EU’s commercial relationship with Morocco and the implications on Sahrawi natural resources (Olson, 2006: 30).

#### 3.1. Common Position on Conflict and other Utopias

In 1981 the European Parliament (“EP”) adopted its first resolution on Western Sahara<sup>9</sup>, establishing a position contrary to the line taken by the United Nations, followed by

<sup>6</sup> Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara, 29 March 2018, S/2018/277, par. 308.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, par. 82.

<sup>8</sup> Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara, 19 April 2016, S/2016/355, par. 9 and par. 17.

<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, from 1979 European Parliament made secondary pronouncements including Western Sahara.

France during that time, and considering what happened in the territory was an internal struggle for its control, it called on Algeria and Morocco to find a way out, ignoring the local population, the actual holders of the right to self-determination (Torrejón Rodríguez, 2014: 303). Eight years later, Parliament would rectify this position with a second resolution in which it recognized the right to self-determination of the Saharawi people and called for negotiations between Morocco and the POLISARIO, identifying it as part of the conflict. In 1987 the EP protested for the imprisonments and arrests of the Moroccan police in the territory, although without pronouncing on the legal situation.

This position would continue in the EP Resolution on the Violation of Human Rights in the Western Sahara of 1990, in which the Parliament protests against the violations that take place in the territory at the same time that it congratulates the POLISARIO Front for the liberation of 200 prisoners of war.

In 1991, the European Parliament approved a resolution in support of the peace plan sponsored by the UN. From this moment on, the EP will, at least once a year, pronounce itself on different aspects of the conflict such as human rights, those people who have disappeared (after arrest or detention), prisoners of war or political trials that take place in Morocco. In 1995, given the obstacles imposed by Morocco on the census for a referendum that would ruin the peace plan, Parliament is adamant in asking “*the Moroccan authorities to respect their commitments and to end their delaying manoeuvres aimed at stopping the implementation of the peace plan*”. By 1998, the EP asks the Council to establish a common position on the conflict, but this position has not been adopted to date.

Official relations between the EU and the POLISARIO will not begin to be more fluid and distinct until the end of the 80s, when the Organization is positioned in favour of the self-determination.

In 1987, according to Benabdallah “*the Polisario proposed to the EU the signing of an agreement to legitimise the fishing in the waters alongside the Western Sahara coasts, but the EU declined this proposal*” (Benabdallah, 2009). It is important to underline that, in accordance with International Law, the POLISARIO is the sole and legitimate representative of the Saharawi people and, in consequence, the EU could have signed that agreement with the National Liberation Movement in the exercise of its international subjectivity. The position of the EP concerning the dispute has passed through different phases (Urruela, 1995: 112), and has become more aware of the principle of self-determination since 2004. In October 2005 the EP, in support of UNSCR1495 (2003) adopted various resolutions about human rights, calling Morocco to cooperate in “*ascertaining what had happened to people who has disappeared since the conflict began*”, and about humanitarian aid to Saharawi refugees, initiating a new and more active phase in the relation between the conflict and this institution. One year later, in 2006, the European Parliament pronounced itself on the issue of the natural resources of the Western Sahara with a legislative resolution<sup>10</sup>, proposing amendments to the UN Security Council’s proposed regulation.

The Saharawi National Liberation Movement is also an “interest group” accredited in the EP, which gives it the power to be heard in matters related to the issue. The nominative accreditation of the representative of the POLISARIO Front by the European Union in the EP also signifies respect for the code of conduct which requires renouncing any claim of having an official relationship beyond that with the Parliament. This highlights the little identification of this type of connection, more designed for interest groups, than for an entity of the National Liberation Movement type.

<sup>10</sup> European Parliament legislative resolution on the proposal for a Council regulation on the conclusion of the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Community and the Kingdom of Morocco (COM(2005)0692 – C6-0040/2006 – 2005/0280(CNS)). [Consult. Jan.2019].

In fact, partially contravening this code of conduct, the EP decided to establish another point of connection with the POLISARIO granting it some participation in the Delegation for relations with the Maghreb countries and the Maghreb Union, in which an *ad hoc* delegation (already extinct) was established for the Western Sahara.

On the other hand, the international legal personality of the POLISARIO Front in the Organization is manifested by the fact of being a beneficiary of humanitarian aid by ECHO (European Humanitarian Aid Office). The National Liberation Movement is the official manager of the Saharawi refugee camps in Tindouf (Algeria), which benefited right up to the year 2017 of more than 230 million euros, since it began to be the recipient of the aid in 1993. It is enough considering that Saharawi people are being represented by POLISARIO Front in the EU.

Nevertheless, we cannot talk about a common position so far, even when the EP has clarified its position in the latest resolutions.

### 3.2. The position of the EU with respect to other Non-Self-Governing Territories

To a reduced policy of Non-Self Governing territories (Timor, Crimea or Palestine), the Western Saharan seems to have arisen as the most discordant element. Certainly, situations of occupation are often among the most difficult challenges for International Community. The European Union, as a third party, has the obligation not to contribute to the occupation. We talk about occupation when a territory has been annexed illegally, considering moreover that this is supposed to be a temporary status. This stance of non-contribution demands a policy of non-recognition of the legality of the occupation, along with other elements of foreign policy that are to be connected with the *de facto* administration of the territory. This requires for the EU to “*refuse to recognize legislative and other changes in the occupied territory, they should refrain from engaging in economic and other activities that sustain that occupation and they should seriously consider sanctions against the responsible government*” (Wrange, 2015: 2).

However, the EU has demonstrated a varied and confusing position on how to deal with occupation of territories, as discussed below.

#### Crimea

Close to that view described by Wrange is the policy developed by the EU with respect to Crimea. The relations between the EU and Russia have traditionally been marked by different points of tension and distension (Fernández Liesa, 2017), and one of them has been Crimea. The illegal annexation of this territory by Russia in 2014 can be considered inside the scope of UNGAR 3314 (XXIX) as aggression<sup>11</sup>, constituting a serious violation of Ukraine’s national sovereignty. And this is precisely what the European Council declared on 20<sup>th</sup> March of 2014 expressing a strongly condemn for “the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation and will not recognize it”. Similar declarations have been stated along the years, in 2018 the EU considered extending the restrictive measures imposed on Russia until 29 June 2019<sup>12</sup>. Indeed the EU imposed, starting from 2014, different processes (diplomatic measures, individual restrictive measures, restrictions on economic relations with Crimea and Sevastopol, economic sanctions targeting exchanges with

<sup>11</sup> “Aggression is the use of armed force by a State against the sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence of another State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations”, Article 1, Definition of aggression. UNGAR 3314 (XXIX), 12/14/1974.

<sup>12</sup> Council of the EU, Press Release, 346/18.



Russia in specific economic sectors and measures concerning economic cooperation)<sup>13</sup> that are still being imposed. Similarly, EU Member States have followed a consistent policy of non-recognition.

These are undoubtedly elements of a good practice when talking about EU and Member States policy that should be followed in cases of Non-Self Governing Territories governed by occupying power. This practice of the EU arises from the Crimea case:

1. Follow the non-recognition obligation according to UNSCR 2625 (XXV).
2. Avoid investment and economic activity in the occupied territory under the aegis of occupying power (Wrange, 2015a: 10).
3. Impose sanctions against the occupying power and its private entities.
4. Diplomatic consequences between the relations of the EU and the occupying power.

## Palestine

The good practices developed in the case of Crimea do not find a parallel in the EU's policy respecting another Non-Self Governing Territory, Palestine. The case of Palestine offers an irresolute practice with interesting elements to be addressed. Considering the first obligation of the EU regarding an occupation, it is a fact that the EU has repeatedly condemned the occupation of the Palestine territory by Israel, not recognizing Israeli's sovereignty over the settlement, that now dominates more than 45 % of the territory. The International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (2004) stated that "*all States are under an obligation not to recognize the illegal situation resulting from the construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem. They are also under an obligation not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by such construction*"<sup>14</sup>. Nevertheless, Israel has been eligible for funding in different economic programs of the EU. Also the EU-Israel Association Agreement was signed in Brussels in 1995, followed by successive frameworks<sup>15</sup>. The significant aspect of these commercial relations is that the Agreement excluded the occupied territory. On the one hand, EU is maintaining commercial relations with the occupying power, and therefore there is no sanction, measure or diplomatic consequence perceptible in this case. On the other, the Agreement does respect the Palestine settlement by excluding it, meaning an application of the coherence principle (EU does not recognise the intended Israeli sovereignty in the Palestine settlement, in consequence with the non-recognition policy the Organization has followed in this particular). But in practice things have turned out to be different, some sources have informed that "products are often marked as originating in Israel, even when the place of manufacture is in Occupied Palestine Territory" (Wrange).

## Human rights

The EU must consider human rights as a principle, and take into account its own rules and laws. For instance, article 21 of the *Treaty of European Union* declares:

<sup>13</sup> Commission Guidance Note on the implementation of certain provisions of Regulation (EU) No 833/2014, European Commission, Brussels, 25/09/2015.

<sup>14</sup> Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Advisory Opinion, I. C. J. Reports 2004, p. 136, par. 159.

<sup>15</sup> This Association Agreement was replacing the previous Cooperation Agreement of 1975.

*“The Union’s action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law”.*

The EU must ensure consistency and effectiveness in the application of its external policy, which implies not only statements and declarations but an active role in defending its key external principles. It shall mean that countermeasures and other actions be applied consistently.

In fact in 2008 the EU adopted the Guidelines on Human Rights to be used in dialogues with third countries<sup>16</sup> in which a basic principle was developed:

*“The European Union undertakes to intensify the process of integrating human rights and democratisation objectives (“mainstreaming”) into all aspects of its external policies” further asserting that “the European Union will ensure that the issue of human rights, democracy and the rule of law is incorporated into all meetings and discussions it has with third countries, at every level, including political dialogue and, if necessary, at the highest level”.*

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) (including Morocco and Israel)<sup>17</sup> represented 9.4 % of total EU external trade in 2016 and it is an expanding area of economic integration. The existence of Non-Self-Governing territories in this spot of the Mediterranean necessarily makes it more difficult to develop a consistent commercial and political relationship (Newman *et al.*, 2004: 11). As it can be seen, the EU finds itself at a crossroad. As PACE points out *“this dialogue framed EU–Mediterranean relations in terms of principles, including respect for human rights Democratization and democracy and the use of peaceful means for the settlement of disputes”* (Pace, 2009: 42). Thus, through the EMP’s institutionalized framework, the EU committed itself to democracy promotion and Mediterranean partners signed up in Barcelona Declaration to *“Develop the rule of law and democracy in their political systems”*<sup>18</sup>. In the case of Palestine and Western Sahara it is important to underline the obligation of the EU *“to develop the rule of law and democracy in their political systems, while recognizing in this framework the right of each of them to choose and freely develop its own political, socio-cultural, economic and judicial system”*, and more significantly, in conformity with the Barcelona Declaration, the EU is committed to *“respect the equal rights of peoples and their right to self-determination, acting at all times in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and with the relevant norms of international law, including those relating to territorial integrity of States, as reflected in agreements between relevant parties”*<sup>19</sup>.

### 3.3. Lights and shadows of the CJEU’s judgments: immediate consequences

The relations between the EU and Morocco have had several approaches and trade agreements since the 2000 Euro-Mediterranean Agreement was adopted, establishing a greater approach in commercial relations, especially agricultural. In the development of

<sup>16</sup> EU guidelines on human rights dialogues with third countries, 2016, p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> Euro-Mediterranean partnership objective is the creation of a free trade area in the Mediterranean, and include the following countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey. [Consult. Jan.2019] Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/regions/euro-mediterranean-partnership/>. The programs are funded under the European Neighbourhood Policy.

<sup>18</sup> Barcelona declaration adopted at the Euro-Mediterranean Conference, 27-28/11/95.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem.

this agreement, in 2005 a Plan of Action was accorded and, subsequently, the agreement for the liberalization of agricultural products and fishing by-products was signed in 2012. As a result of this agreement, in the same year, Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) N.º 812/2012 is adopted, which modifies Council Regulation (EC) No. 747/2001 regarding quotas. Union tariffs are applied to certain agricultural products and processed agricultural products, originating in Morocco.

In 2013 were adopted

*the Council Decision on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, of the Protocol between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco establishing the fishing opportunities and the financial contribution established in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco (2013/720/EU), and Council Regulation (EU) No 1270/2013 on the allocation of fishing opportunities under the Protocol between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco setting out the fishing opportunities and the financial contribution provided for in the Partnership Agreement in the fisheries sector between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco (L 328/40, of 7.12.2013).*

Both instruments, although they were expected to be final and bring greater stability to the desired trade relations with Morocco, have suffered with this judicial journey initiated by the POLISARIO Front before the General Court of the EU, presenting an annulment remedy in 2012 (as a subject of International Law), for having included the territory of Western Sahara. The Judgment of the General Court of the European Union was adopted in December 2015<sup>20</sup>. Although the pronouncement is not very convincing, it is clear, at least, in affirming the need to respect International Law for the territory of Western Sahara (Soroeta Licerias, 2016: 205).

The 2015 Judgement required the exclusion of the territory of Western Sahara from the agreement between the EU and Morocco, annulling part of the agreement, but the Judgement was the object of a subsequent appeal by the Council of the European Union and was supported by Belgium, Spain, Germany, France, Portugal and Morocco. In a second Judgment of December 21, 2016, the Court of Justice of the EU finally decided to annul the Judgment adopted in 2015 because it considered that the legitimacy of the POLISARIO to request the annulment of the contested decision was not sufficiently proven.

Regarding the Appeal brought on 19 February 2016 by the Council of the European Union against the judgment of the General Court (Eighth Chamber) delivered on 10 December 2015 in Case T-512/12 POLISARIO Front v. Council, and according to International Law, it is necessary to point out the following: the Council posits that the Court has erred in considering that POLISARIO Front is capable of bringing proceedings before the Courts of the European Union, and this premise will be triumphant on the Council's Appeal and the Judgement of 21 December 2016.

However, we cannot forget that, according to International Law, POLISARIO is the legal and sole representative of Sahrawi people until Western Sahara territory can conclude the self-determination process. The legal status of the territory is still a Non-Self-Governing territory, and POLISARIO is the only legitimate entity recognized for the defence of their rights, as it is said in the UNSCR 2625 (XXV), the territory has a different status from the administrating power:

<sup>20</sup> 10 December 2015 partially annulling the 2013/720/EU: Council Decision of 15 November 2013 on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, of the Protocol between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco setting out the fishing opportunities and financial contribution provided for in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco, in regards to the implementation of the agreement in the territory of Western Sahara.

*“The territory of a colony or other Non-Self-Governing Territory has, under the Charter, a status separate and distinct from the territory of the State administering it; and such separate and distinct status under the Charter shall exist until the people of the colony or Non-Self-Governing Territory have exercised their right of self-determination in accordance with the Charter, and particularly its purposes and principles”.*

Furthermore, following Cassese, national liberation movements have “*the rights and obligations deriving from rules on treaty making. The existence of the power is evidenced by the numerous agreements various liberation movements have entered into on such matter*”. In fact, POLISARIO Front itself has signed international agreements, such as the peace agreement reached with Mauritania in 1979.

Even though this legal status is not considered clear enough to give procedural rights to POLISARIO Front, it cannot be denied the right of any legal person directly concerned to institute proceedings in the Court, as it is said by article 263 of the Treaty in the Functioning of the European Union:

*“Any natural or legal person may, under the conditions laid down in the first and second paragraphs, institute proceedings against an act addressed to that person or which is of direct and individual concern to them, and against a regulatory act which is of direct concern to them and does not entail implementing measures”.*

POLISARIO Front has to be considered a legal person in accordance to their stable condition, structures, statutes and representation in international and national practice acting as a legal person.

The Council submits that the General Court erred in law by holding that the applicant was directly and individually concerned by the decision annulled since the agreements between EU and Morocco include the territory of Western Sahara, as observed by “Human Rights Resource Watch” and others. It has been established the presence of more than a hundred and forty companies operating in the territory.

The General Assembly Resolution 1803 about Permanent Sovereignty over natural resources declares that “*the exploration, development and disposition of such resources, as well as the import of the foreign capital required for these purposes, should be in conformity with the rules and conditions which the peoples and nations freely consider to be necessary or desirable with regard to the authorization, restriction or prohibition of such activities*”. According to this paragraph of the resolution (par. 2) the POLISARIO must conform to the trade agreement, as the sole and legitimate representative of Sahrawi people.

The exploitation of natural resources of a Non-Self Governing Territory makes it so that its sole representative can be considered legitimate, because the interests of the People are being affected and are in direct opposition with International Law (Ferrer Lloret, 2017).

POLISARIO has an individual interest in the effects of the Decision, and according to the general principle of *pacta tertiis nec nocent nec prosunt*, it makes the accord unenforceable and contrary to International Law. Furthermore, the article 29 of Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties stated that “*Unless a different intention appears from the treaty or is otherwise established, a treaty is binding upon each party in respect of its entire territory*”. Due to the special condition of the territory of Western Sahara, in order to fully respect the responsibilities under the UN Charter we cannot consider that Morocco can include the territory of Western Sahara for several reasons, that can be found in UNSCR 1514 (15) or General Assembly Resolution 2625 (XXV) and the enshrined *ius cogens* rule of self-determination.

The Council considered the Court to have erred in law in the Judgement of 2015 by basing the annulment on a *plea* which had not been raised by the applicant and with regard to

which the Council was unable to express its views. This point does not correspond to the facts in the application. The first recurrent, POLISARIO Front, has pointed out the violation of human rights under the article 67 of the Treaty in the Functioning of the European Union and the article 6 of the European Union Treaty.

In the POLISARIO Front's plea, it is necessary to consider that, when pointing out the coordination principle of the European Union, the question that raises is the protection of human rights in the context of trade agreements. As a key rule in European Union law is constituted by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the principles for conducting agreements with third-party States always in the respect of the human rights (human rights clause).

The *Human Rights and Democracy: EU Strategic Framework and EU Action Plan* (11417/12, 25 June 2012), stated that

*“the EU will promote human rights in all areas of its external action without exception. In particular, it will integrate the promotion of human rights into trade (...)”, and it is establishing a material obligation for the EU when it affirms “The EU will place human rights at the centre of its relations with all third countries, including its strategic partners. While firmly based on universal norms, the EU’s policy on human rights will be carefully designed for the circumstances of each country, not least through the development of country human rights strategies”.*

In the special context analysed, the Action Plan is more than clear regarding the European Neighbourhood Policy, claiming that

*“The EU will step up its effort to make best use of the human rights clause in political framework agreements with third countries. In the European Neighbourhood Policy countries, the EU has firmly committed itself to supporting a comprehensive agenda of locally-led political reform, with democracy and human rights at its centre, including through the policy of “more for more”. Human rights will remain at the heart of the EU’s enlargement policy”.*

The aforementioned Action Plan and the whole sense of the European Union Law makes unclear and inconsistent the claim sustained by the Council when it stated that *“the General Court erred in law by holding that the Council was required to examine the possible impact of the production activities concerning the products covered by the agreement concluded by the decision annulled on the human rights of the population of Western Sahara before adopting the decision annulled”.*

The Decision faced International Law basic resolutions, as the UNGAR 1803's declaration about Permanent Sovereignty over natural resources when it point out that *“Foreign investment agreements freely entered into by or between sovereign States shall be observed in good faith; States and international organizations shall strictly and conscientiously respect the sovereignty of peoples and nations over their natural wealth and resources in accordance with the Charter and the principles set forth in the present resolution”.*

The Council also claims that the General Court erred in law in its first Judgement by holding that the Council was required to examine whether there was evidence, under the agreement concluded by that decision, of the exploitation of the natural resources of the territory of Western Sahara under Moroccan control which may be carried out to the detriment of its inhabitants and may infringe their fundamental rights, before adoption. Nevertheless, the sole and legitimate representative of Sahrawi People, in the territory still considered by International Law as Non-Self Governing, declared that the exploitation of natural resources is not improving the situations of Saharawi local people.



It is easy to understand that an examination of the effects of the trade-agreements in the population could negatively affect the population. UNGAR 1803 states *“In cases where authorization is granted, the capital imported and the earnings on that capital shall be governed by the terms thereof, by the national legislation in force, and by international law”*. We can look at this statement considering that there are exemptions when it is clear and obvious that the representative of the People have given express authorization to the *“de facto”* Administrator State to conclude such agreements. It seems clear that in the case we are examining there is a serious lack of good faith and a lack of fulfilment of international principles considered in this resolution and other more general and common like the mentioned *“pacta tertiis nec nocent nec prosunt”*.

The Council claims that the General Court erred in law by partially annulling the contested decision, which had the effect of altering its substance. This claim made by the Council seems to be acknowledging and affirming that the Decision includes the territory of Western Sahara as an important part of the trade agreement. Considering it as a substantial element of the Decision to assume that the POLISARIO Front is an individual subject affected by it, that the Sahrawi People are sovereign, and whose sovereignty over the natural resources has to be respected and not exploited, until the agreement goes in the behalf of the indigenous population, fact that could not have been adequately proved. Moreover, according to the article 34 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, *“A treaty does not create either obligations or rights for a third State without its consent”*.

It is true that we cannot consider that the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic is a State vis-à-vis the International Community, but we must insist we are in front of a Non-Self Governing Territory whose sole and legitimate representative is the POLISARIO Front, who has not been consulted relating the negotiations and entry into force of the agreement and the Decision, much more when the national liberation movement must have a special representation in order to exercise their rights to defend the rights of Sahrawi people.

The remarkable element of the Judgement of the Appeal (Court of Justice of the EU, Grand Chamber) of 21 December 2016<sup>21</sup> is that the Grand Chamber sustained that the POLISARIO Front cannot be considered as a concerned party because it cannot be presumed that the Agreement between Morocco and the EU includes the territory of Western Sahara, based on good faith:

*“It must be pointed out that, in order to be able to draw correct legal conclusions from the absence of a stipulation excluding Western Sahara from the territorial scope of the Association Agreement, in interpreting that agreement, the General Court was bound (...) to observe the rules of good faith”<sup>22</sup>.*

Even more, the Court considers that this *“good faith”* is not controversial in the practice of the Agreement, even without having brought elements to eliminate the possibility of the illegal appropriation of the natural resources of Western Sahara and contenting itself with the presumption that:

*“In view of the separate and distinct status accorded to the territory of Western Sahara by virtue of the principle of self-determination, in relation to that of any State, including the Kingdom of Morocco, the words ‘territory of the Kingdom of Morocco’ set out in Article 94 of the Association Agreement cannot, as the Commission maintains and as the Advocate General essentially pointed out in points 71 and 75 of his Opinion, be interpreted in such a way that Western Sahara is included within the territorial scope of that agreement”<sup>23</sup>.*

<sup>21</sup> Judgment of the Court (Grand Chamber), 21 December 2016, ECLI:EU:C:2016:973, C-104/16 P.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, par. 86.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem, par. 92.

On the other hand, The Grand Chamber confirmed the distinct status and the application of the self-determination principle to the legal context of the dispute.

The consequences were that the agreement was again fully in force and the international subjectivity of the POLISARIO Front, at the European regional level, is once again in question and the application on the Agreement bypassed.

### Western Sahara Campaign UK

In May 2016, The High Court of Justice of the UK requested a preliminary ruling under Article 267 TFEU in the case of Western Sahara Campaign UK v. Commissioners for Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs<sup>24</sup>.

The request argued "*the validity of the Fisheries Partnership Agreement and 2013 Protocol*" in accordance with International Law, presupposing that the territorial scope of the Agreement included the waters of Western Sahara.

The Court, following the Judgement of C-104/16 P, considers "*that the Fisheries Partnership Agreement and the 2013 Protocol must be interpreted, in accordance with the rules of international law that are binding on the European Union and that are applicable to relations between the Union and the Kingdom of Morocco, as meaning that the waters adjacent to the territory of Western Sahara do not fall within the scope of that agreement and that protocol*".

### Action Brought on 24 April 2018- Aviation Agreement

In April 2018, the POLISARIO Front brought action against the Council regarding Council Decision (EU) 2018/146 of 22 January 2018 on its conclusion, on behalf of the Union, of the Euro-Mediterranean Aviation Agreement between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and the Kingdom of Morocco, of the other part (OJ 2018 L 26, p. 4).

The action, pending still a decision, understands that the agreement has been violating the Saharawi air space. Even more, it has been applied on a provisional basis for a period of 12 years, to the territory of Western Sahara, in breach of its separate and distinct status<sup>25</sup>. Beyond an alleged infringement of core principles and values guiding the European Union's external action, the action considers the lack of competence of both Morocco and the EU to negotiate and conclude international agreements that include the territory and the violation of the rights of defence of the sole representative of Saharawi People, thus the Council did not begin any discussion about the text with the POLISARIO, besides the violation of Vienna Convention given the relative effects of treaties.

### Conclusions

We will have to wait for the Court of Justice's position on the pending actions, but it is clear that the international personality of POLISARIO Front is being strongly used in international tribunals, as the Court of Justice of the European Union. This is certainly an attribute of subjectivity that is being put into practice more than ever. The Court of Justice, however, considered that POLISARIO had no legitimacy to initiate the proceedings,

<sup>24</sup> The request has been made in two proceedings between, on the one hand, Western Sahara Campaign UK, and, on the other, the Commissioners for Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (United Kingdom), respectively, on the implementation, by that authority and by that minister, of international agreements concluded between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco and the secondary legislation associated with those agreements.

<sup>25</sup> Action Brought on 24 April 2018, Front Polisario v. Council (Case T-275/18).

but only arguing that the agreement does not include the Western Sahara territory, and without subtracting elements of subjectivity to its condition of the National Liberation Movement.

Also, that is the reason why the EU now has the chance to explain itself on its position about the conflict, since said position has been not particularly defined so far. In analogous cases, such as Palestine, the EU has been clear to explicitly put apart the Non-Self-Governing territory to the Commercial policy conducted with Israel. It is very reasonable to ask the same for Western Sahara.

Even so, the Court of Justice has confirmed in cases C-104/16-P and C-266/16 the current status of Western Sahara as one of a decolonisation case with the necessity of respecting the self-determination principle. This has been done through formal elements and theory arguments based in a non-existent “good faith” which finally fails to accept that the several agreements concluded with Morocco are being applied illegally to the territory.

Regarding the Western Sahara Non-Self-Governing Territory, the European Union continues to contravene its own established practice as applied to in the cases of Palestine and Crimea and also ignores the violations of Human Rights that take place in the territory.

The commercial relations with this one remain unharmed, contravening its strong practice on Human Rights as emphasized by its relations with Cuba, its limited and difficult relations with Russia or the arms embargo applied to Sudan of the South.

The close relationship with its privileged MENA partner, Morocco, is riddled with different aspects that may bring a more controversial relationship to the south Mediterranean pair, such as migration, human trafficking, drug dealing and terrorism prevention. The EU does not seem to have any intention of souring the relation, but the Western Sahara dispute is continuing to disrupt more institutions in each movement.

## Acronyms

CJEU – Court of Justice of the European Union

EMP – Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

EP – European Parliament

EU – European Union

MENA – Middle East and North Africa

MINURSO – Mission des Nations unies pour l'organisation d'un référendum au Sahara occidental

POLISARIO – Popular de Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y Río de Oro

UN – United Nations

UNGAR – United Nations General Assembly Resolution

UNSCR – United Nations Security Council Resolution

## Bibliographic references

Ahmed, D. R. (2015), *Boundaries and Secession in Africa and International Law*, Cambridge.

Benabdallah, K. (2009), “The position of the European Union on the Western Sahara conflict”, *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 17:3, pp. 417-435.

Cassese, A. (2005), *International Law*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fernández Liesa, C. (2017), “Relations between the European Union and Russia in the light of the notion of empire”, *Spanish Yearbook of International Law (SbYL)*, pp. 41-56.

Ferrer Lloret, J. (2017), “El conflicto del Sáhara Occidental ante los tribunales de la Unión Europea”, *Revista General de Derecho Europeo*, n.º 42, pp. 15-64.

- Newman, D.; Yacobi, H. (2004), "The role of EU in the Israel/Palestine conflict", Working Paper Series in EU Border Conflicts Studies: University of the Negev, n.º 12.
- Olson, C. (2006), "The Western Sahara Conflict. The role of natural resources in Decolonisation", *Current African Issues*, n.º 33, Uppsala.
- Pace, M. (2009), "Paradox and contradictions in EU democracy promotion in the Mediterranean: the limits of EU normative power", *Democratization*, vol. 16, n.º 1, February, pp. 39-58.
- Soroeta Liceras, J. (2016), "La Sentencia de 10 de diciembre de 2015 del Tribunal General de la UE (T-512/12), primer reconocimiento en vía judicial del Estatuto del Sáhara Occidental y de la Subjetividad Internacional del Frente Polisario" *Revista General de Derecho Europeo*, n.º 38, enero 2016, pp. 202-238.
- Torrejón Rodríguez, J. D. (2014), *La Unión Europea y la cuestión del Sáhara Occidental. La posición del Parlamento Europeo*, Reus.
- Urruela, A. (1995), "El Parlamento Europeo ante el conflicto del Sáhara Occidental", *Papers* 46, 1995, pp. 107-120.
- Wrange, P. (2015), *Occupation/Annexation of a territory: Respect for international humanitarian law and human rights and consistent EU policy*, Directorate General for External Policy, Policy Department.

# The Western Sahara never ending Story: A case of organized hypocrisy

Rui Alexandre Novais\*

pp. 79-89

It has been argued that ‘organized hypocrisy’ is both a pervasive feature of the international system and the cause of dysfunction in international organizations (Brunsson, 2003; Lipson, 2007). Two authors stand out in the original literature related to the discussion surrounding the concept of ‘organized hypocrisy’. Perhaps the most well-known is Stephen Krasner (1999 and 2001), who posited that sovereignty norms tend to be symbolically affirmed but are often violated by powerful states subordinated to logics of consequences – political action as the product of rational calculation behaviour designed to maximize a set of unexplained preferences – something which amounts to ‘organized hypocrisy’.

The concept, however, was originally formulated one decade before by Nils Brunsson (1989) with the emphasis on something of interest to the present study, which is the realm of organizations in particular. Indeed, Brunsson (2003) introduces two significant innovations worth of consideration. Firstly, he offers a distinction between the divergent internal aspects of an organization – ‘the organization of hypocrisy’ – and inconsistent organizational outputs – ‘organized hypocrisy’. In fact, whereas the former relates to the incorporated inconsistencies of the environment which are reflected upon the organizational structures, processes, and ideologies, the latter refers to inconsistencies between the organizational outputs.

Secondly, Brunsson (2003) identifies three fundamental types of organizational outputs – “talk, decisions, and action”. He also makes the case that, despite the fact that talk and decisions tend to be inconsistent with action, they are still causally related in both a “reverse” and “compensatory” coupling. More concretely, there is, on one hand, a mismatch between talk or decisions and the corresponding actions, and vice-versa, in the sense that actions in one direction decrease the likelihood of talk and decisions accordingly (Brunsson 2003: 205-206).

Talk and decisions, on the other hand, also ‘compensate for’ inconsistent action. This is so, to the extent that either talk and decisions can satisfy demands to address an issue without actually taking action, or action can be insulated from opposition by contrary formal decisions that diffuse pressure to change the action (Brunsson, 2002). What is more, and rather ironically, action is being protected, in that management satisfies by talk the demands which the action does not meet. It also facilitates action for not having to satisfy inconsistent norms (Brunsson, 1989: 172).

In order to complete the academic discussion surrounding the concept of ‘organized hypocrisy’, mention should be made that previous research has documented the impact of ‘organized hypocrisy’ in distinct international organizations such as the World

---

\* Universidade do Mindelo, Cabo Verde.



Bank (Weaver, 2008), humanitarian NGOs (Cooley and Ron, 2002), the World Trade Organization (Steinberg, 2002) and the EU (Cusmano, 2018). Above all, and more to the point of this article, ‘organized hypocrisy’ has also been asserted in terms of the post-Cold War United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations (Lipson, 2007).

In fact, Lipson raises a number of issues worth of a more detailed consideration. To start with, ‘organized hypocrisy’ contributes to dysfunction in peacekeeping in, at least, three different ways. The first one regards the ‘irresponsible divorce’ between the Security Council and the field operation (Doyle, 2001: 537), also known as a ‘commitment gap’ (UN, 2000: 11). Such a gap, according to Lipson (2007), renders the Security Council resolutions merely ‘symbolic talk’ decoupled from action.

In addition, it eventually leads to the second dysfunctional tendency involved in ‘organized hypocrisy’ which consists of repeated reform talk (also) disconnected from action efforts (Brunsson and Olsen, 1993: 40; Lipson, 2007). Indeed, when involved in peacekeeping processes, international organizations tend to respond to external normative pressures by promising reform. But, once again, this is conducted in a disconnected way from the decision-making structures and processes that actually generate action. The critical factor that accounts for such disconnect is the political will. That being the case, (promises of) reforms either decoupled from or only loosely coupled to action only serve to compensate for a lack of political will to act. Not rarely, thus, this results in inaction which therefore amounts to ‘organized hypocrisy’ in peacekeeping.

Subcontracting is to be understood as the final form of ‘organized hypocrisy’. By contracting out or ‘separation by organizational unit’, as Brunsson (1989: 37-8) calls it, different organizational units respond separately to conflicting normative and operational demands. More recently, this may also involve regional subcontracting. In these cases, whereas the UN holds the political role as authorizer of the mission, regional organizations tend to play the action role.

Against this backdrop, this article aims to make a contribution to the field of ‘globalized hypocrisy’ in peacekeeping by applying it to the specific case of the Western Sahara, for a number of reasons. To start with, and despite being one of the long-lasting unsettled issues in world affairs, the last African colony has been completely overlooked as a research topic in ‘globalized hypocrisy’, in particular.

In addition, the Mission for the Referendum in the Western Sahara (MINURSO) matches the conventional definition of a peacekeeping intervention involving a ceasefire agreement between the warring parties and the permission of the host country for a mission invested with the traditional dual role of mediating a conflict and preparing the referendum. Indeed, and for clarity sake, peacekeeping is understood in this article as ‘any international effort involving an operational component to promote the termination of armed conflict or the resolution of longstanding disputes’ (Diehl, 1993: 4).

Lastly, the Western Sahara is an interesting study case since evidences of ‘organized hypocrisy’ on the UN’s positioning vis-à-vis the former Spanish colony can be found across the three dimensions of organizational outputs: the commitment gap, reforms disconnected from action and (regional) subcontracting.

Before dwelling upon those evidences, however, a brief contextual background of one of the oldest and most neglected conflicts of the world is needed.

### **From an unfinished decolonization to a far-reaching deadlock self-determination**

The contemporary roots of the Western Sahara’s dispute date back to the early 1970s. The decolonization of the former Spanish territory was neither a typical nor pacific process. Instead, it was marked by various disruptions and drawbacks, which help to explain why

the conflict within this territory remained unresolved for so many decades (Hodges, 1983; Lawless and Monahan, 1986; Jensen, 2004; Novais, 2009a, and 2009b). Up to the point that it is one of the last remaining non self-governed territories and a 'state-in-waiting' that challenges the traditional understanding of territorially bound nation-states.

By then, the UN exerted pressure on Spain to go ahead and speed up the decolonization process. This clashed with Rabat's expansionist territorial aspirations to see the emergence of the pre-colonial 'Great Morocco' which incorporated the Western Sahara.<sup>1</sup> Morocco's positioning regarding the former Spanish colony went against the idea of the territorial integrity of states, later converted or translated into the well-established principle of international law – the *uti possidetis juris* – which posited that the right to self-determination must not involve changes to existing frontiers at the time of independence, except upon the agreement of all the states concerned.

Indeed, in order to assure the promotion of peace and international stability while granting the self-determination right for colonial peoples, the principle of 'extancy' gained prominence (Novais, 2010). The latter encouraged the acceptance of the *status quo* or the continuity of colonial boundaries under African control, regardless of territorial realities. Territorial acquisition by the use of force, on the contrary, was prohibited by international law.

Besides those underlying historic territorial reasons, the conflict has also been fuelled by the 'culture of looting natural resources' factor (Schnabel, 2001: 18). Moroccan interest in the Western Sahara rested on the fact that this specific territory contained one of the largest areas of high quality phosphate which can be exploited by surface mining as well as considerable and reputedly rich fishing resources along its coast (Ruf, 1986: 71).<sup>2</sup> Additionally, fieldwork has been conducted confirming the existence of gas and oil reserves. In 1974, Madrid announced its intention to organize a referendum in its colony (following the UN recommendation), and to this end it undertook a preliminary census in August of that year. Against this background, Rabat initiated a series of measures aimed at stalling and thwarting any development potentially conducive to the independence of the area, and eventually invaded the Western Sahara in the following year.

Facing a policy of *fait accompli* undertaken by Rabat, without consulting the indigenous inhabitants, Spain secretly divided up the Western Sahara between Morocco and Mauritania under the Madrid tripartite agreements of 1975.

In the meantime, the Polisario Front<sup>3</sup> was established and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) was created, with backing from Algeria in February 1976 – a development which led to the juridical existence to the Saharwi state. By founding the SADR while administering an émigré population, Polisário inaugurated a new scenario in Africa: a state in exile fighting against an African invader.

Since then, a two-fold effort has been made by Polisario towards keeping the file on the Sahrawi decolonization process open while convincing the international community to recognize the SADR. The long and difficult battle that was to proceed thereafter towards self-determination was, nevertheless, largely ignored during the Cold War period.

Peace progress, though, was only visible in August 1988 when both Morocco and Polisario accepted a five-year negotiated Settlement Plan. The UN and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) called for direct negotiations but Morocco resisted due to fears that it would

<sup>1</sup> The territorial ambition of a Great Morocco was promoted by the Istiqlal party and involved taking in not only the Western Sahara, but also present day Mauritania, and much of Senegal, Mali and Algeria.

<sup>2</sup> Besides the above mentioned factors there was also the geo-strategic location of the Western Sahara next to the Canary Islands where a US military base (and spy satellites) was based.

<sup>3</sup> A truly representative movement of the different Sahrawi nationalist militant organizations was created on 10 May 1973, the Polisario Front (Frente Popular para la Liberación de Sanguia el Hamra y Río de Oro), an armed resistance movement against the Spanish colonizer and afterwards against Moroccan occupation.

signal further weakness within internal political circles. Hassan II was to change his attitude the following year when an unprecedented encounter took place in Marrakesh that prompted a unilateral declaration of a cease-fire which marked the beginning of a negotiating process. On 6 September 1991, a cease-fire agreement was eventually sealed between Polisario and the Moroccan authorities. After 15 years of war, MINURSO was established by security Council Resolution 690.

Since then, MINURSO has been trying to implement the self-determination and peace plan that has already known diverse strategies and approaches, as well as numerous deadlocks. For the moment, the Western Sahara is still among the organization's non-self-governing territories, having Spain as the administering power and its decolonization process is an open file converting it into the last African colony. In fact, it lies in a sort of limbo as a 'quasi-sovereign' state. While it has not succeeded in actually becoming a state because it lacks the external dimension of its right to self-determination, it has been able to exhibit reasons of state. Namely, it has until now retained its international personality, notably inside the AU, and was rather successful in implementing state-related practices in its refugee camps, as well as performing acts of stateness such as holding press conferences and producing a flag.

Against this background, the UN intervention in the Western Sahara constitutes an interesting example worth of consideration in order to make the case about 'organized hypocrisy', as the next section is about to show. This will be achieved by bringing into the light the different inconsistencies in terms of the UN's organizational outputs whether in the form of symbolic talk, reforms disconnected from action or the subcontracting of regional organizations.

Although assuming that those outputs are interrelated, for a blunt simplification of the analysis they will be considered separately. In addition, and taking for granted that 'organized hypocrisy' is also the result of conflicting pressures emanating from the organizational environment, the examination will further take into account 'the organization of hypocrisy' factors, or the inconsistencies of the environment which are reflected upon the UN's structures, processes, and ideologies.

## Shoot oneself in the foot... with symbolic talk

Right from the outset, the UN became the arena of the Western Sahara dispute. The UN General Assembly and Security Council's resolutions (whose content and spirit has been reproduced and translated into the OUA regarding Moroccan occupation as illegal and continuously acknowledging the Sahrawi self-determination, proved decisive for Western Sahara as well as to the organizations' own credit.

Although international law seems to have been of little use yet in the definitive resolution of the Western Sahara conflict, as the East Timor case has also demonstrated, managing to keep the unfinished issue on the agenda over the years and to set the legal boundaries may still prove to be critical in the future.

In fact, the recognition of the non-self-governing territory status of the former Spanish colony has been of great importance. It allowed, initially, the Sahrawi authorities and Polisario to pursue their lonely campaign for their common cause and it could legitimize an eventual intervention by the international community ahead.

Having said this, the Security Council resolutions have been merely 'symbolic talk' decoupled from action in terms of the original purpose. Indeed, regardless of the fact that UN Resolution 690 (1991) established the MINURSO and expressed support for the organization and the supervision (in cooperation with the OUA) of a self-determination referendum, that intention is yet to be fulfilled.

Not that the UN has not attempted to achieve it, at least in theory. Indeed, UN's overall approach to solve the Western Sahara affair evolved from the original free and fair referendum on self-determination, to a far more recent political option consisting of a transitional formula of self-government for a limited period, before the final status referendum would be held.

Moreover, the Security Council passed distinct resolutions throughout the years supporting different plans as well as renewed MINURSO's mandates on more than 40 occasions.<sup>4</sup> As a last resort, it even turned to high profile intervention of the different International negotiators and high-profile UN special Envoys to look for a breakthrough. However, albeit the appointment of highly prestigious figures such as James Baker, Peter van Walsun, Christopher Ross or Horst Kohler as personal envoys, the UN was unable to invert the stalemate situation in the Western Sahara.

True that UN internal dysfunctions were sided with external factors such as the lack of cooperation, and hostility at times, on the part of host governments, something which constitutes a test to the Council's will and capacity to support the operations in the field (SC, 2016). But the lack of success by the UN to uphold the principle of self-determination in the last African colony has been, in practice, a failure of political will at the highest level.<sup>5</sup> By continually allowing the Moroccan government to evade the obligation to submit the issue to the decision of the people of Western Sahara through a referendum, the Security Council has compromised MINURSO's efforts by shooting its own foot and has been complicit in the endless postponing of the conflict resolution.

Indeed, unable to reconcile the conflicting demands of the parties involved, the UN opted for managing the Western Saharan affair by decoupling politics and action (Brunsson, 1989: 33) – a pragmatic approach to peacekeeping based upon a political logic of consequences (Lipson, 2007). Symbolic talk by the UN, thus, served but a dual reverse and compensatory purpose in the Western Sahara: to give one the appearance of attempting to do something about it while hiding its reluctance to act.

A similar point could be made regarding a second dysfunctional tendency involved in 'organized hypocrisy' by the UN, which consists of repeated reform talk also disconnected from action (Brunsson and Olsen, 1993: 40; Lipson, 2007).

### **Dysfunctional promises of reform**

To disguise such commitment gap and to compensate for the lack of political will to act, the UN promised reforms in its peacekeeping procedures throughout the years. Three moments stand out in this respect during MINURSO's life span.

The first landmark document about UN peacekeeping was launched in a tough time for conflict prevention and peace consolidation. In truth, it emerged in a period of turbulence in the international system marked by crisis and change at the end of the Cold War (Rosenau, 1990). Penned by the UN's Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali, in 1992, the Agenda For Peace aimed to strengthen and make the preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping more efficient. A special emphasis was put upon the importance of building democratic institutions and, above all, the concept of post-conflict peacebuilding (Boutros-Ghali, 1992) was introduced.

<sup>4</sup> The most recent one dated from November 2018, when the UN Security Council adopted resolution 2440 which extended the MINURSO mandate in the Western Sahara for a further six months until 30 April 2019, on the grounds of a need to achieve a realistic, practicable and enduring political solution.

<sup>5</sup> James Baker interview "Wide Angle", 19 August 2004.

Another significant reform effort and review of peacekeeping operation took place in 2000. At the time, Secretary General Kofi Anan triggered a thorough review of the UN peace and security activities looking for improvement. The recommendations known as Brahimi Report placed the emphasis on peacebuilding and the rule of law, inadequate strategic analysis, gap between the goals identified by the Council and the resources available to meet them, as well as the need for clear, credible and achievable mandates (SC, 2016). Many of the Brahimi report's recommendations, however, were not implemented and remained unsolved in the Western Sahara.

More recently, in 2015, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon appointed a High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) to undertake another comprehensive assessment of the UN peace operations. Its report raised the need for reforms. Indeed, it called for four major changes: ensuring the primacy of politics, a flexible use of the full spectrum of peace operations, the need for stronger partnerships and a field-focused UN Secretariat and people-centred peace operations.

As a result, Ban Ki-moon assumed as the priorities of his mandate to focus on prevention and mediation, to strength the regional-global partnerships as well as conceiving faster and more responsive peace operations. Accordingly, the Council shifted the focus to deliver on the ground and put forward suggestions on how to be more strategic and realistic in deciding mandates (sequenced and prioritized) as well as more timely and effective supporting the peace operations.

Taken together, those realizations, besides being far from new, were not translated into the MINURSO field actions. Quite the opposite, such repeated reform talks were conducted in a disconnected way from the decision-making structures and processes that generate action efforts (Brunsson and Olsen, 1993: 40; Lipson, 2007).

Indeed, while the UN has produced voluminous quantities of talk and decisions relating to peacekeeping reform from 1992 to present, the end result to the Western Sahara is but institutional rhetoric decoupled from or only loosely coupled to action and only to satisfy external political pressure. To prove it, more than two decades elapsed since the establishment of MINURSO, the referendum is yet to be accomplished and the settlement of this territorial conflict still lies in a sort of limbo. To a great degree, this is due to UN's failing and lack of political will to act definitively in moments of deadlock, regardless of its numerous reform promises.

Subcontracting is to be understood as the final form of 'organized hypocrisy' by the UN. In the present case of the Western Sahara, it involved contracting out the regional organization of the AU to play an action role.

### **Contracting out and u-turning**

The role of regional organizations in (local and international) security issues both in Africa and the rest of the world would eventually gain *kudos* in more recent times, with implications for the Western Sahara case. It was not until the simultaneous occurrence of particular conditions that the possibility of regional states and organizations taking part in conflict prevention and resolution was brought to the upper end.

Among the factors that facilitated the change were the limitations of the UN – politically and budget overstretched – along with the states' disinclination to get involved and entangled in distant conflicts (i.e. US in Somalia) as well as the demands of globalization and regional bloc-formation. Such post-Cold War contextual circumstances were to produce two significant inter-related changes within the UN.



On the one hand, there was the UN's tendency to widen its security intervention so as to champion peacekeeping and conflict prevention, something that both the 1992 Agenda for Peace and the 2000 Brahimi report aptly confirm. This was only possible due to the UN's overruling of the relative sanctity of state sovereignty under certain conditions, namely genocide, humanitarian intervention or peace processes. On the other hand, such refocusing by the UN prompted the organization to increasingly intersect with other role-players while dealing with disputes and conflict resolution.

The end result of this change was that different actors other than the global UN, such as regional organizations (European Union, African Union, OSCE, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Organisation of American States and Association of South East Asian Nations to name a few), states (like Australia in East Timor), groups of states, NGOs and individuals (i.e. Nelson Mandela in Burundi, Abdelaziz Bouteflika between Ethiopia and Eritrea, or more recently Martti Ahtisaari in Kosovo), provided alternatives and assumed new roles in conflict prevention and resolution (Wedgwood, 1997). More concretely, external input was particularly required in two distinct recurrent scenarios: when the parties implicated in the dispute are not able or willing to reach an agreement; or when holding a plebiscite or referendum in the disputed territory is also not attainable (Miall, 1992).

Against this backdrop, the newcomer AU proposed reformed institutions and offered a credible strategy of conflict prevention by assuming to be willing to interfere, without consent, in the affairs of states to preserve peace and the rule of law. Indeed, by legally curtailing the sovereign prerogatives of African states, the UA assumed a disposition to move from the 'culture of non-intervention' of its predecessor (OAU) to a 'culture of non-indifference' (Williams, 2007).<sup>6</sup>

However, its strict adherence to the principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty and national independence served more as an argument for non-intervention than for involvement in conflicts. This is visible, for instance, in the fact that by favouring harmony and states over groups, the UA did not prevent its governing *uti possidetis* principle to be ignored and violated right at the outset in the case of Morocco over Western Sahara (Shelley, 2004: 27).

Thus, only in theory did the African organization endeavour to foster best practice in this respect. An analysis of the Western Sahrawi dispute in particular is revealing of a continuity line in terms of the regional organization's approach and the durability of the difficulties faced by the AU in the resolution of the conflict in the last African colony. Following years of being contracted out by the UN to play an action role on the affair, and shortly after calling for a joint AU and UN facilitated talks for a free and fair referendum for the people of Western Sahara (January 2018), the AU surprisingly announced, in September 2018, that it opted for limiting its peace efforts in order to support the UN process in the region (Ani, 2018). The more restricted role by the AU implies that the issue will not be discussed by its Peace and Security Council – where conflict situations are usually addressed – but rather by a troika of heads of state (the outgoing, current and incoming AU chairpersons) alongside the AU Commission chairperson, and without any binding effect. Such unexpected and unprecedented decision by the AU followed Morocco's return to the organization in 2017 as its 55<sup>th</sup> member and constituted a big win for Rabat's contentious of the UA biased stance on the former Spanish colony. By attempting to move it from the UN to the AU and then freeze the issue by returning it once again to the UN, Morocco

<sup>6</sup> More concretely, Article 4(h) of the AU's Charter states that it has the right to intervene in a member state to 'restore peace and stability', to 'prevent war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity'; and in response to 'a serious threat to legitimate order'.

believed that the idle time works in favour of its pretensions in the hope that the passing of time will convert the Western Sahara takeover into a *fait accompli*.

A number of diverse environmental or 'organization of hypocrisy' factors account for the UA's partial failure in question: non-cooperative neighbours, the lack of political will of the Western powers, Morocco suffering from the 'strong hubris syndrome' – believing it has the power to implement its will regardless of Sahrawi opposition – and not acknowledging full legitimacy to the AU. Besides, the AU also had to deal with the crucial internal issue of funding shortage (Schnabel, 2001: 19) due to its continual struggle to ensure that its members pay their dues at all let alone on time (Williams, 2006).

Admitting that both the relative dependence on local and external actors and the half-hearted support of those same actors, as well as its fund shortage, may beset AU's intervention, still the brunt of responsibility also lies on the regional organization's apparent incapacity or disinclination to utilize its potential to the fullest, notably in the case of the Western Sahara dispute.

Taken into consideration that no state has yet acknowledged the Moroccan *de facto* ruling over the Western Sahara, there is no tension between the principles of sovereignty or internal affairs and the humanitarian intervention. Morocco is the occupying force of Western Sahara preventing a waiting-state to enter functions and the Sahrawi people to exercise their self-determination right.

Thus, despite teaming up with the AU in cooperating to reach a peace settlement to the Western Sahara dispute, the UN has been unable to achieve the referendum for self-determination. Eventually, as a way to avoid confrontation between the allies of the contending parties to the dispute, the UN had to reassume the solo role to try once again to resolve the crisis through MINURSO. This is revealing of the organizations' uneasiness to move from the 'culture of non-intervention' to the 'culture of non-indifference'.

Furthermore, the case of the Western Sahara is illustrative of the strategic means of managing the pressures of inconsistent logics of consequences and appropriateness that the possibility of contracting out offers (Lipson, 2007), as a remaining compelling evidence of 'organized hypocrisy' by the UN. Finally, it also corroborates the contradictory nature of the organizations' mediation role in conflict resolution: it can be both ameliorative of the situation and counter-productive.

## Conclusion

As a rule, the existence of 'organized hypocrisy' in international organizations involved in conflict resolution dynamics has been more asserted than demonstrated and it tends to escape empirical verification. Against this backdrop, the purpose of this paper is to illustrate the existence of 'organized hypocrisy' by the UN in the Western Saharan conflict. The latter was a creation and legacy of post-colonialism and constitutes an evocative example of the most conflict-ridden continent in the world region. It is basically a territorial dispute also involving competition over resources and regional political power which has prevented for more than 40-years both Maghrebi integration and the African unity. Moreover, its long-tailed stalemate constitutes a pebble in the shoe of the international community and a source of permanent latent security threat in the Mediterranean Basin. Based upon the tailor-made analysis of the UN intervention in the protracted dispute of the Western Sahara, the article examined the prospects and challenges of peacekeeping intervention faced by international organizations. It concludes that despite the meritorious attempts of peacekeeping (or conflict management more than resolution), the considerable inherent limitations and extrinsic obstacles faced by the UN in the last African colony are illustrative of the organizations' dysfunctional impediments to put an end to a conflict.

True that it has performed the pivotal role in collectively legitimising the self-determination right of the Sahrawi people, achieving a peace accord which amounted to a ceasefire and the preparation of a self-determination referendum (without no reference to any enforcement mechanism). However, and above all, it represents a partial failure and the Achilles' heel in the curriculum of the UN. Indeed, it proved incapable of abating the conflict by reaching a definitive solution for the Western Sahara and displayed throughout the years distinct evidences of 'globalized hypocrisy'.

More concretely, the paper proposed an examination of the continuous inconsistency between the rhetoric and action by the UN. In fact, notwithstanding the considerable amount of talk and decisions produced over the last 40 years, it only served to satisfy the demands to address the ongoing issue, without actually reversing into action. Indeed, the Western Sahara example unveils the huge gap between rhetoric and policy of international organizations. In a similar way, UN's rhetoric (talk and decisions) about peacekeeping reform throughout the years also did but compensate for the inaction regarding the Western Sahara self-referendum.

Lastly, another evidence of 'organized hypocrisy' underlying UN's record towards the last African colony consisted of subcontracting a regional organization (the AU) – right from the outset of MINURSO and until quite recently, before re-assuming a solo role – to vie for the resolution of the conflict. Contracting out the AU, however, only served as a strategic mean of managing the pressures of the contradictory logics of consequences and appropriateness, since it proved unable to achieve a plebiscite or referendum in the disputed territory.

It could be argued at this point that MINURSO's efforts to organize a referendum to decide the dispute have been continuously frustrated by 'organization of hypocrisy' factors or conflicting pressures and inconsistencies emanating from the UN's environment. Namely, it can be pointed out the Moroccan government's refusal, at critical junctures, to cooperate in practice in the implementation of the agreed procedures as the sole responsible for MINURSO lack of success. Not risking any significant international opprobrium, Morocco has been reluctant to accept both the UN and the UA terms, and has been blocking with impunity the resolution of the Western Saharan dispute.

Nevertheless, Rabat has been able to behave in this way only because of the attitude of the UN's Security Council, which has repeatedly refused to impose its binding arbitration at Morocco's expense. It seems therefore to be the case of the global system of law and order being pushed aside by Rabat, with the condoning of the UN, out of fear of the undesirable prospect of the unstable and unfriendly Morocco. UN member states, perhaps over-identified with Morocco, appear to lack the political will to act decisively, choosing instead to continue delaying the resolution of the protracted Saharwi conflict.

In reality, and despite being a straightforward case in terms of international legality, the Western Sahara state-to-be has been 'let down' by the incapacity or unwillingness of the global community to find an acceptable formula which puts in place the Sahrawi right to self-determination. That is the case of both the UN and the major Western powers.

In short, the lack of vital support by the UN accounts for the failure of many attempts to find a resolution for this stalemate. Far from dissolving the conflict, these previous and currently missed opportunities have done nothing but perpetuate the status quo in the former Spanish colony.

Originally purposed to fulfill the task of granting self-determination, MINURSO has been unable to provide for its namesake. What is worst, considering the historic incapacity by the UN to reform MINURSO and in view of the difficulties involved in achieving more decisive steps towards the referendum process by the traditional means – either increasing

troops, equipment or funding – the case has been made for the UN to consider to begin planning an exit strategy by introducing a series of progressive pre-exit benchmarks (Dyer, 2015).

In sum, assessing the role of the UN in the failed MINURSO and the unrelenting continuity of the Western Saharan affair, sheds light to the organization's pragmatic peacekeeping approach which aims at assuring its survival at all cost, regardless of freezing and ossifying the far-reaching deadlock. Such contention – on MINURSO being the lesser devil – serves to corroborate the argument that the likelihood of 'organized hypocrisy', as a response to conflicting demands, is inversely related to the efficacy of alternative means of managing conflicts (Brunsson 2003: 12).

Meanwhile, the peace accord and plans for the self-determination referendum in the Western Sahara are becoming almost moribund which makes the collaboration of international and regional organizations even more pressing. Despite the hypothetical commitment fatigue of the international community, and the past record of 'organized hypocrisy', it is rather ironic that the UN may still be pivotal in a conflict which is difficult to settle and hard to resolve.

## Acrónimos

AU – African Union  
 EU – European Union  
 MINURSO – Mission for the Referendum in the Western Sahara  
 NGO – Non-governmental organization  
 OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe  
 OUA – Organisation of African Unity  
 SC – Security Council  
 UN – United Nations

## Bibliographic references

- Ani, Ndubushi (2018), AU limits its role in Western Sahara crisis, Institute for Security Studies Today. [Consult. Sept.2018]. Available at: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/au-limits-its-role-in-western-sahara-crisis>.
- Boutros-Ghali, Boutros (1992), *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-Keeping*, New York: UN.
- Brunsson, Nils (2003), 'Organized Hypocrisy', in Barbara Czarniawska and Guje Sevón (eds.) *The Northern Lights: Organization Theory in Scandinavia*, pp. 201-22. Oslo: Copenhagen Business School Press.
- \_\_\_\_ (2002), *The Organization of Hypocrisy: Talk, Decisions and Action in Organizations*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oslo: Copenhagen Business School Press.
- \_\_\_\_ (1989), *The Organization of Hypocrisy: Talk, Decisions and Action in Organizations*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Brunsson, Nils and Johan P. Olsen (1993), *The Reforming Organization*. New York: Routledge.
- Cooley, Alexander and Ron, James (2002), 'The NGO Scramble: Organizational Insecurity and the Political Economy of Transnational Action', *International Security* 27(1): 5-39.
- Cusmano, Eugenio (2018), Migrant Rescue as organized hypocrisy: EU maritime missions offshore Libya between humanitarianism and border control, *Cooperation and Conflict*. [Consult. Oct.2018]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836718780175>.
- Diehl, Paul F. (1993), *International Peacekeeping*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Doyle, Michael W. (2001), 'War Making, Peace Making, and the United Nations: The United Nations' Post-Cold War Record', in Chester Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela Aall (eds.) *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, pp. 529-60. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace.
- Dyer, Josh (2015), Beyond reforms: Considering a UN exit in Western Sahara, Stimson spotlight. [Consult. Oct.2018]. Available at: <https://www.stimson.org/content/beyond-reforms-considering-un-exit-western-sahara>.
- Hodges, Tony (1983), *Western Sahara: The Roots of a Desert War*, Westport: Lawrence Hill & Co, Publ.
- Jensen, Erik (2004), *Western Sahara: Anatomy Of A Stalemate*, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Krasner, S. D. (2001), Organized hypocrisy in nineteenth century East Asia, *International Relations of Asia-Pacific* 1: 173-179.
- (1999), *Sovereignty: Organized hypocrisy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Lawless, Richard and Monahan, Laila (eds.) (1986), *War and Refugees: The Western Sahara Conflict*, London: F. Pinter Publ.
- Lipson, Michael (2007), 'Peacekeeping: Organized Hypocrisy?' *European Journal of International Relations*, 13: 5-35.
- Novais, Rui Alexandre (2010), *Stalemate in the Western Sahara: The blocking trilogy*, *IPRIS Maghreb Review* 4.
- (2009a), An unfinished process: the Western Sahara as a post-scriptum of the colonial period, *Africana Studia* (12): 59-66.
- (2009b), How the North pictures the neighbouring South: The Portuguese press coverage of the Sahrawi conflict, *Journal of African Media Studies* 1 (3): 415-427.
- Rosenau, James (1990), *Turbulence in world politics: A theory of change and continuity*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Security Council (2016), "The Security Council and UN peace operations: Reform and Deliver, *Security Council Report* 2: 1-20.
- Schnabel, Albrecht (2001), "Preventing Wars within States: What can Intergovernmental Organisations do in Africa", in Sidiropoulos, E (ed.) *A Continent Apart: Kosovo, Africa and Humanitarian Intervention*, Johannesburg: SAIIA, pp. 13-36.
- Shelley, Toby (2004), *Endgame in the Western Sahara: What Future for Africa's Last Colony?*, London: Zed Books.
- Steinberg, Richard (2002), 'In the Shadow of Law or Power? Consensus-Based Bargaining and Outcomes in the GATT/WTO', *International Organization* 56(2): 339-74.
- United Nations (2007), Security Council Extends United Nations Mission in Western Sahara until 31 October, New York: Department of Public Information, News and Media Division press release, 30.04.2007. Available at: [http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/in\\_02.05.2007](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/in_02.05.2007).
- (2000), 'Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations', UN Document A/55/305-S/2000/809, 21 August. [Consult. May.2004]. Available at: [http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace\\_operations/](http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/) [Brahimi Report].
- Weaver, Catherine E. (2008), *Hypocrisy Trap: The World Bank and the Poverty reform*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Wedgwood, Ruth (1997), "Regional and Subregional Organisations in Conflict Management", in Crocker, C.A., Hampson, F. O., and Aall, P. (eds.) *Managing Global Chaos. Sources and Responses to International Conflict*, Washington D.C.: United States Institute of peace Press.
- Williams, Paul D. (2007), From Non-Intervention to Non-Indifference: The Origins and Development of the African Union's Security Culture, *African Affairs*, Advance Access published 12 March 2007: 1-27.
- Williams, Paul D. (2006), Military Responses to Mass Killing: The African Union Mission in Sudan, *International Peacekeeping*, 13 (2): 168-183.







# The African Union policies towards the Western Sahara

Sidi Omar\*

pp. 91-102

## Introduction

Commonly referred to as Africa's last colony, Western Sahara remains the last Non-Self-Governing Territory in Africa on the agenda of the UN since 1963. Despite international and African settlement efforts, the conflict, which erupted in 1975 following Morocco's occupation of the Territory, remains active and there is no solution in sight. The article will analyse the policies pursued by the African Union (AU), as an intergovernmental organisation, with regard to the question of Western Sahara, as reflected in AU official documents, decisions and statements on the matter. It will start with outlining the general historical and political context of the involvement of the African continental organisation in the issue of Western Sahara, and how the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the predecessor of the AU, had dealt with this question. It will then focus on some defining moments of the engagement of the African continental organisation with the Western Sahara issue, with special emphasis on four defining moments. First, the admission of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) to the OAU in 1984 as its significance for the treatment of the question of Western Sahara within the African context. Second, the transformation of the OAU into the AU in 2002, and the role played by the AU policy-making and legal organs regarding the question of Western Sahara. Third, the admission of Morocco to the AU in 2017 and its implications on the debates within the AU policy organs regarding the Western Sahara issue. Fourth, the establishment of the AU high-level mechanism for Western Sahara and the prospects of the AU involvement in the UN-led peace process aimed at resolving the conflict. Overall, the article will demonstrate that, despite its active involvement in the question of Western Sahara, the AU still faces certain structural and political constraints that have so far prevented it from having a major role as an active player in the management and resolution of the longest running conflict on the continent.

## Historical and political context

To set the historical and political context in which the African continental organisation became involved in the question of Western Sahara, three key points should be highlighted. *First*, the creation of the OAU in 1963 coincided with the inclusion of Western Sahara—or Spanish Sahara as known then—on the UN list of Non-Self-Governing Territories under Chapter XI of the UN Charter. The list, which is still open today, included those territories whose peoples were subjected to colonial and foreign domination at the time. The legal

\* Universitat Jaume I de Castellón.

and political importance of establishing Western Sahara as a Non-Self-Governing Territory consisted in recognising the people of the Territory as a colonial people with an inalienable right to self-determination in accordance with the UN General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 containing the *Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples*. On 16 December 1965, the UN General Assembly adopted its first resolution on Spanish Sahara<sup>1</sup> in which it recalled resolution 1514 (XV) of 1960 and requested Spain, as the administering power of the Territory, to take all necessary measures to liberate Spanish Sahara from colonial domination.

*Second*, the OAU Charter, which was adopted in May 1963, included among its purposes the promotion of the unity and solidarity of the African States and eradication of all forms of colonialism from Africa.<sup>2</sup> Article 3 of the OAU Charter provides that Member States, in pursuit of the purposes stated in Article II, solemnly affirm and declare their adherence to the following principles including, *inter alia*, absolute dedication to the total emancipation of the African territories that are still dependent.<sup>3</sup> The First Conference of Independent African Heads of State and Government, held in Addis Ababa, from 22 to 25 May 1963, adopted resolution CIAS/Plen.2/Rev.2 on decolonisation. Through the resolution, the African leaders reaffirmed the duty of all African Independent States to support dependent peoples in Africa in their struggle for freedom and independence. In 1966, the OAU Council of Ministers also adopted resolution CM/Res. 82 (VII)<sup>4</sup> in which it expressed its full support for all efforts aimed at the immediate and unconditional liberation of all African territories under Spanish domination including Spanish Sahara.

*Third*, recognising that border problems constituted a grave and permanent factor of dissent, the OAU was unequivocal in establishing the intangibility of borders inherited from the colonial period as one of the key guiding principles of the incipient continental body. The principle was enshrined in resolution AHG/Res. 16 (I) adopted by the OAU Assembly held in Cairo, Egypt, from 17 to 21 July 1964.<sup>5</sup> The resolution recognised that the borders of African States, on the day of their independence, constituted a tangible reality. The OAU Assembly consequently reaffirmed solemnly the strict respect by all Member States of the Organisation for the principles laid down in paragraph 3 of Article III of the OAU Charter.<sup>6</sup> It also solemnly declared that all Member States had pledged themselves to respect the borders existing on their achievement of national independence.<sup>7</sup> The same principle has also been enshrined in the Constitutive Act<sup>8</sup> of the African Union.<sup>9</sup> It is pertinent to note in this context that only Morocco and Somalia abstained from voting on the OAU resolution AHG/Res. 16 (I) because both countries had territorial claims over their neighbours: Morocco in the case of Western Sahara and Mauritania and Somalia in the case of parts of Ethiopia and Kenya.

The UN and the international community as a whole have significantly contributed to the enshrining of the principle of the intangibility of colonial borders in the African context. The UN in particular has recognised and admitted within its membership the African

<sup>1</sup> A/RES/20/2072 of 16 December 1965, paragraph 2.

<sup>2</sup> The OAU Charter adopted by the Heads of African States and Governments assembled in the City of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 25<sup>th</sup> day of May 1963; article II; a and d.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, article III: 6.

<sup>4</sup> Resolution on the Territories under Spanish Domination, Resolutions of the Seventh Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 31 October to 4 November 1966.

<sup>5</sup> Resolution AHG/Res. 16 (I) on Border Disputes among African States adopted by the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government First Ordinary Session, Cairo, UAR, from 17 to 21 July 1964.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Constitutive Act adopted by the Thirty-Sixth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU, held in Lomé, Togo, on 11 July 2000; see Article 4, Principles: b.

<sup>9</sup> The African Union was launched officially during the First Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union held in Durban Summit, South Africa, on 9-10 July 2002.

States with their borders as they existed at the time of their independence and not based on any historical, ethnic or other criteria. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has also shown that the principle of *uti possidetis juris*, the application of which gives rise to this respect for intangibility of frontiers, is a firmly established principle of international law where decolonisation is concerned. According to the ICJ, the principle is not a special rule which pertains solely to one specific system of international law. It is a general principle, which is logically connected with the phenomenon of the obtaining of independence, wherever it occurs.<sup>10</sup>

This was the historical and political context in which the OAU became seized of the question of Western Sahara as an African territory that was under foreign domination. The principles and objectives of the OAU Charter were to guide the OAU in its policies regarding Western Sahara, in particular those principles relating to the total decolonisation of the African territories under foreign occupation. In line with these principles, the OAU consistently maintained its support for the liberation struggle of the people of Western Sahara as manifested in the many statements and resolutions adopted on the matter. These included the OAU decision to admit the Sahrawi Republic (SADR), as a full member State, to the African continental body.

### The Admission of the Sahrawi Republic (SADR) to the OAU

As I pointed out elsewhere (Omar, 2008: 46), although Spain withdrew from Western Sahara in February 1976 without fulfilling its responsibilities in decolonising the Territory, it created the conditions and structures on which a national Sahrawi entity would be founded. First, Spain delimited the borders of the Territory through a series of international agreements. Second, it contributed, through its colonial policy, to the emergence of a relatively homogeneous demographic community conscious of its own distinctive self: the Sahrawi people. As Zunes and Mundy (2010: 95) have observed, Spanish colonial domination specifically and regional colonisation generally played a profound role in shaping the Western Saharan's self-conception.

It was in this context that the Frente POLISARIO<sup>11</sup>, in representation of the Sahrawi people, proclaimed the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) on 27 February 1976 as a sovereign State over the Territory of Western Sahara. The proclamation of the SADR was not only to fill in the vacuum left by Spain's precipitated withdrawal from the Territory but was also to embody the sovereign will and independence of the Sahrawi people. This fact was confirmed by the Advisory Opinion of the ICJ on 16 October 1975<sup>12</sup>, which established that, prior to Spanish colonisation, Western Sahara was inhabited by autonomous and independent people who were socially and politically organised under leaders competent to represent them. Since its proclamation, the SADR has been recognised by more than 80 states; it has established diplomatic relations with many countries around the world. The SADR exercises its full sovereignty over the liberated territories of Western Sahara and has the administrative and political capacity to handle its own affairs and conduct its international relations.

The huge costs incurred during the war made King Hassan II of Morocco realise the impossibility of a military solution in Western Sahara. In an attempt to halt the advance of the Sahrawi Army and the increasing diplomatic achievements made by the SADR

<sup>10</sup> International court of Justice, Reports of judgments, Advisory Opinions and Orders. Case concerning the frontier dispute (Burkina Faso/Republic of Mali), Judgment of 22 December 1986, par. 20.

<sup>11</sup> *Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y de Río de Oro* (Frente POLISARIO).

<sup>12</sup> ICJ (1975) Advisory Opinion on Western Sahara, 1975, ICJ 12, par. 81.

in Africa and elsewhere, King Hassan II was forced to contemplate, albeit for tactical reasons, the possibility of holding a self-determination referendum in Western Sahara as a way-out of the conflict. In its Eighteenth Ordinary Session held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 24 to 27 June 1981, the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government examined the report of the Secretary-General and the Reports of the Fifth and Sixth Sessions of the Ad-Hoc Committee of Heads of State on Western Sahara. It noted with appreciation the solemn commitment made by King Hassan II of Morocco to accept the holding of referendum in the Western Sahara to enable the people of that territory to exercise their right to self-determination as well as his pledge to cooperate with the Ad-Hoc Committee in the search for a just, peaceful and lasting solution.

The OAU Assembly consequently adopted resolution AHR/Res. 103 (XVIII) on Western Sahara in which it decided to set up an Implementation Committee with full powers to work with the UN and to take all necessary measures to guarantee the exercise by the people of Western Sahara of self-determination through a general and free referendum. It urged the parties to the conflict to observe an immediate ceasefire and directed the Implementation Committee to meet before the end of August 1981 and in collaboration with the parties in conflict to work out the modalities and all other details relevant to the implementation of the ceasefire and the conduct and administration of the referendum. It also requested the UN in conjunction with the OAU to provide a peacekeeping force to be stationed in Western Sahara to ensure peace and security during the organisation and conduct of the referendum and subsequent elections.

Despite the early commitment undertaken by King Hassan II of Morocco before the OAU Summit held in Nairobi in June 1981 and its pledge to allow the referendum to take place and to respect its outcome, it immediately became evident that Morocco was not sincere in its intentions, and that it was only playing for time. Against the backdrop of Morocco's obstructionism, on 22 February 1982, the OAU took a decision to admit the Sahrawi Republic (SADR) into the continental organisation, after having been recognised as an independent sovereign African State by more than half of Member States of the OAU.<sup>13</sup> The decision was then followed by the SADR taking up its seat as the 51<sup>st</sup> Member State of the OAU in November 1984. In reaction, Morocco withdrew from the organisation.

In opposing the SADR's admission into the OAU, Morocco and its allies at the time contended expressly and implicitly that a state could not exist and be recognised as such before it had established governmental, effective control over a given population living in a clearly defined territory. However, Morocco's argument was both circular and self-serving. The SADR was not able to establish control over the whole Western Sahara and over half of its population precisely because of Morocco's forcible occupation and annexation of the Territory in defiance of the Advisory Opinion of the ICJ of 16 October 1975 and the UN and OAU resolutions on the matter.

At a later stage, Morocco argued that some States had allegedly withdrawn their recognition of the SADR, thus undermining the political and legal existence of the Sahrawi State. The argument is invalid because, in accordance with the rules of international law of recognition of States contained in article 6 of the 1933 Montevideo Convention, "recognition is unconditional and irrevocable"<sup>14</sup>. Hence, once other States have recognised the SADR as a sovereign State, then these States cannot revoke their recognition, except when the SADR ceases to exist, or when the recognising States no longer exist. Moreover, the fact that some States, due to extraordinary circumstances, had to have a part of their institutions

<sup>13</sup> Admission was based on decision by simple majority of Member States in line with Article XXVIII (2) of the OAU Charter.

<sup>14</sup> The Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States of 1933, article 6.

operating from outside their territories has never been considered as an impediment to their recognition as sovereign States. The Palestinian case has shown that the doctrine related to recognition of States has evolved to benefit the legitimate aspirations of peoples struggling against foreign occupation and colonial rule.

The OAU decision on admitting the SADR as a Member State of the OAU was therefore a crucial defining moment that had significant implications on the OAU active involvement in the question of Western Sahara. A landmark in this context was the adoption by the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, meeting in its Nineteenth Ordinary Session in Addis Ababa from 6 to 12 June 1983, of resolution AHG/Res. 104 (XIX)<sup>15</sup> on Western Sahara. The resolution reaffirmed, in letter and spirit, OAU resolution AHR/Res. 103 (XVIII) on Western Sahara, as outlined above. It urged the parties to the conflict, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO, to undertake direct negotiations with a view to bringing about a ceasefire to create the necessary condition for a peaceful and fair referendum for self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, a referendum without any administrative or military constraints, under the auspices of the OAU and the UN.<sup>16</sup> It also requested the UN in conjunction with the OAU to provide a Peace-Keeping Force to be stationed in Western Sahara to ensure peace and security during the organisation and conduct of the referendum.<sup>17</sup>

The OAU resolution AHG/Res. 104 (XIX) was instrumental in laying the foundations for the subsequent UN efforts aimed at finding a solution to the question of Western Sahara. It was in this context that the UN General Assembly adopted unanimously resolution 40/50<sup>18</sup>, on 2 December 1985, based on a draft introduced by the Chairman of the OAU, the then President of Senegal, on behalf of the African States. Resolution 40/50, which reflected the entire operative paragraphs of OAU resolution AHG/Res. 104 (XIX), requested the two parties to start (a) direct negotiations to reach (b) a ceasefire, and (c) to agree on the modalities of a free and fair referendum on self-determination for the people of Western Sahara.

In the framework of the General Assembly resolution 40/50, the UN Secretary-General and the OAU Chairman began, in 1986, a joint mediation aimed at obtaining acceptance by the two parties to the conflict of a settlement plan. The main aim of the plan was to enable the people of Western Sahara to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence under conditions acceptable to them and, hence, to the international community. The UN and OAU jointly elaborated a Settlement Plan that was agreed to by the two parties on 30 August 1988, and adopted by Security Council resolutions 658 (1990) and 690 (1991). The plan provided for holding a free and fair referendum under UN/OAU supervision in which the Sahrawi people could exercise their right to self-determination in choosing between independence and integration into Morocco. The Security Council also mandated the establishment of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) that was tasked with holding a referendum for self-determination at a specified date not later than February. The mission was subsequently deployed in the Territory to supervise the ceasefire, which came into force on 6 September 1991. The promised referendum however has not been held yet owing to Morocco's unwillingness to go ahead with UN/OAU Settlement Plan<sup>19</sup> for fear that the Sahrawi voters would overwhelmingly vote

<sup>15</sup> Resolution AHG Res 104 (XIX) on Western Sahara, Assembly of Heads of State and Government, Nineteenth Ordinary Session, 6 to 12 June 1983, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 4.

<sup>18</sup> Resolution A/RES/40/50, adopted by the General Assembly on 2 December 1985, 99<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting, Question of Western Sahara.

<sup>19</sup> Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara, 19 February 2002, (S/2002/178), par. 48.

for the independence of Western Sahara. In the meantime, until its transformation into the AU, the OAU maintained the same policy regarding Western Sahara which was based on the principles and objectives of its Charter and its relevant resolutions on the matter.

## The AU and the Question of Western Sahara

The transformation of the OAU into the AU was described as an event of great magnitude in the institutional evolution and transformation of the continent. The year 1999 however may be singled out as the first time when the OAU Assembly decided, in conformity with the ultimate objectives of the OAU, to establish an African Union as a way to expedite the process of economic and political integration of the continent. Since then, efforts were redoubled to achieve this goal that culminated in Durban Summit, South Africa, held on 9-10 July 2002, which marked the official launching of the AU and the holding of the First Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union.

In the AU founding Constitutive Act<sup>20</sup>, which was adopted in Lomé, Togo, on 11 July 2000, the African leaders underlined that the AU shall function in accordance with a number of principles including, *inter alia*, sovereign equality and interdependence among Member States of the Union; respect of borders existing on achievement of independence; and prohibition of the use of force or threat to use force among Member States of the Union. The establishment of the AU, therefore, marked another important defining moment in the involvement of the African organisation in the question of Western Sahara. As the successor to the OAU, the AU has remained strongly committed to finding a solution to this question in fulfilment of its responsibilities for the promotion of peace, security and stability on the continent in accordance with the UN Charter and the AU Constitutive Act. It is pertinent to highlight in this context the AU Plan of Action<sup>21</sup> that was adopted during the Special Session on the Consideration and Resolution of Conflicts in Africa held in Libya in 1999. The Plan of Action included the measures that needed to be taken to accelerate the resolution of conflict and crisis situations and consolidate peace in Africa. Regarding Western Sahara, the AU leaders pledged their support for the ongoing UN efforts to overcome the current impasse and for relevant UN Security Council resolutions. They also called for the intensification of efforts towards the holding of a referendum to enable the people of the Territory to choose between the option of independence and that of integration into the Kingdom of Morocco.

Concerned about the human rights situation in the occupied territories of Western Sahara, the AU Executive Council, meeting in its Twentieth Ordinary Session, held in Addis Ababa, from 23 to 27 January 2012, adopted decision EX.CL/Dec.689(XX) on the Twenty ninth, Thirtieth and Thirty first Activity Reports of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). Concerning the situation in Western Sahara, the Executive Council requested the ACHPR to carry out a mission to the Occupied Territory of the SADR with a view to investigating human rights violations and to report to the next Ordinary Session of the Executive Council in January 2013. The significance of this decision lies in that it highlighted the increasing interest given by the AU to the issue of human rights in the Occupied Territories of the SADR as well as the AU's stance with regards Morocco's occupation of parts of the SADR.

<sup>20</sup> Constitutive Act adopted by the Thirty-Sixth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU, held in Lomé, Togo, on 11 July 2000; Article 4.

<sup>21</sup> Plan of action (SP/ASSEMBLY/PS/PLAN (I)) adopted by the AU Heads of State and Government, meeting in Tripoli, Libya, on 31 August 2009.



The AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, meeting in its Nineteenth Ordinary Session, held in Addis Ababa, on 15-16 July 2012, adopted the Report of the Peace and Security Council on its Activities and the State of Peace and Security in Africa. Regarding Western Sahara, the Assembly renewed the AU's appeal to the Security Council for a more proactive approach to the dispute. In particular, it called on the Security Council to endeavour to create conditions that would enable the people of Western Sahara to exercise their right to self-determination in line with international legality and the relevant AU decisions, including the AU Plan of Action adopted on 31 August 2009. In the same context, the AU Executive Council, meeting in its Twenty-Second Ordinary Session, held in Addis Ababa, on 21-25 January 2013, adopted decision EX.CL/Dec.758(XXII) on the Activity Report of the AU Commission. Concerning Western Sahara, the Executive Council requested the Commission to take all the necessary measures for the organisation of a referendum for self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in compliance with the relevant OAU decisions and UN resolutions.

The Peace and Security Council (PSC) is the principal, standing organ of the AU for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. In March 2015, the PSC took a decision<sup>22</sup> on Western Sahara in which it reaffirmed the AU commitment to the search for a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict in fulfilment of the AU responsibilities in the promotion of peace and security on the continent in accordance with the UN Charter. To this end, the PSC recommended practical steps including the reactivation of the Ad Hoc Committee of Heads of State and Government on Western Sahara, the establishment of an International Contact Group for Western Sahara and the regular review of the situation in the Territory. The decision urged the UN Security Council to take all necessary decisions to ensure progress in the search for a solution to the conflict in Western Sahara. It also called on the Council to provide MINURSO with a human rights mandate and to address the issue of the illegal exploitation of the Territory's natural resources.

In June 2015, the AU Assembly adopted a decision<sup>23</sup> in which it called on the UN General Assembly to determine a date for the holding of the self-determination referendum for the people of Western Sahara and to protect the integrity of Western Sahara as a Non-Self-Governing Territory from any act that might undermine it. It also urged the Security Council to assume fully its responsibilities and to address effectively the issues of the respect for human rights and the illegal exploitation of the natural resources of the Territory. The same position was reiterated in the AU Summit held early this year<sup>24</sup>.

The Office of the Legal Counsel and Directorate for Legal Affairs of the AU Commission issued in 2015 a legal opinion<sup>25</sup> on the legality of economic activities in Western Sahara. The legal opinion reaffirmed that Western Sahara is a Non-Self-Governing Territory under Article 73 of the UN Charter. As a Non-Self-Governing Territory, Western Sahara question remains a pending issue of decolonisation and should therefore be resolved in accordance with UN General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 on *the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples*.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the AU legal

<sup>22</sup> Communiqué (PSC/PR/COMM/1. (CDXCVI)) adopted by Peace and Security Council, 496<sup>th</sup> Meeting, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 27 March 2015.

<sup>23</sup> Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.583(XXV), Assembly of the Union, Twenty-fifth Ordinary Session 14-15 June 2015, Johannesburg, South Africa, par. 18.

<sup>24</sup> Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.598(XXVI), Assembly of the Union, Twenty-sixth Ordinary Session 30-31 January 2016, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, par. 20.

<sup>25</sup> Legal opinion on "the legality in the context of international law, including the relevant United Nations resolutions and OAU/AU decisions, of actions allegedly taken by the Moroccan authorities or any other state, group of states, foreign companies or any other entity in the exploration and/or exploitation of renewable and non-renewable natural resources or any other economic activity in Western Sahara" issued by the Office of the Legal Counsel and Directorate for Legal Affairs of the African Union Commission, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 67.

opinion made it clear that Morocco had never acquired the status of administering Power over the Territory of Western Sahara in terms of Article 73 of the UN Charter<sup>27</sup>, and that, consequently, Western Sahara/SADR is considered to be under colonial occupation by Morocco. Furthermore, the legal opinion recalled that the AU and all Member States of the UN had never recognised the sovereignty claims of Morocco over Western Sahara nor approved Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara.<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, Morocco, as the occupying Power in accordance with the UN General Assembly resolution 2711 of 1970<sup>29</sup>, has no legal right under the UN Charter and international law to occupy or govern the Territory of Western Sahara.

As outlined above, the actions taken by the AU Assembly, the Executive Council and the Legal Counsel all show the different instruments and levels at which the AU has been actively involved in the question of Western Sahara in line with the guiding principles of AU Constitutive Act and AU relevant decisions on the matter.

### **Morocco's Admission to the AU**

As indicated earlier, Morocco withdrew from the OAU in 1984 when the SADR took up its seat a Member State of the African continental body. Three years later, Morocco applied to join the then European Communities (EC) but the application was rejected. Following decades of trying to win the support of some African countries to ease its increasing isolation on the continent, Morocco eventually decided to join the AU in the hopes that its activated economic and religious diplomacy would help it redeem its image on the continent. The decision came after a continent-wide campaign initiated by Morocco in 2016 to lobby its African friends on its own behalf. This included personal visits by the King during which "major" trade deals were concluded with a number of African countries. In a letter addressed to the 27<sup>th</sup> AU summit held in Kigali, Rwanda, in July 2016, King Mohammed VI of Morocco announced his country's decision to join<sup>30</sup> the AU. On 19 September 2016, the Moroccan Foreign Minister officially wrote to the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, notifying her of the intention of the Kingdom of Morocco, an African State, to accede to the AU Constitutive Act and to be admitted as a member of the Union in line with Article 29 of the Constitutive Act. Less than two weeks ahead of the AU Summit in January 2017, the Moroccan Parliament was pressed by the King to ratify, without any reservation, the AU Constitutive Act at time when the country had no government in power.

It is pertinent to underline that, in line with Article 19 of the 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties<sup>31</sup>, customary International law dictates that no reservation can be formulated on a treaty if it is incompatible with the objects and purpose of the treaty in question. In particular, Article 3 and Article 4 of the AU Constitutive Act are fundamental provisions as they set out the principles and objectives of the Union and, as such, they cannot be derogated from in any way. A state willing to accede to the AU therefore must fully comply with the letter and spirit of these provisions. In this context, Morocco's ratification of the AU Constitutive Act without any reservation implies Morocco's recognition of and commitment to the principles stipulating the respect for the existing borders and the sovereign equality of all AU Member States, including the SADR, among

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, par 50.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 53.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, par 72.

<sup>30</sup> Some commentators and political pundits often speak of Morocco's "return" to the AU. This is incorrect because, prior to its admission in 2017, Morocco had never been a member of the AU.

<sup>31</sup> Vienna Convention on the law of treaties (with annex), concluded at Vienna on 23 May 1969.

other principles. Nonetheless, Morocco's continued occupation of parts of the SADR, a founding Member State of the AU, posed a major legal and political challenge, leading to heated debates within and outside the Union.

Amid these debates, the Assembly of the Union adopted its decision<sup>32</sup> on the admission of the Kingdom of Morocco to the AU at its ordinary session held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 30-31 January 2017. Its decision, the AU Assembly took note of the debate on the matter and the legal opinion provided by the Legal Counsel of the AU at the request of some Member States. It welcomed the request from the Kingdom of Morocco as it would provide the opportunity to reunite the African community of states around the Pan-African core values of the Founders of solidarity, unity, freedom and equality, in accordance with the principles and objectives of the Constitutive Act. It would also strengthen the ability of the AU to find African solutions to African problems. To this end, the AU Assembly decided to admit the Kingdom of Morocco as a new AU Member State in conformity with Article 9(c) and Article 29 of the Constitutive Act.

Morocco's admission to the AU represented another defining moment because it was received with the expectation that it would contribute to finding a solution to the question of Western Sahara, thus strengthening the ability of the AU to find African solutions to African problems. In particular, it was expected that it would enable the AU to support the relaunching of the negotiation process between the SADR and Morocco, both members of the Union, with a view to reaching a durable solution consistent with the letter and spirit of the relevant OAU/AU decisions and UN resolutions. An important step in this direction was the decision taken by the AU in July 2018 to establish an African high-level mechanism for Western Sahara.

### **The establishment of the African High-level Mechanism for Western Sahara**

In his report<sup>33</sup> submitted to the 31<sup>st</sup> Ordinary AU Session, held in Nouakchott, Mauritania, from 1 to 2 July 2018, the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, recalled that the Assembly had requested him to report on measures and initiatives that would have been taken on the Western Sahara issue in partnership with the UN. He highlighted as major challenges the paralysis of the integration process in the Maghreb region and the impact of the conflict on the functioning of the AU, as evidenced by the numerous incidents that occurred in the course of the activities organised as part of its programmes and in meetings with international partners. In his view, this situation was even more damaging as it occurred at a time when the AU was endeavouring to accelerate the process of continental integration. As for the contribution of the AU in this regard, the Chairperson of the AU Commission underlined that the AU's role should be aimed at accompanying and supporting the UN efforts, bearing in mind that the Security Council is seized of the matter. In line with this accompaniment and support role, it was advisable that the Assembly of the Union establish an African mechanism that would enable the AU to extend effective support to the UN led-process, based on the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

<sup>32</sup> Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.639 (XXVIII) on the Admission of the Kingdom of Morocco to the African Union, adopted at Twenty-eighth Ordinary Session, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 30-31 January 2017.

<sup>33</sup> Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Issue of Western Sahara, Assembly of the Union, Thirty-first Ordinary Session, 1-2 July 2018, Nouakchott, Mauritania, Assembly/AU/4 (XXXI).

In its decision (Assembly/AU/Dec.693 (XXXI)) on the report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission, the AU Assembly reiterated its deep concern at the continued stalemate in the conflict in Western Sahara and the resulting consequences on the ground and in the region, as well as its impact on the functioning of the AU and the implementation of its priorities. It stressed the need for renewed efforts to overcome the current impasse in the negotiation process and to find a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in line with the relevant AU decisions and UN Security Council resolutions. In this respect, the Assembly appealed to the parties to the conflict to urgently resume negotiations without preconditions and in good faith, under the auspices of the Secretary General of the United Nations whose Security Council is seized of the matter.

The AU Assembly further agreed on the need for the AU to contribute actively to the search for a solution through renewed support to the efforts led by the UN Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy. To this end, the Assembly decided to establish an African mechanism comprising the AU Troika, namely the outgoing, the current and the incoming Chairpersons, as well as the Chairperson of the Commission, to extend effective support to the UN-led efforts. This mechanism shall report regularly on the implementation of its mandate to the Assembly of the Union and, as necessary, to the Peace and Security Council at the level of the Heads of State and Government. The Assembly also decided that the issue of Western Sahara would only be raised within this framework and at this level.

The reactions of the two parties to the newly established mechanism were understandably based on their own positions as to the AU involvement in the matter in the first place. On the one hand, the SADR authorities stressed the important role that the AU should play in view of its responsibility to promote peace, security and stability across the continent in line with the AU relevant instruments and the role devolved upon regional arrangements according to the relevant provisions of the UN Charter (Chapter VIII).<sup>34</sup> The establishment of an African mechanism dedicated to the question of Western Sahara was therefore considered as a strong sign of the AU commitment to contribute substantively to the search for a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the conflict between the SADR and Morocco. The AU decision was also interpreted as a significant step given Morocco's persistent attempts to deliberately neutralise the AU's role in the peace process in Western Sahara manifested, for instance, in Morocco's unwillingness to allow the AU Observer Mission to return to the Territory and resume its collaboration with MINURSO.

On the other hand, the Moroccan authorities reaffirmed the central role of the UN in leading the peace process and considered that, by recognising the SADR, the AU had excluded itself from efforts to find a solution to the conflict. This attitude was publically expressed on 30 April 2015 by Morocco' Ambassador at the UN who described the AU involvement in the Western Sahara issue as "toxic"<sup>35</sup>. In Morocco's view, therefore, the newly established African mechanism "has no mandate to intervene in the search for a political solution, nor to take steps" and that its role is limited only to "providing effective support to United Nations efforts"<sup>36</sup>. In this regard, it cautioned against the risks of a parallel process while underscoring the primacy of the UN in dealing with the situation. It is to be recalled that, as the successor to the OAU, the AU has remained strongly seized of the question of Western Sahara ever since the OAU became actively engaged in

<sup>34</sup> Annex to the letter dated 6 July 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Namibia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, S/2018/673.

<sup>35</sup> "In W. Sahara, 15-o But Qs of Rights, AU, Morocco PR Answers ICP" By Matthew Russell Lee. [Consult. 15.Mar.2019] Available at: <http://www.innercitypress.com/wsahara10unfile042815.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Letter dated 3 July 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Morocco to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, S/2018/663.

reactivating the peace process following the adoption of the OAU resolution AHG/Res. 104 (XIX) of 1983. The AU is therefore acting regarding Western Sahara within the framework of its responsibilities for the promotion of peace, security and stability on the continent in accordance with the UN Charter and the AU Constitutive Act, which establishes as a principle of the Union “the peaceful resolution of conflicts among Member States of the Union through such appropriate means as may be decided upon by the Assembly”<sup>37</sup>. The AU also remains a full partner of the UN and guarantor of the implementation of the UN-OAU Settlement Plan of 1991, which was accepted by the two parties, the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco, and endorsed by the UN Security Council and General Assembly.

Some have observed however that the establishment of this high-level African mechanism along the lines outlined above was unprecedented, as it was the first time the AU had taken a formal decision to limit the involvement of the AU Peace and Security Council in an African crisis. Given the centrality of the PSC as a major player in every security issue on the continent, the danger of such a move is that it could set a precedent for other AU member states that disapprove of AU interventions (Christian Ani and Louw-Vaudran, 2018). However, the establishment of the AU high-level mechanism for Western Sahara was prompted by the recognition of the fact that the AU should actively involve itself in the search for a solution to this longstanding conflict whose continuation affects not only regional peace and stability but also the functioning of the AU itself.

## Conclusions

Based on the above examination of the policies pursued by the AU, as an intergovernmental organisation, with regard to the question of Western Sahara as well as the defining moments of the AU involvement in this issue, I would like to highlight the following conclusions:

The policies pursued by the African continental organisation (the OAU first and subsequently the AU) regarding the question of Western Sahara have been inspired by two fundamental principles, which are enshrined in both the OAU Charter and the AU Constitutive Act. The first is the solemn commitment to the total decolonisation of the African territories under foreign occupation based on the inalienable right of colonial peoples to self-determination, and the second is the intangibility of borders existing on achievement of national independence.

As disused above, the policies of the African continental organisation concerning the question of Western Sahara have evidently evolved in tandem with the developments of this question in Africa and beyond. In particular, the UN peace process in Western Sahara has had a significant bearing on how the question has been addressed within the AU at different levels of its policy-making organs. One may also argue that the emergence of a new generation of political leaders in Africa has similarly influenced in certain ways the intensity and scope of the manner in which the question used to be addressed within the African context. Unlike the post-colonial leaders who espoused Pan-Africanism and African solidarity as overarching principles of domestic and foreign policy, most of the new African leaders tend to focus largely on domestic issues, thus limiting their involvement in an issue like the Western Sahara question, which has clear continental and international implications. The long duration of the conflict and the absence of prospects for solution

<sup>37</sup> Constitutive Act adopted by the Thirty-sixth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU, held in Lomé, Togo, on 11 July 2000; Article 4 (e).

has also reinforced the impression of its intractability. This may lead some to argue that the energies and the limited resources of the AU should be employed to address other urgent conflict situations and humanitarian crises on the continent.

In view of the fact that the AU remains an important continental forum where the Sahrawi State, the SADR, is present as a full-fledged State that enjoys support from big powers on the continent, the AU' potential scope of action regarding this issue is not unlimited. In addition to the elements outlined above, this is due primarily to the structural and political constraints built into the AU as an inter-governmental organisation where the need for consensus are often hard to reconcile with the interests and positions of individual Member States. For this reason, the AU is still unable to play a major and active role in the management and resolution of the Western Sahara conflict, which remains one of the longstanding conflicts on the continent.

### **Bibliographic references**

- Christian Ani, Ndubuisi and Louw-Vaudran, Liesl (2018), "AU limits its role in Western Sahara crisis, Institute for Security Studies", 11 February 2018. [Online]. [Consult. 11.Mar.2019]. Available at: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/au-limits-its-role-in-western-sahara-crisis>.
- Omar, Sidi M. (2008), *The Right to Self-determination and the Indigenous People of Western Sahara*, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 21: 1, pp. 41-57.
- Zunes, Stephen and Mundy Jacob (2010), *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism and Conflict Irresolution*, New York: Syracuse University Press.



# The Arab League and the Western Sahara Conflict: The Politics of a sheer neglect

Belkacem Iratni\*

pp. 103-114

## Introduction

To dwell on the attitude of the Arab League towards the issue of the Western Sahara seems relatively easy since this organization has paid a little attention to this issue whether when this case was inscribed in the United Nations decolonization agenda or when this territory came under the domination of Morocco in 1975, after the demise of Spain to complete its mandatory duties that include the organization of a referendum for the Self-determination of the Saharawi people.

Such a neglect was not complicated to apprehend as the Arab League was relieved from being involved in a struggle of an Arab people against Spanish colonial rule that lasted from 1884 until 1975, since the issue of the Western Sahara has been handled by the United Nations. This league was also relieved that this territory came under the control of Morocco, an Arab country and an influential member of this organization. The satisfaction felt within the Arab league was, presumably, that the Arab world has avoided another fragmentation and dispersion of its vital forces.

The Sahrawi people and its representative, the Polisario Front did not have advocates for their cause among the Arab League. The only country that has staunchly and continuously backed the right of the Saharawi people for Self-determination was its neighbour Algeria. However, it was preferable for the Polisário not to seek the involvement of the Arab league in its conflict against Morocco because of the unofficial support the Arab league has given to the so-called Moroccan “historical” rights over the Western Sahara.

By contrast, the Polisário Front found a resounding support from the organization of the African Unity (OAU) and its successor the African Union (AU) as an African State, following the proclamation of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in 1976 which was recognized by the African continental organization in 1984 and also by a great number of countries. By obtaining these recognitions, the self-proclaimed Saharawi republic has achieved an international status which the Arab League has naturally denied to the Sahrawi people.

At one time or another, the Sahrawi cause received some support from certain Arab countries such as Libya, Syria or Yemen in the past or Saudi Arabia in recent months. This support was granted not because of a commitment to the achievement of the decolonization process of the Western Sahara, but mostly on the basis of the animosities of these States towards Morocco over issues related mainly to the Middle East geostrategic entanglements and ideological alignments.

---

\* Faculty of Political Science and International Relations University of Algiers 3.

This paper contends that the neglect shown by the Arab league towards the Sahrawi cause may be explained by the fact that this issue does not fit the agenda of this organization which emphasized mainly the need to reinforce Arab solidarity in its natural regional context which is confined to the Middle East. Most of the influential members of the League come from this region while the unifying core of the Arab world still lays on the Palestinian cause and the vital geostrategic interests of the Arab world still remain located in the Middle East and not in the “far” Maghreb. In addition to geostrategic considerations proper to the Middle East, this confinement was strengthened by the increase of the role of the monarchies of the Gulf region, especially after the decline of the weight of countries such as Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Libya which were known for their opposition to the Western domination over the Arab affairs.

The attitude of the Arab league towards the Western Sahara issue was overshadowed by the individual and decisive support given by the Arab monarchies to Morocco. The evolution of this organization in the future will depend on the relations these monarchies will entertain with Morocco with regard to issues related more to the Middle East than to Maghreb politics and entanglements.

### 1. The Arab League’s deaf ears:

The Arab League was created in Cairo in March 1945 under the impulse of Egypt as a reaction to the project of the United Kingdom to favour the establishment of a gathering of some Arab States under its influence, known as the “Fertile Crescent”.<sup>1</sup>

In its evolving process, the Arab League was divided along ideological lines between progressive States as Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Algeria, Libya, Yemen and Arab monarchies, mainly Saudi Arabia and Morocco and along temptations of the leadership over the Arab world such as the Egyptian-Saudi rivalry in the past and the Saudi-Qatari clash in recent years.

The Arab league has not been successful to solve the inter-Arab conflicts whether during the civil war in Syria in the Mid-1970s or during the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1993. The antagonisms among the member States of this league did not permit to promote the ideals of Pan Arabism or advance the Palestinian cause. By contrast, the Arab League was able to reach a consensus when it endorsed the intervention of the United Nations in Libya in 2011 and when it became involved in the engagement of a Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. But, both cases were unpopular among the Arab peoples who saw these interventions as detrimental to the Arab unity.

As an organization, the Arab League did not play a decisive role in the process of decolonization of the Maghreb countries which were under the domination of European powers<sup>2</sup>, albeit some diplomatic lobbying and despite the individual contributions of its members to end this domination, as it occurred in the case of Algeria which gained its independence in 1962. Since then, the only Arab territory which remained under the grip of colonialism has been the Western Sahara. This territory was ruled under the Spanish mandate until it was handed over to Morocco in 1975 in violation of the United Nations resolutions which affirmed the right of the people of the Western Sahara for self-determination ever since the proclamation of the UN renowned Declaration on the

<sup>1</sup> The Fertile Crescent project initiated in 1941 comprised Iraq, Jordan, Palestine and Syria. The Arab league included all these countries, in addition to Egypt.

<sup>2</sup> In the wake of the emergence of anti-colonial movement in the Maghreb, a Bureau of the Maghreb was created by the Arab League in Cairo in 1948. Later, ideological and political dissonances among the representatives of Algerian, Tunisian and Moroccan nationalist parties impaired the activities of the Maghreb bureau and did not lead to the coordination among these nationalist parties in their fight against French colonialism.

Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (UN Resolution 1514) which was adopted on 14 December 1960 (Iratni, 2015a: 235-271).

The Arab League did not play any significant role in solving the Algerian-Morocco border dispute that occurred in 1963, despite the fact that it did not grant Morocco its support for the efforts it displayed in the early 1960s for the idea of Greater Morocco<sup>3</sup>. It was the Organization of African Unity that obtained a cease-fire between the belligerents and not the Arab League, although this organization had the legal and moral duties to be involved in the settlement of inter-Arab conflicts.<sup>4</sup>

When the case of the Western Sahara became inscribed on the international agenda related to decolonization, the Arab League did not show a substantial interest in the fight of the Saharawi people for its rights for self-determination. It did not also express a determinant support for Morocco in the pressures this country exercised upon Spain in order to ensure its control over the Western Sahara territory. King Hassan's declared its plea to the Arab League on the basis of Arab nationalism and mutual solidarity, by asserting that: "*Morocco, which has never hesitated to express an active solidarity to the Arab nation in general and the Palestinians in particular, has today the right to expect from its brother countries, whether in the Mashreq or in the Maghreb, the same solidarity and the same display of efficient means, because the colonialists do understand only the language of the force*" (Oliver Vergniot, 1985).<sup>5</sup> The implicit recall of the solidarity Morocco has shown towards the Arab cause such as sending troops to Sinai and Gaza during the Arab-Israeli wars of June 1965 and October 1973 remained unheard from the Arab League. Only some members of the League such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Kuwait and the Organization of the Liberation of Palestine (PLO)<sup>6</sup> have expressed a formal support to the Moroccan attempts to bring the Western Sahara under its sovereignty. The other Arab States were cautious not to side publicly with the Moroccan stance, because of the alignments taken, at that time, in the framework proper to the East-West confrontation.

As the conflict between Morocco and the Polisario Front culminated in armed skirmishes, the Arab League attempted a timid mission of reconciliation carried out by its Secretary General, Mahmud Riad in 1976 with no much success and consequently, the Saharawi issue was completely ignored by the Arab League. Neither the Polisario Front nor Algeria were eager to see the Arab League debating the Western Sahara issue. Both seem convinced that the most appropriate framework susceptible to make progress in the Saharawi cause remains the United Nations which were believed to be more determined to achieve the decolonization process and assumed to have greater means and leverage to attain this objective.

The Arab League found it comfortable not to be entangled in the Western Sahara conflict, knowing that this issue has led to frictions between Morocco and Algeria. It ignored repetitive appeals of Morocco in 1976-77 to convene a session on the basis of the accusations of aggression this country made against the Polisario Front and Algeria. It declined the proposition of a joint meeting with the Organization of the African Unity to discuss the Western Sahara issue in December 1977. The Arab League-mandated mediation between Morocco and Algeria which was led by the Saudi Foreign Minister in 1978, failed because

<sup>3</sup> In 1956, Allal Al Fasi, the leader of the nationalist Istiqlal party issued a map of a Greater Morocco that includes Mauritania (then under French colonial rule), the Western Sahara (then under Spanish mandate), and large swaths of western Algeria (then a French department). The map was not officially endorsed by the Moroccan authorities but until now, political parties, personalities and media in Morocco still claim these irredentist demands.

<sup>4</sup> The Arab League tried to intervene, but Morocco rejected the League's call for the settlement of this conflict, El-Ayouti, Yassin and Brooks, C. Hugh, *Africa and international Organizations*, The Hague: Martinus Nihof, 1974, p. 176.

<sup>5</sup> Oliver Vergniot, *Le conflit du Sahara Occidental dans les Relations Interarabes*. Available at: [http://aan.mmsh.univ-aix.fr/Pdf/AAN-1985-24\\_33.pdf](http://aan.mmsh.univ-aix.fr/Pdf/AAN-1985-24_33.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> The PLO was aware of the role of King Hassan in the Arab -Israeli negotiations, its strong links with the Gulf monarchies, regarded as its main financial contributors and close ties with the United States and France.

Algiers was adamant that the conflict opposes Morocco to the Polisario Front. Algeria also affirmed that its support to the Saharawi right for self-determination stems only from its ideological principles and experience of a former colony that had fought hard to recover its independence from France. Finally, the Arab League proved reluctant to hold an extraordinary session devoted to this Western Sahara issue. However, it did not fail to express its support for Moroccan territorial integrity when Morocco took over the Western Sahara territory and favoured the plan of autonomy which Rabat has advocated since the early 1980s in order to avoid the independence of the Western Sahara.

By contrast, the Arab League was poised to reject the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1993, describing this attempt as a coup de force and as an aggression to one of its Member States.

The Arab League declared its support to Morocco on May 02, 2019 when this country has decided to sever its diplomatic relations with Iran which the Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita accused of “*delivering arms to the Polisario Front through the Lebanese Hezbollah party and with Algeria’s complicity*” (Al-Jazeera News, 2018).<sup>7</sup> The Spokesman of the Arab League Mahmud Afifi explained that the Moroccan decision was due to: “*the dangerous interferences of Iran in the domestic affairs of the kingdom which are refutable and condemnable*” (Morocco World News, 2018).<sup>8</sup> The Moroccan Foreign Minister has previously asserted that: “*Morocco has in its possession irrefutable evidence of names and precise facts that show the support of Hezbollah to the Polisario in order to harm the supreme interests of the Kingdom*” (Huffpost Maghreb, 2018).<sup>9</sup> This evidence remains questionable as until now, Morocco has not been able to disclose the evidence it believes it has in its possession. This equation reminds of the arguments displayed by the US president George Bush to intervene in Iraq on the pretext that this country detained weapons of massive destruction and that the US authorities have irrefutable evidence of Iraq’s military potential.

The objective sought by Morocco consisted in trying to obtain the support of the Western powers and the Arab league in a context marked by the pressures of the United States to force Morocco and the Polisario Front to look for a settlement of their conflict and amid mounting accusations against Morocco’s treatment of human rights in the Western Sahara.

## 2. Reverberations of inter-Arab relations on the Western Sahara issue

Many Arab States defined their attitude towards the Western Sahara issue on the basis of their contentions and frictions with other Arab “brothers”.

This image of the split of Arab ranks was mostly highlighted when Egypt, under the leadership of President Anwar Sadat, signed the David Camp agreements in September 1978 and recognized the State of Israel. This move led to the division of the Arab States, to the exclusion of Egypt from the Arab League and to the removal of its Headquarters to Tunis.

<sup>7</sup> Morocco accuses Algeria of supporting Iran in Western Sahara feud, Al-Jazeera News, May 13, 2018. [Consult. 21. Mar. 2019] Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/morocco-accuses-algeria-supporting-iran-western-sahara-feud-180513073052685.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Morocco WorldNews, Arab League, GCC Reaffirm Support for Morocco’s Decision to Cut Ties with Iran, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2018/05/245704/arab-league-gcc-reaffirm-support-for-moroccos-decision-to-cut-ties-with-iran/>.

<sup>9</sup> Nasser Bouarita demande au Chargé d’affaires de l’Ambassade de l’Iran au Royaume à Rabat de quitter immédiatement le Royaume sans délai, Huffpost Maghreb May 01, 2018. Available at: [https://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/entry/nasser-bourita-demande-au-charge-daffaires-de-lambassade-diran-a-rabat-de-quitter-le-royaume-sans-delai\\_mg\\_5ae89f4ee4b055fd7fdo](https://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/entry/nasser-bourita-demande-au-charge-daffaires-de-lambassade-diran-a-rabat-de-quitter-le-royaume-sans-delai_mg_5ae89f4ee4b055fd7fdo).

In retaliation for the firm support given by Morocco to Egypt, the relations of Rabat with Saudi Arabia and other Arab monarchies of the Middle East suffered serious setbacks. As a result, only Egypt and Mauritania voted for the resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1978 which was relatively in favour of the Moroccan strategy in Western Sahara.

In parallel, the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front which was set up in 1977 by countries most hostile to Egypt's agreements with Israel, such as Algeria, Syria, Libya and Yemen, in addition to PLO, quickly moved to grant official recognition to the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic at their meeting convened in Tripoli in April 1980<sup>10</sup>.

However, with the exception of Algeria, the support of Arab States to Morocco or their recognition of the right of the Sahrawi people for self-determination proved to be tactical, and thus ephemeral and provisional. Indeed, some of the countries that had backed up the Saharawi cause have quickly moved to resume their support to the plan of autonomy which Morocco intended to implement in Western Sahara. Libya moved from opposing to supporting the Western Sahara cause and vice-versa for regional ambitions or pragmatic considerations. Mauritania followed the same swinging attitudes because of internal politics and worries of keeping a balance between Algeria and Morocco.

As of March 2019, only four members of the Arab League have officially recognized the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic: Algeria (February 1976), Syria and Libya (April 1980) and Mauritania (1984).

When Morocco decided to break off its diplomatic relations with Iran in May 2019 on the basis of accusations related to presumed implications of this country in arming the Polisario Front through the Lebanese ally of Teheran, the Hezbollah party (Al-Jazeera News, 2018)<sup>11</sup>, the Gulf monarchies hailed this decision and affirmed their active solidarity with the "*sisterly Kingdom of Morocco*", as stated in the declaration of the Saudi Foreign Minister, Adel Al Jubeir in June 2018. He emphatically stated that: "*what Iran has done to the Kingdom of Morocco through its proxies (Hezbollah) training the so-called Polisario Front is solid proof of Iran's interference*" (Cherkaoui, 2018).<sup>12</sup>

The United Arab Emirates emulated its Saudi ally by recalling the long-standing close ties that exist between the Gulf monarchies and the Moroccan Kingdom. The UAE Foreign Minister declared that: "*our policy and support for Morocco has a well-established historical legacy. Our attitude towards Morocco is constant both in good and bad days*" (Cherkaoui, 2018)<sup>13</sup>. In contrast, his Qatari counterpart was more pragmatic by asserting that Qatar "*stresses the importance of respecting the principles governing relations between States, foremost among them the respect for the sovereignty of states, non-interference in their internal affairs and the resolution of disputes through dialogue and peaceful means and internationally recognized methods.*"<sup>14</sup> This nuanced statement in comparison to the declaration of the UAE Foreign Minister highlights the reverberations of the clash of rivalry that opposed Qatar to Saudi Arabia.

<sup>10</sup> The Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) was proclaimed by the Polisario Front on February, 27, 1976. SADR has been a member of the African Union (AU), formerly the Organization of African Unity (OAU) since 1984. Morocco withdrew from the OAU in 1984 in protest of the inclusion of the Saharawi republic in the membership of OAU. It joined AU in 2017.

<sup>11</sup> Morocco's Foreign Minister Nasser Bouarita declared to the Qatari TV channel Al Jazeera that his country has evidence that incriminates Iran on the basis of assisting Hezbollah by assisting Hezbollah in providing financial as well as logistic support through its Embassy in Algiers, News/Iran: Morocco cuts its diplomatic ties with Iran over feud with Iran. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/morocco-cuts-diplomatic-ties-iran-western-sahara-feud-18050173220190.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Mohamed Cherkaoui, Political Calculations ... from the Western Sahara to the Arabian Gulf. [Consult. June.04.2018]. Available at: [http://arabcenterdc.org/policy\\_analyses/political-calculationsfrom-the-western-sahara-to-the-arabian-gulf/i](http://arabcenterdc.org/policy_analyses/political-calculationsfrom-the-western-sahara-to-the-arabian-gulf/i).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Cherkaoui, Mohamed, Political Calculations... Op. cit.



The Saudi-Qatari rift certainly explains why the Gulf States issued statements to support Morocco on an individual basis and not on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council, an organization that includes the monarchies of the Gulf which became impotent as a result of the Saudi Arabia-Qatari dispute. This Council has, previously, invited Morocco to become one of its members in order to assert active solidarity among Arab monarchies.

The Polisário Front rejected Morocco's accusations and "*defied Rabat to present evidence of these false allegations,*" according to the declaration made by M'hamed Khadad, its Coordinator with the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in the Western Sahara (Minurso) on May 03, 2018 (Cherkaoui, 2018)<sup>15</sup>. Morocco's accusations of links existing between the Polisário Front and terrorist organizations are not new. This country has in the past denounced presumed ties between this movement and some groups of Al-Qai'dah in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) operating in the Sahel-Sahara region as well as accused the Polisário guerillas of being implicated in terrorist-affiliated network of drug smuggling (Boukhars, 2012).<sup>16</sup>

The Secretary General of the Hezbollah also denied Morocco's allegations by asserting that his party has "*no relations with the Polisário Front*" and that the evidence presented by the Moroccan Foreign Affairs "*were unfounded*" (Middle East Monitor, 2018)<sup>17</sup>. Algeria vehemently refuted Morocco's accusations by describing them also as "*totally unfounded.*" (APS, 2018)<sup>18</sup>.

Many political observers regarded Morocco's move as an attempt from the Kingdom to participate in the demonization process initiated by the United States which aimed at justifying the decision of Washington to revise the nuclear agreement which was struck with Iran in 2015 (Sputnik, 2018)<sup>19</sup>. But it seems, however, that the objective of Morocco aimed at alleviating heavy pressures from the United States to urgently strike a settlement to the conflict over the Western Sahara with the Polisário Front. Morocco aimed also at tempering European criticisms of its treatment of the population of the Western Sahara under its domination. Once again, as it did when it cut off its diplomatic relations with Teheran in 2009 in retaliation of Iran's criticism of Bahrain, Rabat played an anti-Iran card to strengthen its ties with the monarchies of the Gulf. Indeed, Morocco sought to secure the important financial endowments it regularly obtained from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (Morocco World News, 2016).<sup>20</sup>

Morocco participated quite reluctantly with the Polisário Front in the roundtable meetings convened under the United Nations auspices in Geneva in December 2018 and March 2019 (United Nations Secretary General, 2019).<sup>21</sup> To avoid direct dialogue and negotiations with

<sup>15</sup> The Frente Polisário denies Morocco's allegations after breaking off its diplomatic relations with Iran. Available at: <https://www.spsrasd.info/news/fr/node/15220>.

<sup>16</sup> Two young Saharawis were assumed to have kidnapped two Frenchmen in Hambori in North-Eastern Mali at the end of October 2011 under the influence of the legend of Hakim Ould Mohamed M'Barek, alias Houdeifa, "a major figure in Polisário AQIM," in Boukhars, Anwar, *Simmering Discontent in the Western Sahara*, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Speech delivered on May 28, 2018 on the occasion of celebrating Lebanon's Resistance and Liberation Day, Memo Middle East Monitor, May 29, 2018, Hezbollah denies Morocco's claims of its ties with the Polisário Front Middle East. Available at: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180529-hezbollah-denies-moroccos-claims-of-its-ties-with-polisario-front/>

<sup>18</sup> Rupture des relations diplomatiques Maroc-Iran: L'Algérie réagit aux propos «infondés» de Rabat, May 02, 2018. Available at: <http://www.aps.dz/algerie/73469-maroc-iran-l-algerie-rejette-les-propos-totalement-infondes-du-mae-marocain>.

<sup>19</sup> Interview of Muhamad Nourredine, an expert of the Cairo Center of Strategic Studies to the Russian media on May 02, 2019, Le Maroc et la Ligue Arabe, deux épisodes du meme scénario de diabolisation, <https://fr.sputniknews.com/international/201805031036202404-iran-maroc-ligue-arabe-diabolisation/>.

<sup>20</sup> A military and technical agreement was signed between Saudi Arabia and Morocco in Riyadh in December 2016 through which the Saudi Kingdom accepted to finance the implementation of an industrial military project in Morocco, worth \$22 billion. Morocco World News: Saudi Arabia to provide \$22 billion to Morocco's military industry. Available at: <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2016/01/176944/saudi-arabia-to-provide-22-billion-to-moroccos-military-industry/>.

<sup>21</sup> These roundtable meetings were convened by Horst Kohler, the personal envoy of the Secretary General of the United Nations and included Algeria and Mauritania as "interested" parties, in addition to Morocco and the

the Polisario Front which may alter its grip on the Western Sahara territory, Morocco moved to depict Algeria as a part in the conflict over the Western Sahara. Therefore, it displayed intense diplomatic efforts to prove that this issue was the object of a bilateral dispute with its neighbour. Algeria replied, on many occasions, that the Western Sahara conflict concerns exclusively Morocco and the Polisario Front and that its support to the Saharawi cause stems from its ideological doctrine that exalts an “uninterested engagement” to contribute to the fight waged by colonized peoples to recover their independence.

The issue of the Western Sahara lied also behind the relations between Saudi Arabia and Morocco which became seriously strained in early 2019. This issue became surprisingly an object of contention between two countries which share so many features: being two monarchies that have close ties with the Western powers and a common position towards the Arab-Israel conflict. Most significant, Saudi Arabia has been one of the most fervent advocates of Morocco’s autonomy plan in the Western Sahara-dominated territory and its most important financial supplier. Morocco withdrew its Ambassador from Riyadh in February 2019 as a reaction to a broadcasting video report released by Al Arabiya TV Channel which was regarded by the Moroccan authorities as detrimental to “*the territorial integrity of the kingdom of Morocco and as an indication of Saudi support for the Sahrawi independence cause*” (Middle East Monitor, 2019)<sup>22</sup>. The Saudi move came after Morocco decided to withdraw its troops from the Saudi-led coalition which wages a war against the “rebels” in Yemen and after that Morocco has hinted of its deception over the Jamal Khashoggi affair, the Saudi journalist believed to have been killed in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul in October 2018. Morocco’s anger to Saudi reversal of position towards the question of the Western Sahara was confirmed by the refusal of Rabat to receive the visit of Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman during his Maghreb tour of November 2018 (Morocco World News, 2018).<sup>23</sup>

As it appears, the issue of Western Sahara came to represent an issue of dispute in the fluctuation of the relations Morocco entertains with other Arab countries. Except with Algeria, this question did not lead to a serious crisis between Morocco and other members of the Arab League. In some cases, the Western Sahara became “a collateral issue” when the relations of Morocco with other Arab countries came to deteriorate on other issues. This was precisely, the case of drifts confronting Morocco to Mauritania in the past or to Saudi Arabia, more recently.

### 3. What impact the evolution of the Arab League would have on the future of the Western Sahara conflict?

The impact of the “Arab Spring” wave may be a significant indicator that the Arab League may also evolve into a more responsible regional gathering in the sense that this organization may give more attention to:

- settling conflicts between its member States (Saudi-Qatar rift);
- participating in solving intra-Arab crises (Libya and Lebanon);

Polisario Front designated as the “concerned” parties of the conflict, United Nations Secretary-General, March 18, 2019, Note to Correspondents: Second Roundtable Meeting on Western Sahara. [Consult. 21.Mar.2019]. Available at: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2019-03-18/note-correspondents-second-roundtable-meeting-western-sahara-scroll-down-for-french>.

<sup>22</sup> Saudi-Morocco relations hit all-time low, Memo News. Available at: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190212-saudi-morocco-relations-hit-all-time-low/>.

<sup>23</sup> King Mohammad VI snubs Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, Morocco World News. Available at: <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2018/11/258877/king-mohammed-vi-morocco-mohammed-bin-salman/>.

- advocating issues in conformity with the international legality (Palestine and the decolonization of the Western Sahara);
- promoting the State of law (Tunisia, Algeria and Sudan) and encouraging the respect of the rights of individuals (Khashoggi affair) and;
- advancing the principle of “Living Together in Peace” (Iratni, 2019c),<sup>24</sup> for instance between Shia and Sunna.

It is noteworthy to recall that the early premises of the Arab Spring appeared in the protests carried out by the pro-independence Saharawi militants at Gdaim Izik camp located near the city of Dakhla in the occupied Western Sahara territory in October 2010, as many political scientists have depicted, notably Noam Chomsky in his interview to Qatari Channel TV Al-Jazeera conducted on February 02, 2011 (Democracy Now, 2011).<sup>25</sup> The incidences of the “Arab Spring” have resulted in the exacerbation of Islamist terrorism (Daesh or Islamic State), the decline of the role of Egypt in the Middle East affairs, the fragmentation and instability of the Arab world (crises in Syria, Yemen and Libya), the Shia-Sunna divide in Iraq and in the Gulf States and the Saudi-Qatar rivalry over regional leadership.

Most notable consequence of the so-called Arab revolutions on the Arab League may be the evolution of this organization as an extension or as an appendix of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The weakening of the Arab republics, once led by more secular and progressive or liberal regimes such as Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Tunisia and Libya has paved the way to the supremacy of the Gulf monarchies on Arab affairs. The economic potential of these monarchies was considerably consolidated by the rise of oil prices for the period extending from 1999 to 2014.

The geostrategic value of these monarchies in the designs of the great powers in the Middle East was considerably enhanced by Iran’s growing nuclear ambitions. Thus, these monarchies became courted by the Western powers and were given military support in order to contain the spread of the influence of Iran, particularly in the Arab countries which have sizeable Shia communities, such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Yemen and Bahrain.

The Arab league has certainly contributed in the increase of the role of the Arab monarchies in the decision-making of this organization through the exclusion of Syria, the blessings it gave to NATO’s intervention in Libya and through its campaign which aimed at demonizing Iran. All these decisions have enhanced the status of conservative Sunni schism and boosted the ambitions of Saudi Arabia and Qatar for regional leadership. There is a little doubt that the outputs of internal changes in many Arab countries will impact the evolution of the Arab League. The process of democratization or at least the growing appeals for political changes in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Sudan and even in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain will inflate a democratization trend in the functioning and decision-making of the Arab League. Such a democratization process may pave the way to the efforts that have been displayed in order to restructure this organization. Under the impulse of Algeria,<sup>26</sup> the other Arab States which have suffered from the domination of the Gulf monarchies over the League, such as Iraq, Syria, Lebanon

<sup>24</sup> Belkacem Iratni, *The Living Together in Peace, Dialogue on Cultures: Developing exemplary Euro-African Relations*, the Berlin Research Institute, January, 16, 2019.

<sup>25</sup> Democracy Now, February 07, 2011 *The genie is out of the bottle; Assessing a changing Arab world with Noam Chomsky and Al Jazeera’s Marwan Bishara*. [Consult. 10.Mar.2019]. Available at: [https://www.democracynow.org/2011/2/17/the\\_genies\\_are\\_out\\_of\\_the](https://www.democracynow.org/2011/2/17/the_genies_are_out_of_the).

<sup>26</sup> Algeria made officially a list of demands to reform the Arab League General Secretariat in 2015. Among the most important propositions was the turnover of the post of General Secretary of the League among its member States.

and Egypt, in particular, may join forces to introduce reforms in order to enhance the operative mechanisms of the League, democratize its decision-making process and ameliorate its mechanisms devoted to crisis management.

Such reforms may incite the Arab League to treat issues in conformity with international law and in this conceptual framework; this organization may support the efforts of the United Nations and the African Union to hasten the settlement of the Western Sahara conflict.

One striking change in the behavior of the Gulf monarchies towards the question of the Western Sahara occurred when only eight member States of the Arab League walked out of the summit which this organization jointly convened with the African Union, in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in November 2016, in a protest to the participation of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (Morocco World News)<sup>27</sup>. More striking is that the statement issued by the Moroccan Foreign Ministry to express its disappointment to the position of Kuwait did not include Egypt (Moroccan World News, 2016)<sup>28</sup>. Both countries did not boycott the Malabo summit. Seemingly, Kuwait was not willing to relinquish the prospects of investments in Africa for a simple solidarity with Morocco, while Egypt was eager to express an autonomous position in order to increase its credentials in the African Union and compensate its diplomatic isolation in the Middle East affairs.

The Saudi-Moroccan rift shows also an evolution in the political calculations of the members of the Arab League, due to pressures of their public opinion. Morocco decided to withdraw from the Saudi-led coalition that intervened in Yemen and declined an audience to Saudi Crown prince in November 2018, because of the accusations of the implication of the Saudi Kingdom in the Khashoggi affair. Indeed, the Moroccan throne was, at that time, under mounting pressures from the rebel region of the Rif region<sup>29</sup>. Therefore, it appears that worries of regime's surviving were more important for the Moroccan ruler than the substantial subsidies it used to obtain from Saudi Arabia.

The progress of the democratization process in Tunisia may push this country to line up with Algeria in demanding reforms of the Arab League. The post-Caid Essebsi era may bring to power young leaders more aware of international legality. It may be, therefore, possible for the young Tunisian leaders to support the Saharawi cause for instance. The recent push of Tunisian political class to revive the Union of the Maghreb Arab through the appeals made in February 2018 by the UMA<sup>30</sup> General Secretary, a Tunisian diplomat, may stand as a good impetus for building the Maghreb of peoples, and why not the League of the Arab peoples, or at least regional organizations that would work more for the interests of their populations.

The recent popular discontent that has taken the form of huge street demonstrations Algeria has witnessed since February 22, 2019 against the extension of the fourth mandate of President Bouteflika and the maintaining of the regime, may impulse a wave of democratization not only in the Maghreb but also in the Middle East.

<sup>27</sup> Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Jordan, Oman, Yemen and Somalia quitted the Summit along with Morocco.

<sup>28</sup> Morocco World News, Africa Arab Summit, Morocco disappointed by Kuwait. Morocco World News, November, 2016. [Consult. 14.Feb.2016]. Available at: <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2016/11/202276/africa-arab-summit-morocco-disappointed-kuwait-decision/>.

<sup>29</sup> The Rif province, a region situated in the eastern Mediterranean coastal parts of Morocco and inhabited by Berbers, was known for its fierce resistance to French colonial rule and for its resentment to the Monarchy which it accused of political marginalization and discrimination in the development projects of the country. The main instigators of the attempted coup against the Hassan II in 1971 were Berbers originating from the Rif region and so was General Oufkir who tried unsuccessfully to topple the Moroccan King from power in 1972.

<sup>30</sup> The Union of the Maghreb Union was set up through a Treaty signed by Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania in the Moroccan city of Marrakech in February, 1989. Its objective was to promote the political and economic integration of the Maghreb region.

The popular mobilization, through social networks, has led to the organization of huge demonstrations that have forced the Algerian regime to make gradual concessions. The anger and the determination of the Algerian youth, in particular, may finally result in a radical change of the home polity. The peaceful and disciplined features of the protests that have occurred in Algeria since February 2019 were hailed by many politicians and political scientists. Therefore, they may be a good example for other Arab peoples to follow in order to participate in the national decision-making and contribute in the conduct of public affairs.

Ultimately, the democratization process may have a positive impact on the functioning, decision-making and missions of the Arab League. One of the big challenges this organization may face in the future would be the contribution in settling the question of the Western Sahara along the resolutions adopted by the United Nations which favour the right of the Saharawi people for Self-determination.

## Conclusion

The Arab League has not inscribed the question of the Western Sahara on its agenda ever when this territory was under the Spanish mandate or when it came under Morocco's control in violation of the UN resolutions urging the implementation of the right of the Saharawi people for Self-determination.

This neglect signifies a failure of the Arab League to conform to the international legality, as this organization came under the control of countries which supported the autonomy plan Morocco has implemented in order to maintain its hold over this territory on the basis of the so-called historical claims and with the blessings of the Western powers. The solidarity towards the Moroccan stance over the Sahara issue shown by the Gulf monarchies in particular, has prevented any move of the Arab League to support the initiatives taken by the United Nations or the African Union to favour the decolonization of the Western Sahara. More than that, this League has become the "*League of the Arab monarchies*" as a journalist has depicted, after the weakening of countries that have advocated Pan-Arabism as a result of the "Arab Spring" revolutions (Ghezali, 2018).<sup>31</sup>

The swinging in attitudes towards the issue of the Western Sahara adopted by certain members of the Arab League did not mean a formal recognition of the right of the Saharawi people for self-determination, but only a temporary leverage to upset Morocco in retaliation for the hostility this country has occasionally shown towards its Arab partners. It is still precocious to apprehend the incidences on the Arab League of the internal changes which are affecting many member States of the Arab League. What is certain, however, is that the functioning and the potency of the League are only the output of what these States have been willing to make out of this regional organization.

The future of the Arab League may also depend on the balance of power between the monarchies and their Arab partners and on the societal and political mutations that are occurring in the Arab countries. Yet, this League has moved from the politics of Pax Britannica to Pan-Arab ideals under the impulse of Egypt and the Baathist regimes of Iraq and Syria and then to monarchies whose model still stand as an anachronism in the face of modernization, liberal thought and the prospects of democratization that may be waged by social forces thanks to popular protests which are sweeping the Arab World.

<sup>31</sup> Ghezali, Abdelkrim. L'organisation a fait plus de mal que de bien: La Ligue arabe est devenue une ligue des monarchies. [Consult. 28.Feb.2019]. Available at: [http://www.alterinfo.net/La-Ligue-arabe-est-devenue-une-ligue-des-monarchies\\_a138379.html](http://www.alterinfo.net/La-Ligue-arabe-est-devenue-une-ligue-des-monarchies_a138379.html).R



These prospects of change that may occur in the Arab world would probably alter the negative attitude the Arab League has followed towards the issue of the Western Sahara. The efforts made by the African Union and the recent forcing displayed by the United Nations to find a solution to the Western Sahara on the basis of the respect of the right of the Saharawi people for self-determination may incite the Arab League to follow suit.

## Bibliographic references

- Ammour, Laurence (2006), *A qui profite le gel du Sahara Occidental?* Research paper no. 30, Novembre.
- Barbier, Maurice (1982), *Le Conflit du Sahara Occidental*, Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Bennis, Samir (2016), *Mauritania-rocky-relations*, *Al-Jazeera News*. [Consult. 3.Mar.2019]. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/08/morocco-mauritania-rocky-relations-160831122945279.html>.
- Boilley, Pierre et al. (2012), *La résistance Sahraouie à Gdaim Izig*, *Cahiers des études Multidisciplinaires*, vol. 8.
- Bolton, John (1998), *Resolving the Western Sahara Conflict*, Washington, DC: Congressional Defense and Foreign Policy Forum, Defense Forum Foundation.
- Cherkaoui, Mohammed (2019), *Political calculations... from the Western Sahara to the Arabian Gulf*, Arab Center Washington DC, June 4, 2016. [Consult. 2.Mar.2019]. Available at: [http://arabcen-terdc.org/policy\\_analyses/political-calculationsfrom-the-western-sahara-to-the-arabian-gulf/i](http://arabcen-terdc.org/policy_analyses/political-calculationsfrom-the-western-sahara-to-the-arabian-gulf/i).
- El-Ayouti, Yassin and Brooks, C. Hugh, *Africa and international Organizations*, The Hague: Martinus Nihof, 1974.
- Gaudio, Attilio (1978), *Le dossier du Sahara Occidental*, Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines.
- Ghezali, Abdelkrim (2018), *L'organisation a fait plus de mal que de bien: La Ligue arabe est devenue une ligue des monarchies*, *Alterinfo*, May, 6, 2018: [Consult. 28.Feb.2019]. Available at: [http://www.alterinfo.net/L-ORGANISATION-A-FAIT-PLUS-DE-MAL-QUE-DE-BIEN-La-Ligue-arabe-est-devenue-une-ligue-des-monarchies\\_a138379.html](http://www.alterinfo.net/L-ORGANISATION-A-FAIT-PLUS-DE-MAL-QUE-DE-BIEN-La-Ligue-arabe-est-devenue-une-ligue-des-monarchies_a138379.html).
- IFRI, available at: [www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Trente\\_ans\\_deconflit\\_Finan.pdf](http://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Trente_ans_deconflit_Finan.pdf)
- Iratni, Belkacem (2019), *The Living Together in Peace: Developing exemplary Euro-African Relations*, Dialogue on Cultures, Berlin Research Institute, January 16, 2019.
- (2015), *The Saharawi people's quest for self-determination: The complexities of unachieved decolonization*. In Redie Bereketab (orgs.), *Self-determination and Secession in Africa*, London and New York. Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.
- (2008), *The Strategic Interests of the Maghreb States*. Forum paper, Rome: Research Division, NATO Defense College.
- Jensen, Erik (2005), *The Western Sahara: Anatomy of a Stalemate*, International Peace Academy Occasional Paper Series, London: Lynne Rienner.
- Kassataya Mauritania (2018), *Conflict au Sahara occidental: le Maroc et neuf pays se retirent du Sommet afro-arabe*, Novembre, 23, 2018. [Consult. 26.Feb.2019]. Available at: <https://lesmauritanies.com/2016/11/23/conflit-au-sahara-occidental-le-maroc-et-neuf-pays-se-retirent-du-sommet-afro-arabe/>.
- MacDonald, W. Robert (2015), *The League of Arab States: A Study in the dynamics of Regional Dynamics*, Princeton: Princeton legal Library.
- Masters, Jonathan, Sergie, Mohammed Aly (2014), *The Arab League: A backgrounder*, Council on Foreign Affairs, Council on Foreign Affairs, October 21, 2014. [Consult. 10.Mar.2019]. Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/arab-league>.
- Mercer, John (1976), *Spanish Sahara*, London: George Allen & Unwin.

- Mohsen-Finan, Khadija (2017), *Mémoire et réconciliation au Maroc*, Politique Étrangère, n.º 2, 2007, pp. 327-338.
- \_\_\_\_ (2016) Ni pai x ni guerre au Sahara occidental, *Observatoire du Monde arabo-musulman et du Sahel*, Juin.
- \_\_\_\_ (2008), Trente ans de conflit au Sahara occidental. *Ifri Note*, Janvier. Ross Carn The Western Sahara: forgotten first source of the Arab Spring, The Guardian April, 17, 2017. [Consult. 28.Feb.2019]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2012/apr/17/western-sahara-forgotten-first-source> 17 04/2017.
- Pointier, Laurent (2004), *Sahara Occidental: La Controverse devant les Nations Unies*, Paris: Karthala.
- Ross, Carne (2019), *The Western Sahara: forgotten first source of the Arab Spring*, The Guardian April, 17, 2017. [Consult. 28.Feb.2019]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2012/apr/17/western-sahara-forgotten-first-source> 17 04/2017.
- Saint-Prot, Charles, De Cara, Jean-Yves, Christophe Boutin (2016), *Sahara marocain: le dossier d'un conflit artificiel*, Paris: Cerf Editions.
- Sarkis, Fabiana (2017) *The Arab League has debated upon yet another resolution discussing the Western Sahara conflict*. [Consult. 12.Mar.2019]. Available at: <https://medium.com/bramun-xv-press-corps/the-resolution-is-simply-inefficient-says-moroccan-delegation-2ee9bb9d10b7>.
- Taylor, R. Allan (1982), *The Arab Balance of Power*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Thompson, Virginia and Adolf, Richard (1980), *The Western Sahara*, London: Croom Helm.
- UN Resolution 1514 (XIV), available at: [http://www.unorg./fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/histoire\\_du\\_sahara\\_occidental](http://www.unorg./fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/histoire_du_sahara_occidental).
- Vergniot, Oliver (1985), le conflit du Sahara Occidental dans les relations inter-arabes, *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord*, CNRS publications, Volume XXIV. [Consult. 14.Mar.2019]. Available at: [http://aan.mmsh.univ-aix.fr/Pdf/AAN-1985-24\\_33.pdf](http://aan.mmsh.univ-aix.fr/Pdf/AAN-1985-24_33.pdf) Olivier.
- Zacher, W. Mark (1979), *International Conflicts and Collective Security, 1946-1977: The United Nations, Organization of American States, Organization of African Unity, and Arab League*. New York: Praeger.
- Zartman, William (2007), *Time for a Solution in the Western Sahara Conflict*, Middle East Policy, vol. 14, n.º 4, winter, pp. 178-83.
- Zoubir, H. Yahia (2007), *Stalemate in Western Sahara, Ending International Legality*, Middle East Policy, vol. 14, n.º 4, pp. 158-77.

## *Observadores emergentes*





57. MAURITANIA		٥٧- موريتانيا
58. BURKINA FASO		٥٨- بوركينا فاسو
59. PERU		٥٩- البيرو
60. NIGERIA		٦٠- نيجيريا
61. YUGOSLAVIA		٦١- يوغسلافيا
62. COLOMBIA		٦٢- كولومبيا
63. LIBERIA		٦٣- ليبيريا
50. NAURU		٥٠- ناورو
51. ISLAS SOLIMAN		٥١- جزر سليمان
52. MAURICIO		٥٢- موريشيوس
53. VENEZUELA		٥٣- فنزويلا
54. SURINAME		٥٤- سورينام
55. BOLIVIA		٥٥- بوليفيا
56. ECUADOR		٥٦- ايكوادور
43. CHAD		٤٣- تشاد
44. MALI		٤٤- مالي
45. COSTA RICA		٤٥- كوستاريكا
46. VANUATU		٤٦- فانواتو
PAPUA 47. NUEVA GUINEA		٤٧- بابواغينيا الجديدة
48. TUVALU		٤٨- توفالو
49. KIRIBATI		٤٩- كيريباتي

# South Africa's position on the Western Sahara and the right of self-determination: An Afro-decolonial Analysis

Siphamandla Zondi\*

pp. 117-129

*In the light of the developments to which I have referred, we have begun discussions with the Polisario Front to agree on the modalities of the opening of the Embassy of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic in our country (Mbeki, 2004).*

## Introduction

In respect of the conflict between the Saharawi and Morocco over their right to self-determination, both the ANC policy outlook and the formal government foreign policy required the new South Africa to side with the struggle of the Saharawi people to attain their right to self-determination, even if this undermined Morocco's claim to national sovereignty extending into Saharawi territory. So, this article suggests that to understand the South African position on the Saharawi question, we must understand the fact that while both the principle of preserving national sovereignty, especially of African countries, and the support for the right to self-determination for peoples that demands it feature prominently among the guiding principles of the ANC government, it is the latter that undergirds the policy on the Saharawi question. In power, the ANC pursued the policy of solidarity with the Saharawi, disagreed with Morocco's claim to sovereignty over the Western Sahara, and supported pressure on Morocco to respond positively to UN mediation for a peaceful resolution of the conflict over the status of the Western Sahara. Yet, it encouraged Morocco and Polisario to reach a negotiated settlement under the auspices of the UN. In 1995, the Mandela-led government took a decision to support the calls for a referendum among the Saharawi people in the occupied territories on the status of Western Sahara. This, it was thought, would bring about a way out of the dispute on the basis of the expressed will of the people on the ground. South Africa decided not to recognize the sovereignty of the Saharawi territory in order to give the UN a chance to bring about a negotiated solution. But in spite of a number of UN initiatives, no progress has been registered. It is in this context that Mandela's successor, Thabo Mbeki, wrote the letter announcing the decision to recognize the Saharawi Republic as an independent state. This article will employ a decolonial Afrocentric lens of analysis to explain this policy position, its evolution and the underlying principles that underpin, as well as how this influenced the aggressive growth of Moroccan influence in Africa.

---

\* University of Pretoria.

## A Lens Matters

No serious piece of analysis is achieved without a clear and rigorous paradigm of thought, a theoretical lens sort. The idea of thinking from a point zero perspective (Castro-Gomez, 2005) means being a free-floating signifier (Mafeje, 2011: 41). Thinkers once took a view that the knowing subject is objective, transparent, disincorporated from the known and untouched by the geopolitical configuration of the world in which people and regions are racially ranked. This point of view enabled the knowing subject to map the world for others according to what is good for them (Mignolo, 2009). This made possible the de-centering of the thinker from Africa from places, traditions, cultures, and experiences they speak from. This de-centering is in fact dislocation where thinkers of the South are fooled into thinking from locations other than where they are from. Without being uprooted from their physical locations, their locus of enunciation is established elsewhere, in the centres of global discourses, making possible mimicry and puppetry in our discourses about ourselves. Thus, it generated silences, erasure and distortions of our stories, a sort of dismemberment where we torn between our true ontology and what we say and think (our epistemology). It has trapped thinkers from the South in globally engineered extroverted discourses, the discourses by which the data from the South are exported in order to validate narratives, theories, methodologies and illusions manufactured in imperial centres, which we import (Hountondji, 1997). The hubris of zero point has thus produced and reproduced epistemic injustices.

This makes necessary a shift in the locus of enunciation. This is something akin to what Ngugi wa Thiong'o terms re-memberment, which in this is re-memberment of who we are with where we are and with where we speak and think from (wa Thiong'o, 2009: 1-31). Re-memberment is to negate the prior epistemic negation, which is the dismemberment that causes forgetfulness and disillusionment among the oppressed. This is what Mignolo terms epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009: 2). Re-memberment is to undertake epistemic liberation in order to lead to freedom, diversity and justice.

In this case, we employ an Afro-decolonial on the basis of shared analytical principles. Between Afrocentric analysis and decoloniality is premised on recognizing fixing fundamental problems at three levels simultaneously: the level of being, the level of power and the level of ways of knowing. It helps us recognize that all in modernity is underpinned by a new model of power, being and knowledge that takes the form of lines of inclusion and exclusion as well as the logic of hierarchies that normalize injustice, inequality, domination of some by others, racism, patriarchy, sexism, imperialism and neocolonialism today. It promotes solutions along the lines of undoing this logic in order to end the outcomes listed. It enables thinkers to argue along the lines of liberation, freedom, justice, rebellion, emancipation and ending all forms of domination. This is not an emotional argument driven by blind faith, but it is a reasoned outcome of understanding how the logic of coloniality haunts phenomena the global South has to contended as well as those that relate to relations between the South and the North. It remains the organizing logic of the modern world and the world system. So, decoloniality enables us to understand systemic issues that lie below the surface in relation to the issue at hand, including how this may not be understood merely within the boundaries of the territories that are our focus but epitomize something global and international. It also helps us understand the contestations over the Western Sahara, which is a tiny impoverished and semi-arid territory involving Morocco, an old established stable and powerful state seeking to assert its sovereign power over Western Saharawi, against the will of the Saharawi represented by the Polisario organization.



Afrocentricity compliments this observation of how things operate that give rise to the contestation over Western Sahara's status by emphasizing an epistemological perspective that foregrounds the African experience of African phenomena, the view from within rather than from without (Asante, 1989). This means while understanding the entanglement of issues that explain the Western Sahara issue and South Africa's position on it, from national to global levels, we need to be sensitive to African agency in our analysis. It also calls for re-centering Africa, its history, its cultural heritage, its aspirations, its thinking, paradigms and philosophies in interpreting African phenomena. Recognizing the centrality of African experience in the story of Western Sahara and South Africa's position enables us as analysts to get closer to understanding the issue in a manner that is closest to its gist and to arrive at positions of thought closest to the experiences of those who are affected by the phenomenon understand. This is important because it is very easy to force onto the Western Sahara issue narratives manufactured far from the issue, narratives meant to conceal rather than reveal, to confuse rather than to clarify the Saharawi question and South African foreign policy towards it. The Afrocentric dimension of our lens also enjoins us to think about the whole subject on the basis of the question: what is the interest of the Saharawi people as key African/black people in the story? Both decoloniality and Afrocentricity require the exposition of the dismemberment, the decentering, the epistemic injustice and an understanding of the political, economic and social/cultural injustices that the Saharawi question and South Africa position on it foreground. Both recognize the intersection between various levels of problems that make up the Saharawi problem. They both seek to unmask the rhetoric used in the Saharawi problem and the negative operations of power, privilege and position that thrive on inequality and subjection. Both place historical analysis at the center of rethinking because the present and tomorrow cannot be fully grasped without understanding the historical evolution of phenomena we contend with today. Both have a revolutionary flavour in that they militate against injustice and its manifestations today in order to bring about new possibilities. They are both about freedom and liberation. Therefore, then together they offer a useful perspective for thinking through struggles of the oppressed, the pursuit of equality and freedom; contestations over sovereignty and power and position. These are central considerations to the issue of Western Sahara and an Afro-decolonial lens of analysis has a potential to explain the problem and responses to it including post-apartheid South Africa's policy position on it.

### **South Africa's Position on Western Sahara**

The challenge that confronted the post-apartheid South African state at birth in 1994 was what position to take regarding the sovereignty of the area called Western Sahara located in North-Western Africa because while the Saharawi had organized themselves through the Polisario Front to fight to be granted the right to self-determination, Morocco which rules the territory called Western Sahara claimed its sovereignty over the area. The Polisario Front led an insurgency against the Spanish colonial empire in 1973-75 demanding independence from colonial rule. The Spanish were forced to depart the area in 1975 only for Mauritania and Morocco, also newly independent states, to annex it in 1976 just as the Polisario Front declared an independent state of Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). In response, the United Nations General Assembly voted to grant the Saharawi people their right to self-determination, the right to rely decide their statehood. But the conflict between the Saharawi, Morocco and Mauritania continued. Mauritania withdraw from territory in 1979, leaving the Saharawi people to continue

their struggle against Morocco further. Interventions by France, United States and the UN in the 1980s and 1990s only succeeded to keep the stalemate in place with frequent outbreak of incessant conflict. Polisario Front governs 20 % of the territory as the SADR, while Morocco retains control over 80 % of it as what it calls southern provinces. The Organization of African Unity and its successor, the African Union (AU), have repeatedly taken the position in favour of the right of self-determination for the Saharawi people. They officially declare the Western Sahara to be among the last cases of decolonization before the United Nations. SADR was admitted as a member of the OAU in 1982 and continued when the AU replaced the Organization of African Unity (AU) in 2003. As a result, Morocco left the OAU until its surprise return in 2017. The AU has repeatedly expressed support for an UN-led mediation process to facilitate the granting of the right to self-determination for the non-self-governing territory as it calls it. The AU argues for an UN-supervised referendum to allow the Saharawi people to exercise their right to choose how they should be governed. It has also shone spotlight on human rights violations in the occupied territories to Morocco's chagrin (AU, 2012).

Since the South African position has been in conformity with the OAU and later AU positions, it is crucial to briefly outline these continental positions. The OAU and the AU referred frequently to *African Charter of Human and People's Rights*, especially its preamble referring to the commitment to end colonialism, neocolonialism and all forms of domination and Article 20(1), which states, "All peoples shall have the right to existence. They shall have the unquestionable and inalienable right to self-determination". In this regard, the Charter grants all African people the right to "freely determine their political status" and "pursue their economic and social development according to the policy they have freely chosen" (ACHPR, undated).

The OAU decisions on this can be traced back to the Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers held in 1966 in Addis Ababa that resolved to call on Spain to grant full independence to all its colonies, namely; Spanish Sahara, Equatorial Guinea and Fernando Po (OAU, 1966). Again, three years later, the Council adopted a resolution where it affirmed the legitimacy of the struggles for self-determination in several countries including territories under Spain. It invited solidarity and support to ensure these struggles succeeded (OAU, 1969). In another resolution in 1970, it called on Spain to abide by a UN resolution requiring that the dominated people be given a chance to express their right to self-determination. From this point on, both the UN and the OAU emphasized the right to self-determination in resolving the Saharawi question. The OAU support for the Polisario Front grew every time Spain sought to obfuscate issues. When Spain finally conceded and agreed to convene a referendum on the self-determination in Western Sahara, Morocco objected on the basis that the referendum included the option of independence. This has been the contestation between the Saharawi people, the UN and the OAU/AU on their side, on the one hand, and Morocco claiming the territory as its province, on the other. Since 1975, the OAU rejected Morocco's claim and insisted on a self-determination referendum. This has been the AU position also since taking over from the OAU in 2002.

The African National Congress (ANC) was elected to lead South Africa's post-apartheid government and remembered its long-established policy positions on Western Sahara during the 1960s and 1970s that would later translate into government policy. This position developed alongside the evolution of its international strategy to form alliances with various like-minded forces around the world in order to isolate apartheid South Africa and mobilize concrete support for its struggles against apartheid. International solidarity became key among the four pillars of the new phase of the struggle after 1961 following the banning of the liberation movements and arrests of Mandela and other

leaders. These four pillars were internal mobilization, underground struggle, armed struggle and international solidarity. The latter required the ANC to find friends all over the world either on the basis that they share the ANC's outlook, commit to support its efforts to isolate apartheid South Africa or because the potential friends are engaged in similar struggles elsewhere and the ANC can offer solidarity. The Polisario Front-led struggles of the Saharawi people came into the picture on that basis. Links with the Algerian liberation movement in power, which was also the main source of support for the Polisario Front, saw the ANC solidarity network extended to Polisario Front. The Saharawi struggle got a mention in ANC campaigns, speeches and discussions as a sister struggle worthy of energetic support.

In a speech to the Afro-Arab Solidarity Conference in 1981, the ANC President, Oliver Tambo (1981), revealed that the ANC shared with Polisario and others the enemy in the form of imperial designs over Africa including those epitomized by the subversion of newly independent African states. Though Morocco was seen as a major stumbling block to the Saharawi's right of self-determination, the ANC was critical of the involvement of Western powers in enabling Morocco's defiance of advice and demands of the international community. For this reason, he saw beyond Morocco's chauvinism and detected imperial designs that sought to undermine the forward march of the forces of liberation. In this sense, what the Saharawi people were contending with were simply manifestations of the same mega enemy that the liberation movements were fighting against in various parts of the world. The conference was described as an opportunity "for the progressive forces of the Afro-Arab world to launch a united counter-offensive to beat back the offensive that world imperialism, and especially the United States, has launched to turn our countries and peoples into vassals" (*Ibid*). These imperialist forces felt entitled to turn various territories and countries into assets in their global geopolitical games. Therefore, the liberation struggle is a universal struggle against a universal problem. It was thus a struggle for "the renewal of the world order in favour of independence, democracy, social progress and peace" (*Ibid*). The ANC therefore approached international solidarity on the understanding that this universal problem resolved a devilfish with many limbs that affect various preys at the same time in a manner that seems distinct for each of its victim. This is the essence of the idea of coloniality as a logic that brutalizes, diminishes, violates, impoverishes, hurts and confuses various parts of the world even simultaneously. It seems to be different things in different parts of the world because of how each tormenting limb of coloniality appears in each nation, but it is different tentacles of the same beatifically looking enemy.

Solidarity is therefore a response on the global scale that is conditioned by the universal nature of the problem experienced in different ways and forms in different countries. The understanding that the problems of Saharawi were not just as they appear (the chauvinism of Morocco) but were of a deeper nature similar to the South African apartheid manifestation of the same. Archie Mafeje's idea of negation of prior negation like Ngugi wa Thiong'o's idea of re-memberment as a historically-determined response to dismemberment explain this vividly. The solidarity that brought the ANC and the Polisario Front together was about what Tambo called the pursuit of a "common future".

Immediately, after 1994, it was clear that the ANC had a specific expectation that its government's foreign policy on Western Sahara was part of its broader solidarity programmes. It stated that on Western Sahara, South Africa "will support OAU resolutions which call for the recognition of that territory's independence" (ANC, 1995: 3). It prefaces this policy statement with two statements of principles that must be born in mind when analyzing the South African policy towards Western Sahara. The first is the principle of

solidarity, that South Africa needed to not forget that the people of this territory joined together with those of Algeria to stand with South African liberation movements in South Africa, including by providing practical material support to the anti-apartheid struggle all over Africa. This established the point that this experience of solidarity driven by revolutionary pan-African consciousness against colonial domination needed to be reciprocated or could not, at least, be discounted when making decisions about the Saharawi question. This is underpinned by “our anti-imperialist, anti-colonial and anti-neocolonial commitments in international relations” (ANC, 1997: 2), declared the governing party in relation to solidarity as a key factor in the foreign policy outlook of its government. In this regard, the new state’s willingness to build relations with non-state actors in the form of liberation movements like Polisario in pursuit of the ends mentioned above. Three years earlier, the ANC’s commitment that in future foreign policy, “The right of all the people of Africa to independence and self-government shall be recognized and shall be the basis of close cooperation” (ANC, 1994: 3), was also reflected in the actual state conduct in foreign affairs in relation to the Saharawi question, the Palestine issue and the Niger Delta crisis in Nigeria. This showed how ANC thinking shaped the state’s foreign policy conduct. It went on to acknowledge that, “We are conscious, however, that new demands on the ideal of democracy have recently emerged. In part, they arise from an apparent rediscovery of self-determination which, in some cases, undercuts the sovereignty of established nation-states” (ANC, 1994: 3). In 1990, addressing the United Nations in his capacity as a leader of the ANC, Nelson Mandela outlined the future foreign policy positions of free South Africa widely expected to be led by the ANC. On the Saharawi question he said,

*We also take this opportunity to extend warm greetings to all others who fight for their liberation and their human rights, including the peoples of Palestine and Western Sahara. We commend their struggles to you, convinced that we are all moved by the fact that freedom is indivisible, convinced that the denial of the rights of one diminishes the freedom of others (UN, 1990).*

Thus, before it assumed the reigns as the first government of the post-apartheid period, the ANC had made the right self-determination a crucial foreign policy principle, even if this had a possibility of challenging the sovereignty of established nation states. South Africa’s foreign policy discussion document of 1995 established similar parameters for the new foreign policy. It suggested that, “if consistently adhered to”, principles “will render our foreign policy predictable and in line with our perception of the kind of nation we seek to be, and the kind of world we wish to live in” (SA Government, 1995: 4-5). It went on to say, the principles adopted would also “serve as a yardstick by which the quality of our practical foreign policy decisions may be measured” (*ibid*). Key among those principles is the use of foreign policy and diplomacy for the promotion of human rights, stating that foreign policy “should be a means to an end, namely to promote the well-being of the country and its citizens” (*ibid*). It presented a view of human rights based on the dictum, what is good for South African citizens should be fought for other citizens too. In this is included such rights as the right to self-determination. The document suggested a commitment to advance and promote the rights of nations to self-determination by ending all forms of colonial and neocolonial domination. Solidarity with those fighting for this right would therefore become a cornerstone of post-apartheid foreign policy outlook after 1994. The international efforts to bring about a lasting and negotiated solution to the Saharawi question on the basis set by UN resolution gained momentum when the UN appointed a former Secretary of State of the US with influence in Washington, Mr. James Baker, as an envoy to facilitate a negotiation solution in 2000 (UN Security Council, 2001). Spain also

began to take keen interest in playing a prominent and constructive role in the process a former colonial power. This led to a proposal of a solution that did not involve full integration into Morocco or full independence, but a third way in the form of a 5-year period of autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty followed by a referendum. The UN, US, EU, Spain and the AU supported this; the Polisario Front accepted it, but Morocco rejected it saying its sovereignty was not negotiable. After four intense years without any positive outcomes, Baker resigned in 2004. This was the period when the US under George W. Bush took strong interest in energy resources in the region and drew a little closer to France, Morocco's major backer (Zoubir, 2014: 249-51). South Africa strongly supported the Baker Plan though the plan did not provide an unfettered route to the achievement of the right of self-determination for the Saharawi people and South Africa's wish to recognize the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic. It seems that in South African policy circles, this principle could be deferred or be temporarily sacrificed because a peaceful, negotiated solution in this conflict was considered more important than insisting on this principle as a precondition. So, South Africa vocally expressed its support of the Baker Plan and the UN Security Council Resolution 1495 on it. It expressed hope that the international community will put pressure on Morocco to accept a negotiated solution.

In a debate on the Western Sahara of the Fourth Committee of the UN General Assembly two years later in October 2006, South Africa expressed frustration at the fact that the issue remained unresolved because Morocco, a fellow African country, had not moved an inch to make this possible. "Anything short of the exercise of the right of self-determination will not be acceptable," said a South African diplomat. It pleaded with the two parties to redouble efforts to find a way out of this impasse (UN General Assembly, 2006). In an extensive briefing to the parliamentary committee on foreign affairs in March 2015 on the situation since South Africa took a formal position on Western Sahara, the head of the Department of Foreign Affairs then, Dr. A. Ntsaluba, told the committee, the path to a negotiated solution was fraught with difficulties, littered with all manner of thorns and stumbling blocks (Ntsaluba, 2005). He expressed frustration about the stalemate that had frozen progress after the Baker Plan as not unconditionally accepted by Morocco. He told parliamentarians South Africa was on the verge of formally recognizing Western Sahara, a decision the country had put in abeyance for almost a decade in order to give a negotiated process a chance. South Africa was clearly angered by Morocco's geopolitical games including its formal request in mid-2004 that South Africa "contribute to the search for a solution within the context of the UN processes led by the UN secretary" (*ibid*). When South Africa convened an exploratory discussion between Morocco and representatives of the Saharawi people in September of the same year, having secured the support of the UN Secretary General, Morocco declined the invitation and questioned South Africa's ability to mediate. This led to a letter by the then President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, to key countries involved in finding solution to this question informing them of his government's intention to give full recognition to SADR. We will return to this shortly.

As Dr. Ntsaluba reported, South Africa had remained consistently committed to four principles about the Western Sahara situation: the OAU/AU Policy stance regarding complete decolonization; the UN resolutions that consistently call for the decolonization of the Western Sahara through a self-determination referendum of the people of that territory; the decisions of the International Court of Justice regarding the interpretation of the Charter of the UN in regard to self-determination of non-self-governing states; and the solutions proposed by the UN General Secretary endorsed by the OAU in 1991 and 1994 summits. Besides, the UN, South Africa also formally recognized the US and Spain as interlocutors in the search for a durable solution (*ibid*).



This frustration on the part of South Africa over the stalemate on the Western Sahara question reached a sort of a climax in 2004 with the collapse of the Baker Plan and the failure of its own mediation Initiative to even take off the ground. It is evident in Mbeki's speech to the Pan African Parliament in September of that year where he said the following:

*It is a matter of great shame and regret to all of us that nevertheless the issue of self-determination for the people of Western Sahara remains unresolved. This presents to all of us with the challenge to ensure that we do everything possible to ensure that these sister people also enjoy this fundamental and inalienable right, whose defence by the entirety of our continent brought us our own freedom (Mbeki, 2004b).*

A day earlier, his foreign minister, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, had told parliament, "In implementation of the principles and objectives enshrined in the African Union and UN Charters, the Republic of South Africa and the Sahrawi decided to establish diplomatic relations at ambassadorial level as of Wednesday" (Mbeki, 2004c). Both Mbeki and the Foreign Affairs Minister continued to call for a negotiated solution, suggesting that the full recognition decision in 2004 was not an abandonment of the foreign policy position since 1994, but an amplification of it. It did not think that Morocco's disappointment with this will diminish the weight of their voice calling for a lasted negotiated solution. Therefore, the decision to recognize SADR even before there was negotiated solution was seen by South Africa as an implementation of a part of its position that was always in place but had been deferred to give negotiations a chance. For this reason, the South African government hoped to campaign for the negotiated solution through bilateral engagements, multilateral discussions, lobbying China and Russia as two permanent members of the UNSC that were most likely to understand the plight of the oppressed, partnerships with civil society including the Friends of Western Sahara in Britain, engagement with IBSA partner countries, and building international consensus on the recognition of the Polisario Front (Executive Background).

Let us return to the letter by Mbeki that we alluded to the beginning of this article in order to establish the point immediately above. Penned on 1 August 2004 for the attention of the King of Morocco, the Mbeki letter announced a policy change on the Saharawi question (Mbeki, 2004a). Mbeki began the letter by reminding the king that the first post-apartheid president, Nelson Mandela, announced in 1993 that the new government would recognize and start formal diplomatic relations with the SADR, consistent with the decisions of the OAU that the country joined in 1994. Mandela was persuaded by the king and the UN General Secretary not to carry out this decision in order to give the UN-facilitation of a peaceful solution a chance. He communicated how difficult it had been to defer a principle South Africa held so dear for a decade against pressure from the Polisario Front and from some African states.

Mbeki indicated that in this decade of painstaking wait for a negotiated solution, South Africa repeatedly persuaded the Polisario Front to give negotiations a change and contribute to a peaceful solution of the issue in line with UN resolutions. On the advice to defer recognition, Mbeki said,

*We indicated to the Front our belief that our respect of this advice was the best contribution we could make to the successful implementation of the peace plan and other proposals that would lead to the holding of a referendum that would give the people of Western Sahara the possibility to exercise their right to self-determination (ibid).*

It is clear from the tone of the letter that this stalemate hurt South Africa's compromise and made this compromise position untenable to maintain. It felt vindicated for shelving its decision to grant diplomatic recognition in order to give negotiations between Polisario and Morocco a chance. According to the letter, the strike that broke the proverbial camel's back was the conclusion by then UN secretary-general, Kofi Anan, that Morocco's final response to the UN efforts was to reject off-hand the very basis of interventions by insisting that it would negotiate only on the basis that the solution will be autonomy within Moroccan sovereignty. But Mbeki noted that Morocco had gone further and announced formally that the final nature of "the autonomy solution is not negotiable", thus rendering negotiations a futile exercise. There was clear a deep clash between the principle of justice as in the rights to the Saharawi to be heard on the issue of self-determination and another principle, Morocco's insistence on its national sovereignty as extended over the territory of the Saharawi considered in Rabat as the southern provinces. This clash had not been resolved by the many UN initiatives, neither by the flexible position promoted by South Africa, nor by many compromises that the Polisario had made since 2001 on behalf of the Saharawi people. It seemed central to the logjam over the Saharawi people and was a clash that Morocco used skillfully to keep hopes for a peaceful end to conflict alive without moving an inch in the direction of such peace.

Mbeki said that the UN Security Council Resolution no 1541 in response to Morocco's statement, which insisted on a solution a solution that provided for self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, was the solution South Africa also insisted. The resolution reaffirmed the Council's commitment to the "Peace Plan for Self-Determination of the People of Western Sahara" and the mandate of the Secretary-General (UNSG) and the UNSG's Personal Envoy in the pursuit of this plan, and called upon the parties cooperate with the UNSG and the Envoy, while it also extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) by a further six months (United Nations Security Council, 2004). In spite of overwhelming evidence about the lack of genuine political will on the part of Morocco to allow a win-win solution to the problem, the Security Council continued to hope that such a solution could be read as quickly as in the next six months after the resolution. It even made provision for a possible reduction in the size of the MINURSO at the end of its extended mandate.

Accordingly", Mbeki said, "when we delayed recognition of SADR this was on the basis that both Morocco and the Polisario Front were working with the UN SG and the Security Council to agree on the modalities of a process that would allow the people of Western Sahara to exercise their right of self-determination, in a manner consistent with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant documents of the OAU and AU" (Mbeki, 2004a). After reminding the King of Morocco's sterling role in support of the struggle for the right of self-determination in South Africa, Mbeki concluded that the kingdom clearly did not have intentions to extend the same principle position in relation to the right of the Saharawi people under any circumstances. It suggested that Morocco had abandoned a principle that had connected the kingdom to the new South Africa in the first place, a basis on which South Africa had hoped to help bring finality to the stalemate. Though the kingdom had willingly participated in the decade-long negotiation period culminating in the peace plan, Mbeki observed that it turned out the very issue being discussed was in fact not negotiable. Therefore, Morocco's statement had revealed what was already obvious in its conduct, the fact that it was negotiating in bad faith because it had an outcome in mind, but one that made negotiations a futile exercise. The sense of betrayal and of being deceived is clear from this observation. Morocco had deceived everyone including the UN and this undermined the international system itself.

“The avoidable cul-de-sac caused by the position advanced by the Government of Morocco”, Mbeki concluded, “has created the situation that any further delay on our part to recognize SADR will inevitably translate into an abandonment of our support for the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination” (*Ibid*). South Africa felt that maintaining the compromise in the hope of a positive outcome from negotiations had suddenly become not just unwise option, but one that could be construed as supporting Morocco’s deceitful position. Therefore, South Africa decided to establish full diplomatic relations with the SADR while continuing to support the UN efforts to find a lasting peaceful resolution of this matter.

Morocco responded by withdrawing its ambassador from South Africa, accusing Tshwane of having a biased stance on the Western Sahara issue. It called South Africa’s decision “partial, surprising and inopportune”, saying it “undermines the efforts of the United Nations to find a just, realistic solution that is acceptable to all parties to this conflict” (Morocco Recalls). Morocco indicated that by pursuing the right of self-determination, South Africa was out of touch with the realities on the ground in the disputed territory and, that in fact, it undermined the will of the very populations concerned, which said were not in favour of a Polisario agenda. The relations between South Africa and Morocco thus froze to basic diplomatic interface and became hostile in international platforms like the UN.

Mbeki was succeeded by Jacob Zuma in 2009, after a one-year interregnum in which Kgalema Motlanthe was a caretaker president. Between 2009 and 2017, the Morocco position on the questions discussed above shifted a small and subtle ways. It started to shift towards friendly overtures to South Africa in order to end hostility. It started to court Zuma. By 2012, South Africa and Morocco were the African representatives in the UN Security Council and shouldered the responsibility to coordinate on mostly African issues before the Council. The election of Morocco into the Council in September 2011 followed the bruises South Africa had suffered over its vote in support of what became a destabilizing regime change agenda in Libya. This dovetailed with Morocco’s spirited courting of African countries to enable Morocco to get elected alongside Togo ahead of Mauritania that the AU had decided to support. Morocco had thus split an AU consensus and demonstrated that it had made inroads in the AU that it remained not member of due to disputes over the Saharawi question. So, as a partner with South Africa in the Council in 2012, Morocco was a growing power in African multilateral politics as a result of conscious strategy to end its isolation by hook or crook. According to Nomfundo Ngwenya, a foreign policy expert, this required South Africa to seek a pragmatic relationship with Morocco while watching its growing significance in African politics (Ngwenya, 2012). By 2016, having supported the African agenda at the Council, Morocco had built up its case for its re-admission into the AU without changing its position on Western Sahara, which was the reason it departed in the first place.

Things changed remarkably in 2017 when after a year of spirited lobbying and campaign, Morocco was overwhelmingly voted back into the membership of the AU after 34-year absence from the formal African multilateral platform (Rawhani, 2018). This campaign happened in the course of 2016 when the South African Africa policy seemed to be in disarray with the energies of the Jacob Zuma government absorbed by huge domestic problems including political scandals and its focus on nurturing relations with China and BRICS. There was a lack of an alternative group of African countries to insist on Morocco addressing the reasons for conflict that led to its withdrawal from the OAU in 1984. Morocco was wise to identify key anchor states whose support would enable it to win the votes at the AU. It had actually experiment on this when it won the votes of many African

countries in the race for the seat in the Security Council in September 2011. So, it was not a short-term strategy at work, but part of an elaborate long-term strategy that can be traced back to 2007/2008, when the Mbeki term ended and the era of a strong team of leaders driving the AU agenda ended.

Morocco had unveiled a regionalization agenda with Western Sahara as a key spring board to Morocco's expansion in Africa in 2008-2010. In this period, there was a marked growth in the kingdom's bilateral engagements with African countries, intensified as European markets dried up due to the global financial crisis after 2009 (Ben-Meir, 2010; Messari, 2018). South Africa had assumed that the traditional OAU/AU position on the right to self-determination was still so entrenched that it would prevent Morocco from shirking its responsibility to account for the Western Sahara issue before it could be accepted back. Outwitted and out-boxed, South Africa had not way to explain the return of Morocco when it happened (Allison, 2017).

This has shifted the relations from Western Sahara to power relations between two major powers in Africa, both with ambitions to be leading African powers. There are discussions in progress to resume full ambassadorial bilateral relations between South Africa and Morocco. The thawing of relations in spite of stalemate in Western Sahara is a key indication of this shift to geopolitical chess-games between an adventurous and expansionist Morocco and a rather lethargic South Africa. Morocco is back in the AU using its power to project itself as a champion of African development, signing many bilateral economic cooperation agreements and promising millions in Moroccan investment in Africa. South Africa takes solace in the fact that SADR remains also a member of the AU because Morocco has not pushed to have it expelled in fear of being as divisive. South Africa seems happy with the fact that it is what is called a draw in football language, but this is a draw with Morocco on a stronger footing, and certainly on the prowl for more gains in African geopolitics. The SADR is worried that this re-admission of Morocco reduces the pressure on Morocco, disincentivizes it to reach a settlement and makes the Saharawi struggle even more difficult and complicated.

## Conclusion

The decision to fully recognize the SADR in 2004 marked the end of a decade of hope in the UN-driven facilitation process in the hope that this would result in a negotiated granting of the right of self-determination for the people of Western Sahara. It also marked a beginning of a decade that would culminate in Morocco's a surprise return to the AU without abiding by the AU position on Western Sahara. Both decades represent power politics in the form of Morocco's dancing around the AU, UN and South Africa in delay tactics and deceit. It was also power games in the form of solidarity alliances that South Africa was a part of that kept the hopes of the people of Western Sahara high. The second decade also showcased Morocco's smart power politics by which it lobbied strategically to win the support for its own decision to return to the AU and its visible efforts to build itself up as a major regional power in Africa. South Africa's position evolved over time with a deferment of the decision to recognize SADR in the first decade and a decision to give SADR full recognition to the chagrin of Morocco in the second decade. The future of Western Sahara and the UN process to find a lasting negotiated solution is uncertain and so are outcomes of the South African position on this issue. What is certain is that Morocco is increasingly setting the pace and drawing the parameters of the next phase in the evolution of this problem. South Africa is certainly exhausted, inward-looking and directionless in relation to the future of the Saharawi question.

## Bibliographic references

- ACHPR (Undated), *African Charter of Human and People's Rights*. [Consult. 13.Jan.2019]. Available at: <http://www.achpr.org/instruments/achpr/#part1>.
- Allison, S. (2016), Analysis: Morocco's Big African Union Win Comes at the Expense of Western Sahara and South Africa, *The Daily Maverick*, 31 January 2017. [Consult. 2.Dec.2018]. Available at: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za>.
- ANC (1997), Developing a strategic perspective on South African foreign policy, Johannesburg: ANC Department of Information.
- \_\_\_\_ (1995), Foreign Policy in a New Democratic South Africa: A Discussion Paper.
- \_\_\_\_ (1994), Foreign Policy Perspective in a Democratic South Africa, Johannesburg: ANC Department of Information.
- Asante, Molefi Kente (1989), *Afrocentricity*. Trenton, N. J.: Africa World Press.
- AU (2012), Report of the Peace and Security Council, Addis Ababa: AUPSC.
- Ben-Meir, Y. (2010), Morocco's Regionalization "Roadmap" and the Western Sahara. *International Journal on World Peace*, 27 (2), pp. 63-86.
- Castro-Gomez, S. (2005), *La hybris del punto cero: ciencia, raza e ilustración en la Nueva Granada (1750-1816)*, Bogotá: Editorial Pontificia Universidad Javeriana.
- Executive Backgrounder on Western Sahara prepared for the Director General, Dr. Ayanda Ntsaluba on the Occasion of the Briefing of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee in Foreign Affairs on March 14, 2005, Cape Town. [Consult. 2.Dec.2018] Available at: <http://pmg-assets.s3-website-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/docs/2006/060314wsahara.htm>.
- Hountondji, Paulin (ed.) (1997), *Endogenous Knowledge: research trails*. Dakar: Codesria Books.
- Mafeje, Archie (2011), A Combative Ontology, In Devisch, R. and Nyamnjoh, F. B. (eds.). *Postcolonial Turn: Imagining Anthropology and Africa*, Bamenda and Leiden: Langaa, pp. 31- 41.
- Mbeki, Thabo (2004a), Address by the President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki at the Pan African Parliament, Gallagher Estate, Midrand, 16 September 2004. [Consult. 3.Dec.2018]. Available at: <http://www.dirco.gov.za/docs/speeches/2004/mbeko917.htm>.
- \_\_\_\_ (2004b), President Thabo Mbeki's Letter to His Majesty King Mohamed VI of Morocco. [Consult. 16.Dec.2018]. Available at: <https://www.mbeki.org/2016/10/25/president-thabo-mbekis-letter-to-his-majesty-king-mohamed-vi-of-morocco/>.
- \_\_\_\_ (2004c), Western Sahara Needs Self-Determination, *The Daily Star*, 17 September 2004. Author copy.
- Messari, Nizar (2018), Morocco's African Foreign Policy. *Future Notes* 12, June. pp. 1-6.
- Mignolo, Walter (2009), Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and the De-Colonial Freedom, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26(7-8): pp. 1-23.
- Morocco Recalls SA Ambassador, Independent Online, 15 September 2004. [Consult. 2.Dec.2018]. Available at: <https://www.iol.co.za/news/Africa/Morocco-recall-sa-Ambassador-221970>.
- Ngwenya, Nomfundu (2012), A critical year ahead for South Africa at the United Nations Security Council, *Sunday Independent*, 12 June. [Consult. 2.Dec.2018]. Available at: <https://saiia.org.za/research/a-critical-year-ahead-for-south-africa-at-the-united-nations-security-council/>.
- OUA (1969), Council of Ministers Resolution in Decolonisation and Apartheid, 27 August-6 September, Addis Ababa, OAU papers, AU Library.
- \_\_\_\_ (1966), Resolution on the Territories under Spanish Domination, CM/Res. 82, 31 October-4 November. AU Library.
- Rawhani, Carmel (2018), Morocco Joins the AU: Motives and Meanings, Occasional Paper 277, South African Institute of International Affairs, Johannesburg.
- SA Government (1995), Foreign Policy for South Africa: Discussion Document. Pretoria: Department of Foreign Affairs. Author's original copy.



- Tambo, Oliver (1981), Our Reply- Struggle, Attack and Counterattack, Speech by Oliver Tambo at the Afro-Arab Solidarity Conference, Luanda, Angola, 6 December. [Consult. 12.Dec.2018]. Available at: <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/our-reply-struggle-attack-and-counterattack-speech-oliver-tambo-afro-arab-solidarity-confere>.
- UN General Assembly (2006), Fourth Committee Takes up The Question of Western Sahara, 3 October, GA/SPD/342. [Consult. 2.Dec.2018]. Available at: <http://www.un.org/press/en/2006/gaspd342.doc.htm>.
- UN Security Council (2004), Resolution 1541, Adopted by the Security Council at its 4957th meeting, on 29 April 2004, S/RES/1541 (2004). [Consult. 1.Dec.2018]. Available at: <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1541>.
- UN Security Council (2001), Reports of the Secretary-General on the Situation Concerning Western Sahara, S/2001/613, June 20. [Consult. 2.Dec.2018]. Available at: <http://www.un.org>.
- UN (1990), Statement by Nelson Mandela, Deputy President of the African National Congress to the 641st meeting of the Special Committee Against Apartheid, 22 June. New York: UN. Available at: [http://www.un.org/en/events/mandeladay/statement\\_SCAA\\_1990.html](http://www.un.org/en/events/mandeladay/statement_SCAA_1990.html).
- wa Thiong'o, Ngũgĩ (2009), *Something Torn and New: an African Renaissance*. New York, Basic Books, pp. 1-31.
- Zoubir, Y. H. (2014), The US and Morocco: the long-lasting alliance. Looney R. (ed.). *Handbook of US-Middle East Relations*. New York: Rutledge, pp. 249-61

NATO No  
1015-99 964 5764  
MANFD [ ] ROF N 19 77  
REGD No [ ] T 371

MOD. RECORD  
ASSEMBLY PART No.  
FL346MA

1	6	11	16	21
2	7	12	17	22
3	8	13	18	23
4	9	14	19	24
5	10	15	20	25

GUN 105 M.M. FIELD L118  
NATO STOCK No 1015-99-962-5696  
SERIAL No [ ] 3 4 6  
MAN FD. [ ] ROF N 19 77

# China's Non-interference Policy towards Western Sahara Conflict

Wu Wanjun\* and Pedro Sobral\*\*

pp. 131-143

## 1. China's non-interference policy towards the Western Sahara conflict

Chinese leaders have long viewed their movement in global terms. Ever since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the decision to reach out to Africa was a necessary part of a foreign policy dedicated to spreading Maoist ideology around the world and striking against American and Soviet expansionism. As such, China took as its mission the assistance of the oppressed and the exploited, as well as the provision of aid to developing nations in what Mao Zedong then called the "Third World".<sup>1</sup>

During the Bandung Conference of 1955, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai had the opportunity of contacting with several liberation movements that attended the event as observers. The forum provided a platform for China to manifest its support for the independence movements of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia (Shinn *et al.*, 2012: 33).<sup>2</sup> These countries were specifically mentioned by Zhou as ones of "dependent peoples who have been fighting for independence", and that "have never ceased to be suppressed with violence" ("Major Speech by Zhou Enlai", 1955). The solidarity of the Chinese leaders with the plight of northern African nations was thus evident.

Beijing's support for independence movements and revolutionary groups in North Africa was not only rhetorical. Another sign of China's anti-imperialist and supportive stance concerning northern Africa was its recognition of the *Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Algérienne* merely three days after its proclamation in September 19, 1958 ("List of Recognitions of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic", 1959), followed by a credit for the purchase of arms and training of Algerian fighters in China (Larkin, 1971: 38). More tellingly, China has even praised the Algerian revolution as "a brilliant example" for the rest of Africa (Connelly, 2002: 274).

China's engagement with post-colonial Africa knew one early important diplomatic development in the form of Zhou Enlai's and Vice-Premier Chen Yi's visit to ten African countries at the end of 1963 and beginning of 1964, which included Morocco and Algeria. This diplomatic outreach heralded Beijing's assertion of ideological independence from the Soviet Union, as well as projected the Chinese vision of an international "third force" opposed to the American and Soviet blocks (Adie, 1964: 174). In Morocco, where

\* University of Minho & University of Sun Yat-sen.

\*\* Zhejiang Yuexiu University of Foreign Languages.

<sup>1</sup> For more on Mao Zedong's "Theory on the Division of the Three Worlds", see [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/ziliao\\_665539/3602\\_665543/3604\\_665547/t18008.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ziliao_665539/3602_665543/3604_665547/t18008.shtml).

<sup>2</sup> "In view of the unsettled situation in North Africa and of the persisting denial to the peoples of North Africa of their right to self-determination, the Asian-African Conference declared its support of the rights of the people of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia to self-determination and independence and urged the French Government to bring about a peaceful settlement of the issue without delay." ("Asia-Africa Speak from Bandung", 1955).

Zhou stayed between December 21 and 30, discussions were mainly dominated by trade. In fact, by that time Morocco traded phosphate fertilizers, cobalt and other strategic resources with China despite American pressure. Although there was some lingering animosity due to China's support of the opposition to Moroccan King Hassan II in 1961, Zhou diplomatically "praised the successes achieved by His Majesty's Government and the Moroccan people in their efforts to consolidate national independence..." (Adie, 1964: 186). In return, Morocco supported the aspirations of the People's Republic to a place in the United Nations.

Bilateral relationships aside, it was also during this African tour that Zhou Enlai applied China's "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" to the African and Arab countries. These principles, which continue to be widely quoted by Chinese scholars and officials, were originally conceived by India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Zhou himself, in 1954. They rose to fame at the Bandung Conference, which set the stage for the Non-Aligned Movement. They still form an essential part of China's foreign policy, especially towards Africa, and will be discussed later in this article.

Given the support initially offered by China to independence movements in North Africa during the 50s and 60s, as well as the ideological importance of building a non-aligned block of Third World countries against the imperialist United States and revisionist Soviet Union, we might assume that the Chinese government would adopt a similarly sympathetic stance towards the POLISARIO (*Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguia el Hamra y Río de Oro*) movement upon the beginning of the Western Sahara conflict. However, that did not happen. For example, China has refused the participation of the leaders of the POLISARIO front in its China-Africa Summits in both 2015 and 2018 ("Beijing Rejects Polisario's Participation", 2015; "Beijing Skips the Polisario", 2018). In the following sections, we intend to analyze the reasons for this lack of support.

The 70s were an unusually eventful decade for China. In 1971, the country gained admission to the United Nations and replaced the Republic of China on the Security Council. The next year, it started working towards a rapprochement with the United States, effectively adopting a degree of pragmatism as a result of deteriorating Sino-Soviet relations. More importantly, in 1976, one year after the beginning of the conflict in the Western Sahara, the Chinese leader Mao Zedong dies, opening the way, if not for a significant change in foreign policy, at least for a more pragmatic one.

The launch of the Reform and Opening program in December 1978 fundamentally changed China's international and domestic priorities and, along with it, its Africa policy. The erosion of the government's ideological leanings due to the success of China's developmental progress has brought about a more practical and principle-oriented foreign policy, especially towards the Third World countries.

## 2. Underlying causes for China's non-interference policy towards Western Sahara

Four reasons can be found to explain the non-interference policy practiced by China towards the Western Sahara Conflict, which are the application of the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence", the similarity between the Taiwan issue and the Western Sahara conflict, China's pragmatic diplomatic policy with Morocco and Algeria and, last but not least, China's vested economic interests in the region.

### 2.1. The “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence”

Above we have mentioned China’s “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence”. This group of principles remain an essential part of China’s policy towards Africa. They can be translated as follows<sup>3</sup>:

- China supports the African and Arab peoples in their struggle to oppose imperialism and old and new colonialism and to win and safeguard national independence;
- It supports the pursuance of a policy of peace, neutrality and non-alignment by the Governments of the African and Arab countries;
- It supports the desire of the African and Arab peoples to achieve unity and solidarity in the manner of their own choice;
- It supports the African and Arab countries in their efforts to settle their disputes through peaceful consultations;
- It holds that the sovereignty of the African and Arab countries should be respected by all other countries and that encroachment and interference from any quarter should be opposed.

The vagueness of these principles has allowed them to stand the test of time and still be applicable today. Of particular importance to our study are principles number 1 and 5, which can, to some extent, be contradictory in some cases. While the first principle pledges support to struggles for national independence, the fifth principle offers guarantees that China will never interfere in other countries’ internal affairs. Applying both these principles to the conflict on the Western Sahara, the first principle would, in theory, require China to pledge its support to the POLISARIO front as a national independence movement. The fifth principle, however, would forbid this same support, as that would mean interfering in what became, since 1975, a Moroccan domestic affair.

In practice, the increasingly close economic relations with African countries, as well as China’s own domestic situation, demand that the fifth principle become increasingly important and the most often cited by Chinese politicians. On one hand, it serves to assuage the African countries and the international community that China will not meddle in other countries’ internal affairs, nor attempt regime changes in these countries, as well as shed western accusations of “neocolonialism”.<sup>4</sup> On the other, and more importantly, this principle of non-interference is valid both ways, and China focuses on it in part because of its own concerns over sovereignty issues at home (Hanauer *et al.*, 2014: 22), as we will see more closely below.

### 2.2. The Taiwan issue

The Taiwan issue dates back to the late nineteenth century, when Taiwan was ceded by the Qing government (1644-1911) to the Empire of Japan. Following Japan’s surrender at the end of World War II, on August 14, 1945, Taiwan was taken back by the Chinese government. In 1949, with the establishment of the People’s Republic of China and the victory of the Communists in the civil war, the remnants of the Chinese Nationalist Party, the Kuomintang (KMT), retreated to Taiwan, where they maintain a separate government from the rest of the mainland. Since then, Taiwan has become one of the most sensitive

<sup>3</sup> These principles are listed in “Chinese Leaders on Sino-African Relations”, china.org.com, December 10, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> During the 2018 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, Chinese President Xi Jinping has reinforced this idea by pledging to follow “five nos”: “[N]o interference in African countries’ pursuit of development paths that fit their national conditions; no interference in African countries’ internal affairs; no imposition of our will on African countries; no attachment of political strings to assistance to Africa; and no seeking of selfish political gains (...).” (Tiezzi, 2018).



and complicated issues for the PRC, as well as for East Asian geopolitics in general. On one hand, an increasingly significant part of public opinion in Taiwan advocate its independence. On the other hand, the PRC adamantly insists on the “One-China policy”, which is the principle that dictates that there is only one China and Taiwan is an inalienable part of this China, being this “one China” open to interpretation by both sides. Furthermore, it is telling that the one precondition for diplomatic relations with Beijing is the recognition of the “One-China policy”, such is the importance Beijing gives to it.

To some extent, we can find some similarities between the Taiwan issue and the Western Sahara Conflict. First, both of them are historical issues, which means they originated in a relatively remote past and are, as a result, difficult to solve based on international law. Secondly, both Taiwan and the Western Sahara were occupied by other countries for decades (almost a century in the case of the Spanish colonization of the Western Sahara), which generates a cultural gap and a distinct identity that sets it apart from would-be “liberators”, thus complicating the reunification. Last but not least, the independence movements in these two regions are both supported by other foreign entities. Algeria keeps providing military, financial, logistic and moral support to the POLISARIO front, as it has been doing for more than thirty years. On the other hand, the American government also continuously sells weapons to the Taiwan government, much to Beijing’s dismay. As mentioned in an article by *The Diplomat* already cited above, “China’s relationship with Taiwan is complicated by geopolitical rivalry with the United States and China’s territorial ambitions; in a similar fashion, the fate of the Western Sahara is closely tied to Morocco’s longstanding icy relationship with Algeria. Algeria has long supported POLISARIO, a Socialist party that carried out a guerrilla campaign against Morocco until a ceasefire in 1991” (Hammond, 2017). Therefore, the Taiwan issue and the Western Sahara Conflict share common ground on some aspects.

The fundamental similarity between the two regional issues drives the Chinese and Moroccan governments closer to a consensus, in which both sides remain neutral and do not interfere in each other’s domestic issues. From another perspective, the Chinese government’s neutrality towards the Western Sahara conflict is in line with its stance on its own Taiwan issue, opposing regional separatism. In addition, in the 1950s, when the young Chinese Communist government tried to reestablish diplomatic relationships with other countries, Morocco was the second African country to formalize official contacts with the new China and accept the “One-China policy”. Therefore, since the 1950s, China and Morocco have reached a consensus and shared concordant opinions regarding each other’s territorial issues. This constitutes one of the major drivers of Chinese neutrality towards the Western Sahara conflict.

### 2.3. China’s pragmatism in Sino-Moroccan and Sino-Algerian relations

Despite what was said above, in international relations, what determines the positions of states is not only their political doctrine, but also, and most importantly, their economic interests. This is especially true for China, whose cooperation with Africa is increasingly an economic and commercial one, especially since the launch of the Belt and Road initiative. This highlights the need to analyze the Chinese partnership both with Morocco and Algeria and see the way it relates with China’s position on the territorial dispute.

Generally speaking, China has maintained stable and smooth relations with both Morocco and Algeria since the 1950s. As we already noted, Morocco was the second African country to establish relations with the new Chinese government in 1949. Meanwhile, the PRC was the first non-Arabic country to recognize the independent Algeria, also sharing long and

healthy bilateral relations with this country. In return, Algeria was one of the first African countries to establish diplomatic relations with China in 1958. Maybe more significantly, in 1971, Algeria, along with Albania, was one of the sponsors of the recognition of the Government of the People's Republic of China as the only lawful representative of China in the United Nations and the Security Council, which resulted, as we have seen, in the restoration of all its rights in the international community and the expelling of Chiang Kai-shek's Republic of China from the United Nations.

In 1982, then Premier of the PRC Zhao Ziyang visited 11 African countries for the first time since the aforementioned visit of Zhou Enlai in 1950s. The visited countries included, once again, Morocco and Algeria. As we can see, every major political overture China makes in Africa always involves Algeria and Morocco, be it visits of important leaders or the participation in international organizations like the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCF), which will be mentioned in more detail below. For one thing, these two countries are geographical neighbors, sharing a similar natural environment and similar resources, which naturally fosters their competitive relations. Moreover, existing border conflicts between the two also enhance the competition. On the other hand, as mentioned, Zhao Ziyang, who visited both countries in 1982, analyzed the special roles played by them in the region in his speech. China had strongly supported Algeria in its seven-year independence war against France, although Algeria then maintained good relations with the Soviet Union, being influential in the Group of 77 and the Non-Aligned Movement. Morocco kept intimate relations with America, being its representative in Africa and among Islamic "moderate" countries (Editorial team of *The Collected Works of Zhao Ziyang*, 2016: 38). Therefore, China, who had practiced a principle of non-aggressive diplomacy and had been prioritizing domestic and economic development since the Reform and Opening-up policy, kept a balance in the region. However, after a first intensifying of Sino-Moroccan and Sino-Algerian relations, they entered a cooldown period in the late 1980s which lasted until the arrival of the new millennium, following the more and more intense arms race and strife between the United States and the Soviet Union for hegemony and the disintegration of the Soviet Union later on.

By 2000, China had built and constructed a platform around the world to further its "Go global" strategy (*zou chu qu zhan lue*). China began to organize and hold a variety of international and high-level summits to gain support, reach consensus and sign agreements on all aspects, such as the FOCAC and CASCF. Algeria and Morocco participate in both forums. Moreover, by the end of 2001, China successfully joined the World Trade Organization after fifteen years of efforts, and began to expand its trade relations. In 2003, the volume of bilateral trade between China and Morocco achieved 552.9 million dollars, an 185.1 million dollars or 33.4 % increase comparing to 2002. According to the UN Comtrade database, during the same time, bilateral trade between China and Algeria increased by 45.1 %, (almost 185.1 million dollars), achieving 608.2 million dollars (Algeria's exports of goods in 2002). In 2017, China was the 13<sup>th</sup> largest export market and the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest import market for Morocco. The bilateral relations with Algeria are similar: in 2017, China was the 14<sup>th</sup> largest export market for Algeria and its 1<sup>st</sup> import market. As we can see, the bilateral trade relations for Morocco and Algeria are quite a bit unbalanced, but China still depends on its strong economic power and prosperous economy to influence the economic balance in the Western Sahara region. In fact, as far as China is concerned, there does not exist a very direct interest in the Western Sahara conflict, which at most adds potential instability to the commercial relations and does not deeply influence diplomatic relations between China and the other two countries,

Morocco and Algeria. Even so, China, as one of the most prosperous and emerging leading powers in the world, is influential. As reported by *Morocco World News*, King Mohammed VI's second visit to China in 2016 was related to then Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's controversial statement that describes Morocco's *status quo* in the Western Sahara as an "occupation" and called for the renewal of the mandate of the UN mission (discussed later on) in the territory. The ambiguous and seemingly unsupportive attitude of the United States towards Morocco in the Security Council also contributed to Morocco's outreach to China (Bennis, 2016). During this visit, the King of Morocco and the President of the PRC, Xi Jinping, signed a strategic partnership called *Joint Statement of the People's Republic of China and the Kingdom of Morocco on Establishing a Strategic Partnership between the Two Countries*<sup>5</sup>, which mentions cooperation in various fields including politics; economy, trade and investment; culture, education, hygiene, tourism, sports and news; technology; military and communications. In addition, China and Morocco achieved great progress in tourism. As mentioned by the *Oxford Business Group*, the Moroccan government, facing a decrease in visitors from its traditional source market in Europe, intends to diversify its tourism industry, including China. During the aforementioned visit, a memorandum of understanding on the growing economic partnership between the two nations was signed in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. The visa exemption for Chinese citizens to Morocco tremendously stimulates the number of Chinese tourists. In the first 11 months of 2017, the number of Chinese tourists registered an increase of 173 % and the consumption per person achieved an average of Dh867 (≈\$90.4) per night, higher than the average of Dh 696.4 (≈\$72.6) per night in the same year (Oxford Business Group, 2018).

In the meantime, while Morocco looks up to China as a market target, Sino-Algerian bilateral relations were elevated to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" and have further developed since 2014, as John Calabrese commented (Calabrese, 2017). In fields like construction, telecommunications, astronomy and joint ventures, China and Algeria continue to cooperate and attain great success in recent years. Kamal Kheffache, an Algerian economic analyst, suggested that the government should encourage more Chinese investment and the establishment of joint ventures in the manufacturing sector to turn the trade imbalance around (Lu (ed.), 2017).

Through sorting out the Sino-Moroccan and Sino-Algerian relations, we can find that China seems to intend to maintain the balance in the area, as well as its neutrality in this region. In fact, most of the Western Sahara is actually controlled by Morocco and only a small portion is open to contention. One of the reasons why the conflict has lasted for over four decades is the military and financial support of Algeria. Therefore, the Western Sahara conflict is of course related to the history and the struggle for independence of the local people, but it is also a contest between Algeria and Morocco themselves. China has expanded the volume of bilateral trade with both countries and also signed various agreements to further the cooperation in recent years. China kept the regional balance all along, avoiding biases and preferences, whether in national visits or in the economic domain. For one thing, the balance and equality for two similar countries kept by China conforms to its non-interference diplomatic policy and "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence". In other words, if China were partial to or in favor of one of them, exerting influence on Western Sahara conflict, it would amount to regional hegemonism. For another, from a long-term perspective, a neutral attitude can better maintain good relations with these two countries.

<sup>5</sup> Original in Chinese: 《中华人民共和国和摩洛哥王国关于建立两国战略合作伙伴关系的联合声明》.

#### 2.4. China's invested interests in Western Sahara

Generally speaking, China does not have too many invested interests and relations with the Western Sahara conflict, which is the main reason why China can remain comparatively neutral in the conflict, as well as maintain a healthy and profitable relationship with the contending actors. However, be that as it may, as more and more profound and comprehensive relations are being established with Morocco and Algeria in recent years, the invested interests of China in the region have undoubtedly increased.

As has been mentioned above, in 1950s, President Mao Zedong of the young People's Republic of China showed his positive and supportive attitude towards the struggle for independence of North African countries. At that time, China's invested interests in Africa mostly reflected its political leanings in supporting independence movements. Entering the 1970s, the People's Republic of China, the government in mainland China, sought to replace the representatives of the Republic of China, the government in Taiwan, on the Security Council in the United Nation. The PRC's success in the United Nations was due to the support of 26 African countries, including Morocco and Algeria, especially the latter, who proposed to recognize mainland China in the United Nations. At that time, China's invested interest in the Sahara were simply to try and gain ideological support and to be recognized in the United Nations.

In 1995, when WTO succeeded its predecessor General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), China and Morocco signed an *Agreement Between the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco and the Government of the People's Republic of China, Regarding Reciprocal Encouragement and Protection*.<sup>6</sup> However, the agreement did not come into effect until 1999. Similarly, China signed a bilateral investment treaty with Algeria in 1996, but only in 2003 did the treaty enter into force.

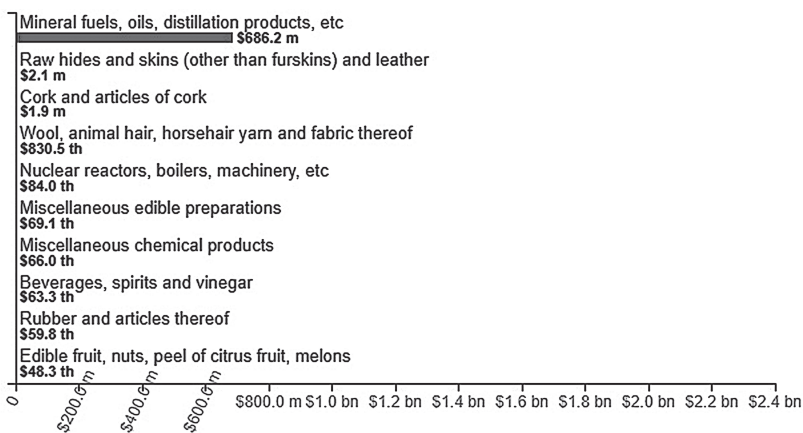
In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, China's invested interests in the Western Sahara can be divided into two aspects: politics and economy, the latter also divided into investment and trade. The political interest in Algeria, Morocco and the Western Sahara is due to their geographic advantage. Algeria and Morocco are located in the intersection zone of the European, Asian and African cultures, being members of the African Union and the League of Arab States. Both of them participated in the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum established by China, which means they carry weigh and are influential in both Africa and the Arab world. It is important to mention that of the 21 members of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, 10 are African countries. Therefore, we can see the value of these Arab-African countries. Furthermore, their political influence also translates into economic power. According to statistics taken from the World Bank database, in 2017, the nominal GDP in Algeria was 167 555 billion dollars, ranking fourth in Africa; the nominal GDP in Morocco was 109 709, ranking the sixth in a total of 54 African countries. In the same year, Morocco ranked second among African countries for FDI in sub-Saharan Africa, only after Southern Africa, from which we can see the economic ambition of Morocco in Africa (Masaiti, 2017).

Since 2013, China began to implement the Belt and Road Initiative, which is an abbreviation of "The Silk Road Economic Belt" and the "21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road". In other words, it is an international macro-economic strategy that encompasses both the domestic and international communities. Concretely, the strategy's main vectors are policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people communication (Demissie *et al.*, 2016: 6). As far as the place of Morocco

<sup>6</sup> Original in French: *Accord Entre le Gouvernement du Royaume du Maroc et le Gouvernement de la Republique Populaire de Chine, Concernant L'encouragement et la Protection Reciproques des Investissements*.

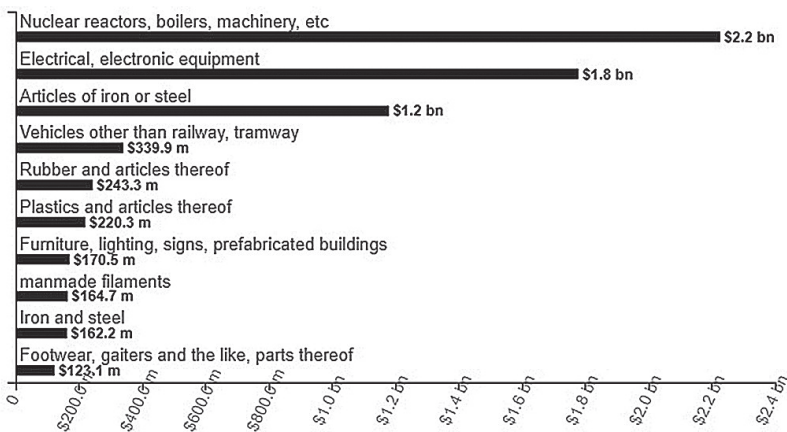
and Algeria in the Belt and Road initiative is concerned, the biggest cooperation is in the area of infrastructure. Algeria and China have agreed to a project for the construction of a trans-shipment port at Cherchell, which is 60 km far from the capital city of Algeria, worth about 3,3 billion dollars. Moreover, in Algeria there is a 233 Mw photovoltaic project including 16 solar power stations, as well as an implement of the Noor solar power plants project in Morocco, with a predicted capacity of generating 510 Mw, plus the contract for the expansion of the Jerada coal-fired power plant. On the other hand, as for the bilateral trade between China and Algeria, we can find that the later has a continuous trade deficit for 25 years, aggravated in recent years. In 2017, the volume of imports for Algeria from China is 8,3 billion dollars and the volume of exports only 691.6 million dollars. In terms of the variety of goods, we can see the graphs below:

Gráfico 01 – Algeria-Top-10 Exports of Goods to China in 2017



Fonte: International Trade in Goods and Services based on UN Comtrade data, <https://comtrade.un.org/labs/dit-trade-vis/?reporter=12&partner=156&type=C&year=2017&flow=2>.

Gráfico 02 – Algeria-Top-10 imports of goods from China in 2017



Fonte: International Trade in Goods and Services based on UN Comtrade data, <https://comtrade.un.org/labs/dit-trade-vis/?reporter=12&partner=156&type=C&year=2017&flow=2>.



As shown above, it is not difficult to notice the great imbalance in bilateral trade, dominated by raw material exports from Algeria, as well as the import of mainly industrial and advanced technology from China. The situation of bilateral trade between China and Morocco is similar, with a huge trade gap and structural imbalance in the imports and exports of goods.

In conclusion, as mentioned above, China has little invested interests in the Western Sahara region, especially political interest. China has been longing for support and cooperation in the region, and as such maintains neutrality in the regional conflict and looks forward to friendly and harmonious diplomatic relations, that reduce conflicts and hostility. In terms of economic interest, even though Chinese investment and bilateral trade greatly improved in recent years, there exists structural imbalance and trade deficit, leaving huge room for improvement in bilateral economic relations. On the other hand, in fact, China may consider Africa as a region to which it can not only transfer technology but also Chinese standards, which is beneficial for both sides. As mentioned by Tina Hahn and Georgeta Vidican-Auktor, Morocco is trying to adjust its industrial policy to establish an ecosystem for different parts of the value chain (Hahn *et al.*, 2017). In the meantime, China also needs to improve its industrial structure from labor- and material-intensive to technology-and skill-intensive. Facing the vast and promising economic cooperation and prosperous economic interest, Chinese involvement in the Western Sahara conflict seems obviously unnecessary and unwise.

### **3. An instance of Chinese involvement in the Western Sahara – Peacekeeping missions**

As we have seen above, China has a no-intervention policy concerning the Western Sahara issue. However, that does not mean it doesn't get involved in the region, namely through international organizations. Below we will analyze the way China participates in United Nations mediation in the area, as well as the reasons why it does so.

China's belief that the sovereignty of nations gives them an inherent right to control their own internal affairs without third-party interference has caused it to be initially reluctant to contribute to UN peacekeeping missions (Rogers, 2007: 75). After a first exploratory foray into UN peacekeeping in 1989, however, China became increasingly involved, to the point that today it sends more peacekeepers to more UN missions than any other permanent member of the Security Council besides France.

China is currently involved in all seven UN missions in Africa, among which is the MINURSO (United Nations Mission for the Referendum in the Western Sahara), established by Security Council Resolution 690 of April 29, 1991. Since 1991, MINURSO has been monitoring the cease-fire between the belligerents Morocco and the POLISARIO front. However, despite China's increasing involvement in peacekeeping missions in Africa, the number of Chinese operational in MINURSO is relatively small. United Nations figures from August 2016, cited by *The Diplomat*, show that just 10 of the 2639 Chinese soldiers deployed on United Nations missions abroad were in the Western Sahara region (Hammond, 2017). As of November 2018, although the MINURSO Force Commander is a Chinese national (Major General Wang Xiaojun), the number of Chinese troops involved is 13, less than Russia (16 personnel) and significantly less than the biggest contributor Bangladesh (26 personnel) (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2018).

Taking into account its neutrality towards the Western Saharan conflict and its close relations with both Morocco and POLISARIO-supportive Algeria, the fact that China sends relatively few personnel to collaborate in MINURSO should not surprise us. But

then we may ask ourselves why does China send any troops at all. What is the strategic value of Chinese participation in peacekeeping missions in the region?

These strategic gains can be summarized in three points: protecting its citizens and assets in the region, gaining much-needed “on-the-ground” experience for its army<sup>7</sup> and performing the security duties incumbent upon an emerging power (Thrall, 2015: 52).

First of all, it is necessary to notice that China’s increasing number of overseas citizens and assets, namely those under the Belt and Road initiative, have outgrown the People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA) power projection capabilities. A stable political environment is one of the most basic preconditions for the security of Chinese nationals and investments. As such, and as we have seen above, China’s increasing economic ties with Morocco and Algeria require that the region retains a certain degree of stability.

Moreover, at least for the moment, peacekeeping missions continue to be one of the most important ways China’s military can gain distant operational experience, as well as exposure to the operational practices and methods of foreign military forces (Rogers, 2007: 88). Operating in an austere environment like the one in the Sahara is also challenging, and the experience of being “on the ground” in a foreign territory for an extended period of time is invaluable. Chinese military can only rely on this kind of training should the necessity arise to actively protect Chinese citizens and assets in regions that correspond with its strategic vision.

Lastly, China’s involvement in the Western Saharan conflict as a peacekeeper is in line with its affirmation as a responsible stakeholder in international affairs, as well as part of its security cooperation with African nations. A bigger participation in the mediation of international conflicts helps paint the picture of China as a global power and an active participant in the international system. Since UN peacekeeping operations are carried out under the authority of a multilateral institution (i.e., the UN) and in most cases with the consent of the hosting state, UN peacekeeping operations are viewed as legitimate means for China to contribute to peace and stability in Africa (Hanauer *et al.*, 2014: 44).

To conclude, it can be seen that Chinese contribution in the mediation of the Western Sahara conflict can be seen not only from an international perspective of security cooperation and responsibility as a global power, but also as an extension of economic policies, in order to maintain the security of Chinese assets and accessibility of its strategic resources. Such involvement is not seen as an infringement of the non-intervention policy because it is inserted in the UN framework, but it has undeniable geo-strategic and geo-economic advantages for China.

#### 4. Conclusion

From this brief article we have managed to ascertain the stance and policies of the People’s Republic of China towards the still unresolved Western Sahara conflict. Faced with a neutral and non-interventive posture by the Chinese government, which seems to betray the ideological fervor and active support for oppressed countries showed in its first decades, we have tried to analyze the reasons for this lack of policy in the Western Sahara. We did so by looking at various dimensions of world governance. Looking at the political one, we have noted that China’s “Non-Intervention policy”, namely its fifth principle, as well as the issues with Taiwan independentism it faces at home create solidarity between China and Morocco, with both countries refusing to comment the other’s internal

<sup>7</sup> China’s national army, the People’s Liberation Army, hasn’t fought a major conflict in nearly 40 years, the last being the Sino-Vietnamese conflict of 1979.

problems. As far as the economic aspect is concerned, Chinese involvement in the Western Sahara conflict would result in a potential cooling down of its relations with Morocco and Algeria. Furthermore, considering the balance China maintains with both countries, it is unexpected that Beijing would place one above the other by taking sides in the conflict. Finally, despite its official neutrality, Chinese presence is still felt in the Western Sahara through its contribution, although a subtle one, to the UN peacekeeping mission in the region. By so doing, China also manages to extract some advantages, namely the projection of its image as a responsible emerging global power, as well as the training of its military personnel in the harsh Saharan regions, useful if an emergency arises and endangers Chinese assets and citizens.

## Acronyms

CASCF – China-Arab States Cooperation Forum  
 FDI – Foreign Direct Investment  
 FOCAC – Forum on China-Africa Cooperation  
 GATT – General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade  
 GDP – Gross Domestic Product  
 GPRA – Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic  
 KMT – Kuomintang, the Chinese Nationalist Party  
 MINURSO – United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara  
 PLA – People's Liberation Army  
 PRC – People's Republic of China  
 POLISARIO – Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro  
 UN – United Nations  
 WTO – World Trade Organization

## Bibliographic references

- Adie, W. A. C. (1964), *Chou En-lai on Safari, China Quarterly* 1964, N.º 18, pp. 174-194.
- Beijing Rejects Polisario's Participation at the China-Africa Summit" (December 3, 2015), *Morocco World News*. [Consult. 23.Feb.2019]. Available at: <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2015/12/174194/beijing-rejects-Polisarios-participation-at-the-china-africa-summit/>.
- Beijing Skips the Polisario when Inviting AU member states to the China-Africa Summit (September 2, 2018), *Sahara Question*. [Consult. 23.Feb.2019]. Available at: <https://sahara-question.com/en/news/17749>.
- Bennis, Samir (May 21, 2016), What impact of Morocco-China Strategic Partnership on Western Sahara?, *Morocco World News*. [Consult. 23.Feb.2019]. Available at: <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2016/05/187088/what-impact-of-morocco-china-strategic-partnership-on-western-sahara/>
- Calabrese, John (October 31, 2017), Sino-Algerian relations: on a path to realizing their full potential?, *Middle East Institute*. [Consult. 23.Feb.2019]. Available at: <https://www.mei.edu/publications/sino-algerian-relations-path-realizing-their-full-potential>.
- Chairman Mao Zedong's Theory on the Division of the Three Worlds and the Strategy of Forming an Alliance Against an opponent, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*. [Consult. 23.Feb.2019]. Available at: [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/ziliao\\_665539/3602\\_665543/3604\\_665547/t18008.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ziliao_665539/3602_665543/3604_665547/t18008.shtml).
- Chinese Leaders on Sino-African Relations (December 10, 2003), *china.org.com*. [Consult. 9.Feb.2019]. Available at: <http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/China-Africa/82054.htm>
- Connolly, Matthew (2002), *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era*, New York: Oxford University Press.

- Demissie, Alexander *et al.* (2016), *China's Belt and Road Initiative & Its Implications for Africa*. Nairobi: WWF Kenya.
- Hahn, Tina e Auktor, Georgeta Vidican (2017), *The effectiveness of Morocco's industrial policy in promoting a national automotive industry*, Deutsche: eco-friendly.
- Hammond, Joseph (March 1). Morocco: China's Gateway to Africa?, *The Diplomat*. [Consult. 23.Feb.2019]. Available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2017/03/morocco-chinas-gateway-to-africa/>.
- Hanauer, Larry e Morris, Lyle (2014), *Chinese Engagement in Africa: Drivers, Reactions, and Implications for U. S. Policy*, Washington D.C.: Rand Corporation.
- Larkin, Bruce D. (1971), *China and Africa 1949-1970: The Foreign Policy of the People's Republic of China*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- "List of Recognitions of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (GPRA)" (1959), History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Dossier 33/02; Fond: GPRA, 1958-62; Archives Nationales d'Algérie, Alger. Translated from French and transcribed by Pierre Asselin, with Paulina Kostrzewski. [Consult. 11.Feb.2019]. Available at: <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121604>.
- Lu Hui (ed.) (December 21, 2017), News analysis: Sino-Algerian relations witness steady progress in 59 years of diplomatic ties, *The Xinhua News Agency*. [Consult. 23.Feb.2019]. Available at: [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-12/21/c\\_136843247.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-12/21/c_136843247.htm).
- Main Speech by Premier Zhou Enlai, Head of the Delegation of the People's Republic of China, Distributed at the Plenary Session of the Asian-African Conference (April 19, 1955), *History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive*. Translation from China and the Asian-African Conference (Documents) (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1955), pp. 9-20. [Consult. 23.Feb.2019]. Available at: <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121623>.
- Masaiti, El Amira (September 20, 2017), Morocco Second Biggest Investor in Sub-Saharan Africa: French Think Tank, *Morocco World News*. [Consult. 23.Feb.2019]. Available at: <https://www.morocccoworldnews.com/2017/09/229012/morocco-second-biggest-investor-in-sub-saharan-africa-french-think-tank/>.
- New strategies engender source market diversification of Morocco's tourism sector (2018), *Oxford Business Group*. [Consult. 23.Feb.2019]. Available at: <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/analysis/broadening-horizons-new-strategies-engender-source-market-diversification>.
- Restoration of the lawful rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations*. In *General Assembly-twenty-sixth Session*, p. 2. [Consult. 23.Feb.2019]. Available at: [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/2758 \(XXVI\)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/2758 (XXVI)).
- Rogers, Philippe (2007), *China and the United Nations Peacekeeping in Africa*, *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 60, N.º 2, pp. 73-93.
- Shinn, David H. e Joshua Eisenman (2012), *China and Africa: a Century of Engagement*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- The Collected Works of Zhao Ziyang (ed.) (2016), *The collected works of Zhao Ziyang (1980-1989)*, Vol. 2 (1983-1984) (in Chinese), Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs e Republic of Indonesia (Ed.) (1955), *Asia-Africa speak from Bandung, Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. Jakarta: Indonesia, pp. 161-169. [Consult. 23.Feb.2019]. Available at: [https://www.cvce.eu/obj/final\\_communique\\_of\\_the\\_asian\\_african\\_conference\\_of\\_bandung\\_24\\_april\\_1955-en-676237bd-72f7-471f-949a-88b6ae513585.html](https://www.cvce.eu/obj/final_communique_of_the_asian_african_conference_of_bandung_24_april_1955-en-676237bd-72f7-471f-949a-88b6ae513585.html).
- The World Bank (2018), *World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files - GDP (current US\$)*. [Consult. 23.Feb.2019]. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?contextual=region&locations=DZ>.
- Thrall, Lloyd (2015), *China's Expanding African Relations: Implications for U. S. National Security*, Washington D. C.: Rand Corporation.
- Tiezzi, Shannon (September 5, 2018), FOCAC: Rebranding China in Africa, *The Diplomat*. [Consult. 9.Feb.2019]. Available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2018/09/focac-2018-rebranding-china-in-africa/>.

United Nations Comtrade (2003), *Algeria's exports in 2002*. [Consult. 23.Feb.2019]. Available at: <https://comtrade.un.org/labs/dit-trade-vis/?reporter=12&partner=156&type=C&year=2002&flow=2&commodity>.

United Nations Peacekeeping (2018), *Troop and Police Contributors (as of November 2018)*. [Consult. 23.Feb.2019]. Available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>.

\_\_\_\_\_. *United Nations Resolution 690 (1991)* (April 29, 1991). [Consult. 23.Feb.2019]. Available at: [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/690\(1991\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/690(1991)).

\_\_\_\_\_. «中华人民共和国和摩洛哥王国关于建立两国战略伙伴关系的联合声明» (May 11, 2016), *Xinhua.net*. [Consult. 23.Feb.2019]. Available at: [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-05/11/c\\_1118849465.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-05/11/c_1118849465.htm).



**Ilustração 01** – Exploração de fosfatos 1973. Fonte: Arquivo RASD.





# China's Balancing Act in the Western Sahara Conflict

Hang Zhou\*

pp. 145-156

“Now there is only one country in Africa that has not established diplomatic relations with China. China sincerely hopes that this country can join the big family of China-Africa friendship at an early date,” China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi said during a signing ceremony establishing diplomatic relations between China and Burkina Faso in May 2018 (Chinese Embassy in the United States, 2018). The country to which Wang referred is Eswatini (former Swaziland), Taiwan’s only ally in the continent, not the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in Western Sahara, which Beijing unlike the African Union (AU) has not recognised until today. Later that year in September, SADR was not in the list of invitees to the 2018 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in Beijing. Despite all the fanfare revolving around China-Africa relations since the new millennium, the Western Sahara conflict appears to be under the radar, in part precisely because of Beijing’s non-recognition of SADR. Very little has been written on China’s attitudes towards this currently one of the most neglected conflicts and there has been rare reference to it by Chinese foreign policy circles, except periodically during the debates within United Nations Security Council (UNSC). This article seeks to engage in a preliminary exploration of China’s position on this conflict. To begin with, I introduce the scholarly discussion within China on Western Sahara since 2000 and examine the main perspectives of Chinese international relations epistemic community on this issue. Then I look at China’s official statements during UNSC debates on the issue of Western Sahara and China’s current participation in the peacekeeping mission in Western Sahara. In the session following that, I outline the current relations Beijing maintains with Morocco and Algeria respectively and investigate how these two bilateral relations factor into China’s present position on Western Sahara. Finally, I explore the prospect of any changes in China’s position in the near future.

## 1. Chinese Scholarly Discussion on Western Sahara since 2000

I conducted a key word search of the term “Western Sahara (西撒/西撒哈拉/西撒哈拉问题)” among academic journals from 2000 to 2018 in the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database. Confining my search to the subject category of international relations, I was only able to identify 10 articles with relatively substantial analysis on Western Sahara. Against the background of the two-decades burgeoning China-Africa relations and a growing body of scholarship within China on African studies, this significantly low number of publication itself indicates Chinese scholars’ scant interest in this conflict.

\* PhD candidate in the Department of Politics & International Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.

While many Chinese scholars tend to locate the early stage of the Western Sahara conflict within the discourse of decolonisation, they tend to prioritise the geopolitical realities in their analysis of the current conflict dynamics. For instance, Cao and Liu (2005: 27-28; 2006) assert that the resolution of this conflict depends primarily on the development of Morocco and Algeria's domestic politics and bilateral relations, because these two countries have appropriated the issue of Western Sahara to "meet the need of their domestic politics" and to "promote political coherence and national identity". In other words, Western Sahara has become an inseparable constituent of their respective domestic and foreign policy. Yang & Tian (2016: 14) attribute the conflict irresolution partly to Rabat's irredentist sentiment for a "Greater Morocco", but also notice that the balance of power is in strong favour of Morocco and Polisario is unable to rely solely on its military capabilities to achieve independence. Some scholars (Li and Li, 2004: 26) argue more bluntly that the resolution does not lie on "UN's resolutions or opinions", but "the capabilities and political willingness of concerned parties [Morocco and Polisario]".

It is with this primarily geopolitical and realist lens that the majority of Chinese scholars I survey appears to be pessimistic about the chance for Western Sahara to obtain independence. Cao and Liu (2005: 29) claim that a high degree of autonomy in Western Sahara might be the "second best result for Morocco", but "the best result given the current circumstances". Chen (2003: 3) goes further to question whether Morocco is willing or can be coerced to move its army and settlers out of Western Sahara in case of referendum – which he also deems highly unlikely to be held – with independence as the final result. Most recently, Sun Hong (2017), assistant research fellow at the Institute of African Studies in China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, in her analysis on Morocco's re-admission into the AU, states that the chance for independence is dim. Considering the decreasing urgency of the conflict and Rabat's de-facto control of the region for over 40 years, Morocco feels more comfortable in re-joining the AU and is likely to rally support for their case on Western Sahara within the organisation (Sun, 2017: 56-57).

The continued irresolution of the conflict is expected to further strengthen Morocco's de-facto control of the territory (Cao and Liu, 2005), but at the same time causes two main concerns among Chinese scholars: one is the strained Moroccan-Algerian relations leading to a slow and frustrating integration process in the Maghreb, particularly within the Arab Maghreb Union (Cao and Liu, 2005; Zhao, 2008; 2010), and the other is the further aggravation of this region's vulnerability to extremist militancy and terrorist activities (Chen, 2003: 9; Mu, 2016: 47; Wu, Xi and Wu, 2010; Zhao, 2008: 43).

Another major focus by Chinese scholars is to explain the reasons behind the inability of United Nations (UN) in resolving the Western Sahara conflict. One frequently mentioned factor is the lack of coercive means by the UN and the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to implement UN resolutions, which significantly damage UN's authority and credibility (Chen, 2003: 3; Li and Li, 2004: 26; Li, 2005: 18; Mu, 2016: 47). Mu, a former Chinese military observer in MINURSO raises concern over "MINURSO's marginalisation", because the mission has not made any progress in carrying out the referendum and limited itself to cease-fire monitoring and to talks with both parties on political and security situations, which could further reinforce Polisario's impression that the existence of MINURSO helps Morocco's de-facto control of Western Sahara. The interests of or interference by external powers, particularly the US, France, and the Soviet Union, is another factor. Li (2005: 18) argues that the Cold War competition between the US and the Soviet Union made the Western Sahara an "indirect battlefield" and prolonged the conflict, whereas the geostrategic importance of the Western Sahara has reduced in the post-Cold War period, leading to a lack of interest by external

powers in resolving the conflict or actively advancing the agenda within UN. Finally, the changing power balance between Morocco and Polisario is also claimed to limit UN's room for manoeuvre. Some scholars (Li and Li, 2004: 26) believe that when UN intervenes in a conflict, where the power balance is clearly tilted towards one party, UN's ability to influence is significantly conditioned by this party and this is precisely what has happened in the Western Sahara conflict, with Morocco currently at a clear advantage over Polisario and more able to influence UN's action.

## 2. Chinese Current Engagement in Western Sahara

The lack of interest in Western Sahara within Chinese epistemic community in international relations indicates that this conflict is of very low priority for Chinese foreign policy makers; and China's current engagement – if there is any – should also be understood with in mind this dormant scholarly discussion. The Polisario's proclamation of the SADR occurred in 1976, a time when China's policy towards Africa underwent significant changes. The end of Cultural Revolution, the improvement of Sino-Soviet Union and Sino-US relationship in the late 1970s, as well as the preoccupation with economic reform since the 1980s foresaw Beijing's gradual withdrawal of assistance to many African national liberation movements that it had previously supported since the mid-1950s. Beijing's foreign policy, particularly its aid program, has since then shifted to emphasize more on mutual benefits and economic cooperation. This coincidence of timing partly explains why Beijing provided Polisario with no support during the 1976-91 military confrontation with Morocco (Olimat, 2014: 124), and to a certain degree, lays the foundation for China's current engagement in the Western Sahara conflict, best characterised as being detached and distanced.

Beijing has limited its role primarily within the UN setting – a form of “indirect participation” of “China's quasi-mediation diplomacy in the MENA region (Sun and Zoubir, 2018)”. Sun Degang (2015: 88), deputy director of the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University, attributes Beijing's detachment to its lack of “real interest [现实利益]” in Western Sahara. In a more recent article he co-authors with Yahia Zoubir (2018: 233), a French expert in Western Sahara, they further argue that Beijing's need to balance its relationships with Morocco, an increasingly important business partner, and Algeria, a long-time friend, explains “China's balanced, guarded position on the conflict.” The intractability of the conflict with both parties unlikely to reach any breakthrough in the short term, as well as the declining sense of urgency towards the conflict by other great powers also appears to conducive to Beijing's limited role (Sun, 2015; Sun & Zoubi, 2018). Beijing's selective activism in conflict resolution should also be understood within the larger backdrop that China is still playing a catch-up in terms of its diplomatic, security, and military resources with its rising status as a global power.

The discussion within UNSC appears to the only major occasion we are able to glance at China's official position and language on Western Sahara. However, even looking through UNSC meeting records available online from 2006 to 2018, China did not make any substantial statements until 2016 on the resolution 2285, and most recently on the resolution 2414 and 2440 in 2018 – which itself may indicate a slow pick-up of interest in this issue. China has voted in favour of all the UN resolutions that aim to extend the mandate of MINURSO, except one abstention casted on the resolution 2414. China claims that its position remains “consistent”, and parsing through these three statements, we could get an initial sense of what this “consistent” position is composed of: accentuating the role of



UN including its resolutions and special envoys, emphasizing consensus within UNSC, and emphasizing a mutually-acceptable political solution achieved through negotiations. Despite Beijing's claim on its impartiality and objectivity, some underlying tensions can still be detected within its position and statements. Although the issue of self-determination of the people of Western Sahara is confirmed by UN resolutions, which China has endorsed so far, its commitment in this regard remains precarious. It did not make any reference to "self-determination" in its statements reviewed here. Many analysts attribute this reticence to China's own domestic concerns over the issue of Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang (Bennis, 2016; Leudi, 2017). Besides, the *political reality* on the ground in Western Sahara, particularly its regional dimension, factors quite heavily into China's consideration. For instance, after the abstention vote on the resolution 2414, China's representative to the UN states that "the priority is to maintain *regional stability* [*italic added*] and to create favourable conditions for the restart of the political process." The presence of these two considerations, one relating to international legal principles and another to *realpolitik*, should not come as a surprise, as Roussellier (2014: 120) points out, the concurrence of these two factors and the tension thereof has characterised UN's current handling of Western Sahara, leading to "a complex and conflicting dual track approach ... blending ... the self-determination paradigm and the political settlement option." However, it is reasonable to suspect that, among these two factors, the *realpolitik* lens might weigh more heavily in Beijing's calculations.

Beijing's more "active" posture in the conflict can be found in its continued support to MINURSO as troop contributor. China has sent military observers to MINURSO since its establishment in 1991. As of January 2019, China contributes 13 peacekeepers to MINURSO composed of 225 staff, making it 7<sup>th</sup> largest troop contributor in this mission. Peacekeeping diplomacy has become an integral part of Beijing's ambition to have stronger influence in international peace and security, particularly in regions such as Africa and the Arab world (Duchâtel, Gowan and Rapnouil, 2016; Sun, 2018). Currently as the largest troop contributor among the P-5 members in UN Security Council and the second largest financial contributor, Beijing actively uses its participation in peacekeeping to project a constructive and positive side of its rising and to show its commitment to peaceful development. Moreover, in conflict-ridden areas with significant China's economic or human presence (e.g. South Sudan), UN peacekeeping missions have become an ideal and internationally-acceptable platform to protect Beijing's ever-growing overseas interests. In areas with less strategic interests like the case of Western Sahara, participating in peacekeeping mission helps Beijing maintain a minimum presence on the ground and remain alerted about the on-going conflict dynamics, but also is used as evidence by China to fend off potential criticism that it stays aloof or unconcerned over the conflict. Moreover, MINURSO could be of particular symbolic value for China. In 2007, the UN appointed Major General Zhao Jingmin as the force commander of the MINURSO, the first time a Chinese force commander heading one of UN peacekeeping missions. In December 2016, Major General Wang Xiaojun was appointed to head MINURSO. UN Peacekeeping is not only just a significant channel for China to contribute to international peace and security, but equally importantly, is seen in itself as an existing platform and structure of global governance, which China should strive to shape and leave its own imprints commensurate with its rising status as a global power, particularly relating to the normative underpinnings of peacekeeping and personnel representation within different UN peacekeeping decision-making, operational, and consultative bodies (He, 2018). With this consideration in mind and the history of important positions assigned to China in MINURSO, China's commitment to this mission is expected to remain strong.



### 3. China' Delicate Balancing between Morocco and Algeria

It is not possible to discuss China's current position in Western Sahara without taking into account its relations with Morocco and Algeria. The aforementioned *realpolitik* factor, especially in economic terms, is of great importance to our understanding of Beijing's current detachment to Western Sahara, a region – particularly those controlled by Polisario – appears to be of little economic interests to Beijing. For instance, according to the data available in China Statistical Yearbooks, China's trade with Western Sahara, if not inexistent, is negligible (Table 01). Phosphate is one of the few strategic resources that the land of Western Sahara disposes. According to the latest United States Geological Survey (2019), Morocco with Western Sahara represents over 70 % of the global reserves of phosphate rock, while China ranks the second with approximately 5 %. Available statistics from UN Comtrade indicate that China remains itself a net exporter of phosphate ore.<sup>1</sup> One of the most important uses of phosphate rock is to produce fertilizers for agriculture, and China also remains a net exporter of phosphate fertilizers up to date.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the strategic importance of the phosphate rock reserve in Western Sahara may be factored into China's position on this conflict in the long term, but not likely at the present time or in the short to medium term.

Table 01 – China-Western Sahara Trade (2010-2017)

Year	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
Volume (million US\$)	1.79	0.19	0.4	0.32	0.02	0.29	0.02	0.03

Source: China Statistical Yearbook 2012-2017.

Morocco is the second African country to recognise People's Republic of China in 1958, only after Egypt. Recent years, particularly after Morocco's King Mohammed VI's state visit to China in 2016, witnessed a boost to bilateral ties. During this visit, the two countries established a "strategic partnership" (Xinhua, 2016). 15 government documents were signed to reinforce cooperation over areas ranging from economic, judicial, cultural to energy, tourism, infrastructure, and consular (Challenge, 2016). Soon after this visit, Rabat announced the removal of visas for Chinese nationals, contributing to a quadruple increase of Chinese tourists to Morocco within three years, from 43 000 in 2016 to nearly 200 000 in 2018. This massive growth of tourists had not yet led to a significant presence of Chinese community in Morocco. According to the country report issued by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce (2017: 4), Morocco hosts a Chinese community of about 2000 people, with more than half of them in Casablanca. In November 2017, Morocco also became the first country in the Maghreb to join the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China's cultural diplomacy has also made its way into Morocco. It hosts three Confucius Institutes only behind South Africa (6) and Kenya (4) in the continent and inaugurated the China Cultural Centre in December 2018, the second of its kind in the Arab world. Institutionalised mechanisms are either renewed or created to further invigorate this bilateral relationship, for instance, the first meeting of the Morocco-China Energy

<sup>1</sup> For instance, in 2017, the value of China's export of phosphate ore was about US\$45.2 million while that of its import stood at US\$9 million. Data (HS Code 2510) was accessed through UN Comtrade Database via <https://comtrade.un.org/data>.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, according to the latest data from UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, the value of China's import of phosphate fertilizers stood at about US\$13.5 million while that of its export was about US\$479.4 million. Data was accessed via <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#search/Phosphate%20fertilizers>.

Cooperation Committee was held in 2017; and the Morocco-China Trade Economic and Technical Cooperation Joint Committee was reinitiated to have its 6<sup>th</sup> session in 2018 after an 11-years interrupt.

However, despite this recent boost in bilateral political ties, the economic relationship between Beijing and Rabat still has much to develop when we look at more specifically three indicators: the bilateral trade, Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI), and the turnover of China's construction projects in Morocco. In terms of trade, as the 6<sup>th</sup> largest economy in Africa, Morocco is China's 10<sup>th</sup> trading partner in the continent with a bilateral trade volume of US\$3.83 billion in 2017, representing about 2.2 % of China-Africa trade.<sup>3</sup> While this trade volume is almost insignificant in China's total foreign trade – less than 0.09 %, it occupies more importance in Morocco's trade, occupying 5.44 % of Morocco's foreign trade and 7% of its total import. China also gains a trade surplus of US\$2.5 billion. When it comes to investment, despite a continuous upward trend, the stock of Chinese FDI in Morocco stands at US\$318 million, far behind Morocco's top three foreign investors: France (US\$21.8 billion), Emirates (US\$13.2 billion), and Spain (US\$5.24 billion) by the end of 2017, only comparable to countries like Ireland (US\$383 million) and accounting for only a negligible 0.05 % of Morocco's total FDI stock received by 2017. This stock also represents merely 0.073 % of Chinese FDI stock in Africa and is only comparable to other African countries with much smaller economic sizes that receive Chinese FDI, like Liberia (US\$319 million). As Pairault (2018) succinctly points out, China in Africa is primarily not an investor, but a service provider. However, China's role as a service provider in Morocco also appears to be largely marginal. Considering the turnover of overseas construction contracts as a proxy for the value of services provided by China, Chinese construction companies in 2017 finished works worthy of US\$37.6 in Morocco, accounting for only 0.7 % of these companies' turnover in Africa, similar to their business in Djibouti (US\$36.6).

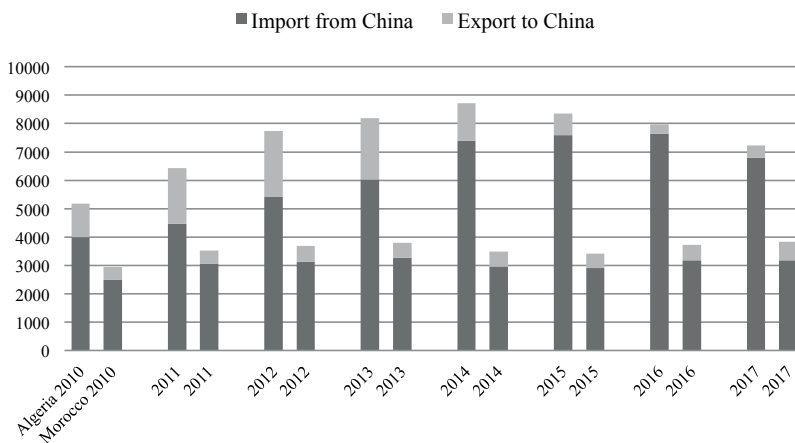
The bilateral political relationship between China and Algeria is a notch stronger than that of China-Morocco, as indicated by both sides' decision to establish a “comprehensive strategic partnership” in 2014, making Algeria the first Arab country to enter this partnership category with China. In fact, the two capitals traditionally enjoy strong relations deeply rooted in their respective prominent roles in the Non-Aligned Movement and their support for anti-colonial movements. China was also the first country to recognise the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic in September 1958 and the first non-Arab country to recognise Algeria's independence in 1962. Algeria also co-sponsored with Albania for Resolution 2758, which was passed and allowed Beijing's admission to the UN in 1971; and China's first ever overseas medical team was dispatched to Algeria back in 1963.

However, this strong political tie has not been translated into a closer economic relationship between them until the last decade and China overtook France to become Algeria's largest supplier in 2013 (Pairault, 2015: 3). Despite a two-year drop since 2015, the bilateral trade reaches US\$7.23 million, still double larger than the China-Morocco trade in 2017. It is currently China's fifth largest trading partner in the African continent and accounts for 4.2 % of China-Africa trade, but only occupies a marginal place in China's total foreign trade (0.18 %). This trade volume, however, takes up 8 % of Algeria's foreign

<sup>3</sup> Data on China-Morocco bilateral trade, China-Africa trade, Chinese FDI in Morocco and selected countries, and the turnover of China's overseas project is obtained from China Statistical Yearbooks and Statistical Bulletin of China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment; Data on the total FDI in Morocco and the FDI of selective countries in Morocco is obtained from Office Des Changes of the Moroccan government [Consult. 7.Mar.2019]. Available at: <https://www.oc.gov.ma/fr/etudes-et-statistiques/series-statistiques>; Data on Morocco's total foreign trade and its import volume is obtained from UNCATD Country Profile. [Consult. 7.Mar.2019]. Available at: <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/Country-Profile/GeneralProfile/en-GB/504/index.html>.

trade, representing 15 % of Algeria's import, but only 1.3 % of its export, which leads to a US\$6.3 billion trade surplus in favour of China (Table 02). Although oil and petroleum products dominate Algeria's export to China (Pairault, 2015: 4), the majority of Algeria's oil exports in fact goes to Western Europe, not China. In terms of investment, Algeria ranks sixth among the African countries receiving China's FDI proxied by the stock. Despite the occurrence of divestment in 2017, China's FDI stock in Algeria still stands at US\$1.83 billion, almost 6 times larger than that in Morocco by 2017, representing 4.2 % of Chinese FDI stock in Africa. This stock of investment, however, only takes up 0.63 % of Algeria's total FDI stock, just as the case of Morocco, relatively insignificant.<sup>4</sup> And Chinese FDI in Algeria's energy and mining, a sector crucial to the economy of Algeria, remains unimpressive (Pairault, 2017: 51). Contrary to Morocco, Algeria currently is the largest market for Chinese construction companies in Africa. In 2017, their turnover of overseas construction projects in Algeria reaches US\$7.85 billion, accounting for over 15 % of their business in the African continent and 21-fold larger than that in Morocco. It comes with a human presence – according to the data published by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, there is a Chinese workforce of 61 491 in Algeria in the end of 2017 (627 in Morocco... ). In fact, Algeria is the only African country that has seen a continuous and large presence of Chinese workforce, which has never been inferior to 20 % of the total Chinese workforce present in the continent since 2005 (Pairault, 2017: 43). This workforce, mobile yet continuously abundant, constitutes the majority of Chinese living in Algeria (Ministry of Commerce, 2017b).

Table 02 – China's Trade with Algeria and Morocco (million US\$)



<sup>4</sup> Data on China-Algeria bilateral trade, China-Africa trade, Chinese FDI in Algeria and selected countries, and the turnover of China's overseas project is obtained from China Statistical Yearbooks and Statistical Bulletin of China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment. Data on the total FDI in Algeria is obtained from the online data platform of UNCTAD; Data on Algeria's total foreign trade and its import and export volume is obtained from UNCTAD Country Profile. [Consult. 7.Mar.2019]. Available at: <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/CountryProfile/GeneralProfile/en-GB/012/index.html>.

This brief overview suggests that the Sino-Algerian relation is more prominent than the Sino-Moroccan relation both in terms of political and economic ties, and it would therefore be reasonable to suspect that China would align its foreign policy more in line with Algiers' interests, for instance, to support Polisario on the issue of Western Sahara. However, this is not what has happened in reality. China stays "neutral ... a position perceived as 'disappointing' by Algerians who argue that 'we do support China on Tibet and Taiwan, while China remains neutral on Western Sahara even if the question of Tibet and Taiwan is totally different from Western Sahara' (Sun and Zoubir, 2018: 233)." Moreover, Algiers has not conditioned its relations with China on the latter's support to its position on Western Sahara, neither has Rabat (Sun and Zoubir, 2018: 233).

China's current stronger economic presence in Algeria should also be put into perspective with Beijing's growing interest in titling its economic cooperation towards Morocco. China views Morocco as a strategic launchpad for its companies to enter Europe and Africa, a strategic importance that Algeria does not occupy – or a position that Algeria fails in proving itself – in China's economic manoeuvre in the region. The current Chinese Ambassador to Morocco has repeatedly stipulated this vision by actively calling for efforts to reinforce "a new model of tripartite cooperation between China, Morocco and Africa (Ambassade de la République populaire de Chine au Maroc, 2018)" and make Morocco "become the bridge for Chinese companies to enter Africa (Iraqi, 2019)" and the pivot in the implementation of BRI initiative in Africa and the Mediterranean region (Lahrache, 2018). It also meshes nicely with Rabat's own vision of national economic and industrial transformation (Chen, 2016). This economic affinity between Beijing and Rabat contrasts with China's relatively painful investment experience in Algeria, as Pairault argues, both sides "have never spoken the same language" and Algiers has confined Chinese companies to the role of a contracted service provider, while China wants to invest and establish economic special zones (Bassine, 2019). In this sense, from a long-term strategic and geo-economic perspective, Algeria holds much less appeal than Morocco to China and Chinese companies, which have been longing, yet confronted with arduous challenges, to move beyond its role as a mere service provider in Africa and to become a truly international investor with long-term presence and rooted influence in host countries.

In other words, the status-quo in the region actually benefits China, which continues to reap benefits from its economic presence – trade surplus with both Morocco and Algeria, and a huge turnover of contracted projects in Algeria. Beijing's preference for Morocco as a launchpad for Chinese capital depends not only on Morocco's strategic location and economic policies, but equally importantly its political stability, which Beijing greatly appreciates, as commented by China's former ambassador to Rabat Sun Shuzhong (Ambassade de la République populaire de Chine au Maroc, 2016).

*"In recent years, despite the instability in West Asia and North Africa, under the clear-sighted leadership of his Majesty the King Mohammed VI, Morocco has maintained its commendable stability and prosperity ... Morocco has become an indispensable partner in international security cooperation. China also needs a friend like Morocco with stability and trustworthiness."*

The political stability of Morocco is therefore not only crucial to China's pursuit of economic expansion in and beyond the country, but also regarded as a stabilising factor in North and West Africa, an area strewn with tumultuous security challenges since the past decade, where China, compared to other powers like the US and France, still has much less leverage to influence. Given that the legitimacy of the Moroccan monarchy is still dependent on its de-facto occupation of Western Sahara (Isidoros, 2012: 124), it is

unlikely that China will dramatically change its detached position or sides with Algiers to support Polisario, which may alter the status-quo and potentially be detrimental to the stability of the Moroccan monarchy and therefore also to Beijing's current economic, geopolitical, and security interest in that wider region. Seeing from a realpolitik, interest-driven perspective, China does not see its current position on Western Sahara cause any problems for its relations with either Morocco or Algeria.

#### 4. Looking forward: Slim likelihood for changes in China's Position

If there is any other conflict in the African continent, which testifies Beijing's significant changes in its foreign and security policy, it is the conflict in South Sudan. This is considered as a test case and a "real-world laboratory", where Beijing experimented the limit of its sacrosanct policy of non-interference to engage in a more proactive posture (Duchâtel, Bräuner and Zhou, 2014; International Crisis Group, 2017). The crucial factor encouraging China's unprecedented engagement in Darfur, Sudan-South Sudan war, and the current conflicts within South Sudan is the rapid expansion of China's overseas interests since its embrace into globalisation – in South Sudan specifically, China's oil investment and the security of its citizens there (ibid). If the case of South Sudan can be of any use of reference point for Western Sahara, China is unlikely to change its detached and distanced position vis-à-vis this conflict. China's direct economic interests in Western Sahara appears to be largely insignificant. It presents itself as an "impartial" party to the conflict through its reticence and discreetness, enabling it to continue its economic cooperation with both Morocco and Algeria. China may be in quite fair agreement with Morocco's traditional ally, such as the US regarding the importance of a stable Moroccan monarchy, which might not only be crucial geopolitically given the region's current volatile security situation, but also economically to China's vision of Morocco as a geo-economic node of its continued global economic expansion. In this sense, a continued status-quo without either significant conflict escalation and spill-over effect or exposing Rabat to the risk of internal instability seems to cater to China's current economic and geopolitical interest in the region, especially when there is no available alternative imaginable in a near future. The two concerns over the conflict irresolution in Western Sahara we identify within the Chinese scholarly discussion – the strained Morocco-Algeria relations and the risk of increased terrorism in the region – do not appear to be pressing enough to change Beijing's calculations. China's skilful balancing between Morocco and Algeria allows it to maintain good relationships with both countries. When it comes to the fight against terrorism, China may perceive itself already making fair contribution considering its troop contribution to both MINURSO and the mission in Mali. Moreover, the resumption of diplomatic relationship between China and Burkina Faso in 2018 also opens another framework – Sahel G5 – for China to contribute to the fight against cross-border crimes and terrorism, and China has since not wasted time in promising its financial backing to this joint force.

There is also little reputational cost at stake if Beijing remains its reticence, meaning that China will not be confronted with the same level of international pressure calling to boycott the Beijing Olympics due to its support to Khartoum during the Darfur crisis back in 2008. It was out of concerns over its economic interests but also global image that prompted Beijing's shifting from aloofness to taking actions to persuade Khartoum to accept the joint AU-UN peacekeeping mission. However, similar scenario is highly unlikely to occur in Western Sahara, a conflict risking being "frozen" and "neglected" subject to decreasing attention from great powers and the international community in general.



Placing this conflict within the broader trend of China's strengthened cooperation with Africa on peace and security, the issue of West Sahara remains unlikely to attract much attention. Peace and security issue has been included as an integral part of the triennial FOCAC meetings since 2012. The 2018 FOCAC witnessed even stronger willingness from both parties, such as the call for establishment of a China-Africa peace and security forum. In February 2019, following the 2018 FOCAC, a Ministerial-level Dialogue on the implementation of China-Africa Peace and Security Initiative was held in Ethiopia to reach further consensus on the concrete content of this Initiative. However, the re-entry of Morocco into AU, the persistent division among AU members on Western Sahara, as well as AU's most recent decision to limit its peace efforts in Western Sahara in order to support the UN process (Ani and Louw-Vaudran, 2019), all seems to suggest that a common African position on this conflict or an "African solution" be unlikely to reach in a near future. Without a greater consensus achieved among African states, AU might miss an opportunity within the FOCAC framework to stimulate Beijing's interest in this conflict and Beijing could find itself unmotivated to take a more proactive posture given its continued emphasis on "African solutions to African problems". In this case, China's engagement in Western Sahara will continue to focus on – and be confined to – peacekeeping, an area that has already been recognised as one of the top priorities by both China and Africa within the FOCAC setting. Lastly, the appointment of Xu Jinghu in 2016 as China's Special Representative on African Affairs could potentially present an opportunity for Western powers or AU member states to engage China in Western Sahara. A seasoned diplomat, Xu has a broad array of experiences in the continent and should be well informed about the conflict, given her position as Chinese Ambassador to Morocco (2009-2013) and Director-General of African Department of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2004-2009).

## Acronyms

AU – African Union  
 BRI – Belt and Road Initiative  
 CNKI – China National Knowledge Infrastructure  
 FDI – Foreign Direct Investment  
 FOCAC – Forum on China-Africa Cooperation  
 MINURSO – United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara  
 SADR – Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic  
 UN – United Nations  
 UNSC – United Nations Security Council

## Bibliographic references

- Ani, Ndubuisi Christian, Louw-Vaudran, Liesl (2018), AU Limits Its Role in Western Sahara Crisis, *ISS Today*, September 11. [Consult. 4.Mar.2019]. Available at: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/au-limits-its-role-in-western-sahara-crisis>.
- Ambassade de la République populaire de Chine au Maroc (2018), *Des liens faits pour durer*, November 1. [Consult. 4.Mar.2019]. Available at: <http://ma.china-embassy.org/fra/xwtd/t1609331.htm>.
- Ambassade de la République populaire de Chine au Maroc (2016), *Chinese Ambassador to Morocco published a signed article in Morocco's news paper Le Matin titled "Promoting pragmatic cooperation, continuously enriching the Sino-Moroccan strategic partnership"*, May 30. [Consult. 4.Mar.2019]. Available at: <http://ma.china-embassy.org/chn/xwtds/t1367501.htm>

- Bassine, Mar (2019), *Thierry Pairault du CNRS: Pourquoi la Chine a basculé de l'Algérie vers le Maroc*, April 18. [Consult. 4.Mar.2019]. Available at: <http://afrique.le360.ma/maroc-algerie/economie/2017/03/09/10222-thierry-pairault-du-cnrs-pourquoi-la-chine-bascule-de-lalgerie-vers-le-maroc-10222>.
- Bennis, Samir (2016), The Morocco-China Partnership and Its Impact on Western Sahara, *The New Arab*, May 19. [Consult. 2.Mar.2019]. Available at: <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2016/5/19/the-morocco-china-partnership-and-its-impact-on-western-sahara>.
- Cao, Hua, Liu, Shiyong (2006), Algerian Strategy on Western Sahara Dispute [阿尔及利亚西撒问题策略研究], *Journal of Chongqing University (Social Sciences Edition)* [重庆大学学报(社会科学版)], 12(4), pp. 23-27.
- (2005), Political Analysis on Western Sahara Dispute [西撒哈拉问题政治透析], *Journal of Sichuan University of Science & Engineering (Social Sciences Edition)* 四川理工学院学报(社会科学版), 12(3), pp. 26-29.
- Challenge (2016), *Le détail des 15 accords signés pour lancer le Partenariat Stratégique Maroc-Chine*, May 11. [Consult. 2.Mar.2019]. Available at: <https://www.challenge.ma/le-detail-des-15-accords-signes-pour-lancer-le-partenariat-strategique-maroc-chine-68048/>.
- Chen, Jianmin (2003), The Current Situation of Western Sahara and Its Solutions [西撒问题的现状与解决之道], *Arab World* [阿拉伯世界], 87, pp. 2-9.
- Chen, Yingqun (2016), Morocco is a Platform for Chinese Companies Entering Europe and West Africa: Minister, *China Daily*, May 13. [Consult. 2.Mar.2019]. Available at: [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2016-05/13/content\\_25267369.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2016-05/13/content_25267369.htm).
- Chinese Embassy in the United States (2018), *Wang Yi Talk about Resumption of Diplomatic Relations between China and Burkina Faso*, May 26. [Consult. 6.Mar.2019]. Available at: <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zgyw/t1563345.htm>.
- Duchâtel, Mathieu, Bräuner, Oliver and Zhou, Hang (2014). *Protecting China's Overseas Interests*, SIPRI Policy Paper 41, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.
- Duchâtel, Mathieu, Gowan, Richard and Rapnouil, Manuel Lafont (2016), *Into Africa: China's Global Security Shift*, European Council on Foreign Relations Policy Brief, June.
- He, Yin (2019), China Rising and Its Changing Policy on UN Peacekeeping, in: de Coning Cederic., Peter Mateja (eds.), *United Nations Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, pp. 253-276.
- International Crisis Group (2017). *China's Foreign Policy Experiment in South Sudan*. Asia Report N.º 288, July.
- Iraqi, Fahd (2019), Li Li: «Jamais les Relations entre la Chine et le Maroc n'ont été aussi bonnes», *Jeune Afrique*, February 7. [Consult. 4.Mar.2019]. Available at: <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/728406/politique/li-li-jamais-les-relations-de-la-chine-avec-le-maroc-nont-ete-aussi-bonnes/>.
- Isidoros, Konstantina (2011), Awakening Protests in Morocco and Western Sahara, *Pambazuka News*, March 17. [Consult. 4.Mar.2019]. Available at: <https://www.pambazuka.org/governance/awakening-protests-morocco-and-western-sahara>.
- Lahrache, Ayoub (2018), Entretien avec S. E. Li Li, Ambassadeur de la République Populaire de Chine, *Le Matin*, February 7. [Consult. 4.Mar.2019]. Available at: <https://lematin.ma/journal/2018/relations-sino-marocaines-entrees-nouvelle-phase-developpement-marquee-resserrement-precedent-liens-politiques-bilateraux/286799.html>.
- Li, Guangyi, Li, Kaisheng (2004), The Origin, Evolution and future of Western Sahara Problem [西撒问题的由来、演变与前景], *Journal of Hunan City University (Humanities & Social Sciences)* [湖南城市学院学报(人文社科版)], 25(1), pp. 22-26.
- Li, Kaisheng (2005), An Analysis of the Effect of UN on the Western Sahara Issue [联合国在解决西撒问题中的作用分析], *International Forum* [国际论坛], 7(5), pp. 16-19.
- Luedi, Jeremy (2017), Under the Radar: What's behind China's Love Affair with Morocco?, *Global Risk Insights*, March 26. [Consult. 4.Mar.2019]. Available at: <https://globalriskinsights.com/2017/03/chinas-love-affair-with-morocco/>.

- Ministry of Commerce (2017a), *Guide for Countries and Regions on Overseas Investment and Cooperation – Morocco* [对外投资合作国别(地区)指南 – 摩洛哥] [Consult. 4.Mar.2019]. Available at: <http://fec.mofcom.gov.cn/article/gbdqzn/upload/moluoge.pdf>.
- Ministry of Commerce (2017b), *Guide for Countries and Regions on Overseas Investment and Cooperation – Algeria* [对外投资合作国别(地区)指南 – 阿尔及利亚]. [Consult. 4.Mar.2019]. Available at: <http://fec.mofcom.gov.cn/article/gbdqzn/upload/aerjiliya.pdf>.
- Mu, Xiaoming (2016), Indiscreet Remark by UN Secretary General Creates Troubles for the Issue of Western Sahara [联合国秘书长“失言”西撒问题再起波澜], *World Affairs* [世界知识], September, pp. 46-47.
- Olimat, Muhamad S. (2014), *China and North Africa since World War II: A Bilateral Approach*, Maryland: Lexington Books.
- Pairault, Thierry (2018), La Chine au Maghreb: de l'esprit de Bandung à l'esprit du Capitalisme, *Revue de la régulation*, 21. [Consult. 2.Mar.2019]. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/regulation/12230>.
- (2017), Algérie: Quelle Présence Economique Chinoise?, in Adel Abderrezk, Pairault Thierry & Talahite Fatiha, (eds.), *La Chine en Algérie: approches socio-économiques*, Paris: Eska, pp. 33-68.
- (2015), *China's Economic Presence in Algeria*, CCJ Occasional Papers, n.º 1, pp. 1-15.
- Roussellier, Jacques (2014), The Evolving Role of the United Nations: the Impossible Dual Track? in Boukhars Anouar & Roussellier Jacques, eds, *Perspectives on Western Sahara: Myths, Nationalism, and Geopolitics*, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefields: pp. 119-140.
- Sun, Degang (2015), Theory and Practice of China's Participation in the Middle East Conflict Governance [中国参与中东地区冲突治理的理论与实践], *West Asia & Africa* [西亚非洲], 4, pp. 79-98.
- Sun, Degang, Zhang, Shuai (2018), China's Participation in the UN Peacekeeping Missions in the Middle East since the Reform and Opening-up: Ideations and Practice [改革开放以来中国参与联合国在中东维和行动的理念与实践], *Arab World Studies* [阿拉伯世界研究], 5, pp. 14-28.
- Sun, Degang, Zoubir, Yahia (2018), China's Participation in Conflict Resolution in the Middle East and North Africa: A Case of Quasi-Mediation Diplomacy?, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 27: 110, pp. 224-243, DOI: 10.1080/10670564.2018.1389019.
- Sun, Hong (2017), Morocco re-entered AU, where the issue of Western Sahara goes [摩洛哥重返非盟, “西撒国”何去何从], *World Affairs* [世界知识], May, pp. 56-57.
- United States Geological Survey (2019), *Phosphate Rock*. [Consult. 19.Mar.2019]. Available at: [https://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/commodity/phosphate\\_rock/mcs-2019-phosp.pdf](https://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/commodity/phosphate_rock/mcs-2019-phosp.pdf).
- Wu, Wenbin, Xi, Laiwang and Wu, Yun (2010), The Question of Western Sahara Increases the Burden in Regional Anti-terrorist Efforts [西撒难题增大地区反恐负担], *People's Daily* [人民日报], November 10.
- Xinhua (2016), *China, Morocco Establish Strategic Partnership*, May 11. [Consult. 3.Mar.2019]. Available at: [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2016-05/11/content\\_25220718.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2016-05/11/content_25220718.htm).
- Yang, Mian, Tian, Bin (2016), Territorial Border Disputes Affecting Northwest African Peace and Security [影响西北非地区和平与安全的边界领域争端因素], *Journal of Yangzhou University (Humanities & Social Sciences)* 扬州大学学报(人文社会科学版), 20(3), pp. 5-16.
- Zhao, Huijie (2008), Analysis on Maghreb regional Integration [浅析马格里布地区一体化进程], *West Asia & Africa* [西亚非洲], pp. 41-45.
- Zhao, Huijie (2010), The Western Sahara Issue and Integration of Maghreb [西撒哈拉问题与马格里布一体化], *West Asia & Africa* [西亚非洲], pp. 55-61.

# The dynamics shaping Turkish African Policy and Turkey's Approach towards the Western Sahara Conflict

Abdurrahim Sıradag<sup>\*</sup>

pp. 157-167

## Introduction

Turkey has been one of the most significant strategic actors on the African politics over the last decade. The Justice and Development Party (AK Party) which has taken over the reins of the country designated the year 2005 as the year of Africa. This has ensued Turkey to take important action to widen and deepen its strategic relations with the African continent. It has to be placed on record that today the diplomatic missions across the continents stands at a staggering 41 compared to 12 before 2009. Likewise, Turkey's earlier total trade with Africa was only 5 billion dollars but has now reached an astounding 20 billion dollars (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey (n. d.)). The changing domestic dynamics in Turkey has opened new strategic opportunities for Turkey. Africa has been a new strategic environment for Turkey to diversify the parameters of the traditional Turkish foreign policy. The ruling AK Party government has aimed to reduce its high level of dependency on the Western world by establishing the new political and economic allies with the African countries.

Turkey has implemented the "Africa Action Plan" that was developed in 1998. The Action Plan explains Turkey's African policy comprehensively and provides a strategic guidance for Turkey's foreign policy towards Africa (Hazar, 2012). Accordingly, Turkey has strengthened its strategic security partnership with the African countries. In 2017, Turkey opened its largest overseas military training base in Somalia and it has signed security and defense agreements with more than 30 African countries (Sıradag, 2018). Turkey has also expanded its sphere of influence through the Turkish NGOs and its state institutions over the continent. For instance, Turkey has opened 21 Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) offices in the different countries in Africa in order to provide humanitarian and development assistance across the continent. The Turkish NGOs in cooperation with the state institutions have opened schools, hospitals, orphanages, water wells and they have also provided scholarship to thousands of the African students (Sıradag, 2016). This article raises a number of important questions to analyze the Turkish engagement with Africa: What are the strategic determinants shaping the Turkish foreign policy towards Africa? Does Turkey pursue a selfish foreign policy towards Africa? are some of questions which need to be elucidated.

---

\* King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM). Department of Global & Social Studies, Saudi Arabia.

In the second part of the article, Turkey's policy towards the Western Sahara has been analyzed. Though Turkey has been developing its bilateral relations with the countries in the region of West Africa since 2005, it has not developed a proactive foreign policy in solving the Western Sahara conflict. This article discusses that there are important reasons and dynamics limiting Turkish foreign policy capacity in Africa and Western Sahara in particular. This apart, the article also highlights that Turkey has been pursuing a realpolitik foreign policy towards the Western Sahara conflict. The main aim in this part is to explore the question of why Turkey has been developing a passive foreign policy towards Western Sahara.

### **The Dynamics and the factors shaping Turkish Foreign Policy towards Africa**

The ruling AK Party government has used 'history' as an important power source to strengthen its relations with Africa. Turkey has a deep historical relationship with Africa dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Africa held a unique place in the Ottoman foreign policy due to its geo-strategic, geo-economic and geo-cultural importance. Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, Niger, and Chad belonged to the territory of the Ottoman State in the past. Protecting and serving to the Holy Cities in Makkah and Madinah had been one of the most important responsibilities of the Ottoman foreign policy. Therefore, The Ottoman State controlled over the Red Sea and East Africa to secure the Holy Cities against the security threats and the challenges (Kavas, 2007).

The Ottoman State struggled against the Portuguese colonial power in Red Sea and in East Africa and it played a critical role in abolishing the penetration of the Portuguese colonial power in these regions. The Ottoman State particularly developed very close relations with the Muslim Sultanates in East Africa including the Sultanates of Harar, Zanzibar and Darfur and provided them political, economic, cultural and military support to balance the colonial power in East Africa. The strategic reasons behind the Ottoman State's active involvement in Africa were to stop the Portuguese colonial expansion in East Africa and in the Red Sea and to secure and control the trade routes in the Indian Ocean (ibid). In addition, the Ottoman State also struggled against the Spanish colonial power in North Africa and abolished its expansionist and imperialist policies over the region of North Africa. These developments demonstrate that the Ottoman State remained a critical power on African politics until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Kavas, 2015).

Furthermore, the Ottoman State developed diplomatic and security relations with the Kanem Bornu Empire which controlled countries like Niger, Chad, North Nigeria, and North Cameroon and sent military equipment to these Empire. The Kanem Bornu Empire particularly requested from the Ottoman State to ensure the safety of the pilgrimage routes from Central Africa to the Holy Cities (ibid). The strong relations between the two states show that the Ottoman State had a leadership position among the Muslims Empires and it was considered a significant military and political power on the world politics. The Ottoman State attached a significant importance to developing its socio-cultural relations with the continent. In this regard, the Ottoman State sent Imam Abu Bakr Effendi to the Cape of Good Hope in 1862 upon the request of the Muslims in order to teach the Islamic principles and strengthen the Islamic community among the South African Muslims. Moreover, when the Ottoman State during the reign of Abdulhamid II begun to construct a Hejaz Railway Project, the South African Muslims raised donations for the project. Today, the legacy of Abu Bakr Effendi in South Africa is still alive as he is a much respected and a well-known Islamic figure among the South African Muslims (ibid).



In addition, Abdulhamid II had a special relationship with Muslims in Nigeria. He sent a special representative for the ceremony of the opening of the first mosque in Lagos in Nigeria in 1894 and awarded Mohammed Shitta, who made a significant contribution to the spreading of the religion of Islam in the country, with the title of 'Bey' which was a higher civilian title in the Ottoman society (Ozkan and Akgun, 2010). After the First World War, the Ottoman State entered to the demolition process and lost Trablusgarp as its last territory in North Africa in 1912. With the collapse of the Ottoman State, the new Turkish Republic was established under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1923 which resulted in the cessation of the deep and historical relations between the Ottoman State and Africa (Orakci, 2007).

Analyzing the question of why the new secular state disengaged with Africa is essential for understanding the ruling AK Party government's active foreign policy towards Africa. The Kemalist elite adopted a Western and secular identity for the new state to transform the society. It was believed that westernization and secularization could modernize Turkey very quickly. The Kemalist elite imposed the new identity of the Turkish nation and used the 'hard power' to be able to build up the new identity on the Muslim nation. It can be said that the new identity construction project in the country emerged as a top-down identity construction project rather than a bottom up project. But the Turkish nation never accepted this top-down identity project because it was totally against its core values. The Kemalist elite who ruled the country for a long time rejected the Islamic and the multi-ethnic identities of the Ottoman State and endeavored to eliminate the Islamic identity of the nation from the society (Bozdaglioglu, 2003). However, the Kemalist elite failed to understand the role of the religion of Islam in Anatolia because the nation in Anatolia was strongly attached to it.

The Kemalist elite disengaged with the former territories of the Ottoman State and developed strong relations with the Western world but ignored that Turkey had a strong historical legacy in Africa. Furthermore, they saw the Ottoman legacy as a significant threat for its own security. It has to be noted that the new identity construction process during the Republican years (1923-1950) was a significant reason behind the beginning of the disengagement process between the Ottoman legacy in Africa and the new secular state. The enforcement of a new identity on the Muslim nation in Anatolia led to the emergence of deep social, economic, political and identity crises in Turkey (ibid). Until the 2000s, most of the Turkish governments developed its domestic and foreign policies in line with the Western and secular identity. Nevertheless, the AK Party governments did not conflict with the Ottoman legacy and it gave due respect to the values of the nation in Anatolia. The ruling AK Party elite redefined its historical legacy and began to see the Ottoman legacy as a significant value of the nation (Duran, 2013).

The second dynamics shaping Turkish foreign policy towards Africa is Turkey's changing domestic issues. Since Turkey was established in 1923, Turkey underwent a major change in social, economic, political and security spheres. Economic, social and political crises had been a constant feature of Turkey for many years. Particularly, Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) had been actively involved in politics in the country and considered one of the most important and effective institutions of the Kemalist elite (Sakallioğlu, 1997). TSK carried out a number of military coups and played a key role in toppling the democratically elected governments in Turkey. TSK was the most important power in shaping domestic and foreign politics in Turkey until the 2000s and it saw itself as the most significant guardian of the secular country. TSK, the bureaucratic institutions, the constitutional court, the judicial power, and the Republic People's Party (CHP) had been known as the most important protector of the secular identity of the country (ibid). However, the

traditional institutions and the actors of the Kemalism in Turkey always looked down the social and cultural values of the nation in Anatolia, conflicted with the religious values and the history of the Turkish nation (Bozdaglioglu, 2003).

Turkey particularly adopted a military identity rather than a civilian or democratic one after the republic was established in 1923. It is important to highlight that the history of the emergence of identity crisis in Turkey goes back to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century during the Ottoman State. The Westernization process in the Ottoman State began in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Ottoman Sultans decided to implement a set of the reforms in many spheres in order to prevent the collapsing of the State (ibid). After the establishment of Turkey in 1923, the new secular state dictated the top-down identity construction project on the Muslim nation, which led to the emergence of a dual identity crisis over the society (ibid). The undemocratic role of TSK in politics and the institutions of the secular elite undermined the development of democratic and civilian culture over the country. For instance, the Constitutional Court in Turkey decided to shut down the National Order Party (1970-1971), the National Salvation Party (1972-1991), the Welfare Party (1987-1998), and the Virtue Party (1998-2001). These banned political parties were established under the most important Islamic figure of Turkey Necmettin Erbakan (Yildiz, 2017). According to him, Turkey would strengthen its relations with the Islamic world and develop a national and independent foreign security. Furthermore, he was the most important supporter of the establishment of an Islamic Military Union and the Islamic Economic Union among the Muslim countries (ibid).

When Erbakan's Welfare Party came to power in 1997 by making a coalition with the Truth Path Party, the leader of the Welfare Party Erbakan established the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation (Developing-8) to strengthen economic cooperation among the countries including Bangladesh, Egypt, Nigeria, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, and Pakistan. In addition, when he was the Prime Minister, he made an official visit to Libya and Nigeria to develop bilateral relations with Turkey. However, the Constitutional Court in Turkey banned the party in 1998 and prevented the implementation of the strategic plans of the Welfare Party (Cizre and Cinar, 2003). Despotic and undemocratic practices of the Kemalist institutions in Turkey particularly was the most important driving force behind the birth of the AK Party government after the 2000s. The secular elite in Turkey formulated Turkish foreign policy (TFP) in line with the Western interests and ignored developing relations with the former territories of the Ottoman State (Bozdaglioglu, 2003). When the Turkish governments maintained diplomatic, economic, military and social relations with the West at the highest level, they kept their relations with Africa and the Middle East at the lowest level until the 1990s. In this regard, Turkey became a member of the Council of Europe in 1949 and NATO in 1952 in order to westernize the Muslim country (ibid).

The end of the Cold War era brought about significant changes in the traditional Turkish foreign policy. The new geopolitical structure in the region and in the world emerged after the Cold War era forced Turkey to revise its conventional foreign policy parameters. After the 1990s, Turkey began to take strategic steps to diversify its traditional foreign policy and to develop its relations with the former territories of the Ottoman State (Sayari, 2000). The eighth President of Turkey Turgut Ozal played a very crucial role in diversifying Turkish foreign policy and strengthening the civilian structure of Turkey. According to Ozal, Turkey should had a historical and geographical significance in world politics. Turkey would be a new regional and global actor if it reinterpreted its historical and geographical dynamics. Turkey began to play a more active role in the neighboring regions and engage more actively with the countries which were a part of the former territories of the Ottoman State. Moreover, he developed an export-oriented foreign policy. During

the administration of Turgut Ozal (1983-1993), Turkey took significant steps to increase economic relations with the neighbors and to democratize Turkey (Ataman, 2002).

However, Turkey faced important regional security threats and the challenges by entering the first Gulf War in 1990-1 along with the coalition powers against Iraq. After the first Gulf War, Turkey lost its biggest economic partner in the Middle East and the terrorist organization, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), began to attack Turkey (Bozdaglioglu, 2003). Even though Ozal's role was historic and remarkable in changing the traditional foreign policy, the secular elite and its institutions remained as the main threat and obstacle against his new domestic and foreign policy. After the death of Turgut Ozal in 1993, a period of the coalition governments in Turkey began but it damaged political and economic stability and created deep social and economic issues over the country.

Importantly, the coalition party in 1998 adopted a new Africa Action Plan, which aimed to strengthen its relations with the African countries and with the African regional organizations. The Plan was the most important strategic plan to revitalize the relations between Turkey and the African continent in many spheres (Hazar, 2012). The disappointment of Turkey regarding its membership for the EU in 1998 was a significant reason for developing a new foreign policy orientation towards Africa. Even though the Africa Action Plan was prepared in a strategic plan, the coalition government failed to implement it because of the economic and political crises in the country (Ozkan, 2010). After the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) came to power in November 2002, Turkey underwent a major change in many spheres. The constant economic, political, and social crises in Turkey led to the birth of the AK Party as an important civilian power in the general election of 2002. Since then, the AK Party Governments have achieved to maintain political and economic stability despite the many challenges. Turkey emerged as a significant economic and political power during the administration of the AK Party Governments, and became the sixth largest economic power among the European countries and the 17<sup>th</sup> largest one in the world. Moreover, Turkey has become a more active regional power in maintaining peace and security in the Middle East.

When the AK Party came to power, the biggest challenge for the party was the traditional institutions of the Kemalist elite. For instance, the Supreme Court of Appeals applied to the Constitutional Court for the closure of the AK Party in 2008. It was decided that the party would not be shut down but the treasury assistance would be cut at a certain rate. Despite these undemocratic challenges against the AK Party, the founder and the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan achieved to remove the army from politics (Altunisik, 2011). The overwhelming public support, the strong leadership under Erdogan, and the strong relations with the EU played very critical roles in reducing the traditional power of the military bureaucracy in politics.

The AK Party elite redefined Turkey's historical and geographical depths from a strategic perspective rather than an ideological perspective, and perceived that Turkey has an Afro-Eurasian identity. According to the AK Party elite, Turkey needs to develop a multilateral foreign policy rather than a western-oriented foreign policy (Davutoğlu, 2008). In this regard, historical and geographical profound of Turkey have been among the key dimensions of the new Turkish foreign policy parameters. From the perspective of the ruling AK Party elite, the historical depth means that the Ottoman legacy should not be seen as a threat by the state. On the contrary, it should be seen as a strategic asset by the state. According to the ruling AK Party, the state should particularly put big efforts to restore its damaged relations with the former territories of the Ottoman State. Accordingly, Turkey has taken significant steps to restore the damaged relations with the African continent. For instance, Turkey has been playing a very critical role in

rebuilding Somalia since 2011. It became the first country to open its diplomatic mission in Mogadishu in 2012 among the European and Asian countries (Ozkan and Orakci, 2015). In the view of the AK Party elite this means that Turkey needs to take advantages of its geographical depth. It is a fact that Turkey is not only a neighbor of Europe but also a neighbor with the Middle East, Asia, Caucasus, and Africa. In this regard, Turkey needs to develop a balanced relationship with its neighbors and to diversify its strategic relations with different regions and continents in line with its national interests (Davutoğlu, 2008). Turkey has established a joint economic council with the many African countries and thus paving the way to provide diplomatic and financial support to the Turkish businessmen and the business associations to engage more actively with Africa. Apart from Turkey's increasing diplomatic and economic relations with Africa, it has developed the notion of non-Western humanitarian diplomacy in Africa (Sıradağ, 2015). This new model in Africa has not only aimed to provide humanitarian assistance to the African people directly but also provide development assistance to the African countries. In this regard, Turkey has provided scholarships for more than 15 000 African students since 2002 and established hospitals, schools, mosques, and new roads, etc. (ibid).

Somalia, in particular, is a unique case for practicing Turkey's new non-Western humanitarian diplomacy in Africa. When a severe drought began in Somalia and East Africa in 2011, Erdogan the Turkish President, at that time the prime minister, was the first statesman visiting Somalia among the European and the Asian countries. Turkish government in cooperation with the Turkish NGOs initiated a joint national campaign to raise donation for the people who were affected by the severe drought in Somali. More than 350 million dollars were collected among the Turkish people (Sıradağ, 2018). Turkey has also organized international conferences on Somalia along with the international organizations such as the UN. In addition, Turkey established a military training base in Mogadishu in 2017. The main objective of the Turkish military training base is to train the Somali soldiers, to create the independent Somalia army and fight against the terrorist organizations. Parallel to this new security cooperation with Africa, Turkey initiated to train the soldiers from many African countries and intensified security relations with the continent (ibid). The strategic implication of increasing security relations between Turkey and Africa ensued to acclaim Turkey as an important strategic partner for the African countries in the military and security fields. This apart, the African countries have seen Turkey as an important actor to diversify their foreign and security policy and to decrease their dependency on the Western countries. Even though Turkey has been a new actor on the continent, it has established very strong relations with the African countries quickly due to Turkey's akin geo-cultural and geo-strategic structure with the many African countries and the lack of its colonial history on the continent that facilitated developing its relations with the continent.

The third dynamics is the regional dynamics that affect Turkish foreign policy towards Africa profoundly. Turkey is located in a very vibrant geographical point in world politics. Political, economic and security problems in the region have directly affected Turkey's political and economic stability. After the Arab Spring began in 2011, new social, political and security dynamics have emerged in the region of Middle East and North Africa (MENA). War in Syria has continued since 2011 and posed political, economic, social and security threats to Turkey. Developing strategic relations with the neighbors in all the spheres has been a key objective for the AK Party Governments (Oğuzlu, 2018). However, the emergence of the new geo-political structure in the region of the MENA has forced Turkey to revise its foreign and security policy and to adopt the new conditions according to the Turkey's strategic interests. Especially, the new security structure in the region has

damaged its political and security relations with Syria and Egypt. Political and economic instabilities in Iraq have also damaged its multilateral relations with this country. The new security landscape in the region has been a significant driving force for Turkey to play a more active role beyond the region and to find the new strategic allies and the new economic partners worldwide.

The last dynamics is Turkey's shifting identity and globalization. Turkey had formulated its foreign and security policy in line with its Western identity during the Cold War era. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey developed a new foreign policy identity that aimed to develop relations with different regions. Until the 2000s, the traditional institutions of the Kemalist elite mainly controlled the foreign policy. The Kemalist elite in Turkey always supported to maintain a Western-oriented foreign policy. The traditional foreign policy identity went through a significant transformation under the administration of the ruling AK Party governments. Turkey has intensified its strategic relations with the non-Western actors, including Russia, China, Africa and Latin America in many aspects (Oğuzlu, 2018). Multilateral foreign policy has been a significant dimension of the new foreign and security policy. In this regard, Turkey decided to buy S-400 missile from Russia and construct its first nuclear power plant in cooperation with Russia (ibid). Furthermore, Turkey has been one of the most active players in sustaining peace and security in Syria and conducted two important military operations in the Northern Syria against terrorist organizations by developing a profound strategic relation with Russia (ibid).

Turkey was chosen as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council between the 2008-2009. African countries provided a substantial support to the membership of Turkey at the UN Security Council. Turkey has also become a member of non-Western regional and sub-regional organizations in the different parts of the world, including Africa, Asia and Latin America. It has increased its global visibility within the framework of these regional and global institutions during the AK Party Governments. According to the AK Party elite, developing relations with the important non-western global and regional institutions will diversify its foreign policy and facilitate developing its relations with the different states in the world (Tepeciklioğlu, 2012). It can be said that the objectives of the new Turkish activism in the globalized world are to get more global responsibility against poverty and structural problems of the world, to establish new strategic allies, to diversify Turkish foreign policy, and to find the new economic partners.

Globalization has also played a catalyzing role in transforming the traditional foreign policy (Ozkan, 2010). While the state bureaucracy and the military bureaucracy were the most important entities in shaping Turkish foreign policy before 2000, but this traditional structure has changed and non-state actors have been more actively involved in shaping Turkish foreign policy. For instance, the Turkish NGOs, the Turkish businessmen and the Turkish business associations, the religious communities, the academic institutions in collaboration with the different states institutions have been playing a very active role in increasing political, economic, military and socio-cultural relations with the African continent.

### **Turkey's Approach toward the Western Sahara Conflict**

During the Cold War era, Turkey developed its foreign policy in line with the Western interests. For instance, Turkey rejected the demands for independence of Morocco and Algeria at the UN General Assembly in the 1950s and in the 1960s (Hazar, 2016). From the perspective of Turkey, France as a colonial power of that time would solve these problems in line with its own interests. Turkey's Western-oriented foreign policy towards



the continent damaged its historical, political and economic relations with the African continent (Bozdaglioglu, 2003). While the old Turkey had an ideology-oriented foreign policy towards Africa, the ruling AK Party has developed a new strategic perspective towards Africa that aims to develop political, economic, socio-cultural, military and historical relations with the continent comprehensively. In this regard, while Turkey rejects a unilateral approach to the Western Sahara conflict, it supports an institutional approach under the leadership of the UN, believes that the UN should play a leading role on this conflict and solve this problem by working with all the stakeholders including the Polisario front, Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania. Whereas Turkey does not recognize the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) as an independent state, it also does not accept Morocco's unilateral approach towards the Western Sahara.

Though Turkey has been a new emerging power on the African continent in the last decade and playing an active role in the rebuilding process in the different countries in Africa including Somalia and Libya since 2011, it does not pursue a proactive foreign policy towards the Western Sahara conflict (Kavas, 2018). Why Turkey does not play an active role in solving the conflict in Western Sahara? Turkey follows a *realpolitik* foreign policy towards the Western Sahara. It is important to emphasize that North Africa is the most important economic partner for Turkey in Africa. The ruling AK Party government has been strengthening its strong economic and political relations with Morocco. It is a fact that Turkey does not want to damage its bilateral relations with one of its most important economic partners in the region. When Mr. Erdogan, the current Turkish president, paid an official visit to Morocco in 2013, his counterpart particularly underlined that developing strong economic relations between Turkey and Morocco were the interests of the both countries (Morocco on the Move, 2013).

**Table 01** – Exports by the Countries in North Africa (Thousand US \$)

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Morocco	1 337 555	1 469 043	1 657 718	1 989 610
Algeria	1 825 875	1 736 371	1 712 901	2 031 706
Tunisia	819 061	910 613	912 703	904 618
Libya	1 419 760	906 107	880 729	1 498 484
Egypt	3 124 876	2 732 926	2 360 734	3 054 402

**Table 02** – Imports by the Countries in North Africa (Thousand US \$)

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Morocco	710 636	918 164	924 062	715 715
Algeria	740 547	463 820	766 803	1 137 914
Tunisia	144 077	214 383	206 466	182 080
Libya	195 796	161 021	247 965	367 010
Egypt	1 215 905	1 443 397	1 997 503	2 190 937

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute.

According to Table 1 and 2, Turkey's total trade with Morocco has been increasing since 2015. While Turkey's total trade with Morocco in 2015 was about 2 billion dollars, it jumped to 2,238 billion dollars in 2016. Likewise, Turkey's total trade with this country was roughly 2,581 billion dollars in 2017; it reached to 2,702 billion dollars in 2018. Morocco is the most important economic partner for Turkey in North Africa after Egypt and Algeria.

After the Arab Spring in 2011, the geopolitical structure in the Middle East and North Africa has changed significantly. In particular, the conflict in both regions have created new economic, political and security threats and challenges for Turkey. The Libyan civil war has damaged Turkey's economic activities in this country. At the same time, the Syrian conflict has also created many threats for Turkey. For instance, Turkey has accommodated the largest Syrian refugees in the world spending more than 34 billion dollars since 2011 (CNN Turk, 2018). Turkey's active involvement in the conflict in Syria and Libya has limited the development of an active Turkish involvement towards the Western Sahara. The essential question is that while Turkey is an active player in Somalia, why is Turkey not playing a constructive role in solving the Western Sahara conflict? First, the growing economic relation between Turkey and Morocco has prevented its active involvement in solving the Western Sahara issue.

Second, there are many regional and global actors involved in the conflict which slowed down and complicated its involvement on the conflict. Third, the security issues around Turkey has limited its foreign policy power towards the Western Sahara. Turkish NGOs have also played a very little role in proving humanitarian assistance in the refugees' camps in Algeria. It should be stated that the political motivations have been a significant driving force behind the Turkish NGOs' active involvement in many African countries (Sıradağ, 2015). Since 2011, many significant high-level visits between Turkey and Somalia have happened, which has motivated Turkish NGOs' to work in this country but there is a lack of strong political motivation that will prompt the Turkish NGOs in solving the conflict in the Western Sahara. It should be underlined that Turkey has a significant potential to play a constructive policy in solving the conflict in Western Sahara. First, Turkey has an Islamic identity and Turkish NGOs and state institutions have a significant international experience in rebuilding peace and security in the different parts of Africa. What Turkey should ensure is to develop a more active diplomacy rather than a passive diplomacy with the countries involved in the conflict as well as to actively engage with the UN, EU and the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in this regard. Lastly, Turkey's growing economic relations in the region of North Africa is more likely to force itself to play a more constructive role on the Western Sahara conflict in the near future.

## Conclusion

This article has established that there are four important dynamics shaping Turkish foreign policy towards Africa, namely domestic, regional, global and historical. Domestic dynamics means that Turkey has underwent a significant transformation under the leadership of the ruling AK Party governments. In particular, Turkey's growing economic power has opened new economic and political opportunities for the country. Turkey's historical and geopolitical dynamics have forced Turkish foreign policy to accomplish a more active role in the continent. Furthermore, the new geopolitical landscape emerged in the region of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) after the 2011 provided a new impetus to diversify the traditional parameters of the Turkish foreign policy and to develop its economic and political relations with the African countries. Globalization has

also produced the new incentives for Turkey and facilitated the Turkish NGOs to play a more active role in the field of humanitarian diplomacy in the different parts of the world. This article has observed that Turkey has different foreign policy with the different regions in Africa. For instance, while Turkey has been one of the most active players in sustaining peace and security in Somalia, it has not pursued an active foreign policy towards the Western Sahara conflict. This article argues that Turkey's economic relations with Morocco has limited its active involvement on the Western Sahara conflict. Furthermore, there are many actors involved in the Western Sahara conflict. This has also complicated the evolution of the Turkish foreign policy towards the Western Sahara. It is more likely that Turkey will continue to deepen its strategic relations with the African countries and strengthen its institutional capacity in the coming years over the continent.

This research has also identified some obstacles and challenges that undermine the Turkish foreign policy towards Africa. First, even though the Turkish universities have opened the new African research centers, but there is a lack of experts, academicians, and politicians understanding the African dynamics. The second assumption is that even though Turkey has opened many diplomatic missions in the continent, there is a lack of diplomatic experts on Africa. The source of significant educated people in African politics is necessary to make a long-term strategic plan in Africa.

## Bibliographic references

- Altunisik, M. B. (2011), *Turkish foreign policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Barcelona Centre for International Affairs.
- Ataman, M. (2002), Leadership Change: Özal Leadership and Restructuring in Turkish Foreign Policy. *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 1, N.º 1.
- Bozdaglioglu, Y. (2003), *Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity: A Constructivist Approach*, New York and London: Routledge.
- Cizre, U., Cinar, M. (2003), Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism, and Politics in the Light of the February 28 Process, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 102, N.º 2\3.
- CNN Turk (2018), *Suriyelilere 31 Milyar Euro Harcadik (Turkey has spent over 31 Billion Avro for the Syrian Refugees)*. [Consult. 1.Mar.2019]. Available at: <https://www.cnnturk.com/dunya/recep-akdag-suriyelilere-31-milyar-dolar-harcadik>.
- Davutoğlu, A. (2008), Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: an Assessment of 2007, *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 10, N.º 1.
- Duran, B. (2013), Understanding the AK Party's Identity Politics: A Civilizational Discourse and its Limitations, *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 15, N.º 1.
- Hazar, N. (2016), *Türkiye-Afrika İlişkileri: Türkiye'nin Dost Kıtaya Açılım Stratejisi (Turkey-Africa Relations: Turkey's Opening Strategy to the Friendly Continent)*, Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları.
- (2012), *Turkey in Africa: The Implementation of the Action Plan and an Evaluation after Fifteen Years*, Ankara: Orsam, Report n.º 124.
- H. Tarık Oğuzlu (2018), Turkish Foreign Policy in a Changing World Order, *All Azimuth*, doi: allazimuth.464076.
- Kavas, A. (2018), Bati Sahra Sorunu ve Afrika'nin Guvenligi (The Western Sahara Problem and Africa's Security). [Consult. 23.Feb.2019]. Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz-haber/bati-sahra-sorunu-ve-afrikanin-guvenligi/1147826>.
- (2015), *Osmanli-Afrika Iliskileri (Ottoman-Africa Relations)*, Istanbul: Kitabevi.
- (2007), *Ottoman Empire's Relations with Southern Africa, AUIFD*, Vol. 2.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey (n.d.), Turkey-Africa Relations. [Consult. 2.Mar.2019]. Available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey-africa-relations.en.mfa>.

- Morocco on the Move (2013), Erdogan Backs UN-hosted W. Sahara talks. [Consult. 7.Mar.2019]. Available at: <https://moroccoonthemove.com/2013/06/06/morocco-erdogan-backs-un-hosted-w-sahara-talks-says-turkey-doesnt-recognize-Polisario/>.
- Orakci, S. (2007), A Historical Analysis of the Emerging Links between the Ottoman Empire and South Africa between 1861-1923 (Unpublished MA thesis), Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.
- Ozkan, M. (2010), What Drives Turkey's Involvement in Africa? *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 37, n.º 126.
- Ozkan, M., Akgun, B. (2010), Turkey's Opening to Africa, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 48, N.º 4.
- Ozkan, M., Orakci, S. (2015), Viewpoint: Turkey as a "Political" Actor in Africa – an Assessment of Turkish Involvement in Somalia, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol. 9, N.º 2.
- Sakallioğlu, U. C. (1997), The Anatomy of the Turkish Military Political Autonomy, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 29, N.º 2.
- Sayari, S. (2000), Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: The challenges of Multi-regionalism, *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 54, N.º 1.
- Siradağ, A. (2018), Turkey-Africa Alliance: Evolving Patterns in Security Relations, *African Security Review*, DOI: 10.1080/10246029.2018.1550429.
- (2016), Turkish-Somalia Relations: Changing State Identity and Foreign Policy, *Inquiry-Sarajevo Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 2, N.º 2.
- (2015), Benevolence or Selfishness: Understanding the Increasing Role of Turkish NGOs and Civil Society in Africa. *Insight on Africa*, Vol. 7, N.º 1.
- Tepeciklioğlu, E. E. (2012), Afrika Kıtasının Dünya Politikasında Artan Önemi ve Türkiye-Afrika İlişkileri (The Increasing Significance of the African Continent in World Politics and Turkey-Africa Relations), *Ankara Üniversitesi Afrika Çalışmaları Dergisi*, Vol. 1, N.º 2.
- Yildiz, M. (2017). The Effect of Political Vision of Necmettin Erbakan on Turkish Foreign Policy, *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 12, N.º 8.



# Le Mexique et les limites de la politique étrangère des grands principes à travers le cas de la RASD

Mohamed Badine El Yattoui\*

pp. 169-180

“Il y a des cas où tout l’art de la diplomatie consiste à maintenir les problèmes intacts le plus longtemps possible.”

André Frossard

La politique étrangère peut être définie comme l’action entreprise par un Etat dans le but de nouer des relations avec d’autres Etats, et ce dans des domaines aussi variés que la diplomatie, la culture, l’éducation, la recherche, l’économie, le commerce, la justice, la sécurité ou encore les questions de défense. Le but final du Mexique devrait être de créer des liens privilégiés dans tout ou partie de ces domaines avec un maximum d’Etats. Pour Philippe Moreau Defarges, elle représente «l’ensemble des éléments par lesquels une entité (par exemple un Etat) s’affirme vis-à-vis de l’extérieur» (Kessler, 1999: 756-757). Dans chaque Etat, quel que soit son modèle institutionnel, un ministère, ou une structure administrative, est chargé de la conduite de la politique extérieure et des relations avec les autres Etats. Il est rattaché au pouvoir exécutif.

L’Etat peut être vu comme une «boîte noire» qu’il faut ouvrir pour comprendre la construction de la politique étrangère. L’analyse des processus décisionnels vue par Snyder, Bruck et Sapin conservent une approche centrée sur l’Etat mais affirment que le décideur est influencé par ses perceptions et le contexte bureaucratique. La politique étrangère est donc vue comme un processus dont il faut comprendre les dynamiques (Snyder *et al.*, 1962). L’ouverture de la «boîte noire» en matière de politique étrangère permet une meilleure connaissance des processus décisionnels. Mais certains lui reprochent de surestimer l’importance des bureaucraties au détriment des proches conseillers (Cohen, 1998: 85). Il faut aussi les instances de préparation de la décision des instances de prise de décision (Dahl, 2005).

Le Mexique a reconnu la «République Arabe Sahraouie Démocratique», émanation du Front Polisario (Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro), comme représentante du «peuple sahraoui» sur le territoire de l’ancien Sahara espagnol. Pour comprendre cette position, permanente depuis 1979, il faut analyser les mécanismes et les acteurs de la politique étrangère mexicaine. Expliquer leurs caractéristiques. La tendance profonde de la politique étrangère du Mexique est la prédominance du droit fondée sur deux principes qui protègent sa souveraineté et son intégrité territoriale. Néanmoins,

\* L’Université des Amériques de Puebla (UDLAP).



chaque président tente d'imprimer un style personnel en terme de définition de la politique étrangère. Les gouvernements issus du PRI (1929-2000) sont caractérisés par le légalisme, l'isolationnisme et le nationalisme. Cela va durer jusqu'à l'élection de Vicente Fox en 2000 qui engage une politique qui se prétend beaucoup plus novatrice et bien plus active. Dans cet article, nous tenterons d'expliquer cette position concernant la RASD, sa permanence et ses contradictions.

## 1. Les grands principes de la politique étrangère du Mexique

Les deux piliers de la politique étrangère mexicaine restent, depuis 1930, la non-intervention, ainsi que l'autodétermination des peuples, ou Doctrine Estrada. Mais au-delà de ces principes, sur lesquels nous reviendrons, il nous faut analyser le système institutionnel de ce pays. Le présidentielisme des différents chefs d'Etat entre 1929 et 2000 a annihilé le principe de séparation des pouvoirs et le système fédéral, pourtant reconnus constitutionnellement, et abouti à un pouvoir centralisé. La prédominance du PRI a eu comme conséquence sur la politique étrangère que le changement de président, tous les six ans, ne représentait pas un changement majeur, mais simplement la tentative d'instauration d'un style personnel, lié très souvent au contexte conjoncturel international. Pour comprendre la politique étrangère du Mexique, il est nécessaire de connaître le contexte historique de l'élaboration de ses principes. Au XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle, le processus de construction de l'Etat-Nation n'a pas été chose aisée. Les différents types de systèmes politiques découlaient d'une certaine vision du monde et d'un système d'alliances. L'affirmation et la sauvegarde de la souveraineté nationale étaient alors une nécessité du fait de la fragilité de l'Etat.

Les relations avec les Etats-Unis sont difficiles et vont coûter au Mexique la moitié de son territoire en 1848. La France n'est pas en reste car l'invasion des troupes de Napoléon III (1863-1867), impose un empire éphémère avec à sa tête Maximilien de Habsbourg. Ces événements le poussent à se replier sur lui-même et à s'isoler. La devise du président Benito Juárez (1858-1872), «le respect des droits des autres est la paix» peut être considérée comme une ode à la non-intervention (Carrillo, 1966: 233).

Sous Porfirio Diaz et Manuel Gonzalez (1876-1911), le Mexique consolida sa politique étrangère nationaliste et pragmatique afin de se libérer des pressions américaines et européennes. Souveraineté et nationalisme se prolongent à travers les principes de non-intervention et au droit des peuples à l'autodétermination.

Un an après la fin du processus révolutionnaire, en 1918, le président Venustiano Carranza (1917-1920) proclame le principe de non intervention de la manière suivante:

*«Les idées centrales de la politique internationale du Mexique sont claires et simples: tous les pays sont égaux, leurs institutions, leurs lois et leurs souverainetés. Aucun pays ne devrait intervenir pour quelque raison que ce soit dans les affaires intérieures d'un autre. Tous doivent se soumettre sans exception au principe universel de non-intervention»* (Carrillo, 1966a: 234).

La Doctrine Carranza défend l'égalité entre les Etats et désapprouve toute intervention dans les affaires intérieures d'un autre pays; cela s'explique par le fait car après la révolution, le Mexique est isolé et souhaite donc se concentrer sur la construction de ses institutions politiques.

Mais la doctrine la plus connue reste la Doctrine Estrada qui date de 1930 et qui affirme:

*«le gouvernement du Mexique se limite à maintenir ou retirer quand il le considère approprié, ses agents diplomatiques et de continuer à accepter quand il le considère approprié des agents diplomatiques semblables que les nations respectives ont accrédité au Mexique, sans a priori, ni sur le coup, ni a posteriori sur le droit qu'ont les nations étrangères de maintenir ou substituer leurs gouvernements ou autorités.»*  
(Palacios 2004: 3).

Après 1945, la politique extérieure du Mexique est défensive, nationaliste, passive, légaliste et isolationniste et son modèle économique est protectionniste. A travers les principes de non-intervention et d'auto autodétermination des peuples, le Mexique semble vouloir éviter les conflits avec Washington et éviter les critiques externes concernant son modèle économique et politique de «parti-Etat» du PRI (Velázquez, 2002: 20).

En 1965, Jorge Castañeda Alvarez de la Rosa, alors ambassadeur du Mexique aux Nations-Unies, se pose la question de la pertinence de redéfinir le principe de non-intervention de cette doctrine, afin de l'adapter aux défis de l'époque comme les décolonisations (Covarrubias, 2006b: 394)

La présidence d'Etcheverria (1970-1976) va coïncider avec le début du conflit lié à la décolonisation du Sahara espagnol et va se définir comme un mandat ouvert sur le Tiers-Monde. Nous verrons cela en détails plus bas.

Celle de José López Portillo (1976-1982) a hérité de la crise de la dette, ce qui réduit sa capacité de négociation sur le plan international. Mais la découverte de nouveaux gisements de pétrole, lui permet d'entreprendre une nouvelle fois une politique étrangère active, fondée sur la richesse pétrolière, ce qui lui permet de s'impliquer dans les conflits d'Amérique centrale. Il apporte un large soutien au mouvement «sandiniste» et au mouvement de guérilla au Salvador, ce que certains ont vu comme une rupture avec le principe de non-intervention, Notamment la Déclaration franco-mexicaine de 1981, lorsque ces deux pays reconnaissent le Front Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional (FMLN) et le Front démocratique révolutionnaire (FDR) en tant que «forces politiques représentatives». Cette déclaration a des coûts élevés pour le Mexique. Le Venezuela et de la Colombie soutiennent le gouvernement salvadorien de José Napoleón Duarte à travers la Déclaration de Caracas et accusent Paris et Mexico d'intervenir dans les affaires du Salvador. Cet exemple montre les contradictions mexicaines entre ses principes et ses objectifs (Rico, 2000: 96).

La diplomatie de Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988) réduit l'activisme international et la défense du Tiers Monde. La dette et la crise économique l'oblige au pragmatisme (Velázquez, 2002a: 26).

Il doit négocier la dette et accepter les conditions des banques et des institutions financières internationales. Le Mexique doit réorienter son économie et s'ouvrir aux investissements étrangers. Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) accélère cette politique de libéralisation économique dont la signature du traité de libre-échange avec les Etats-Unis et le Canada, l'ALENA, en 1994, est le symbole. Il souhaite que le Mexique acquiert une position plus importante dans le scénario international. L'arrivée de ce gouvernement coïncide avec la fin de la Guerre Froide, le renforcement de la globalisation et l'émergence de blocs commerciaux régionaux (Macouzet, 1994).

Malgré tout, à partir de 1988, le chef de l'exécutif se doit de respecter sept principes constitutionnels, voulus par le président Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988). Certains voient dans la signature de l'ALENA, en 1994, comme une rupture ou la fin d'une politique étrangère passive, légaliste et nationaliste. L'élection de Fox, en 2000, transforme le Congrès en un acteur important de la politique étrangère. La perte de la majorité au Congrès par le parti au pouvoir (PAN) génère une intensification de l'activité des partis d'opposition dans la politique étrangère du Mexique.

Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000) va tenter de solutionner la crise financière de 1994-1995 et de signer un accord de libre-échange avec l'Union européenne en 1997 et entre en vigueur en 2000. Il dirige le dernier «gouvernement PRI» avant la transition (Covarrubias, 2006a: 103-104).

Le PAN avec Vicente Fox (2000-2006) et Felipe Calderon (2006-2012) va poursuivre avec cette libéralisation économique et en accentuant la place des droits de l'Homme dans la diplomatie mexicaine (cette dernière a été initiée par Zedillo).

Notons qu'en 1987 et en 1988, la Constitution a été réformée afin d'inclure, au sein de son article 89, les sept principes de la politique étrangère du Mexique. Depuis lors, ils sont considérés comme les lignes directrices que le président devra respecter. Il s'agit des principes suivants: l'autodétermination des peuples; la non intervention; le règlement pacifique des différends; l'interdiction de la menace ou de l'emploi de la force dans les relations internationales; l'égalité juridique des Etats; la coopération internationale pour le développement; et la lutte pour la paix et la sécurité internationales. L'objectif de cette constitutionnalisation étant de rendre la politique étrangère consensuelle. On peut parler de sanctuarisation (Velázquez, 2002b: 27).

Le retour du PRI à la tête de l'Etat avec Enrique Peña Nieto (2012-2018) a été marqué par une certaine continuité en terme de politique étrangère. En effet, beaucoup se demandaient si le PRI poursuivrait ce qu'a fait le PAN ou s'il tenterait de revenir en arrière. La nomination de José Antonio Meade comme Secrétaire aux Affaires étrangères était un signe de continuité. Il a été Secrétaire à l'Energie et aux Finances dans l'administration de Felipe Calderón. La diplomatie économique reste donc prioritaire du libre-échange et des investissements.

En revanche, l'administration de Peña Nieto n'a pas inclus la sécurité, la migration et droits de l'homme en tant que questions prioritaires à l'ordre du jour, comme l'avaient fait les présidents issus du PAN. En effet, Vicente Fox avait placé les migrations, les droits de l'Homme et la démocratie comme des axes centraux de sa politique étrangère, avec les questions économiques. Felipe Calderon a lui placé la lutte contre le trafic de drogue comme un élément important de sa relation avec les Etats-Unis, à travers l'Initiative Merida, tout en maintenant la démocratie et les droits de l'Homme à l'ordre du jour. Enrique Peña Nieto a également cherché à faire du Mexique un acteur mondial responsable.

Mais au moment d'en faire le bilan, la présence du Mexique dans des régions géographiques autres que l'Amérique du Nord, l'Amérique latine, l'UE, la Chine, le Japon et la Corée du Sud est assez limitée. Sa politique étrangère envers l'Afrique, le Moyen-Orient, l'Europe de l'Est et l'Asie centrale est limitée. Les relations commerciales et culturelles sont faibles.

## **2. Le Mexique et l'ancien Sahara espagnol: une position idéologique?**

L'histoire du conflit du Sahara occidental ne peut pas comprise sans une étude de la Marche Verte. Le 6 novembre 1975 a été un moment clé dans l'histoire de ce territoire puisque, de ce fait, le discours nationaliste s'est consolidé dans les deux camps. Le Maroc a considéré ce territoire comme lui appartenant bien avant cette date et son nationalisme s'en est imprégné. Certains habitants du alors Sahara espagnol ont été bercés par des discours qui les ont amenés à imaginer un «nationalisme sahraoui». Par ailleurs, nous devons préciser que la Marche Verte, voulue et conçue par le roi Hassan II (1961-1999), a coïncidé avec la dernière vague de décolonisation en Afrique. Il existe un décalage, par rapport au reste du continent, qui a été indépendant une à deux décennies auparavant selon les cas.

Le cas du Sahara espagnol est assez unique dans l'histoire coloniale car bien que la colonisation du territoire ait débuté en 1884, ce n'est qu'en 1958, que l'occupation formelle a eu lieu. Le territoire passant du statut de colonie à province espagnole, deux

ans après l'indépendance du Maroc. Cela a entraîné la création d'infrastructures et des investissements pour l'exploitation des gisements de phosphates récemment découverts, ainsi que de la banque de pêche canarienne et saharienne.

Le Maroc est indépendant en 1956 et sort d'un double protectorat espagnol au nord et français au centre, plus Tanger et son statut international jusqu'en 1960. Cela a entravé la cohésion au moment de l'indépendance y compris pour les régions situées au sud de l'Oued Draa. Face à cette situation originale, le Maroc a besoin d'un ciment commun. La guerre d'Ifni de 1958 a été la première phase de ce projet car la frontière sud a été redéfinie. Si la partie française du Maroc a obtenu son indépendance en 1956, ce n'est pas le cas de toute la partie espagnole. Le nord du pays oui, mais pas le Sahara et Ifni. Le roi du Maroc Hassan II avait l'intention de libérer le Sahara occidental de la présence espagnole, comme l'avait promis son père Mohammed V après l'indépendance. Le Maroc lance alors une nouvelle offensive, mais diplomatique cette fois-ci, sous le règne de Hassan II (1961-1999) qui a centré son agenda sur le cas du Sahara espagnol. La Marche Verte vise le rapprochement de la monarchie et du peuple. Ce projet signifiait pour certains sahraouis la nécessité de se regrouper sous la tutelle du Front Polisario avec comme projet, l'indépendance vis à vis de l'Espagne. La Cour de justice de La Haye s'est prononcée, en 1975, concernant les arguments présentés par le Maroc. Le tribunal international confirme l'existence de liens entre certaines tribus sahraouies et le royaume du Maroc avant la conquête espagnole de 1884, mais établit que le droit à l'autodétermination ne doit pas être négligé (Recueil Cour Internationale de Justice, 1975: 130).

Le Maroc a demandé la restauration d'un droit historique à la réunification après la colonisation. Dans ce jeu politique, la population des deux côtés de la frontière de l'Oued Draa a été touchée par un conflit qui se poursuit jusqu'à ce jour.

Dans ces lignes, nous revenons à ce qu'a déclaré López García, qui reprend ce qu'écrivait Abdallah Laroui:

*«C'était un moment critique dans lequel le Maroc devait choisir entre accepter l'autodétermination des habitants du Sahara, avec le risque de perdre le jeu, ou l'isolement international dû au fait que nous nous sommes détournés de la doctrine et des décisions des Nations Unies» (Lopez, 2015).*

À cet égard, le Maroc a opté pour une voie alternative, le recours à la Cour de La Haye en quête de légitimation de sa position. À ce stade, les deux auteurs rappellent que trois questions s'opposaient dans la question à résoudre par la cour suprême:

*«En ce qui concerne le concept de souveraineté, le Maroc s'appuie sur la logique du droit islamique, alors que la Mauritanie dans la logique tribale; et l'Espagne et l'Algérie, dans la logique coloniale occidentale, qui dicte que la souveraineté antérieure à l'expansionnisme européen ne soit pas, dans le meilleur des cas, concluante». Le nationalisme ou l'idée de national est présent dans chaque contexte; l'ambiguïté de l'opinion de La Haye résidait finalement dans la reconnaissance des trois logiques (Lopez, 2015a).*

Le président Luis Echeverría (1970-1976) exerce à cette période un activisme international promouvant les causes du Tiers Monde. Il joue un rôle important dans le Mouvement des pays non alignés, il s'adresse au Groupe des 77, et fait la promotion de la Charte des droits et devoirs économiques des Etats, approuvée par l'assemblée générale des Nations Unies, qui établit les principes d'un dialogue entre les pays du Nord et du Sud en proposant une répartition plus juste et plus équitable des richesses du monde. Il a créé un Centre d'études économiques et sociales du tiers monde (Ceestem). La diplomatie d'Echeverría permet la réincorporation de Cuba au sein du système interaméricain (González, 2006).



**Ilustração 01** – Tomada de Posse Presidencial: Presidente José Lopez Portillo à esquerda e Ex-Presidente Luís Echeverría.

Il rompt ses fonctions relations avec le Chili, condamnant le coup d'Etat d'Augusto Pinochet contre Salvador Allende en 1973. La doctrine Estrada, semble être violée car au-delà du retrait de ses diplomates, le Mexique émet un avis sur la situation politique intérieure de ce pays. De plus, le Mexique accueille un nombre important d'exilés chiliens.

À partir de 1884, l'Espagne revendique le territoire du Sahara occidental et l'administre jusqu'en 1975. Le 14 novembre 1975, l'Espagne accepte de céder une partie du territoire au Maroc et à la Mauritanie après en avoir convenu les accords de Madrid (ONU, 1980: 77). Le 6 novembre 1975, 350 000 Marocains et 20 000 soldats marocains ont célébré la «Marche Verte» pour obliger l'Espagne à céder le territoire en litige (Abdallah, 1993: 147-158).

Le Front Polisario (Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro), créé en 1973, proclame un gouvernement en exil en Algérie et a nommé son projet d'Etat la «République démocratique sahraouie» (RASD) en février 1976 (Malinowski, 2001: 64) Débute alors un conflit entre le Maroc et le Front Polisario.

Le Mexique, par la voix de son ministre des Affaires étrangères, Jorge Castañeda et Álvarez de la Rosa a reconnu la «République Sahraouie» le 8 septembre 1979 lors du mandat de Jose Lopez Portillo. Après le Panama, il s'agit alors du deuxième pays d'Amérique latine à la reconnaître. Déjà en 1975, des représentants du Front Polisario se sont rendus au Mexique pour obtenir un appui contre l'Espagne (Mateo, 2015: 3). En 1978, son «ministre des Affaires étrangères», Bachir Mustafa Sayed, s'est rendu au Mexique (Roffiel, 1978).

Le 24 octobre 1979, des relations diplomatiques ont été établies et en 1988, la RASD a ouvert un bureau diplomatique à Mexico mais dès 1979, le Mexique a nommé son ambassadeur basé en Algérie (Oscar González) «ambassadeur» auprès de la RASD (Roffiel, 1978a).

En septembre 1991, un accord de cessez-le-feu est signé et un plan de règlement prévoit alors l'organisation d'un référendum, dès janvier 1992. Mais faute d'accord entre les parties

sur la composition du corps électoral, le référendum fut ajourné, jusqu'à aujourd'hui. L'abandon de l'issue militaire du a la construction des murs de défense de la part du Maroc et le choix d'une procédure référendaire «suggèrent que les deux protagonistes ont opté en 1988 pour une victoire totale et définitive de l'un d'entre eux» (Mohsen-Finan, 1999: 101). Depuis 1992, la composition des listes électorales est un enjeu du débat. Avant de se retirer, les Espagnols ont organisé un recensement qui dénombrait 74 000 habitants et de 70 204 électeurs aptes à voter, répartis entre les camps de Tindouf en Algérie, la Mauritanie ou les villes du Sahara sous contrôle marocain (Mohsen-Finan, 1999a: 102).

Mais le Maroc refuse d'accepter un corps électoral réduit aux habitants recensés en 1974 et évoque, par le biais de son représentant auprès de l'Onu, Ahmed Snoussi (1992-2001), le risque de «dizaines de milliers de candidats injustement éliminés» et donc d'un référendum «peu démocratique et très peu équitable». L'ONU comptabilisait en 1999 «147 000 Sahraouis» (Mohsen-Finan, 1999b: 103).

Le 29 avril 1991, la résolution 690 du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, créée la Mission des Nations unies pour l'organisation d'un référendum au Sahara occidental (MINURSO) qui est un détachement de 230 militaires chargé de surveiller les activités des anciens belligérants et de préparer le référendum (ONU, 1991).

En 2007, un projet d'autonomie présenté par le Maroc est repoussé par le Front Polisario qui continue de défendre l'idée d'un référendum. Ce projet prévoyait la création d'un gouvernement et d'un parlement local tandis que le Maroc conserverait les compétences en matière d'affaires étrangères, de défense, de monnaie et de gendarmerie (Saidy, 2012).

Ricardo Alday Gonzalez, représentant du Mexique auprès de l'ONU, a rappelé, en 2015, lors des débats de la Quatrième Commission, que son pays «défendait le droit des peuples à l'autodétermination comme un droit inaliénable et a réaffirmé son engagement pour continuer à promouvoir ce droit dans le cadre des Nations Unies» et a ajouté que «la situation des droits de l'homme, sur le territoire comme dans les camps de réfugiés, doit être surveillée sans interruption de manière indépendante et impartiale, le délégué a précisé que son pays encourageait les deux parties à intensifier leur coopération avec les organismes des droits de l'homme des Nations Unies» (Quatrième Commission ONU, 2015).

Chaque année, depuis trente ans, la représentation de la RASD au Mexique organise des voyages culturels pour que les Mexicains visitent les camps de réfugiés sahraouis de la province de Tindouf, en Algérie (Communiqué de presse de la représentation de la RASD, 2017).

En 2010, le président de la «RASD», Mohamed Abdelaziz, s'est rendu au Mexique pour participer à la célébration du bicentenaire de l'indépendance du Mexique (Petrich et al., 2010) Il a également assisté à la cérémonie d'investiture du président Enrique Peña Nieto en 2012 (Univisión, 2012) et Brahim Ghali, son successeur à la tête de la RASD, à celle de Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador en 2018 (Excelsior, 2018).

Le président du Sénat mexicain, Carlos Navarrete Ruiz, s'est rendu en Algérie et a rencontré le président de la RASD, Mohamed Abdelaziz, puis s'est rendu dans la province de Tindouf pour rendre visite aux réfugiés sahraouis et connaître leurs besoins (El Universal, 2010).

En mars 2013, le ministre des Affaires étrangères de la RASD, Mohamed Salem Salek, s'est rendu au Mexique et a rencontré son homologue José Antonio Meade Kuribreña au siège du ministère des Affaires étrangères du Mexique (All Africa, 2014).

### 3. Une position figée

Les caractéristiques traditionnelles de la politique étrangère du Mexique, que nous avons décrit, se doivent, selon nous, d'évoluer du fait du nouveau poids de ce pays dans l'économie internationale, ce qui lui donne un nouveau rôle. Le principe de non-intervention, tel que



défini par la doctrine Estrada, semble avoir eu une double fonctionnalité: avoir l'image d'un pays pacifique et tolérant et dans le même temps demander la réciprocité, la non-ingérence dans ses affaires intérieures. Le PRI en a profité durant sept décennies.

La géographie proche et le concept d'«identité nationale» ont été deux facteurs déterminants dans l'élaboration de la politique étrangère du Mexique. Cette dernière se concentrent principalement sur l'Amérique du Nord, l'Amérique centrale et les Caraïbes. L'Europe et l'Asie Pacifique sont devenus des régions stratégiques pour des raisons économiques et commerciales depuis les années 1990. La politique étrangère du Mexique ne semble pas en adéquation avec sa position géographique privilégiée. Elle a une portée limitée. Le Mexique pourrait développer une politique étrangère plus ambitieuse. En s'appuyant sur sa position géographique entre Atlantique et Pacifique, Amérique du Nord et Amérique du Sud, son poids économique (membre du G20) et ses ressources naturelles comme le pétrole. Une vision géoéconomique semble nécessaire, au sens où l'avait défini Pascal Lorot:

*«La géoéconomie s'interroge sur les relations entre puissance et espace, mais un espace «virtuel» ou fluidifié au sens où ses limites bougent sans cesse, c'est-à-dire donc un espace affranchi des frontières territoriales et physiques caractéristiques de la géopolitique» (Lorot, 1997: 29).*

Au lieu de cela elle semble concentrer ses efforts sur une problématique complexe et ne l'impactant pas qui est le cas de l'ex Sahara espagnol. Des raisons idéologiques ont poussés les présidents Echeverria et Lopez Portillo à soutenir le Polisario puis la RASD dans les années 1990. Mais malgré le changement de contexte géopolitique concernant cette affaire et son changement de statut sur le plan international, le Mexique semble, comme nous l'avons décrit, bloqué avec une grille de lecture désuète. Jorge Castañeda Gutman, ministre des Affaires étrangères sous Fox (2000-2003), critiquait déjà en 1987 la politique étrangère de son pays en déclarant:

*«Dans la politique étrangère du Mexique, il a été continuellement revendiqué la défense de nos principes et du droit international. Ainsi, nous n'avons pas d'intérêt, à la place, nous avons des principes qui peuvent être qualifiés d'hypocrisie diplomatique. À long terme, cette malheureuse mise en œuvre des principes s'importe quel appui à toute réelle politique étrangère (avec des coûts, des conséquences et des avantages) et confère au pays une aura arrogante sur la scène internationale» (Pereña-García, 2001: 36).*

Les propos de Jorge Castañeda Gutman peuvent paraître forts mais ils sont justes. Un exemple récent a montré «l'hypocrisie diplomatique» qu'il dénonçait il y a trente-deux ans. Le président Peña Nieto (2012-2018) déclara sur Twitter que «le Mexique ne reconnaîtra pas la déclaration unilatérale d'indépendance de la Catalogne» (La Razon de Mexico, 2017) alors que certains Catalans tout comme certains Sahraouis réclament l'indépendance au nom du principe d'autodétermination. Pour l'anecdote, précisons que Jorge Castañeda Gutman est le fils de Jorge Castañeda Alvarez de la Rosa qui a reconnu la RASD.

Mais il n'y a pas que la reconnaissance d'une autodétermination sélective qui est à questionner dans la politique étrangère mexicaine, il y a aussi la non-intervention. La doctrine Estrada est considérée comme la contribution la plus importante et la plus exclusive du Mexique à la pratique diplomatique et au droit international. Cependant, Gutierrez Baylon remet en cause cette idée (Gutiérrez Baylón, 2005: 79). Il montre qu'elle s'applique plus souvent en fonction des intérêts et de l'idéologie. Cela dépend grandement du pays concerné et de la relation historique et/ou économique qu'il a avec le Mexique. Par exemple, entre 1974 et 1990, le Mexique d'Echeverria a rompu ses relations avec le Chili, en condamnant le coup d'Etat de 1973 et la dictature de Pinochet (Rojas, Mira, 2016: 123-140).

La diplomatie mexicaine semble souffrir d'un conservatisme étrange en ce XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle, le «nationalisme romantique» a été remplacé par un romantisme dans l'analyse de la question du Sahara. Une impossibilité à reconnaître la réalité brute, qui est la *realpolitik*. Même si souvent nation et romantisme sont «comme des jumeaux dans la matrice de l'histoire» (Florenne, 1979: 22). On serait tenté de voir dans ce «romantisme révolutionnaire» en politique étrangère qui perdure, malgré l'adaptation rapide et parfois brutale à la réalité du monde sur le plan économique depuis les années 1980, une volonté de rester fidèle à au moins quelques principes issus de la révolution (1910-1917). Par ailleurs, notons que les représentants de la RASD au Mexique ont su se faire une place dans le monde universitaire mexicain. Ce dernier lui sert de relais académique et médiatique. La moindre tentative d'évolution du Mexique dans ce dossier serait vue comme une trahison par la majorité des chercheurs mexicains en sciences sociales. La neutralité mexicaine s'est effritée depuis 1979 avec la reconnaissance de la RASD. Se pose donc la question de la rationalité.

Pour décrire ce qu'est une politique étrangère, il faut avant tout avoir à l'esprit sa singularité. Elle se distingue des autres secteurs d'activités publiques par de nombreux éléments. Tout d'abord, la politique étrangère d'un Etat, quel qu'il soit et qu'elle que soit les institutions et les talents individuels qui composent sa bureaucratie, est essentiellement réactive. Les institutions et les personnes chargées de la politique extérieure d'un pays passent donc le plus clair de leur temps à réagir aux événements qui surgissent sur la scène internationale. Le plus souvent ces événements surgissent de manière, partiellement ou complètement, inattendue. Il est par conséquent extrêmement difficile de les prévenir. De plus, un très grand nombre d'entre eux nécessitent des réponses rapides et précises, parfois même de manière urgente. On pense notamment aux guerres qui sont déclenchées d'une manière soudaine, aux attentats, aux crises humanitaires ou encore aux crises économiques et financières.

De plus, la politique étrangère d'un Etat ne se distingue pas par l'homogénéité des sujets qu'elle traite, au contraire. Elle est fréquemment le fruit de l'addition et de la mise en œuvre simultanée de plusieurs politiques sectorielles, complètement hétéroclites, comme par exemple la politique de coopération culturelle, les accords commerciaux au niveau bilatéral et de plus en plus multilatéral, ou encore les partenariats concernant l'aide publique au développement. Ces différents éléments rendent encore plus complexe le travail d'analyse de ces actions, particulièrement par le biais des politiques publiques. D'ailleurs, l'une des choses les plus complexes à mettre en œuvre lorsque l'on travaille sur des thématiques rattachées aux politiques publiques est la distinction entre le sectoriel et le global, autrement dit entre le particulier et le général. Mais ce travail, qui est difficile, permet de bien comprendre les moments clés de la mise en place d'un programme public. La *Foreign Policy Analysis* s'est développée aux Etats-Unis à partir des années 1960-1970 grâce aux travaux menés par Graham Allison autour de l'étude de la prise de décision en matière de politique étrangère (Allison, 1971). On parle d'approche bureaucratique de l'étude de la politique étrangère. Elle a toujours eu plus de poids et d'impact dans le monde universitaire anglo-saxon que dans le monde universitaire français par exemple, comme l'a noté Franck Petiteville (Petiteville, 2006: 357-366). Son inspiration est clairement weberienne et son objectif est simple. Elle vise à démontrer qu'il n'y a pas d'acteur rationnel dans la construction et la formulation de la politique étrangère. Les choix déterminés sont «satisfaisants» et non pas les meilleurs. Cela s'explique par les contradictions flagrantes entre les motivations des dirigeants (président et secrétaire d'Etat dans le cas américain) et celles de la bureaucratie. Ils empêchent la constitution de choix «optimaux». Dario Battistella va plus loin dans son analyse et dans sa critique puisqu'il écrit que les intérêts bureaucratiques peuvent même s'opposer à l'intérêt national. Selon lui, deux

«rationalités» s'opposent. La recherche effectuée par la bureaucratie n'est pas la prise de la meilleure décision possible mais celle qui lui permettra de maintenir ses intérêts (Batistella, 2002).

S'il apparaît nécessaire de reconnaître que le processus bureaucratique compte, et a une certaine importance, dans la production de la décision en politique étrangère, tout comme les acteurs le poids des contraintes internationales et nationales, la rationalité qui en découle est «bridée» (bounded rationality) (Faber, 1990: 307-319). La «rationalité substantielle» en politique étrangère peut, elle, difficilement exister.

La prise de position du Mexique et l'absence de tout débat concernant la RASD prouve le poids de la bureaucratie dans le processus décisionnel. Deux instances principales sont influentes. Le ministère des affaires étrangères et le sénat. La méconnaissance du dossier sur le fond pousse les présidents successifs à s'appuyer sur ces expertises.

## Conclusion

En 1999, au début du règne de Mohammed VI, 14 pays latino-américains reconnaissent la RASD. Assez rapidement, cinq pays de la région la retirent: Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala et Paraguay. Puis en 2002, c'est au tour de la République dominicaine et en 2004, l'Equateur et la Colombie. En novembre et décembre 2004, le roi effectue une tournée régionale (Hassan II n'est jamais venu en Amérique latine) dans six pays: Mexique, Brésil, Pérou, Chili, Argentine et République Dominicaine. Le Salvador a reconnu la RASD en 1989, puis l'a retiré en 2000, pour revenir sur son engagement et la reconnaître, à nouveau, en 2010 (Khader, 2019).

Si nous revenons au cas mexicain, l'élection d'Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador semble avoir une conséquence claire en terme de politique étrangère, le retour en force de la doctrine Estrada de manière assumée et revendiquée (Crespo, 2019). Et l'absence de toute remise en question de sa vision du dossier.

Les grands principes de la politique étrangère mexicaine semblent donc plus que jamais sur le devant de la scène sans prise en compte de la réalité du monde et de l'évolution des rapports de force sur le plan international. Si la position du Maroc a évolué, allant jusqu'à accepter l'idée d'une autonomie, celle du Mexique semble figée. Une non-intervention présentée comme une neutralité alors que c'est loin d'être le cas, comme nous l'avons démontré.

## Références bibliographiques

- All Africa, (2014), Western Sahara: Ould Salek Congratulates Mexican Secretary of Foreign Affairs On National Day. [Consult. 3.Févr.2019]. Disponible en: <https://allafrica.com/stories/201409250993.html>.
- Allison, Graham T. (1971), *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, Boston: Little, Brown.
- Batistella, D. (2002), « *L'intérêt national* », dans F. Charillon (dir.), *Politique étrangère, Nouveaux Regards*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, chapitre 5, pp. 139-167.
- Carrillo Flores, Antonio (1966), « *La politica exterior de Mexico* », Foro Internacional, Colegio de México, vol. VI (2), n.º 3, octobre 1965-mars 1966.
- Cohen, Samy (1998), « *Décision, pouvoir et rationalité dans l'analyse de la politique étrangère* » in Marie-Claude Smouts (dir.), *Les nouvelles relations internationales. Pratiques et théories*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, pp. 75-100.

- Covarrubias, Ana (2006a), *Cambio de siglo: la política exterior de la apertura económica y política, México*, El Colegio de México, 2010. Tomo IX Colección México y el mundo. Historia de sus relaciones internacionales, coord. Blanca Torres.
- (2006b), “*Los principios y la política exterior de México*”, in Jorge A. Schiavon, Daniela Spencer, Daniela, Vázquez, M. (eds.), *En busca de una nación soberana*. Relaciones internacionales de México, siglos XIX y XX, CIDE/SRE, México, pp. 387-422.
- Crespo, Jose Antonio (2019), *AMLO, Juárez y la Doctrina Estrada*, El Universal. [Consult. 15. Févr. 2019]. Disponible en: <https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/articulo/jose-antonio-crespo/nacion/amlo-juarez-y-la-doctrina-estrada>.
- Dahl, Robert (2005), *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*, New Haven, Yale University Press, (2<sup>ème</sup> edition), 384 p.
- El Universal (2010), *Navarrete visita campos de refugiados saharauis*. [Consult. 15. Févr. 2019]. Disponible en: <http://archivo.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/669800.html>.
- Excelsior (2018), *Continúan llegando mandatarios para investidura de López Obrador*. [Consult. 5. Févr. 2019]. Disponible en: <https://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/continuan-llegando-mandatarios-para-investidura-de-lopez-obrador/1281435>.
- Faber, Jan (1990), *On Bounded Rationality and the Framing of Decisions in International Relations: Towards a Dynamic Network Model of World Politics*, Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 27, N.º 3 pp. 307-319.
- Florenne, Yves (1979), «*Les nations romantiques*» de Jean Plumyène, Le Monde Diplomatique, p. 22. [Consult. 3. Févr. 2019]. Disponible en: <https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/1979/07/FLORENNE/35211>.
- González Navarrete, Euridice (2006), «*La signification historique des relations entre Cuba et le Mexique au cours des cinquante dernières années*», document présenté au congrès SOLAR, Université de La Havane, Cuba, novembre mimeo.
- Gutiérrez Baylón, Juan de Dios (2005), “*La No Intervención*”. En: Rabasa, Emilio (coordinador). *Los siete principios básicos de la Política Exterior de México*. México. UNAM-Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, pp. 71-87.
- Kessler, M. C. (1999), «*La politique étrangère de la France, acteurs et processus*», Politique étrangère numéro 3, volume 64, pp. 756-757.
- Khader, Bichara (2019), *L'Amérique latine et le Maroc: l'impératif géopolitique*, Maroc Diplomatique. [Consult. 15. Févr. 2019]. Disponible en: <https://maroc-diplomatique.net/lamerique-latine-et-le-maroc-limperatif-geopolitique/>.
- La Razón de Mexico (2017), «*México no reconocerá independencia de Cataluña, reafirma EPN*». [Consult. 3. Févr. 2019]. Disponible en: <https://www.razon.com.mx/mexico/mexico-reconocera-independencia-cataluna-reafirma-epn/>.
- Laroui, Abdallah (1993), *Marche Verte et conscience historique dans Esquisses historique*, Casablanca, Centre Culturel Arabe, pp. 147-158.
- Lopez Garcia, B. (2015), *Las tres lógicas de la Haya: La marcha verde sobre el Sahara occidental se sirvió de la ambigüedad del tribunal*. Periódico: El país. [En línea]. [Consult. 3. Févr. 2019]. Disponible en: [https://elpais.com/elpais/2015/11/04/opinion/1446649199\\_200655.html](https://elpais.com/elpais/2015/11/04/opinion/1446649199_200655.html).
- Lorot Pascal (1997), «*De la géopolitique à la géoéconomie*», Géoéconomie, n.º 1, p. 29.
- Macouzet, Ricardo (1994), «*Politique économique extérieure et diplomatie multilatérale dans le gouvernement de Carlos Salinas de Gortari*», Forum International, Collège de Mexico, vol. 34, n.º 4, oct.-déc., pp. 700-728.
- Mateo, Luz Marina (2015), *El rol de América Latina en la descolonización del Sáhara Occidental*, Anuario en Relaciones Internacionales del IRI, Instituto de Relaciones Internacionales (IRI), p. 3.
- Malinowski, Mario (2001), *Le Sahara Occidental dans la politique internationale 1956-1976*, Méditerranée Tanulmanyok, *Etudes sur la région méditerranéenne*, Université de Szeged, Pologne, pp. 51-75.
- Mohsen-Finan, K. (1999), *Le règlement du conflit du Sahara occidental: À l'épreuve de la nouvelle donne régionale*. Politique africaine, 76(4), pp. 95-105.

- ONU (2015), *Quatrième Commission: la question des îles Falkland/Malvinas domine le premier jour du débat sur la décolonisation*. Disponible en: <https://www.un.org/press/fr/2015/cpsd580.doc.htm>
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1991), *Résolution 690*. Disponible en: [http://www.un.org/french/documents/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/690%281991%29](http://www.un.org/french/documents/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/690%281991%29).
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1980), «*Décolonisation*», n.º 17, p. 77.
- Palacios Treviño, Jorge (2004), «*La Doctrina Estrada y el Principio de la No-Intervención*», p. 3. Disponible en: <http://archivo.diplomaticosescritores.org/obras/DOCTRINAESTRADA.pdf>.
- Pereña-García, Mercedes (2001), *Las Relaciones Diplomáticas de México*. Plaza y Valdés, 94 p.
- Petiteville, F., Smith, A. (2006), «*Analyser les politiques publiques internationales*», *Revue Française de Science Politique*, Presses de Sciences Po, vol. 56, pp. 357-366.
- Petrich, Blanche, Saldierna, G. (2010), *AL, "aliada estratégica" de la lucha del pueblo saharui*. Disponible en: <https://www.jornada.com.mx/2010/09/15/opinion/021n1pol#>.
- Recueil Cour Internationale de Justice (1975), *Sahara occidental*, avis consultatif, p. 130.
- Représentation de la RASD, *Viaje hacia el pueblo saharui en noviembre de 2017*, Communiqué de presse. Disponible en: <http://www.embajadasaharauimexico.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Comunicado-viaje-noviembre-2017.pdf>.
- Rico, Carlos (2000), «*Hacia la globalización*», in Blanca Torres (coord.), *México y el mundo/Historia de sus relaciones exteriores*, Senado de la República, vol. VIII, México, p. 96. Citado por Ana Covarrubias Velasco, «*Los principios y la política exterior de México*», loc cit., pp. 405-406.
- Roffiel, Rosa (1978), «*Francia se une a los invasores*». Disponible en: <https://www.proceso.com.mx/122834/francia-se-une-a-los-invasores>.
- Rojas Mira, Claudia Fedora (2016), *The Hosts of Chilean Exiles in Mexico, 1973-1993*. *Historia Critica*, n.º 60, pp. 123-140.
- Saidy Brahim, (2012), *La paradiplomatie dans le projet marocain d'autonomie pour le Sahara occidental*, *Revue de Défense Nationale*, Tribune 304.
- Schiavon, Jorge, Spencer, Daniela, V., M. (2006), (eds.), *En busca de una nación soberana*. Relaciones internacionales de México, siglos XIX y XX, CIDE/SRE, México, 648 p.
- Snyder, Richard, Bruck, H. (1962), *Burton Sapin, Foreign Policy Decision-Making. An Approach to the Study of International Politics*, New York, The Free Press of Glencoe.
- Univisión, (2012), *Los invitados a la investidura de Enrique Peña Nieto*, Univision. Disponible en: <https://www.univision.com/noticias/noticias-de-mexico/los-invitados-a-la-investidura-de-enrique-pena-nieto>.
- Velázquez Flores, Rafael (2002), «*El proyecto de política exterior de Vicente Fox: ¿Continuidad o cambio?*», In Rafael Velázquez Flores (coord.), *La política exterior de México bajo un régimen democrático. ¿Cambio o continuidad?*, Universidad de Quintana Roo/Plaza y Valdés, Mexique.



## *A RASD e a área lusófona*







# Portugal e o conflito do Saara – contributo para o estudo da 1.ª década

Maciel Santos\*

pp. 183-204

Há poucas sínteses sobre a história da política externa dos estados africanos, tal como sobre a da III República portuguesa. Mas para certas questões que articulam as duas, como a do conflito do Saara, está praticamente tudo por fazer.

O condicionalismo dos arquivos públicos, interditando a informação produzida nos últimos trinta anos, pouco deixa acrescentar às declarações oficiais sobre a descolonização saariana. O mesmo se aplica à política africana de Portugal pós-1975 que, ainda para mais, não tem tido a atenção académica que merece. Acresce que, para perspetivar este conflito em articulação com a sociedade portuguesa, é preciso contar ainda com o “bloqueio informativo” que em Portugal, como em geral na Europa, o acompanhou ao longo de quatro décadas.

Apesar disso, compreender a descolonização falhada do Saara com base na documentação dos arquivos de estado portugueses tem um potencial elevado. A diplomacia portuguesa herdou do período colonial, e manteve devido aos interesses vigentes nas suas ex-colónias, uma importante rede de postos e de observadores em África.

Os pontos que se seguem pretendem avançar hipóteses explicativas para as tendências em curso durante a primeira década da guerra do Saara, mais precisamente entre 1976 e 1983 e, simultaneamente, para as posições portuguesas que as acompanharam. A escolha destes anos justifica-se por:

- haver agora acesso a *algumas* fontes oficiais desse período. Para além disso, a discrição com que, na mesma altura, a imprensa portuguesa cobriu o processo facilita a sua pesquisa sistemática;
- englobar um primeiro ciclo neste longo processo, no qual a guerra e a diplomacia – por esta ordem – interagiram. O ciclo, e aqui está talvez a primeira hipótese explicativa, obedeceu a um padrão que a evolução futura ainda não abandonou: o do desfazamento entre a situação no terreno e a movimentação diplomática, seguindo esta última a primeira com atraso (que no caso português foi pequeno).

Começar pela conjuntura internacional (ponto 1) é um lugar comum mas com algum cabimento. Como se verá, apesar da proximidade geográfica de Portugal ao teatro do conflito, as políticas do governo português tiveram mais determinações externas (próprias de um regime em transição como o português, nascido em 1974) do que internas (vindas dos interesses da sociedade civil portuguesa nesse teatro). Daí também o poder falar-se em política de estado e se justificar o uso do singular aplicado a “governo”.

A restante contextualização, feita nos dois pontos seguintes, serve-se de informações enviadas ao MNE a partir de algumas capitais africanas. Parte desses postos emissores fez também uma seleção da imprensa africana. Surgem assim materiais inesperados que,

\* CEAUP.

como diz outro lugar comum, permitem igualmente caracterizar quem a enviou. Talvez por isso se possa desculpar que o ponto quatro, o que mais desenvolvimento aqui deveria ter, seja o único a descrever os interesses especificamente portugueses na questão.

## 1. A recessão da década de 1970 não foi a de 1930

Na segunda metade da década de 1970, a recessão mundial agravou as contradições imperialistas. Face à queda acentuada da taxa média de lucro, os aparelhos de estado das maiores economias capitalistas entraram cada vez mais no processo de acumulação: internamente, com o salvamento dos “patos coxos”, isto é, das grandes empresas privadas ou públicas em risco (Stoffaës, 1991: 183-186); externamente, protegendo investimentos, moedas, e estados-clientes em risco<sup>1</sup>.

O controlo do mercado do petróleo, agora o combustível dominante das economias capitalistas avançadas, tornou-se a grande questão geopolítica. A disputa da renda petrolífera entre as multinacionais e os estados produtores estava desde 1970 numa nova fase<sup>2</sup>. Em 1975 o dólar foi associado ao petróleo saudita. A partir de então a hegemonia do capital norte-americano consolidou-se. Na linguagem consagrada das relações internacionais, seguiu-se o aumento das tensões Oeste-Leste, o fim da chamada *detente* e uma intensificação dos conflitos regionais.

Contudo as receitas bélicas, tão utilizadas para a retoma durante a grande recessão anterior (década de 1930), tinham limitações. O aumento da despesa militar podia até ter efeitos multiplicadores sobre o produto interno (não sobre a taxa média de lucro) dos países capitalistas mas na era do átomo as principais armas táticas não podiam ser usadas. Não haveria uma nova geopolítica à conta dos armamentos nucleares. Para começar, porque havia dois blocos que se equilibravam e sobretudo porque, no caso de uma intervenção militar no Golfo Pérsico, a única coisa certa “seria a destruição imediata dos recursos petrolíferos, que são precisamente o que se trata de proteger”.<sup>3</sup> Esta “impunidade” e a dependência absoluta de dois dos principais polos capitalistas relativamente ao petróleo do Médio Oriente (a Europa e o Japão) deram uma oportunidade à coligação entre o nacionalismo árabe e a “radicalização” do “Terceiro Mundo”. Foi esse o sentido da cimeira de Argel em 1975, da declaração de Taif de 1980 e das numerosas conferências realizadas dentro e fora da ONU a favor da redistribuição de rendimentos Norte-Sul (Servan-Schreiber, 1981).

Houve assim, sobretudo durante os anos 1978-1983, nas metrópoles capitalistas, o receio permanente de uma derrapagem da OLP (“queda” do Irão, ascensão do par Líbia-Argélia, instabilidade saudita). Para o agravar, desenvolveu-se uma perceção errada sobre a oferta e a procura de petróleo, imaginando-se (tal como viria a acontecer nos anos 2000) cenários catastrofistas<sup>4</sup>.

No terreno “mole” dos novos estados africanos a recessão chegou da pior maneira. Como novidade relativamente à década de 1960, às mudanças de regime vinham agora juntar-se o aumento das dívidas externas (acompanhadas das respetivas políticas “de reajustamento”)

<sup>1</sup> O peso crescente dos capitais e políticas públicas em curso desde a 2.ª guerra, aumentado pela recessão a partir de 1974, passou para um certo campo teórico “económico” sob a forma de “capitalismo monopolista de Estado”. (Tcheprakov, 1969; Boccara, 1976). A década seguinte revelaria o carácter conjuntural deste tipo de análises.

<sup>2</sup> Em Setembro desse ano, o novo regime líbio fazia passar o imposto sobre a margem de lucro de 50 para 55 % e nos meses seguintes os restantes produtores O.P.E.P. faziam o mesmo (Mihailovitch *et al.*, 1985: 21).

<sup>3</sup> Walter J. Levy em *Foreign Affairs* (Servan-Schreiber, 1981: 84). As opiniões contrárias, expostas em Washington por “falcões” como Wolfowitz (que chegou a ameaçar os recalitrantes com armas nucleares) ou por artigos anónimos orquestrados por Kissinger, destinavam-se sobretudo a pressionar os dirigentes do Golfo (Clark, 2006: 46-47).

<sup>4</sup> Para além de subavaliarem o efeito da recessão, os serviços secretos norte-americanos estavam convencidos de que a União Soviética deixaria em poucos anos de ser uma potência exportadora de petróleo, pelo que aumentaria a pressão militar sobre o Médio Oriente (Servan Schreiber, 1981: 77-79).



e, em número crescente de casos, guerras igualmente associadas às ex-metrópoles. Nas cimeiras da O.U.A., os conflitos inter-estados tornaram-se mesmo o assunto prioritário. Em 1977, a de Libreville deveria antes de mais “sanar as acusações de ingerência nos seus assuntos internos que vários países fazem a alguns de seus vizinhos”. A lista era extensa – Chade-Líbia, Etiópia-Sudão-Somália, Zaire-Angola, Marrocos-Argélia, Benim-Gabão – e, como se verá, faltavam algumas. Não sendo a “cimeira” o local próprio para tais questões, a O.U.A. criou uma comissão para a resolução de conflitos composta por dez países<sup>5</sup>. No ano seguinte, na cimeira de Kartum, “o problema da presença de tropas estrangeiras em África dominou os debates”. Segundo o presidente Nimeiry, era de reear “que o nosso continente siga o mesmo caminho pisado pela Ásia: 20 anos de guerra e destruição”<sup>6</sup>.

De facto, pouco tempo antes, o governo francês tinha começado a preparar uma alteração de escala nas intervenções externas em África. Na cimeira franco-africana de Maio de 1978, o presidente Giscard retomara a “eventual criação de uma força especificamente africana de intervenção armada”. Esta «organização de segurança colectiva», como a designou o seu homólogo do Gabão, Omar Bongo, visava as intervenções ocidentais em três casos-chave: Chade, Mauritânia e Zaire. A cimeira “designou o Presidente Senghor, do Senegal, para ver com os seus outros colegas africanos se o projeto é ou não realizável”<sup>7</sup> mas não havia muito tempo para auscultações. No Zaire, “pára-queidistas franceses e belgas e uma vanguarda marroquina” já estavam no terreno “para ajudar o regime de Mobutu a resistir à Frente Nacional de Libertação do Congo, na província de Shaba”. Segurar o Zaire, o “escândalo geológico” das multinacionais mineiras, era demasiado importante para esperar pela solução preferida<sup>8</sup> – forças multinacionais africanas que dispensassem a sempre embaraçosa intervenção das ex-metrópoles. No seguimento da proposta francesa, que defendia a “perspectiva continental” para esse tipo de operações, uma reunião de cinco países NATO (Bélgica, EUA, França, Grã-Bretanha e RFA) concluiria que para “garantir a segurança e integridade do Zaire e bem assim de outros países africanos que, uma vez em dificuldades, o desejassem”, o problema “deve ser tratado no âmbito africano em geral”. Elaborou-se uma doutrina consensual de intervenção: o auxílio «aos Estados africanos desejosos de preservar, colectiva ou individualmente, a sua integridade e o seu desenvolvimento»<sup>9</sup>. Perante uma tal atmosfera internacional, até o “moderado” presidente nigeriano, Obasanjo, se sentira autorizado a lembrar, na cimeira de Kartum, que a “África não foi colonizada pela URSS mas pelas potências europeias” e que “não aceitaria “mais lançamentos de pára-queidistas no séc. XX como os nossos antepassados não aceitavam canhoeiros no século passado».

Um estado africano em particular parecia atravessar-se em muitos caminhos: a Líbia do coronel Khadafi. Em 1970, a Líbia fornecia cerca de 25 % do petróleo consumido na Europa ocidental e começava a usar a sua favorável situação de exportador não dependente da via do Suez para rebocar as reivindicações da O.P.E.P. A partir de então, o cartel petrolífero andaria a duas velocidades, com estados como a Líbia e a Argélia a acelerar a alta de preços e os países do Golfo funcionando como lastro. As multinacionais não mais teriam tão cedo um único interlocutor para negociar margens<sup>10</sup>. Graças aos *windfall profits* pro-

<sup>5</sup> *Expresso*, 09-07-1977, *Conferência da O.U.A.: soluções adiadas*, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> *Expresso*, 22-07-1978, *Cimeira da O.U.A.: Presença militar estrangeira foi tema dominante*, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> *Expresso*, 27-05-1978, *Balanço da Conferência franco-africana: Não à “ingerência externa” mas sim ao “auxílio” francês*, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> A alta da cotação do cobre na London Metal Exchange e do cobalto no mercado *spot* (uma multiplicação por 8) mostrava a urgência da intervenção (Servan-Schreiber, 1981: 150-151).

<sup>9</sup> *Expresso*, 09-06-1978. Depois da reunião de Paris, tropas de seis países concentram-se no Zaire, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> Como na conferência de Teherão, na qual o aumento “moderado” de 20 % (33 a 35 cts/barril) não foi subscrito pela Argélia e pela Líbia: o acordo de Trípoli garantia-lhes um majoração de 90 cts/barril. Nos aumentos de outubro de 1973, os estados do Golfo aceitaram um novo aumento de 1,2-1,3\$ por barril contra 2,4\$ para a Líbia (Milhailovitch *et al.*, 1991: 24-26).

porcionados pelo seu crude, o regime líbio podia pagar-se as despesas de representação de um novo nasserismo e tornou-se o campeão do anti-imperialismo em África. Com Khadafi a disparar em várias direções (“Frente da Firmeza” contra os acordos de Camp David, intervenções na guerra civil do Chade, interferências no Sudão e no Egito), os Estados Unidos e França tinham-no como alvo prioritário. Controlar a O.P.E.P. significava conter a influencia do par Líbia-Argélia. No principio da década de 1980, o “ódio psicopático” (Bontems, 1984: 200-201) que as administrações americanas lhe votavam – e a de Reagan<sup>11</sup> em particular – seria um fator na evolução da questão saariana.

## 2. Saara ocidental, 1976-1980: a Frente Polisário marca pontos no terreno e fora dele

No conflito do Saara ocidental, uma das guerras menos mediáticas saída dessa recessão mundial, houve no período 1977-80 – e apesar da sua internacionalização – uma espetacular recuperação na situação da Frente Polisário.

Em primeiro lugar (e não só cronologicamente), pelos acontecimentos no terreno militar. Em 1976, com base em equipamento capturado, as forças saaraúis já tinham conseguido levar a guerra ao interior dos dois estados invasores: desde Nema, no leste da Mauritânia, até Zagora, no sul de Marrocos<sup>12</sup>. Os êxitos militares da R.A.S.D. tiveram um custo: a intensificação da intervenção francesa tanto mais que na Mauritânia os ataques da Polisário visavam os investimentos europeus da SNIM<sup>13</sup>. O apoio francês (aviões, pilotos, contingentes) para a Mauritânia<sup>14</sup> foi contudo insuficiente para inverter o novo sentido da guerra. Os ataques da Polisário (que incluíram abates de *Mirage* franceses<sup>15</sup>) continuaram e com maior extensão – do sul de Marrocos (onde, em janeiro de 1979, a Polisário tomou a cidade de Tan Tan!) ao complexo de Zouerate, passando pelo “triângulo útil” dos fosfatos de Bou Craa (o outro grande investimento europeu na região).<sup>16</sup>

O efeito da guerra sobre as fontes de renda mineira da aliança invasora teve, como se previa, efeitos desiguais. Na Mauritânia, “um país pobre, um povo pobre sobre o qual se abateu uma desgraça”<sup>17</sup> no dizer dos próprios militares saaraúis, o regime cedeu a partir de maio de 1978. Depois de um golpe de estado, o novo governo retirou-se do conflito e passou para o outro lado<sup>18</sup>.

Marrocos – que com a saída da Mauritânia passou a reclamar a totalidade do Saara – tinha outra consistência embora nesses anos quase experimentasse... uma saída à mauritana. Entre 1978 e 1983, a combinação das baixas cotações do fosfato, dos efeitos do segundo choque petrolífero, da queda das exportações devido à recessão europeia, dos anos de

<sup>11</sup> Um eco na imprensa Africana: “It will be recalled that President Gaddafi stood up against the might of the United States in August 1981 when Libyan jets challenged provocative measures by the American air force in the Gulf of Sydra off the coast of Libya. Later in December 1981 the Libyan leader called President Reagan a liar and accused him of being silly and childish to believe that a five-man Libyan hit squad had been sent to the US to kill him.” *Times of Zambia*, 12-08-1982, *Opinion*.

<sup>12</sup> O contra-ataque, designado pelo ELPS como ofensiva Chahid El Uali Mustafa Sayed, foi desencadeado no verão de 1976. (Frente Polisário *et al.*, 1981: 7-10). Para ecos dessa ofensiva na imprensa portuguesa, *Expresso*, 27-08-1977, *Ataques da Polisário em Marrocos e Mauritânia*, p. 7; 15-12-1977; *Baixas marroquinas no Saara Ocidental*, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> A Société Nationale Industrielle et Minière (SNIM) resultara da reorganização da MIFERMA, a companhia de capitais franceses e europeus que desde 1960 explorava os jazigos de ferro de Zouerat (Marbeau, 1965).

<sup>14</sup> *Expresso*, 12-11-1977, *Ameaças da França e de Marrocos agravam a situação no Saara Ocidental*, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Expresso*, 14-12-1979, *Outro Mirage abatido em território marroquino*.

<sup>16</sup> *Expresso*, 02-02-1980, *A Frente Polisário ataca em Marrocos*, p. 8; El Moudjahedid, *L'ALPS frappe à l'intérieur du "Triangle utile"*, 26-07-1982.

<sup>17</sup> *Expresso* (Revista), 22-07-1978, Luís Ferreira, *Mauritânia: um alvo «mole para os petardos da Polisário*, p. 8.

<sup>18</sup> Inicialmente o golpe “teve a aprovação da Companhia de Minas do Estado” e Marrocos “tornou público o seu apoio ao regime do coronel Salek”. *Expresso*, 15-07-1978. *Golpe na Mauritânia... mas a guerra continua*, p. 8. Mas em janeiro do ano seguinte, o coronel Salek mostrou-se pronto a “fazer voltar a paz à região” e a respeitar “o direito intangível dos povos à autodeterminação”. *Expresso*, 06-01-1979, *Preânúncios de viragem na luta do Saará Ocidental*, p. 11.



seca e das elevadas despesas militares, fizeram passar a dívida pública marroquina de 8,5 a 13 biliões de dólares (Vermeren, 2006, 74-76). Em 1981, as políticas do FMI levavam à tentativa de greve geral da CDT e à insurreição de Casablanca, provas às quais o regime sobreviveu graças unicamente à repressão militar<sup>19</sup>. Para o Makhzen, o apoio do exército, a necessidade de o ocupar longe de Rabat (em 1983, a queda do general Dimi revelaria nova conspiração falhada) e o conflito do Saara tornar-se-iam um outro “triângulo útil”.

Em segundo lugar, porque durante os anos 1977-1980 não foi só a iniciativa militar a passar para a Polisário. A diplomacia marroquina somou também insucessos, a ponto de a segunda válvula de segurança do Makhzen, o eixo Washington-Paris-Madrid, começar a vacilar.

Em novembro de 1978, a administração Carter, embora agradecendo o apoio marroquino dado às negociações israelo-egípcias, não autorizou a venda dos aviões e helicópteros pedidos por Hassan II, “por recear que os aparelhos pudessem vir a ser usados contra a Frente Polisário”<sup>20</sup>. A ameaça da neutralidade americana assustou muito Rabat porque vinha na pior altura. Pouco tempo antes o governo espanhol, pela primeira vez desde os acordos de Madrid e tal como a Mauritânia, aproximava-se da Argélia, falando “num processo de paz que conduzisse à autodeterminação do povo da região”<sup>21</sup>. Depois, porque a nova correlação de forças estava também a ter reflexos nos dois organismos multilaterais que mais diretamente tocavam o conflito. Em novembro de 1979, na ONU, a tese marroquina de que a Mauritânia desistira porque fora coagida pela Argélia e que, como prova de boa vontade, Rabat estaria pronta a negociar com... Argel, levou à Resolução mais afirmativa desde 1972: condenação da invasão marroquina e reconhecimento da Polisário como interlocutor nacional<sup>22</sup>. Produto da votação dos países de Leste e afro-asiáticos (exceções feitas à “clientela africana” da França e dos Estados Unidos), esta resolução vinha contudo somar-se às restantes que, desde 1976, aí tinham passado sem consequências porque todas remetiam as medidas a tomar para a O.U.A. (Bontems, 1984: 189-190).

Contudo, mesmo esta começava a agitar-se. Em 1978, na cimeira de Khartum, o conflito do Saara já aparecia no centro do debate embora o plenário se tenha limitado a indigitar uma comissão *ad hoc* para examinar “sob todos os aspetos” a questão. Mas na mini-cimeira de Monróvia de dezembro de 1979 (um mês depois da Resolução onusiana desse ano), o comité já pedia a retirada das tropas marroquinas e uma força de paz interafricana para implementar o referendo no Saara<sup>23</sup>.

Em março de 1980, Hassan II foi pedir ajuda a Paris: o Makhzen estava minado, por dentro e por fora, e apenas a reativação do eixo Washington-Paris poderia trazer algo de novo<sup>24</sup>. Para a Polisário, havia razões para considerar estar-se em um bom momento para negociar. Como dizia Bernatar Mahmoud, o coordenador da diplomacia da R.A.S.D. na Europa: “Reconhecemos que o rei Hassan é um factor de equilíbrio na zona e a perspectiva actual de um regime ultra, de direita ou de esquerda, não é do nosso interesse.”<sup>25</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Só em Rabat, o número de réus era de cerca de dois mil, “julgados à média de 180 por dia”. *Expresso*, 11-07-1981, *Julgamentos em massa em Marrocos*, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> *Expresso*, 18-11-1978, *Encontro entre o rei de Marrocos e o presidente dos EUA*, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> *Expresso*, 30-09-1978, *Reação marroquina à aproximação da Espanha à Frente Polisário*, p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> “Pela primeira vez, uma resolução da Assembleia Geral da ONU classificou de “ocupação” a presença de Marrocos no Saará Ocidental.” *Expresso*, 24-11-1979, *Saara Ocidental: ONU condena Marrocos*, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> *Expresso*, 07-12-1979, *Membros da O.U.A. pedem a Marrocos que retire do Saará Ocidental*, p. 9. A cimeira de Monróvia de 1980 designou depois um comité de peritos (*Comité de Sages*) composto pela Serra Leoa, Guiné, Mali, Nigéria, Sudão e Tanzânia. O Comité teve várias sessões em Freetown e entregou o relatório final na cimeira de Nairobi de 1981.

<sup>24</sup> Na opinião de um jornal português, o rei teria ido a Paris porque: “Sem ir ao ponto de classificar a posição de Hassan II como “desamparada” (como o fez o jornal argelino “El Moudjahid” esta semana), facto é que ele está numa posição inextricável: é-lhe impossível ganhar a guerra e é improvável negociar a paz.” *Expresso*, 29-03-1980, *Hassan II procura mediano em Paris para a guerra do Saara*, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> *Expresso*, 05-12-1980, *Representante da Frente Polisário ao Expresso*, p. 11.

### 3. Saara Ocidental, 1981-1983: a reação e o começo do impasse

Assim, em 1980, no eixo vital do imperialismo e da geopolítica do petróleo, dois terminais ameaçavam rutura. No extremo oriental, no golfo de Ormuz, a revolução iraniana; no ocidental, à entrada do Mediterrâneo, o conflito do Saara, com potencial para arrastar a queda do regime marroquino.

O que valia então Marrocos para o imperialismo ocidental? A manutenção do régimen marroquino não servia apenas para salvaguardar os investimentos europeus nos fosfatos, pescas ou construção civil. A “queda de Marrocos”, que com “grande coragem” mantivera a “coesão do mundo árabe”<sup>26</sup>, poderia fazer entrar a Liga Árabe, bem como as restantes organizações do “Terceiro Mundo” (O.U.A., Liga Islâmica, etc.) numa outra rota. Regionalmente, abria a possibilidade de um Maghreb unido na hostilidade à NATO (Marrocos, Argélia, Líbia). Além disso, os serviços prestados (e a prestar) por Marrocos eram demasiado importantes para serem preteridos: basta relembrar o que desde 1963 tinha sido e continuaria a ser o intercâmbio israelo-marroquino<sup>27</sup>: apoio israelita durante a “guerra das areias” (1963), permissão marroquina à espionagem da Mossad durante a cimeira da Liga árabe em Casablanca ao mesmo tempo que esta colaborava no rapto de Ben Barka (setembro de 1965), intermediações de Hassan II para a visita de Sadat a Jerusalém (1977)<sup>28</sup>, etc. Mas a polivalência de Marrocos para o imperialismo ocidental não se limitava aos pontos quentes do Maghreb ou do Médio Oriente. Pouco tempo depois seria fundamental a sua participação no processo negocial angolano. E por enquanto, no teatro sub-saariano Paris já ia faturando o seu apoio a Rabat forçando a presença militar marroquina na operação zairese<sup>29</sup>.

Considerando o que estava em jogo, não haveria mais hesitações em Washington sobre o que fazer relativamente a Marrocos, tanto mais que o risco de colisão com a URSS sobre o assunto era nulo. Os soviéticos tinham fortes ligações à Argélia mas não descartavam a pesca nos bancos marroquinos nem, muito menos, os fosfatos da região<sup>30</sup> – e, como relembrava a França, nenhum país de Leste tinha até então reconhecido a R.A.S.D.<sup>31</sup>. No final de outubro de 1979, os Estados Unidos anunciavam a venda do equipamento militar solicitado por Marrocos. Tratando-se da administração Carter, a notícia vinha acompanhada de um voto piedoso – “reforçar a posição do rei Hassan II e encorajá-lo a encetar negociações”; noutras interpretações mais simples, “os “falcões” (liderados pelo conselheiro Brzezinski) levaram a melhor”. Na verdade, o neutralismo tinha sido de curta duração na Casa Branca<sup>32</sup> e o seu fim foi acelerado pela sucessão rápida dos desastres na política colonial marroquina. O *update* americano na força aérea marroquina veio reequilibrar as forças em presença mas só por si seria insuficiente. Contudo veio acompanhado de outras

<sup>26</sup> *Expresso*, 18-11-1978, Encontro entre o rei de Marrocos e o presidente dos EUA, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> Para um bom e inesperado artigo de divulgação sobre as relações secretas israelo-marroquinas, Messoudi, 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Isto é, em 1977-78, pouco antes da ameaça de rutura nos dois terminais do eixo do petróleo (Gibraltar e Ormuz), Marrocos ajudava o imperialismo ocidental a consertar a cavilha central, o Suez.

<sup>29</sup> Hassan II “preferiria ver os militares marroquinos integrados numa força pan-africana, sugestão feita por Giscard” mas à falta dela, a “espinha dorsal é formada por 1 500 soldados marroquinos, que começaram a partir para o Zaire no domingo, transportados por aviões norte-americanos”. *Expresso*, 03-06-1978, *Um segundo movimento contra Mobutu iniciou operações militares no Zaire*, p. 9; 09-06-1978, *Depois da reunião de Paris, tropas de seis países concentram-se no Zaire*, p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Um acordo de cooperação comercial (créditos contra fosfatos) tinha sido assinado entre Moscovo e Rabat em março de 1978. *Expresso*, 18-03-1978, *Assinado o acordo marroquino-soviético sobre fosfatos*, p. 8.

<sup>31</sup> “Quanto à frente de Polisário, para o presidente francês é reconhecida por muita poucas nações e por um único país árabe, a Argélia. Nenhum país europeu. Um único país socialista: a Coreia do Norte”. *Expresso*, 12-11-1977, *Ameaças da França e de Marrocos agravam a situação no Saara Ocidental*, p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> Em 1974, os EUA exportaram para Marrocos material militar no valor de 8,3 milhões de dólares. Em 5 anos, o total da “ajuda militar oficial” americana quase sextuplicou (em milhões de dólares correntes, 31 em 1976 e 45 em 1978). *Expresso*, 27-10-1979, A. H. Fernandes, *O Saara Ocidental na geoestratégia mediterrânica*, p. 11.

“autorizações”, sendo decisiva a luz verde para nova colaboração israelita. Começou pouco depois a construção do muro em torno do Saara útil: os jazigos de fosfato, a correia de transporte e o porto de Layoun (Vermeeren, 2006: 72). Acabado entre 1981 e 1982, este primeiro muro não estancou todos os ataques da Polisário mas retirou-lhe grande parte da iniciativa e da mobilidade<sup>33</sup>. Sentindo-se em terreno mais sólido, Rabat retomou a iniciativa político-militar e um dos seus alvos passou a ser o governo mauritano, organizando várias tentativas de mudança de regime em Nouakchott<sup>34</sup>.

No campo diplomático, o regime marroquino contava também com o eixo Washington-Paris para desacelerar o processo de descolonização dentro da O.U.A. A convergência de esforços seria tanto mais fácil quanto, na O.U.A., havia contas americanas e francesas a acertar que coincidiam com os interesses de Rabat.

#### 4. O Saara Ocidental e as cimeiras africanas – 1978-1983

Desde 1977 que Marrocos vinha adotando na O.U.A. a política da cadeira vazia. Em março desse ano, o governo de Rabat exprimia a sua “profunda consternação” pela “acção irresponsável” do Secretariado da O.U.A., ao permitir que, na reunião ministerial de Lomé, circulasse um relatório acusando Marrocos e o Gabão de cumplicidade no malogrado golpe contra o regime do Benin<sup>35</sup> (o Benim tinha sido um dos primeiros estados a reconhecer a R.A.S.D.). Ultrapassado este incidente, a participação marroquina continuou intermitente enquanto prosseguiram os trabalhos dos comités de peritos sobre o Saara, em curso desde 1978.<sup>36</sup>

Em 1981, falhadas as tentativas bilaterais ... com a Argélia<sup>37</sup>, o Makhzen jogaria noutro tabuleiro. Compreendendo que o princípio do referendo estava definitivamente consagrado mas que o calendário e a situação no terreno lhe seriam favoráveis depois de estabelecido o cessar-fogo (isto é, mantendo o exército marroquino posições entretanto recuperadas), Hassan II julgou reunidas as condições para comparecer na cimeira O.U.A. desse ano, em Nairobi. Aí, tudo como previsto por Rabat: na base de declarações consensuais sobre o referendo – ainda que acarretando problemas domésticos<sup>38</sup> – a delegação marroquina assistiu à nomeação de novo comité, agora para implementar (*mise en oeuvre*) as medidas necessárias à sua realização. Com o reforço a curto prazo da ajuda militar americana<sup>39</sup>, Marrocos tinha posto o tempo a seu favor.

Contudo, a basculação “progressista” no seio da O.U.A. já não permitiu prolongar mais o *statu quo*. Um ano antes, a R.A.S.D. tinha feito o seu pedido de admissão à O.U.A. e na cimeira de Freetown 26 dos 50 membros votaram-no favoravelmente. Em fevereiro de 1982, face às dilações marroquinas sobre o referendo, o secretário-geral da Organização, Edem Kokjo admitiu a delegação da R.A.S.D. na cimeira de ministros dos negócios estrangeiros da O.U.A., reunida em Adis-Abeba. Seguiu-se o abandono da sessão por parte de Marrocos

<sup>33</sup> A eficiência deste modelo de defesa – um muro de areia protegido por minas e fossos – tinha sido testada pelos israelitas no canal de Suez entre 1967-1973 (a linha Bar-Lev).

<sup>34</sup> *Expresso*, 21-03-1981, *Mauritânia corta com Marrocos após vencer tentativa de golpe*, p. 12. *Expresso*, 13-02-1982, *Mauritânia, golpe falhado*, p. 10.

<sup>35</sup> *Expresso*, 04-03-1977, *Marrocos suspende participação na O.U.A.*, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> Ver nota 23. O comité de Monróvia ocupou-se em 1980 e 1981 com a regulamentação do referendo, tentando com dificuldade atualizar os resultados do último recenseamento de 1974 (Bontems, 1984: 195-196).

<sup>37</sup> *Expresso*, 07-03-1981, *O conflito no Saharã não é “caso arquivado”*, p. 10.

<sup>38</sup> Os partidos da oposição marroquina tentaram capitalizar o “abandono do Saara”, como o fez a UFSP. Mas para o Makhzen o risco valera a pena: a resolução de Nairobi não mencionava a retirada marroquina como condição para o referendo (Bontems, 2004: 196-197).

<sup>39</sup> O programa delineado em Fez previa que em 1982 o total da “cooperação militar” americana chegasse aos 100 milhões de dólares. *Expresso*, 01-05-1982, *Divida pela questão do Saara Ocidental – A O.U.A. espera pela “cimeira” de Trípoli*, p. 11.



**Ilustração 01** – O presidente do Conselho de Ministros da R.A.S.D. com o presidente da República de Moçambique Samora Machel. Fonte: RASD, 1981: 17.

e países “amigos” (todos francófonos com exceção do Sudão e da Guiné Equatorial: Zaire, Senegal, Camarões, República Centro Africana, Niger, República da Guiné, Tunísia e Djibouti). Efeito secundário da decisão, um “confronto declarado” entre o presidente em exercício, Daniel Arap Moi (do Quênia), e o secretário Kodjo, que não ajudava a acelerar trabalhos futuros<sup>40</sup> O eixo Rabat-Paris começava a afetar a normalidade da organização.

Nas reuniões preparatórias seguintes, realizadas em terreno favorável a Marrocos, o objetivo (exclusão da RASD, paralisia da OUA) foi alcançado: a 16 de março, reunião de ministros da Informação, em Dacar, suspensa por o Governo senegalês ter impedido a entrada no país da delegação da R.A.S.D.; uma quinzena depois, na de Salisbúria, delegados de oito países recusavam-se a entrar na sala de conferências, “devido à presença” da Polisário<sup>41</sup>.

Na O.U.A. as contas para as cimeiras futuras eram fáceis. Um total de 19 estados não aceitava o que a retórica de Rabat designava por “banditismo jurídico”, i.e., a admissão da R.A.S.D. na O.U.A.. Sendo esta composta por 50 membros, o quórum necessário para uma cimeira era de 33 (dois terços): “sem Marrocos e seus amigos o número de Estados presentes não deverá ultrapassar 31”<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> *Expresso*, 27-02-1982, *O Saara Ocidental e a divisão da O.U.A.*, p. 8. No ano seguinte, Kodjo não seria reeleito na O.U.A. e no seu país natal, o Togo, passaria para a oposição.

<sup>41</sup> *Expresso*, 03-04-1982, *Questão do Saara compromete futuro da O.U.A.*, p. 8.

<sup>42</sup> *Expresso*, 01-05-1982, *Divida pela questão do Saará Ocidental – A O.U.A. espera pela “cimeira” de Trípoli*, p. 11.



#### 4.1. Tripoli 1 e 2

Para agravar a divisão africana, a cimeira seguinte estava marcada para Tripoli, sede do governo de Khadafi. A possibilidade de, a partir de então e por um ano, a O.U.A. ter como porta-voz o símbolo da O.P.E.P. desalinhada com os países do Golfo e, simultaneamente, o mais ativo adversário da *Françafrique* era proibitiva para Washington e Paris. Para o governo francês, só um lenitivo: tal como na crise de Suez mais de duas décadas atrás, dispunha de uma boleia anglo-saxónica para a sua política norte-africana (e bem mais segura que a de então).

Paralisar a O.U.A. para desacreditar o regime líbio e salvar Marrocos não era uma tarefa difícil considerando as clivagens entre os estados africanos. A cisão entre o grupo de Casablanca (“progressista”) e o de Monróvia (“moderados”) precedera a cimeira de 1963, que criara a O.U.A. Para uma parte da imprensa africana, a principal diferença de 1982 relativamente a esses anos era que, para além da mudança de campo que muitos estados tinham experimentado (entre os quais Marrocos), os conflitos tinham agora (!) uma origem e mesmo um financiamento extra-africano<sup>43</sup>. Kaunda, o presidente zambiano, a braços com a baixa do cobre orquestrada pela City, mencionou explicitamente a ação das multinacionais nas manobras anti-Khadafi<sup>44</sup>. Por detrás das multinacionais estavam os respetivos estados: nesse ano de 1982 a administração Reagan decretou o embargo às importações americanas de petróleo líbio e de todas as exportações de tecnologia para a Líbia<sup>45</sup>.

Mas seria preciso tanto? A autonomia dos estados africanos tinha sido sempre limitada, num continente em que todos (África do Sul incluída) exportavam maioritariamente bens do setor primário e importavam capitais<sup>46</sup>. É certo que alguns dispunham de mais condições políticas para diversificar os investidores externos (as opções na balança comercial eram sempre menores) e que outros, nos quais o escasso capital investido ou os mercados eram exclusivamente euro-americanos... nem tanto. A retórica própria de “progressistas” e “moderados” acompanhava estas diferentes opções, que eram mais de grau que qualitativas.

Por outro lado havia também contradições complexas *entre* as classes dirigentes africanas. A maior ou menor exposição dessas burguesias de estado ao tecido produtivo *herdado* das suas ex-metrópoles produzia configurações sub-regionais de interesses. Era apenas no quadro *nacional*<sup>47</sup> que evoluíam as formações sociais africanas e se geravam os seus orçamentos de estado. Tornava-se muito improvável um esforço para qualquer política “continental”, mesmo entre os chamados “progressistas”. Por exemplo, para os estados austrais da Linha da Frente, a ameaça sul-africana (ao sul de Angola, Moçambique, Botswana, Lesotho, Zâmbia, Zimbabwe) bem como a independência da Namíbia constituíam as prioridades. Em contrapartida, para o par Argélia-Líbia, a necessidade de fortalecer a respetiva posição na O.P.E.P. e na Liga Árabe fazia com que, especialmente para

<sup>43</sup> “What makes the whole difference between the squabbles of the 1960’s and the current problems of the OAU is that today’s split is sponsored and financed by extra-continental interests and powers”. Sunday Times of Zambia, 29-05-1983. *As Africa sings Happy Birthday*.

<sup>44</sup> “Exploitative international capital” e “Powerful multinationals persuaded some African countries against attending the Tripoli summit. Times of Zambia, *Opinion*, 12-08-1982.

<sup>45</sup> Khadafi declarou-se também “disposto a publicar documentos que comprovam que o imperialismo corrompeu Chefes de Estado” para boicotarem a primeira cimeira de Tripoli. *Expresso*, 07-08-1982, Alves Gomes, O.U.A.: *do desacordo nasce a fraqueza*, p. 9.

<sup>46</sup> No comércio externo dos estados africanos em 86,4 % das situações havia especialização na exportação de bens primários e em nenhum se desenvolviam “atividades industriais fundamentais” para a acumulação auto-centrada (Pimenta *et al.*, 2011: 7).

<sup>47</sup> Cerca de 93 % das fronteiras africanas foram estabelecidas com interferência colonial o que não impediu que uma das primeiras declarações consensuais da O.U.A. (Cairo, 2107-1964) fosse a do compromisso mútuo de as respeitar (Foucher, 2014: 16-19).



Tripoli, se tornassem incómodos os regimes árabo-islâmicos que no grande Sahel alinhavam com os interesses ocidentais: os da ex-AOF, o Egito, o Sudão, a Somália, Djibouti. A necessidade de fazer bascular a O.P.E.P. (o petróleo, “espada” do Terceiro Mundo) obrigava a Líbia a um internacionalismo que encontrava na *FrançaÁfrica* – e não na África do Sul – o seu principal obstáculo. A guerra civil do Chade seria, juntamente com o conflito do Saara, o ponto quente das cimeiras de 1982-1983.

Assim as clivagens sub-regionais, mais do que determinadas por alinhamentos ideológicos, refletiam as contradições *nacionais* das burguesias de estado africanas<sup>48</sup>.

As cimeiras anuais serviam para publicitar internacionalmente essas urgências e para legitimar as políticas dos estados *nacionais*<sup>49</sup>.

A cimeira de Tripoli tornou-se contudo inadiável para o grupo “progressista” no seu conjunto<sup>50</sup>. Os estados austrais necessitavam urgentemente dela para pressionar o ocidente contra Pretória<sup>51</sup>. O *tandem* Argélia-Líbia beneficiaria de a presidência de Khadafi na O.U.A.: para além de resolver a questão do Saara, uma O.U.A. com outra dinâmica poderia desbloquear as organizações do Terceiro Mundo que em 1982 também não tinham conseguido reunir ou estavam em vias disso (Liga Árabe, Liga Islâmica e Conferência dos Não-Alinhados, “ameaçada pelo conflito entre Iraque e Irão”).<sup>52</sup>

Para remover o pretexto dos 19 “moderados” tornava-se necessário levar a R.A.S.D. a aceitar a proposta da Nigéria, “segundo a qual poderia participar sessão ministerial,” mas “abster-se-ia assistir posterior cimeira”.<sup>53</sup> Postos perante um dilema, os saaraouis aceitaram-na numa reunião já em Tripoli<sup>54</sup>. O esforço foi baldado porque os 19 “moderados” faltaram à chamada, apesar dos esforços do governo líbio junto de Paris<sup>55</sup>. Sem quórum, 26 delegações reuniram<sup>56</sup> mas na expectativa de que outros mudassem de ideias ainda a tempo, os anfitriões estavam dispostos a mais concessões. Embora suspeito, o testemunho

<sup>48</sup> Angola, por exemplo, esperava reunir a primeira fatia dos 200 milhões de USD necessários para a duplicação da sua produção de petróleo exclusivamente com capital norte-americano: 85 milhões do Export-Import Bank e 50 milhões de outros bancos comerciais americanos. Nada disto interferia com a chamada grande política, na qual a presença cubana se discutia internacionalmente. “The Cabinda field, under Cuban protection, is operated by a subsidiary of the U.S. Gulf Oil Corporation.” MNE-AHD, PAA 96. Reuter – Lisbon, 08-11-1982.

<sup>49</sup> Era, entre outros, o caso de Angola a braços com a guerra civil: “um Estado soberano poderia pedir auxílio a outro país, se o desejasse”. Esta tese seria “calorosamente sustentada pelo Presidente Agostinho Neto, ao proclamar que as tropas cubanas não sairiam de Angola, enquanto persistirem as ameaças militares, políticas e diplomáticas contra este país”. Expresso, 22-07-1978, *Cimeira da O.U.A.: Presença militar estrangeira foi tema dominante*, p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> Vistas de fora, as cimeiras da O.U.A. prestavam-se a questões como esta: “Would the lives of any of the 400 million Africans be altered one jot, for better or for worse, if the Organisation of African Unity ceased to exist?” The Times, *Panafrican Farrago*, 15-06-1983.

<sup>51</sup> Como dizia o presidente Kaunda: “We need a strong O.U.A. to resolve the economic problems that we face, we need a strong O.U.A. to resolve the problem of Namibian independence and apartheid in South Africa.” Zambia Daily Mail, 16-06-1983, *African Leaders Shame Prophets of Doom*.

<sup>52</sup> Expresso, 07-08-1982, *O.U.A.: do desacordo nasce a fraqueza*, p. 9.

<sup>53</sup> A embaixada portuguesa utilizava a imprensa moçambicana para descrever, com algum ceticismo, esta solução e acrescentava: “Esforço desbloqueamento da situação tem sido sobretudo levado cabo por Líbia, interessada assegurar por todos meios condução destinos O.U.A.”. AHD-MNE, PAA 86, *Embaixada de Portugal em Maputo*, 29-07-1982.

<sup>54</sup> “Para os dirigentes da organização que reivindica a soberania sobre o território do ex-Saara Espanhol colocava-se um importante desafio: ou aceitava manter-se ausente da “cimeira”, debilitando a sua posição, ou sabotava a mesma, de importância crucial para o país anfitrião, que tem facultado substanciais apoios à Frente Polisário.” Expresso, 31-07-1982, *Desistindo de participar na “cimeira” de Tripoli – Polisário perdeu uma batalha mas ganhou a O.U.A.*, p. 8. Para Polisário, a relação estreita com a Argélia não se comparava com a que mantinha com Líbia: Tripoli só tinha reconhecido a R.A.S.D. em abril de 1980 (Frente Polisário *et al.*, 1981: 20).

<sup>55</sup> Uma trégua no apoio líbio a Wedeye no Chade uma “abstenção” do género da que foi proposta à R.A.S.D. deve ter sido uma das contrapartidas de Tripoli oferecidas ao governo francês Paris. O saldo fora praticamente nulo: “ne fut «retournée» que le Centreafrique, qui faisait partie des «19» en février dernier.” Jeune Afrique, 11-08-1982, *O.U.A. Tout sur le non-sommet de Tripoli*.

<sup>56</sup> Os 26 de Tripoli 1: Angola, Argélia, Benin, Burundi, Chade, Congo, Etiópia, Gana, Guiné-Bissau, Lesoto, Líbia Madagáscar, Malawi, Mali, Maurícia, Mauritânia, Moçambique, República Central Africana, Ruanda, São Tomé e Príncipe, Seychelles, Suazilândia, Tanzânia, Uganda, Zâmbia e Zimbabué. The Guardian, 09-08-1982, *Radicals in OAU plan new meeting*.



Ilustração 02 – Mapa usado na cimeira de Tripoli 1 (*Jeune Afrique*, 11-08-1982).

dos repórteres da *Jeune Afrique* enfatizava a insatisfação da Polisário e da Argélia perante o mapa publicado no jornal oficial da cimeira – no qual a menção à R.A.S.D. desaparecia<sup>57</sup>. Como desses esforços nada resultou, um Comité de 5 países (Tanzânia, Líbia, Congo, Zâmbia e Mali) ficou encarregado de convencer os ausentes para nova cimeira, igualmente em Tripoli e a realizar nos três meses seguintes.

A preparação de Tripoli 2 repetiu as mesmas pressões sobre a R.A.S.D.<sup>58</sup>. A 2 de novembro, “após prolongadas negociações, em que se distinguiram pelo empenho os ministros Chissano, Paulo Jorge e Salim Salim”, – isto é, três ministros “progressistas” austrais (Moçambique, Angola e Tanzânia) –, a Polisário aceitou novamente não comparecer<sup>59</sup>. A segunda tentativa para realizar a cimeira de 1982, entretanto marcada para os dias 22 a 26 de novembro, podia começar. Alguns dos 19 refratários, como o Quênia ou o Zaire mostravam agora mais disponibilidade e o quórum parecia alcançável. Até Marrocos os poderia acompanhar, se garantida a não participação da R.A.S.D. e se o Saara não fosse mais assunto (visto que a OUA já tinha “um Comité competente para assegurar cessar-fogo e organizar referendium”).<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> *Jeune Afrique, O.U.A. Tout sur le non-sommet de Tripoli*, 11-08-1982.

<sup>58</sup> A imprensa ocidental punha novamente em evidência o desgaste da R.A.S.D. junto dos “progressistas” austrais: “The whole point now is the survival of the OAU, rather than issues which divide us – said an African diplomat whose country supports the SADR. In the interests of unity, people agree it is important to have a meeting. But the SADR’s membership has outraged leaders across the political spectrum. From Guinea’s isolationist president Sekou Touré to pro-western Felix Houphouët-Boigny of Ivory Coast and is expected to remain a thorny issue in corridor talks.” MNE-AHD, PAA 96. Reuter – Lisbon, 08-11-1982.

<sup>59</sup> AHD-MNE, PAA 86, Missão de Portugal na ONU, 02-11-1982.

<sup>60</sup> As apostas marroquinas não tinham mudado: “Intenção será porventura retirar à Frente Polisário por algum tempo possibilidade politicamente se fazer ouvir enquanto se espera que previsível melhoria relações com Argélia prejudique definitivamente aquele movimento.” MNE-AHD, PAA 96, Embaixada de Portugal em Rabat, 09-11-1982.

Apesar do “ambiente de optimismo”<sup>61</sup>, da ausência da R.A.S.D. e do compromisso para “ultrapassar a polémica sobre o Chade”, Tripoli 2 repetiu Tripoli 1: o quórum não foi atingido (apenas 32 delegações presentes). Havia razões para pensar que tinha havido farsa das duas vezes e não apenas na repetição, parafraseando Hegel. Afinal, em 1982, quem queria a cimeira? Em novembro, os “moderados” fundamentavam a recusa com base na dupla delegação do Chade (as duas partes da guerra civil), tal como em julho o tinham feito com a da R.A.S.D.. Por detrás de tudo, como se sabe, estava a vontade franco-americana de boicotar Khadafi<sup>62</sup>. O secretário-geral adjunto da O.U.A. declarou-o explicitamente<sup>63</sup>. Mas já em Tripoli 1 parte dos “progressistas” tinham *também* manifestado vontade de outra coisa: “promover a formação de um movimento africano radical que dividirá definitivamente a O.U.A.”<sup>64</sup>.

As contradições entre as classes dirigentes africanas manifestavam-se agora a um nível superior. A Líbia tinha feito tudo para ter a “sua” cimeira (quase se incompatibilizando com a Polisário e deixando cair o GUNT do Chade)<sup>65</sup> mas dos boicotes de Tripoli 1 tirava a conclusão de que seria preferível criar um novo organismo sem “soluções de conciliação” (Bontems, 1984: 202). A gestão que a O.U.A. vinha fazendo desde 1979 do referendo no Saara dava-lhe razão (não falando no que seriam os trinta anos seguintes). Contudo, Kadhafi enganava-se na dinâmica da correlação de forças: a partir de 1982-83, o cartel dos produtores de petróleo já encontraria uma outra conjuntura de mercado e não haveria mais condições para financiar um salto em frente desse tipo. Em contrapartida, para os “austrais”, preocupados em manter o contacto com as forças que no ocidente poderiam conter a África do Sul, uma O.U.A. “militante” sempre estivera fora de questão. Em Tripoli 1, o legalismo tinha sido respeitado sobretudo graças aos equilíbrios de Nyerere, o presidente da Tanzânia, que teria impedido os “radicais” de “casser la barrique”<sup>66</sup>.

Sendo os “austrais” maioritários entre os progressistas, tudo se encaminhava para nova via sacra de compromissos. No final de Tripoli 2 foi nomeado mais um grupo de contacto, desta vez um comité de 12, com a finalidade de recuperar os ausentes para a terceira tentativa.<sup>67</sup> Provocatoriamente, Kadhafi insistiu em ... Tripoli 3<sup>68</sup> e um grupo de quatro “radicais” – dos quais apenas um “austral” – declarou mesmo desligar-se dos compromissos anteriormente tomados (sobre a R.A.S.D. e o Chade) para salvar as cimeiras<sup>69</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> Juventud Rebelde (Havana), *Optimismo en Tripoli ante posible solución a la crisis que entorpece XIX cumbre de la O.U.A.*, 25-11-1982.

<sup>62</sup> Isto é, “las verdaderas causas hay que buscarlas en el empecinamiento norteamericano de impedir que el lider libio Muammar el Khadafi asuma la presidencia de la O.U.A.”. Granma, 20-11-1982, *El pretexto ahora se llama Chad*.

<sup>63</sup> No fracasso estava “ação administração americana com auxilio seus aliados africanos, fim obter “fiasco” diplomático Chefe Estado Libio. Questões Sahara Ocidental e Tchad teriam sido apenas pretextos.” AHD-MNE, PAA 86, Embaixada de Portugal em Budapeste, 02-12-1982.

<sup>64</sup> The Guardian, 09-08-1982, *Radicals in OAU plan new meeting*. AHD-MNE, PAA 86, Embaixada de Portugal em Londres, 19-08-1982.

<sup>65</sup> “O compromisso consistia essencialmente em a generalidade da África reconhecer como governo legítimo do Chade o presidido por Hissene Habre, ao mesmo tempo que pedia a este governo para não ester voluntariamente presente na cimeira, de forma a não afastar da mesma os países que não têm reconhecido a legitimidade de Habre.” AHD-MNE, PAA 86, ANOP, 25-11-1982.

<sup>66</sup> Jeune Afrique, O.U.A. *Tout sur le non-somment de Tripoli*, 11-08-1982.

<sup>67</sup> O comité dos 12 pós Tripoli 2: Quénia (presidente), Angola, Congo, Etiópia, Lesoto, Líbia, Mali, Moçambique, Nigéria, Tanzânia, Uganda e Zâmbia.

<sup>68</sup> “Repetiremos o convite quantas vezes for preciso” disse Khadafy”. AHD-MNE, PAA 86, ANOP, 26-11-1982.

<sup>69</sup> Os quatro “desligados”: Etiópia, Líbia, Madagáscar e Moçambique. Da “Linha da Frente” austral Moçambique parece ter sido o estado mais próximo dos pontos de vista libio-argelinos. Para Marrocos, não havia dúvidas: “Embaixador marrocos disse-me recentemente que desde admissão Angola e Moçambique na O.U.A. esta organização tinha vindo experimentar crescentes dificuldades dada intransigência e extremismo demonstrado por aqueles novos membros”. AHD-MNE, PAA 86, Embaixada de Portugal em Nairobi, 23-02-1983.

Mas para a maioria dos “progressistas” já chegava de “radicalismo”: a agenda austral assim o exigia<sup>70</sup>. Ainda em Trípoli, a Etiópia manifestou-se pronta a acolher a terceira tentativa, que na opinião de muitos não podia falhar.

#### 4.2. Adis-Abeba

Na verdade, a cimeira de Adis-Abeba, que em 1983 coincidiria com o 20.º aniversário da O.U.A., estava na rota autorizada pelo ocidente. As acusações cubanas aos Estados Unidos de desmantelar a O.U.A. falhavam o alvo: como essa mesma imprensa reconhecia, o boicote anterior tinha-se destinado à Líbia, não à organização continental. Além disso, como se viu no ponto anterior, uma dissolução da O.U.A. poderia dar lugar a um novo movimento que fizesse a ponte com os “desalinados” de outros continentes. Isso teria o efeito de desequilibrar os *outros* organismos do Terceiro Mundo e de radicalizar certos “faithful OAU members”, especialmente na África Austral. Os interesses imperialistas no Médio Oriente e na África do Sul não entrariam neste jogo perigoso. O caso do Botswana, por exemplo, servia de lição: ameaçado pela África do Sul e ignorado pelo ocidente, começava a abrir-se ao investimento soviético. O mesmo se poderia passar no Sahel, onde apesar dos 1300 militares franceses de elite estacionados no Senegal e de um número não estimado no Chad no Níger, os Estados Unidos se viam obrigados a planear “ambitious military programmes<sup>71</sup>”. O tom das declarações oficiais ocidentais era agora diferente: por exemplo, poucos dias antes da cimeira, o presidente francês falava publicamente da O.U.A. como um organismo “insubstituível<sup>72</sup>”. Não seria coincidência o facto de por essa altura nada menos de três cimeiras parcelares se terem orientado *no mesmo sentido*:

- a da CEDAO em Conakry – capital do muito anti-R.A.S.D. Sekou Touré;
- a do Maghreb – com a participação da Tunísia e de... Marrocos (!);
- a do comité de contacto, na qual tanto a presidência (Quénia) como a Nigéria não tinham reconhecido a R.A.S.D.<sup>73</sup>.

Mesmo assim, para haver quórum em Adis-Abeba duas condições deveriam continuar a combinar-se: a presidência não poderia caber a Khadafi (Arap Moi do Quénia teria portanto de prolongar o seu mandato desde Nairobi-81, tornando-se recordista na O.U.A.) e a R.A.S.D. deveria aceitar nova “abstenção” de participação.

A prova de que Khadafi não as subscrevia estava nos esforços em que diplomacia líbia tinha participado com os “austrais” para reunir adesões<sup>74</sup>. Contudo, a presidência líbia já era uma batalha perdida<sup>75</sup>. Para não haver dúvidas, os “moderados” e “austrais” tinham instruções para deixar a via livre a Mengistu, o anfitrião “progressista” da cimeira<sup>76</sup>.

Quanto à R.A.S.D., tornava-se evidente que tinha chegado a hora de exigir contrapartidas para tanta “abstenção”. Para os “austrais”, as negociações não iam ser fáceis tanto com

<sup>70</sup> Nas vésperas de Adis-Abeba, Kaunda já não escolhia as palavras: “Zambia had all along supported Colonel Muammar Gaddafi for the OAU chairmanship but she changed her mind when Libya insisted the third attempt to hold the meeting should take place in Tripoli (...) But when I got a message inviting me to Libya we decided to drop him. We realised the whole exercise was self seeking and not done with the interest of the OAU at the heart.” Sunday Times of Zambia, *Next OAU summit to be specia*.

<sup>71</sup> Sunday Times of Zambia, *As Africa sings Happy Birthday*.

<sup>72</sup> *Le Soleil* (Dakar), 27-05-1983, *Invité par les ambassadeurs africains à Paris Mitterrand exalte le rôle de l’O.U.A.*

<sup>73</sup> *Le Soleil* (Dakar), 27-05-1983, O.U.A.: *Les chances de deblocage s’accroissent*.

<sup>74</sup> *Le Soleil* (Dakar), 30-05-1983, *Triki reçu par Abdou Diouf*.

<sup>75</sup> Segundo se previa, Arap Moi passaria o testemunho a Mengistu ou a outro qualquer “progressista” austral: “The compromise figure will ultimately be the Ehtioipan Marxist leader, so the socialists and radicals won’t mourn Gadaffi that much – but there are indicators that a president from amongst the Frontline states may be asked to lead the Organisation instead”. Sunday Times of Zambia, 29-05-1983, *As Africa sings Happy Birthday*.

<sup>76</sup> *Le Soleil*, 10-06-1983, *Abdou Diouf refuse d’être candidat*.

a Polisário como com o outro lado: Marrocos e os seus amigos estavam ao corrente da necessidade “progressista” de realizar a cimeira e poderiam subir a fatura. O comité dos 12 começou firme, fazendo a convocatória para Adis-Abeba “sem condições prévias”<sup>77</sup>. Sentindo o perigo (pressão internacional para a realização da cimeira, incluindo de “cima”, mas não tendo garantias sobre a presença da R.A.S.D.), Rabat começou por pôr em causa a legitimidade do grupo de contacto<sup>78</sup>. A CEDAO veio em seu auxílio, exigindo a recomposição do comité dos 12 na mesma declaração em que acedia a participar na cimeira<sup>79</sup>. Uma semana depois, o comité preparatório tinha passado a 21 membros e os amigos de Marrocos estavam agora amplamente representados.<sup>80</sup>

Já em Adis Abeba, o consenso alargado não chegou para se fazer uma pré-sessão com a R.A.S.D. havendo imediatamente 22 ausências e abandonos da sala. De novo os “progressistas” austrais regressaram às negociações, começando por convencer a R.A.S.D. a nova auto-exclusão<sup>81</sup>. Era de prever que à terceira não iria ser fácil<sup>82</sup>. Apenas no dia seguinte, 8 de junho, às 17 horas, o acordo se faria através de uma negociação *direta* entre os “moderados”, representados pelo Senegal, e a R.A.S.D.. A sessão inaugural podia enfim começar e a O.U.A. comemorar o seu 20.º aniversário em vida. Para a imprensa africana, a R.A.S.D. – “bem comportada” como até aí<sup>83</sup> – aceitara a nova abstenção em troca da garantia de que a cimeira iria ouvir o relatório do conselho de implementação – indigitado dois anos antes na cimeira de Nairobi – sobre a organização do referendo<sup>84</sup>. Na verdade, a R.A.S.D. tinha exigido mais: declaração pública de que a sua suspensão era apenas “temporária e voluntária” e garantias de que a O.U.A. se pronunciará por negociações *diretas e exclusivas* entre si e Marrocos (Argélia e a organização pró-marroquina AOSARIO excluídas)<sup>85</sup>.

A estratégia da Polisário foi mal recompensada pelo acréscimo de representatividade internacional que daí adveio<sup>86</sup>. O quadro referendário já tinha efetivamente sido ultrapassado<sup>87</sup> e na prática as negociações diretas teriam começado pelo menos em 1980<sup>88</sup>. Era indesmentível que na cimeira de 1983 a posição negocial da R.A.S.D. refletia sobretudo a situação de facto no campo militar, onde indesmentivelmente a iniciativa lhe tinha *até então* pertencido<sup>89</sup>.

Neste quadro, a resolução “mais importante” da cimeira de Adis-Abeba exortava “as partes em conflito, o reino do Marrocos e a Frente Polisário” a iniciar negociações diretas para um “referendo pacífico e justo nos próximos seis meses sob os auspícios da O.U.A. e das

<sup>77</sup> AHD-MNE, PAA 86, Embaixada de Portugal em Nairobi, 22-02-1983.

<sup>78</sup> Marrocos alegava que «la continuation même de ce comité n'ayant pas été décidée par un instance légale de l'O.U.A.». AHD-MNE, PAA 86, 01-03-1983, Embaixada de Marrocos em Varsóvia, Service de Presse – Communiqué.

<sup>79</sup> Le Soleil, 30-05-1983, *Les chefs d'Etat décident de se rendre au 1933<sup>m</sup> sommet de l'O.U.A.*

<sup>80</sup> Tinham entrado 10 “moderados” que não reconheciam a R.A.S.D.: o Alto Volta, Camarões, Comores, Gâmbia, Guiné-Conakry, Niger, Nigéria, Serra Leoa, Togo e a Tunísia. *Le Soleil*, 07-06-1983, *Le Groupe des 21*.

<sup>81</sup> *Le Soleil* (Dakar), 08-06-1983, Ibrahimia Gaye, *O.U.A.: l'impasse sur le Sahara*.

<sup>82</sup> O presidente da R.A.S.D., Mohammed Abudallaiz, “had made a pledge that come what may – he was going to participate in the summit”. *Sunday Times of Zambia*, 19-06-1983, *Next OAU summit to be special*.

<sup>83</sup> Na expressão do mais influente jornal zambiano, “well behaved”. *Sunday Times of Zambia*, 29-05-1983, *As Africa sings Happy Birthday*.

<sup>84</sup> *Le Soleil* (Dakar), 09-06-1983, Ibrahimia Gaye, *L'O.U.A. sauvée*.

<sup>85</sup> *Le Soleil* (Dakar), 10-06-1983, *Négociations directes demandent les Sharaouis*.

<sup>86</sup> Do total de reconhecimentos da R.A.S.D. como estado, dois terços foram declarados entre 1987-83 e o terço restante entre 1984-2011.

<sup>87</sup> Só os “amigos” do Makhzen, como o presidente Mitterrand durante a sua visita a Rabat em janeiro desse ano, continuavam a referir-se ao referendo de “auto-determinação”, sem mencionar a “independência”, e dando-lhe um caráter probatório (Bontems, 1984: 208).

<sup>88</sup> Segundo Seleh Bobik, o ministro dos negócios estrangeiros da R.A.S.D., as negociações secretas teriam começado em 1980 e sido interrompidas depois. *Expresso*, 16-05-1981, *Carlos Gil na R.A.S.D.*

<sup>89</sup> A forma como a Polisário utilizou essa favorável correlação de forças no terreno para compensar outros campos pode verificar-se, por exemplo, através das operações militares desencadeadas imediatamente antes de Trípoli 1. El Moudjahid, 26-07-1982, *R.A.S.D. L'ALPS frappe à l'intérieur du «Triangle utile»; 27-07-1982, Operation ALPS pres de Smara Haouza (territoires libérés); 28-07-1982, Nouvelles attaques des combattants sahraouis; 31-07-1982, Nouvelle attaque contre les forces monarchistes*.



Nações Unidas”. Previa-se também uma força de interposição no território<sup>90</sup>. A resolução correspondia apenas a um pequeno avanço na resolução do conflito mas não ia muito além de Nairobi.

Para Marrocos, o balanço de Adis-Abeba continha uma derrota difícil de engolir – a O.U.A. reconhecia a R.A.S.D. como parte interessada<sup>91</sup> – mas era menos mau do que parecia. A curto prazo e para uso doméstico, o Makhzen ainda podia argumentar que conseguira a exclusão da R.A.S.D. na cimeira (“a reposição da legalidade”). Depois, porque uma vez que a resolução continuava compatível com o seu controlo do Saara útil (para isso o cessar-fogo era fundamental), Rabat poderia sempre escolher o momento e as condições do referendo. Neste quadro, as discrepâncias entre as declarações internacionais e para uso doméstico não tardaram. No intervalo de algumas semanas os dirigentes marroquinos diriam, por exemplo:

- sobre as “negociações diretas” – que «son pays refusait toujours toute négociation directe avec le Front Polisario» (ministro N.E. Mohammed Boucetta, durante a cimeira); “une volonté de passer par tous les chemins qui mènent au référendum” (Boucetta, depois da resolução)<sup>92</sup>;
- sobre o referendo: «Le Maroc est tout à fait disposé ce qui a été décidé à Nairobi et rejette tout changement dans les résolutions du 18eme somme» (Boucetta, antes da cimeira); “Nada obrigaria Marrocos entregar o território do Sahara em bandeja de prata a bando de mercenários.” (Hassan II em discurso de aniversário, três meses depois da cimeira)<sup>93</sup>;
- sobre o prazo de seis meses para o referendo: seria feito “dés que possible” (Boucetta, durante a cimeira de Adis-Abeba) mas “ce délai qui a été fixé nous convient” (Boucetta, depois da cimeira, ainda em Adis-Abeba)<sup>94</sup>.

## 5. Portugal e o Saara (1976-1983): alguma mercadoria por debaixo da bandeira

Uma explicação das posições portuguesas relativamente ao conflito do Saara durante o período 1976-83 não pode dissociar-se da enumeração dos seus interesses diretos na região.

Antes do euro, o capital português, como o dos restantes países N.P.I., tinha um grau baixo de internacionalização. O investimento externo português apresentava “valores irrelevantes”, especialmente para África e apesar dos fluxos para as ex-colónias. O mesmo se passava com o movimento comercial com os novos estados africanos, nitidamente em queda até 1990<sup>95</sup>. Relativamente à região Maghreb/Sahel, apenas com Marrocos se verificava uma tendência ascendente<sup>96</sup> devido a dois fatores: o crescimento marroquino, que entre 1973-77 registou uma taxa média de 7,3 % ao ano (Vermeren, 2006: 63-64), e as pescas.

<sup>90</sup> A resolução fora redigida pelas delegações da Etiópia, Mauritânia e Senegal. AHD-MNE, PAA 86, 01-03-1983, Embaixada de Marrocos em Argel, 14-06-1983.

<sup>91</sup> A imprensa e os partidos marroquinos reagiram sobretudo a este ponto. AHD-MNE, PAA 86, Embaixada de Marrocos em Rabat, 16-06-1983.

<sup>92</sup> *Le Soleil* (Dakar), 10-06-1983, Boucetta: *Nous sommes prêts à organiser un référendum*; 13-06-1983, *Le Maroc n'exclut pas des négociations directes avec le Polisario*.

<sup>93</sup> *Le Soleil* (Dakar), 06-06-1983; *M'Hamed Boucetta: Le Maroc disposé à appliquer les résolutions de Nairobi*; AHD-MNE, PAA 86, Embaixada de Marrocos em Rabat, 29-09-1983.

<sup>94</sup> *Le Soleil* (Dakar), 10-06-1983, Boucetta: *Nous sommes prêts à organiser un référendum*; 13-06-1983, *Le Maroc n'exclut pas des négociations directes avec le Polisario*.

<sup>95</sup> Em 1990, o investimento português no total da África sub-saariana, por exemplo, era de cerca de 1,2 milhões de contos, i.e., o equivalente nominal de 6 milhões de euros. Nesse ano, as exportações portuguesas para a região correspondiam a 3,5 % do valor exportado (tinha sido de 10 % em 1975). (ICEP, 1992: 12).

<sup>96</sup> Em 1977, cerca de 42 % das exportações portuguesas para os 5 países do norte de África destinavam-se a Marrocos. Suplemento Expresso, 03/06/1978. Fonte: I.N.E.

Até 1975, o crescimento de Marrocos deveu-se às cotações do fosfato e de outros minerais. Enquanto pôde endividar-se, o Makhzen entrou numa “opção industrializante” que garantiu encomendas e internacionalização a firmas portuguesas, especialmente de equipamentos e obras públicas. Em 1976, a empresa “Construções Técnicas” (Lisboa) começaria a construir uma cimenteira em Oujda com capacidade de produção de 1 milhão de toneladas ano<sup>97</sup>; no ano seguinte, a SONAFI – Sociedade Nacional de Fundação Injectada (Matosinhos) – já estava, em regime de sociedade mista, a montar em Marrocos uma unidade de produção de ferragens para a construção local, prevendo-se um volume inicial de negócios de 800 mil contos<sup>98</sup>.

Atrás destas oportunidades e de “outros concursos”, uma missão “chefiada pelo secretário de Estado do Comércio Externo, António Celeste, e integrando representantes dos sectores privado e público” deslocou-se a Rabat<sup>99</sup> para assinar um acordo comercial<sup>100</sup> e outro de cooperação técnica. Entretanto tinha sido criada a Associação de Amizade Portugal-Marrocos que em menos de um ano já era creditada com “a implantação de unidades industriais portuguesas em Marrocos, bem como a constituição de sociedades mistas em sectores como o da pesca ou da actividade de importação e exportação”<sup>101</sup>. Como se verá, a descrição talvez fosse exagerada.

Os anos recessivos que se seguiram (em Marrocos, os “anos de chumbo”) diminuíram consideravelmente os fluxos de mercadorias e capitais mas não a dependência portuguesa num setor tradicional: o das pescas.

### 5.1. Políticas de pesca a pensar no deserto

Em Portugal, a pesca garantia em 1981 cerca de trinta mil postos de trabalho e um produto da ordem dos 10,7 milhões de contos (Arroteia, 1985: 85-86), isto é, cerca de 1,2 % do PIB. Uma parte significativa desta atividade dependia de concessões em águas territoriais de outros países, do Canadá à Guiné-Bissau.

Nos bancos do noroeste africano, a pesca industrial (“arrasto do alto”) estava em declínio mas era cada vez mais substituída pela chamada “pesca artesanal longínqua”: entre 100 a 200 embarcações ocupando cerca de 3 mil pescadores e produzindo talvez mais de 10 % do valor anual do pescado<sup>102</sup>. Os pesqueiros marroquinos eram os mais frequentados e o quadro legal deste tipo de pesca parecia ter estabilizado com a assinatura do acordo de pescas com Marrocos, em março de 1976<sup>103</sup>. Não seria assim porque a partir de 1978 Rabat começou a utilizar os acordos de pesca como uma ferramenta de política colonial.

Os pescadores espanhóis foram os primeiros a ser envolvidos. Em fevereiro desse ano o parlamento espanhol, após “acalorado debate”, tinha aprovado também o seu acordo de pesca com Marrocos no qual Rabat *incluía* as águas territoriais do Saara Ocidental<sup>104</sup>. Em maio a Polisário, “cansada de emitir avisos que não são obedecidos”, noticiava o julgamento de oito pescadores espanhóis capturados cerca de um mês antes nas águas do

<sup>97</sup> *Expresso*, 15-05-1976, *Empresa portuguesa constrói em Marrocos*, p. 10.

<sup>98</sup> Isto é, aproximadamente equivalente a 60 % do investimento total português para a África subsariana em 1990. *Expresso*, 28-01-1978, *Empresa de fundição vai exportar tecnologia para Marrocos*, p. 12.

<sup>99</sup> *Expresso*, 28-01-1977, *Missão em Marrocos para comércio e cooperação*, p. 10.

<sup>100</sup> Decreto n.º 64/78, promulgado a 21/6/1978.

<sup>101</sup> Revista *Expresso*, 22-07-1978, “*Sagres*” em Casablanca, *uma presença simbólica*, p. 7.

<sup>102</sup> *Diário da Assembleia da República*, 23-05-1979, 1.ª série, I Legislatura, n.º 63, p. 2228, José Victorino (PSD). Neste tipo de pesca, só os portos do Algarve eram responsáveis por trinta embarcações e cerca de mil pescadores, produzindo um valor de 0,5 milhão de contos. *Diário da Assembleia da República*, 15-06-1979, 1.ª série, I Legislatura n.º 74, pp. 2694-2695, Pedro Coelho (PS).

<sup>103</sup> Decreto n.º 75/77. Acordo em Matéria de Pesca Marítima entre o Governo da República Portuguesa e o Governo do Reino de Marrocos, promulgado em 18/04/1977.

<sup>104</sup> *Expresso*, 08-02-1976, *Acordo hispano-marroquino ratificado em Madrid*, p. 6.

Saara: a guerra não era contra os pescadores, mas “os prisionados estavam a levar a cabo actos de roubo e pilhagem das riquezas marinhas”<sup>105</sup>. Quando uma delegação do governo espanhol, para minimizar riscos em função da nova situação no terreno, se encontrou em Tinduf com a Polisário, Rabat advertiu a Espanha contra “sérias consequências”. Um mês depois, sete tripulantes espanhóis da traineira “Cruz-del-Mar” seriam assassinados por agentes marroquinos. A Polisário explicou: “Recebemos informações de que Marrocos preparava uma série de acções para sabotar as relações entre a Espanha e o Saará Ocidental; esta é a primeira.”<sup>106</sup>

Para Portugal, os problemas da pesca nos bancos africanos começaram na concessão mauritana, considerada demasiado cara pelo governo português e em risco de não ser renovada em Nouakchott<sup>107</sup>. Mais a norte, os riscos para os pescadores portugueses eram semelhantes aos dos espanhóis. O acordo de pescas com Marrocos não tinha cláusulas geográficas pelo que as embarcações portuguesas violavam frequentemente as águas saarianas. Além disso, as expectativas da Polisário de que um governo do PS em Portugal pudesse ter uma política diferente do espanhol depressa se viram frustradas<sup>108</sup>.

Antecipando que, mais tarde ou mais cedo, a Polisário abriria uma representação em Lisboa e conhecendo a dependência dos pescadores portugueses relativamente às suas águas, Marrocos começou a sua coacção pesqueira. O acordo de pescas de 1976 tinha previsto a criação de sociedades de capital misto<sup>109</sup> mas até então e mesmo sem elas, “Portugal vinha aí pescando sem problemas de maior”: as licenças eram passadas pelo Ministério dos Transportes marroquino mediante a “entrega de uma percentagem do produto líquido da pesca”. Em 1979, o governo de Marrocos alargou a sua área exclusiva para as 200 milhas marítimas (tal como o de Portugal, aliás) mas passou a condicionar a pesca à constituição das empresas mistas. Na ausência de resposta do ministério em Lisboa, os armadores portugueses enviaram um advogado a Rabat para tratar do assunto.

A partir de aí a incerteza seria grande<sup>110</sup>.

Embora nenhuma empresa mista tenha sido criada entre 1976 e 1979, o “esfriamento de relações” luso-marroquinos tinha outras variáveis. Em janeiro de 1979, uma delegação parlamentar portuguesa visitara Marrocos sem se ter pronunciado sobre a questão saariana – “apesar da importância excepcional que lhe foi atribuída pelos órgãos de Informação e meios políticos locais e para “mal disfarçada frustração dos que, em Rabat, esperavam colher frutos deste encontro”<sup>111</sup>.

O problema para Rabat é que nas pescas, como no resto, a sua capacidade de pressão estava em queda. A Polisário tinha-lhe retirado grande parte do controlo do litoral saariano e portanto era mais provável serem os seus efetivos a fiscalizar os arrastões ibéricos

<sup>105</sup> *Expresso*, 27-05-1978, *Pescadores espanhóis julgados pela Polisário*, p. 8.

<sup>106</sup> *Expresso*, 30-09-1978, *Reação marroquina à aproximação da Espanha à Frente Polisário*, p. 7. *Expresso*, 07-12-1978, *Incidente hispano-saaraui F. Polisário denuncia “provocação” marroquina*, p. 11.

<sup>107</sup> Um acordo de pesca tinha também sido assinado entre o governo português e a Mauritânia em 1976, Menos de um ano depois, segundo um relatório do Ministério das Finanças, em 1976, os custos (licenças, multas, participação em empresa mista e tripulações mauritanas) passavam dos 150 000 contos contra “um valor de pescado que se desconhece, mas dificilmente terá ultrapassado 500 a 600 mil contos”. *Expresso*, 25-03-1977, *Pesca na Mauritânia acelera demissão de P. Coelho*, p. 1. As licenças mauritanas expiravam em junho de 1980. Diário da Assembleia da República, 27-07-1980, II série, I Legislatura, n.º 38, pp. 473-474, Requerimento de Carlos Espadinha (PCP).

<sup>108</sup> Sobre a política do governo PS, ver ponto 4.2. A recente captura de três pescadores espanhóis, que operavam em águas territoriais saaraui, pelos guerrilheiros polisários deve – segundo os dirigentes da Frente – ser interpretada como um “aviso”. E não só pela Espanha. A bom entendedor...” *Expresso*, 11-03-1978, A. Martim Lopes, No 2.º aniversário da proclamação da R.A.S.D. o povo saaraui apenas quer ser independente, p. 8.

<sup>109</sup> As “sociedades de capitais mistos” teriam benefícios fiscais (clausula VI). Decreto n.º 75/77.

<sup>110</sup> *Diário da Assembleia da República*, 23-05-1979, I série, I Legislatura, n.º 63, p. 2228, José Victorino (PSD).

<sup>111</sup> *Expresso*, 20-01-1979, Vicente Jorge Silva, *Parlamentares portugueses de “mãos vazias” em Marrocos*, p. 3. Pela mesma razão, e contra o que certa imprensa antecipava para “ainda antes do próximo Verão”, o Parlamento marroquino não ratificou a abolição dos vistos aos visitantes portugueses. *Expresso*, 21-04-1979, *Abolição de vistos entre Portugal e Marrocos*, p. 13.

do que as desgastadas forças armadas marroquinas. No verão de 1980, as tripulações de várias embarcações de pesca portuguesas e espanholas seriam apresadas pela... marinha da Polisário. O caso mais célebre, pelo longo tempo de captura e também pelo impacto político que teve, seria o do arrastão “Rio Vouga”. A 21 de julho, a entrega dos pescadores foi acompanhada de uma declaração conjunta na qual o governo português exprimia o seu “apoio ao direito do Povo Sarauí à autodeterminação, à independência, à soberania e à integridade territorial do seu país sob a direção do seu único e legítimo representante, a Frente Polisário.”<sup>112</sup>

Embora o governo de Lisboa, sob pressão marroquina, tivesse logo a seguir minimizado o comunicado e negado ter reconhecido a R.A.S.D., a posição portuguesa *estava diferente*. Antes de mais, contrastava com a de Madrid<sup>113</sup>. Além disso, nos apresamentos seguintes de tripulações que pescavam em águas saarianas, a Polisário não deixaria de enfatizar que diferenciava o tratamento dado às portuguesas das espanholas<sup>114</sup>. Um diplomata da R.A.S.D., comentando a recente abstenção portuguesa em mais uma votação na ONU, mostrava como o acordo de 21 de julho servia os interesses saarauis:

*“não consideramos que o facto de Portugal se ter abstido seja um desrespeito aos acordos assinados anteriormente. A exploração do voto, dada pela delegação portuguesa, satisfaz-nos, já que se baseava num princípio de coerência em não votar igualmente a favor da resolução marroquina. Naturalmente, teríamos preferido um voto afirmativo, mas compreendemos, sem grande esforço, a atitude do Governo português.”*<sup>115</sup>

O ministro dos negócios estrangeiros Selek Bobih explicaria melhor o significado do “acordo” de 21 de julho: “Portugal é o único país europeu do bloco ocidental que reconhece a sua luta e evidentemente os seus direitos sobre as águas territoriais do Saara Ocidental”<sup>116</sup>. A “neutralidade” de Lisboa dava para tudo, sobretudo porque publicamente primava pela indefinição<sup>117</sup>. Para os pescadores, o facto de não haver contencioso Portugal-Polisário expunha-os, como já tinha acontecido aos espanhóis, às represálias do governo marroquino<sup>118</sup>. No entanto, ao contrário do que tinha feito o governo de Madrid em idênticas circunstâncias, não haveria protestos públicos do governo português sobre essa ou outras ilegalidades marroquinas, que incluíam a venda de licenças de pesca por privados<sup>119</sup>. Contudo, havia alterações em curso. Ainda em 1981, o governo português começaria a implementar as “empresas mistas” com Marrocos, previstas pelo acordo de pescas de 1976;

<sup>112</sup> Para uma perspetiva mais detalhada do caso “Rio Vouga”, ver o artigo de Jorge Ribeiro desta publicação, pp. 205-209.

<sup>113</sup> Na sequência do apresamento da tripulação do “Gormonar, desde 21 de maio, o governo espanhol não só se recusava a fazer o mesmo que Portugal como tinha levado a questão à Comissão de Direitos Humanos da ONU. Le Monde, 04-10-1980, *Quinze pêcheurs portugais ont été capturés par le Polisario*.

<sup>114</sup> Por exemplo, no seguimento do caso do arrastão “Denebe” (provavelmente apresado por a Polisário pensar tratar-se de uma embarcação espanhola), enquanto o Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros português “anunciava que a libertação dos 15 pescadores tinha sido incondicional, a Frente Polisário em afirmações a agências estrangeiras referia que a libertação se processara nos termos do acordo firmado em 21 de Julho aquando a libertação dos pescadores do Rio Vouga. *Expresso*, 11-10-1980, *Pescadores libertados pela Polisário chegaram ontem a Lisboa*, p. 2.

<sup>115</sup> *Expresso*, 15-12-1980, *Representante da Frente Polisário a Expresso*, p. 11.

<sup>116</sup> *Expresso*, 16-05-1981, *Carlos Gil na R.A.S.D.*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>117</sup> Como diria um deputado da oposição: “Concluem-se acordos de duvidoso interesse com a Espanha em escassos dias, mas não se alcançam quaisquer resultados satisfatórios em meses e anos com Marrocos e a Mauritânia, nem se chega a um *modus vivendi* com a Frente Polisário” *Diário da Assembleia da República*, 17-10-1981, I série, II Legislatura, n.º 2, pp. 49-51, Victor Brás (PS).

<sup>118</sup> Uma semana depois da entrevista de B. Mahmoud, era notícia a libertação da tripulação do “Santa Luísa” pelo governo marroquino após um cativeiro de 50 dias e a multa de 3500 contos. *Expresso*, 12-12-1980, *Marrocos vinga-se de acordo com a Polisário*, p. 2.

<sup>119</sup> Um deputado da oposição denunciou no parlamento a “actividade ilícita de algumas pessoas influentes em Portugal, na Mauritânia e em Marrocos que exploram os nossos pescadores artesanais, fazendo com que lhes sejam entregues quantias avultadas”. Um outro deputado apresentou documentos de licenças “cujo custo seria de 6000 a 7000 contos.” *Diário da Assembleia da República*, 11-11-1981, I série, II Legislatura, n.º 12, p. 358, Luís Saias (PS); Carlos Espadinha (PCP), p. 359.

em Setembro já havia seis “em fase de arranque”<sup>120</sup>. Dois anos e alguns meses depois, à medida que o exército marroquino consolidava posições no litoral saariano, a “neutralidade” portuguesa chegava mais longe, isto é, mais a sul. Em junho de 1984, um deputado da oposição pedia esclarecimentos ao governo sobre

“a autorização eventualmente dada pelas autoridades portuguesas no sentido de soldados marroquinos montarem o sistema de segurança e serem possivelmente transportados a bordo de barcos de pesca portugueses ou pertencentes a sociedades mistas luso-marroquinas”.

O requerimento perguntava ainda se dos acertos entretanto feitos (visita recente do MNE a Marrocos) “os acordos de pesca revestem ou não um sentido hostil em relação à Frente Polisário”. Sabe-se que tinha havido “recusa de alguns armadores portugueses em admitirem a bordo homens armados, eventualmente membros das forças armadas marroquinas.”<sup>121</sup>.

Não houve resposta governamental no parlamento<sup>122</sup>. Como habitualmente, a diplomacia portuguesa tinha-se realinhado rapidamente com a evolução no terreno mas não só.

## 5.2. A Líbia ao ataque da Madeira e dos Açores?

A orientação da política portuguesa para corrigir a guinada imposta pela Polisário no verão de 1980 fez-se gradual mas precocemente, aqui e ali acelerada pela pressão dos seus aliados NATO e por incidentes. Um dos mais significativos – porque tendo começado cedo foi sobretudo empolado depois – foi a campanha de imprensa à volta da eventual independência dos arquipélagos atlânticos (portugueses e espanhóis).

Um indicador da precocidade: em julho de 1978, o presidente Giscard d’Estaing visitou Lisboa com o objetivo de justificar a política francesa em África, de pedir a intermediação do governo português nas relações franco-angolanas (a Elf estava em dificuldades nas negociações petrolíferas com Luanda)<sup>123</sup> e de reafirmar com a posição do Governo português relativamente aos... Açores<sup>124</sup>.

Como tinha chegado o “perigo” aos Açores? Em fevereiro desse ano Khadafi tinha exigido na ONU a liberdade das “nossas ilhas africanas que foram ocupadas pela Grã-Bretanha, Espanha e Portugal”. A única ilha “africana” que verdadeiramente poderia interessar o governo líbio era certamente a vizinha Malta<sup>125</sup> mas a provocação iria ser aproveitada na questão saariana. Em maio, a imprensa portuguesa fez-se também eco das declarações no mesmo sentido de Bouteflika, ministro argelino dos negócios estrangeiros, sobre as Canárias. Argélia e a Líbia estariam então a financiar grupos separatistas (a FLM da Madeira, o MPAIAC das Canárias e mesmo a FLA dos Açores). Dito de outro modo, para os *opinion-makers*

<sup>120</sup> Na agenda da deslocação a Marrocos do secretário das pescas, Gonçalves Viana, estava “o enquadramento legal das empresas mistas de pesca luso-marroquinas” e “a cooperação nos domínios da investigação e formação profissional”. *Expresso*, 05-09-1981, *Conversações com Marrocos sobre pescas*, p. 4.

<sup>121</sup> *Diário da Assembleia da República*, 27-07-1984, I série, III Legislatura, n.º 145, p. 6290, Hasse Ferreira (PS).

<sup>122</sup> Um memorando da Direção Geral das Pescas “esclareceu” que, sendo as embarcações de pesca propriedades de empresas mistas (isto é, luso-marroquinas), as autoridades portuguesas não tinham “competência para se pronunciarem sobre a presença ou não de soldados marroquinos a bordo.” *Diário da Assembleia da República*, I série, 28/9/1984, III Legislatura, n.º 163 S 1, p. 80.

<sup>123</sup> Em 1981, a Elf começou a extrair petróleo de uma concessão na qual detinha 50 %, tendo a Mobil, a AGIP e duas companhias jugoslavas como sócios. *The New York Times*, 04-09-1981, *Elf Oil Find Off Angola*.

<sup>124</sup> *Expresso*, 15-07-1978, *Mercado Comum (e emigrantes), África e Açores – pontos quase certos de uma agenda mantida em segredo*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>125</sup> O governo de Malta pretendia garantias para o seu estatuto de neutralidade e a Líbia tinha financiado o governo de Dom Mintoff para consolidar a sua posição negocial quando das negociações com a Grã-Bretanha, que levaram ao encerramento da base naval britânica em 1979. *The Times of Malta*, *Gadaffi’s Relationship with Malta*, 20-10-2011.



lusos a ligação entre a ameaça líbio-argelina e o apoio português a Marrocos estava feita, o que permitiria transformá-la em política nacional.<sup>126</sup>

Assim se explicaria o apoio de Mário Soares e da “Internacional Socialista” ao governo do Senegal, onde estacionavam as forças francesas que davam apoio à Mauritânia contra a Polisário. Do mesmo modo na visita oficial feita a Marrocos imediatamente a seguir, era natural que “o primeiro-ministro português e as autoridades marroquinas tenham abordado o problema da Frente Polisário, *conjugando-o com a ofensiva do Movimento de Independência das Canárias* que aquela Frente guerrilheira apoia, e bem assim com as recentes declarações de Kadhafi e Bouteflika em relação aos Açores”.<sup>127</sup>

Nos anos seguintes, certos editoriais continuavam taxativos:

*“Com efeito, a Argélia tem vindo a sustentar a causa separatista no arquipélago vizinho das Canárias no âmbito de uma estratégia que passa também pelo apoio à Frente Polisário. No que diz respeito à Madeira e aos Açores – em que a soberania portuguesa tem sido contestada pela Líbia e mais veladamente pela Argélia – o nosso país estará em condições de exigir que, pelo menos, os equívocos, e as ambiguidades sejam desfeitos, não se limitando a ser um mero espectador passivo da questão do Sahara.”*<sup>128</sup>

A possível “independência” das ilhas, um verdadeiro *fait divers* na geopolítica que realmente contava, não foi seguramente um fator explicativo para a política portuguesa relativamente ao Sahara. Contudo, o eco que encontrou nos meios governamentais portugueses e na imprensa dominante é seguramente um sintoma das mudanças em curso.

## Conclusões

Na guerra do Saara a Frente Polisário recuperou posições no terreno militar entre 1976 e 1980. Depois disso, a ajuda externa recebida por Marrocos retirou-lhe parte da iniciativa militar. Mas com o desfazamento que geralmente ocorre entre guerra e diplomacia, o seu estatuto internacional melhorou entre as cimeiras de Nairobi (1981) e de Adis-Abeba (1983). Depois desta última, contudo, uma diplomacia atenta como a portuguesa podia detetar que o tempo corria agora favoravelmente para o governo marroquino.

O governo português manteve ao longo destes anos a posição de “neutralidade” oficial. Mas o MNE português conhecia vários tipos de neutralidade. O que determinou realmente a política portuguesa durante esta primeira década do conflito do Saara?

Aparentemente (isto é, ideologicamente) nada impediria um posicionamento favorável à Polisário. A III República Portuguesa saíra de uma guerra colonial e tinha transformado uma descolonização falhada, a de Timor-Leste, em uma questão de regime. Por outro lado, a reaproximação de qualquer governo português aos PALOP's, nunca poderia ser prejudicada por uma política pró-R.A.S.D., estado que todas as antigas colónias africanas de Portugal tinham reconhecido. O resultado das observações dos postos diplomáticos

<sup>126</sup> Para maior plausibilidade, fazia-se igualmente associação com a política soviética... de 1961. Curiosamente, as reações “patrióticas” dos partidos parlamentares de todos os quadrantes foram no sentido previsto pela campanha, tanto em Portugal como em Espanha. Revista *Expresso*, 27-05-1978, *Desde a URSS à Argélia passando pela FLA*, p. 2.

<sup>127</sup> *Expresso*, 20-05-1978, *Soares e Senghor em ofensiva africana*, p. 9 (itálico não original).

<sup>128</sup> *Expresso*, 20-01-1979, Vicente Jorge Silva, *Parlamentares portugueses de “mãos vazias” em Marrocos*, p. 3. Seria interessante acompanhar o movimento de basculação pró-Marrocos da classe política portuguesa. Em 1982, na Madeira, a reviravolta parecia estar completa no principal partido da oposição regional: “Portugal e os países da NATO podem e devem contribuir para a estabilização e evolução democrática do regime marroquino, ao qual devem ser facilitados meios que garantam a sua defesa no contexto estratégico em que está inserido”, dizia o deputado Bernardino Gomes do PS. *Expresso*, 06-09-1980, *Marrocos, Sahara Ocidental, Portugal e a NATO*, p. 10.

do MNE e o interesse com que seguiam as cimeiras africanas não deixam dúvidas sobre isso<sup>129</sup>.

Mais ocultos e em sentido contrário, havia nestes anos *poucos* interesses portugueses associados a Marrocos. Em 1990, o investimento português em Marrocos, para além de inferior a meio milhão de euros, concentrava-se ainda (96 %) no setor pesqueiro, isto é, nas “sociedades mistas do acordo de pescas de 1976 (ICEP, 1991: 55). O contraste com a situação atual é grande:

**Quadro 01** – Investimento Direto de Portugal no Exterior

Anos	Capital português em Marrocos (milhões de euros)	% no total do capital exportado
1987	0,49 (a)	1,7
2017	110,25	0,2

Conversão escudo-euro à taxa nominal de 1999.

Fonte: Banco de Portugal, Posições em fim de período.

Note-se que, mesmo baixando percentualmente, os valores absolutos do investimento português em Marrocos, são hoje 200 vezes superiores aos dos anos 1980. Atualmente seria impossível explicar as “políticas marroquinas de Portugal” sem identificar os interesses, privados e públicos, operando fluxos de capital na ordem das centenas de milhões de euros, que as orientam. Trinta anos antes, a capacidade lobbyística dos investidores portugueses ou dos exportadores de bens e serviços para Marrocos seria necessariamente muito menor. Abstraindo dos interesses nas pescas, associados a pequenos e médios capitais que se poderiam articular com muitas políticas bilaterais e que portanto não comportam efeitos determinísticos, o que resta como fatores explicativos de uma “neutralidade” à portuguesa entre 1976 e 1983? Apenas os imperativos internacionais de Lisboa (integração NATO, candidatura CEE) bem como as articulações bilaterais com os seus aliados tradicionais (Estados Unidos, França, Espanha). Foram estes vetores a empurrar tendencialmente o MNE português para a sua particular interpretação do “neutralismo oficial”. Pode acrescentar-se que foi um neutralismo com tradições na diplomacia portuguesa, suportando bem o paralelismo com o do Estado Novo nos anos 1940: ativo, atento e alinhado. Enfim, um neutralismo rentabilizado em outras latitudes.

## Fontes

### Documentos de Arquivo

Arquivo Histórico Diplomático – Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros.

AHD-MNE, PAA, 86.

AHD-MNE, PAA, 94.

<sup>129</sup> O governo português fez esforços consideráveis por enviar um observador à cimeira de Adis-Abeba, em 1983. O enviado seria o Dr. Zanatti Rodrigues, então colocado na Embaixada em Tunes que não chegaria a ir porque entretanto a O.U.A. resolveu não aceitar a participação de observadores de países europeus. AHD-MNE, PAA, 94 Embaixada de Portugal em Tunes, despachos e ofícios (julho e agosto de 1982).

## Periódicos

Diário da Assembleia da República.

Jornal “Expresso”.

## Referências bibliográficas

- Arroteia, Jorge Carvalho (1985), *Portugal: perfil geográfico e social*, Lisboa: Livros Horizonte.
- Boccara, Paul (1976), *O capitalismo monopolista de Estado. Tratado marxista de economia política*, Lisboa: Seara Nova.
- Bontems, Claude (1984), *La guerre du Sahara occidental*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Clark, William (2006), *Petrodollar Warfare. Oil, Iraq and Future of the Dollar*, Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers.
- Comité de Relações Exteriores da Frente Polisário (1979), *Sahara Ocidental A luta do povo saharauí*, Lisboa.
- Foucher, Michel, *Frontières d'Afrique Pour en finir avec un mythe*, Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- Frente Polisário; Comité Português de Apoio à Frente Polisário (1991), *R.A.S.D. uma realidade irreversível*, Lisboa: Silvas.
- ICEP (1992), *Anuário Portugal África*, Lisboa.
- (1991), *Um país, um mercado Marrocos*. Lisboa.
- Marbeau, Victor (1965), *Les Mines de fer de Mauritanie M. I. F. E. R. M. A. Annales de Géographie*, t. 74, n.º 402, pp. 175-193. Disponível em: [https://www.persee.fr/doc/geo\\_0003-4010\\_1965\\_num\\_74\\_402\\_16811](https://www.persee.fr/doc/geo_0003-4010_1965_num_74_402_16811).
- Messoudi, Yaounes (2016), *Le Maroc et la Mossad Une si longue relation*, *Zamane*, n.º 66, pp. 34-37.
- Mihailovitch, Lioubomir; Pluchart, Jean-Jacques (1985), *L'O.P.E.P.*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Pimenta Carlos, Silva, Herminia Pereira (2011), *Contributos para o estudo da economia rendeira e extroversão em África*, Porto: CEAUP WP/ # CEAUP/01.
- Servan-Schreiber, Jean-Jacques (1981), *El Desafío Mundial*, Barcelona: Plaza y Janes, S.A.
- Stoffaës, Christian (1991), *A crise da economia mundial*, Lisboa: Publicações Dom Quixote.
- Tcheprakov, Victor (1969), *Le capitalisme monopoliste d'Etat*, Moscou: Editions du Progrès.
- Vermeren, Pierre (2006), *Histoire du Maroc depuis l'indépendance*, Paris: La Découverte.
- (2002) *Marruecos en Transición*, Granada: Almed.

# O longo sequestro de pescadores portugueses em 1980 – Lisboa negoceia de má-fé e engana a Frente Polisário

Jorge Ribeiro\*

pp. 205-209

## Introdução

No dia 4 de junho de 1980, a Frente Polisário capturou no mar da costa do Saara o barco português Rio Vouga, registado na praça de Matosinhos. A sua tripulação – quinze homens – foi trazida para terra e conduzida para uma base já no interior do deserto. Os assaltantes pretendiam, antes de tudo, um impacto mediático da ação sobre a recém-criada República Árabe Sarauí Democrática – RASD. O país dos sequestrados, Portugal, era assim pressionado a declarar apoio à independência do povo sarauí, ao reconhecimento da Frente Polisário, e à condenação de Marrocos que ocupava militarmente este país.

Quando as reivindicações da Polisário fossem satisfeitas, os pescadores portugueses seriam libertados. O que veio a acontecer, mas apenas ao cabo de 51 dias de doloroso cativeiro, o tempo que o governo de Lisboa precisou para executar um plano ardiloso, negociado de má-fé, em que prometeu aceitar as condições dos árabes. Estes cumpriram a sua parte: libertaram todos os homens. Na sequência, o governo de Lisboa rasgou os documentos assinados com a Polisário, num exercício em que a ética política esteve ausente.

Este caso, pela sua violência e complexidade, trouxe a angústia das comunidades piscatórias de Matosinhos, Vila do Conde e Póvoa de Varzim, e aumentou, cada dia passado, a aflição das famílias dos pescadores presos. O “Jornal de Notícias”, do Porto, dedicou ao acontecimento a atenção e o cuidado que sempre lhe mereceram as notícias dos pescadores: as boas – como fainas excecionais –, e as más – como os funestos naufrágios. É o trabalho de cobertura cronológica desse drama, por este jornal diário, que a seguir se colige.

## Calendário da história durante o cativeiro<sup>1</sup>

A primeira notícia sai publicada no dia 10 de junho: «*Atuneiro português encalhou no Cabo Branco*», título da secção Nacional a 3 colunas na p. 4.

O assunto volta à estampa só no dia 12 por motivos do feriado do Dez de Junho, e já traz mais dados. Na 1.ª página lê-se: «*Quinze pescadores portugueses reféns da Frente Polisário – “Rio Vouga” encalhado na costa do Sara*». E remete para a p. 8, com continuação

\* CEAUP.

<sup>1</sup> Todos os títulos, citações e excertos de texto assinalados foram extraídos das edições do Jornal de Notícias publicadas nas datas indicadas do ano de 1980.

na p. 20: «O Rio Vouga é um barco de madeira de 75 toneladas / Empresa proprietária é a MAURICOOP – Sociedade Cooperativa de Pesca na Mauritânia / Os seus dirigentes vão ser recebidos pelo Secretário de Estado dos Negócios Estrangeiros / O Governo já contactou as autoridades marroquinas / Maioria da tripulação é de Matosinhos / Arrastão “Menina”, de Vila do Conde, avistou o Rio Vouga e foi a bordo: sem indícios de luta, sem saque, só cédulas da tripulação / No passado dia 22 (maio), ao barco espanhol “Garmo Mar” aconteceu o mesmo aos seus 15 tripulantes, todos levados para a zona de libertação da RASD / Notícia da Rádio Nacional de Espanha revelou que estes assaltos têm a ver com os acordos de pescas que Portugal e Espanha estão a negociar com Marrocos e a Mauritânia, acordos que autorizam ir pescar para as águas da Frente Polisário».

Dia 13, 1.ª p., em baixo: «Tripulantes do Rio Vouga ainda por localizar / Tindouf (a principal comuna e capital da província com o mesmo nome na Argélia) fica a 2.000 km da zona do assalto / Secretário de Estado dos Negócios Estrangeiros, Azevedo Coutinho, pediu intervenção da marinha de Marrocos (p. 6) negando estarem previstos contactos com a Frente Polisário, assim como o recurso à esquerda para mediar quaisquer negociações».

Dia 14, 1.ª p.: «Tripulação do Rio Vouga bem tratada pela Polisário». Na p. 2: PM Sá Carneiro declara que há um país com boas relações com os dois lados. No texto trata os assaltantes por guerrilheiros, e anuncia que Aviões da Força Aérea de Marrocos já sobrevoam a área / O Sindicato Livre dos Pescadores repudia o anúncio do Governo de Lisboa que vai contactar com as autoridades marroquinas para resolver a situação. O único interlocutor é a Frente Polisário, escreve o diário.

15.6, 1.ª p.: Pescadores em poder da Polisário vão passar uns tempos no Saara. Na p. 6 é citado um comunicado do Ministério da Informação da RASD «reiterando de novo os seus avisos a todos os que atentem contra a nossa soberania nacional, desenvolvendo ações que violem as leis do nosso país».

16.6, 1.ª p.: «Tripulação está em lugar seguro – declarou o embaixador de Portugal em Argel».

17.6: «Como vivem | os pescadores | no deserto a 15 horas do mar – estão 40.º à sombra e andam todos vestidos à árabe».

18.6, p. 5: Embaixador |de Portugal | em Argel negocia a libertação | dos portugueses | / PS emite comunicado: é absolutamente inaceitável que o Governo de refugie num total mutismo sobre este caso.

19.6, p. 4: «Embaixador dr. Meneses Cordeiro parte hoje de Argel para Tindouf na fronteira com o antigo Saara Espanhol. E dentro de um caixilho: Secretário de Estado Azevedo Coutinho afirmou não reconhecer a Frente Polisário como Estado.

20.6, p. 4, uma declaração do Embaixador ocupando 5 colunas do jornal: «Parto com a esperança de trazer os nossos homens neste fim- de-semana» (21/22.6).

21.6, p. 4 inteira, com continuados na p. 21, para desenvolver o principal título da capa: «Pescadores do Vouga já hoje em Argel?» No vasto espaço dedicado ao caso, 17 dias após a sua origem, o jornal desloca-se pela primeira vez às localidades de residência dos pescadores e publica imagens das suas mulheres, mães, esposas e filhos que vivem o drama, a tristeza, a ansiedade e as expectativas. O tratamento editorial, como era habitual dedicar a acontecimentos com as mesmas características, inclui mais 5 peças escritas em Leça da Palmeira e na redação do Porto, e publica ainda as fotografias de todos os pescadores detidos no deserto. Ressaltam também declarações obtidas junto do Comité Português de



Apoio à Polisário, segundo as quais «Os pescadores serão libertados a muito curto prazo / Autoridades da RASD não colocam qualquer condição à sua libertação / A única condição já foi atendida | que é | a abertura de negociações diretas com o Governo de Portugal / Embaixador garante que pescadores chegam já hoje a Argel / A Polisário declara | à mesma fonte | que o aprisionamento do pesqueiro não representa qualquer ato deliberado de hostilidade a Portugal». Noutro local do jornal, um pequeno caixilho em separado revela que «A tripulação simpatiza com o Partido Socialista» | O governo em Lisboa tinha por base uma coligação entre a Direita e a Extrema-direita|.

22.6, em contraste com a considerável publicação da véspera, na edição deste dia só na secção DIVERSOS é possível encontrar uma curta referência, de apenas 35 linhas: «Embaixador adia regresso / Cordeiro continua a conferenciar com guerrilheiros / Continua a desconhecer-se que condições pretende a Polisário para libertar os pescadores».

### E vão vinte dias... de frustração e drama

24.6, p. 4, um título a 3 colunas: «Embaixador regressou | do cativo | a Argel sem os pescadores, segundo cita a Agência Associated Press».

26.6, 1.ª p.: o título «Para passar o tempo pescadores jogam cartas e... futebol» remete para a pg.10 onde se lê: «RASD à espera duma definição clara da posição portuguesa», com um caixilho anunciando «Diligencias | do Ministério dos Estrangeiros | continuam», a que se juntam umas fotografias sem qualquer legenda.

27.6, 1.ª p.: o título «As negociações deverão ser retomadas» e, finalmente, a primeira mensagem dos pescadores: «Vejam lá se o Governo nos tira daqui senão ficamos secos». O texto surge na p. 9.

28.6, O jornal publica mensagens dos pescadores para as suas famílias e informa que: «Embaixador | português | continua à espera de instruções de Lisboa».

29.6, 1.ª p.: «Governo foge a negociações diretas com sarauis». «Embaixador Meneses Cordeiro sem instruções».

3.7, 1.ª p.: «Mães e filhas dos pescadores fazem pressão junto do Governo e ouvem evasivas / Primeiro-Ministro Sá Carneiro confrontado à chegada de Paris».

4.7: «Governo não está a negociar a libertação dos pescadores».

5.7, 1.ª p.: «Sá Carneiro: Há um enviado do Governo com credenciais para negociar» / O embaixador de Marrocos em Lisboa acusou a RASD de pirataria».

6.7: «Mulheres dos pescadores rodeiam o Primeiro-Ministro, que está em campanha eleitoral, dizendo que não querem subsídios – querem os seus homens / Sá Carneiro acusa os partidos de Esquerda de traírem a libertação».

9.7: «Presidente da República Ramalho Eanes diz-se disposto a uma declaração favorável à Frente Polisário / E diz ter avião preparado para lá ir buscá-los [aos pescadores]».

10.7: «Governo sofreu revés em Argel: Polisário não aceitou negociar com enviado do PPD/PSD». O enviado foi Luís Fontoura, antigo dirigente do Secretariado Nacional de Informação (SNI) da equipa do ministro Moreira Baptista no último governo da Ditadura em Portugal. Agora em democracia, Fontoura é funcionário do partido do chefe do Governo, Sá Carneiro, que no passado dia 5 garantira levar «credenciais para negociar».

11.7, p. 4: «Luís Fontoura falhou na sua «operação diplomática».

14.7: «Enviado do PSD | Fontoura | volta | a Lisboa | e diz que o Governo não está disposto a reconhecer a RASD».

15.7: «Fontoura esteve 12 dias em Argel e regressou de mãos vazias».

16.7, p. 3, dois títulos: «Se Governo não reconhecer a RASD os pescadores não serão libertados / Embaixador dos EUA na ONU desloca-se a Argel e a Rabat».

17.7, p. 4: Fontoura faz exposição ao Governo.

21.7, p. 4: Fontoura deve ir ao deserto negociar hoje a libertação.

22.7, MNE declara: “Dar mais informações prejudica o processo”.

23.7, 1.ª p.: «Pescadores amanhã no Porto»; p. 4: «É quase certo que os pescadores “hóspedes” da Polisário serão libertados amanhã».

24.7, 1.ª p.: Tripulantes do Vouga a caminho de casa; p. 3: Avião militar vai a Argel para trazer os 15 pescadores. O jornal publica o “comunicado final das conversações” entre o enviado Fontoura e o ministro da RASD, Omar Mansour:

«Nos dias 20 e 21 de julho de 1980 tiveram lugar nas zonas libertadas da República Árabe Sarauí Democrática, negociações entre o sr. Luís Fontoura, representante e enviado especial do governo Português, e o sr. Omar Mansour, membro do Bureau Político da Frente Polisário e representante do Governo Sarauí.

«Depois de ter sido examinada a situação que prevalece no Noroeste Africano:

«A parte portuguesa exprimiu a sua inquietação perante a situação perigosa decorrente da persistência da ocupação militar marroquina dos territórios da RASD.

«A parte portuguesa, à luz dos princípios da carta da ONU e da resolução 1514 de 14 de Dezembro de 1960 relativa à descolonização, exprime o seu apoio ao direito do Povo Sarauí à autodeterminação, à independência, à soberania e à integridade territorial do seu país sob a direção do seu único e legítimo representante, a Frente Polisário.

«As duas partes exprimem a necessidade de abertura de negociações entre os governos marroquino e sarauí, em conformidade com as resoluções da ONU e da OUA, para chegar a uma solução justa e duradoura para esta questão.

«Pelo Governo Português, Luís Fontoura.

«Pelo Governo Sarauí, Omar Mansour».

25.7, 1.ª p.: «Rio Vouga: terminou o cativo de 51 dias / Pescadores chegam hoje (7h) a Lisboa». P. 4: «Governo reconheceu a Frente Polisário».

## Grau zero da diplomacia

26.7, 1.ª p.: «Marrocos pede explicações ao Governo Português / MNE emite Nota: Portugal não reconhece a existência da RASD».

«A Presidência do Conselho de Ministros e o Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros» distribuíram pela Comunicação Social uma Nota «assentando na seguinte linha geral de orientação (excertos):

(...) Não podemos tomar uma posição que poderia ser considerada como um acto de hostilidade de Portugal contra Marrocos – o que não podíamos, obviamente, admitir. (...) Foram estes os termos em que o governo português consentiu negociar com a Frente Polisário (...) Sucede que o comunicado conjunto assinado com vista à libertação dos pescadores excedeu,

em alguns pontos e na forma da sua redacção, a orientação traçada. (...) Nessas condições, o Governo Português apenas se considera vinculado pelas partes do comunicado que correspondem à posição acima referida. (...) O Governo português não reconhece a existência da RASD ou do seu governo.

27.7, 1.ª p.: Título: «Polisário estranha diplomacia portuguesa» (caixilho de chamada com fotografia). Texto: «Omar Mansour (o alto-representante da Polisário que assina o comunicado conjunto de 21 de junho, publicado na edição de 24) declara-se surpreendido com a estranha declaração do vice-Primeiro Ministro Freitas do Amaral» e «compara a diplomacia de Lisboa à diplomacia espanhola». P. 5 (caixilho de 2 colunas): «Política externa posta outra vez em causa / Governo rasga compromissos e mancha imagem de Portugal» – acusa a única reação partidária conhecida. Em comunicado, «O PCP acusa a falta de seriedade do Governo Sá Carneiro / Freitas do Amaral que deram uma imagem do negociador que rasga os compromissos que assumiu no próprio dia em que os assume e obtém os efeitos desejados». O documento acrescenta que «O Governo português é o único responsável pelo protelamento da libertação dos pescadores, denunciando falta de ética política e métodos indignos de que o Governo português deu provas».

Trinta e oito anos após a assinatura do chamado “comunicado inequívoco” de 21 de julho de 1980, as relações entre Portugal e a RASD mantêm-se como estavam antes do assalto ao Rio Vouga: o Governo de Lisboa não reconhece a existência da RASD e aceita a ocupação do território.



Ilustração 01 – Quase dois meses no deserto, os pescadores portugueses regressam a casa (capa do *Jornal de Notícias* de 26 de julho de 1980).



# O dia-a-dia da Polisário há 40 anos pelo primeiro repórter português na RASD

Luís Alberto Ferreira\*

pp. 211-219

Na década de 70 do século passado, já a Polisário, braço armado da tenaz determinação do povo da RASD – rumo à independência nacional – desconcertava os jornalistas estrangeiros com a coragem física e moral dos seus quotidianos. As ministras vestiam de negro. Certa noite de Agosto de 1978, o líder da Frente Polisário, secretário-geral Mohamed Abdelaziz, sabedor da presença, nos acampamentos, de dois repórteres convidados, abandonou a sua misteriosa alcáçova para uma conversa em pleno deserto, esmaltada de memoráveis detalhes.

A experiência começou, em Argel, numa madrugada de Agosto de 1978. Dois jovens militantes da Frente Polisário foram buscar-me ao hotel que me alojava, no litoral periférico de Argel, em Sidi Fredj, portinho ameno e, por vezes, chamativo – ali decorria uma das mais animadas lotas dos fins-de-semana. Mahmoud e Nasser, quadros auxiliares da representação política da Polisário na capital argelina, foram de uma pontualidade inexecedível. Às 4 da manhã, sentado na zona de receção do hotel, vi-os chegar a bordo de um pequeno e modesto automóvel.

A Frente Polisário, de implantação recente, atribuía aos jornalistas visitantes dos seus acampamentos, no deserto do Sahara, uma enorme relevância. Os visitantes abrangiam um largo espectro geopolítico. Desta feita, os convidados éramos eu, com o semanário *Expresso* à minha espera, e um muito jovem e corajoso repórter senegalês, Latif Guyé, alto, magro, de cálida simpatia humana. Latif trabalhava, em Dakar, na Redacção do semanário “*Taxaw*”. Um jornal de combate que travava uma luta arriscada e tenaz contra a mal disfarçada face ditatorial do regime “democrático” do presidente da República Léopold Sedar Senghor.

Esta seria uma caudalosa constante nas conversas que eu e Latif iríamos sustentar ao longo dos muitos dias que nos aguardavam no deserto.

\* Jornalista português muito prestigiado internacionalmente pelas suas reportagens, sobretudo nos países de língua portuguesa em África e por toda a América Latina. Ficaram para a história, entre outras, as coberturas jornalísticas que efetuou em 1975, para a RTP, da guerra civil angolana no eixo Lobito-Huambo e na batalha entre o exército da África do Sul e as tropas cubanas nas províncias de Benguela e Quanza Norte. Em 1996, no México, conseguiu alcançar para o JN a Selva Lacandona de Chiapas, bastião guerrilheiro do Exército Zapatista de Libertação Nacional, entrevistando os seus comandantes “Marcos”, “Tacho” e “Moisés”. Em Bissau, entre 1978 e 87, ao abrigo dos primeiros acordos de cooperação profissional pós-25 de Abril, acompanhou nos planos editorial e de formação o jornal *Nô Pintcha* e a Rádio Nacional da Guiné. Em 2001, as suas crónicas para o DN enviadas de Carachi, Lahor e Peshawar, no Paquistão, e da «Estrada da Morte» (Jalalabad) no Afeganistão, mereceram referências além-fronteiras. Das entrevistas que publicou ao longo da sua valiosa carreira destaca-se ainda o valor histórico dos trabalhos com Juana Maria Villa, única filha sobrevivente do mítico Pancho Villa (figura primordial da Revolução Mexicana iniciada em 1910), com a viúva de Emiliano Zapata – Petra Portillo Torres –, e com João Bernardo Vieira “Nino”, figura incontornável da história da Guiné Bissau e de África.



Uma experiência única. Vivida sob calor infernal, refeições baseadas no sacrossanto cuscuz, ervilhas enlatadas e carne de camelo. Eu, desconfiado, e agindo à socapa, rejeitei sempre a carne do utilíssimo quadrúpede ruminante, tão emblemático do imenso deserto. A água – para beber – pouco ou nada confiável. Deslocações a pontos remotos do Sahara. Participação em incursões dos guerrilheiros da Polisário. Encontros inusitados com caravanas de tuaregues. Visitas aos campos de concentração dos prisioneiros marroquinos e mauritanos. Ponto rubro dessa admirável sucessão: uma *misteriosa*, densa, críptica entrevista noturna com o líder dos saharianos em luta pela independência nacional da RASD. Mohamed Abdelaziz. Um sábio da historicidade, das raízes matriciais do seu povo. Contava, então, o conspícuo Abdelaziz, 31 anos de idade! O processo de descolonização do Sahara Ocidental havia sido interrompido em 1976, quando a Espanha, ocupante colonial, de forma esquívota e mal-intencionada, abandonou o território, deixando-o à mercê das vontades perversas de Marrocos e Mauritânia.

### “On parle français”

À porta do hotel em Argel, na Rua Hassiba Ben Bouali, ficou explícito que nós, os dois repórteres a caminho de uma experiência inolvidável, iríamos entender-nos em francês. Nenhum conflito com a língua de Malraux. Sendo assim, mãos à obra, após a apresentação, tarefa de Mahmoud e Nasser, os dois jovens ativistas da Polisário.

Estabelecida a empatia, pergunta-me Latif: “Tu confias *nisto*? Não tens medo? Vamos para o deserto, ao encontro de desconhecidos...”. Uma breve e esconsa “troca de impressões”. Murmúrios à revelia dos dois elementos da Frente Polisário que iriam conosco, num avião argelino, para Tindouf, lá onde a faixa desértica do Sahara começa e promete. A cidade, 1460 quilómetros a sudoeste de Argel, vista do ar é um *espanto*: casas de barro vermelho entre palmeiras calcinadas pelas altas temperaturas. Não descortinámos, lá do alto, uma única pessoa a transitar nas ruas de Tindouf. Ali, no extremo sudoeste da Argélia e limitando a Ocidente com Marrocos, “o inimigo” – as chuvas anuais não chegam aos 200 milímetros.

Mal aterrámos, empunhámos as respetivas máquinas fotográficas. De imediato, dois militares argelinos interpelaram-nos com uma categórica advertência: “Isto é uma base aérea militar em território da Argélia. Fotografias, nem pensar...”. Escassos segundos depois estávamos ambos rodeados de quatro desconhecidos, malta jovem, dois quadros políticos e outros dois integrantes da guerrilha da Polisário – os tais “desconhecidos” a quem, à entrada do deserto, iríamos confiar o destino de ambos. Quatro pessoas amáveis, de facto, mas algo reservadas.

A bordo de um todo-terreno, atacámos a área vestibular dos imensos areais. Seriam umas 3 horas da tarde. Longa marcha. Dunas e planuras. Horizontes inalcançáveis. Com o sol a morrer, primeira paragem: a hora das rezas e súplicas a Alá. Apeámo-nos todos. Os quatro jovens nacionalistas da RASD entregaram-se à oração, ajoelhados, enquanto eu e Latif, de pé, silenciosos, contemplávamos as lonjuras. Pensei em Marrocos e na Mauritânia. A marcha prosseguiria até à beira do anoitecer, quando chegámos ao escasso aglomerado de casas miseráveis e algumas tendas. O primeiro dos acampamentos na área mais próxima de Tindouf.

Novas caras. Brahim e Julián, falando castelhano, como os restantes – reflexo da colonização espanhola – ocuparam-se da receção. As novas caras procediam do campo de refugiados em Dakla. Estávamos cansados. Imperavam uns 40 graus... Instalados num quarto estreitíssimo, percebemos a ausência de lençóis, almofadas, toalhas... Eu e o meu colega senegalês muito escassa bagagem levávamos. A mais-valia traduzia-se em duas garrafas de

água de litro e meio e de marca francesa, cada um com a sua. Era a primeira noite. Horrível. Esquadrilhas de insetos voadores tornaram o sono impossível. Insetos minúsculos que “não deveríamos confundir com mosquitos”, advertência de Brahim. Insetos característicos do deserto. Não pregámos olho. Eu e o meu colega havíamos decidido evitar resmungos e queixumes...

### “Eles vieram de Paris...”

Amanheceu e um estranho e lânguido otimismo veio ao nosso encontro: o termómetro, segundo o “polisário” Julian, acusava pouco mais de 33 graus. Escovámos os dentes e lavámo-nos à beira do poço, debaixo de uma palmeira esgaldada. O pequeno-almoço, paupérrimo: cuscuz. E água, tirada de um poço que não nos inspirava a mínima confiança. Apareceram mais quatro elementos da Frente. Apresentações. Explicaram-nos que estávamos não muito longe de El Aiún. Que outro acampamento, o de Gdeim Izik, “por enquanto” seria só “uma ideia, um projeto”. E explicaram-nos a agenda do dia: incursões na segunda zona civil do acampamento e “pesquisas” em pontos do “entroncamento”, no deserto, onde por norma havia um olheiro tuaregue ou de origem tuaregue, os impertérritos nómadas do Grande Sahara. Mahmoud, que nos recebera na Base Aérea de Tindouf, elogiou a nossa disponibilidade enquanto, no todo-terreno, avançávamos no coração de El Aiún.

O sol brilhava cada vez mais quando o guerrilheiro, secundado por Julián, nos contou: “Não há ainda uma semana, estiveram cá dois jornalistas vindos de Paris. Repórteres franceses. Eles vieram mesmo de Paris. Percebemos que eram ambos pessoas bem-intencionadas, motivadas para a nossa causa. Mas, coitados, não aguentaram. Fartaram-se. Enfim, o calor, a alimentação... Ao cabo de dois dias e meio, tivemos de contactar Argel. Eles queriam regressar a França. E foram-se embora, desculpando-se muito. Nós compreendemos...”.

Encontrámos um olheiro tuaregue, um berbere de cara azulada. Sentado num tosco banquinho. Com ele estiveram à conversa, em voz baixa, os “polisários” que nos escoltavam. Em torno do *homem azul* giravam, pachorrentas, três cabras. (Não havia ali o menor sinal de qualquer vegetação. Dir-se-ia que as cabras, esgaravando, com o seu ar paciente, pressentiam a existência de algo que escapasse à nossa perceção. Comentou, a propósito, Latif, bocejante: “Elas lá sabem... elas lá sabem...”). O certo é que, na imensidão do deserto, o *modus vivendi* dos tuaregues aparece como que inseparável dos seus, por vezes, grandes rebanhos indiferentes à rudeza da soalheira.

Regressámos ao acampamento. Depois do breve e seco almoço, decidimos ir dar uma volta. Cobrimo-nos com os dois lençóis brancos que nessa mesma manhã haviam chegado ao acampamento, enviados de Argel. Não havia nada para ver, além do fogaréu dos horizontes. Mas, ensaiados meia dúzia de passos, demos com umas ossadas de tamanho invulgar. À volta, sangue coalhado, que nos pareceu recente. “É a carcaça dos jornalistas de Paris... Coitados, morreram aqui...”, sugeriu o repórter de Dakar. E a mesmíssima piada repetiria ele, no regresso à tenda, diante dos guerrilheiros-ativistas Mahmoud, Nasser, Julián e Brahim: “Vocês enganaram a gente. Afinal, os nossos colegas franceses morreram aqui. Vimos aí perto as ossadas de ambos. Nós queremos ir já embora...”. Risota geral e, a seguir, “la siesta”, a soneca vespertina. Aflitiva, impossível, porque começava a escalada para os 45 ou 46 graus... sabia-se lá até aonde.

Estendemo-nos no solo de areia batida da tenda. A respiração, dificultosa. Cada vez mais. Eu levava comigo seis lenços, dos normais. Tinha, a meu lado, no solo, um púcaro de barro com água fresca do poço. Experimentei e... resultou: com um lenço encharcado, sobre o rosto, da testa aos lábios, a respiração fluía que era um regalo. E ia para adormecer quando

dei pelo “drama” de Latif: o senegalês, a despeito da sua rotina de altas temperaturas no Oeste Africano, estava em dificuldades, virava-se e revirava-se a cada instante. Ao inteirar-me, gritei-lhe: “Eh, pega num lenço, encharca-o em água e põe-no sobre o rosto...”. Azar dele: “Esqueci-me dos lenços na Rue Hassiba Ben Bouali” (a rua do seu hotel em Argel).

Detentor de seis lenços, não hesitei em ceder-lhe três, três mais três são seis, contas universais. Comovido, hesitou: “Não... não posso aceitar, são os *teus* lenços. São parte de ti mesmo, parte da tua alma, isso só entre irmãos...”, argumentou ele. Havia no seu discurso, senti eu, uma difusa religiosidade, o sagrado a imiscuir-se numa coisa tão simples. “Eu sou teu irmão, vai-te lixar”. Ato contínuo, ergui-me, encharquei um dos lenços e coloquei-o sobre o rosto, em lágrimas, do rapaz de Dakar. Ele, resignado, aceitou o gesto. Acalmou-se, respirou fundo. Os lenços, num ápice, secavam, imagine-se a temperatura. Encharcávamo-los, uma vez, e outra, outra, outra. Até que adormecemos.

Já o sol havia embarcado na nave fosforescente dos horizontes quando vi o meu companheiro, acordado pouco antes, debruçado, junto da sua mala, aberta. Vi-o tirar de lá uma espécie de túnica, um *bubú*, dizem os senegaleses – peça de vestuário que pode ser rudimentar, prática, ou *de luxo*. Aquele era, sem dúvida, *de luxo*, requintadíssimo nos seus relevos dourados. Isto ocorreu em Agosto de 1978. Ainda hoje conservo esse *bubú* da amizade e da fraternidade.

## As ministras e os prisioneiros

As rotinas prosseguiam. Percebemos que o programa destinado a ambos, baseado em deslocamentos no interior dos acampamentos, cobrindo distâncias nunca superiores a 20 quilómetros, conheceria um momento *excecional*. Era o que ambos intuíamos.

Uma manhã, estivemos de visita a alguns membros do Governo *provisório* da RASD. A visita à ministra da Administração Local terá sido a mais significativa. Mulher de alguma imponência, vestia de negro, túnica e panos negros. Cara redonda. A cabeça, coberta. Muitas mulheres da RASD vestiam de negro. Explicaram-nos que havia muitas viúvas de combatentes. A ministra detalhou as atividades do seu ministério, similares às do modelo europeu de Administração Interna. Talvez de maior âmbito interventivo. Preocupações com a segurança, a circulação, e também com as escolas, a saúde, a alimentação. Uma ministra preocupada, mas serena, muitíssimo serena.

Nos acampamentos, ninguém se intimidava. Viver as inclemências do deserto e, em simultâneo, harmonizar “o que é preciso fazer”, não perturbava nenhuma das responsáveis do Governo – vestidas de negro, todas. Nem mesmo quando irrompiam, ameaçadores, nos céus, os *caças* “Mirage”, de fabrico gaulês, da Força Aérea marroquina. Altura em que, por norma, as pessoas buscavam refúgio nos subterrâneos.

Coube-nos, também, descer aos subterrâneos por mais de uma ocasião. Os “Mirage” surgiam de rompante. E mesmo sem *caças* marroquinos à vista, as descidas ao subsolo aconteciam. Nos subterrâneos convivíamos, muitas vezes, com dirigentes mais velhos, entretanto chegados aos acampamentos. Servia-se, com requinte e alguma solenidade, chá de menta, o que mais nos deliciava, ali, no deserto. Os veteranos da RASD falavam-nos da postura da Mauritânia no conflito. Esperavam do governo de Nuakchot uma “evolução” – a neutralidade – que isolaria mais o soberbo poder palaciano instalado em Rabat.

No décimo dia, depois do almoço e sob um sol deveras abrasador, seriam 14 horas, deslocámo-nos no todo-terreno ao campo de concentração que abrigava os militares marroquinos e mauritanos capturados nas esporádicas refregas ao longo do deserto.

Os prisioneiros marroquinos e mauritanos, sorrindo, bem alinhados, aceitaram os apertos-de-mão que lhes fomos, um a um, dispensando. Mahmoud animou-nos: “Eles percebem

o francês”. E em francês fomos conversando com os prisioneiros. Todos pareciam vender saúde. E, caso impressionante, expostos ao sol, aparentavam como que a fruição de uma praia algarvia em qualquer Verão... normal. Eu e o colega senegalês, com camisas sem mangas, cobertos, com o *amigo* lençol branco, da cabeça aos tornozelos. Comentei para o “polisário” Mahmoud: “Estes homens aparentam saúde e ... poderíamos dizer que encaram a sua sorte sem grandes preocupações”. Ao que o ativista respondeu: “Nem têm mesmo que andar preocupados. Eles cumpriram o seu dever, tanto os marroquinos como os mauritanos. O único destino que lhes reservamos é a libertação, não poderia ser outro”.

O prisioneiro marroquino Ayouch ofereceu-se ao diálogo. “Vocês comem, todos os dias, o suficiente?”, propus-lhe eu. “O suficiente? Sim. Ninguém passa fome neste lugar”, replicou o soldado, sorridente. Mahmoud acha curial advertir: “Uma ou duas vezes, por semana, estes prisioneiros comem carne. Às vezes, carne de boi ou vitela que nos chega de fora. Não vemos nisso um privilégio, mas lembro que nem sempre o nosso povo come carne...”. E quanto ao futuro, o mesmo prisioneiro marroquino mostrou-se sem cuidados: “Ou o Exército (de Marrocos) ou, quem sabe, uma profissão na vida civil”.

No regresso ao acampamento, era visível, nos semblantes, a satisfação dos ativistas e guerrilheiros da Frente Polisário – a visita, pensámos, resultara muito esclarecedora da política da RASD em matéria de prisioneiros de guerra. Para eles, os nacionalistas, como frisou Mahmoud, era “importante, deveras importante, que jornalistas alheios ao conflito vissem com os seus próprios olhos como o humanismo da RASD” se traduzia “em atos”.

### Os camelos “civis” e “da guerra”

O pequeno oásis que muito escassa sombra oferecia ao poço de onde se extraía a água, nesses quotidianos-braseiros... parecia desafiante: ali, observando o infindável deserto, a tentação de explorá-lo era constante. Víamos o lento desfile dos tuaregues, com os seus camelos, os seus rebanhos. Vida nómada em terra seca. Os ativistas da Polisário davam como certo que os tuaregues se dividiam em duas categorias: os homens livres e os escravos. Desses dois segmentos derivavam os vassalos, os artesãos, os sacerdotes e os guerreiros. Latif, o meu inseparável companheiro de aventura, por ser senegalês conhecia as andanças dos *djilas*, também conhecidos dos naturais da vizinha Guiné-Bissau. Daí o coincidirmos na similitude entre os *djilas*, oriundos da Guiné e de outros países do Oeste Africano, e os tuaregues com as suas grandes caravanas comerciais cruzando o majestático deserto.

Uma manhã acompanhámos vários guerrilheiros da Frente Polisário na visita a um “velho sábio”. O ancião residia a alguns quilómetros do nosso acampamento, algures na região de El Aiún. Apeámo-nos junto da casa, um pequeno barracão, e logo reparámos num camelo postado à entrada, animal em estado lastimoso, com feridas, muitas moscas revoloteando em seu redor.

Seguindo os preceitos, descalçámo-nos, todos, e entramos no casitéu. Connosco, além de Mahmoud e Brahim, vários dos veteranos, homens de mais de 60, 70 anos. O anfitrião, sóbrio na afabilidade, olhou-nos, curioso. Enfim, jornalistas.

Sentados no solo, pernas cruzadas, diante de uma mesa baixinha mas de largo comprimento, todos nos olhámos, em silêncio, por momentos. E começou o “discurso” de boas-vindas do anfitrião, em árabe. Logo seguido da “abertura dos trabalhos”. (Não entendemos uma única palavra. Mais tarde, sim, os dirigentes da RASD explicar-nos-iam em castelhano o que ali havia estado em discussão). Houve um momento em que o anfitrião, sábio homem do deserto, suspendeu a dissertação. Uma pausa, digamos, para que duas

senhoras da família começassem a distribuir leite pelos visitantes. O mesmo utensílio, uma velha tigela de latão, girava, de forma pausada, de mão em mão.

Na tarde do dia seguinte, nova incursão no deserto. Desta feita, o todo-terreno transportou-nos para mais longe, para uma “fortificação” ou quartelamento que funcionava como centro de formação de novos soldados-guerrilheiros da Frente Polisário. Lá chegados, os líderes locais levaram-nos para os subterrâneos. Apresentações. E chá de menta. Desta feita, os chefes militares locais falaram em castelhano. Disseram-nos da “imensa coragem” e não menor “disponibilidade sincera” dos jovens para arriscar a vida pela pátria saharai. Que, no essencial, os saharais “defendiam-se”.

Era verdade, “defendiam-se”. Acima de tudo, “defenderem-se” do inimigo marroquino e, em menor escala, do mauritano. Mas em ações de contra-ataque, sabíamos nós, a Frente não hesitava em prolongá-las, atacando os guardas fronteiriços em posições vizinhas da capital mauritana, Nuakchot. Aí, alguns camelos intervinham, militarmente, na contenda: além de meio de transporte, os quadrúpedes, deveras inteligentes, serviam, deitados nas areias, de escudo – uma precaução-limite dos guerrilheiros saharais.

Uma primeira abordagem nossa, junto de um quadro da guerrilha, no sentido de nos permitirem acompanhá-los em alguma incursão na fronteira da Mauritânia, ficou sem resposta imediata. Esta nunca surgiria, mas também é verdade que, até ao nosso regresso à Argélia, não tivemos conhecimento de qualquer surtida da Polisário na fronteira da Mauritânia.

No centro de formação de jovens combatentes, assistimos a parte dos exercícios da jornada. Na altura do marchar e do marcar passo, notámos que um camelo “militarizado”, de imponente silhueta, tomava parte, também, nos exercícios. A dada altura, diz-me Latif: “Olha bem, o malandro do camelo faz que marcha, mas não levanta sequer as patas do solo. Olha com atenção”. Dei-me logo ao exame e vi que, de facto, o dromedário movia apenas a zona lombar, poupando-se à *trabalheira* pernil...

## O pavor de uma hemorragia

Estar, dias a fio, no deserto do Sahara, andar ao sol, de cabeça coberta as mais das vezes, e pouca água beber, por pouco confiável, sem sofrer insolações, parece ou deve ser... *obra*. À hora do segundo banho, lá pela tardinha, nas proximidades da nossa tenda, íamos ao poço e enchíamos várias latas. Arremessávamos a água, um ao outro, num improviso que resultava. A saúde tranquilizava-nos. Fadiga ou dores de cabeça, nem por sombras. Estávamos, isso sim, mais magros. Eu via-me “esquelético”, mas forte. Outro indicador: nunca ouvimos falar de doentes ou faltas de assistência nos acampamentos.

Até que...

A meio de uma certa tarde, já de pleno aclimatado, estabilizado, normalizado, fui acometido de uma violenta hemorragia nasal. Tronco nu, o sangue, abundante, de pronto invadiu-me o peito, barriga, pernas... Estalou o alarme nas *fileiras*. O alvoroço tomou todas as tendas à volta. Os lenços que eu conservava encharcaram-se.

Estendido no solo, achei a coisa normal – tanto sol, tanto calor, algum preço, como nos meus tempos de adolescente em Angola, eu pagaria. Como agora podemos todos constatar, não sucumbi. E desses momentos guardo um *signal* de que, no dia em que a RASD, a República Sarauí, for uma realidade, nela teremos um país – o contrário de outras colónias – com cabeça tronco e membros.

Aconteceu que, decorrido menos de um quarto de hora, e comigo prostrado, percebi sobre a tenda o rumor de um helicóptero, chamado, via rádio, pelos dirigentes dos acampamentos. Com emoção, vi surgir, de rompante, um homem de grande estatura, o “médico



de serviço” em El Aiún. Vestia uma larga túnica branca, aquele gigante. Um comprimido “debaixo da língua”, para começar. Acho que me deu para adormecer, por instantes. Coisa rapidíssima. De novo consciente, voltei a escutar o rumor das hélices do helicóptero, que se afastava. Missão cumprida – acampamento em paz. Assim se *resolviam*, no oceano de areias escaldantes do Sahara, os quotidianos da Frente Polisário.

Fomos embora, numa manhã de fins desse memorável Agosto de 1978. Rumo a Argel. Pesarosos, inconformados, por entre abraços. Deixei ali, talvez, o melhor, o mais vibrátil, o mais tocante da nossa história de repórteres sem fronteiras, sem amarras, livres, nos lugares que são os nossos *lugares certos*.

## As confissões de Mohamed Abdelaziz

Era noite cerrada e o luar dir-se-ia timorato quando, com trejeitos de coisa misteriosa, entraram na nossa tenda Mahmud, Nasser e Brahim. Com eles, outro jovem, que desconhecíamos.

– Há uma boa notícia para vocês, disse-nos, com alguma solenidade, Nasser. Perante a nossa mal disfarçada e compreensível perplexidade, acrescentaria, por seu turno, Mahmoud: “Vocês vão conversar com uma pessoa importante, muito importante. E não vale a pena imaginarem isto ou aquilo. Conversem com ele, ouçam-no com atenção, sabemos que vão ser comedidos e competentes nas vossas perguntas... É a pessoa mais importante”. E lá fomos nós. A “pessoa importante” estava sentada sobre uma almofada, no solo. Era, evidência das evidências, Mohamed Abdelaziz, o já então aureolado secretário-geral da Frente Polisário e presidente “exilado” da República Árabe Sarauí Democrática – RASD. Um homem que, depois dos cumprimentos, falou sempre em voz baixa. “Quero agradecer-lhes, em nome de todo este povo, o esforço que a simples presença, aqui, lhes exige. Muito obrigado. Estamos todos, aqui, na extremidade ocidental do deserto. E temos por perto o Atlântico – mas a vida é dura”. Primeiras palavras do líder sarauí.

Algo sabíamos das origens beduínas de Mohamed Abdelaziz. Das suas andanças e vivências marroquinas, quando universitário. E de como ele havia bebido do cálice rebeliônico do nacionalismo sarauí, mola propulsora do levantamento em armas, em 1973, contra o colonialismo espanhol. Cabia-nos, agora, tentar obter, de Abdelaziz, a sua visão dos acontecimentos em curso no próprio deserto – a resistência psicossomática, a exposição à placagem militar exercida pelos regimes de Rabat (Marrocos) e Nouakchott (Mauritânia), as vias diplomáticas possíveis.

“O povo sarauí já experimentou, e continua a experimentar, na própria pele, as consequências da insubmissão, que é coletiva” – diz Abdelaziz, atendendo à primeira das questões que lhe coloco. “Todos pagamos, iremos pagar, sempre, pelo menos enquanto não formos donos das nossas decisões e da nossa vontade de sermos independentes”, prosseguiu. “Os senhores viram como todos resistem, participando no esforço. Temos muitas mulheres em cargos de muita responsabilidade. Queremos prevenir já o futuro, mostrar o que iremos querer que seja, como país independente, a nossa República. Para tal, estamos a educar os mais novos. Nas atuais condições de dureza, aprendemos e evoluímos para, amanhã, sermos ainda mais capazes”, sentenciou, em voz baixa, sempre, o secretário-geral da Polisário.

Anunciam-se mudanças na Mauritânia. O que vinha sendo presidente, Ould Daddah, foi “destituído”, houve um golpe de Estado em Nouakchott. Estão aqui alguns prisioneiros mauritanos, além dos outros, os marroquinos. Esta situação na Mauritânia favorece os designios da Frente Polisário e da RASD?

– Por enquanto, observamos. A fraqueza ou as perturbações alheias pouco nos dizem, principalmente quando, como neste caso, o da Mauritânia, não há contornos muito definidos. Tanto da Mauritânia como de Marrocos o que desejamos são boa diplomacia, boa política, boa leitura da História para melhor entenderem o significado da nossa luta. Agrada-me saber que os senhores estiveram junto dos soldados marroquinos e mauritanos que capturámos. Como nós, são seres humanos e como tal devem ser tratados.

Faz-se algum silêncio, por momentos, que o próprio Abdelaziz rompe, ao considerar: “Nós insistimos em forjar vias próprias, mesmo quando dizem, e é verdade, que exploraremos todas as possibilidades junto das Nações Unidas. E quando nos acercamos dos espaços políticos que os regimes democráticos europeus sugerem. Vamos, iremos devagar”.

A Argélia tem sido, observo eu, decisiva para a luta, a resistência sarauí. É uma garantia acaso considerada definitiva pela Frente Polisário?

*(No acampamento falava-se, de modo furtivo, do “estado de saúde”, delicado, de Houari Boumediène, desde 1965 presidente da Argélia).*

– Definitiva, filosofou Abdelaziz. É a nossa determinação.

– O socialismo, pergunto eu, poderá vir a ser uma opção? É algo que, noutros tempos, nos anos de 1960, causou alguma perturbação na própria Argélia, agitou ânimos. Boumediène e Ben Bella não coincidiam na apreciação do modelo...

De novo “à defesa”, ou comedido, disse o líder da Frente Polisário: “Os modelos podem discutir-se. Nós não somos, como a Argélia, um país livre, independente. Poderá imaginar o que são para nós as prioridades. Vamos observando o mundo. A África Negra, como a chamada África Branca, estão a viver situações totalmente novas, vejamos o que aconteceu, desde 1974, na África Austral. Cumpre-nos estar atentos, perceber os fenómenos, não damos importância à antecipação de cenários políticos. Não podemos, nem devemos, estabelecer polos de comparação. Certamente que as experiências coloniais têm pontos comuns, mas há diferenças entre os respetivos processos...”.

– A Argélia, portanto, apesar da ajuda, das boas relações, não servirá de modelo...

– De exemplo a seguir, quer você dizer? sussurrou Abdelaziz, para logo concluir: “A Argélia viveu, nos termos próprios da sua identidade, da sua história, o debate ou os debates que lhe correspondiam. É um grande país amigo e irmão. E, na nossa região, a Argélia é importantíssima.

O secretário-geral da Frente Polisário pronunciava-se, naquela “noite fechada” sahariana, quando na Mauritânia o novo poder buscava, ainda, traves de sustentação interna. Em Dezembro, a presidência mauritana iria ser assumida pelo coronel Uld Taya. Da herança diplomática do defenestrado Ould Daddah constariam, por certo, “compromissos” de tréguas e políticas de proximidade com Argel e a Frente Polisário. O ministro dos Negócios Estrangeiros do último governo de Houari Boumediène era Abdelaziz Bouteflika, atual presidente da República da Argélia.

*(Boumediène tinha os dias contados. Morreria não muitos meses depois desta nossa conversa noturna, em pleno deserto do Sahara, com o hoje também já desaparecido líder da Frente Polisário).*

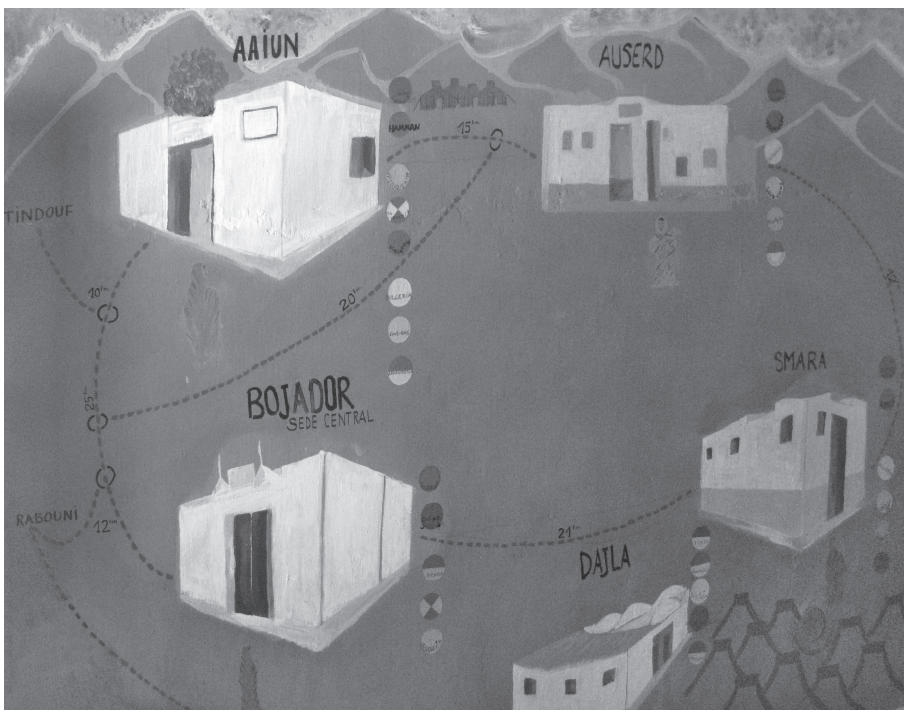
Significativas, para os “sonhos” libertários do povo sarauí, haviam sido, em 1977, as assertivas de um dos discursos mais acutilantes do muito debilitado Boumediène, o da sua “despedida”, dir-se-ia. O argelino que mais ajudou e defendeu a Frente Polisário fez, nesse grande exercício oratório, acusações e advertências contra “novas formas de colonização”. A França iria, de pronto, acusar os “efeitos” desse discurso, perturbador, afirmou-se então, dos seus interesses no Gabão, no Senegal, no Mali, na Costa do Marfim... Contudo, hoje, com uma titubeante, imprevisível e *dividida* União Europeia a semear ventos e colher

tempestades, o discurso premonitório de Boumediène vibra, de novo, em não poucas consciências.

Grande seria, agora, a decepção de Mohamed Abdelaziz, observando, por exemplo, na ONU, o triunfo da inércia e da impotência – quando vemos as reivindicações do nacionalismo sarauí acantonadas no podreouro da indiferença e do calculismo mercantil das democracias ocidentais.

Se visse ainda, Mohamed Abdelaziz encontraria, hoje, no derradeiro discurso de Houari Boumediène, a mais visceral das explicações para o abandono, pela União Europeia, da justa e inatacável causa dos nacionalistas que pugnam pela sua República Árabe Sarauí Democrática.

Mais do que nunca, penso que a morte de Boumediène demoliu, em grande parte, o edifício das expectativas nacionalistas do povo do Sahara Ocidental.



**Ilustração 01** – Graffiti sobre os acampamento. Campo Boujdour 20018. Foto: Carmo Matos.





# Sahara Ocidental, entre a ambiguidade internacional e o idealismo angolano

Issau Agostinho\*

pp. 221-235

## Nota introdutória

Na sequência de dezenas de anos de colonização por algumas das metrópoles europeias, que na época eram também as maiores potências navais, pode-se afirmar – por via da luta armada, e com base em dados históricos pós-segunda Guerra Mundial – que a efetiva libertação nacional contra aquelas teve início na Ásia<sup>1</sup>, sobretudo na Indonésia de Suharto, quando em 1945 alcançou a independência e expulsou os holandeses ali presentes desde o século XVII.

Não obstante o ANC, fundado em 1912, ter sido em África o primeiro movimento político negro de libertação contra o Apartheid, numa África do Sul segregada e discriminatória contra a maioria negra – embora a institucionalização legal deste regime date de 1948 –, reconhece-se que aí os primeiros movimentos de libertação começaram antes de 1912, e, na altura, não eram só dedicados aos negros, mas também aos indianos e outros. A propósito, William Mervin Gumede afirma que

*“As organizações políticas formais dos negros incluíam o Congresso Nacional Indiano (formado por Mohandas Gandhi, em 1894) e a Organização Política Africana (mais tarde, Organização Popular Africana), criada em 1902 para combater a discriminação política. Embora a APO era aberta a todos, organizou principalmente pessoas de cor ou aquelas descendentes de raças mistas” (Gumede, 2008: 2).*

A extensão da luta de libertação nacional em países africanos tem, nesses dois momentos (a independência da Indonésia e a formação do ANC), o seu ponto de revitalização para uns, e de partida, para outros, uma vez que, de um lado, a conferência de Bandung de 1955, protagonizada pelos líderes indonésiano Suharto (anfitrião), o indiano Nehru, o egípcio Nasser ou o ministro chinês de relações exteriores, Zhou Enlai (em representação de Mao Zedong) lançou as bases para o nascimento do Movimento dos Não-Alinhados (MNA), ocorrido mais tarde na conferência de Belgrado, em 1961 – sob os auspícios do líder jugoslavo Tito – que em linha de máxima defende a descolonização e a auto-determinação dos povos. De outro lado, o ANC representou para a maioria da população africana a tomada de consciência sobre a necessidade de organização política e militar para o alcance das independências nacionais, iniciadas na década de 60 do século XX.

\* Vice-Diretor do magazine científico II Geopolítico-A Revista de Análise Geopolítica e Sociológica; CEAUP.

1 Não se descarta que uma das primeiras lutas armadas contra a ocupação estrangeira em África teve lugar na Líbia, quando o Movimento de Resistência Líbio, liderado por Omar Mukhtar, opôs-se à ocupação colonial italiana entre 1923 e 1932, durante a chamada Guerra de Pacificação, terminada apenas após a captura e morte de Mukhtar em 1931 pelas autoridades do Reino da Itália, que ocuparam aquele território até ao declínio do regime fascista de Mussolini.



Todavia, a libertação destes países do jugo colonial não aconteceu da mesma maneira, nem ao mesmo tempo, na medida em que enquanto uns empenharam-se arduamente em lutas armadas de libertação, como é o caso das ex-colónias portuguesas, ou do Kenya, através da Revolta dos Mau-Mau dos anos 50, outros passariam por processos de transição mais negociada, como foi na maioria das ex-colónias inglesas e francesas, com exceção do caso argelino; bem como outros ainda chegaram à auto-determinação não durante o período chamado de «boom das independências africanas» da década acima referida, mas sim durante os anos 70, ou anos 90.

Neste caso, e mais uma vez, inclui-se países como Angola, que chegou à independência só em 1975, por razões que segundo Gianluigi Rossi

*“na África portuguesa, onde os movimentos nacionalistas foram formados mais recentemente do que noutros lugares, as reivindicações independentistas confrontaram-se durante anos contra a firme vontade do regime português de não renunciar ao seu império no exterior, definido como parte integrante do seu território metropolitano”* (Rossi, 2010: 41).

No entanto, se a Namíbia e a África do Sul chegam à independência nos anos 90, com o fim do regime de Apartheid, em parte, graças ao envolvimento de Angola que, através do desfecho da Batalha do Kuito Kuanavale em março de 1988, e dos sucessivos acordos de Nova Iorque de dezembro do mesmo ano, permitiu a implementação quer da Resolução 435/78 do Conselho de Segurança da ONU, quer do *linkage* proposto em 1981 pela Administração Reagan (que já previa, na altura, a mudança do *status quo* na região com a retirada das tropas cubanas do território angolano); hoje, o conflito em curso entre o Reino de Marrocos e a Frente Popular de Libertação de Saguia el Hamra e Rio d’Oro – também designado por Frente Polisário – é das mais longas batalhas pelo controlo e legitimidade do Sahara Ocidental, que pode ser considerado como a “última colónia em África” (Darbouche e Colombo, 2010: 2), ou seja, a última fronteira do colonialismo e da ocupação contestada de uma região africana.

Por conseguinte, neste breve ensaio, queremos analisar a posição e o papel de Angola face à RASD, tendo como balizas teóricas de orientação metodológica, não só o método histórico, mas também o idealismo e o pragmatismo das autoridades angolanas, olhando para nova *leadership* do país e ao regresso do Reino de Marrocos à União Africana, em 2017, após ter-se auto-afastado desta organização continental durante cerca de 33 anos, devido não só à admissão da RASD como membro da OUA em 1982, como também a críticas movidas contra si relativamente à ocupação do Sahara Ocidental, que a Resolução 34/37 da ONU considera como ilegal, impondo a Frente Polisário como legítimo representante do povo saharauí.

## 1. De Espanha a Marrocos. A ocupação do Sahara Ocidental

Como a vasta maioria dos territórios um pouco por todo o lado (e não apenas em África), pelo menos desde o pós-expansionismo europeu dos séculos XV-XIX, a região do Sahara Ocidental manteve-se ocupada e submetida à Espanha desde os finais do século XIX até 1976, altura em que se retirou precipitadamente, sem determinar um claro “sucessor” entre os principais países vizinhos – Argélia, Mauritânia e Marrocos – que, como os documentos históricos desclassificados o revelam, se bateram pela anexação, controlo e soberania sobre o território nos anos anteriores e nos imediatamente a seguir à sua retirada.

Uma das razões da não realização do *referendum* sobre a auto-determinação dos saharauís pelas autoridades espanholas, lideradas por Francisco Franco, terá sido a forte oposição do rei marroquino Hassan II, que inclusive havia solicitado à Corte Internacional de Justiça

(CIJ), em setembro de 1974, uma arbitragem sobre a existência do estado de vassalagem de tribos da região saharai ao Marrocos anterior à colonização espanhola. Solicitação semelhante foi igualmente feita pela Assembleia Geral da ONU à Espanha, para que esta adiasse a sua realização até a uma data posterior, em as que as condições legais tivessem sido estabelecidas.

Dada a importância e a urgente necessidade de sanar a controvérsia sobre o *status* legal do Sahara Ocidental, ante as reivindicações quer marroquinas, quer mauritanas, em vista ao eminente fim da ocupação colonial espanhola, o Secretário-geral da ONU, com base na Resolução 3292 (XXIX), de 13 de dezembro de 1974<sup>2</sup>, da sua Assembleia Geral, solicitou à CIJ um Parecer Consultivo relativamente à pertença histórica da região, bem como à eventual existência de laços jurídicos entre os saharais e os dois contendores que fossem anteriores àquela presença colonial.

A CIJ obteve e avaliou documentos históricos, tais como uma série de arquivos relacionados à matéria, desde os acordos anglo-marroquinos de 13 de março de 1895 ao ofício franco-alemão de 4 de novembro de 1913, que fazem referência a extensões territoriais norte-africanas pertencentes hipoteticamente a Marrocos, incluindo, eventualmente, partes do atual Sahara Ocidental (que a Espanha, por sua vez, nunca reconheceu). Os referidos documentos foram enviados à Corte pelas partes interessadas, incluindo as diversas comunicações e ofícios endereçados pelas três partes ao Secretário-geral da ONU, nos anos 50 e 60. A submissão à CIJ de tais documentos tinha respaldo no parágrafo 2, da resolução 3292 (XXIX).

A título de exemplo, durante os trabalhos do Comité Especial Político e de Descolonização, e com base num ofício enviado a 12 de outubro de 1961, com o qual a Espanha havia prestado esclarecimentos sobre o Sahara Ocidental, que à luz da sua legislação colonial era uma província espanhola, os representantes do Reino de Marrocos haviam rebatido tais afirmações, dizendo que tal território era parte integrante de Marrocos, enquanto que um dispositivo legal da realza espanhola, datado de 26 de dezembro de 1884, revelava o momento em que as autoridades tribais locais saharais se teriam submetido ao protetorado da potência colonizadora ibérica.

À semelhança de Marrocos, que inicia as suas disputas contra a Espanha depois do alcance da sua independência em 1956, de igual modo fê-lo a Mauritânia, quando, em 1960, fez presente às Nações Unidas a titularidade de soberania sobre o Sahara Ocidental. Porém, contrariamente a Marrocos, que neste período pretendia a incorporação do Sahara Ocidental no seu território, sem ter em conta a vontade das populações locais, a Mauritânia optou por uma via mais conciliadora, defendendo que fossem as populações locais a decidir pelo seu futuro dentro ou fora do território mauritano.

Fazendo jus a esse manancial de documentos, a CIJ emitiu, a 16 de outubro de 1975, o seu Parecer Consultivo, mais ou menos, nos seguintes modos:

- a. Relativamente aos *status* do Sahara Ocidental, isto é, se pertencia ou não a alguma entidade local antes da presença espanhola datada em 1884, a CIJ reconheceu, com base no parágrafo 81<sup>4</sup> do seu Parecer, a existência de autoridades tribais locais no Sahara Ocidental, com as quais a Espanha haveria assinado um acordo de protectorado, colocando-as sob a sua jurisdição e protecção desde 1884.

<sup>2</sup> Portal das Nações Unidas (1974), *Question of Spanish Sahara*. [Consult. 13.set.2018]. Disponível em: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NRo/738/94/IMG/NRo73894.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>3</sup> Muitos desses documentos não foram validados em sede da discussão pela CIJ, como por exemplo o ofício franco-alemão de 4 de novembro de 1911, que segundo determinou no parágrafo 127, do Parecer, não fazia nenhuma referência ao reconhecimento de limites fronteiriços marroquinos, mas sim à zona de influência francesa, uma vez que neste período Marrocos era, como o Sahara Ocidental espanhol, uma continuidade geográfica da potência colonizadora, no caso, a França.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. Portal da Corte Internacional de Justiça (1974), *Western Sahara. Overview of the case*. [Consult. 2.out.2018]. Disponível em: <https://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/61>.

- b. Já em relação a eventuais laços entre o Sahara Ocidental e o Reino de Marrocos e a Mauritânia, os quais apregoavam que tal fosse parte do seu território (diga-se, anterior a 1884), o parecer da Corte estabeleceu, no seu parágrafo 105, a não existência de qualquer soberania marroquina sobre o território, reconhecendo apenas alguns laços de vassalagem entre algumas tribos locais nómadas com o sultão marroquino, enquanto que no parágrafo 150 determinou que, na altura da colonização espanhola, não havia nenhum laço que submetesse a soberania territorial do Sahara Ocidental à Mauritânia, nem tampouco (diferentemente de Marrocos), laços de vassalagem entre a Mauritânia e as tribos nómadas locais.

O Parecer Consultivo da CIJ, que não determinou o domínio territorial nem pela Mauritânia, nem por Marrocos sobre o Sahara Ocidental, reconhecendo apenas certos laços de vassalagem entre este último e algumas tribos locais (e não todas, em número desconhecido mas certamente maior), foi sucessivamente alvo de uma interpretação política marroquina contrária ao espírito e letra dos juizes da Corte Internacional de Justiça.

O rei Hassan II – cujo pai, Mohammed V, já vinha reivindicando<sup>5</sup> em *fora* internacionais a legitimidade sobre o Sahara Ocidental logo após a proclamação da independência nacional marroquina, afirmando ser parte do seu território – foi o protagonista desta interpretação contrária àquele parecer, que foi deliberadamente distorcido, dando-lhe uma conotação política afirmativa e envolvendo correntes nacionalistas que sonhavam com o chamado «O Grande Marrocos», integrado não só pelo Sahara Ocidental, como também pelos enclaves de Ceuta e Melila, actualmente sob a soberania espanhola.

Para dar corpo à sua determinação de ocupar a região, Hassan II realizou uma mega manifestação popular a 6 de novembro de 1975, que ficou conhecida na história como “A Marcha Verde”, que consistiu em mais de três centenas de milhares de participantes, que idos de Marrocos, ultrapassaram a fronteira e chegaram ao Sahara Ocidental, num ato que simbolizou o início da sua ocupação efectiva actualmente em curso, reforçada pela reocupação da região sul do Sahara Ocidental, que a Mauritânia abandonou em 1979, por via de acordos de Alger rubricados com a Frente Polisário.

## 2. A RASD parcialmente reconhecida ao nível internacional

A estratégia de “facto consumado” utilizada pelas autoridades marroquinas na integração do Sahara Ocidental como parte da sua geografia política, em total inobservância do parecer sopramencionado, obrigou a Frente Polisário a proclamar a República Árabe Saharui Democrática, em fevereiro de 1976, que foi prontamente reconhecida e apoiada quer militar, quer diplomaticamente pela Argélia, bem como por meio da Resolução 34/37 da ONU, adoptada em 21 de novembro de 1979, que reconhece a mesma Frente Polisário como o único representante legítimo do povo saharauí.

O abandono pela Espanha do Sahara Ocidental, em Fevereiro de 1976, a ocupação marroquina do território e a sucessiva proclamação da RASD, não podiam senão criar uma atmosfera propícia para o eclodir do conflito pela disputa territorial entre o Reino de Marrocos e a Frente Polisário, de um lado, e entre esta última e a Mauritânia, do outro.

<sup>5</sup> Como oposição a uma comunicação enviada ao Secretário-Geral das Nações pelo governo espanhol, em 10 de novembro de 1958, em que se lia “O governo espanhol não possui territórios autónomos, uma vez que os submetidos a sua soberania em África, são considerados províncias espanholas, de acordo com a lei em vigor”, o governo marroquino respondeu dez dias mais tarde, afirmando ao Secretário-general que reivindicava “certos territórios africanos presentemente ocupados pela Espanha”. Cfr. Parecer da CIJ, par. 34, p. 25.



Ilustração 01 – Instalações da MINURSO. Fonte: ONU 2009.

Não obstante a retirada da Mauritânia de regiões limítrofes com o Sahara Ocidental, em agosto de 1979, ter significado um reconhecimento tácito da soberania da RASD sobre o território, a reocupação imediata das mesmas pelas autoridades marroquinas não só revelou uma vitória fugaz da Frente Polisário. Implicou também o agravamento do conflito entre si e o Reino de Marrocos, que construiu durante os anos 80 um muro de 2700 km de distância, dividindo o território em duas partes: a parte marroquina, que representa 2/3 do território e a sua fronteira marítima, e os restantes 20 % do território controlados

pela Frente Polisário, encravados na fronteira com a Mauritânia e a Argélia, cuja região de Tindouf hospeda, desde os anos 80, campos de refugiados saharuis, a principal base operativa da Frente Polisário no exílio e a sede da RASD.

O conflito militar entre Marrocos e a Frente Polisário, movido pela disputa da soberania sobre o Sahara Ocidental, é dos mais longos jamais registados em África durante e pós-Guerra-fria, e pode ser visto em duas fases:

1. uma entre 1975 e 1991, caracterizada por ações de guerra violenta entre as partes, com o envolvimento ativo de países estrangeiros que apoiaram cada uma das partes em função das afinidades ideológicas próprias daquele período;
2. outra pós-Guerra-fria, com esporádicas ações de confrontos não violentos do ponto de vista militar.

A intermediação da ONU foi determinante para o alcance e a implementação do cessar-fogo entre o Reino de Marrocos e a RASD, ocorrido em 1991, através da Resolução 690 do Conselho de Segurança da ONU, de 21 de abril do mesmo ano. A referida resolução estabeleceu igualmente a Missão das Nações Unidas para o Referendum no Sahara Ocidental (MINURSO)<sup>6</sup>, com tarefas específicas de monitoramento do cessar-fogo e da realização de um referendun sobre a independência do povo saharai ou a sua integração no Reino de Marrocos.

Todavia, os esforços das Nações Unidas não alteraram o *status quo* na região no pós-Guerra-fria, se considerarmos que nem Marrocos se retirou do Sahara Ocidental, nem tampouco abateu o muro por si construído em 1987, continuando a ocupar, de facto, 2/3 do território saharui. Por seu lado, a RASD, para manter acesa a chama da sua auto-determinação, conta com apoios diplomáticos de pouco mais de 80<sup>7</sup> países membros da ONU, entre os principais a Argélia e a Angola, para além de mais países da América Latina e da própria UA. Porém, denota-se no elenco dos Estados que reconhecem a auto-determinação da RASD e a legitimidade da Polisário a ausência de países ocidentais, dos quais destacamos a da União Europeia e dos Estados Unidos de América (EUA).

Em primeiro lugar, a política da UE tem sido incerta e por vezes confusa. Segundo Darbouche e Colombo

*“Historicamente, o envolvimento da UE no conflito do Sahara Ocidental tem sido modesto, na melhor das hipóteses. [...] a UE tem sido geralmente resignada a uma posição de banco de trás, declarando inicialmente neutralidade e depois, desde 1988, apoiando iniciativas da ONU de uma maneira visivelmente passiva”* (Ibidem, p. 5).

### 3. A comunidade internacional ambígua

Com efeito, não obstante nenhum Estado membro da UE ter reconhecido a legitimidade da RASD, incluindo a própria Espanha (mais adiante trataremos desta ambiguidade), a Corte de Justiça da União Europeia (CJUE) aprovou uma sentença a 21 de dezembro de 2016, que anulava a aplicação do acordo de pesca de 2012 entre a UE e o reino de Marrocos por ser extensivo ao Sahara Ocidental, que a CJUE reconheceu como um território não marroquino. A corte estabeleceu que nenhum acordo seria válido sem a participação e o consenso do povo saharui, excluindo posteriormente, em fevereiro de 2018, a aplicação de acordos semelhantes no mar territorial saharui.

<sup>6</sup> Portal das Nações Unidas (1991). *Question of Western Sahara. Resolution 690 (1991)*. [Consult. 4.out.2018]. Disponível em: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/46/a46ro67.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Cfr. Fernando Petrolito, *Sahara occidentale: la corte di giustizia dell'Ue annulla accordo commerciale col Marocco*, 17/12/2015. [Consult. 4.agos.2018]. Disponível em: <https://www.unifonews.it/sahara-occidentale-la-corte-di-giustizia-dellue-annulla-accordo-commerciale-col-marocco/>.



Em segundo lugar, a posição dos Estados Unidos sobre o Sahara Ocidental foi, mais uma vez, realçada durante a visita do rei de Marrocos à Casa Branca, em Novembro de 2013. No seu comunicado final, em especial sobre a questão daquele território, lê-se que

*“O Presidente comprometeu-se a continuar a apoiar os esforços para encontrar uma solução pacífica, sustentável e mutuamente acordada para a questão do Sahara Ocidental. A política dos EUA em relação ao Sahara Ocidental permaneceu consistente por muitos anos. Os Estados Unidos deixaram claro que o plano de autonomia de Marrocos é sério, realista e confiável, e que representa uma abordagem potencial que poderia satisfazer as aspirações do povo do Sahara Ocidental de administrar seus próprios assuntos em paz e dignidade.”<sup>8</sup>*

Quanto a nós, se o comunicado faz questão de mencionar na sua primeira linha o compromisso da antiga Administração Obama em «apoiar esforços para uma solução pacífica», de seguida, refere a “consistência” da política dos Estados Unidos sobre o Sahara Ocidental. Ora, se a política estado-unidense em relação ao Sahara Ocidental tem sido consistente desde há muitos anos, e visto que a solução definitiva que satisfaça as partes (em especial os saharuis) tarda a chegar, questiona-se se haverá uma coincidência entre a consistência da política estado-unidense e a persistência do *status quo* no território. Se considerarmos que «Os Estados Unidos deixaram claro que o plano de autonomia de Marrocos é sério, realista e confiável», na verdade, reconhecer o plano de autonomia marroquina ao Sahara Ocidental, implica que a política dos EUA sobre o Sahara é parcial. Com efeito, não será um mero caso que Washington não reconheça a legitimidade da RASD, que almeja «administrar seus próprios assuntos em paz e dignidade», sim, mas sobretudo em independência. Enfim, mais do que retratar aqui os meandros de sentenças da CJUE *vis-à-vis* UE e Marrocos, que são similares ao Parecer Consultivo da CIJ, já aqui abordado, e a presumível parcialidade dos EUA, os Estados ocidentais, os únicos que não reconhecem a RASD, são também os mesmos que constituem os principais destinos quer dos produtos piscatórios, quer do fosfato – produtos controlados, explorados e comercializados pelo Marrocos, segundo revelações feitas pela Democracy Now-Independent Global News, na sequência de uma reportagem que fez *in loco* no Sahara Ocidental em 2018, sob forte controlo e nervosismo de autoridades marroquinas.

Por conseguinte, se de um lado, a não realização do Referendum sobre a auto-determinação do povo saharai pela MINURSO e a inclusão do Sahara Ocidental na lista de territórios por descolonizar e sem um governo soberano (resolução 1542) encorajam as aspirações independentistas da Frente Polisário, de outro lado, a posição ambígua da comunidade internacional e das principais praças diplomáticas, económicas e militares parece legitimar a ocupação marroquina do território *ad eternum*.

#### 4. O idealismo e/ou realismo angolano face à RASD

O Sahara Ocidental continua a ser um dossier com um certo peso na política externa angolana, no continente africano. Todavia, urge situar a intervenção do Estado angolano em vários momentos distintos, embora com o mesmo partido político no governo (MPLA), para melhor entendermos o seu posicionamento em relação àquele dossier e caracterizarmos a acção da sua política externa quer do ponto de vista do idealismo, quer do ponto de vista do realismo.

<sup>8</sup> Portal da Casa Branca (2013), *Joint Statement by the United States of America and the Kingdom of Morocco*. [Consult. 4.jul.2018]. Disponível em: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/22/joint-statement-united-states-america-and-kingdom-morocco>.

Um primeiro olhar não pode deixar de ver a herança ideológica que o partido MPLA abraçou nos primeiros anos da existência da RPA até aos anos 90, por via da sua aproximação quer com a URSS e Cuba, quer com o MNA. Na década de 80, no auge da afirmação da ideologia socialista, Oye Ogubandejo notou que *“a postura pró-Leste de Angola reflecte a inclinação ideológica do partido político ao governo, o MPLA, liderado, até à sua morte, pelo Dr. Agostinho Neto. O MPLA teve muito contacto e relacionamento com Moscovo”* (Ogubandejo, 1981: 254).

Trata-se de uma postura que ao nível das relações internacionais se traduziu numa crítica à dominação dos Estados mais fortes sobre os menos fortes.

Mas a aproximação ideológica com URSS e Cuba, e mais tarde com o MNA, não foi uma estratégia só de condenação do predomínio dos Estados mais potentes nas relações internacionais. Serviu igualmente para moldar a política externa do neo-Estado e da sua afirmação enquanto entidade soberana e independente no contexto interno (face às diátribes verificadas com a FNLA e a UNITA), no contexto africano (face à oposição da sua integração na OUA de Estados africanos que nutriam simpatias pelos dois partidos rivais), e principalmente no contexto internacional, através do estabelecimento de relações diplomáticas bilaterais e da manifestação da sua voz no seio da OUA ou da ONU, respaldada nos valores e princípios específicos de um regime do género e naquele particular contexto. No entanto, se a relação de proximidade ideológica com URSS e Cuba foi determinante para o alcance da independência e a manutenção do poder do MPLA, o seu alinhamento com o MNA forjou grandemente o tipo de política externa a assumir com os demais Estados do mundo, pequenos ou grandes, mais potentes ou menos fortes, e a relação multilateral no seio das organizações regionais e internacionais de que passou a ser membro.

Uma das mais pragmáticas evidências da incorporação dos princípios de Bandung na política de Angola, como os relativos ao «respeito pela soberania e integridade territorial de todas as nações» ou ao «respeito pela justiça e obrigações internacionais», foram patentes no discurso de proclamação da independência nacional proferido pelo primeiro presidente angolano, ao afirmar que

*“a República Popular de Angola, ciente da sua importância e das responsabilidades que lhe cabem no contexto da África Austral e do mundo, reitera a sua solidariedade para com todos os povos oprimidos do mundo, em especial os povos do Zimbabwe e da Namíbia contra a dominação racista.”*

E mais ainda:

*“a República Popular de Angola, País empenhado na luta anti-imperialista, terá por aliados naturais os países africanos, os países socialistas e todas as forças progressistas do Mundo.”<sup>9</sup>*

Os enunciados de «solidariedade para com os povos oprimidos», o «da luta anti-imperialista» e o da «aliança para com os países socialistas», que adquirem uma dimensão normativa em sede da Constituição de independência de 1975, não só se constituíram efectivamente em princípios de orientação da política externa de Angola durante a década de 80 e 90, mas foram-no também durante a II república (1991-2010) e continuam a sê-lo agora na III república, com as readaptações que se impunham decorrentes do contexto internacional pós-muro de Berlim e do advento das lideranças que se sucederam ao nível do partido MPLA. Isto é, de Neto a dos Santos, e deste a Lourenço, estando a política

<sup>9</sup> AAN (2018), *O discurso do Presidente Agostinho Neto na Proclamação da Independência de Angola*. [Consult. 21.out.2018]. Disponível em: [http://www.agostinhoneto.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&id=997:discurso-do-presidente-agostinhoneto-na-proclamacao-da-independencia-de-angola](http://www.agostinhoneto.org/index.php?option=com_content&id=997:discurso-do-presidente-agostinhoneto-na-proclamacao-da-independencia-de-angola).

deste último inserida no contexto da III república em vigor desde 2010, iniciada por dos Santos, um dos protagonistas da II república, que é também o herdeiro da I república (1975-1990) iniciada por Neto.

Por conseguinte, se considerarmos a política externa enquanto “*conduta de um Estado ao nível do engajamento global para alcançar, consolidar ou desenvolver determinados objectivos estratégicos em relação a outros Estados*” (Malaquias, 2011: 5), um segundo olhar tem que ver com os resultados trazidos pela política externa angolana com base naqueles princípios orientadores, e que objectivos Angola alcançou. Aqui, podemos indicar como exemplo o desanuiamento político na região da África Austral na década de 90.

É óbvio que segundo Boniface o termo «desanuiamento» é empregue para “*qualificar as relações Este-Oeste de 1962-1979*”, para determinar “*o abrandamento das tensões entre a URSS e os Estados Unidos*” (Bonifacice et al., 1997: 82). Todavia, proporcionalmente ao abrandamento das tensões entre os dois rivais ideológicos no contexto da Guerra-fria, assistia-se ao agravamento da conflitualidade nas zonas marginais deste conflito, sobretudo em países onde eles exerciam grande influência, entre os quais Angola.

Uma clara manifestação desta conflitualidade ocorreu em 1988, através da Batalha do Kuito Kuanavale, na fronteira Sul entre Angola e Namíbia, sob a ocupação do regime racista do Apartheid. No pós-confronto directo entre as Forças governamentais angolanas, apoiadas pelas cubanas, e as sul-africanas, aliadas à UNITA, assistiu-se finalmente ao

*“desanuiamento político (que) compreende aqueles países cujos reflexos do desfecho da Batalha do Kuito Kuanavale, bem como a emissão de sinais para uma Nova Ordem Mundial – com o fim da Guerra-fria – foram determinantes na mudança do status quo ante, nomeadamente na África do Sul e na Namíbia”* (Agostinho, 2015: 73-74).

Em resumo, deste confronto, determinante para o estabelecimento da actual conjuntura política reinante no triângulo geográfico «Angola-África do Sul-Namíbia», resultou a manutenção daqueles princípios de solidariedade para com os povos oprimidos, alcerçados na estratégia de Neto de 1978, segundo a qual “*Na Namíbia, no Zimbabwe e na África do Sul está a continuação da nossa luta*”<sup>10</sup>, implementada dez anos mais tarde por dos Santos, no culminar da I república. Aliás, a dimensão meramente estatal (Angola, Cuba e África do Sul) dos Acordos de Nova Iorque de 1988, que selaram o desanuiamento político em referência na SADC, foi sucessivamente complementada com os Acordos bilaterais em Bicesse entre o governo de dos Santos e a UNITA, que deram azo à II república.

Na perspectiva da política externa angolana, os princípios orientadores da sua implementação quer no contexto da Guerra-fria, quer no do advento de uma democracia formal, os resultados obtidos não só garantiram a sobrevivência do regime político em Angola, cujo partido MPLA está ainda no poder. Além disso, ligou-se, pela primeira vez, a ideia da pacificação da SADC não mais ao domínio de força de um regime minoritário apoiado pelo *Constructive engagement* da Administração Reagan, mas sim à retirada do solo angolano dos aliados da RPA, que em conjunto com o governo angolano terão posto fim ao mito da invencibilidade das forças do Apartheid.

Por fim, o terceiro olhar refere-se ao posicionamento de Angola em relação ao dossier “Sahara Ocidental” e à relação diplomática que mantém com a RASD.

Com efeito, a integração da RASD como membro da OUA em 1982, de um lado contou com um forte apoio do governo angolano, e de outro, ressalta, mais uma vez, a importância dos princípios acima referidos, ou se quisermos, do idealismo angolano para a solidariedade, auto-determinação e cooperação com povos africanos durante a I república, com reflexos em fases posteriores.

<sup>10</sup> José Ribeiro (2017), *A Namíbia finalmente livre e independente*, [Consult. 19.out.2018]. Disponível em: [http://jornaldeangola.sapo.ao/reportagem/a\\_namibia\\_finalmente\\_livre\\_e\\_independente](http://jornaldeangola.sapo.ao/reportagem/a_namibia_finalmente_livre_e_independente).

Estes princípios orientadores, já em sede da II república, adquiriram uma dimensão incontornável que coincidiu com a afirmação do «modelo da política externa angolana» no continente africano, relançado pelos Acordos de Nova Iorque e pelo reconhecimento da legitimidade do governo angolano pelos Estados Unidos, em 1993. É assim que, mesmo mantendo relações diplomáticas com Marrocos, que ocupa o Sahara Ocidental desde a Marcha Verde, Angola mantém-se como um dos mais importantes apoiantes da causa da Frente Polisário à auto-determinação. Assim, o reconhecimento da legitimidade governamental de Luanda pelos Estados Unidos, que por vezes parece favorecer a linha marroquina, não condicionou a manifestação da solidariedade angolana para com o povo saharui.

Pelo contrário, neste período constata-se a reafirmação do apoio angolano à RASD em *fora* internacionais e regionais e em encontros bilaterais entre as autoridades angolanas e os representantes do povo saharui. A título exemplificativo, durante a XXII cimeira dos Chefes de Estado e de governo da UA, em 2014, o então Vice-presidente de Angola, Manuel Vicente, afirmou que *“A questão do Sahara Ocidental e o direito do seu povo à auto-determinação devem constituir prioridade da agenda da União Africana.”*<sup>11</sup> Oração congruente foi igualmente manifestada, no corrente ano, pelo ministro angolano de relações exteriores, Manuel Augusto, segundo o qual *“A nossa posição, independentemente da nossa relação com Marrocos, é uma posição de princípio. Somos daqueles que defendem que deve ser o povo sarauí a decidir o seu destino. Se a escolha for a independência, deve ser dada.”*<sup>12</sup>

A consolidação deste apoio é fruto do prestígio que Angola granjeou (e procura manter) pela via da resolução definitiva do seu conflito militar, emergindo como actor fundamental para a estabilidade política em África. Pode-se mesmo afirmar que a postura de Angola como actor crucial para a paz e estabilidade no continente se manteve nos últimos anos, não obstante os altos e baixos no seu dinamismo, fruto da adaptação à crise do preço do petróleo no mercado internacional, que retirou alguma liquidez à intervenção da diplomacia no continente. Assim se explica a preferência pelas políticas multilaterais no seio da CIRGL, da CEEAC, da SADC e da UA, onde assumiu recorrentemente a presidência do órgão de paz e segurança. Esta recalibração pragmática teve como focus permitir a concretização positiva do seu operato, tal como afirma Paula Cristina Roque, para quem a *“mudança para multilateral visou aumentar o espaço de manobra e proteger interesses específicos”* (Roque, 2017: 17).

Contudo, neste interim, assiste-se também à consolidação da permanência marroquina no Sahara Ocidental com acções de natureza diplomática, económica e de defesa contra a insurgência da Frente Polisário dentro dos limites impostos pelo muro de divisão daquele território. Em consequência disso, no culminar do seu mandato como membro não permanente do Conselho de Segurança das Nações Unidas, em dezembro de 2016, Angola reconheceu a desunião dos membros do conselho na discussão do tema “Sahara Ocidental”, o que em nosso ver constitui um ganho da diplomacia marroquina, ao convencer membros daquele órgão a não tratarem do dossier e não reconhecer a RASD.

Na verdade, o manifesto desinteresse dos membros daquele conselho, presumivelmente a França e os Estados Unidos, é «consistente» com as suas políticas de cooperação bilateral com o Reino de Marrocos. Por exemplo, em 2008, o Departamento de Estado da Administração Bush Jr. anunciava que *“Um Estado saharui independente não é uma opção*

<sup>11</sup> Angop (2014), *Angola quer Sahara Ocidental nas prioridades da União Africana*. [Consult. 7.abr.2018]. Disponível em: [http://www.angop.ao/angola/pt\\_pt/noticias/politica/2014/05/Etiopia-Angola-quer-Sahara-Ocidental-nas-prioridades-Uniao-Africana,8eco4a35-8e1b-4e61-ba60-33167f8004ba.html](http://www.angop.ao/angola/pt_pt/noticias/politica/2014/05/Etiopia-Angola-quer-Sahara-Ocidental-nas-prioridades-Uniao-Africana,8eco4a35-8e1b-4e61-ba60-33167f8004ba.html).

<sup>12</sup> Pronunciamentos feitos à margem da participação de Angola na 32.ª Sessão Ordinária da Comissão Executiva da União Africana, em janeiro de 2018.

*realista. Em nossa visão, alguma forma de autonomia sob soberania marroquina é o único caminho realista para resolver este conflito de longa data*” (Human Rights Watch, 2008: 38), enquanto que “*tradicionalmente a França tem sido consistentemente a mais solidária com o Marrocos, chegando-lhe a fornecer regularmente com armas durante a fase quente do conflito (1975-1991), e até mesmo a tomar uma acção militar reactiva contra o exército polissário em 1977-8*” (Darbouche e Colombo, *op. cit.*, p. 6).

A França é igualmente “*o principal fornecedor de ajuda bilateral a Marrocos, com 220 milhões de Euros concedidos em 2006, totalizando 53 % do total de ajuda prestada pelos países pertencentes à OCDE*” (Human Rights Watch, *op. cit.*, p. 40).

Não obstante este quadro desigual, o continuado apoio angolano à RASD vai além da simples observância dos princípios orientadores (que devem ser flexíveis) da política externa angolana, já que revelam não só a predisposição de Angola para o respeito pelas resoluções e normas emanadas das organizações multilaterais de que é parte, mas também a predisposição para um certo idealismo comportamental ao nível internacional, padrão do seu agir, em prejuízo do realismo decorrente dos interesses tangíveis que os Estados podem e devem esperar da sua condução no cenário global. Se nos interesses tangíveis as autoridades angolanas incluírem o prestígio de que gozam junto da RASD e das suas congéneres africanas, então o idealismo comportamentista justifica-se totalmente.

De outro modo, questionar-se-ia se o prestígio é o único interesse que o Estado deve perseguir na sua relação com os demais actores, ou se haverá, além deste, outros interesses materiais que são igualmente úteis. Esta última componente material faz-nos pensar nos acordos de pesca que a UE vem rubricando com o Reino de Marrocos, mesmo sabendo que o Sahara Ocidental, e de consequência o seu mar, é internacionalmente não reconhecido como parte do território marroquino, como aliás, a própria Corte de Justiça da União Europeia determinou em sentença em 2016 e em 2018. A UE, ao estabelecer tais acordos com Marrocos, persegue interesse material ou prestígio internacional? A cooperação bilateral entre a França, os Estados Unidos e o Marrocos, que fins persegue?

Certo, aqui parece-nos que o conceito de Malaquias sobre a política externa justifica a inserção que faz de países africanos na segunda categoria, a do alcance de “objectivos domésticos modestos” (*ibidem*), e ao reconhecê-lo não significa entrarmos em contradição, por razões de contextualização e operacionalização daquele conceito na I república e nas duas posteriores. Ora, se durante as décadas de 80-90, os objectivos havidos pela política externa angolana não podem ser “modestos”, com a consolidação do seu modelo e do prestígio adquiridos na década de 2010, o idealismo angolano começou a dar azo ao realismo, sem contudo abandonar a relevância dos princípios idealistas, que são fundamentais para a justificação do seu agir pragmático.

Por conseguinte, tal como ocorrido no contexto do conflito militar, em que as autoridades angolanas “*imbuídos do espírito realista – Realpolitik – souberam interpretar o pensamento realista sobre a maximização do poder [...] na defesa da soberania e da integridade territorial de Angola*” (Agostinho, 2015: 63), a partir dos últimos anos do governo dos Santos, começou-se a notar fortes sinais de aproximação e do fortalecimento das relações bilaterais entre Marrocos e Angola.

Em junho de 2017, o então ministro das relações exteriores de Angola, Georges Chikoty, efectuou uma visita oficial ao Reino de Marrocos, a primeira em décadas de um ministro angolano àquele país africano, durante a qual foram assinados dois acordos relativos à supressão de vistos em passaportes diplomáticos e de serviço e a consultas bilaterais sobre assuntos de interesse de ambas as partes. Apesar de tentativas de dissuasão para a não realização desta visita por parte do embaixador saharai em Luanda, a sua efectiva realização revela a assunção pelas autoridades angolanas de uma nova postura na sua relação



bilateral com Marrocos, que na perspetiva de Joaquim de Espírito Santo, ex-director de África e Médio Oriente daquele ministério angolano, “*estabelece uma nova era nessas relações.*”<sup>13</sup>

Ato contínuo, o rei marroquino, Mohamed VI, e o novo Chefe de Estado angolano, João Lourenço, além de se terem encontrado à margem de cimeiras da UA em 2018, levaram os seus ministros de relações exteriores, Nasser Bourita e Manuel Augusto, respetivamente, a visitarem-se reciprocamente (Luanda, em junho, e Rabat, em julho do corrente ano). Acresce que Bourita, por ter sido enviado especial de Mohamed VI, foi recebido em audiência pelo presidente angolano.

Esta «nova era» nas relações angolano-marroquinas, que são obviamente positivas também para as autoridades marroquinas, não só podem ser vantajosas para a economia de ambos os países<sup>14</sup>, mas revelam também o novo pragmatismo na política externa angolana *vis-à-vis* a Marrocos e a sua influência na resolução do “dossier Sahara Ocidental”.

*A priori*, será de esperar que as autoridades marroquinas solicitem às suas congéneres angolanas a “neutralidade” relativamente ao Sahara Ocidental, indispensável ao aprofundamento desta “nova era” na sua relação bilateral e ao estabelecimento de uma cooperação *Win-Win*, já que Marrocos, como afirmou o ministro Augusto, teria um potencial e experiência em determinados sectores necessários a Angola para o processo da diversificação da sua economia e do desancorar-se do petróleo.

*A posteriori*, ao ceder à solicitação de “neutralidade”, Angola estaria perante uma mudança de princípios idealistas na sua política externa jamais vista nos últimos 20 anos, já que, e como abordámos anteriormente, foram aqueles princípios que nortearam a sua intervenção no contexto internacional durante os anos conturbados da sua história recente e os mesmos que a levaram a reconhecer a RASD. A ser assim, mesmo negando a referida neutralidade hipoteticamente exigida pelas autoridades marroquinas como *conditio sine qua non* ao *Win-Win*, Angola precisará recalibrar a sua postura em relação ao Sahara Ocidental, passando de uma prioridade ao nível bilateral com a RASD (com a qual poderá manter relações bilaterais) para o nível multilateral no seio da UA, como de resto assinalou o antigo Vice-presidente angolano em 2014, visto que não poderá manter o mesmo nível de relações diplomáticas com a RASD e com Marrocos sem ferir os interesses e as expectativas de uma ou de outro (a tentativa de dissuasão ao ministro Chikoty é uma prova disso).

Entretanto, uma das provas aparentes desta passagem a prioridade da agenda da UA – o que não implica necessariamente a aceitação ou negação da neutralidade de Angola – é a criação na cimeira de Nouakchot, em junho de 2018, de um órgão que doravante se ocupará do conflito que opõe Marrocos aos saharuis, embora, para estes últimos, o “*problema é, por excelência, uma questão de descolonização da última colónia em África. Tal explica porque a União Africana não pode distanciar-se de toda a solução do problema*”<sup>15</sup>. Esta determinação saharui à independência constituirá um banco de provas à implementação do pragmatismo angolano na sua relação com Marrocos, sem prejudicar os princípios que sempre defendeu e as aspirações saharuis à auto-determinação.

<sup>13</sup> Pronunciamentos feitos à Panapress Angola, em 20.06.2017.

<sup>14</sup> Durante a visita de Nasser Bourita a Luanda, o seu homólogo angolano, Manuel Augusto, reconheceu o potencial e a experiência marroquina em setores de energias renováveis, agricultura, exploração mineira e no domínio industrial e de prestação de serviço, bem como a necessidade de realizar “um grande encontro empresarial” entre investidores dos dois países, cuja atividade necessita ainda de enquadramento institucional. Cfr. Portal Angop, *Mohamed VI do Marrocos quer reforço da cooperação com Angola*, 21 de junho 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Palavras do Embaixador saharui em Angola, Bah Cheik Mohamed, durante a entrevista ao Angop, em 22 de setembro de 2018.

Por seu lado, Marrocos, para quem o Sahara Ocidental “*será marroquino até à eternidade*”<sup>16</sup> não dá sinais de renúncia à ocupação daquele território, mesmo depois de ter sido readmitida no seio da UA. Em nosso ver, o seu regresso à organização continental visa fundamentalmente legitimar a sua administração soberana no Sahara Ocidental, através do envolvimento da própria UA, que não terá mais margens de manobra para condenar a sua permanência aí quer dentro quer fora da organização. Como se não bastasse, a reaproximação diplomática com os principais países apoiantes da causa saharui, entre os quais Angola, visa igualmente colocar em dificuldades as relações entre a RASD e esses países. Esta hipótese poderá ocorrer a partir do momento em que Marrocos e Argélia, que hospeda a base militar da Polisário, melhorar também as suas relações, o que poderá resultar no fim ou na redução de apoio à Frente e à RASD, quer ao nível bilateral, quer ao nível multilateral, sobretudo em África.

Por conseguinte, a distinção entre o idealismo e o realismo angolano na sua relação com o Sahara Ocidental, durante a era do presidente João Lourenço e do retorno de Marrocos como membro da UA, poderá ser evidenciada determinando se o governo angolano se afasta de Marrocos para apoiar a causa saharui (idealismo), se se afasta dessa causa a fim de maximizar seu ganho material (realismo), numa presunta “neutralidade”, ou então, se se aproxima ao Marrocos e mantém a sua relação com a RASD, numa equação de ambiguidade que poderá resultar em conflitos de interesses e de princípios. Em todos os casos, só o tempo e a prática dirão o quão realista, idealista ou ambígua será a relação de Angola com Marrocos e com a RASD.

## Acrónimos

AEIA – Agência Internacional de Energia Atómica  
 ANC – African National Congress (Congresso Nacional Africano)  
 APO – African People’s Organization (Organização Popular Africana)  
 CEAUP – Centro de Estudos Africanos da Universidade do Porto  
 CEEAC – Comunidade Económica dos Estados da África Central  
 CIJ – Corte Internacional de Justiça  
 CIRGL – Comissão Internacional da Região dos Grandes Lagos  
 CJUE – Corte de Justiça da União Europeia  
 EUA – Estados Unidos da América  
 FAAN – Fundação António Agostinho Neto  
 FNLA – Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola  
 FRENTE POLISÁRIO – Frente Popular de Libertação de Saguia el Hamra e Rio d’Oro  
 MINURSO – Missão das Nações Unidas para o Referendum no Sahara Ocidental  
 MNA – Movimento dos Não-Alinhados  
 MPLA – Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola  
 OCDE – Organização para a Cooperação Económica e Desenvolvimento  
 ONU – Organização das Nações Unidas  
 OUA – Organização de Unidade Africana  
 RASD/SADR – República Árabe Saharai Democrática  
 RPA – República Popular de Angola  
 SADC – Comunidade de Desenvolvimento dos Países da África Austral  
 UA – União Africana  
 UNITA – União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola  
 URSS – União das Repúblicas Socialistas Soviéticas

<sup>16</sup> Palavras pronunciadas pelo rei Mohamed VI, por ocasião da celebração do 42.º aniversário da Marcha Verde.

## Referências bibliográficas

- Agostinho, Issau (2018), *Angola: formação e democratização do Estado*, Roma: Edizioni Nuova Cultura.
- (2015), *A Batalha do Kuito Kuanavale e o desanuiamento político na África Austral*, Roma: Edizioni Nuova Cultura.
- Bobbio, Roberto (1984), *Il futuro della democrazia*, Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore.
- Boniface, Pascal *et al.* (1997), *Dicionário das Relações Internacionais*, Lisboa: Plátano Ed. Técnicas.
- Byers, Michael (2004), *Agreeing to disagree: Security Council Resolution 1441 and International Ambiguity*, *Global Governance*, 10(2), 165-186. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27800520>.
- Darbouche, Hakim, Silvia, Colombo (2010), *The EU, Civil Society and Conflict. Transformation in Western Sahara: The Failure of Disengagement*, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex.
- Human Rights Watch (2008), *Human Rights in Western Sahara and in the Tindouf Refugee Camps*, New York: Human Rights Watch.
- Gumede, William Mervin (2008), *Thabo Mbeki and the Battle for the soul of the ANC*, London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Maluquias, Assis (2011), *Angola's Foreign Policy: Pragmatic Recalibrations*, South African Institute of International Affairs, Occasional Paper N.º 84, pp. 1-17.
- Marziali, Alice *et al.* (2009), *Il processo di identificazione per il Referendum nel Sahara Occidentale. Analisi e Contraddizioni*, Bologna: CISP.
- Ogubandejo, Oye (1981), *Angola: Ideology and pragmatism in Foreign Policy*, *International Affairs*, Vol. 57, Issue 2, 1 April 1981, pp. 254-269. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2619163>.
- Rossi, Gianluigi (2010), *L'Africa verso l'unità. Dagli stati indipendenti all'Atto di Unione di Lomé*, Roma: Edizione Nuova Cultura.
- Roque, Ana Paula (2017), *Angola's Africa Policy*, Bruxelas: Egmont Paper 98, The Royal Institute for International Relations.

## Sitografia

- Angop [Portal] (2018), *Angola: o Embaixador saharui reafirma direito à autodeterminação da RASD*. [Consult. 24.out.2018]. Disponível em: [http://www.angop.ao/angola/pt\\_pt/noticias/africa/2018/8/38/Angola-Embaixador-saharui-reafirma-direito-autodeterminacao-RASD,id5ac4c2-fac2-4a36-af54-a6fca1c82d9.html](http://www.angop.ao/angola/pt_pt/noticias/africa/2018/8/38/Angola-Embaixador-saharui-reafirma-direito-autodeterminacao-RASD,id5ac4c2-fac2-4a36-af54-a6fca1c82d9.html).
- (2017), *Mohamed VI do Marrocos quer reforço da cooperação com Angola*. [Consult. 4.agos.2018]. Disponível em: [http://m.portalangop.co.ao/angola/pt\\_pt/mobile/noticias/politica/2018/5/25/Mohamed-Marrocos-quer-reforco-cooperacao-com-Angola,cafo0985-a98b-48b6-856e-c66ef0657bfb.html?version=mobile](http://m.portalangop.co.ao/angola/pt_pt/mobile/noticias/politica/2018/5/25/Mohamed-Marrocos-quer-reforco-cooperacao-com-Angola,cafo0985-a98b-48b6-856e-c66ef0657bfb.html?version=mobile).
- (2014), *Angola quer o Sahara Ocidental nas prioridades da agenda da União Africana*. [Consult. 7.abr.2018]. Disponível em: [http://www.angop.ao/angola/pt\\_pt/noticias/politica/2014/05/Etiopia-Angola-quer-Sahara-Ocidental-nas-prioridades-Uniao-Africana,8eco4a35-8e1b-4e61-ba60-33167f8004ba.html](http://www.angop.ao/angola/pt_pt/noticias/politica/2014/05/Etiopia-Angola-quer-Sahara-Ocidental-nas-prioridades-Uniao-Africana,8eco4a35-8e1b-4e61-ba60-33167f8004ba.html).
- Belkassam Yassine (2017), *Marocco. Il re Mohamed VI, "Il Sahara resterà marocchino fino all'eternità"*. [Consult. 20.out.2018]. Disponível em: <https://www.notiziegeopolitiche.net/marocco-re-mohammed-vi-il-sahara-restera-marocchino-fino-alleternit/>.
- Casa Branca [Portal] (2013), *Joint Statement by the United States of America and the Kingdom of Morocco*. [Consult. 4.jul.2018]. Disponível em: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/22/joint-statement-united-states-america-and-kingdom-morocco>.

- Corte Internacional de Justiça [Portal] (1974); *Western Sahara. Overview of the case*. [Consult. 2.out.2018]. Disponível em: <https://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/61>.
- FAAN [Portal] (2018), *O discurso do Presidente Agostinho Neto na Proclamação da Independência de Angola*. [Consult. 21.out.2018]. Disponível em: [http://www.agostinhoneto.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&id=997:discurso-do-presidente-agostinho-neto-na-proclamacao-da-independencia-de-angola](http://www.agostinhoneto.org/index.php?option=com_content&id=997:discurso-do-presidente-agostinho-neto-na-proclamacao-da-independencia-de-angola).
- Fernando Petrolito (2015), *Sahara occidentale: la corte di giustizia dell'Ue annulla accordo commerciale col Marocco*, 17/12/2015. [Consult. 4.agos.2018]. Disponível em: <https://www.unifonews.it/sahara-occidentale-la-corte-di-justizia-dellue-annulla-acordo-commerciale-col-marocco/>.
- José Ribeiro (2017), *A Namíbia finalmente livre e independente*. [Consult. 19.out.2018]. Disponível em: [http://jornaldeangola.sapo.ao/reportagem/a\\_namibia\\_finalmente\\_livre\\_e\\_independente](http://jornaldeangola.sapo.ao/reportagem/a_namibia_finalmente_livre_e_independente).
- Nações Unidas [Portal] (2002), *Resolution 1441(2002)*. [Consult. 5.out.2018]. Disponível em: <http://www.un.org/Depts/unmovic/documents/1441.pdf>.
- \_\_\_\_ (1991), *Question of Western Sahara. Resolution 690(1991)*. [Consult. 4.out.2018]. Disponível em: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/46/a46ro67.htm>.
- \_\_\_\_ (1979), *The continued occupation of Western Sahara by Morocco*. [Consult. 21.set.2018]. Disponível em: <https://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/34/a34res37.pdf>.
- \_\_\_\_ (1978), *Security Council Resolution 435(1978): Namibia*. [Consult. 21.set.2018]. Disponível em: <https://peacemaker.un.org/namibia-resolution435>.
- \_\_\_\_ (1974), *Question of Spanish Sahara*. [Consult. 13.set.2018]. Disponível em: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/738/94/IMG/NR073894.pdf?OpenElement>.
- \_\_\_\_ (1960), *Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly during its Fifteenth Session. Resolution 1542(1960)*. [Consult. 10.out.2018]. Disponível em: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/153/16/IMG/NR015316.pdf?OpenElement>.
- Pana Press [Portal] (2017), *Angola e Marrocos Suprimem vistos em Passaportes de Serviço*. [Consult. 4.jul.2018]. Disponível em: <http://www.panapress.cms-france.net/Angola-e-Marrocos-suprimem-vistos-em-passaportes-de-servico--3-630515996-47-lang4-index.html>.





# À margem da margem: a retórica brasileira para não reconhecer a República Árabe Saaraui Democrática (RASD)

Renatho Costa\* e Rodrigo Duque Estrada\*\*

pp. 237-253

Todo ano, o Brasil, tradicionalmente abre os trabalhos na Assembleia Geral da ONU e o discurso dos representantes do país, além de abordar alguns aspectos da política nacional, enfatiza os valores que o Estado defende internacionalmente, especialmente no que tange a resolução de conflitos a partir da via pacífica (Cervo e Bueno, 2012; Brigação e Fernandes, 2012). Inclusive nos períodos de governos mais despóticos, os oradores brasileiros utilizaram a retórica democrática no discurso aos seus pares para demonstrar que defendiam algo que, via de regra, o país não aplicava internamente. Um caso flagrante desse procedimento pode ser percebido no discurso do chanceler Vasco Leitão da Cunha, em 1964, mesmo ano em que os militares deram um golpe de Estado. Na ocasião, pautando seu discurso nas diretrizes apontadas pelo então presidente/ditador Castello Branco (1964-1967), no que viria a ser conhecida como “Política Externa Independente”, abordou questões relacionadas ao alinhamento político e ao perigo do socialismo, mas deu ênfase ao direito de autodeterminação às colônias africanas e mesmo à extensão do conceito.

*Já se chamou a Carta de São Francisco de “Carta da Descolonização”. O epíteto é justo, mas seria mais exato – e mais rico de sentido – se qualificado pelo adjetivo pacífico. Os homens do futuro seguramente se referirão ao Capítulo XI da Carta como ao instrumento político de libertação, por meios pacíficos, dos povos coloniais, e prestarão homenagem à sabedoria, à prudência e à visão dos estadistas que redigiram aquele documento. Através da aplicação paulatina, ordeira e pacífica da Carta e das resoluções pertinentes desta organização, mais da metade da humanidade acedeu à independência, mediante a prática do princípio da autodeterminação. A Organização, na sua sabedoria, transformou-se não só no instrumento acelerador da marcha dos povos coloniais para a independência, como tem servido de quadro legal e político para as negociações e os entendimentos necessários para que a evolução se realize por meios pacíficos. As exceções só realçam a previsão e a sabedoria da Carta. Devemos preservar e aperfeiçoar a experiência adquirida pelas Nações Unidas em matéria de*

\* Universidade Federal do Pampa (UNIPAMPA).

\*\* Universidade Federal de Pelotas (UFPEL).

<sup>1</sup> Optou-se por utilizar a classificação de “Política Externa Independente” para o modelo implementado durante o governo de Castello Branco, contudo, cabe a ressalva de que este não tinha as mesmas diretrizes dos governos anteriores, Jânio Quadros (1961) e João Goulart (1961-1964). No caso de Castello Branco, ocorreu o incontestável alinhamento político aos Estados Unidos, porém, no que tange ao aspecto comercial, não se fazia qualquer restrição para quem exportar. Assim, torna-se aplicável o conceito, desde que com as devidas reservas.

*descolonização. Essa experiência permitiu à organização e aos Estados-membros cumprirem as suas obrigações sem aumentar as tensões internacionais. Ao contrário, o método pacífico de descolonização tem sido, em geral, instrumento de paz, de conservação da paz e de reforço da paz [...] O exercício do direito de autodeterminação é para nós um conceito amplo, que vai além dos problemas do colonialismo. Esse direito devem poder exercê-lo todos os povos, e penso particularmente no povo alemão, até hoje dividido por uma fronteira que não tem razão de ser, sujeito a restrições que não se coadunam com o espírito de nossa Carta (Cunha apud Corrêa, 2007: 196-197).*

Ainda que o discurso reforçasse os valores que o patrono da diplomacia brasileira, Barão do Rio Branco, defendeu e implementou nas ações que vieram a estabelecer as fronteiras do Brasil, de fato, os processos históricos mostraram que, muitas vezes, os discursos às autoridades na ONU não eram condizentes com a prática. Seja como reflexo da situação política de exceção que o Brasil vivenciou de 1964 a 1985 (Ditadura Militar), ou mesmo devido à forte influência que os Estados Unidos exerciam, e exercem, no continente americano, ainda que o direito à autodeterminação seja reconhecido pelo Estado e defendido pela diplomacia brasileira, sua aplicabilidade tende a ser relativizada quando se trata da questão do Saara Ocidental.

Nesse sentido, este artigo visa analisar o posicionamento do Brasil perante a questão do Saara Ocidental a partir de 1975. A data proposta diz respeito ao momento em que deveria cessar a atuação colonial espanhola na região então conhecida como Saara Espanhol. Porém, com a invasão marroquina à região no mesmo ano e o acirramento dos conflitos entre a população saarauí e os invasores, teve início uma guerra que se estendeu até 1991.

Partindo dos pressupostos acima, aventa-se a hipótese de que a questão do Saara Ocidental seja um caso típico de impossibilidade de solução devido à interferência de atores preponderantes do sistema internacional – Estados Unidos e França, prioritariamente – e que essa influência seja irradiada às organizações internacionais, impossibilitando que se alcance a independência dos saaraúis. Assim, como o Brasil não teria condições/interesses de se posicionar de acordo com os valores historicamente defendidos por sua diplomacia, simplesmente buscaria o alinhamento automático às deliberações da ONU que, nesse caso, tendem a não solucionar a questão e fazer com que se arraste indefinidamente.

No intuito de alcançar os objetivos propostos, este artigo apresenta um breve histórico sobre a situação do Saara Ocidental a partir da década de 1970, e, na sequência, demonstra o posicionamento do Brasil – exposto através de documentos oficiais, discursos de chanceleres ou presidentes e entrevistas do representante da Frente Polisário – sobre o tema específico e congêneres.

## **Têm Início os Eventos no Saara Ocidental**

Um dos questionamentos mais enfáticos acerca da aplicabilidade do direito de autodeterminação ao povo que habita o Saara Ocidental advém do reino de Marrocos e se fundamenta no debate sobre sua identidade como nação, pois para a monarquia, os saaraúis fariam parte do que convencionaram chamar de “Grande Marrocos”, projeto geopolítico de cunho imperialista que entrou em voga na conjuntura de instabilidade desenhada após o processo de independência, em 1956. Efetivamente, nessa alegação, deixa-se de considerar dois aspectos importantes, quais sejam, primeiramente, de que

as Nações Unidas já reconhecem esse direito<sup>2</sup> desde 1963, e, em segundo lugar, de que a própria construção do sentimento nacional saaraui se deu a partir do processo de interação entre as populações autóctones e o colonizador – que já havia passado por esse processo anteriormente, na Europa. Inclusive, é no fomento do nacionalismo saaraui que desencadear-se-á a ruptura com o processo de dominação.

Assim, de fato, as populações que viviam na região em que hoje se encontra o Saara Ocidental tinham outras características, eram nômades, não tinham um modelo político-organizacional como os Estados, mas mantinham uma relação de proximidade entre as tribos devido a elementos comuns que as ligavam, seja pela religião<sup>3</sup>, o idioma ou mesmo os costumes (Hodges, 1983; Miguel, 1995). Nesse sentido, da chegada dos primeiros europeus à região – portugueses – até a derradeira ocupação colonial que a Espanha (1884-1975) impôs, houve uma influência direta no processo de construção e fortalecimento dos laços nacionais entre as tribos e, como resultado, o que era percebido como “laços naturais” se converteu em “vínculo nacional”.

A própria potência colonizadora, no intuito de demarcar sua zona de atuação das demais que colonizavam o continente africano, tinha interesse em que a população que vivia na região do Saara Espanhol se reconhecesse como vinculada àquele território. E, esse processo de *fortalecimento identitário* em detrimento aos povos circunvizinhos não pode ser considerado como forçado, pois o vínculo prévio já existia. Entretanto, há de se considerar que outras características da população foram alteradas, até porque, a Espanha pretendia explorar economicamente a região e o estilo de vida nômade do saaraui não era condizente com o modelo proposto. Assim, o processo de urbanização se intensificou, primeiramente, com a exploração da pesca e, depois, com o descobrimento de fosfato<sup>4</sup> e sua exploração industrial.

Diante desse cenário, uma parcela substancial da população migrou para as cidades, sedentarizando-se, e, se por um lado, passou a atender aos interesses da potência colonizadora com mão de obra barata, também se abriu a possibilidade para que tomasse contato com ideologias que explicavam o processo de exploração dos povos e o direito que teriam de seguir como nação livre e soberana.

De fato, os embates coloniais que se seguiram durante a primeira metade do século XX entre França e Espanha pautavam-se, basicamente, na disputa territorial e de fronteiras (Hodges, 1983; Miguel, 1995), por conseguinte, repercutiram-se em Marrocos e no Saara Espanhol. A diferença mais marcante no caso das colônias foi o fato de que o Marrocos conseguiu obter sua independência frente à França em 1956 e o Saara Espanhol foi levado a iniciar, posteriormente, uma guerra contra a Espanha que somente teve fim em 1976, quando os marroquinos passaram a exercer a função de colonizador. Antes de tratarmos dessa transição entre “colonizadores”, cabe ressaltar que na década de 1960, já inserida no processo de descolonização, a manutenção de uma população cativa a outra soava com algo inadmissível, principalmente para quem já havia assumido sua identidade e esta não era compartilhada com o colonizador. É nesse contexto também que surge o Terceiro-Mundo como força política no cenário internacional, especialmente pelo ativismo pró-descolonização que países afro-asiáticos tiveram na

<sup>2</sup> A Resolução 2229 (XXI), aprovada pela Assembleia Geral em 20 de dezembro de 1966, reconheceu “o direito inalienável do povo do Saara Espanhol à autodeterminação”, no entanto, essa questão já vinha sendo tratada desde 1963, quando o Saara Espanhol foi incluído na lista de territórios não autônomos e pendentes de descolonização.

<sup>3</sup> A islamização se deu dentre os séculos VIII e IX.

<sup>4</sup> Em 1962 o Instituto Nacional da Indústria criou a companhia ENMINSA (Empresa Nacional de Mineração do Saara) para explorar a reserva de fosfato de Bu Craa. Durante os anos seguintes também foram prospectadas possíveis reservas de petróleo, inclusive com a participação de outras empresas estrangeiras. Contudo, devido ao alto investimento requerido para sua exploração, foi considerado inviável naquele momento (Martín, 2010).

Assembleia Geral da ONU e na busca por uma Nova Ordem Econômica Internacional que realizasse plenamente o desejo de autodeterminação dos povos colonizados. Por tais razões o surgimento de movimentos políticos independentistas no Saara Espanhol se intensificou nesse período. O questionamento ainda se dava de modo pacífico e, em certa medida, buscando a conciliação de interesses da população local e da colonizadora. Em vista do cenário internacional propício, essa demanda chegou à ONU em 1966:

*La Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas aprobó la resolución 2229 el 20 de diciembre de 1966, solicitó a España la realización de un referéndum para que los Saharauis pudieran expresar libremente sus aspiraciones y decidir su futuro. Sin embargo, el Gobierno franquista le dio largas al asunto y el referéndum no llegó a celebrarse. En ese contexto, las autoridades españolas tampoco aceptaron el movimiento recién creado por Bassiri, lo que hizo que permaneciera en la clandestinidad, hasta mediados de 1970 (Abdalahe, 2015: 57).*

No início da década de 1970, com o Saara Ocidental ainda sob colonização espanhola, a população saarauí já reivindicava seu direito à autodeterminação e buscava se organizar de modo que o processo pudesse ser o mais pacífico possível, inclusive, uma das maiores lideranças saarauís, Mohamed Sidi Ibrahim Bassiri, fundador do Movimento de Libertação (Harakat Tahir), atribuía à Espanha a responsabilidade pela transição. Em certa medida, apesar das ideias nacionalistas de Bassiri apontarem para a independência imediata, baseada no próprio direito de autodeterminação de seu povo, seu entendimento acerca do contexto internacional e do significado político do Saara Ocidental para a Espanha, o fez deixar claro que a opção pela via não-revolucionária seria prioritária.

Alheia a essa sinalização dos saarauís, a Espanha mantinha-se irredutível a qualquer tipo de negociação e, atuando na contramão da História e do que propunha a ONU, resolveu agir como um colonizador tradicional e reprimir qualquer tipo de manifestação que questionasse reivindicações autóctones. Diante dessa postura e, com o assassinato de Bassiri após “a Grande Manifestação” – um evento que contou com maciça participação popular em El Aiun, em 1970 –, houve o desencadeamento de uma nova vertente de resistência. O Movimento de Libertação iniciou um processo de sensibilização da população saarauí pela necessidade da luta armada e enfrentamento ao inimigo colonizador. Também estendia essa luta ao reino do Marrocos que propagava sua intenção em anexar o território do Saara Espanhol sob a alegação de que fazia parte do “Grande Marrocos”.

A primeira metade da década de 1970 se converteu no surgimento dos movimentos de guerrilha e no fortalecimento do nacionalismo (Martín, 2010). Também, deu vida à Frente Popular de Libertação de Saguía el Hamra e Río de Oro, ou, simplesmente, Frente Polisário, cuja finalidade era organizar a luta armada no território. Fundada em 1973, seu embate com a potência colonizadora surtiu efeito pois, “disturbances in the territory and mounting political pressure, externally and internally, drove Spain to propose a declaration of internal autonomy as move toward full self-determination. The Spanish authorities decided that a population census should be carried out” (Jensen, 2012: 15).

À parte o encaminhamento que o governo espanhol havia dado à questão, durante todo o período, o reino de Marrocos procurava evitar a aplicação das resoluções da ONU deslegitimando aqueles que lutavam pela independência. Nesse sentido, a estratégia consistia em fomentar a criação de organizações que, supostamente, falariam em nome dos saarauís. Com isso, tentava-se desconstruir a unidade do nacionalismo saarauí e mesmo o interesse pela autodeterminação.

*Diversos grupos van a surgir a principio de los años setenta. Unos van a estar creados por Marruecos, como el Movimiento Revolucionario de los Hombres Azules (MOREHOB) liderado por el fantasmal Eduardo Moha, o el Movimiento 21 de Agosto, que en ocasiones firmó comunicados conjuntos con el MOREHOB. El MOREHOB no pasó nunca más allá de las carpetas secretas de los servicios de información y jamás tuvo ni un solo militante ni combatiente en el Sahara ni en sus fronteras. Finalmente, también es de inspiración marroquí el "Frente de Liberación y Unidad", creado por Marruecos em marzo de 1975 para suceder al "Movimiento del 21 de agosto", también creado por Marruecos (Miguel, 1995: 88).*

O interesse de Hassan II, rei do Marrocos, em anexar o Saara Ocidental era evidente e já vinha sendo exposto à Espanha, contudo, não conseguia obter êxito. Inclusive, a ambição do monarca fez com que fosse levada uma consulta à Corte Internacional de Justiça (CIJ) sobre a legitimidade de seu pleito. Em 16 de outubro de 1975 a CIJ "largely dismissed Morocco and Mauritania's historical claims to Western Sahara. What minimal ties existed the court highlighted, were not sufficient ground to deny the Western Saharans their rights to self-determination"<sup>5</sup> (Zunes e Mundy, 2010: 05). A resposta de Marrocos foi a mobilização de tropas no sul do país, já conjecturando a possibilidade de invasão, caso sua última manobra fosse inviabilizada. Nesse caso, dizia respeito às tentativas que estavam sendo feitas com o governo espanhol para que o Saara Ocidental passasse a ser parte do reino marroquino. Apesar de o ditador espanhol ser contrário à cessão do Saara Ocidental, e já ter expresso isso, seu estado clínico inviabilizou um posicionamento mais enfático, a Espanha negociou com Marrocos e a Maurîtânia o Acordo Tripartido de Madrid, que dividiu o território do Saara Ocidental em dois e atribuiu o norte a Marrocos e o sul à Maurîtânia (Hodges, 1983). A consequência imediata desse acordo foi a invasão que se deu de, aproximadamente, 350 000 marroquinos no Saara Ocidental, pela aclamada "Marcha Verde" do rei Hassan II. "The king touched a popular nerve and volunteers, many more than expected, had to be selected by quota and lottery. The great multitude gathered at Tarfaya just north of the border to await their king" (Jansen, 2012: 16). Esse evento e a retirada das tropas espanholas do território saaraui desencadearam a guerra entre a Frente Polisário, o Estado marroquino e a Maurîtânia. É a partir desse conflito instaurado que se inicia a análise efetiva acerca da percepção brasileira sobre a situação no Saara Ocidental. Na sequência, analisaremos como o país se posicionou frente aos desdobramentos do conflito que se prolonga até os dias atuais.

## A Guerra do Saara não vista pelo Brasil

De acordo com Cervo e Bueno (2012) a política que regeu o Brasil, no que tange ao continente africano, durante o período 1967 e 1979, vivenciou duas fases. A primeira se estende até o final de 1973, quando o país, em apoio a Portugal, votava favoravelmente às resoluções da ONU que versavam sobre a manutenção de seu colonialismo e se abstinha (a partir de 1970) de votar quando se tratava da questão relacionada à política de *apartheid* na África do Sul. Essa situação se alterou com o novo presidente/ditador Ernesto Geisel (1974-1979) que tinha uma visão mais pragmática das relações com a África e, por isso, passou a reconhecer a independência de Guiné-Bissau, Angola, Moçambique, Cabo Verde, São Tomé e Príncipe durante os anos de 1974-75. Em certa medida, a Revolução dos Cravos possibilitou que o Brasil rompesse com antigos acordos

<sup>5</sup> "[...] a conclusão da corte é de que os materiais e as informações apresentados não estabelecem nenhum laço de soberania territorial entre o território do Saara Ocidental e o reino de Marrocos [...]" (CIJ, 1975: 100, tradução nossa).



que vinculavam interesses portugueses aos brasileiros e, diante da nova configuração do sistema internacional com o processo de descolonização, a aproximação e reconhecimento da independência das ex-colônias portuguesas parecia ser um caminho natural para se fomentar, inclusive, as relações comerciais entre os continentes. Assim, a segunda fase da política externa brasileira para a África estava baseada em três parâmetros:

- a) *Incremento da cooperação, na modalidade Sul-Sul, em proveito do desenvolvimento mútuo;*
- b) *respeito aos princípios da soberania e autodeterminação dos Estados e da independência econômica das sociedades;*
- c) *repulsa pelo colonialismo e à discriminação racial, com apoio à Namíbia e ao governo de maioria negra do Zimbábue* (Bueno, 2012: 452).

Percebe-se que, apesar de o Brasil adotar uma política crítica com relação ao colonialismo e se alinhar aos países africanos, mais enfaticamente à África Lusa e Meridional, países como o Saara Ocidental que, em 1976, já havia sofrido a violenta invasão de seu território por Marrocos e vivenciava uma guerra que levava milhares de saarauís a buscar refúgio na Argélia, não encontrava ressonância nos discursos brasileiros na ONU. Praticamente um ano após a invasão do Saara Ocidental, o chanceler brasileiro, Antônio Francisco Azeredo da Silveira, discursou na Assembleia das Nações Unidas condenando o impasse que o Conselho de Segurança vivenciava durante a Guerra Fria e a situação dos países subdesenvolvidos. E, no que tange aos países da África, ressaltou a preocupação com o Zimbábue e Namíbia, mas deixou de lado o conflito no Saara Ocidental.

*Os impasses no campo político são um aspecto da estratificação que caracteriza a presente estrutura internacional. Talvez apenas os avanços no caminho da descolonização permitam hoje vislumbrar uma tendência oposta a essa estratificação, uma tendência que antecipa novas possibilidades de convivência e de um ordenamento internacional mais justo. [...]*

*A África Meridional, onde persiste a opressão racial, está hoje não apenas tomada pela intranquilidade e pelo temor, mas assolada pela violência e pelo morticínio. Os itens ora em nossa agenda sobre os problemas que afligem aquela região ganham importância inusitada diante dos acontecimentos recentes. O Brasil sempre favoreceu soluções pacíficas para esses problemas e sempre esteve convencido de que não havia tempo a perder. Nossa opinião, inúmeras vezes manifestada através dos anos, era a de que, caso tais soluções não pudessem ser prontamente alcançadas, fatalmente a região caminharia para conflitos abertos. Infelizmente, não temos motivos para rever este diagnóstico, mas queremos ainda crer que a unânime repulsa internacional às injustiças cometidas servirá de grave advertência aos que consideram possível a preservação da opressão racial. É nossa esperança que os povos do Zimbábue e da Namíbia, que ainda não lograram sua independência, possam realizar livremente, e em curto prazo, sua autêntica vontade nacional* (Azeredo da Silveira apud Corrêa, 2007: 333-334).

Em decorrência desse posicionamento, ainda que o Conselho de Segurança da ONU tenha aprovado resoluções que condenavam a postura de Marrocos com sua Marcha Verde<sup>6</sup> e a própria legitimidade do Acordo Tripartido de Madrid, o Brasil se manteve à parte nessa questão. Inclusive, em 1979, quando houve uma nova reviravolta no conflito e a Mauritânia, diante da derrota iminente face à Frente Polisário, resolveu assinar um acordo de paz, nenhum pronunciamento foi feito no intuito de se posicio-

<sup>6</sup> Resoluções 377 (22/10/1975), 379 (02/11/1975) e 380 (06/11/1975).

nar mais enfaticamente em favor dos saarauís, como procedeu-se no caso dos países anteriormente citados por Azeredo da Silveira.

Em certa medida, o distanciamento do Brasil desse conflito pode ser entendido devido à participação das potências que apoiavam Marrocos. Como destaca Santayana, após a derrota da Mauritània,

*“com a ajuda da França, Marrocos procura reorganizar as suas forças e mudar a orientação tática aplicada até então. O Estado-maior marroquino, seguindo instruções de Paris, [...] cria novas unidades equipadas com tanques e veículos ligeiros, são treinadas, a toque de caixa, nas bases marroquinas de Ben Guerir e El Hadheb” (1987: 70).*

A participação da França, assim como o apoio dos Estados Unidos a Marrocos tem sido o fator diferencial para que não haja o cumprimento das determinações da ONU. Bilhões de dólares têm sido investido na manutenção da monarquia marroquina e na preservação do Saara Ocidental ocupado. Ainda que durante os anos de 1978 e 1979 o Congresso estadunidense tenha pedido para que a administração Carter respeitasse o direito de autodeterminação dos saarauís e, em 1982, o House Foreign Affairs Committee se opôs formalmente ao envolvimento militar da administração Reagan e aprovou legislação que proibia atividades militares estadunidenses no Saara Ocidental, dentre os anos de 1982 e 1983, os Estados Unidos enviaram armas, recursos e *expertise* para dar suporte ao rei Hassan II (Kamil, 1987).

### **Brasil e a redemocratização: efeitos na política externa**

Com a administração Reagan e sua política conservadora, muito pouca margem de manobra os países sul-americanos tinham para trilhar um caminho autônomo. Como o Brasil passava por transformações políticas e econômicas substanciais no início da década de 1980, o posicionamento em determinadas situações, ainda que imbuídos de valores que a diplomacia brasileira vinha defendendo tradicionalmente, não repercutia em ações práticas. De fato, as relações com os países africanos se intensificaram e diversas missões vieram ao Brasil, assim como o presidente/ditador João Figueiredo (1979-1985) e o presidente José Sarney (1985-1990) visitaram Guiné-Bissau, Cabo Verde, Senegal e Nigéria. Conforme destacam Cervo e Bueno (2012), houve o aumento de representações diplomáticas brasileiras no continente, alcançando o número de 22, também se tentou extirpar o passado de apoio que o Brasil concedeu à política colonialista portuguesa com a visita do chanceler Saraiva Guerreiro à Tanzânia, Zâmbia, Moçambique, Zimbábue e Angola. E, mantendo certa coerência, estendeu o apoio prestado à independência da Zimbábue também ao Saara Ocidental mas não reconheceu o Estado que foi criado para dar voz ao povo saarauí, a República Árabe Saarauí Democrática (RASD), que foi fundada em 1976 e, devido à guerra, estava exilada nos campos de refugiados em Tindouf, Argélia.

Reforçando as “boas intenções” do Brasil frente ao mundo e sua impossibilidade de atuação efetiva, em 1985, o presidente brasileiro, José Sarney, foi à ONU para a abertura dos trabalhos da Assembleia Geral e, num discurso fortemente pautado nos problemas econômicos da América Latina e na valorização da democracia e da busca pela paz, não deu destaque ao continente africano. O foco estava na América do Sul, tanto que durante seu governo foram iniciadas as tratativas para a criação do Mercosul. Assim, num discurso recheado de citações literárias e menção a personalidades históricas, o primeiro presidente após a redemocratização, fez um longo discurso protocolar:

*Não seremos prisioneiros de grandes potências nem escravos de pequenos conflitos. Há quarenta anos, nossos fundadores estabeleceram, sobre os estertores da guerra e as ruínas da opressão, os fundamentos do edifício da paz, o concerto das nações e ilimitada cooperação entre os povos. As potências da Terra e os países emergentes foram convocados a liquidar a exploração colonial. Proclamaram ao universo o valor dos princípios democráticos de igualdade e justiça. Condenaram o racismo e a intolerância. Legitimaram o direito universal à saúde, ao bem-estar e à educação. Reafirmaram a dignidade do trabalho e o poder aprimorado da cultura (Sarney apud Corrêa, 2007: 447).*

Reforçando a dificuldade de o Brasil manter uma posição efetiva acerca da questão do Saara Ocidental, durante os trabalhos da Assembleia Nacional Constituinte para a elaboração da nova constituição brasileira, em reunião da Subcomissão da Nacionalidade, da Soberania e das Relações Internacionais, em 1987, o então ministro das Relações Exteriores, Roberto de Abreu Sodré, foi arguido pelos constituintes e reiterou a necessidade de resolução do conflito através de meios pacíficos e com a intermediação da ONU e da OUA:

*V. Ex.<sup>a</sup> falou sobre a RASD, a República Árabe Soharani Democrática. É um dos temas mais difíceis que temos a enfrentar. Não é fácil chegarmos a uma posição clara com relação à República, porque posso afirmar que um terço da comunidade internacional apenas reconhece a RASD, a República de Soharani. E não há consenso sobre o tema; nem no Leste, nem no Oeste, nem no grupo Árabe. Não há consenso em área alguma do mundo Leste, Oeste africana, com relação ao reconhecimento da República de Soharani. O assunto depende, portanto, da evolução diplomática e da própria evolução dos fatos locais. Reconhecemos o direito do povo desse território. O Brasil reconhece a Frente de Polissário (sic), do Movimento de Libertação Nacional, na ONU, que envolve este caso. Nas votações da ONU, neste caso votamos a favor dessa posição. As partes envolvidas negociaram diretamente as suas diferenças. Incentivamos as partes a negociar de forma direta o cessar-fogo, com vistas à realização de um **referendum**, sob os auspícios da ONU e da OUA, que é uma organização africana. Há também conversações indiretas em curso, graças a OVA e a OUA, entre Marrocos e Polissário (sic). O que o Brasil deseja – conversei com muitos emissários da RASD, por ocasião de minha presença na ONU quando tive até a honra de presidir a Assembleia Geral, coisa que jamais pude pensar – é estabelecer a necessidade de termos com critério um **referendum**, porque se trata, no caso, de um povo nômade, que está num território impreciso. Não poderíamos reconhecer uma nação nessa situação. Acompanhamos com interesse essa negociação, para estabelecer aquilo que queremos, ao final: que haja um **referendum**, um plebiscito envolvendo as populações interessadas. Depois disso, então, caminharemos para o referencial. Esta é a nossa posição com respeito ao problema da RASD.*

*(...) com relação à RASD, à República de Saaraui. Esse problema abordado por V. Ex.<sup>a</sup> como tema da sua segunda intervenção é um processo evolutivo. Ele não pode ser resolvido agora. Tem que haver uma evolução natural para através daí se chegar até a um plebiscito com todos percalços que V. Ex.<sup>a</sup> soube bem assinalar. Eu poderia até dizer a V. Ex.<sup>a</sup> como estamos dentro desse processo evolutivo. No momento, o Rei de Marrocos e o Presidente da Argélia, portanto, duas partes antagonicas, estão reunidos, sob a inspiração do Rei da Arábia Saudita, para uma conversação sobre esse assunto. Trata-se, portanto, de um assunto que continua ainda em evolução. Trago a V. Ex.<sup>a</sup> como exemplo, considerando que o problema da RASD não é para uma solução imediata, mas ele sofre um processo evolutivo. Esta é a notícia mais recente. Há dois ou três dias que recebemos telegramas a respeito na Chancelaria do Itamarati. Então, eu tenho a esperança de que este povo espremido entre as duas nações possa um dia ganhar o seu território e com isso o Brasil cumprir a sua missão de reconhecimento da República de Saaraui (9.<sup>a</sup> Reunião, em 7 de maio de 1987, 7.<sup>a</sup> Reunião de audiência pública).*

Se, a segunda metade da década de 1980 significou o retorno à democracia para o Brasil, para os saarauís foi uma espécie de *turning point*, considerando como a guerra seguia sem uma definição. Foi então colocada a proposta – trazida pela Argélia e Marrocos, como destacado pelo chanceler, na citação anterior – de se fazer um referendo junto à população saarauí para que ela decidisse sobre a autodeterminação. Na sequência das negociações, a proposta passou a ser gerida pela ONU-OUA para estabelecer um cessar-fogo e organizar o referendo, baseando-se, efetivamente, na resolução 1514 (XV). Com isso, em 22 de novembro de 1988, aprovou-se, na Assembleia Geral da ONU, a resolução 43/33 (Jensen, 2012). “To Polisario, which had been fighting for, at the very least, a self-determination referendum, such language was conforming. The statement also paved way for the first (and only) meeting between King Hassan and Polisario officials In January 1989” (Zunes e Mundy, 2010: 50).

A partir das reuniões subsequentes entre as partes, chegou-se à aprovação da resolução 690 (1991) que decidia “establecer bajo su autoridad una Misión de las Naciones Unidas para el Referéndum del Sáhara Occidental, de conformidad con el informe mencionado de 19 de abril de 1991” e o estabelecimento do “Plano de Solução” (*Settlement Plan*). No entanto, apesar da aparente boa vontade, Jensen (2012) destaca que a realização de um referendo sob aquelas circunstâncias não era algo que a ONU houvesse organizado anteriormente e, o processo que se constituiu na sequência, caminhou para sua inviabilização.

A aceitação do censo realizado em 1974 não era consensual, visto Marrocos alegar que parte da população do sul de seu território também deveria ser incluída na consulta. Nesse sentido, os trabalhos se desenrolaram com muita lentidão a cada novo questionamento que surgia. Os mais distintos problemas eram objeto de apreciação e mediação por parte da MINURSO e dos atores externos que procuraram colaborar na solução dos embates, no entanto, gradualmente evidenciava-se que o reino de Marrocos não tinha mais interesse na realização do referendo. Mesmo diante dos fatores condicionantes impostos pelo rei marroquino e de sua aceitação por parte da Frente Polisário, em uma década de trabalhos, até 2001, praticamente a única função desempenhada com efetividade pela MINURSO foi o monitoramento do cessar-fogo. A década de 1990 significou um novo período de transição para a diplomacia brasileira e uma difícil adaptação à estrutura do sistema internacional. O final da Guerra Fria e a transformação do mundo bipolar num ambiente propenso ao multilateralismo – trazido pela globalização – levou o Itamaraty<sup>7</sup> a reformulação da maneira de pensar o país e sua inserção internacional. Nesse novo cenário, muito frequentemente, o peso da economia passou a ditar a política externa, inclusive, se impondo à tradição do Itamaraty. Com isso, durante os governos dos presidentes Fernando Collor de Mello (1990-1992) e Itamar Franco (1992-1995) a política externa brasileira não teve um rumo certo. Apenas a partir da eleição de Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2003) passou a ter um direcionamento mais específico, mas agora privilegiando o modelo neoliberal.

Se o engajamento e a sujeição às leis do mercado e às diretrizes impostas pelas organizações econômicas internacionais, a partir da aplicação incontestada do Consenso de Washington, pautou a política externa do Brasil, por outro lado, a questão dos Direitos Humanos ganhou uma defesa mais enfática. Já no início da década de 1990 o Brasil aderiu a dois tratados da ONU e à Convenção da OEA, também, aderiu a convenções específicas “contra a discriminação racial e da mulher, contra a tortura,

<sup>7</sup> Ministério das Relações Exteriores.

sobre os direitos da criança e do refugiado” (Cervo e Bueno, 2012: 499). Na sequência, em 1997, houve o reconhecimento à jurisdição da Corte Interamericana de Direitos Humanos, aprovou-se a lei sobre refugiados e o Brasil passou a acolher com mais efetividade os africanos.

Sem um posicionamento mais enfático do governo brasileiro no sentido de reconhecer a RASD ou condenar a tática marroquina para inviabilizar o referendo em curso desde 1991, o Ministro das Relações Exteriores, Luiz Felipe Lambreira, em discurso de abertura da Assembleia geral da ONU, simplesmente reiterou a defesa do modelo neoliberal que o Brasil implementava e reforçou seus valores com relação à defesa dos Direitos Humanos:

*O Oriente Médio está finalmente trilhando o caminho do diálogo e do entendimento, através de um processo de paz que apoiamos firmemente e encorajamos. Angola e Moçambique são as novas promessas da África meridional, promovendo a paz e a conciliação regionais assim como o fizeram os sul-africanos. O terrorismo, o tráfico de drogas, o crime organizado, a xenofobia e o racismo, “a limpeza étnica”, o fanatismo religioso e a intolerância e as persistentes violações dos direitos humanos continuam a afligir milhões de seres humanos. O Brasil está comprometido com a paz e a democracia e acredita que, se todos os povos puderem expressar livremente suas idéias e construir seu próprio destino, a democracia sairá fortalecida e continuará a servir ao propósito do desenvolvimento e da justiça social. O Brasil também está comprometido com o desenvolvimento e sabe que o desenvolvimento depende de um ambiente internacional de paz, cooperação e liberdade econômica (Lampreia apud Corrêa, 2007: 598).*

Ainda que o tema relativo ao Saara Ocidental fosse suscitado com alguma frequência em fóruns políticos ou diplomáticos, a ausência de uma representação oficial da Frente Polisário no país impediu que ele ganhasse maior dimensão. Eventualmente, parlamentares que conheciam a causa historicamente, como no caso da ex-deputada Maninha, ou mesmo do senador João Capiberibe, traziam a questão para o Legislativo e buscavam sensibilizar seus pares no intuito de propor que o Brasil reconhecesse a RASD, mas a década de 1990 terminou sem que tivesse havido algum avanço perceptível nesse cenário.

## **A Esquerda no poder e as novas possibilidades de reconhecimento**

As mudanças que o continente sul-americano vivenciou no início do século XXI com a chegada da Esquerda aos governos da Argentina, do Uruguai, do Paraguai, da Bolívia, da Venezuela e do Brasil trouxe uma esperança nova à Frente Polisário de que essa vertente política ratificasse o direito de autodeterminação de seu povo e, por conseguinte, reconhecesse a RASD.

No Brasil, de fato, com uma política externa que visava transformar o país num *player mundial*, o continente africano ganhou um destaque que nunca tivera. A partir de alguns objetivos específicos, o governo do presidente Luís Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2011), através do chanceler Celso Amorim, iniciou um processo de abertura de embaixadas, intensificação de trocas comerciais, cooperação técnica e visitas frequentes ao continente.

Além dessas questões, o governo brasileiro reiterava a importância dos laços históricos e culturais entre os povos dos dois continentes, ressaltando que a população negra do país só é menor que a da Nigéria. Nesse sentido, além de ratificar a política contra qualquer tipo de racismo, a valorização e defesa aos Direitos Humanos, que já era prioridade no governo anterior, nesse, não deixou de ser enfatizada.



Conforme destaca Gusmão (2012: 230), “ao tratar da África, em janeiro de 2009, Celso Amorim afirmou que o universalismo que o governo Lula procurava imprimir à política externa não se limitava ao plano declaratório”, nesse sentido, apresentou dados que comprovam a presença no continente de modo efetivo e criando uma política de multilateralidade. Ao final de seu governo o Brasil tinha 33 embaixadas no continente, “em termos comerciais, as exportações brasileiras para a África passaram de US\$ 2,8 bilhões, em 2003, a US\$ 9,3 bilhões, em 2010” (Gusmão, 2012: 230). No que tange à cooperação técnica, o Brasil desenvolveu cerca de 300 projetos em 37 dos 53 países africanos.

Claramente, a política externa brasileira estava orientada pelo desenvolvimento econômico e pela justiça social, e, nesse sentido, o presidente Lula demonstrava que atuaria em todas as frentes, seja participando do Foro Social Mundial ou da reunião do Foro Econômico Mundial de Davo. Outro aspecto que ganha destaque na política externa do governo Lula, e que foi enfatizado em seu primeiro discurso na ONU diz respeito à promoção do que ficou conhecido como “Fome Zero” e o reiterado interesse em que o Conselho de Segurança da ONU passasse por reformas que assimilassem as novas características “daquele mundo” e não de quando foi criada. A partir dessa argumentação, a necessidade de que o Brasil ocupasse um acento permanente no Conselho de Segurança se configurava em sua conversão num *player mundial*.

Com um modelo de política de âmbito global, o discurso do presidente Lula na cerimônia de abertura da Assembleia Geral da ONU, novamente, abordou diversos temas que anteriormente o Brasil somente citava, mas agora buscava ocupar um papel de protagonismo. Ainda que a questão do Saara Ocidental não tivesse sido mencionada e que o combate à fome tenha sido o tema preponderante de seu discurso de 2004, a crítica acerca do colonialismo e a valorização ao direito de autodeterminação ganhou destaque:

*Pela segunda vez, dirijo-me a esta Assembléia universal para trazer a palavra do Brasil. Carrego um compromisso de vida com os silenciados pela desigualdade, pela fome e pela desesperança. A eles, nas palavras tremendas de Franz Fanon, o passado colonial destinou uma herança comum: “Se queres, aí a tens: a liberdade para morrer de fome”. Hoje somos 191 Estados-nação. No passado, 125 deles foram submetidos ao jugo de umas poucas potências que originalmente ocupavam menos de 2% do globo. O fim do colonialismo afirmou, na esfera política, o direito dos povos à autodeterminação (Silva apud Corrêa, 2007: 715).*

Mesmo sem uma representação oficial no Brasil, a Frente Polisário, esporadicamente enviava comissões ao país ou deslocava seus diplomatas de países sul-americanos para atuarem junto aos parlamentares, tendo em vista que o Itamaraty, apesar de demonstrar interesse pela solução da causa saaraui, não se pronunciava favoravelmente à independência da RASD. Em contrapartida, devido à pluralidade da Câmara Federal e do Senado, pontualmente o Saara Ocidental entrou no debate político do Legislativo.

Em 26 de agosto de 2005, a deputada Maninha do PT, proferiu um discurso na Câmara clamando pela necessidade de solução da causa saaraui.

*Sr. Presidente, ainda sobre a pauta internacional, quero tratar de importantes fatos que têm sido noticiados pela imprensa e estão ligados ao Saara Ocidental. Reconheço a República Árabe Saaraui Democrática e acompanho a luta pela libertação daquele povo desde a época em que o saudoso Miguel Arraes exilou-se na Argélia, na década de 60. Instalamos nesta Casa a Frente Parlamentar para a Libertação do Saara Ocidental,*

que tem por finalidade o intercâmbio de experiências e elementos culturais e o atendimento de objetivos comuns. A região é disputada pelos governos de Marrocos e da Argélia. O primeiro considera que o Saara Ocidental faz parte de seu território e não pretende, de forma alguma, abrir mão dele. Em recente visita à Comissão de Relações Exteriores e Defesa Nacional desta Casa, uma delegação chefiada pelo Ministro do Território de Marrocos veio nos afirmar que aceitaria que o Saara Ocidental fosse como a Catalunha para os espanhóis. Sabemos, no entanto, que a população do Saara Ocidental não se aceita como marroquina e continuará lutando por sua libertação. (...) É evidente, Sr. Presidente, que há uma disputa econômica naquele local. Ali são desenvolvidos produtos extremamente importantes não só para a região, mas para o restante do mundo. Percebemos que hoje a ONU pretende resolver a questão do Saara Ocidental. O organismo já propôs a realização de um plebiscito internacional com esse objetivo. Na verdade, há um muro da vergonha que divide Marrocos do Saara Ocidental. Muitos outros existiram no mundo, como o de Berlim, que caiu. O muro construído naquela região, e que possui mais de 2 mil quilômetros, separa parentes e nações. Isso prova que existe intolerância, embora a maior parte do mundo não a perceba, até num pequeno ponto do Saara Ocidental. Queremos, a partir da união principalmente da Espanha e de países do norte da África – e, por que não, do próprio Brasil? –, examinar o debate que se instala sobre a luta de libertação de um pequeno povo, que pode até não ter significação para alguns. Semelhante à situação do Timor Leste, que conseguiu a autodeterminação, queremos trazer a este Congresso Nacional a luta do povo do Saara Ocidental. Acreditamos, Sr. Presidente, que o diálogo poderá ser muito oportuno, (...) [q]ueremos, o mais brevemente possível, discutir com os integrantes da Frente Parlamentar para a Libertação do Saara Ocidental a necessidade da criação de um escritório de representação em Brasília, como o do povo palestino. Acreditamos que isso não causaria qualquer problema para o Governo brasileiro, que mantém relações diplomáticas e tratativas econômicas com o Governo de Marrocos. Também as mantemos com Israel, e nem por isso o escritório do povo palestino deixou de existir em nosso País. Outro exemplo: o Brasil mantém relações diplomáticas com a China, e Taiwan tem aqui um escritório de representação. Quando da realização da Cúpula dos Países Árabes, o Presidente argelino falou ao Governo brasileiro da necessidade de o Brasil se somar a tantos países que buscam a paz naquele distante ponto do mundo. Então, que o Brasil possa se somar às ações que a Argélia tem implementado para a libertação do povo saarauí. Como internacionalista que sou, quero somar minha voz à de tantos outros. Lutemos pela libertação do povo saarauí e nos solidarizemos com as medidas adotadas pela Frente Polisário. (...) Como Presidente da Frente pela Autodeterminação do Povo Saarauí, conclamo o Congresso brasileiro a se juntar a esta luta, que é do mundo e dos povos que compõem a região do Saara Ocidental (Maninha, Câmara dos Deputados, Sessão: 229.3.52.O, 26/08/2005).

Com a participação maior dos deputados em apoio à causa saarauí, em 31 de maio de 2007, o então deputado Viera da Cunha, Presidente da Comissão de Relações Exteriores e Defesa Nacional, submeteu uma moção que instava o governo brasileiro a reconhecer a independência do Saara Ocidental. Constava em seu conteúdo, “[q]ue o Brasil, através dos procedimentos e mecanismos de sua diplomacia advogue pelo respeito dos direitos humanos da população civil saarauí frente às violações flagrantes que praticam as autoridades marroquinas no Sahara”. No entanto, em janeiro de 2011, a moção foi arquivada “tendo em vista a perda de oportunidade”<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Conforme art. 164, inciso I, do Regimento Interno da Câmara dos Deputados. Disponível em: <http://www2.camara.leg.br/atividade-legislativa/legislacao/regimento-interno-da-camara-dos-deputados/RICD%20atualizado%20ate%20RCD%2027-2018a.pdf>.

Ainda, no final do governo Lula, em 3 de dezembro de 2010, o Brasil informou a ANP (Autoridade Nacional Palestina) que reconhecia a existência do Estado Palestino com as fronteiras de 4 de junho de 1967. De acordo com o comunicado do Ministério das Relações Exteriores, tratava-se de uma demanda justa, haja vista o país já reconhecer a OLP (Organização para a Libertação da Palestina) desde 1975 e, em 1993, autorizou a abertura de um escritório da delegação Especial Palestina no país. Esse evento, especificamente, devido à similaridade com a questão saarauí, acendeu a possibilidade de que a RASD também viesse a ser reconhecida, no entanto, isso não aconteceu.

A partir de 2012, a Frente Polisário, ainda que não contasse com as mesmas prerrogativas da OLP, enviou seu representante ao país para atuar mais diretamente junto ao Congresso e ao Itamaraty. Reflexo dessa ação, mais parlamentares<sup>9</sup> passaram a conhecer a causa e requerer o reconhecimento do Saara Ocidental e a instalação de uma representação oficial no país. Contudo alegando a necessidade de seguir os procedimentos adotados pela ONU e aguardar que a questão fosse resolvida de modo pacífico, o Brasil mantinha sua pseudoneutralidade<sup>10</sup>.

Apesar da presença mais efetiva do representante da Polisário no Brasil, o governo da presidenta Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016) não manteve a mesma projeção internacional que o anterior. Com isso, ainda que as diversas solicitações para o reconhecimento do Saara Ocidental tenham chegado ao Executivo, simplesmente adotava-se o parecer do Itamaraty que reafirmava a necessidade de que a ONU resolvesse a situação e o Brasil seguiria suas determinações.

No discurso que a presidenta Dilma proferiu na abertura dos trabalhos da Assembleia Geral da ONU – primeira vez em que uma mulher esteve nessa posição –, em 2011, as bases do que se convencionou chamar de Diplomacia para a Paz<sup>11</sup> foram dispostas.

*Há pelo menos três anos, senhor Presidente, o Brasil repete, nesta mesma tribuna, que é preciso combater as causas, e não só as consequências da instabilidade global. Temos insistido na interrelação entre desenvolvimento, paz e segurança; e que as políticas de desenvolvimento sejam, cada vez mais, associadas às estratégias do Conselho de Segurança na busca por uma paz sustentável. (...) Estamos aptos a prestar também uma contribuição solidária, aos países irmãos do mundo em desenvolvimento, em matéria de segurança alimentar, tecnologia agrícola, geração de energia limpa e renovável e no combate à pobreza e à fome. (...) É preciso que as nações aqui reunidas encontrem uma forma legítima e eficaz de ajudar as sociedades que clamam por reforma, sem retirar de seus cidadãos a condução do processo. Repudiamos com veemência as repressões brutais que vitimam populações civis. Estamos convencidos de que, para a comunidade internacional, o recurso à força deve ser sempre a última alternativa. A busca da paz e da segurança no mundo não pode limitar-se a intervenções em situações extremas. Apoiamos o Secretário-Geral no seu esforço de engajar as Nações Unidas na prevenção de conflitos, por meio do exercício incansável da democracia e da promoção do desenvolvimento. O mundo sofre, hoje, as dolorosas consequências de intervenções que agravaram os conflitos, possibilitando a infiltração*

<sup>9</sup> O deputado Bala Rocha (PDT) apresentou a INC 1741/2011 que foi arquivada. Os deputados Márcio Marinho (PBR), Sérgio Barras Carneiro (PT), Ozziel Oliveria (PDT), dentre outros, apresentaram a INC 1854/2011 solicitando o reconhecimento do Saara Ocidental e criação de uma representação oficial. Nenhum procedimento foi adotado. Através da INC 6225/2014, o deputado Alfredo Sirkis (PDT) apontou a necessidade de a MINURSO monitorar a violação de direitos humanos na zona ocupada por Marrocos. Também foi arquivada.

<sup>10</sup> Pelo contrário, o Brasil sob os governos Lula aprofundou as relações com Marrocos, elevando-a ao nível de “parceria estratégica”. Vale lembrar que neste contexto Marrocos foi uma das principais vozes africanas e árabes em apoio à candidatura brasileira ao assento permanente no Conselho de Segurança da ONU. Sobre a política externa de Lula para o Saara Ocidental, ver Duque Estrada e Ricci (2013).

<sup>11</sup> A base para essa proposta vem sendo debatida desde 1992, ocasião em que o secretário-geral da ONU, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, lançou a *Agenda da Paz*.

*do terrorismo onde ele não existia, inaugurando novos ciclos de violência, multiplicando os números de vítimas civis. Muito se fala sobre a responsabilidade de proteger; pouco se fala sobre a responsabilidade ao proteger. São conceitos que precisamos amadurecer juntos. Para isso, a atuação do Conselho de Segurança é essencial, e ela será tão mais acertada quanto mais legítimas forem suas decisões. E a legitimidade do próprio Conselho depende, cada dia mais, de sua reforma. (...) Mas lamento ainda não poder saudar, desta tribuna, o ingresso pleno da Palestina na Organização das Nações Unidas. O Brasil já reconhece o Estado palestino como tal, nas fronteiras de 1967, de forma consistente com as resoluções das Nações Unidas. Assim como a maioria dos países nesta Assembléia, acreditamos que é chegado o momento de termos a Palestina aqui representada a pleno título.*

*O reconhecimento ao direito legítimo do povo palestino à soberania e à autodeterminação amplia as possibilidades de uma paz duradoura no Oriente Médio. Apenas uma Palestina livre e soberana poderá atender aos legítimos anseios de Israel por paz com seus vizinhos, segurança em suas fronteiras e estabilidade política em seu entorno regional (Rousseff, 21 de setembro de 2011)<sup>12</sup>.*

De acordo com Mello (2012), a postura do Brasil estava ratificada por sua atuação em diversas missões de paz da ONU, com destaque a MINUSTAH<sup>13</sup>, pois ali exerceu um papel preponderante. Assim, o discurso da presidenta dava o respaldo necessário para que o Brasil continuasse atuando como mediador em conflitos internacionais, como ocorreu no caso do Irã – atuando em cooperação com a Turquia –, como membro da UNASUL, na mediação durante a crise entre Venezuela e Colômbia, e, por fim, fortalecendo o papel da ONU ao apoiar a diplomacia preventiva e a mediação num cenário em que o multilateralismo impera. Somente na questão do Saara Ocidental não havia interesse em exercer um papel proativo. Nesse caso, a diplomacia brasileira e o Poder Executivo preferiam esperar que a ONU, através da MINURSO, encontrasse uma solução.

Seguindo um caminho diametralmente oposto ao do Itamaraty, em dezembro de 2013, o Senado, através de audiência pública da Comissão de Direitos Humanos presidida pelo senador João Capiberibe (PSB), trouxe a público o debate sobre a questão do Saara Ocidental. O então representante da Frente Polisário no Brasil, Mohamed Laarosi Bahia (também conhecido por Mohamed Zrug), teve a oportunidade de expor aos parlamentares a situação crítica em que o Saara Ocidental se encontrava e, ao exaltar o papel distinto do Brasil no cenário internacional, solicitou o reconhecimento de seu Estado com base em dois princípios consagrados historicamente pelo Estado brasileiro, quais sejam, o reconhecimento do processo de descolonização e o direito de autodeterminação<sup>14</sup>.

Em 2015 o espaço para o debate sobre o Saara Ocidental foi ampliado com a audiência pública na Comissão de Relações Internacionais e Defesa Nacional (CREDN) da Câmara dos Deputados. Desta vez uma delegação marroquina fez-se presente. Assim, dentre os participantes da mesa estavam os representantes do Ministério das Relações Exteriores (MRE), ministra Maria Luisa Escorel de Moraes, da Frente Polisário no Brasil, Mohamed Laarosi Bahia e a presidente do Conselho Mundial da Paz, Socorro Gomes Coelho. Acompanhando a audiência, duas deputadas marroquinas: Kenza El Ghali e Jamila El Mossalli, vice-presidente e secretária da Câmara dos Representantes de Marrocos.

<sup>12</sup> Disponível em: <http://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2011/09/veja-integra-do-discurso-de-dilma-na-abertura-da-assembleia-da-onu.html>.

<sup>13</sup> A Missão das Nações Unidas para a Estabilização no Haiti foi criada pelo Conselho de Segurança da ONU em 2004 (Resolução 1542), com o intuito de restaurar a ordem no país.

<sup>14</sup> Vídeo com pronunciamento do representante da Frente Polisário. Disponível em: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmkHUIDkRM>.

Um dos aspetos mais relevantes e emblemáticos nesta audiência diz respeito ao pronunciamento da representante do MRE. Apesar da ampla divulgação sobre a violência que a população saaraui vivencia cotidianamente nas Zonas Ocupadas e, considerando que um dos pilares da política externa brasileira é a defesa dos direitos humanos, o posicionamento adotado pela ministra foi absolutamente protocolar ao tratar das questões relacionadas ao Saara Ocidental. Para ela, “o governo brasileiro acompanha com interesse a situação do Saara Ocidental e defende uma solução justa, pacífica e mutuamente aceitável, com base no princípio da autodeterminação”, depois completou, ao referir-se à RASD, “a solução sobre o status final do território deverá ser alcançada por meio do entendimento mútuo entre as partes, bem como por meio do tratamento da questão no âmbito do Conselho de Segurança”<sup>15</sup>.

Até ao final do governo Dilma não houve mudança substancial acerca da maneira com que a diplomacia brasileira trata a questão do Saara Ocidental. Mesmo o traumático processo de *impeachment* que levou ao poder o vice-presidente Michel Temer (2016-2018), não alterou as diretrizes da diplomacia brasileira perante a RASD e a Frente Polisário.

Apesar dos pilares tradicionais da política externa brasileira, e dos seus motes da cordialidade, da defesa do princípio da autodeterminação e dos Direitos Humanos, a prática acabou revelando-se, no caso do Saara Ocidental, distante do discurso. Após décadas de ocupação ilegal por Marrocos no território saaraui e mais décadas de fracasso da MINURSO, a simplória defesa de uma posição de credibilidade aos esforços da ONU para a resolução do conflito reflete menos uma postura de neutralidade e mais de convivência com a potência ocupante. Isto se revela especialmente com a descoberta de que o Brasil importa recursos clandestinos do Saara Ocidental (especialmente sardinha dos portos ocupados), revelado pelo documentário investigativo *Um Fio de Esperança: Independência ou Guerra no Saara Ocidental* (Duque Estrada, Costa, 2018).

### Considerações Finais

Durante os mais de 40 anos que o embate entre o Saara Ocidental e o reino de Marrocos está em vigor, tecnicamente, a diplomacia brasileira não mudou seu posicionamento. Ainda preserva o discurso de que defende a resolução de conflitos por vias pacíficas e que segue o posicionamento da ONU na referida questão.

Esse posicionamento demonstraria coerência na atuação se não houvesse dois casos peculiares, Timor Leste e Palestina, nos quais o Brasil subverteu essa ordem e assumiu um posicionamento que se fundamentava nos valores defendidos historicamente, ou seja, fugindo do alinhamento a um ou outro ator envolvido. O resultado do posicionamento brasileiro não foi a ruptura com o “outro lado”, inclusive, no caso da Palestina, as relações políticas e econômicas permanecem as mesmas com o estado de Israel.

Com isso, constata-se que o impasse no caso do Saara Ocidental possui alguma característica específica que estaria impedindo o Brasil de exercer seu papel, como o fez em 1975, ao ser o primeiro estado a reconhecer a Angola. Estranhamente, dois procedimentos foram criados na apreciação dessa questão: por um lado, o Poder Legislativo constantemente insta o Executivo a se manifestar favorável ao reconhecimento, por outro lado, ao ser levada a consulta ao Itamaraty, antes da decisão presidencial, a negativa é categórica.

<sup>15</sup> Fragmento da entrevista disponível no documentário “Um Fio de Esperança: Independência ou Guerra no Saara Ocidental” (2017), Produção: Nomos Filmes, Direção: Rodrigo Duque Estrada e Renatho Costa. Disponível em: <https://vimeo.com/26911602>.



Se essa justificativa não pode ser encontrada dentro do Congresso, certamente a atuação de *lobbies* pró-Marrocos poderia ser parte da resposta. Como os Estados Unidos historicamente têm investido na preservação da monarquia marroquina (Kamil, 1987; Zunes e Mundy, 2010), e essa também recebe apoio francês, a dificuldade de o Brasil atuar como um *outsider* no sistema internacional, o levaria a seguir a disposição dessas potências.

A situação geopolítica na região do norte da África é extremamente delicada e o acirramento do conflito entre Marrocos e Saara Ocidental com um suposto retorno à guerra, poderia desencadear um conflito de ordem continental. Considerando que Marrocos também serve como uma espécie de “dique contentor” para a entrada de extremistas na Europa, a manutenção da monarquia torna-se preponderante. Então, aí residiria a pouca autonomia da diplomacia brasileira que, mesmo que não se alinhe aos Estados Unidos, tem um limite para sua atuação independente. Quaisquer questões que possam fragilizar o combate ao terrorismo são condenadas e o ator que vier a ser responsabilizado por ela pode sofrer graves sanções.

Assim, mesmo que recorrentes relatórios apontem para a violação de direitos humanos<sup>16</sup> na zona ocupada do Saara Ocidental, o Conselho de Segurança da ONU prefere não considerar essa possibilidade e manter a atuação da MINURSO como foi planejada em 1991. Inclusive, em 31 de outubro de 2018 foi aprovada a resolução 2440 (2018) que estende o mandato da MINURSO até 30 de abril de 2019 e busca promover um novo processo de negociação entre as partes que dar-se-á dentre os dias 5 e 6 de dezembro, em Genebra.

Como a ONU opta por não observar o que realmente acontece no Saara Ocidental e o Brasil é refém de um modelo político dependente dos Estados Unidos, a possibilidade de que haja uma mudança no posicionamento brasileiro é mínima. E, conseqüentemente, por mais que a diplomacia saarauí venha a conquistar espaço no Brasil, não terá muita margem de manobra para atuar junto ao Itamaraty. Se hoje o representante da Frente Polisário possui um visto especial que lhe permite estar no Brasil por mais tempo que um turista, com a transição de governos, 2019 apresenta-se como um ano de profundas perdas para a causa saarauí. Não somente pela ascensão da direita ao poder, mas pelas diretrizes que a política externa brasileira poderá adotar, tendo por base os pronunciamentos do presidente eleito e de seu novo chanceler.

## Referências bibliográficas

- Abdalhe, M'Beirik Ahmed (2015), *El Nacionalismo Saharai – de Zemla a la Organización de la Unidad Africana*, Tese doctoral, Universidad de las Palmas de Gran Canarias, Departamento de Ciencias Históricas. [Consult. 5.jul.2018]. Disponível em: [https://acceda.ulpgc.es/bitstream/10553/21618/4/0733650\\_00000\\_0000.pdf](https://acceda.ulpgc.es/bitstream/10553/21618/4/0733650_00000_0000.pdf).
- Barreñada, Isaís, Ojeda, Raquel (eds.) (2016), *Sahara Occidental 40 Años Después*, Madrid: Catarata.
- Barreto, Fernando de Mello (2012), *A Política Externa após a Redemocratização Tomo II – 2003-2010*, Brasília: Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão.
- Brasil, Ministério das Relações Exteriores (2008), *Brazilian Foreign Policy Under Lula: Chronology (2003-2006)*, Brasília: Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão.
- Brigagão, Clóvis, Fernandes, Fernanda (orgs.) (2012), *Diplomacia Brasileira para a Paz*, Brasília: Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão.
- Cervo, Amado Luiz, Bueno, Clodoaldo (2012), *História da Política Exterior do Brasil*, Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília.

<sup>16</sup> Amnesty International, *Shadow of Impunity: torture in Morocco and Western Sahara*, London, 2015.

- Corrêa, Luiz Felipe de Seixas (org.) (2007), *O Brasil nas Nações Unidas 1946-2006*, Brasília: Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão.
- Côrtes, Octávio H. D. G. (2010), *A Política Externa do Governo Sarney: início das reformas de diretrizes para a inserção internacional do Brasil sob o signo da democracia*, Brasília: Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão.
- Duque Estrada, Rodrigo, Costa, Renatho (2017), *Um Fio de Esperança: Independência ou Guerra no Saara Ocidental*. Documentário político, 94min, colorido, H.264. Porto Alegre: Nomos Editora & Produtora Independente.
- Duque Estrada, Rodrigo, Ricci, Carla (2013), *A Política Externa brasileira e a questão do Saara Ocidental: a dinâmica da neutralidade e as possibilidades de engajamento*, *Revista Perspectiva*, vol. 6, n.º 10, pp. 43-62.
- Hodges, Tony (1983), *Western Sahara The Roots of a Desert War*, Connecticut: Lawrence Hill & Company.
- International Court of Justice (1975), *Summaries of Judgments, Advisory Opinions and Orders: Western Sahara*. [Consult. 10.mai.2012]. Disponível em: <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/61/6197.pdf>.
- Jensen, Erik (2012), *Western Sahara – Anatomy of a Stalemate?*, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Kamil, Leo (1987), *Fueling the Fire – U.S. Policy & The Western Conflict*, Trenton: The Red Sea Press.
- Martín, Pablo San (2010), *Western Sahara the Refugee Nation*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Mello, Valérie de Campos, Lapiere, Sébastien (2012), “A diplomacia para a paz na ONU: mediação, resolução de conflitos e o papel do Brasil”, In: Brigagão, Clóvis e Fernandes, Fernanda (orgs.) (2012), *Diplomacia Brasileira para a Paz*, Brasília: Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão, pp. 273-288.
- Miguel, Carlos Ruiz (1995), *El Sahara Occidental y España: Historia, Política e Derecho. Analisis critico de la Política Exterior Española*, Madrid: Dykinson.
- Santayana, Mauro (1987), *Dossiê da Guerra do Saara*, Rio de Janeiro: Editora Paz e Terra.
- Shelley, Toby (2004), *Endgame in Western Sahara*, London: Zed Books.
- Zune, Stephen, Mundy, Jacob (2010), *Western Sahara*, New York, Syracuse University Press.



# Para Timor-Leste, a independência do Sahara Ocidental é fundamental

Dionísio Babo Soares\*

pp. 255-260

## As características do conflito sarauí e a luta pela autodeterminação

Localizado a noroeste do continente africano, o Sahara Ocidental faz fronteira a norte com o Reino de Marrocos, a nordeste com a Argélia e a sul com a Mauritânia.

Os dados publicados nas Estatísticas Mundiais das Nações Unidas indicam que a estimativa da população sarauí residente, em 2016, é de aproximadamente 584 mil habitantes, com uma densidade populacional de 2,2 habitantes por km<sup>2</sup>.

Dado o conflito existente, estima-se que 116 mil pessoas do Sahara Ocidental se encontrem na situação de refugiados, maioritariamente nos campos situados na região de Tindouf, no sudoeste da Argélia.

O território do Sahara Ocidental está atualmente sob domínio do Reino de Marrocos, após assinatura do Tratado de Madrid de 1975, no qual Espanha cede a Marrocos dois terços do território, que desde 1950 reivindicava como sendo uma extensão natural do seu território. Este Tratado foi considerado nulo pela Organização das Nações Unidas, e o Conselho de Segurança das Nações Unidas, através da Resolução 377 (1975) de 22 de outubro de 1975, solicita ao Secretário-Geral que se iniciem consultas imediatas com as partes, a fim de garantir que o Conselho de Segurança adote medidas apropriadas para lidar com a situação do Sahara Ocidental. Face ao conflito eminente, o Secretário-Geral das Nações Unidas visita Marrocos, a Mauritânia, a Argélia e a Espanha entre 25 e 28 de Outubro de 1975, com o objetivo de facilitar uma resolução pacífica entre os povos.

Apesar dos esforços de se alargarem consensos e se definirem conciliações, o governo marroquino deu instruções para que 275 mil cidadãos marroquinos se transferissem para o território, dos quais 25 mil integravam o efetivo militar, por forma a garantir a anexação. Em 1976, a Frente Polisário proclama a República Árabe Democrática Sarauí (SADR), numa forte oposição contra a ocupação. Em resultado da ofensiva, em particular na zona Sul, a Mauritânia sofre inúmeras baixas e assina um acordo de paz. O Reino de Marrocos, por sua vez, continuou a assumir o território do Sahara Ocidental como sendo parte da sua soberania, e passa a ocupar toda a área.

A década de 80 representou um acentuar das hostilidades entre as forças marroquinas e a Frente Polisário. Considerando a escalada do conflito e o forte impacto humanitário junto das populações afetadas, a Organização da União Africana (OUA) e a Organização das Nações Unidas (ONU) identificaram os problemas existentes e apresentaram uma

\* Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e e atual Ministro dos Negócios Estrangeiros e Cooperação do VIII Governo Constitucional da República Democrática de Timor-Leste.

1 Informação disponível no sítio da internet da Divisão Estatística das Nações Unidas [Consult. 11.mai.2019]. Disponível em: <http://data.un.org>.

proposta conjunta de resolução do conflito, afigurando-se um Plano de Conciliação, no qual se apoiava a realização de um referendo junto da população sarauí, pela independência ou pela anexação a Marrocos.

Em 1991, o governo marroquino e a Frente Polisário concordaram com a proposta e decidiram por um cessar-fogo.

A proposta de conciliação foi adotada pelo Conselho de Segurança em abril de 1991, através da resolução 690, estabelecendo-se em simultâneo a Missão de Paz da ONU, designada como MINURSO – Mission des Nations Unies pour l'organisation d'un référendum au Sahara occidental – que seria responsável por supervisionar o cessar-fogo, e garantir o plano de conciliação definido, designadamente na implementação do referendo e apoiar o processo de identificação e registo dos eleitores, assegurando ao mesmo tempo, a redução do número de militares marroquinos no território sarauí e verificar a situação dos prisioneiros de guerra, sensibilizando as posições de força para a sua libertação, na promoção dos direitos universalmente estabelecidos.

O cessar-fogo durou cerca de quatro meses e, em agosto de 1991, as forças marroquinas lançaram uma ofensiva contra os combatentes da Frente Polisário.

Apesar das várias tentativas goradas de se avançar para um novo quadro de negociações, em 2007 o assunto voltou ao Conselho de Segurança das Nações Unidas que convocou as partes a negociarem diretamente, no âmbito dos princípios “de boa fé e sem pré-condições”. Nas negociações que se sucederam, no âmbito das recomendações exaradas em sede de Conselho de Segurança das Nações Unidas, Marrocos arroga a criação de uma “região autónoma do Sahara”, sem abrir mão da soberania marroquina sobre o território ocupado. Por sua vez, a Frente Polisário mantém a sua posição na realização de um referendo, no qual o povo expressaria a sua decisão quanto ao futuro do território, se a anexação, se a independência.

A ronda de negociações terminou sem um acordo entre as partes e, atualmente, mantém-se o impasse quanto à situação do conflito do Sahara Ocidental, apesar dos apelos da ONU e da comunidade internacional para se alcançar uma solução política mutuamente aceitável que promova a autodeterminação do povo do Sahara Ocidental e o término de êxodo populacional do território.

A 31 de janeiro de 2019, os membros do Conselho de Segurança das Nações Unidas, em consonância com a resolução 2440 (2018), saudaram a participação de Marrocos, a Frente Polisário, Argélia e Mauritânia na ronda de negociações que aconteceram nos dias 5 e 6 de dezembro de 2018, e o compromisso em participar numa segunda fase de reuniões de conciliação, planeada para o primeiro semestre de 2019.

## **Timor-Leste e a luta pela libertação nacional**

A 20 de maio de 2002, Timor-Leste entrou no sistema internacional como um Estado legalmente soberano.

A Declaração de Restauração de Independência de uma Nação, surge após um longo e violento período de ocupação, em resultado de uma tentativa de anexação ilegal da República da Indonésia, visando a integração por via da força militar.

A Assembleia Geral das Nações Unidas (AGNU) condenou, através de uma resolução, a invasão indonésia, pela clara violação do direito de autodeterminação do povo timorense, continuando a reconhecer Portugal como potência administrante (A/RES 3485).

2 “Security Council Press Statement on Western Sahara”. [Consult. 13.mai.2019]. Disponível em: [www.un.org](http://www.un.org).



Esta declaração foi seguida por uma Resolução do Conselho de Segurança que pedia a todos os Estados que respeitassem a integridade territorial de Timor-Leste e o direito de autodeterminação do seu povo (S/RES 384).

Portugal, legalmente, mantinha-se como potência administrante de Timor-Leste, ao qual se incumbiram as responsabilidades de evitar atividades conducentes à autodeterminação do povo de Timor-Leste.

No início dos anos 80, com as informações sobre as ações da Resistência Timorense contra as forças militares da Indonésia, e os sucessivos relatos de violação dos direitos humanos no território, a causa pela autodeterminação do povo timorense alcança uma maior notoriedade a nível internacional.

Através das Nações Unidas, e de todo o empenho do Secretário-Geral Javier Pérez de Cuellar, iniciam-se as conversações entre Portugal, Indonésia e Nações Unidas, com o objetivo de encontrar uma solução, em sede de Assembleia Geral das Nações Unidas.

Em 1983, a Assembleia Geral das Nações Unidas mantém o reconhecimento de Portugal como potência administrante do território, no entanto a Indonésia apresenta disponibilidade para diálogo, na vertente de uma autonomia de Timor-Leste, não considerando o direito à autodeterminação do povo timorense que as forças de libertação nacional de Timor-Leste reclamavam.

A visita do Papa João Paulo II a Timor-Leste, em outubro de 1989, e o Massacre de Santa Cruz, a 12 de novembro de 1991, foram decisivos na projeção em larga escala, a nível internacional, da causa para a libertação nacional e no apelo do direito à autodeterminação do povo timorense. As negociações entre Portugal – Indonésia e Nações Unidas, conduziram ao Acordo de 5 de maio de 1999, em Nova Iorque, assinado entre Portugal e a Indonésia, que previa uma consulta popular em Timor-Leste, na presença do então Secretário-Geral das Nações Unidas, Kofi Annan.

Nos designados Acordos de Nova Iorque, define-se a possibilidade de o povo timorense escolher entre a continuidade da sua permanência como província indonésia, num quadro alargado de autonomia especial, ou a independência do território, num processo de organização, monitorização e apuramento dos resultados do referendo que ficasse sob a alçada da ONU.

A 30 de agosto de 1999 foi dada voz ao povo e a capacidade de optar pela integração ou pela independência. Numa demonstração de vontade de exercer o direito de voto, 90 % do povo timorenses dirigiu-se às urnas e 75 % votou pela Independência de Timor-Leste.

### **Considerações para não concluir, quanto à partilha da história entre Timor-Leste a Sahara Ocidental**

15 000 quilómetros separam Dili, capital de Timor-Leste, de El Aaiún, capital do Sahara Ocidental. Dois pontos do globo aparentemente sem conexão aparente, mas que, compartilharam e compartilham os mesmos objetivos e as mesmas ambições.

Em vários pontos, em vários discursos, Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, líder carismático em Timor-Leste e guerrilheiro pela causa da Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste, refere-se às notícias ouvidas na década de 90 de que seria dada a possibilidade de fazer valer a voz do povo sarauí pela independência, através de um referendo popular, num território que, em termos históricos, enfrentou episódios idênticos de colonização, de problemas idênticos no processo de descolonização e de posterior invasão, tal como Timor-Leste.

Timor-Leste e o Sahara Ocidental partilharam uma mesma situação social, baseada num choque de interesses que se sobrepõem, estando tais interesses relacionados a questões e valores nacionais, como independência, autodeterminação, fronteiras e território e distribuição de poder.

Apesar de se situarem em continentes distintos, assumem, numa história comum, um conflito, envolvendo-se um Estado e atores não estatais que reivindicam a independência de determinado território. Timor-Leste e Sahara Ocidental na luta pela independência do território ocupado, opõem-se ao Estado invasor e às Frentes pró-independência como atores não estatais.

Timor-Leste é o exemplo de como o papel das organizações internacionais, como a ONU, das organizações regionais e até mesmo dos Estados parceiros é importante no contexto de resolução de conflitos, através de negociações e alternativas que lidem diretamente com as partes do conflito, designadamente no que respeita à formação de Estados, que envolvem sempre uma dimensão territorial, nos quais a consulta popular por meio de referendos, eleições, será sempre considerado como o caminho mais democrático e legítimo de consolidação de um Estado Soberano.

O território do Sahara Ocidental e, principalmente o povo sarauí, aguardam ainda a decisão de uma Consulta Popular que permita a sua independência.

Timor-Leste, após um percurso de conflito e de violência percorrido, celebra uma independência arduamente alcançada, desde o início da sua afirmação como Estado Soberano, que expressa a sua solidariedade com os povos através da Constituição da República Democrática de Timor-Leste, na base dos princípios da independência nacional, do direito dos povos à autodeterminação e independência, da soberania permanente dos povos sobre as suas riquezas e recursos naturais, da proteção dos direitos humanos, do respeito mútuo pela soberania, integridade territorial e igualdade entre os Estados e da não ingerência nos assuntos internos dos Estados, bem como o princípio fundamental de solidariedade para com a luta dos povos pela libertação nacional.

Na primeira intervenção na Assembleia Geral das Nações Unidas, em 27 de Setembro de 2002, como país independente e durante a cerimónia de boas vindas, o Presidente da República Democrática de Timor-Leste, Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, referiu:

*“que o Sahara Ocidental é outra entidade que continua a ser lamentavelmente excluída da maior parte dos fóruns internacionais. Timor-Leste partilha com os nossos irmãos sarauí uma parte extraordinária da nossa história. O Inalienável direito do povo sarauí à autodeterminação foi reconhecido pelas Nações Unidas oito anos antes de Timor-Leste. Enquanto Timor-Leste é agora visto como um caso de sucesso das Nações Unidas, o Sahara Ocidental continua a ser protelado por sucessivos obstáculos. Atualmente, enquanto nós estamos reafirmando a nossa liberdade e independência apelamos a que as Nações Unidas retomem o controlo do plano do referendo e da autodeterminação do Sahara Ocidental”.*

Na sua história recente, Timor-Leste sempre manifestou e manifestará a sua preocupação quanto à situação do Sahara Ocidental, numa posição de reconhecimento do apoio do povo sarauí à luta de libertação do povo timorense e reafirmação da solidariedade da República Democrática de Timor-Leste para com a causa do Sahara Ocidental. Considerando os seus preceitos constitucionais, a República Democrática de Timor-Leste estabelece relações de amizade e cooperação com todos os outros povos, preconizando uma solução pacífica dos conflitos e o estabelecimento de um sistema de segurança coletiva capaz de assegurar a paz e a justiça nas relações entre os povos.

Assente no que se precede, são aprovadas duas Resoluções do Parlamento Nacional (2/2011 e 10/2013), onde se manifesta a Solidariedade ao Povo Sarauí e se cria uma Comissão de Acompanhamento do Conflito no Sahara Ocidental para apoio ao povo sarauí, impossibilitado de se pronunciar sobre a sua autodeterminação através de um referendo, apesar da Assembleia Geral das Nações Unidas e do Conselho de Segurança já se terem pronunciado favoravelmente nesse sentido, através de várias resoluções.

Em 2014, Timor-Leste evidencia oficialmente a sua preocupação para com a Missão de Paz das Nações Unidas, criada em 1991, MINURSO, por não dispor de uma estrutura responsável pela monitorização da violação dos direitos humanos no território ocupado e nos campos de refugiados e evidenciar fraca capacidade técnica e de recursos humanos capazes para avaliar as eventuais violações dos direitos humanos no território.

De igual forma, Timor-Leste, assume a sua preocupação para com a situação que se vive atualmente nos campos de refugiados sarauí, os quais reclamam ajuda humanitária urgente e que cerca de 500 mil não beneficiam de qualquer tipo de proteção social e humanitária, alertando para a necessidade de evitar situações de insegurança na região, para que os refugiados sarauí não fiquem à mercê dos grupos terroristas ligados à AQMI (Al-Qaeda do Magrebe Islâmico).

O Parlamento Nacional da República Democrática de Timor-Leste apela aos Estados Unidos da América (EUA) para que interceda ativamente junto do Governo de Marrocos e do Conselho de Segurança das Nações Unidas em favor da causa do Sahara Ocidental, de forma a evitar-se mais sofrimento por parte do povo sarauí.

Nesta mesma Resolução, o Parlamento Nacional apela ao Reino de Marrocos, que não tem qualquer vínculo de soberania territorial sobre o Sahara Ocidental, conforme Parecer do Tribunal Internacional de Justiça, de 16 de Outubro de 1975, para que respeite as Resoluções das Nações Unidas e da União Africana e inicie negociações com a Frente Polisário com vista à realização de um referendo no Sahara Ocidental, sob os auspícios do Secretário-Geral das Nações Unidas; e, insta o Reino de Marrocos para que desenvolva ações no sentido de terminarem as perseguições contra o povo sarauí e libertar todos os presos políticos.

Ao Governo da República Democrática de Timor-Leste, o Parlamento Nacional, recomenda que todas as vozes timorenses que se pronunciem sobre política externa, em todos os fóruns internacionais em que participe, e sempre que tal se considere adequado, que se coloque a questão do Sahara Ocidental na ordem de trabalhos, chamando a atenção para a causa e empenhando-se ativamente na promoção e na resolução do conflito no âmbito e no respeito do direito internacional.

A 13 de maio de 2013, é aprovada a Resolução do Parlamento Nacional da República Democrática com a Manifestação de Solidariedade ao Povo Sarauí e cria-se uma Comissão de Acompanhamento do Conflito no Sahara Ocidental.

A presente Resolução foi também encaminhada à representação diplomática da República Árabe Sarauí Democrática (RASD) em Díli, estabelecida e financiada pelo Governo de Timor-Leste, à qual são atribuídas as funções diplomáticas de divulgação da luta do povo sarauí pela autodeterminação de fomentar contatos na região onde Timor-Leste está integrado, para que mais países se sensibilizem com a causa do povo de Sahara Ocidental e evidenciem a sua preocupação junto das Nações Unidas.

Cinco anos após a aprovação da Resolução, mantém-se e reafirma-se a profunda solidariedade de Timor-Leste para com esta causa do Povo Sarauí e apela-se a uma efetiva resolução deste conflito no quadro do direito internacional.

## Referências bibliográficas

A/RES/1542 (1960), *Transmission of Information under Article 73 of the Charter – A/RES/1542 (XV)*, 15 de dezembro 1960. Disponível em: [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/1542\(XV\)&Lang=E&Area=RESOLUTION](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/1542(XV)&Lang=E&Area=RESOLUTION).

- Barata, M. J. (2012), *Identidade, autodeterminação e relações internacionais: o caso do Saara Ocidental*. Tese de Doutoramento. Programa de Doutoramento em Política Internacional e Resolução de Conflitos. Universidade de Coimbra.
- Blanco, R. (2015), *A Construção da Paz em Timor-Leste: uma Visão Crítica*, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2015, pp. 37-69.
- CAVR (2005), *Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação de Timor-Leste — Chega! Relatório Final*, 31 de outubro 2005.
- Duarte, G. R. (2016), *O Papel da ONU no Conflito do Sahara Ocidental*, Revista Conjuntura Austral, Porto Alegre, 2016, pp. 4-15.
- Jornal da República Democrática de Timor-Leste (2013), *Resolução do Parlamento n.º 10/2013 que aprova a Manifestação de Solidariedade ao Povo Sarauí e Criação de uma Comissão de Acompanhamento do Conflito no Sahara Ocidental*, de 13 de maio de 2013.
- (2011), *Resolução do Parlamento n.º 2/2011 de Solidariedade e de Apoio ao Povo Sarauí*, de 28 de fevereiro de 2011.
- Portugal-Indonésia (East Timor) (5 de maio 1999), *Agreement between the Republic of Indonesia and the Portuguese Republic on the Question of East Timor*.
- (5 de maio 1999a), *Agreement Regarding the Modalities for the Popular Consultation of the East Timorese*.
- (5 de maio 1999b), *East Timor Popular Consultation Agreement Regarding Security*.
- Pureza, J. M. *et al.* (2007), *As Novas Operações de Paz das Nações Unidas. Os casos de Angola, Timor-Leste e Moçambique*. Oficina do CES, n.º 290. Coimbra: Centro de Estudos Sociais, 2007. pp. 1-34.
- UN – United Nations. *World Statistics Pocketbook*.
- UN General Assembly (1965), *Resolution 2072*. Disponível em <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minurso/documents.shtml>.
- UN Security Council Resolutions.
- UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees (2015), *Western Sahara Territory*.





## Problemáticas do Saara Ocidental



# لوحة ميلاد الجبهة الشعبية لتحرير المساقية الحمراء ووادي الذهب

110

## MANIFESTE POLITIQUE DU 10 MAI 1973

Après qu'il s'est avéré que le colonialisme espagnol veut maintenir sa domination sur notre peuple arabe, en essayant de tromper par l'ignorance, la misère, ainsi que sa séparation du Maghreb arabe et la nation arabe.

Après l'échec de tous les moyens pacifiques utilisés tant par les mouvements populaires, que par les organisations populaires, et par certains ministres.

Le Front POLISARIO est né comme expression unique de masse, optant pour la violence révolutionnaire, et la lutte armée unique moyen pour que le peuple arabe saharien, africain puisse recouvrer sa liberté totale, et débarrasser les territoires du colonialisme espagnol.

Point indéniable de la Révolution arabe.

- Soutenir la lutte des peuples contre le colonialisme, le racisme et l'impérialisme. Pour cela les conditions pour leurs positions vident à placer les peuples arabes sous domination soi, par le colonialisme direct, ou par le félic colonialisme.

- Considérer que la coopération avec la Révolution populaire algérienne dans une étape transitaire constitue un élément essentiel pour débarrasser les sahariens sahariens contre le Tera-Monoc.

- Nous invitons tous les peuples révolutionnaires à serrer leurs rangs pour affronter l'ennemi commun.

La liberté est au bout du fusil.

Le Comité exécutif  
10 mai 1973

## الجبهة الشعبية لتحرير المساقية الحمراء ووادي الذهب البيان السياسي

إراد الشعب الإسباني بقيادة سيطرا على شعبنا العربي الأسباني، وحاربه، تسببه لهجاءه، والفر والفرار والتفريط بالجزر العبرية والأقاليم العربية، وواد مثل كل مناطق المنطقة وما في من تحتها بها الحركات العربية، والشعوب العربية التي تنهضت للثورة.

كانت الجبهة الشعبية لتحرير المساقية الحمراء ووادي الذهب بالشعب الجزائري وحدها القوة الثورية والعمل الفلاح واليه الثورة التي تلتها الشعوب العربية التي تنهضت للثورة.

بعد من الثورة العربية.

دعمت تلك الشعوب ضد الاستعمار والسياسي المتصوري والامبريالية، تلك التي هي محاولة لبقاء الشعوب تحت سيطرتها سواء بالأسلحة أو التمدد الاقتصادي.

تعتبر التعاون مع الثورة الشعبية الجزائرية في مرحلة انتقالية عمرا لتأسيس الجبهة لتحرير المساقية الحمراء ووادي الذهب.

تدعو جبهة لتحرير المساقية الحمراء ووادي الذهب إلى التحالف بين الشعب البوليساريو مع الشعوب العربية.

والشعبه تامل العربية  
عبد الرحمن بن  
10 ماي 1973  
الجبهة الشعبية

الجبهة بجل الشهيد  
مصطفى السيد

# Modernization and tradition in the Western Sahara, the Sahrawi Constitution

Claudia Barona Castañeda\* and Jorge Gamaliel Arenas Basurto\*\*

pp. 263-275

## 1. Introduction: A constitutional perspective on the Western Sahara

Ever since their independence, countries in the MENA region faced conflicts regarding who they truly were and what colonialism imposed on them as their realities and way of living. European colonial powers' meddling in the region redesigned national borders, leaving in a single territory tribal groups that had historical differences between them.

The transition to post-colonial models came together with a drift on the concept of the State and its inhabitants' role in it. Views in the Arab-Muslim world were split. Colonial land divisions segmented territories and, based on that, independence processes were feasible. But colonists' guidelines remained. Even as they were able to shape their destiny, this awakening contained an element of its deep-rooted colonial past.

There is no idea of modernization in the history of Islam (Landa, 2006). In fact, the *nahda*, the Arab cultural and political renaissance, was the work of Arab personalities, not Muslims, as an act of resistance against external factors (Balta, 1996); nor was it a natural process of State evolution. More than anything, this modernization represented the secular factor that charged against tradition and the very own founding of Islam as a civilization. Strict principles ruled over the traditional Arab Muslim community, same principles that were regulated since their origin.

This turning point between tradition and modernity will be at the core of the national identification and its ideology. Pretending to be modern and traditional at the same time leads to a contradiction; mainly when that European modernity is the one that shapes the State model (Landa, 2006: 17). National identity primarily appears as an answer to colonists; it is a response to the transition from a colony to sovereign State. In many cases, these answers will be radical as they can easily adapt to historical processes of emancipation.

Notwithstanding, the establishment of a new State was more than just the product of an identity reconquest. It is important to stress that external agents to the national identity accelerated or even carried out these processes. Current political systems tend to be mere subtleties of foreign ideologies that, whether for better or for worse were adopted and adapted to their settings. The goal repeats itself, to embrace modernity in their way, but not their pace. Still, the attempt remains.

\* Department of International Relations and Political Science of the University of the Americas Puebla (UDLAP). Founder and coordinator of the Permanent Seminar on Studies on Islam (ILM).

\*\* Department of International Relations and Political Science of the University of the Americas Puebla (UDLAP).

This paper seeks to group and to understand certain notions of the Sahrawi population and what makes them configure themselves into a State, their cultural transformation, and the historical elements that grant them a very particular spot in political studies. However, it is important to mention that there is a noticeable bias in the bibliography of this phenomenon that hinders the reading and interpretation of key moments of its development. The key moments addressed in this paper were chosen with a particular goal– to disclose the social structure and political organization of the Sahrawi from a historical perspective– so that they could ease our understanding of the State’s work and its institutions.

When addressing the Constitution and the participation of people from the Western Sahara, many observers tend to highlight their results, even as a far-off State and one away from the image of not only Arabs but in general. Despite the tingling optimism of some scholars’ and the Polisario Front (the Polisário, from now on), the results are barely there.

Far beyond the failure of implementing the constitution, there is a success story. In the latter, the Sahrawi used their chance to legislate with customs and traditions in several occasions.

The Sahrawi community, every time a bit more trans-territorial, survived the severe conditions of living in exile, highlighted by the shortage of means, while Polisario and SADR –as government authorities that work as political figures– worked on giving this *sui generis* State a legal coherence. The aforementioned due to reforms that remain on their constitutions.

This paper explores those achievements accomplished by the Polisario, SADR, and the Sahrawi civil society in the context of a war with a purpose that remains uncertain. For the latter, this paper will go a different way as compared to conventional studies on the Western Sahara because, based on the distinctive figures of their constitutions together with the Sahrawi society, it will trace the structural changes where tradition and modernization present themselves in the implementation of a legal framework.

## 2. Tradition vs. Modernization, the Sahrawi state through its Constitution

The Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, SADR, appeared on 1976 in the midst of war. A year before the apparition of the SADR, the kingdom of Morocco and Mauritania started the occupation of the former province<sup>1</sup> after they signed with Spain the Madrid Accords, which gave them access to the territory (Barona, 2004: 290-296). By then, a diaspora had already emerged, directed to the camps created by the Polisario in the Tindouf Province, an Algerian area.

It is important to remember that the Sahrawi are no strangers in the Tindouf Province, particularly the Erguibat. Since a pre-colonial period and a central point during the colonial era, this territory was a significant enclave as it eased for both Spain and Algeria a control of the natives.

<sup>1</sup> The occupation of the Western Sahara began on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 1975, with the *Green March*. The King Hassan II called out for a “peaceful” recovery of the Sahara, a decision that the Moroccan population actively supported. Consequently, thousands of Moroccans marched to the border with the former Spanish province. At the end of the latter, the Royal Armed Forces initiated an armed conflict that lasted until 1991. See: Barona Castañeda, Claudia (2004), *Los hijos de la nube desde 1958 hasta la debacle*, San Lorenzo del Escorial: Cuadernos de Langre.

A handling from the Ambassador in Algiers to Minister Castiella dated back to 1967<sup>2</sup> highlights a convergence in the interests of Spain and Algeria to boost the city's infrastructure due to Moroccan advances that sought to bring the Erguibat to Tarfaya. On the same document, the Spanish diplomat, and Minister Abdelaziz agreed on both countries' worry regarding Moroccan actions and the latter's interest to take the Erguibat to Tarfaya which made them reach out for Algerian support. However, the document's author pondered that one must pay attention to this request due to the *Algerianization* of nomads.

This text confirms a couple of hypotheses about the participation of Algeria in the creation of the Sahrawi State and the support they gave to the Erguibat tribe as a permanent ally. Furthermore, it is also important to ask ourselves the following: was Algeria part of the exodus from the territory to the Tindouf province in 1975 from that attraction process? How spontaneous was it? How much of it was incited? How did such a massive and distant exodus prepare itself?

Since then, the settlements at the Tindouf grew under Algeria's protection<sup>3</sup>. It was at that moment that the Polisario leaders used this situation to give legal support to Uali Mustafa Sayed's project via a provisional record. Uali saw a Sahara where its inhabitants were socially equal, humanly different, and completely free.<sup>4</sup> At that time, they sought to build a society that replaced tribal loyalties with fraternity and national unity (Solano, 2011: 11). For that, they had to eliminate tribal the character boosted by the metropolis, even if tradition was to remain in an institutional and social level.

On February 27<sup>th</sup> 1976, Polisario proclaimed the creation of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in Algerian territory. This action was a result of the options available at that moment. They did not accept that any administration that they did not get to choose would rule them, nor did they want to adopt the anonymous and apolitical identity of international refugees. The constitution of the SADR was an act of political resistance itself (Solano, 2011: 5).

The war pushed the Polisario to write a first interim document, the Provisional Constitutional Act of 1976. The goal was to strengthen the new State because, as the conflict arose, it was of utmost importance for the project of self-determination to have international recognition and, for this a Magna Carta came in handy. The Constitutional Act acquired a formal character by the end of that year.<sup>5</sup> It was a simple text, not longer than four chapters and eighteen articles that briefly, cited the principles of a State that stood in the midst of exile and war.

All of the mentioned above framed under the revolutionary discourse of the 70's and very close to the Algerian model, ... *La souveraineté appartient au peuple, lequel fait partie de la Nation arabe, de la famille africaine et de la communauté des peuples du Tiers-Monde* (Sovereignty belongs to the people, who are part of the Arab nation, the African family, and the community of Third World peoples) (SADR Const. Art. 2. 1976 [Author's Translation]). On the same year, they replaced the interim document with one that was just as simple: five chapters and thirty-one articles. Just like the provisional, this new document addressed the core principles of the State; territorial boundaries, government, and the judiciary. From the latter, three articles stand out:

<sup>2</sup> *Archivo General Francisco Franco* - Statement. Letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Castiella to the Ambassador in Algiers. Issue: It looks like Algeria is trying to bring all the Sahrawi to the Tindouf Province, 05-07-1967.

<sup>3</sup> The first camp that the Polisario Front settled in the Tindouf Province was the Nasser Camp. This settlement was the cornerstone of the future *wilayas*. Interview with Ali Beina Rabuni, December 2016.

<sup>4</sup> FDS - Letter, Uali Mustafa Sayed, Folder on the Polisario Front, 1978.

<sup>5</sup> Constitution of the SADR. August 26-30, 1976. Approved on the III Polisario Front Popular Congress, the Congress of the martyr "El Uali Mustafa Sayed."

- Art. 5.º *La Famille, base de la société, est fondée sur la morale et la religion* (The family is the base of the society, founded on the values of Islam and ethics) (SADR Const., 1976 [Author's Translation]). This eliminated the idea of the tribe as an element of cohesion.
- Art. 9.º *Le paiement des impôts et taxes est un devoir pour les citoyens; ils sont définis par la loi* (The payment of taxes and duties is an obligation contemplated in the law) (SADR Const., 1976 [Author's Translation]). The Sahrawi that wrote this first documents, inspired in many others, included in them what they felt was necessary to strengthen the State's institutions. Notwithstanding, the aforesaid belong better in a Civil Code than in a Magna Carta.
- Art. 10.º *Le droit d'asile politique est garanti* (The right to political exile is granted) (SADR Const., 1976 [Author's Translation]).

To this first Magna Carta we must add the sixteen Founding Principles of the Polisario Movement. These series of commandments marked the life of the inhabitants of the firsts camps. These sixteen principles were: 1) revolutionary violence, 2) discipline, 3) sacrifice, 4) secrecy, 5) self-confidence, 6) revolutionary science, 7) time factor, 8) save time, 9) take chances, 10) criticism and self-criticism, 11) revolutionary sincerity, 12) responsibility, 13) democratic equality, 14) objective analysis of reality, 15) fidelity, 16) exemplariness.<sup>6</sup> These documents, together with the National Action Program, a document formulated every General Congress; marked the camp construction era.<sup>7</sup> The purpose was evident, to keep the unity of a group that was ideologically-busy and morally-compromised with the cause.

After 1976, every Sahrawi became a member of the national liberation movement, except those that proposed something different or that defended Morocco's proposals. It was then a debate present since the colonies reappeared: Who are the Sahrawi? Who are the Polisario's followers? What differences are there between the Sahrawi and the Bidani? This concept has been used in multiple ways, going from the sense of belonging to individual elements, political militancy, national identity, or even as a demonym. The result of this is a social fragmentation that remains present.

While society resettled in camps, it was important to consolidate the State. Men old enough to join the armed forces started enlisting against Morocco while women, together with seniors, administrated the many institutions that were part of the SADR. The effort to reactivate the population and to create institutions in the midst of exile was clear. It was not a sovereign State, but it acted like one.

In 1982, the Sahrawi signed a new and better structured Constitution Act. Said document was a tad more appropriate concerning the long-time project and institutional framework they sought for the SADR. The text began with a preface that framed the State's ideological background at that time: pan-Arab, socialist, and non-aligned. The State sought to act like one, even if their Constitution appeared in a camp crisis (Garcia, 2010).

In the late eighties, the situation at the camps became more unstable and uncertain. Desertions in the Polisario affected the bases and, consequently, the populations started suspecting on their neighbors and reporting them. Meanwhile, a discourse on tradition and a sense of belonging reemerged in both the institutions and the society, reaching out to the use of *mefah* and *derrah* as distinguishing components. Sophie Caratini (2006: 12)

<sup>6</sup> In *Le Front Polisario*, Ahmed Baba Miske makes a rather interesting analysis on the birth of the Liberation Front that marked many of its ideological principles. See: Miske, Ahmed Baba (1978), *Front Polisario l'âme d'un peuple*, Paris: Editorial Rupture.

<sup>7</sup> At Fondo Documental del Sahara one can have access to notes and drafts of the first Polisario Congresses. The documentation belongs in the personal carpet of Colonel Rodriguez de Viguri.



points out that to the pre-eminence of security in times of war made some government officials mistook their solely political role with one of authority and that could use force. When all government officials are combatants, the separation of powers is not possible. In fact, it evokes an inherent conflict and rearises past differences; the crisis, be it a party or tribal one, emerges.<sup>8</sup> The crisis starts to show with the arrival of Mauritanian refugees and the State institutions' lack of capacity to meet the needs of the people, which breaks the principle of asylum/exile present in the first and the coming Sahrawi constitutions. Tribalism made itself evident in the social discourse while the population started to cover the shortage thanks to the informal economy, which was already accepted by the Sahrawi State. This was happening by the time they signed the ceasefire in 1991.

Despite of tribalism, it was at this moment that there was a substantial advance on the document as compared to the previous ones, although some articles that belonged better in a Civil Code rather than on a Magna Carta remained. Another important element is that, due to these circumstances, the Polisario gained strength because *le secrétaire général du Front Polisario est le Chef de l'État* (The Front Polisario's Secretary General is the Head of State) (SADR Const. Art. 13, 1982 [Author's Translation]).

From then on, the institutions' legal framework was defined thanks to women networks that hoisted the refugee camps until the ceasefire in 1991. In that year, they expected to go back to territories under Moroccan administration as they waited for the referendum. It is clear that a Constituent must give priority to the State as a long-term project of legal framework for the institutions rather than to a circumstantial one. Notwithstanding, in the case of the SADR, the need to justify many of the changes taking place inside the State, particularly those in camps, was more important.

To close this section, it is important to remember that, as stated before, the ceasefire took place in 1991 together with the preparations for the referendum and the return to the Western Sahara. The following constitutions<sup>9</sup> framed in the Polisario Congress went in different directions: gave a legal framework to the executive and institutions, a new role for society, an economic framework, and an ideological structure. While the latter may come off as shallow and greedy, each one of them tried to cover a particular challenge that appeared during the impasse in 1991, and that remains.

### 2.1. Sahrawi camps and the exiled State

The Camp-State dichotomy pushed the Polisario to change its policies to avoid bigger internal problems. The Sahrawi reorganization reflected on the Magna Carta eased the establishment of refugee camps, the social restructuring to face the war, and the international recognition of the SADR. But, they were not ready for the impasse of war. In this sense, the State, as a fictional object, was only an image built from the idea of a conglomerate to understand a non-existent function on an earthly plane. But government representatives carried out political actions and gave continuity to the concept of the stoic State. Besides, the vast critique to State-centric stances was that they tended to perceive the State as a subject and that decisions were taken based on men and women.

At first, some expected that the arrival to camps was going to be a significant step for a tribal society towards a new citizenship. At this point, the multiple constitutions highlighted equality amongst Sahrawi people, particularly on economic and social

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Fatima Mehdi, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> See: Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, USC (n. d.), Western Sahara Reseach Centre, *SADR Constitution*. [Online]. [Consult. 3.Oct.2017]. Available at: <http://www.usc.es/en/institutos/ceso/RASD-Constituciones.html>.

rights.<sup>10</sup> The end of the armed conflict pushed them to rethink of their situation and the future of this society. Following the latter, they eliminated at the formal level the tribe and made the land public except for farm estates.<sup>11</sup>

At this point, people were loyal to a new institution, the Polisario Front, that represented the State and the liberation movement. The first Constitution of the impasse of war picked up on this matter and built the document around this and the new role of the Sahrawi society. The latter appeared as a first miscalculation as they both covered the role of the other. On the contrary, the negative of the tribe appeared as something counter-productive as it is a constant in their activities that reemerges when either society or the individual need it.

Women and seniors rose the camps while men went to war or pursued diplomacy. The constitution of 1991 acknowledged their work as it pinpointed that *the State would safeguard for the protection of every political, economic, social, and cultural right of the Sahrawi woman as it would assure their participation in society and the country's development* (SADR Const. Art. 30, 1991 [Author's Translation]). But, even if women were of utmost importance in the organization of the latter, they did not make it to national leadership. On the contrary, seniors took upon civil authority. Later on, men would do the same once they came back from war.

The way we see it, the Constitution of 1991 closed many of the bases that were left open in previous constitutions. This document covered the roles of the three branches of government (the Executive, the Legislative, and the Judiciary) just like it enounced the rights and obligations of the Sahrawi society. According to its reading, it presented elements on both a long and short-term. But, even if we faced a clearer document, it still remained shallow in some parts.

Camps were more than a haven for refugees. They were meant to represent the State and, just like this paper asserted, this dual ability was hard to carry out. Since the very beginning, it was necessary to conceive refugees as citizens of a democratic State and to create cadres. Because who would govern them if they achieved their independence? The first matter they acted upon was to divide the population into *wilayas*, or provinces, according to the cities they came from, this eased a tribal break-up. The next step was to create the first social institutions together with neighborhood and provincial committees. Health, education, food production and distribution, and justice were the issues that solved and involved civil society (Caratini, 2006: 6).

Via the National Action Plan, they decide their budget and public expenditure, which is regulated by the Constitution. Humanitarian aid gets controlled by the State, passing through a filter to reach civil society. But corruption could easily end up controlling this sector in the detriment of the Sahrawi society and the consequent loss of credibility from the international community.

The activity sector was structured in a pyramidal way with the principles of democratic centralism at the base. The Sahrawi needed to address immediate shortages. Nevertheless, time, the installation of money, and the informal market had worn down this model. Social instability is already present and, therefore, so is discontent. The younger population sees in migration a chance to help their families and develop their professional abilities while they keep a sense of belonging to the Bidan.

Work was for the community and, at the same time, an agreement. The goal was to be self-sufficient with the support of international NGO's, particularly those from Spain. But,

<sup>10</sup> The Constitution of 1991, Spanish. *Constitución Política De La RASD*. [Online]. [Consult. 12.Oct.2016]. Available at: [http://www.usc.es/export/sites/webinstitucional/gl/institutos/ceso/descargas/Constitucion-RASD\\_1991\\_es.pdf](http://www.usc.es/export/sites/webinstitucional/gl/institutos/ceso/descargas/Constitucion-RASD_1991_es.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Emboirik, Leboihi y Mohamed Abdelkader, December 2007.

how can a State survive only with the help of aid? There is a national determination that calls out on a different thing, the will to live, to organize themselves towards a common aim, and their aspiration for a State. These circumstances and collective will are legally covered. It is the right to a State (Palacios, 2001: 43-86).

The social decay due to the war and the conditions that followed the ceasefire paved the way for an already weak state to stagnate itself. The much-needed step forward to get away from their dependency to aid has not appeared, nor is there a political will to do so as it is nothing but another business to the high echelon of the Polisario. Something similar occurred in the constitutions that followed the one of 1991 as they got further away from reality.

The opposition is not shy to openly criticize what they call “a revolving door democracy” while a critical media that still holds onto the idea of self-determination blooms.<sup>12</sup> The paths both of them propose subtly suggest an estrangement from the Polisario.

The opposition thinks it is necessary to find new options, to open the doors to younger generations, to rethink the State, and to separate the State from the liberation movement. They do not drift away from the goal to get their land back, but perhaps a more viable option is required to do so. However, the real question here is who wants to be this opposition? As of now, there is no visible political or social figure to do so.

The opposition is in need of political maturity, although they do denounce the senior leaders of the Polisario. The Modern Constitutions, as many call the constitutions that came after the end of the armed conflict, accept the right to association and multi-party system after they achieve their independence.<sup>13</sup> Another important query is that of what do they mean when they say independence? Do they refer to Spain's recognition as an administering power or Morocco's?

The strategy, better yet, the demand of the Sahrawi people is change. New politicians, new strategies regarding Morocco, a State rearrangement, and a modern discourse that does not leave tradition behind. The latter is an urgent and crucial process as people's discontent can be a dangerous thing. They can lose previous achievements such as the recognition and cornerstones of the State, something unconventional in Africa.

Before proceeding any further, we insist that the various institutions are a proof of the rather complicated situation of this State. War, a fragile structure, and an urgency of obtaining international recognition pushed the Sahrawi to write a Magna Carta on the go. Adding and eliminating elements that can be correct, unlikely, vague, with contradictory translations, or even incorporating articles that differ from one another in-between different versions.

The constitution of 1991 represents the first landing of a relatively modern and better-structured constitution that will go prior to other five constitutions, including the latest version, the one from 2015.<sup>14</sup> The first and the last documents help us see many of the contradictions in this exiled State.

The surrounding of the SADR directly influenced the constitutions. Similarly, the influence of Libya and Algeria is quite evident on very particular sections like the ideological pan-Arab model and organization. Regarding the former, it is important to stress that there

<sup>12</sup> The journal *Sahrawi Future* became popular on social media after the Gdeim Izik events. The Sahrawi found in it an answer to many of their questions while they voice the Sahrawi dissatisfaction. They are currently on Twitter, Facebook, and even have their own blog. [Online]. [Consult. 27.Oct.2017]. Available at: <http://futurosahara.blogspot.mx/>.

<sup>13</sup> See Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, USC (n. d.), Western Sahara Reseach Centre, *SADR Constitution*. [Online]. [Consult. 27.Oct.2017]. Available at: <http://www.usc.es/en/institutos/ceso/RASD-Constituciones.html>.

<sup>14</sup> The Constitution of 2015, in Arabic. [Online]. [Consult. 23.Oct.2017]. Available at: [http://www.usc.es/exporty/sites/webinstitucional/gl/institutos/ceso/descargas/RASD\\_Const\\_2015\\_ar.pdf](http://www.usc.es/exporty/sites/webinstitucional/gl/institutos/ceso/descargas/RASD_Const_2015_ar.pdf).

was a shift towards Islam that evolved up to the Constitution of 2015. It went from stating that *Islam [was] the State's religion* (SADR Const. Art. 4, 1991 [Author's Translation]) to affirming that *Islam shall be the State religion and a main source of the law* (SADR Const. Art. 2, 2015 [Author's Translation]).

At this point, we can conclude that every modification of the constitution is a consequence of a political or ideological evolution. The Constitution of 1991 took place in a very particular context, the end of the Cold War. Meanwhile, the Constitution of 2015 appeared in a very different geopolitical, international, and regional context; not only for the Polisario but for every other actor in the region where there was a shift from pan-Arabism to pan-Islamism.

From this law concept and source, many other articles' faculties derive. An example of this dilemma is Art. 5 of the Constitution Act of 2015: *The flag, the national anthem, and the coat of arms of the SADR shall be defined by law* (SADR Const., 2015 [Author's Translation]). If we consider Islam as the only source of law in this new State, is Islam the one defining the national anthem, the flag, and the coat of arms of the SADR? To have a body of sources of law could come off as a good idea, but which of these would be secondary sources? Not on a single iteration of the many constitutions do they mention this, not even on the last one of them, the one enacted in 2015.

Likewise, Art. 8 brings out another interesting situation. As stated in said article, *sovereignty shall belong to the people who shall be the source of all power* (SADR Const., 2015 [Author's Translation]). According to the Sahrawi people, what power are we talking about? How do they define it? What faculties does it give to them? In this context, Islam was the primary source of law but, was not Islam the one that held power? Or, does it not concentrate on those who interpret it for its implementation?

Another example that elicits numerous questions is that found in Art. 47 which commands citizens to respect the Constitution and the laws of the SADR. What laws is the article talking about? Where can we find those laws? Is it exclusively referring to those defined in the Constitution? These ambiguities scatter many doubts regarding the proper structure of the SADR. The latter, summed up with recent reports of corruption in the Polisario, aligned with the Algerian government, can lead to the manipulation of private interests rather than to its primary function.

In addition to the above, there are contradictions between the articles of a same document. Quite in fact, there are even some irregularities within the same article. Art. 7 of the Constitution Act of 2015, for instance, states that *the family is the foundation of the society; it shall be based on religious, ethical and national values and on the historical heritage* (SADR Const., 2015 [Author's Translation]). This article presents a fundamental inconsistency: the family versus the historical heritage. As seen in previous sections, the tribe is the cornerstone of the Sahrawi society, and its conversion from a tribal to a family matter rejects the former for a less complex notion with a higher chance of being susceptible as time goes by. Like so, to say that family stands as the core of the Sahrawi society due to its historical heritage is wrong.

One of the articles that we found that stood out from the rest was Art. 19 because we perceived in it many of the Sahrawi's social points of view. Just like the articles mentioned above, this one is concisely written: *holding office in the State shall not be a source of personal enrichment nor a mean to serve private interest or the interests of a group based on regionalism, nepotism or tribalism* (SADR Const., 2015 [Author's Translation]). By presenting tribalism as something negative that could be an object of interest at the expense of the State, this article evidences an internal struggle between Sahrawi historical traditions and its need to modernize itself. To deny tribalism on one hand while

referring to its historical heritage as the basis of society on the other is nothing short of a big contradiction. One cannot understand the Sahrawi people if the analysis does not begin with its basic unit: the tribe.

The experience of the different phases in which they tried to consolidate the Sahrawi Constitution and built a Nation State take us back to various fundamental aspects related to a review of the goals and the sense of the different constitutions in an international historical context. Generally speaking, the constitutions provide a shape and structure for the administration, just like they grant legitimate concentrations of power. These are crucial in the state and national government building process. Constitutions seek to identify the supreme law that will regulate political behavior, the construction of a public sphere, and the creation of binding rules for society as a whole.

Aristotle (2011) noted that there was not an unambiguous model for a constitution and that the many variants sought to adapt to the conditions of a social context. The Sahrawi case and its multiple adaptations of the text help us to understand this pragmatic aspect of the constitution as it goes through different elements. Mores, costumes and traditions inherited from their history and put together on a civil society due to the tribes' influence, the impact of Islam's cultural values and the ideological interpretations that turn into religious practices, a strong international tendency that urged them to be modern, and the weight of their not-as-distant colonial experience.

If we forget about these factors when analyzing the *sui generis* experience of the Sahrawi community, it is rather easy to make simplifications. For instance, the incongruities mentioned above in Art. 8 of the Sahrawi Constitution of 2015 immediately lead us to the issue of the constitution as a mean of sovereignty and a way to express the will of the people; but this is a very American and European thing.

In a Western context, the discussion on the constitution revolves around the power that governments are to receive so that they do not affect individual freedoms and that the State turns into a Leviathan (Hobbes, 1984). Meanwhile, in the Sahrawi experience, the dialogue circles around the weight they ought to give to Islamic values in both the interpretation and application of popular sovereignty which draws into a scenario where religion plays a prominent role in politics. The latter is also addressed in the contradictions of Art. 5, on whether Islam could be the law to create the anthem, symbols, and coats of arms of the Sahrawi community.

Other considerations on the social space that seek to build democratic institutions are those found in Art. 7 and Art. 19 of the Constitution of 2015, which refer to the unavoidable reality of the social weight of the tribes in the Sahrawi historical experience. The Modern Constitutions seek to secure the concept of citizenship, understood as the group of rights and duties that citizens have, at the heart of liberal democracy. The effort to pinpoint these rights and obligations in modern constitutions is also part of the freedom of speech and dissent with powerful social groups. It is almost as if these notions of citizenship do not go with the weight ancient intermediate organizations hold, such is the case of the Sahrawi tribes that structured the identity of the Sahrawi people.

Following the latter, the normative part that refers to the formation of citizens in liberal democracies subsumes in the Sahrawi Constitution another relevant traditional unit like the family. But, far beyond the document condemning the presence of tribes, the Sahrawi Constitution highlights the importance of the family as the core unity center in society.

Maybe the distance that the cited articles of the Sahrawi Constitution observe, particularly Art. 19, regarding tribalism and nepotism in the use of resources, alludes to the absence of mechanisms of social and redistributive justice that limit the resource appropriation of elite groups in power like Polisario, the SADR, and those tribes that work together



with these two groups. Under these circumstances, it is easy to perceive that there are inconsistencies at the social level in conjunction with those found in the Constitution. It is true that some parts of this analysis may come off as *recherché*. But in the situation of what could possibly be a new nation in which traditional processes of a State constitution hurriedly took place with goals that go beyond the ruling of a constitution, it is necessary to distinguish what elements of this constitution-building process are wobbly, what others keep a good government as its primary goal, and which ones seek for a short-term international affinity.

### 3. Final considerations

The study on the Western Sahara and the Sahrawi State leaves us with far too many questions in an already complicated scenario. Throughout this text, we analyzed how did a State configure itself in the midst of exile with a unique set of contradictions. We can link most of these discrepancies to the prevalence of tradition in the face of modernity.

First, there is a dilemma between the Polisario Front and the Sahrawi State insofar as these tend to be seen as synonyms because their roles are yet to be defined. The constitution is clear when it pinpoints that the Head of State is the leader of the liberation movement. Hence, why their functions can overlap in several occasions and may end up hindering State development.

The Polisario is a typical popular front where people try to put together everyone and everything under a single goal which, typically, has to do with resisting a stronger enemy. In this case, these adversaries were colonialism at first and, soon after, Morocco. This dispute over hegemony or the power of the many different actors has been postponed by Sahrawi people, although the contradictions become more and more evident. A strong opposition to the Polisario is yet to appear, although some critical voices started to emerge. On the contrary, the SADR pretends to be a State even if it needs to halt the development of its institutions, getting caught in an old-fashioned discourse with a population that no longer see themselves represented by the movement's leaders. They limit themselves to gathering humanitarian aid and resources, making themselves nothing but an administrators.

Similarly, the power of the SADR limits itself to the deploy of its military units and the protection of the wall. Up to date, the political will to resettle the area is yet to develop, as it relies on small Bedouin groups that survived thanks to their very limited agricultural activities. Contrary to the camps where Algeria has the last word, in these liberated territories the commands of MINURSO, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, limits its monopoly in the area while the tribes get some of their power back.

Up to this moment, the SADR made a significant use of diplomacy but its spheres of influence stifle the latter. The SADR obtained the recognition of several countries, the vast majority of them located in Africa due to Algerian influence. There were important advances in Latin America under the ruling of self-determination but the lack of monitoring of some delegations and embassies made many neglect the humanitarian crisis that takes place at the Algerian Hamada.

Furthermore, the absence of a political identity that entails the use of essential values like freedom and democracy resulted in many of the vital elements, such as the Constitution, elections, parliament, and the procedures for administering justice, to be nothing but a façade to gain international recognition.

As stated in the most recent constitutions, civil society organizations and political parties cannot exist until the Sahrawi get their independence. Notwithstanding, it is not entirely clear whether they seek this independence from Morocco or Spain. In the meantime, it is important to ask ourselves about the legal status of the Western Sahara.

On this very own purport is that the young Sahrawi opposition affirms that *it is their tribal nature, competency, distribution, and alliances, that remains as the decisive factor of social organization and the authentic key to interpreting the political future.*<sup>15</sup> An excellent example of this quote is the paradox of the political-constitutional design and a low feasibility to choose a Secretary-General for the Polisario who, as mentioned before, is the President of the SADR at the same time.

Additionally, all public officials in the SADR are natural members of the Congress of the Front. These born and non-elected congressmen represent over 50 % of Congress. Furthermore, the administration of justice, one that has *shari'a* as its primary source, limits itself to crime, offenses, and disputes between the population, exerting no control over to the Administration of the Polisario or the SADR.

Regarding the Sahrawi Constitution, the SADR's and the Polisario's performance together with their association with the Sahrawi State take us back to what Giovanni Sartori (1992) called "nominal constitutions." By this, the Italian political scientist referred to solely organizational constitutions but that somehow limited civil and political rights. In other words, some fractions in power get to set limits on civil and political rights under the excuse of "the will of the people," creating clientelistic networks that vacate the constitution of its normative component; that is the supreme law of the nation that sets limits on political power and warrants fundamental rights.

Moreover, an essential aspect of these modern constitutions is their need to promote civil order and a social sphere that allow proper conditions to negotiate and accommodate the law according to the needs of multiple social groups that form the society. That is the constitution's *raison d'être* in a democracy: to create a shared space where no exclusion takes place and that has a presence amongst the various groups within a society. The aforementioned goes together with the core idea of constitutionalism that refers to the concept of institutional engineering to pave the way for a system of checks and balances within the groups that the State represents.

But that is not the case for the Polisario or the SADR. In these political organizations of the Sahrawi community, the concept of power prevails on a single organization that represents the people's notion of sovereignty. Under these particular conditions, some may perceive that any room for conflict, negotiation, and discussion is a menace to stability and social order. As a matter of fact this results in a limited vision on the content of the Sahrawi Constitution which explains its briefness and contradictory laws.

At this point, the Sahrawi ought to ask themselves about the rationale of the Western State versus their own. If there is progress on their project, this must be from the inside-out to be one with a solid structure.

Authors like Joel S. Migdal (2011) have asked themselves about the legitimacy of the State as an autonomous and independent body that holds the legitimate use of force that can use it over other actors and organizations within society. In regions like Latin America, Asia, and Africa, their experiences tell of a need for concrete empirical studies to portray some of the particularities acquired due to State control. A peculiar weakness characterizes this State, together with an overlapping tangled mess of social organizations that determine its capacity to create and enforce rules.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Sahrawi Saburini students, 2016.

Based on this approach, we identify two central components of the State. First, the State has an almost-chronic weakness to impose itself on other organizations or actors with either a local or regional influence via ethnic communities, social organizations with or without an armed wing, clans, tribes, or chiefs. Secondly, the State is in permanent need to negotiate with civil society organizations to ensure its survival and to control certain pieces of land and sectors. It is because of these two components that the State comes off as a weak one. This approach helped in the understanding of very particular cases in Latin America (Olvera, 2012); perhaps it could come in handy when studying the Sahrawi experience.

The establishment of the Nation-State has been a hard and devious one. Ancient structures and configurations of colonialism based on different criteria like religious and cultural variables, ethnic groups, political power, charismatic leaders, amongst others, remain. These elements tend to reflect themselves in organizations that, under the threat of rivaling government policies and resource management, create tensions that neutralize their stances. Hence, they aspire to become States themselves. In these complex situations, privilege structures, political clientelism, and corporatism tend to become part of negotiation procedures between the many organizations that rival the State.

The interaction between various competing organizations that clash due to State legitimacy and the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force are two key elements in the Weberian concept of the Modern State (Weber, 1977: 98). In the latter, designations based on personal loyalty, cooptation, and ethnic negotiations are of utmost importance as they can delimit the *State capacity to dictate the binding rules of society* (Migdal, 2011: 98). The aforementioned is relevant because it is possible to apply it to Migdal's criteria to suggest that the Polisario Front and the SADR maximize *the use of group influence for personal gain* (Migdal, 2011: 98). In this sense, the Constitution drifts away from the reality of Sahrawi territory.

## Acronyms

MENA – Middle East and North Africa

MINURSO – United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

SADR – Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic

## Bibliographic references

*Acte Constitutionnel provisoire de 26 février 1976*. Available at: [http://www.usc.es/export9/sites/webinsitucional/gl/institutos/ceso/descargas/Constitution-RASD\\_1976a\\_fr.pdf](http://www.usc.es/export9/sites/webinsitucional/gl/institutos/ceso/descargas/Constitution-RASD_1976a_fr.pdf).

Aristotle (2011), *Política*, Madrid: S.L.U. Espasa Libros.

Balta, Paul (1996), *El Islam*, Barcelona: Salvat Editoriales.

Barona Castañeda, Claudia (2004), *Los hijos de la nube desde 1958 hasta la debacle*, San Lorenzo del Escorial: Cuadernos de Langre.

Caratini, Sophie (2006), *La prisión del tiempo: los cambios sociales en los campamentos de refugiados saharauis*, Cuadernos Bakeaz, n.º 77.

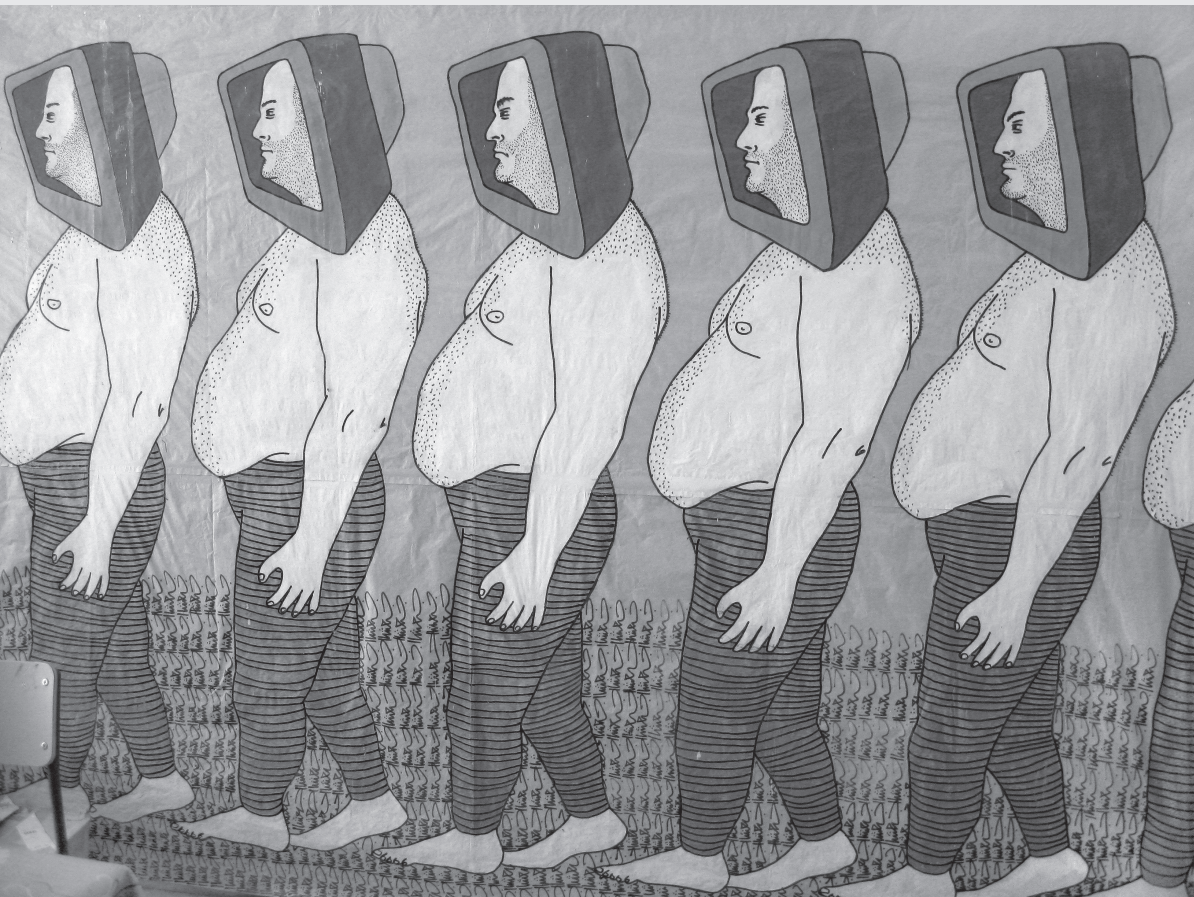
Constitution of the SADR (December 16-20, 2015), Approved on the XIV Polisario Front Popular Congress, Congress of the martyr Jilil Sid-Mhamed.

\_\_\_\_ (June 19, 1991), Approved on the VII Polisario Front Popular Congress.

\_\_\_\_ (1982).

\_\_\_\_ (August 26-30, 1976), Approved on the III Polisario Front Popular Congress, Congress of the martyr El Uali Mustafa Sayed.

- García, Alejandro (2010), *Historia del Sahara y su conflicto*, Madrid: La Catarata.
- Hobbes, Thomas (1984), *Leviatán*, Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Landa Pérez, José Jair (2006), *Política y Derecho Regional: prototipos estructurales del Estado árabe musulmán*, Mexico: Universidad Internacional.
- Migdal, Joel S. (2011), *Estados débiles, estados fuertes*, Mexico City: Fondo de Cultural Económica.
- Miske, Ahmed Baba (1978), *Front Polisario l'âme d'un peuple*, Paris: Editorial Rupture.
- Olvera, A. J. (2012), *Ciudadanía precaria y crisis de la estatalidad democrática en América Latina: lecciones para México*, Mexico City. Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Palacios Romeo, Francisco J. (2001), *Derechos humanos y Autodeterminación vs. Razón de Estado. Elementos para una teoría del estado sobre el Sáhara Occidental. El vuelo de Ícaro*, n.º 1.
- Sartori, Giovanni (1992), *Elementos de teoría política*, Madrid: Alianza.
- Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, USC (n. d.), Western Sahara Reseacr Centre, *SADR Constitution*. Available at: <http://www.usc.es/en/institutos/ceso/RASD-Constituciones.html>
- Weber, Max (1922), *Economía y sociedad*, Berkley: University of California Press.





# Can public opinion about Western Sahara's Cause be revealed by Social Media data analysis?

Ana Maria Guedes\*<sup>1</sup>

pp. 277-287

## 1. Methodological Introduction

Global “Digital in 2018” report from Hootsuite and We Are Social reveals World’s internet users pass the 4 billion mark (53 % of the total world population) and 80 % of the world’s internet users are active on social media.

Detailed analytics and mining of large-scale online data from social media and mobile technology promises to give important information by itself or as complement to traditional survey methods to provide greater insight and finer detail. In addition, social media also promises a faster, cheaper, and granular means to engage the public, using hashtags and raising awareness. However, reliability in social media can also be misleading as we can miss people who are not online or avoid online exposure, or we can get a distorted picture of reality because the most controversial cases may have an amplified echo.

Nielsen *et al.* (2017) assessed social media data from Twitter to inform communication campaigns to promote HIV testing and reduce discrimination related to HIV/AIDS, and its potential utility to evaluate such campaigns through HIV testing uptake. Clinical HIV test data was collected monthly from the city of Curitiba in Brazil and compared to the number of tweets on the subject, mapped to the city, showing a moderate positive correlation.

Abreu-Lopes *et al.* (2018) made a study to investigate the feasibility of leveraging big data sources – Twitter and Facebook – to understand the role of big data to evaluate the contribution of UN Women to women’s political participation and leadership (WPP). Using Twitter data for Mexico and Facebook data for Pakistan, they combined big data sources with traditional data sources to validate Big Data indicators.

Western Sahara is listed by the United Nations as a non-decolonized territory and included in the United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) is the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Western Sahara, established in 1991 under United Nations Security Council Resolution 690<sup>2</sup>. Western Sahara territory was formerly the Spanish Sahara up to 1976. It has been disputed between Morocco, who controls and administers 80 % of the territory, and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), who controls and administers the remaining 20 % which are known as the “Liberated territories”.

\* ISCAP, P. Porto, CEAUP, U. Porto.

<sup>1</sup> Contribution on History and Political Sciences: Maciel Morais Santos, CEAUP and FLUP – U. Porto.

<sup>2</sup> Available at: <http://unsr.com/en/resolutions/690>.

In order to clarify the designations of the regions of origin of the data used in our study, in this text we will use “Moroccan-controlled area” to designate the entire territory currently administered by the Kingdom of Morocco which includes those 80% of the area claimed by SADR. We are also going to need to disaggregate these data originating in the Moroccan-controlled area into two parts: we will then call Morocco to the area without the territories claimed by the SADR and to these we will call Western Sahara.

The sample of data used in this study was selected in order to track public opinion of countries which represent different degrees of interest and commitment regarding the Western Sahara conflict: Algeria, Morocco (Moroccan-controlled area), Spain, France, USA, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa.

Morocco (Moroccan-controlled area) and Algeria may be considered as active players in Western Sahara conflict. Morocco (Moroccan-controlled area) is the current power against which the Saharawi people are fighting. On the other hand, Algeria is the most important supporter of the Polisario Front, the political organization of the Saharawis since 1973; Algerian-based camps are the dwellings of the Saharawi refugees since 1975.

Spain, France and the USA may stand as powers representing indirect players in this conflict: they have been acting in support of Morocco (Moroccan-controlled area), one way or the other. Spain was the colonial power both in the Rif (Mediterranean Morocco) and in the Western Sahara since 1884. The Spanish administration abandoned the Rif in 1956 but left the Saharan territory only in February 1976, after having signed an agreement of a territorial split with Morocco and Mauritania which was not recognized by the United Nations. Together with France – the other formal colonial power in Morocco – the Spanish government remains one of the main investors and allies of the Alaouite dynasty. In 2000, French multinationals in Morocco controlled more than half of the industrial corporations with a majority of foreign capital (Vermeren, 2002: 287).

The United States have developed a close political and military cooperation with Morocco since 1956. As members of the UN Security Council they have played a major role in all the UN initiatives regarding the conflict, some of them directly led by their own diplomats serving as UN envoys, such as James Baker (Baker I and II plans, respectively in 2003 and 2005) and Christopher Ross in 2009.

Being the Saharawi independence widely supported by the large majority of African countries and by some Latin American ones, it was considered relevant to pick some of them in order to test the convergence of official policies with their own public opinion. The sample considered here includes South Africa, Mexico and Brazil. These countries' internet communities may be seen as representatives of the South in the political sense, which is surely bound to have a more active say in this matters.

## 2. Twitter

In this study we use data extracted from the social network Twitter. The tweets are searchable with queries comprised by a set of variables such as keywords and/or hashtags, date range, language, gender and location (Twitter supports country, region and city-level filtering).

Taking into account issues of representativeness, Internationally Twitter users are more likely to be men<sup>3</sup>, except in the United States where more women than men use this social network. Twitter users are more likely to be between 18 and 49 years old (67 %)

<sup>3</sup> Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/828092/distribution-of-users-on-twitter-worldwide-gender/>.

and more educated<sup>4</sup>. These facts prevent information extracted from Twitter data of being generalized to the entire population of a country. A low-educated citizen with no access to the Internet may not provide social media data, biasing attitude measures. To understand the extent of these biases, we could link Twitter data with representative data from traditional surveys, if there were such surveys, to understand the value of Twitter data to measure trends in public opinion related to Western Sahara issue.

Our study will focus on reactions of Twitter users to matters related with Western Sahara in order to understand trends in public opinion. Furthermore, we want to understand if those trends in public opinion, as discussed in social media, are correlated with countries' governmental support to the cause. We suggest three hypotheses:

- Twitter data, as a form of social media data, reveals public opinion on Western Sahara.
- Twitter data is a valid data source to track public opinion towards Western Sahara cause, providing regional trends.
- Trends in public opinion as measured through Twitter data are associated with trends in governmental support.

We analyzed all the public Tweets published between 1<sup>st</sup> January and 21<sup>st</sup> December 2018 for the cases chosen by the criteria explained above: Algeria, Moroccan-controlled area, Spain, France, USA, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa. Twitter data was accessed from where we extracted tweets and re-tweets based on the taxonomy that can be seen in Annex 1.

### 3. Social Media

Social media can be seen as a tool to mobilize individuals around a cause. There are several examples of national or global movements echoing on social media, for example, recently #Metoo – a hashtag campaign that quickly gained momentum worldwide, encouraging women to share stories of sexual harassment and violence against women.

According to “Digital in 2018” report, more than 3 billion people around the world use social media each month, with almost all users accessing their platforms via mobile devices.

Table 1 shows demographic information by country where we can see that Internet penetration rate is above 50 % of the population for all the countries under study, being Algeria the country with the lowest penetration rate (50 %) and France and the USA with the highest ones (88 %). In line with worldwide trends, social media active users in these countries are a major percentage of internet users.

Regarding the countries considered to be the active players of this conflict, Algeria and Moroccan-controlled area, the internet penetration rate is 50 % and 63 % respectively and it is estimated that Twitter active users are around 2 million (4.71 %) in Algeria, 3 million (8 %) in the Moroccan-controlled area, the lowest rates of our sample of countries.

The indirect players, Spain, France, and USA, have the highest internet penetration rates, near 90 % of the population, and the highest number of active users on Twitter as well, with 16 million (24 %), 19 million (40 %) and 114 million (35 %) users, respectively.

The representatives of the observers, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa, have internet penetration rates of 66 %, 65 % and 54 %, respectively. The number of Twitter active users in these countries are 57 million (27 %), 42 million (32 %) and 13 million (22 %), respectively.

<sup>4</sup> Available at: <https://blog.hootsuite.com/twitter-demographics/>.

**Table 01** – Statistics by country<sup>5</sup>

	Country	Population	Internet users (penetration rate)	*Social Media Active users	*Twitter penetration rate	*Twitter Active Users
Direct Players	Algeria	41.66 M	50 %	50 %	4.71 %**	2 M
	Moroccan-controlled area	35.97 M	63 %	44 %	8 %	3 M
Indirect Players	France	65.11 M	88 %	58 %	24 %	16 M
	Spain	46.38 M	85 %	58 %	40 %	19 M
	USA	325.6 M	88 %	71 %	35 %	114 M
Repres. Observ.	Brazil	210.1 M	66 %	62 %	27 %	57 M
	Mexico	130 M	65 %	64 %	32 %	42 M
	South Africa	57.06 M	54 %	32 %	22 %	13 M

## 4. Results

In this section, we present the results of the social media data analysis of Twitter posts related to Western Sahara in 2018 for Spain and France in Europe, the United States, Brazil and Mexico in the American continent and South Africa, Moroccan-controlled area and Algeria in Africa, as we understand these countries may represent the players regarding Western Sahara independence.

### 4.1. Taxonomy

The taxonomy to query Twitter Database started with the list of keywords “Western Sahara”, “Moroccan Sahara”, “Polisario” and “Sahrawi” in five languages: Portuguese, English, French, Spanish and Arabic. The result of that query revealed that there were other keywords and hashtags related with it, not included in the first query, that were very frequent in the tweets extracted. We added those new hashtags and keywords and iterated this process until the number of extracted tweets stabilized. With the final set of keywords and hashtags, that can be found in Annex 1, we were able to obtain a total of 198,849 tweets from the 8 countries under study, for the year of 2018.

### 4.2. Analysis of posts about Western Sahara

The Table 02 shows the number of tweets extracted from the Twitter database using the taxonomy described in section 4.1, translated into the query that can be seen in Annex 1, and applied separately to each of the 8 countries under study.

**Table 02** – Number of tweets extracted by country

#	Country	Posts	% of total
1	Spain	73,055	36.74 %
2	Moroccan-controlled area	48,545	24.41 %

<sup>5</sup> \* GlobalWebIndex, Q2 & Q3 2017. Based on a survey of internet users aged 16-64.

\*\* Available at: <http://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/algeria>.

3	United States of America	26,736	13.45 %
4	France	17,407	8.75 %
5	Algeria	16,147	8.12 %
6	South Africa	9,482	4.77 %
7	Mexico	5,721	2.88 %
8	Brazil	1,756	0.88 %
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>198,849</b>	<b>100.00 %</b>

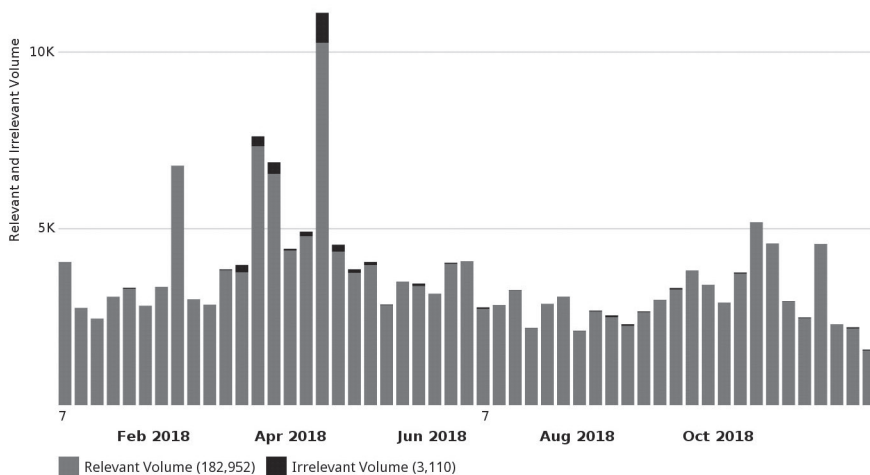
Spain is the country with the highest number of tweets about Western Sahara during the year 2018, with a share of about 36.74 % of total tweets of all the 8 countries. It is known that in Spain the penetration rate of Twitter is high with about 40 % (about 19 million) of the population using this social network actively, as can be seen in table 1. On the other hand, this subject is on the Spanish citizen's daily agenda and the Sahrawi cause has much support from the Spanish civil society, these two factors contribute to the high number of tweets about this subject in Spain.

The Moroccan-controlled area has the second largest number of tweets about Western Sahara in 2018. Although only 8 % (3 million) of the population use Twitter, the subject is very present in users' daily lives and nearly 49 thousand tweets that mentioned it were written in 2018.

Then comes the United States and France with more than 26 thousand and 17 thousand tweets respectively. In the USA, Twitter is a very popular social network with 35 % of the population actively using it, representing around 114 million users. In France about 24 % of the population (16 million) actively use this platform.

Algeria has the lowest Twitter penetration rate of the 8 countries under study, with about 2 million active users on this social network. However, the number of tweets mentioning Western Sahara stood above 16,000, slightly below the number of tweets in France during the same year.

Fig. 01 – Volume of tweets in 2018 for the 8 countries





In South Africa the penetration rate of Twitter is 22 % of the population, with close to 13 million active users in this social network. However the number of tweets on subjects related to Western Sahara during the year 2018 was quite low, below 10 thousand.

At the end of the list we find Mexico and Brazil, which, despite having a considerable Twitter penetration rate (about 42 million users in Mexico and 57 million in Brazil), Western Sahara was little debated on this platform in 2018: only 5686 tweets had been published in Mexico and 1756 tweets in Brazil during this year.

Analyzing the tweets volume distribution in 2018 for these 8 countries, which can be seen in Fig. 01, we observe some peaks that reveal the subjects that had more echo among Twitter users. They were: on February 27, the judgment at the Court of Luxembourg on the waters of Western Sahara; on 1 May, the tension between the Kingdom of Morocco and Iran over the supposed support of Polisario front; on December 5, the start of the Geneva talks between the Polisario Front and Morocco, sponsored by the UN. However, throughout the year, there were several users writing about Western Sahara in their tweets.

The Table 03 shows the 10 most used hashtags during 2018 in tweets that mentioned subjects related to Western Sahara in the 8 countries under study.

Table 03 – Top hashtags used in selected countries

<b>#SaharaOccidental</b>	48,000+
<b>#WesternSahara</b>	41,000+
<b>#ActualidadSaharai</b>	17,000+
<b>#Morocco</b>	14,000+
<b>#SaharaLibre</b>	13,000+
<b>#MoroccanSahara</b>	12,000+
<b>#Polisario</b>	12,000+
<b>#saharai</b>	9,100+
<b>#Maroc</b>	7,700+
<b>#AlgeriaSCAMWillNeverBe</b>	6,000+

### Sentiment Analysis of posts related to Western Sahara

Sentiment Analysis is a Data Mining technic that measures the inclination of people's opinions using natural language processing (NLP), computational linguistics and text analysis, to analyze subjective text. Sentiment Analysis is one of the fastest growing research areas in Computer Science. The outbreak of computer-based Sentiment Analysis occurred with the availability of subjective texts on the Web and therefore, 99 % of the papers have been published after 2004. In recent years, sentiment analysis has been applied to social media texts from Twitter and Facebook. Analyzed data quantifies the general public's sentiments or reactions toward certain products, people or ideas and reveal the contextual polarity of the information (Mäntylä *et al.*, 2018).

Now we are going to analyze sentiment on the extracted tweets for each country independently in order to estimate the inclination of Twitter users' opinion in each of the countries under study. For this, we have done prior classification of some tweets in 5 different languages: Portuguese, English, French, Spanish and Arabic<sup>6</sup>. This training was

<sup>6</sup> Colaboration on Arabic language: Mourad Aty, CEAUP – U. Porto, University of Guelma.

done by classifying as positive 76 tweets chosen from our database expressing support towards Saharawi's cause, 37 tweets that only give information without giving any opinion we classified as neutral and 37 tweets manifesting against Saharawi's cause as negatives. After running the algorithm we obtained the results of classifying the total 198,849 extracted tweets. The results obtained can be found in table 04.

**Table 04** – Sentiment Analysis by country

	Country	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Direct Players	Algeria	41 %	43 %	16 %
	Morocco	19 %	15 %	66 %
	Western Sahara	64 %	23 %	13 %
Indirect Players	France	17 %	23 %	60 %
	Spain	83 %	17 %	<1 %
	USA	47 %	13 %	40 %
Observers	Brazil	72 %	15 %	13 %
	Mexico	75 %	21 %	4 %
	South Africa	80 %	6 %	14 %

To analyze these results, we start by looking at the countries considered to be direct players: Moroccan-controlled area and Algeria.

As for Moroccan-controlled area, we have divided the territory into two parts, in order to try to estimate separately Twitter user's opinions from the territory corresponding to the Western Sahara and to Morocco.

For our study we have considered as Morocco the regions of Tangier, Oujda, Fès, Rabat, Béni Mellal, Casablanca, Marrakesh, Errachidia, Agadir and Guelmim and as Western Sahara the regions of Laayoune and Dakhla, and we were not able to include here the "Liberated territories" controlled by SADR, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic.

We have seen that this division of the Moroccan-controlled territory in two, reveals opposing positions on Western Sahara topic, with tweets originating in Morocco being mostly negative (66 %) and those in the regions considered to be part of Western Sahara mostly positive (63 %). However, it should be noted that we could not include tweets from the "Liberated territories" in Western Sahara data and its number of extracted tweets is small, standing at a few hundred, which limits the conclusions to be drawn on the intensity of opinions in this territory.

In Algeria, neutral tweets have the highest position (43 %), followed by those with a positive opinion (41 %), with around 16 % of tweets expressing negative opinions about Western Sahara. As for indirect players: Spain, France and USA, the analysis of sentiment reveals different directions for these three countries.

In France, the opinion on Saharawi's cause in 2018 was mostly negative (60 %) and in Spain was overwhelmingly positive (83 %), being the number of negative tweets on Western Sahara almost zero.

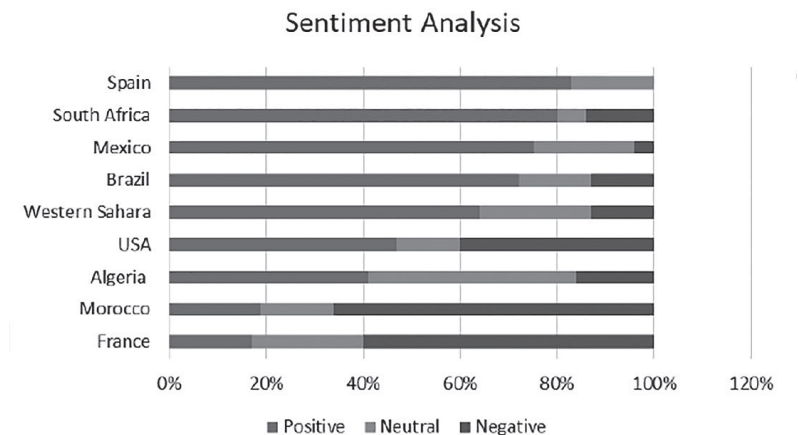
In the USA we see that in 2018 the positive sentiment reaches 47 % of the tweets but the negative was 40 %. This negative result is due mainly to the May 1st episode of the Moroccan accusation of Iran-sponsored terrorism through the Polisario Front which gave rise to a spike of tweets in the USA with negative sentiments in their tweets. These weighed in the annual percentage, raising the percentage of negative tweets and polarizing in 2018 the opinions on the cause of the Western Sahara.

As for the representative observers, South Africa, Mexico and Brazil, all show a strongly positive sentiment.

In both Brazil and Mexico, sentiment over Western Sahara is very positive, reaching 72 % and 75 % respectively. In South Africa, positive feeling was also prevalent reaching 80 % of all written tweets.

Fig. 02 shows us the results in each country ordered from the least positives, France and Morocco (without the regions of Laâyoune and Dakhla), to the most positive, Spain.

Fig. 02 – Percentage of positive, neutral and negative sentiment by country



#### 4.3. Governmental position versus public opinion

The Table 05 shows in a summarized table the most frequent public sentiment and the respective governmental position on Western Sahara conflict for each of the considered countries.

Considering the direct players, the Saharawi, the Algerians and Morocco, we see that public opinion captured by the tweet's sentiment is more or less aligned with governmental positions.

Algerian government supports Western Sahara independence although Algerian public opinion was estimated to be mostly neutral immediately followed by positive. One interpretation for the high number of neutral tweets may be its close association with a regime topic of the last 40 years and therefore its contamination with official politics, quite unpopular as the 2019 demonstrations in Algeria have been showing. It remains however a current issue given the number of tweets and the positive ones come just below the neutral ones, clearly indicating that public opinion did not stop supporting the Saharawi cause. However, a percentage of negative opinions (16 %) was also found.

The Moroccan Kingdom has made the lifeline of the regime out of the Saharan annexation. Accordingly, opinions contesting the “moroccanisation” of the South represent the most serious political offense. Moroccan public opinion is led, one way or the other, to say mainly the same. Still, 19 % of the tweets support Saharawi cause, a percentage that may not be explained not only by the Saharawi living in the Moroccan territory. The social tension is higher in Morocco than in Algeria and the Moroccan regime does not dispose of the hydrocarbons rent to cushion recessive times. The underground opposition to Morocco's colonial policy shown by the tweets may, therefore, go along with the regime's

hidden but rapid wear. Despite the Makhzen repression, these percentages may confirm that societal changes might be on the way.

Western Sahara is obviously supportive of itself. Looking at tweets from this region without the “Liberated territories” we found a positive public opinion, with, probably, the percentage of Moroccan state colons living there explaining the 13 % negative tweets.

The indirect players – France, Spain and the USA – show different degrees of convergence of public opinion towards the respective official policies.

France is an ally of Morocco and French public opinion is in line with French governmental position. However, although the Spanish government persistent role on Moroccan side, Spanish public opinion is massively on the side of Saharawi cause.

The USA have been having meandering policies so far, in regard to the whole Maghreb and the Western Sahara in particular. Since the end of the Cold War, Washington tends to have interests in all of the countries of the region and the US government is surely closer to Algiers than ever. Therefore, the dispersion of sentiment results of the USA public opinion data is consistent with this trend.

Expected results also came from the “observers group”, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa. These three states support the Saharawi cause and their public opinion says the same.

**Table 05** – Most frequent public opinion vs. governmental position

	Country	Public Opinion Positive/Neutral/Negative	Governmental Position
Direct Players	Algeria	Neutral/Positive	Supportive
	Morocco	Negative	Against
	Western Sahara	Positive	Supportive
Indirect Players	France	Negative	Against
	Spain	Positive	Against
	USA	Positive/Negative	Supportive/Against
Repres. Observ.	Brazil	Positive	Supportive
	Mexico	Positive	Supportive
	South Africa	Positive	Supportive

## 5. Conclusions

The presented results allow us to comment on the initial hypotheses of this study.

- Twitter data, as a form of social media data, reveal public opinion. It was possible to classify, for each country, the tweets as positive, neutral or negative, and to conclude if that country’s public opinion is favorable or not to Saharawi cause.
- Twitter data is a valid data source to track public opinion towards Western Sahara, providing national trends.
- Trends in public opinion measured through Twitter data tend to be associated with Governmental public positions. Spain was the only country with opposite positions between public opinion and its Government and the results from the data just confirmed what empirical observation had already concluded.

Furthermore, in the results obtained we observe a perfect consonance between the public opinion of a country and its government policy, which leads us to suspect that the information disseminated in the countries is very much in line with governmental positions influencing public opinion, with the expected exception of Spain.

However, representativeness issues must be taken into account, biasing these results. To understand issues with representation and validity, combining Twitter data with survey data is seen as a best practice (Couper, 2013; Callegaro and Yang, 2018). Future work could include collecting survey data from these 8 countries and compare it with these results. Other social network data like Facebook data, could be considered in future work when addressing Morocco and Algeria, as this social media has far more users in these countries than Twitter.

## Bibliographic references

- Abreu-Lopes, C., Bailur, S., Barton-Owen, G. (2018). *Can Big Data be used for evaluation? A UN Women feasibility study*. UN Women. ISBN: 978-1-63214-129-3.
- Callegaro M., Yang, Y. (2018), *The Role of Surveys in the Era of “Big Data”*. In: Vannette D., Krosnick, J. (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Survey Research*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Couper, M. P. (2014), *What Big Data May Mean for Surveys*. *Proceedings of Statistics Canada Symposium 2014. Beyond traditional survey taking: adapting to a changing world*. Available at: <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/conferences/symposium2014/program/14272-eng.pdf>.
- (2013), “Is the Sky Falling? New Technology, Changing Media, and the Future of Surveys.” *Survey Research Methods* 7(3): 145-156.
- Groves, Robert M. (2011), “Three Eras of Survey Research.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 75(5): 861–71. doi: 10.1093/poq/nfr057.
- Hootsuite and we are social (2018), *Digital in 2018 – Essential insights into Internet, Social Media, Mobile and e-Commerce use around the world*. Available at: <https://hootsuite.com/pages/digital-in-2018>.
- Liu, B. (2015), *Sentiment analysis: mining opinions, sentiments, and emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mäntylä, Mika V., Graziotin, Daniel, Kuutila, Miikka (2018), “The evolution of sentiment analysis —A review of research topics, venues, and top cited papers”. *Computer Science Review*, Volume 27, 2018, pp. 16-32, ISSN 1574-0137.
- Nielsen, R. C., Luengo-Oroz, M., Mello, M. B., Paz, J., Pantin, C., Erkkola, T. (2017), *Social Media Monitoring of Discrimination and HIV Testing in Brazil, 2014-2015*. Springer.
- Purohit, H., Banerjee, T., Hampton, A., Shalin, V., Bhandutia, N., Sheth, A. (2016), *Gender-Based Violence in 140 Characters or Fewer: A #Big Data Case Study of Twitter*. Available at: <https://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/1503/1503.02086.pdf>.
- Salganik, M. J. (2018), *Bit by Bit: Social Research in the Digital Age*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Vermeren, Pierre (2002), *Marruecos en transición*, Granada: Almed.
- Zhang, L., Liu, B. (2016), *Sentiment Analysis and Opinion Mining*. In: Sammut, C., Webb, G. (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Machine Learning and Data Mining*. Springer, Boston, MA.

## Annex 1

### Taxonomy and query to extract tweets related with Western Sahara

“Polisario” OR “Sahrawi” OR



“Western Sahara” OR “Moroccan Sahara” OR  
“Sahara Occidental” OR “Sahara Marroquino” OR  
“Saara Occidental” OR “Sara Occidental” OR “Saara Marroquino” OR “Sara Marroquino” OR  
“Sáhara Occidental” OR “Sahara Occidental” OR  
“Sáhara Marroquí” OR “Sahara Marroqui” OR  
“Sahara Occidental” OR “Sahara Marocain” OR

"المغربية الصحراء" OR "الغربية الصحراء" OR "الصحراوي" OR "البوليساريو"

OR

#Polisario OR #frontPolisario OR #sahrawi OR #saharawi OR #saharai OR #saharais  
OR #RASD OR #SADR OR #WesternSahara OR #SaharaOccidental OR #SaaraOccidental  
OR #SaraOccidental OR #WestSahara OR #SaharaOccidental OR #MoroccanSahara OR  
#SaharaMarroquino OR #SaaraMarroquino OR #SaraMarroquino OR SaharaMarroqui  
OR #SaharaMarocain OR #WesternSaharaIsNotMorocco OR  
#SaharaLibre OR #FreeWestSahara OR #Saharalivre OR #Saaralivre OR #ActualidadSa-  
harai OR #EstePescadoEsRobado OR #EsePescadoEsRobado OR #SaharaIndependence  
OR #marcheverte OR #greenmarch OR #larnaquealgeriennenaupaslieu OR #Justicia-  
ParaLosSaharais OR #YoReconozcoLaRASD OR #FueraMarruecosDeLaRASD OR #Alge-  
riaSCAMWillNeverBe OR #StandInTheSand OR

#بوليساريو OR #الصحراوي OR #الصحراء الغربية OR #الصحراء المغربية OR #الصحراء الغربية الحرة OR  
#مسير تخضراء OR #استقلال الصحراء

OR #الصحراء الغربية المحتلة

OR #آخر مستعمرة أفريقية

OR #الحرية للصحراء

بالبنديفة نفال الحرية

قوة التصميم وامرأة تفرح الاستقلال والسيادة

المجلس الوطني الصحراوي تجرؤ برأية على طريق ترسيخ الديمقراطية





## Entrevista

**JATRI ADUH**

**Hemos decidido habituarnos a gestionar todo lo que tenemos, por muy mínimo que sea, pero gestionarlo bien**





# Jatri Aduh

*Hemos decidido habituarnos a gestionar todo lo que tenemos, por muy mínimo que sea, pero gestionarlo bien*

Entrevista conducida por **Maciel Santos** y **M. Fadel Sweyah**

4 de mayo de 2018

Jatrih Aduh (1955, Aaiun) cursó sus estudios primarios en el Sahara Occidental y los estudios secundarios fuera del país. En 1973 se afilió en la clandestinidad en el Frente Polisario siendo el año siguiente encargado de la sección de estudiantes del F. Polisario en la región norte.

Entre 1976 y 1982 trabajó en el sector de la información. Fue Director Nacional de Cultura (1983-1989), Secretario General del Ministerio de Información y Cultura (1990-1995) y Ministro de Información (1996-1999).

Del 2000 hasta hoy es miembro de Secretariado Nacional del Frente Polisario siendo hasta 2008 responsable del Aparato Político. Entre 2009-2010 fue Gobernador de la *wilaya* de Smara.

Desde 2010 hasta hoy es Presidente del Parlamento Saharaui y el Jefe de la Delegación Negociadora Saharaui. Asumió el cargo de Secretario General de F. Polisario y Presidente de la RASD desde el fallecimiento del Presidente Mohamed Abdelaziz hasta la elección de Brahim Gali como nuevo S. General del F. Polisario y Presidente de la RASD.

**Maciel Santos (MS): ¿Para el congreso o para el parlamento, como se organiza la elección de los diputados? ¿No hay partidos organizados, pero hay tendencias de opinión con expresión parlamentaria?**

**Jatri Aduh (JA):** En 1975 el informe de la comisión de investigación de la ONU, que visitó el territorio en junio, concluyó que el Frente Polisario era fuerza dominante en la zona. La Frente Polisario ha salido a las calles de forma muy amplia para transmitir a esa comisión que nosotros éramos unánimes por la independencia y contra la reivindicación del territorio de Marruecos y de Mauritania. Desde allí se sabe de eso. Los saharauis, con todas las tendencias, todas las formaciones que existían se han reunido todos. Recuérdese que había, entre otros, un partido creado por la administración colonial española (el Partido de la Unión Nacional del Sahara - PUNS y había también una asamblea colonial organizada por la administración española -la Djemmaa) que se constituía de notables con una representación popular. El encuentro fue organizado

por el Frente Polisario en 12 de octubre de 1975 y ahí se decidió unánimemente:

- 1) combatir la invasión Marrueco-Mauritania;
- 2) seguir la estrategia del Frente Polisario ;
- 3) adherirse a las estructuras del Frente Polisario en un marco de un frente de liberación amplio que pueda abarcar, toda la sensibilidad y todas las opiniones.

Luchamos por la independencia y por un proyecto de estado nacional. El Sahara hoy sigue manteniendo ese consenso y las estructuras políticas se han adaptado de forma que pueda a lo largo de todo ese tiempo intercambiar opiniones, debatir la vida política, social, militar y estratégica. No queremos dar lugar a diferencias que pueden afectar los propósitos finales, la independencia y la soberanía nacional.

En este marco a cada tres o cuatro años se organiza una asamblea general, el congreso general del Frente Polisario en el cual participan los representantes del pueblo Saharaui esté donde esté. Donde están los que viven en las zonas liberadas, los que viven



en los territorios europeos, los que viven en los territorios ocupados, los que viven en la diáspora. Cada parte del pueblo elige un representante para ir a ese congreso y debatir todo, todas las estrategias, las estructuras del Sahara.

**MS: El poder ejecutivo de la RASD sale del congreso. ¿Por qué?**

**JA:** El congreso es una especie de asamblea constituyente dónde normalmente se debate las estrategias y mismo la Constitución. Esto porque es una representación muchísimo más amplia y numerosa. En el último congreso teníamos más de dos mil delegados, provenientes de todo el territorio del Sahara y representación de los diferentes focos de diáspora en el extranjero.

Entonces ahí normalmente se diseña la estrategia a seguir. También ahí se hace la revisión de las estructuras del Frente Polisario y si es necesario, de la Constitución que define todo el sistema político.

Cuando termina el Congreso normalmente se organizan elecciones. El presidente de la república es quien tiene también la prerrogativa de nombrar el primero ministro y el gobierno, y ese gobierno después tiene que presentar su programa anualmente al parlamento. Al fin del año el parlamento hace una evaluación en la base del seguimiento de las comisiones especializadas y también en la base del seguimiento parlamentario, cada uno en su distrito, en su *daira*. Y luego se vienen aquí para debatir cómo fue realizado el programa, hasta qué grado el gobierno ha podido realizar esos objetivos y donde no se ha hecho el trabajo.

**MS: Entonces, el congreso es soberano: puede revisar la constitución y elige el parlamento y el presidente. El presidente elige el gobierno y el parlamento controla el gobierno.**

**JA:** Exactamente. El parlamento tiene derecho a tomar y retirar la confianza del gobierno. O bien de forma solidaria, esto es

del gobierno en su totalidad, o bien a uno o a varios miembros. Y en nuestra trayectoria parlamentaria ya se había llegado el caso de la retirada de confianza del gobierno: en 1989 el parlamento se ha retirado la confianza al gobierno y se tuvo que cambiarlo.

**Nosotros no admitimos un solo candidato**

**MS: ¿Las elecciones parlamentares se han realizado sin interrupciones desde 1975?**

**JA:** Ahora estamos en la décima legislatura, desde 1995.

El Parlamento saharauí se ha creado en realidad el 28 de noviembre de 1975. En su raíz está ese encuentro que yo había mencionado antes, en 12 de octubre de 1975 donde se había reunido la mayoría de los miembros de la asamblea general Saharauí, que existía en la época colonial. Esa asamblea se ha reunido para dos cosas:

- 1) la disolución de esa Asamblea. ¿Por qué? Porque España quería que a través de esta Asamblea que fueran legitimados los acuerdos del acuerdo tripartido de Madrid por lo que España quería partir el territorio en dos. Los miembros de esa Asamblea para cortar el paso a esa legitimación, decidieron la autodisolución. Precisamente por eso los acuerdos no están reconocidos por nadie: no pasaran por el referéndum ni tampoco por la representación que existía antes.
- 2) la creación del Consejo Nacional Saharauí.

Entre 1975 y 1991, en la época de la confrontación militar, el parlamento se limitaba a debatir problemas de política interior, a tentar encuadrar la lucha, el sentimiento de la población. Se dedicaba al problema de la supervivencia. Y a nivel de exterior, de la divulgación, de la sensibilización de la opinión pública internacional.

En 1991 se firmó el acuerdo de alto el fuego para organizar el referéndum. Como se ha

visto que referéndum no se iba a realizar los Saharaís decidieran dar más pasos en el sentido de la edificación del estado del Sáhara. Y en ese marco se ha adaptado una constitución basada sobre la separación de poderes. Entonces es en el poder legislativo, en el parlamento, que se tienen que debatir y votar las leyes, las normas que regulan la vida política, económica, cultural del Sahara.

**MS: ¿Cuántos miembros tiene el Parlamento?**

JA: Somos 53 miembros. En esta décima legislatura tenemos unos 70 % de miembros de menos de 40 años: en el seguimiento de la evolución, el parlamento es muy joven. Tenemos 40 miembros licenciados o con nivel universitario. Tenemos 32 % de mujeres, un porcentaje menor de lo que teníamos hace 6 años pero sin utilizar cotas. Así se pueden tener resultados más acertados sobre la representación de las mujeres en el parlamento.

**MS: ¿Cuáles son los círculos electorales?**

JA: El parlamento se elige a sufragio universal. En las zonas liberadas se llaman *willayas* a las provincias y dentro de ellas cada municipio tiene derecho a elegir un representante. Todo ciudadano con dieciocho años tiene derecho a votar. Los candidatos se presentan de forma libre, no hay ninguna restricción, no hay ninguna limitación de ningún tipo. Si tiene la confianza de la gente se vota. Nosotros no admitimos un solo candidato, tenemos siempre no menos de tres candidatos en una asamblea, en un municipio.

Hay otro tipo de círculos. Otros representantes se eligen a través de las organizaciones populares o de masas. Por ejemplo, la Unión Nacional de las Mujeres tiene derecho a un escaño. Lo mismo con las Uniones de jóvenes, de trabajadores y de los estudiantes. La Unión de los Estudiantes del Sahara, por ejemplo, cuenta con cincuenta y tres mil miembros.

**¿Porque nosotros hemos adoptado este método si esto es un gobierno que no posee sus recursos?**

**MS: ¿Y en cuanto al control parlamentario de los presupuestos?**

JA: En regímenes parlamentarios los parlamentos se ocupan antes de más de los presupuestos. Una particularidad aquí es que los presupuestos son muy limitados. Como sabemos el gobierno no posea los recursos del Sahara en sus manos para planificar los presupuestos de acuerdo con las necesidades sociales. Aquello que se debate y lo que se adopta son apenas los programas posibles. Por ejemplo, en materia de educación: este año, por ejemplo, en Smara debido al número de niños que alcanzan la edad de escolarización, la *wilaya* requiere que haya dos o tres escuelas. Así se decide, si es posible, que en el curso 2018-19 tenemos que construir tres escuelas en la Wilaya de Smara. Después al fin del año el parlamento hará el seguimiento de lo proyectado y se cerciora de que las escuelas están equipadas y los profesores están impartiendo sus actividades. Cuanto a los presupuestos, claro son muy limitados; los recursos que se obtienen de fuera también se destinan a la realización de los programas.

¿Se podría plantear la pregunta: porque hemos nosotros adoptado este método si esto es un gobierno que no posea sus recursos? Hemos decidido habituarnos a gestionar todo lo que tenemos, por muy mínimo que sea, pero gestionarlo bien, gestionarlo de forma transparente y de forma aceptada. Eso permite experimentar nuestros modelos de gestión y también consolidar nuestra posibilidad de resistencia, de seguir teniendo confianza en nuestro sistema en el futuro. Además, permite acumular experiencia y formar los cuadros. Y un poco también, evitar también que ocurra aquí lo que había ocurrido en algunos países de nuestro entorno, sobre todo los africanos que cuando accedieron a la independencia se vieron con dificultades de afrontar las tareas

que inmediatamente surgieran. Y nosotros, creo que de esa forma nos posibilita superarlos sin grandes dificultades.

**MS: Con ese grado elevado de democracia directa, como funciona la administración local. ¿Esto es, cuál es el grado de autonomía de las aldeas, barrios?**

**JA:** Hay una ley que define la probativa de los distintos niveles de la administración del Estado. Ahí se ve la competencia del gobernador de *wilaya* y del consejo popular a nivel regional o a nivel de *dairas*, que son municipios.

La administración central asegura la garantía de servicios necesarios: agua, alimentación y vivienda. Esos son servicios que se garantizan por el poder central, porque las *wilayas*, los municipios, los barrios no tienen recursos para poder resolverlos. Y luego necesitan la asistencia del estado, porque por sí solos los ciudadanos, las familias no pueden garantizar nada. La enseñanza, los servicios de salud pública lo mismo. Ahora cómo funciona el servicio? Dependerá de la gestión de la *wilaya* de la *daira*, esto es de los municipios. De forma que si tomamos por ejemplo el sistema del agua: el ministerio de Medio Ambiente y de Aguas tiene que proporcionar a la *wilaya* de Smara una cantidad diaria de agua. ¿Ahora, como repartirla y como garantizar que llega a todos? Eso depende del poder de la *wilaya*.

Y en ese marco, también tenemos hoy una particularidad en el parlamento del Sahara. El control de la gestión de cada *wilaya* se efectúa a través de la comisión de especialidad en cada una o en varias áreas. Pero a nivel de cada *wilaya* tenemos los parlamentarios electos que forman un bureau regional que ejecuta el control sobre la gestión regional y local, para saber si efectivamente el agua que proporciona el ministerio se administra bien, se reparte bien, si lo que se transporta por medio de cisternas llega a lo

lejano y que la red de distribución funcione y se mantenga.

Hay una verdadera autonomía, pero solamente en la gestión. A montante, cada ministro tiene que proponer los medios con los que van a realizar su programa a nivel regional.

**MS: Por último, las relaciones interparlamentarias. Habrá breve nueva ronda de negociaciones sobre el Sahara. ¿Dentro del parlamento europeo la RASD sigue encontrando apoyos parcelarios o espera conseguir algo más?**

**JA:** Yo creo que en el parlamento europeo se está a debatir de forma amplia el tema del Sahara Occidental sobre la base del veredicto del tribunal de justicia europea emitido en 2016. Antes de la publicación de ese veredicto varias fuerzas políticas pleiteaban que se debían preservar las relaciones con Marruecos, y debajo de eso, cooperar hasta cuando se arregle el proceso de descolonización. Ahora no hay un pretexto para intentar bajar o saltar por encima de los derechos del Sahara. Uno, por el hecho que el tribunal de justicia europea ha dicho claramente que el Sahara occidental es un país y Marrocos es otro. Dos, porque solo el Sahara puede decidir de qué forma y con quien entenderse para la exploración de los recursos naturales. Tres, porque siendo el Frente Polisario el único representante legítimo de todo el pueblo saharauí es con Frente Polisario con quien se hay que tratar para precisamente saber si la población se aprovecha de cualquier convenio que se firme en cuanto a los recursos naturales.

Entonces estamos ahora en otro debate, otro debate que normalmente obliga a todas las fuerzas políticas europeas a pronunciarse – a nivel del parlamento europeo y hasta a nivel de la comisión europea y del consejo y conformarse con ese veredicto. Claro, hay las que siempre intentan salir de ello encontrando la forma de no lo contradecir.





## Entrevista

**SALAMA BRAHIM EL-BACHIR**

**Sobre UGT Saario no se puede proyectar la evolución padrón de los otros sindicatos**



الاتحاد العام للعمال  
قسم الإعلام والدراسات والعلاقة م  
ينظم

مؤتمري  
بول للعمال

تحت شعار  
القوى العاملة  
المهنية





# Salama Brahim El-Bachir

## *Sobre UGT Saario no se puede proyectar la evolución padrón de los otros sindicatos*

Entrevista conducida por **Maciel Santos** y **M. Fadel Sweyah**

6 de mayo de 2018

*Salama Brahim El-Bachir (Tiris, 10/02/1967) é o atual secretário geral da UGT Saario, a organização sindical sahraoui. Licenciado em Engenharia pela Universidade de Argel, trabalhou na embaixada da RASD na Líbia até 2011 e depois na União Africana. Foi eleito secretário geral da UGT Saario no 8.º congresso, realizado em 2017.*

*Nesta entrevista pretendeu-se dar a conhecer as particularidades da presente situação dos trabalhadores saaraouis, que se refletem nas suas instituições laborais. Para respeitar o mais possível o pensamento original da recolha, publicamos a entrevista em castelhano.*

**Maciel Santos (MS):** ¿Los sindicatos agrupan los trabajadores que tienen un patrón, público o privado; pero en las zonas liberadas del Sahara cual es el principal empleador de los trabajadores organizados?

**Salama Brahim El-Bachir (SBB):** Antes de responder a tu pregunta pues voy a volver más atrás para que te explique los orígenes del sindicato. Cuando en la era colonial, los trabajadores eran trabajadores y nada más: sin sindicatos. Desde el 1973 hasta el 1975, después del acuerdo tripartido de Madrid, en lo cual se dividió el territorio entre Marruecos y Mauritania, pues los trabajadores sufren una situación nueva. Esos trabajadores tuvieron que abandonar sus trabajos porque tuvieron que alzarse en armas contra la invasión que venía del norte y del sur. Los trabajadores se alistaron al ejército y los que quedaron fueron las trabajadoras en los campamentos de refugiados, las mujeres. Después del cese de fuego, empezó una nueva etapa: la gente ya empezaba a buscar trabajo, a hacer trabajos en hospitales, en agricultura, en lo que sea. Por lo tanto, sobre UGT Saario no se puede proyectar la evolución padrón de los otros sindicatos, a nivel internacional. En otros mundos se defiende

el trabajador, su sueldo, sus horas de trabajo, su salud, su seguridad social; pero aquí el trabajado está simplemente tratando de defender su dignidad y su existencia. Normalmente la mayor parte de la oferta de trabajo es de la administración pública: hay un ministerio de administración pública que se encarga de contratar: por ejemplo en hospitales, en la enseñanza, en agricultura, incluso en construcción.

Pero la acción de la UGT Saario no se dirige solo a los trabajadores aquí en los campamentos: cuida también de los trabajadores en las zonas ocupadas, así como en Marruecos, en Mauritania y en Argelia.

**MS:** ¿UGT Saario existe así desde cuándo?

**SBB:** El UGT Saario se ha constituido justamente con la constitución del Frente Polisario, en 1973. El primer congreso fue el 15 de octubre del 1973. Hasta ahora se han constituido 8 congresos, el último fue el 2016.

**MS:** ¿Como se organiza la UGT Saario: es una confederación o una federación de sindicatos?

**SBB:** No. Ni confederación ni federación, solo un sindicato horizontal.

**MS: ¿Como es su orgánica funcional?**

**SBB:** Se constituye a través de una pirámide: está el secretario general, el consejo nacional, el consejo o comité ejecutivo y después las secciones regionales.

Hay ramos profesionales: por ejemplo, los médicos, los ingenieros, los agricultores, los artesones, los de derecho, los escritores, los periodistas. Cada uno de esos ramos tiene su secretario general y su estructura dentro de lo UGT.

**MS: ¿Cuantos socios hay en UGT Saario? ¿Se puede calcular el porcentaje de los trabajadores saharauis sindicalizados?**

**SBB:** Se considera que todos los saharauis de las zonas liberadas pertenecen a la Frente Polisario y los adultos activos son por lo tanto miembros. Pero se puede estimar un total de cincuenta mil.

**MS: Normalmente los presupuestos de los sindicatos y de las confederaciones son las cotizaciones de los socios. ¿Hay cotización sindical en la UGT Saario?**

**SBB:** Aquí el trabajador es un trabajador voluntario, que trabaja simplemente para recibir alguna ayuda, no por un sueldo. Aquí no hay sueldos, pero hay una ayuda y de esa pequeña ayuda la UGT Saario no puede quitarles algo. Los trabajadores saben que es el UGT Saario quien tiene que aportar a los trabajadores, no el contrario.

**MS: ¿Y en el caso de los trabajadores que trabajan para privados, en Argelia o Mauritania, o para esos estados?**

**SBB:** Pero al no querer practicarlo aquí, pues no se practica ahí. Es gracias a esa gente que está trabajando en Argelia, España, Mauritania o en Francia que se sostienen muchas familias aquí. La financiación de la UGT Saario normalmente la encuentran en los sindicatos solidarios, en Europa y otras partes.

**MS: ¿Tiene UGT Saario fuentes alternativas que le aporten ingresos, como cooperativas? En los sindicatos de África, eso ocurre en ciertos casos.**

**SBB:** A través de algunos sindicatos amigos pues se han podido hacer algunas cooperativas, muy pequeñas, muy reducidas, por ejemplo, en costura, en carpintería, en hacer comidas. ¿Pero qué pasa? que la mayoría de los casos esas cooperativas no se pueden autofinanciar y si, por ejemplo, se avería una máquina ya para y tendrán que esperar a que viene una nueva. También la verdad es que aquí todavía nos falta una cultura sindicalista. Estamos intentando con otros sindicatos traer su experiencia aquí.

**MS: Hablemos ahora de la actividad principal de los sindicatos, que es sobre los conflictos de trabajo. ¿Los hay aquí?**

**SBB:** Eso es lo primordial en su programa. Siempre considerando la situación especial, de que hablamos, siempre que trabajador tenga razón se defenderá y se le ayuda. Durante el año pasado hubo problemas de los trabajadores en la enseñanza, en la salud e intervenciones de las secciones sindicales respetivos de UGT Saario.

**MS: ¿Es permitida la huelga?**

**SBB:** La constitución saharauí no permite tal pero aquí no hay sueldos. Recuerda que todos los trabajadores son voluntarios, pudiendo simplemente recibir alguna ayuda.

**MS: Pero los conflictos pueden no estar relacionados con el sueldo y apenas con las condiciones de trabajo y horarios.**

**SBB:** Anteriormente, los comités que controlaban la aplicación del código de trabajo estaban en los ministerios, por ejemplo, en el ministerio de la salud y el ministro respectivo presidía a ese comité. Ahora eso ha cambiado y quien preside es el representante de los trabajadores. Serán ellos a negociar

y si no resulta podrán hacer su huelga, si necesario.

**MS: ¿Sobre los medios de comunicación: UGT Saario tiene alguno *media*, algún boletín, algún “newsletter” periódico?**

**SBB:** Hay un periódico semestral que sale cada 6 meses. Se intitula “el 20 de octubre” homenajeando una operación que los trabajadores hicieron en la industria de la cinta de fosfatos durante el año de 1974. En conmemoración de esa paralización se dio ese nombre a la revista. El 20 de octubre es el día del trabajador saharauí.

Este boletín se publica siempre que hay medios de financiación: as veces hay un año de retraso. Estamos intentando colocar lo online.

**MS: ¿Y para informaciones cotidianas no hay nada más?**

**SBB:** Normalmente, utilizamos folletos internos. El consejo nacional de UGT Saario que se compone de los secretarios regionales reúne de 3 a 3 meses y hay también reuniones extraordinarias.

**MS: ¿Para la formación de cuadros sindicales, para la informática, tiene UGT Saario previsto algún tipo de formación profesional?**

**SBB:** Hay un centro de formación que tenemos aquí ya través de amigos italianos. A través de los sindicatos italiano, podemos

continuar y formar por ejemplo, en la costura, carpintería, lenguas, cocina, turismo. Fue también inaugurada una clase de arte plástica.

**MS: Último punto, relaciones internacionales. ¿El UGT Saario es afiliado en que organizaciones internacionales?**

**SBB:** Estamos en la organización africana (OUSA) y en consejo económico y cultural de África. Tenemos también las relaciones bilaterales con los sindicatos españoles, portugueses, italianos y otros). Tenemos también relaciones con Argentina, Venezuela. Estamos intentando obtener apoyo de la OIT, de que somos miembros observadores. Esperamos que en el próximo congreso en diciembre en Dinamarca nos tornemos miembros plenos.

**MS: Una cuestión difícil sobre el actual momento sindical en Argelia. ¿Sigue la UGTA siendo la institución representativa de los trabajadores o se justifica el creciente movimiento sindical autónomo en Argelia?**

**SBB:** Para ser más sincero, quien pude juzgar a UGTA son los trabajadores argelinos. En mayo del año pasado pasado, la UGTA hizo un acto acto solidario con los trabajadores saharauis en Oran, agregando en (nombre), 20000 trabajadores. Recibimos ayudas de esta organización, que nos respecta y también los respectamos a ellos, bien como al pueblo argelino.



Handwritten Arabic text in a dense, cursive script, likely a manuscript or a collection of verses. The text is written in black ink on a light-colored background. The script is highly stylized and difficult to read due to its density and the overlapping of lines. The text appears to be a collection of verses or a continuous passage, possibly related to religious or historical themes. The overall appearance is that of an ancient or historical document.





## Notas de leitura





# À la table des Seigneurs...

René Pélissier

pp. 305-325

... barons, écuyers et parasites s'engraissent. Et en cuisine, manants du Parti, mendiants de la famille et valets en livrée se disputent les reliefs les plus juteux, tandis qu'à la décharge (*lixeira*) du château, les archers du guet se contenteront bien des derniers os. Espérons-le, tout au moins! Donc, préparons soigneusement une limonade pétillante et généreuse, proportionnelle à notre impudence, et d'un pas hardi avançons vers nos pseudo-découvertes. Pas toutes, car il y a encore les ultra-pauvres, trop éloignés des «puissances» pour en espérer quelque bienfait. Parmi eux, ceux qui ne se résignent pas et les plus optimistes tentent toujours la traversée des déserts et des flots.

## Généralités et regroupement de plusieurs pays

Commençons par les ancêtres (si l'on peut dire) de ces émigrés volontaires en jetant un coup d'œil sur ceux qui, pendant des siècles, furent des voyageurs forcés que l'on aperçoit à peine à la lecture des premières dizaines de pages de **Opposing the Slavers**<sup>1</sup>. L'auteur est un officier de la Royal Navy, à la retraite depuis 1992, qui a voulu dresser une stèle commémorative pour honorer tous ses prédécesseurs de la marine à voile, engagés dans une mission dangereuse et impossible à mener à bien avec d'aussi faibles moyens: bouleverser un système économique qui n'enrichissait que ses promoteurs et – accessoirement (les primes pour les prises de navires négriers) les marins – surtout leurs officiers. Pour ce faire, Peter Grindal a résumé les centaines de journaux de bord des bâtiments engagés dans la campagne anti-esclavagiste, ayant survécu de 1807 à 1839 (après cette date on a «perdu» ces pièces dans les archives britanniques). Cette énorme partie du livre coïncide avec la période où les interventions de la Navy n'étaient autorisées qu'au nord de l'Equateur, c'est-à-dire que les contrôles entre Corisco et Benguela échappaient aux zones d'intervention du West Africa Squadron.

De ce fait, la description des prouesses navales est d'une lecture plutôt répétitive, malgré le pittoresque de certains détails. Ce torrent d'informations sera probablement utile aux historiens de la marine royale. Toutefois, qui voudrait en savoir plus sur des négriers tels que Pedro Blanco (Espagnol), voire le Chacha (Portugais du Brésil) de Ouidah, ou sur l'attitude de tel ou tel roitelet côtier (partisan de la traite), à l'égard du commerce de la chair humaine qui constituait jusqu'alors l'essentiel des rapports entre Africains et Européens, ce lecteur devra le chercher ailleurs. A peine, voit-on comment les sociétés coloniales portugaises en Angola, en Guinée et à Príncipe réagirent devant l'extinction annoncée de leur principale source d'enrichissement illicite. Au crédit de Peter Grindal nous inscrirons néanmoins tout ce qu'il nous révèle sur le rôle de la base britannique à Fernando Poo dans la lutte contre ce trafic.

<sup>1</sup> Grindal, Peter (2016), **Opposing the Slavers. The Royal Navy's Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade**, London, I.B. Tauris, pp. XXX 11-863, gravures noir et blanc.

On restera dans le lugubre avec **As voltas do passado**<sup>2</sup>. C'est un empilement chronologique de 47 contributions (plusieurs ayant moins de 10 pages). Elles portent sur: **a)** une date ou un événement marquant dans la lutte des nationalistes africains et leur combat contre l'Império; **b)** le traitement qu'en ont fait les partis après l'indépendance. L'objectif des auteurs semble être double: le rappel de faits ou de tournants qui, les années passant, risquent d'être oubliés, et ensuite la recherche désabusée de statistiques plus réalistes sur des chiffres attribués aux victimes africaines par ceux qui en sont devenus les héritiers. On ne peut que se féliciter de voir les comptables contester les propagandistes. Exemples: continuer à faire croire au bon peuple et aux naïfs étrangers qu'il y a eu un millier de morts, le 3 février 1953, dans le massacre de Batepá à São Tomé, est une pure exploitation des mémoires locales. Même chose pour le massacre de Mueda chez les Macondes du Mozambique, le 16 juin 1960, où l'on passe de 16 morts (et peut-être encore beaucoup moins) à 600 dans les Saintes Ecritures du FRELIMO. Remarquons que les commentateurs de ces grandes tueries apoplectiques ne parlent que très rarement de blessés, ce qui donne à croire que tout blessé était un mort réquisitionné par les aèdes du FRELIMO. Tuer 600 personnes sans faire un seul blessé devrait pourtant laisser songeur le moindre sous-officier de bonne foi. En guerre, on ment. Mais c'est bien pire après. Surtout dans certaines sociétés vivant dans l'oralité prépondérante.

**Total Onslaught**<sup>3</sup> est une expression qui connut son heure de gloire dans la SADF sud-africaine et qui peut se traduire par «La guerre totale». L'auteur de ce gros livre engagé est ou fut journaliste puis professeur dans des institutions militaires ou universitaires britanniques ou en Afrique australe, ce qui explique que sa bibliographie rachitique (2 pages) ne comporte que des livres en anglais, phénomène qui ne surprend plus personne dans le monde de l'édition non-anglophone.

Paul Moorcraft a servi dans la police rhodésienne et cela suffira pour comprendre que ce n'est pas un ami des régimes se réclamant du «marxisme austral». Il examine la montée en puissance de la «Pax Pretoria», les guerres coloniales en Angola (1961-1976), Namibie (1966-1976), Mozambique (1964-1975) et en Rhodésie (1965-1980). Il traite ensuite de la suprématie militaire sud-africaine en Angola (1976-1990), en Namibie (1976-1989), et politiquement au Mozambique pendant la guerre civile (1976-1992), aborde le Zimbabwe dans les affres de l'indépendance et examine la guerre interne en Afrique du Sud, si mal couverte par la presse francophone. Il met un point d'interrogation final lorsqu'il parle des nations arc-en-ciel. Dans l'ensemble, il accorde une importance supérieure au Mozambique par rapport à l'Angola. Il arrive même à fournir sur la RENAMO quelques informations peu courantes et il n'est pas loin de voir en Dhlakama un personnage crucial qu'il visitera deux fois dans la Gorongosa, ce qui n'est pas si fréquent et est probablement lié au rôle des Rhodésiens initiaux dans l'affermissement de sa stature. On remarque l'originalité des photos qu'il sème généreusement dans son volume. Il n'est pas toujours unilatéral et aveugle, mais Savimbi apparaît 19 fois dans les pages qu'il consacre à l'Angola, Neto 5 fois seulement. Bref, pour une première introduction à l'histoire récente de l'Afrique australe, les résumés de l'auteur ne sont pas sans valeur si l'on fait abstraction de son parcours politique.

<sup>2</sup> Cardina, Miguel & Martins, Bruno Sena (coord.) (2018), *As voltas do passado. A Guerra colonial e as lutas de libertação*, Lisboa, Tinta-da-China, pp. 358.

<sup>3</sup> Moorcraft, Paul (2018), *Total Onslaught. War and Revolution in Southern Africa Since 1945*, Barnsley (Angleterre), Pen & Sword Books Ltd., pp. XXV-478, photos noir et blanc.

## Guiné

**La fin de l'empire colonial portugais**<sup>4</sup> est un livre important pour connaître la guerre de libération de la Guinée-Bissau et surtout les activités du PAIGC et de ses principaux dirigeants lors de sa période ascensionnelle. Rédigé par un couple de journalistes tiers-mondistes, mais restés lucides et stratégiquement bien placés puisque correspondants de l'Agence France-Presse à Dakar, le texte rassemble 23 témoignages de longueur respectable de cinq hauts cadres bissau-guinéens du PAIGC, dix cap-verdiens de la même obédience, sept officiers et politiques portugais antisalazaristes, et de Léopold Sedar Senghor. Leurs dépositions ont été recueillies entre 1980 et 1982 et plus ou moins actualisées jusqu'à la mort de leur auteur, 2017 étant la date butoir. Le grand absent de cette cueillette tardive est, de ce fait, Amílcar Cabral (... 20 janvier 1973).

Le libellé du titre est ambigu et même trompeur pour le lecteur souhaitant trouver une étude des événements et des évolutions qui ont conduit à l'indépendance de *tous* les PALOP. Le livre irritera également ceux qui sont habitués aux notes de bas de page aisément repérables. Ici elles sont repoussées en fin de volume et difficilement promptement utilisables car scindées selon les chapitres de l'ouvrage. Par ailleurs, les témoignages ne sont pas reproduits *in extenso*, les uns après les autres, mais bien découpés chronologiquement selon la ventilation suivante: **a)** l'éveil; **b)** au début de la guerre; **c)** sous le règne de Spínola; **d)** l'assassinat de Cabral; **e)** le 25 avril; **f)** les lendemains des indépendances.

Cela étant dit, c'est une vision relativement apaisée que nous offrent les acteurs d'origine cap-verdienne qui ont tiré leur épingle du jeu. Certains admettent même la précarité de ce mariage contre nature que Cabral voulait réaliser: unir le lapin *guineense* et la carpe insulaire, c'est-à-dire le maintien d'une domination du premier par une mince couche de «colonisateurs adjoints» plus instruits et, pour certains, exploitant les ruraux continentaux. Comme le dit fort pertinemment Aristide Pereira, les Bissau-Guinéens – et notamment les Balantes – avaient la mémoire longue et, si on ne connaît toujours pas avec certitude les instigateurs de l'assassinat d'Amílcar Cabral, il n'y a pas beaucoup de doutes que les exécutants et tous ceux qui, à tort ou à raison, ont été classés dans le clan des adversaires des Cap-Verdiens au sein du PAIGC, étaient des Bissau-Guinéens.

Ce livre contient beaucoup d'éclaircissements sur le rôle de Rafaël Barbosa, sur l'habileté du général Spínola, et sur le cérémonial rituel du meurtre du président João Bernardo Vieira (Nino Vieira), *assimilado* pepel mais aussi «baptisé» balante. S'y ajoutent des révélations sur la tentative de nommer à la tête de la PIDE l'artisan de l'opération Mar Verde à Conakry, Alpoim Calvão, officier mais également homme d'affaires, sur l'évacuation des postes portugais face à l'ultimatum du PAIGC, sur l'accord de passation des pouvoirs entre le Parti et le dernier gouverneur portugais, Carlos Fabião, et sur les mutineries des compagnies de *comandos* africains.

On aurait peut-être aimé plus de détails sur les succès économiques du Cap-Vert de nos jours et sur le naufrage de la Guinée des putschistes et des corrompus dans une mer de stupéfiants où les pseudo-élites locales se disputent pour s'asseoir à la table de tel ou tel seigneur éphémère. Les Suédois et les Néerlandais – entre autres – n'ont pas dû beaucoup rire à la lecture d'un récent roman de Frederick Forsyth qui s'était déplacé en Guinée. Leurs impôts maintiennent sous perfusion un pays qui paraissait si prometteur au temps d'Amílcar l'enchanteur. Un rêve opiacé?

<sup>4</sup> Makédonsky, Éric et Jeanne (2018), **La fin de l'empire colonial portugais. Témoignages sur un dénouement tardif et tourmenté**, Paris, L'Harmattan, pp. 471, photos noir et blanc, index.

## Angola

En ouvrant cette section par la présentation d'un livre sur le Cabinda on va peut-être indisposer les partisans du droit de l'enclave à l'indépendance. Nous plaiderons l'incapacité des historiens à prévoir l'avenir et, *pour le moment*, le Cabinda étant considéré comme une province angolaise, bibliographiquement parlant, nous ne dissocierons pas les deux entités. *Pour le moment!* Ce qui donne au livre organisé par Sedrick de Carvalho une place spéciale dans la maigrelette littérature parascientifique consacrée à cette anomalie coloniale portugaise, c'est que les huit auteurs ayant contribué à son élaboration ont eu une grande liberté pour exprimer leurs propositions quant au futur. Ce **Cabinda**<sup>5</sup> n'est donc pas une de ces médiocres productions pro-intégration ou pro-souveraineté, chacun exhumant les cinq traités de *protectorado* du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et les interprétant à sa manière. En fait, l'essence du livre est une confrontation de points de vue. C'est déjà un progrès.

Parmi les chapitres les plus utiles nous citerons le premier qui, rédigé par un historien, donne un récit clair des différents statuts administratifs de l'enclave et de l'évolution des lignages commerçants (négriers de profession) Franque et Puna. L'Arche d'alliance des indépendantistes repose sur l'interprétation du *protectorado*, selon les époques. Nous n'entrons pas dans cette querelle de légistes, mais l'auteur a raison d'insister sur le caractère volontaire de l'émigration des Cabindais vers l'Angola. Le deuxième chapitre a pour auteur un Ovimbundu, juriste et ex-premier ministre d'Angola de 1992 à 1996. Il fait une proposition originale: dans le cadre d'une restructuration de l'Etat angolais on pourrait envisager de reconnaître au Cabinda le droit à l'autodétermination et lui octroyer un régime proche de celui de Madère et des Açores au sein du Portugal. On entend déjà les loups hurler. Des loups pas très humanistes. A quelles tables seront-ils invités?

De ce terrain de luttes sournoises, nous glisserons vers un travail assez remarquable pour connaître le début d'un conflit heureusement éteint qui a failli désintégrer l'Angola en 1975-1976 et surtout dans ses phases ultérieures (jusqu'en 2002). C'est l'œuvre de deux collectionneurs de guerres exotiques. L'un est autrichien, l'autre suisse ce qui, *a priori*, devrait constituer une garantie d'«impartialité» dans les jugements. Leur qualité première est avant tout une minutie dans l'accumulation pointilliste des données en matière d'armes, d'avions et de matériels de guerre. Cela peut tourner à l'obsession, mais il y a un public (surtout les anciens combattants anglophones) pour ce genre de détails qui ne fait pas la part belle aux relations internationales et aux visées politiques. Eux restent dans le concret et le mesurable. Ce sont des historiens militaires du genre entomologistes décrivant les couleurs des papillons qu'ils ont épinglés. Un critique intégriste ou jaloux pourrait leur reprocher d'avoir laissé trop de fautes d'impression dans les toponymes, et de fournir une bibliographie décousue ne permettant pas de trouver l'origine de nombreuses notes. Nous minimiserons ces failles pour dire que **War of Intervention in Angola**<sup>6</sup> se rapproche d'une étude d'état-major neutre dont les auteurs ne se seraient pas contentés de croire la propagande quasi journalistique produite par l'Afrique du Sud, Cuba et les trois mouvements angolais. Certes, ils sont peut-être plus réceptifs à certaines sirènes, mais ils sont encore uniques pour connaître par le menu: **a)** le semi-échec de l'Opération Savannah de la SADF au Cuanza Sul; **b)** l'échec total du FNLA, de la CIA et des Zaïrois dans la bataille de Quifangondo contre le MPLA et les Cubains, devant Luanda; **c)** l'expulsion du FLEC (indépendantistes cabindais) et des troupes des deux Congos voisins du Cabinda;

<sup>5</sup> Carvalho, Sedrick de (coord.) (2018), **Cabinda. Um território em disputa**, Lisboa, Guerra e Paz, pp. 254.

<sup>6</sup> Fontanellaz, Adrien & Cooper, Tom (2018), **War of Intervention in Angola. Volume 1: Angolan and Cuban Forces at War, 1975-1976**, Warwick (Angleterre), Helion & Company (Distribué aussi par Casemate UK, Oxford), pp. 72, nombreuses photos et cartes noir et blanc et couleur.



d) la reprise de l'Angola du Nord-Ouest par les Cubains et le MPLA, balayant les pantomimes de prétendus mercenaires. Il y a des trous noirs (notamment comment l'UNITA a perdu le Centre-Angola et le Moxico), mais on est loin de la chevauchée des Valkyries racontée par le colonel Breytenbach, le Pygmalion des soldats dissidents du MPLA, et des Bushmen abandonnés par la PIDE. Sur deux colonnes nos deux auteurs en donnent pour leur argent aux lecteurs. C'est appréciable et marque le succès de la collection (Africa@War) où l'Angola en 1975-1976 occupe le n.º 31. On attend donc le Volume 2 avec impatience.

Mais remontons le temps avec une uchronie optimiste: **E se Angola tivesse proclamado a independência em 1959?**<sup>7</sup>. Son auteur brode sur un canevas politique imaginaire pour inventer ce qui se serait produit si les micro-groupes clandestins, nationalistes et surtout antisalazaristes, avaient réussi à renverser les autorités coloniales, du 15 octobre 1959 au 11 janvier 1960, prenant ainsi la PIDE de vitesse. Jonuel Gonçalves a vécu cette époque *in situ* et a connu certains des militants (coupés des masses *indígenas*), qui toutefois voulaient se dresser contre le lointain Minotaure de Lisbonne. Amusant ou non, son texte a une certaine utilité pour connaître l'isolement et l'irréalisme de ces jeunes enthousiastes, avant les arrestations par la PIDE. Dans son esprit fertile, le coup d'Etat réussit malgré la riposte de Salazar et de l'Afrique du Sud, ce qui nous ouvre de nouveaux horizons et aurait empêché l'éclosion de toute une génération d'anciens combattants devenus mémorialistes de leur infortune outremer, à commencer par ceux qui passèrent une partie de leur jeunesse à végéter dans le saillant de Cazombo, face au MPLA.

**A Leste nada de novo**<sup>8</sup> nous le montre dans ce livre où ce qui frappe le plus, c'est l'introduction de l'avocat Antero Neto au manuscrit laissé par son beau-père, lorsqu'il était sous-officier des transmissions à Lumbala Nova sur le haut-Zambèze. Que Neto ait jugé bon de résumer la géographie et l'histoire de l'Angola à l'intention des lecteurs actuels suffit à dire combien était artificielle, inefficace et trompeuse la propagande de l'Estado Novo qui prétendait que le Moxico et le Minho constituaient deux parties «identiques» du Portugal. Le journal de campagne de Manuel Alves Azevedo, lui, expose indirectement les prétentions du MPLA à s'emparer de ce territoire pointé vers l'est. Mais, inversement, l'année 1973 ne scelle pas non plus le destin du MPLA. Certes, il n'est plus de taille à s'emparer d'une garnison aussi forte que celle de Cazombo – que nous avons visitée cette année-là. Néanmoins, s'il n'a plus les moyens de s'acharner contre ce fort verrou portugais, miner les pistes entre Lumbala Nova et son satellite frontalier à Caripande est encore à sa portée. Lumbala Nova n'est attaquée que deux fois pendant les deux années et quelque où l'opérateur radio est sur place. Son journal n'exprime aucune crainte d'une invasion massive du type PAIGC en Guinée. A l'Est, c'est la routine militaire et les querelles *ad hominem* qui colonisent ses pages. D'ailleurs, ce n'est pas un adversaire du maintien du statu quo militaire. On est dans une impasse tolérable, selon lui, et vive la démobilisation! La révolution? Connais pas!

On quitte l'Est en «guerre molle», bien que coloniale, pour regarder maintenant du côté de la table et de la cuisine de différents seigneurs, et l'on plonge dans une histoire racontée par une journaliste d'investigation qui, comme son éditeur, a dû prendre ses précautions pour la publier. Nous n'en avons jamais entendu parler, mais elle ne nous surprend pas. Elle jette un éclairage sépulcral sur la justice, la politique, l'honneur et, plus que tout, la corruption sur deux rivages de l'Atlantique lusophone. On se croirait revenu au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle où le Portugal et l'Angola étaient la risée et le «mouton noir» des chancelleries et de la Royal Navy. On ne va pas déflorer ici le contenu des 42 chapitres. Il suffira de dire

<sup>7</sup> Gonçalves, Jonuel (2018), *E se Angola tivesse proclamado a independência em 1959?*, Lisboa, Guerra e Paz, pp. 191.

<sup>8</sup> Neto, Antero (organisateur) & Azevedo, Manuel Alves (auteur) (2018), *A Leste nada de novo. Memórias de Manuel Alves Azevedo na guerra de Angola (1971-1973)*, Carviçais (Portugal), Lema d'Origem, pp. 185, photos noir et blanc.

qu'un petit – ou moyen – chef d'entreprise portugais accepte de vendre aux Forces Armées angolaises en 1996 des produits alimentaires et du matériel. Le tout à crédit, sur la foi d'un colonel bien en cour à Luanda, l'un de ces barons en uniforme qui n'étaient pas pressés de terminer la guerre contre l'UNITA car elle était pour eux extrêmement rentable, compte tenu des commissions qu'ils prélevaient sur les contrats. Les noms de certains figurent même dans plusieurs livres de reportages anglo-américains sur l'Angola des années 1990-2010. Mais notre «fournisseur des Armées» était un naïf. Il s'en apercevra lorsqu'il voudra être payé. C'était une escroquerie! Une **Burla**<sup>9</sup>! Il décide alors d'intenter une action en justice. Elle se soldera par seize années passées dans les filets des tribunaux et des avocats. Seize années de plaidoiries, d'humiliations et de dépressions, au gré des jeux politiques et des intérêts supérieurs de la Nation portugaise en crise budgétaire. Il ne pesait pas lourd le bon droit du plaignant, face aux oscillations de la balance commerciale luso-angolaise. C'était une victime tardive de la décolonisation qui aurait dû s'informer avant de conclure le marché, mais qui lit au Portugal septentrional les journalistes anglophones écrivant sur l'Afrique? Tout un réseau de connaissances coloniales s'est effondré depuis 1975-1976. La génération des colons de naguère est en voie de disparition complète. Sera-t-elle remplacée par les centaines de milliers de migrants portugais qui, à partir de 2010, se sont rués pour aller travailler dans le nouvel Eldorado de la Lusophonie où tout était possible avec un baril de pétrole à \$ 100 ou plus? **Postcolonial Portuguese Migration to Angola**<sup>10</sup> est une sorte de memento établi par une chercheuse suédoise qui, aidée d'assistantes sur place, a examiné du point de vue psychosociologique cette forte vague d'expatriés portugais à Luanda et dans les chantiers intérieurs du pays. En quelques années, le reliquat des Blancs (30 000?) ayant résisté à l'exode de 1975-1976 se trouva renforcé par l'arrivée de ces rescapés du chômage au Portugal. Deux grandes catégories divisent alors les nouveaux émigrants: ceux qui travaillent dans la construction et les travaux publics, et ceux qui opèrent dans les services pour pallier le manque de techniciens et de cadres angolais. Lisa Åkesson connaît suffisamment l'histoire coloniale pour n'être la dupe de personne. Elle voit vite que l'arrogance a changé de camp, en fonction des variations des cours du pétrole et de la corruption généralisée. Elle s'aperçoit également – sauf chez les ouvriers portugais du bâtiment qui s'accommodent assez bien des caresses monnayées par les *catorzinhas* – que les contacts entre ces mercenaires du salariat et les nouveaux employeurs (métis ou négro-africains) cessent, le travail fini. Où est donc la différence, sinon chromatique, entre la situation antérieure et les réactions de ces créoles urbanisés qui exploitent au mieux la nouvelle structure du commandement aux dépens des expatriés? Pour trouver le lusotropicalisme sur papier glacé il faut aller le chercher maintenant dans les archives. Cet échafaudage postcolonial est donc encore plus instable que celui d'avant 1974. Avec un baril à nouveau en chute libre, les chantiers florissants dans les années 2010-2015 ont partiellement fermé depuis et les courants migratoires Portugal-Angola se sont, dans une certaine mesure, inversés. Ce qui fait que les constatations de l'auteure risquent d'avoir une validité limitée car fondées sur une période exceptionnelle. On notera que chez ces *retornados* récents la nostalgie, fréquente chez leurs prédécesseurs coloniaux, n'est pas de mise. Leurs racines dans le pays hôte ne semblent pas avoir engendré une floraison vivace. L'Impérialisme est bien mort dans leur esprit et pour eux l'Afrique n'était qu'un pis-aller temporaire. Ce ne sont pas des graines de colons. Les statistiques mortuaires en Afrique et ailleurs offrent rarement des moments de pure poésie à leurs lecteurs. Plus de quarante ans après le massacre de réfugiés namibiens civils

<sup>9</sup> Ferrador, Susana (2018), *Burla em Angola. Burla em Portugal*, Lisboa, Guerra e Paz, pp. 262.

<sup>10</sup> Åkesson, Lisa (2018), *Postcolonial Portuguese Migration to Angola. Migrants or Masters?*, Heidelberg (Allemagne), Springer Verlag pour le compte de Palgrave Macmillan, pp. XI-154.

et de guérilleros de la SWAPO, intervenu à Cassinga, le 4 mai 1978, on ne sait toujours pas combien tombèrent sous les balles de l'aviation et des parachutistes de l'apartheid. Les versions antagonistes continuent à s'affronter et l'on a l'impression que cette situation convient assez bien à Windhoek et à Pretoria. Il n'y a pas eu de tribunal ou d'autres organismes visant à la conciliation qui se soient prononcés. Les survivants ne semblent pas non plus avoir été indemnisés à hauteur des préjudices subis (sauf ceux qui ont eu accès aux prébendes ou autres avantages dispensés par la SWAPO). Un historien namibien, Vilho Amukwaya Shigwedha<sup>11</sup>, le déplore à la lumière d'une thèse soutenue au Cap (de Bonne Espérance, disait-on autrefois) et pour ce faire il apporte de nouveaux éléments. Fort bien, mais rappelons qu'il y a une méthode simple pour trancher en l'espèce entre un crime de guerre et une simple opération militaire réussie: ouvrir au moins une ou deux tombes afin que la biologie et la médecine légale disent: il y a dans cette fosse commune tant de femmes et d'enfants, tant de soldats. Pourquoi traîne-t-on les pieds en hauts lieux? A-t-on peur des chiffres ou des spectres? Bibliographie équilibrée.

Des misérables jetés dans les charniers de la guerre chaude, glissons vers les salons où quelques seigneurs de bonne compagnie s'efforcent – ou prétendent le faire – de régler les conflits en cours ou, ce qui est encore mieux, les prévenir avec de bonnes paroles et un chèque ou quelques livraisons de blindés. Il n'y a rien de tel qu'un diplomate ou un homme politique africain pour se présenter comme le sauveur de la paix. Les beaux discours sont leurs boucliers souvent recouverts de la dépouille de Méduse et de ses «bons» sentiments. **Os conflitos em África**<sup>12</sup> est l'œuvre d'un diplomate, avocat et journaliste angolais. Après l'examen des coups d'Etat, il passe ensuite aux ressources naturelles, aux migrations et aux pandémies. Il en vient, dans un registre plus concret, à plusieurs exemples d'accords bilatéraux avec la RDC et surtout l'Afrique du Sud (2009, 2010, 2011), le Zimbabwe, la Namibie et d'autres Etats plus lointains (le Mozambique, etc.).

Apparemment, on travaille comme des forcenés dans les ambassades angolaises. Reste à voir le degré d'application concrète sur le terrain, et à connaître l'opinion des correspondants de la presse étrangère dans le pays. Même le témoignage des simples voyageurs montre qu'il y a souvent une large marge entre le bout de la table des négociations et les ultrapauvres censés en bénéficier. Au crédit de l'Angola, il y a plusieurs atouts à faire valoir: une armée pléthorique et des rentrées intermittentes de pétrodollars. Le reste appartient au savoir-faire des ambassadeurs et à la générosité de leurs autorités. Face à ce passe-temps africain, pacifique et innocent, la logorrhée a des charmes que n'auraient pas les creuseurs de tombes encombrantes à Cassinga si l'on faisait appel à leur expertise.

L'historiographie de l'Angola étant ce qu'elle est encore en ce début du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle, c'est-à-dire un manteau d'Arlequin décousu et plein de trous béants, ces lacunes affectent des pans entiers de son territoire. On a déjà parlé de notre ignorance du passé relativement ancien des sociétés africaines du Plateau central, de l'Est et du Sud-Angola, mais on peut aussi y ajouter la partie orientale du Nord-Ouest angolais, notamment ses confins, le long du Cuango dans sa partie frontalière avec la RDC. Et dans ce secteur que sait-on de son «exploration» par les Européens? Ce que nous ont laissé Capelo et Ivens sur ce qu'ils ont vu en 1879 chez les Bayaka, certes, et puis après, les observations des Allemands. Mais comme écrire et enseigner l'histoire des «explorations» en Afrique est un exercice généralement nationaliste, les voyageurs allemands en Angola restent, malheureusement, sous-estimés ou tout au moins sous-utilisés dans le monde lusophone, malgré les efforts

<sup>11</sup> Shigwedha, Vilho Amukwaya (2017), *The Aftermath of the Cassinga Massacre. Survivors, Deniers and Injustices*, Basel (Suisse), Basler Afrika Bibliographien, pp. XIII-170, photos noir et blanc.

<sup>12</sup> Augusto, Mário (2018), *Os conflitos em África e a experiência de Angola na sua resolução*, Lisboa, Guerra e Paz, pp. 199, photos noir et blanc.

gigantesques, grandioses même, que l'historienne-ethnologue Beatrix Heintze<sup>13</sup> déploie depuis des décennies pour les faire admettre.

Elle vient de récidiver en consacrant deux épais volumes à un «astre mort» de l'«exploration» angolaise – Alexander von Mechow – qui, pour des raisons assez obscures, n'a pas «publié» de livres sur ses voyages – et juste un ou deux tirés à part –, sinon un atlas de 26 feuilles qui donne la «topographie» ou mieux, l'hydrographie de son exploration fluviale conduite avec deux assistants, dans plusieurs embarcations. Cet étrange officier prussien en retraite (après avoir combattu contre l'Autriche, puis la France en 1870), devenu naturaliste et botaniste émérite, séjourna d'abord au Cabinda, ensuite de 1878 à 1881 en Angola, dont une période de plusieurs mois sur le Cuango en 1880 où il doit reconnaître que les chutes qu'il découvre sur cette rivière rendraient impossible toute navigation vers le fleuve Congo. Pas rancunier, il les baptise chutes de l'empereur François-Joseph d'Autriche et de l'empereur Guillaume d'Allemagne, désignations dynastiques que les Portugais, bons princes, conserveront jusqu'à l'indépendance où le MPLA s'empresse de leur donner des remplaçants aux consonances plus en harmonie avec les couleurs locales.

Mais ce n'est pas tout, car si les géographes portugais avaient eu vent de ce que ce «découvreur de cataractes» leur avait préparé dans le secret de sa correspondance officielle ils auraient été probablement moins respectueux de son antériorité onomastique. N'ayant presque rien publié sur ses voyages (sauf son atlas en 1884/1885), il était jusqu'à présent laissé dans la catégorie des explorateurs de troisième ordre, mais ce que l'on ne savait pas, c'est qu'il avait tenu un immense journal de marche manuscrit qu'il a fallu faire déchiffrer et transcrire plus d'un siècle après sa rédaction.

Comme Beatrix Heintze a accompli un extraordinaire travail d'édition, écumant les archives allemandes pertinentes, elle a découvert un mémoire de Von Mechow, daté de 1883, dans lequel l'auteur, rentré en Allemagne, proposait au Ministère de l'Intérieur du Reich la création d'une colonie allemande basée sur les deux rives du Cuango dont il connaissait les sociétés et les autorités africaines. En fait, l'appétit venant en mangeant, il envisageait, ni plus ni moins, d'empiéter sur la marche orientale et nébuleuse du royaume de Kongo ou, en d'autres termes, de raboter la zone d'influence portugaise potentielle au Nord-Ouest et d'étendre son prolongement germanique sur le territoire du futur Congo léopoldien: une Allemagne «équatoriale» de substitution pour accueillir une partie des émigrants qui s'embarquaient à Hambourg vers les Amériques. A cette époque, la plupart des explorateurs européens ont des arrière-pensées: on risque sa vie pour l'amour de la science ou de la religion, bien sûr! Mais le commerce, le patriotisme, la défense du drapeau, le salut des classes paupérisées aussi. C'est comme cela que l'on devient un héros transitoire, et la pléiade d'abeilles européennes qui butinent alors sur le territoire de l'Angola actuel préparent déjà les cartes de la partition du continent.

Tout cela on le pressent ou le découvre dans le livre précité de Beatrix Heintze qui constitue l'introduction et l'encadrement «biographique» et politique du plat de résistance que constitue l'édition «intarissable» du journal de marche de Von Mechow<sup>14</sup> et là le lecteur doit se préparer à absorber – et à digérer – 690 pages du texte proprement dit, accompagné de 1208 notes de bas de page, le tout précédant près de 200 pages de documents et, finalement, les 70 pages de trois index! Véritablement, pour un «explorateur» quasi inconnu, cette résurrection est une apothéose de proportions monumentales. Regardons

<sup>13</sup> Heintze, Beatrix (2018), *Ein preußischer Major im Herzen Afrikas. Alexander v. Mechows Expeditionstagebuch (1880-1881) und sein Projekt einer ersten deutschen Kolonie*, Berlin, Dietrich Reimer Verlag, pp. 357, illustrations noir et blanc.

<sup>14</sup> Heintze, Beatrix (organisation) [et Von Mechow, Alexander (auteur)] (2018), *Das Tagebuch Alexander v. Mechows über seine Expedition an den Kwango (Angola) (1880-1881)*, Berlin, Dietrich Reimer Verlag, pp. 950, illustration.

cependant une carte. Le journal (**Tagebuch**) ne porte que sur la marche entre Malange et le cours moyen du Cuango, puis la descente partielle de la rivière et la visite prolongée au chef supérieur des Bayaka. C'est important pour la partition du Nord-Ouest angolais mais, à côté des voyages des autres explorateurs allemands dans la Lunda, c'est moins impressionnant. Ce qui compte dans ce livre c'est la masse de renseignements fournis 1.<sup>o</sup>) précisément par Beatrix Heintze pour sortir de l'oubli son mystérieux héros, et 2.<sup>o</sup>) par Von Mechow, lui-même, sur le terrain parcouru et les sociétés africaines rencontrées localement. Là l'éditeur et l'auteur sont sans concurrence sérieuse, même si Von Mechow, trop optimiste, se trompait sur le potentiel qui s'offrait à un éventuel colonisateur dans cette région, riche uniquement à ce jour, des gisements de diamants dans le cours supérieur du Cuango purement angolais (c'est-à-dire là où Von Mechow ne s'est pas rendu). Quoi qu'il en soit, les deux volumes auxquels Beatrix Heintze a participé si souverainement sont les résultats d'un tour de force d'une érudition admirable pour les années 1880-1881 et évidemment 2018!

## Mozambique

Les temps sont mûrs pour scruter en profondeur les guerres civiles qui ont ravagé l'Angola et le Mozambique et qui ont failli vaincre les autorités reconnues internationalement comme légitimes car elles tenaient la capitale et recevaient l'aide de pays marxistes ou marxisants tandis que leurs adversaires soupait avec le Diable. Un livre récent vient de montrer que pour cette période les mozambicanistes l'emportent et de loin sur les angolais. **The War Within**<sup>15</sup> est l'œuvre composite de sept collaborateurs (il y a deux chercheurs mozambicains) dont leurs homologues angolais et angolais tardent à se manifester. Quelle est la coloration générale du livre? Elle ne fera assurément pas le bonheur du FRELIMO et de ses soutiens étrangers, universitaires ou non, puisque dans l'ouvrage plusieurs textes imputent au FRELIMO la responsabilité de la guerre civile et d'une grande partie de la fragilité sociale et du mécontentement de la population rurale face aux seigneurs de Maputo et à la corruption de ses hautes sphères militaires et politiques. Sans oublier une brutalité fréquente vis-à-vis des sociétés paysannes généralement analphabètes et attachées à leurs valeurs traditionnelles (chefferies, sorcellerie, etc.) et hostiles à la politique foncière et économique que voulaient leur imposer sans préparations les détenteurs de la force. Eux étaient éblouis par: a) la victoire que le MFA leur avait apportée sur un plateau d'argent et b) leur foi en la pertinence du modèle soviétique. Ils ont eu de bonnes intentions, à n'en pas douter, mais que d'illusions et de naïveté de leur part!

En fin de compte, on voit apparaître une réhabilitation tacite de la RENAMO. Il y a malgré tout peu ou pas d'éléments sur ses origines et sur sa dépendance matérielle et financière à l'égard des services secrets rhodésiens puis sud-africains. Le nom du premier leader de la RENAMO n'apparaît cité qu'une seule fois. A signaler le manque d'envergure intellectuelle de ses cadres, et des relents tribalistes initiaux (surtout quand la guérilla atteint le Sud). Il semble aussi que ses objectifs ultimes (après avoir renversé le FRELIMIO) aient été incertains ou tout au moins non mis en avant. Un lecteur peu au fait des particularités de la guerre de brousse menée par la RENAMO risque de passer à côté de son passif le plus noir: destruction de l'infrastructure scolaire et sanitaire, cruauté à l'égard des villageois «neutres» ou partisans du FRELIMO (notamment au Sud). La propagande officielle des Sudistes a longtemps insisté sur le conditionnement psychologique que la RENAMO

<sup>15</sup> Morier-Genoud, Eric, Cahen, Michel & Domingos, M. do Rosario (coord.) (2018), **The War Within. New Perspectives on the Civil War in Mozambique 1976-1992**, Woodbridge (Angleterre), James Currey, pp. XII-268, illustrations noir et blanc.



réservait aux enfants soldats pour en faire des tueurs décérébrés, mais on apprend aussi que l'enrôlement de force de la jeunesse était pratiqué des deux côtés. On estime à 12 300 les soldats de la RENAMO en décembre 1984, mais ils étaient passés à 21 979 lors de la démobilisation de 1992, dont 5885 enfants et adolescents de 16 ans ou moins, alors que le FRELIMO enregistrait 70 902 hommes en 1992 dont 5.631 enfants et adolescents de 16 ans ou moins. Avec de tels effectifs engagés, Maputo avait tort de laisser courir et d'utiliser l'appellation de «bandits armés» car on était bien en présence d'une guerre civile sans foi ni loi de chaque côté. Qui en supportait les conséquences? A peu près la quasi-totalité des campagnes avec des taches de «paix» qui rétrécissaient chaque année. Bien pire que lors de la guerre coloniale!

Les points forts de cette étude sont multiples. Certains auteurs ont pu consulter les archives du FRELIMO à l'échelon provincial et ils ont recueilli les déclarations de partisans des deux bords, y compris des Naparamas (un chapitre fort développé). Ils ne cachent pas que les avancées et les reculs des troubles pouvaient varier d'une province à une autre (Zambézia, Nampula, Inhambane, Maputo), selon l'histoire locale, la puissance des esprits et les croyances en leurs pouvoirs, l'intensité de la colonisation et de la guerre coloniale, etc. La bibliographie comporte plus de 400 entrées (y compris articles et thèses) mais, curieusement, pas tous les livres publiés par des journalistes étrangers ni même par tous les prisonniers européens ou américains enlevés par la RENAMO. Bref, on est devant un travail imposant et sans équivalent pour l'Angola où il y aurait pourtant probablement, à découvrir des détails insoupçonnés jusqu'à présent sur le rôle et l'aura de Savimbi.

Mais où sont ses archives?

## Timor

Quand nous aurons tous disparu, nos successeurs s'apercevront que les anciennes métropoles auront mis à profit la période (le premier demi-siècle environ) suivant nos décolonisations respectives pour élaborer des œuvres historiographiques qu'elles avaient été incapables de mener à bien pendant qu'elles gouvernaient leurs colonies. C'est particulièrement vrai pour les Portugais où une poignée de chercheurs, libérés du carcan de l'Estado Novo, commencent à produire des travaux inimaginables pour la censure de l'époque antérieure. Ils ne sont pas nombreux, certes, mais pour Timor ils compensent en qualité leur faible quantité. Un homme comme Fernando Augusto de Figueiredo a dissipé pour sa part les brumes qui entouraient les activités «civiles» de l'Administration locale à partir de 1769 et ce jusqu'en 1975. Le deuxième volume de son opus qu'il consacre aux seules années 1945-1975 est une véritable mine d'informations introuvables ailleurs. Pour la première fois, semble-t-il, on voit dans son récent **Timor-Leste**<sup>16</sup> comment le Portugal de Salazar a repris possession de l'île, après l'occupation japonaise. Les événements de 1959, cachés ou minimisés, ne sont pas non plus esquivés ; les relations avec l'Australie et l'Indonésie sortent de la dérision; la réaffirmation des autorités de Dili dans un contexte tout sauf libéral montre l'influence de la police politique et des militaires. Clairement apparaissent les divers secteurs d'une économie encore embryonnaire, les finances publiques, les transports, la société, l'Eglise catholique, la santé, etc.

L'auteur a également eu la bonne idée de présenter 22 documents en annexe. Dans l'un d'entre eux, l'agronome poète Ruy Cinatti écrit en 1947 à l'ex-ministre des Colonies Marcello Caetano et lui trace un tableau qui n'a rien à voir avec le lusotropicalisme ultérieur. Peu de licences poétiques dans sa lettre!

<sup>16</sup> Figueiredo, Fernando Augusto de (2018), *Timor-Leste. A Presença Portuguesa desde a Reocupação à Invasão Indonésia (1945-1975)*, Lisboa, Ancora Editora, pp. 638, photos noir et blanc.

Là où nous attendions Figueiredo en craignant qu'il nous déçoive, c'était dans ses sources et sa bibliographie. Elles occupent les pages 605-638. Rien à dire. De son grand déballage surgit alors une image réaliste d'une colonie pauvre gérée par un système autoritaire mais quand même moins répressif que dans la colonie de peuplement blanc qu'était l'Angola. On y végétait à petit feu mais ce n'était pas comparable avec la sanglante tapisserie timorienne du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et de la Première République. Qu'en restait-il? Des souvenirs parfois éruptifs mais le plus souvent enfouis dans le huis clos des mémoires familiales. Les Japonais et la guerre en grand avaient peut-être estompé les massacres antérieurs des coupeurs de tête. Après les Javanais et leurs méthodes, comment pourrait-on ne pas regretter le passage des Portugais, si fugace fut-il? Tout au moins dans les familles qui ne voulaient pas collaborer avec les nouveaux occupants envoyés par Djakarta.

## Un complément

Pour diverses raisons, dont le chroniqueur ici n'est que partiellement responsable, des retards sont intervenus dans l'expédition par certains éditeurs des livres ci-dessous examinés. Ils auraient dû être reçus en France en 2018 et, de ce fait, intégrer la chronique proprement dite. Réparons cette omission par cette actualisation.

## Généralités et regroupement de plusieurs pays

Deux «poids lourds» occupent cette sous-section et suffisent à la meubler. La thèse d'histoire de Bruno J. Navarro, publiée et financée par le Centro Interuniversitário de História das Ciências e da Tecnologia (CIUHCT), porte un titre moins austère que son sous-titre. Avec **Um império projectado pelo «silvo da locomotiva»**<sup>17</sup> on est sur le quai d'une gare (le Portugal) qui pourrait être aussi bien Saint-Petersbourg se préparant à l'ouverture du Transsibérien, bien avant le départ du poète Blaise Cendrars en partance vers le Pacifique. Humble prière adressée aux lecteurs pour qu'ils tolèrent le carambolage chronologique! Le sous-titre remet d'ailleurs les choses en place. Il s'agit pour l'auteur, en un premier temps, d'étudier la vie et le rôle des ingénieurs qui ont lutté avec des crédits modestes pour inciter les autorités coloniales sur la côte à essayer de combattre les distances et de lusitaniser l'intérieur avec pour objectif final de rentabiliser le rail en se raccordant aux colonies ou Etats étrangers voisins. Le problème majeur des dirigeants du Portugal a toujours été le manque d'argent pour les colonies et la faiblesse du nombre d'ingénieurs prêts à se sacrifier pour concrétiser leurs plans. Il a fallu donc trouver des investisseurs étrangers (britanniques pour l'essentiel) et dépendre de capitalistes qui n'avaient pas les mêmes ambitions que les ingénieurs des travaux publics. Navarro n'en étudie en profondeur que trois (Joaquim José Machado, Alfredo Augusto Lisboa de Lima, João Alexandre Lopes Galvão), mais il y en eut bien d'autres, surtout parmi les officiers de la conquête avant, pendant et après ceux que nous avons qualifiés de «Centurions». Aussi bien l'Angola (au Sud principalement) que le Mozambique (au Sud et au Centre) recueillirent des gouverneurs qui savaient l'importance des communications, à commencer par Paiva Couceiro, Norton de Matos, etc. Défalquons la «folie des grandeurs», l'*hubris* pour reprendre un vocable à la mode qui, historiquement, a ravagé certains hommes politiques, trop prompts à tirer des plans sur la comète, tout en sachant que les caisses étaient vides et qu'elles ne se remplissent pas par magie, même en

<sup>17</sup> Navarro, Bruno J. (2018), **Um império projectado pelo «silvo da locomotiva»**. **O papel da engenharia portuguesa na apropriação do espaço colonial africano. Angola e Moçambique (1869-1930)**, Lisboa, Edições Colibri, pp. 602, photographies noir et blanc, cartes couleur.

Afrique. Cette incursion dans la biographie des trois ingénieurs nous conduit au cœur du livre (à partir de la page 253).

Il est consacré à une étude approfondie des conditions physiques et financières (y compris les aventuriers et les escrocs) (Ex: la ligne Luanda-Malange) propres aux lignes construites tant bien que mal et rarement aussi loin que les devis initiaux le prévoyaient. A cet égard, le Sud-Mozambique offre des exemples de voies pas toujours rentables. La Compagnie de Mozambique au Centre, entre Beira et la Rhodésie du Sud, offre un cas de réussite surmontant les difficultés du début des travaux. Nous n'allons pas détailler la quinzaine de lignes étudiées par l'auteur qui a fait un effort louable pour s'entourer de sources en anglais et même en allemand. Il lui en manque encore beaucoup, mais si on le compare à la pauvreté des sources extra-portugaises dans certains domaines de l'historiographie coloniale récente, c'est le jour et la nuit. On ne peut donc que le féliciter d'avoir désenclavé sa bibliographie (25 pages) et, pour notre part, nous voudrions bien savoir en quelles bibliothèques portugaises se trouvent réunis les livres étrangers qu'il énumère, sans parler de cette thèse portugaise d'Azevedo, José Manuel de, «*A colonização do Sudoeste Africano*», soutenue en 2014 à l'Université de Salamanca!

Bref, si les thèses de doctorat portugaises sont désormais du même calibre, le saut qualitatif en une génération d'historiens est tel que l'on a presque envie d'étudier au Portugal, tout en sortant des sentiers battus par des siècles de répétitions et de rabâchages.

Autre livre important mais avec des objectifs différents, on se doit de citer **A Força Aérea no Fim do Império**<sup>18</sup>. Ses trois auteurs/compilateurs se sont réparti la tâche par pays: Angola et Cabinda (pp. 25-132); Guinée (pp. 133-319); Mozambique (pp. 321-471). Nous ne pouvons ici que rappeler quelques faits rarement évoqués, ainsi pour l'Angola, 1.°) l'atterrissage d'un appareil portugais ayant franchi la frontière sans s'en apercevoir et qui doit se poser à court de carburant à Luluabourg, en RDC actuelle. Lisbonne «rachète» les aviateurs et l'avion aux Congolais; 2.°) les opérations à Cabinda après (juin 1974) la Révolution des œillets. Le MPLA local n'est pas complètement «mort» et abat un hélicoptère d'attaque envoyé en appui-feu. Pas de survivants dans le Mayombe; 3.°) l'interception à l'été 1974, par les parachutistes, d'une grande colonne (180 hommes) du FNLA, tentant de renforcer depuis le Zaïre ses maquis dans les Dembos du Nord-Ouest. Succès complet des Portugais qui en certaines unités d'élite ont conservé tout leur mordant (les parachutistes appartiennent à l'aviation à cette époque).

Pour la Guinée, c'est le problème des missiles soviétiques qui fait déborder le vase politique, car la supériorité portugaise dans les airs va y perdre beaucoup de son efficacité. Toutefois, l'aviation, malgré ses pertes en aéronefs et pilotes, augmente ses sorties (14 625 heures de vol pour l'année 1973) (p. 190). Durant toute la durée de la guerre le nombre de pilotes décédés fut de 21 (dont 11 officiers). En moyenne, l'aviation maintenait en Guinée près de 35 pilotes en permanence (p. 193) pour des affectations de 20 mois. Un témoignage d'un pilote lieutenant général porte sur le rôle de la Suède, vilipendée avec hargne pour son soutien au PAIGC, son favori parmi les nationalistes lusophones (pp. 196-219). C'était l'époque des illusions moralisatrices. Pour l'aviation portugaise, la Guinée fut le terrain le plus disputé et la litanie des opérations s'étire encore pendant plus d'une centaine de pages.

La richesse documentaire des pages consacrées dans ce livre au Mozambique, vu du ciel en guerre, n'est pas moindre, mais l'étendue des zones d'intervention a pour effet de diluer la densité des activités aériennes. Dans ces conditions, pour lui rendre pleinement justice il faudrait que nous lui réservions au minimum une page de notre actualisation.

<sup>18</sup> Bispo, António, Cardoso, José A. Vizela & Cubas, Ricardo (auteurs et coordinateurs) (2018), **A Força Aérea no Fim do Império. Relatos de episódios, testemunhos e visões pessoais**, Lisboa, Âncora Editora & Oeiras, Programa Fim do Império, pp. 479, photos noir et blanc.

A noter que le maître d'œuvre de la partie mozambicaine a eu la bonne idée d'accorder une place éminente au contexte politique et géostratégique qui singularisait l'engagement de l'aviation locale. La pugnacité de ses homologues rhodésienne et – plus lointainement – sud-africaine était une donnée rassurante que l'on ne retrouvait pas dans la petite Guinée entourée de territoires voisins hostiles (violemment en Guinée-Conakry) ou plus ou moins acquis (Sénégal) à la cause d'Amílcar Cabral. En résumé si, grâce à ce texte, on n'arrive pas encore à disposer d'une histoire construite par des gens dont le métier est l'élaboration des synthèses et des chronologies, on a rassemblé sous une même couverture un ensemble de données qui, mises en forme, permettront un jour – peut-être – d'obtenir un récit global.

## Guinée

**Tatuagens da Guerra da Guiné**<sup>19</sup>, dont l'auteur fut un officier de carrière (capitaine d'infanterie) mobilisé et envoyé à Timor, en Guinée puis au Mozambique où son hélicoptère fut abattu alors qu'il défendait le chantier du barrage de Cabora Bassa, est un ouvrage appartenant au genre «Mémoires de guerre». Il porte sur ses activités entre 1965 et 1966 dans la région de l'Oio (Bissorã, Olossato), l'un des bastions du PAIGC, et à Mansoa. Quelles activités? Militaires assurément, mais aussi humanitaires auprès de la population. En fait, ce qui le préoccupe en priorité, semble-t-il, c'est de venir en aide à son prochain, s'il faut en croire ses multiples photographies de la Guinée et ses activités ultérieures dans les services de la protection civile au Portugal, après qu'il a été pensionné en tant qu'invalidé de guerre, suite aux blessures reçues au Mozambique. Il écrit bien et longuement. Il a utilisé des livres d'histoire locale (dont notre *História da Guiné* dans sa version en portugais) et les chroniques de Rui Silva (*Páginas negras com salpicos cor-de rosa*), ce qui est rare dans les récits d'anciens combattants en Guinée. Cela étant dit, il dialogue artificiellement plus de 50 ans après les faits. Nous doutons donc un peu de l'exactitude de ses reconstitutions des discours envolés dans les forêts de l'Oio mais, après tout, il n'écrit pas pour inscrire son nom sur la stèle des grands historiens, mais bien pour sonder dans sa chair la profondeur du traumatisme qu'a été la confrontation, dans un milieu haï, entre ces soldats involontaires et des guérilleros qui, eux, croyaient qu'ils se battaient pour améliorer leur sort. Naïfs juvéniles qui allaient sombrer, devenus vieillards, dans les marécages d'une simili république qui désormais ricane devant les diplomates suédois. Même sous la table des «narcocrates» les miettes sont devenues rares pour les héros d'hier.

**Portugal e a Guerra de África**<sup>20</sup> a un titre trop ambitieux car il est jumelé avec un sous-titre qui, lui, plus réaliste, concerne modestement le véritable enjeu du livre, c'est-à-dire environ 70 % des pages. Elles sont attribuées à la place de la Marine portugaise en Guinée et en particulier aux opérations des *lanchas* indispensables pour naviguer dans ce pays où les marins ont toujours joué un rôle essentiel, faute de voies de communications terrestres en quantités et en qualités suffisantes. Il faut reconnaître à la Marine portugaise un effort considérable pour se doter en quelques années de bâtiments bien adaptés aux fleuves et rivières *guineenses*, lancés par les chantiers navals nationaux. L'intérêt et la nouveauté de l'ouvrage sont donc dus à la description des opérations menées à bien par ces *lanchas* qui permettaient à de nombreuses garnisons des Forces terrestres de survivre matériellement et physiquement. Des détails sont également fournis sur l'attaque de Conakry (la célèbre invasion par mer, baptisée *Mar Verde*). Les deux auteurs s'attachent aussi à décrire le

<sup>19</sup> Riquito, Luís (2018), *Tatuagens da Guerra da Guiné. Capitão Luís Riquito*, Lisboa, Guerra e Paz Editores, pp. 422, nombreuses photographies noir et blanc.

<sup>20</sup> Duarte, António Rebelo & Neves, João Pires (2018), *Portugal e a Guerra de África. A Marinha com as «Argos» nas águas da Guiné*, Lisboa, Comissão Cultural de Marinha, pp. 200, photos noir et blanc et couleur.

retrait (l'évacuation plutôt) de la Marine de Guinée et le transfert partiel en un convoi des bâtiments vers l'Angola. Le plus original du texte est peut-être le retour de l'*Armada* en Guinée (Opération Crocodilo à Bissau) en 1998, pour exfiltrer 1237 réfugiés d'un pays retombé dans l'anarchie d'une foire d'empoigne du pouvoir, autrement dit des Finances subventionnées par des sources avouables.

## São Tomé et Príncipe

Pour qui un critique doit-il écrire? Pour encenser ou ... démolir un auteur ami ou ... ennemi? Un éditeur envers qui il a une dette, ou avec qui il veut poursuivre une polémique? Tout cela est mesquin et dérisoire. Nous n'avons ici et ailleurs qu'un objectif: informer un lecteur qui, par hasard ou obligation, nous lira ou non. Notre «client» étant ainsi défini, nous lui devons la sincérité et de ne pas le tromper. Dès lors, pour São Tomé et Príncipe nous plaidons coupable d'avoir, pendant des années, laissé l'archipel au bas de l'échelle de nos intérêts actuels, alors que nous l'avions visité en 1966, et étant l'un des rares auteurs français à lui avoir consacré, dès 1968 et 1971, deux articles, dont un, pionnier, sur la «guerre de Batepá» (reproduits dans René Pélissier, *Le naufrage des Caravelles*, Editions Pélissier, 1979, pp. 215-240). Sans parler d'un long chapitre dans *Explorar ...*, *Idem*, pp. 51-83 où l'on évoque cette fameuse «guerre de Batepá» qui peut, à la rigueur, être considérée comme l'une des premières manifestations sanglantes du nationalisme antiportugais en Afrique, ce qui nous pousse à présenter tardivement les trois premiers volumes d'une **História Documental de São Tomé e Príncipe**<sup>21</sup> de Carlos Espírito Santo, un insulaire universitaire engagé, décidé à sortir trois autres volumes, selon ses dires de 2015. Mais comme la publication de cette masse (4 kilos, format 21 x 28) ne paraît pas devoir reprendre durant notre reste de vie, avouons au lecteur que nous n'avons pas eu le courage de lire les trois volumes présentés ici par l'éditeur qui a bénéficié d'une subvention d'une banque de São Tomé. C'est pour le critique un délit de lèse-lecteur, mais nous nous engageons auprès de l'auteur à parler d'un autre de ses nombreux livres antérieurs, intitulé *A guerra da Trindade*, *Cooperação*, (2003) s'il nous l'envoie... et s'il ne dépasse pas les 900 pages! Après tout, le critique, même historien, n'est qu'un être humain. Nous intéresse avant tout le nombre de victimes (morts et blessés) dans ce massacre ordonné par le gouverneur de l'époque qui ne semble pas avoir été sérieusement inquiété par la justice de l'Estado Novo, si nos souvenirs sont exacts, la PIDE ayant elle-même reconnu que la thèse d'un complot « communiste » ne résistait pas à l'examen des faits. Sous réserve de confirmation par des spécialistes mieux informés que nous et en attendant la suite.

## Mozambique

Commençons par un livre<sup>22</sup> qui, une fois surmonté le jargon des 15 contributeurs (dont deux hommes), pourra peut-être éclairer le lecteur sur certains aspects du Mozambique contemporain. Remarquons qu'il constitue une éclatante victoire du féminisme universitaire puisque 13 femmes ont fait sauter le verrou de la parité et prennent la succession de la quinzaine d'auteurs américaines qui, il y a quelques années, avaient déjà publié un livre sur le Mozambique. Etonnant et encore inexpliqué, le tropisme de ces

<sup>21</sup> Espírito Santo, Carlos (2015), *História Documental de São Tomé e Príncipe*, Lisboa, Edições Colibri. Vol. 1, pp. 614. Vol. 2, pp. 513. Vol. 3, pp. 646. Reproduction fac-similé d'imprimés, de documents dactylographiés et surtout de dépôts manuscrits sur près de deux milliers de pages plus ou moins déchiffrables.

<sup>22</sup> Khan, Sheila Pereira, Meneses, Maria Paula & Bertelsen, Bjørn Enge (auteurs et coordinateurs), (2019), *Mozambique on the Move. Challenges and Reflections*, Leiden/Boston & Brill, pp. XIV-294, photographies noir et blanc, sépia et couleur.



femmes savantes pour le soleil austral! Notamment pour celles qui viennent de débarquer de Scandinavie et même du Portugal. Les «sciences molles» leur ouvrent leurs murs de boucliers en dentelles et accueillent à bras ouverts cette nouvelle phalange d'hoplites en jupon, devenues les *shield-maidens* de la sémiologie et autres disciplines essentielles. Avec elles on est très loin de l'OMM (Organização da Mulher Moçambicana) de jadis, car ces générations d'étrangères défendent avant tout leur carrière universitaire sans trop se soucier de faire plaisir au FRELIMO nouvelle manière.

Ce serait plutôt des militantes de la déconstruction des mythes propagés par Samora Machel et sa garde intellectuelle. Le maître d'œuvre qu'est le Norvégien Bertelsen leur montre la voie en soulignant les difficultés qu'a eues le FRELIMO à asseoir la figure de Gungunhana chez les Ndaou qui ont la mémoire longue et avaient constitué une grande partie du commandement de la RENAMO en guerre. L'esclavage et les massacres perpétrés par les hiérarques du Gaza chez les Ndaou il y a plus d'un siècle ne s'oublient pas facilement chez les Shona. D'autres auteurs, plus littéraires, constatent même que Mia Couto ou Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa ont déjà contribué à détrôner la figure de Gungunhana, imposée par le FRELIMO aux descendants de ses anciennes victimes. Autres études brèves mais incisives, on trouve également des pages examinant les conséquences de l'essor d'une des branches les plus conservatrices du protestantisme brésilien sur les Mozambicaines. «Sciences molles» ou non, nos néo-Valkyries ayant remplacé l'épée par la plume dressent donc dans ce recueil un tableau assez sombre de la situation actuelle sous la férule du FRELIMO, dont certains ministres, voire un président, ayant amplement dénaturé les grands principes révolutionnaires d'antan, se contentent d'utiliser leurs positions pour donner libre cours à leur vénalité d'anciens pauvres avides et, par artifices et autres féeries, font disparaître quelques dizaines, voire centaines, de millions de dollars des comptes publics. Les fleurs que l'on jetait sur le parcours du FRELIMO autrefois se sont donc singulièrement fanées aux yeux de nos gardiennes de la moralité. Est-ce à dire que leurs adversaires principaux, les gens de la RENAMO, sont donnés en exemples de la vertu dans ce livre? Non hélas! Et comment pourrait-on le faire de bonne foi après la lecture du texte qui suit?

La population civile a subi de telles horreurs et souffrances pendant les années de guerre qu'elle n'est pas – semble-t-il – prête à changer de régime par des voies légales. Il faut savoir que la vengeance des Ndaou, prépondérants dans le commandement de la RENAMO, aura mis environ un siècle à s'exercer contre les Sudistes, assimilés abusivement aux héritiers de Gungunhana. Si ailleurs, au Centre et au Nord, la RENAMO avait de chauds partisans pendant la guerre civile de 1977-1992 et les a conservés ou élargis en partie localement, le système terroriste qu'elle instaura au Sud vient d'être décrit par une de ses victimes, Hassane Armando, qui assista (à l'âge de douze ans), chez lui à un massacre resté dans sa mémoire et celle de ses contemporains. **Tempos de Fúria**<sup>23</sup> expose donc par le menu l'attaque de la localité de Homoïne, à l'ouest d'Inhambane, peuplée, sauf erreur de notre part, par des Tsua (un sous-groupe des Thonga ou Tonga) et peut-être aussi par des Chope, pas nécessairement des partisans enthousiastes de Gungunhana qui avait aussi ravagé leur territoire avant, pendant et après sa descente du nord, à la fin des années 1880. Le jeune Armando ainsi qu'une partie de sa famille sont enlevés par la RENAMO qui jusqu'à sa fuite le détiendra pendant près de deux ans dans ses maquis, ce qui fait de son livre une source capitale pour connaître les atrocités commises en 1987, de part et d'autre. Même si nous nous méfions de la véracité de la statistique traditionnellement annoncée

<sup>23</sup> Armando, Hassane (2018), *Tempos de Fúria. Memórias do massacre de Homoïne, 18 de Julho de 1987*, Lisboa, Edições Colibri, pp. 172, photographies noir et blanc.

par le FRELIMO (350 morts au moins à Homoïne, le 18 juillet 1987), ces tueries nihilistes n'auraient rien de bon pour une éventuelle prise du pouvoir par la RENAMO. Critiquer aux élections les gens de Maputo, c'est une chose, mais lorsque l'on se rappelle ce que fut l'appareil et les méthodes des «autres», on réfléchit à deux fois avant de se prononcer contre le FRELIMO.

Toujours dans une guerre, mais centenaire celle-ci, le journal tenu par un lieutenant portugais pendant la guerre luso-allemande, de 1916 à 1918, constitue une rareté car le nombre de prisonniers portugais capturés par les Germaniques à Naulila (le combat en 1915, pas l'incident), en Angola, n'a donné dans un livre qu'un témoignage patriotard et à notre connaissance aucun parmi les quelques soldats de la République tombés aux mains des troupes du colonel puis général Von Lettow-Vorbeck sur le territoire de l'Ost-Afrika. Aucun, jusqu'à la parution en 2018 de **A Grande Guerra em Moçambique**<sup>24</sup>, sous le timbre des Edições Colibri! On attendait beaucoup du «diário» du lieutenant Frederico Marinho Falcão, mais il nous faut admettre que l'on est un peu déçu par le contenu. Volontiers on reconnaîtra qu'il a eu au moins le mérite d'avoir inscrit jour après jour les kilométrages des «safaris» auxquels il fut soumis et la nature de l'alimentation fournie, insuffisante en quantité et en variété. Sur les cinq officiers portugais détenus par les Allemands en Afrique orientale, lui seul eut la constance d'enregistrer pour la postérité cette Anabase, de villages en villages, car contrairement à la situation au Sud-Ouest africain, il n'y a pas de villes de garnison intactes ni d'hôpitaux fixes dans la partie sud-orientale de l'Ost-Afrika à cette époque. Conduite sans répit par un génie de la guérilla, la mobilité et les coups de main contre les troupes anglaises et sud-africaines sont la caractéristique de cette interminable chasse-poursuite où l'on marche pendant des années pour ne pas être pris par un ennemi infiniment plus nombreux et mieux armé. Le lieutenant a été capturé dans cette «*Epopéia maldita*» que fut l'offensive portugaise éphémère contre le poste de Nevala. Nous n'avons pas compris si sa libération en novembre 1917 est due à un accord entre les Britanniques et les Allemands. Un manque cruel de cartes ne permet pas non plus de situer les itinéraires empruntés. Mais l'utilité de ce journal reste grande car elle donne une vision de l'arrière du serpent allemand qui se faufile dans la brousse et frappe quand il a récupéré des armes et des munitions ennemies. La guerre du général péripatéticien se poursuit donc jusqu'à quelques jours après la signature de l'Armistice en Europe occidentale. Lui se moquait bien de ses pertes en hommes, blancs et noirs, car en parfait Teutonique, son plan était de harceler l'ennemi jusqu'à la mort du dernier de ses soldats. Et il le mit en œuvre en envahissant le territoire de la Rhodésie du Nord. Drôle d'héroïsme que le sien qui courtise les fantômes oubliés dans les fossés de la gloire pour obtenir une consécration de la part des historiens nationalistes. Mais en novembre 1918, il y avait longtemps que Nevala ne voulait plus rien dire, sinon la honte pour les hommes politiques portugais et le mépris affiché par les Britanniques à l'égard des capacités de la République. Pour solde de tout compte, ils ne lui accordèrent que la récupération du minuscule triangle de Quionga. Un texte brut rendu original par l'absence de concurrence!

### Annexe: Sahara Atlantique

Pour aider le lecteur – intéressé par le Sahara ici en cause – à approfondir ce qu'il vient de lire dans *Africana Studia*, n.º 29, la revue a jugé bon de lui fournir quelques éléments l'incitant à aller plus loin. Et pour parvenir à cet objectif, elle nous a demandé, à nous

<sup>24</sup> Vaz, Francisco António Lourenço (ed.) & Falcão, Frederico Marinho (auteur) (2018), **A Grande Guerra em Moçambique. O diário do Tenente Frederico Marinho Falcão (1916-1918)**, Lisboa, Edições Colibri, pp. 184, photos noir et blanc.

qui avions voyagé à l'intérieur de ce qui était alors le Sahara des militaires espagnols, en 1967, et écrit sur la fin de la période franquiste dans le désert, de concocter une brève introduction bibliographique sur ce territoire à l'avenir en suspens depuis plus de quarante ans. Nous le faisons, après une prudente hésitation, compte tenu de plusieurs facteurs, à savoir:

- 1.º) l'intolérance possible des parties impliquées, habituées qu'elles sont à l'outrance des louanges, et incapables d'admettre un point de vue autre que le leur.
- 2.º) notre ignorance de l'arabe et éventuellement du traitement livresque du thème dans cette langue.
- 3.º) l'ampleur de la bibliographie pertinente (il existe une bibliographie, incluant les articles, dépassant les 400 pages, pour une simple énumération des entrées, parfois profusément commentées, il est vrai. Et elle s'arrête en 1983-1984).
- 4.º) l'insuffisance de notre bibliothèque personnelle qui atteint à peine 300 livres sahariens en langues ouest-européennes.
- 5.º) l'orientation de nos intérêts qui nous a poussé à privilégier les voyages et l'histoire locale, au détriment de la propagande unilatérale.
- 6.º) notre incertitude quant aux convictions et aux désirs des lecteurs.

De ce fait, nous limiterons ou éliminerons beaucoup de détails indispensables à une bibliographie commentée, digne de ce nom. C'est une esquisse bibliographique que nous livrons, pas un instrument de travail perfectionné pour spécialistes abrités derrière des œillères politiques. Avant d'entrer dans le vif du sujet, il nous semble opportun de dire deux mots sur l'évolution de la production des écrits pertinents en espagnol. L'Ouest-saharien est séculairement un désert avec une ou deux petites oasis. Inégalement mais indéniablement hostile aux hommes, il est globalement peu propice à la naissance d'une littérature historiographique en langues ouest-européennes. Ces sables ont cependant toléré des sociétés longtemps nomades pour l'essentiel, c'est-à-dire pauvres, violentes, religieusement farouches et avant tout jalouses de leur indépendance. Qui pouvait bien la menacer? Personne, durablement. Pendant des siècles, parfois venaient s'échouer quelques pêcheurs canariens ou des naufragés d'autres origines. Ceux que l'on ne tuait pas, on les réduisait en esclavage dans l'attente du paiement d'une rançon. Dans le partage de l'Afrique, c'était, même au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, une région qu'il fallait mieux éviter: une sorte de Somalie atlantique avant la lettre.

Pourtant, en 1884, l'Espagne se décide à faire valoir des «droits» sur la carte, en réalité sur le rivage. Mais elle renoncera à s'affirmer à l'intérieur avant 1934 (occupation de Smara). C'était d'ailleurs plus par nostalgie et pour devancer la France que pour développer ce qui n'était qu'une proto-colonie militaire que l'on voulait maintenir pour se rappeler qu'autrefois (aux XVI<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles) Madrid régenterait un Empire mondial. En cinquante ans, le nombre de livres en espagnol sur ce Sahara qui ne l'était pas encore réellement avait été probablement inférieur à vingt (en incluant les récits des déportés). Madrid pratiquait à l'égard des nomades les plus intolérants ce que certains historiens ont appelé la «politique du pain de sucre». C'était habile car ainsi on achetait la «tranquillité» de l'intérieur par l'octroi de secours alimentaires, monétaires, voire sanitaires. Insidieusement, elle créait malheureusement une culture de la dépendance dans un pays d'hommes fiers. Par ailleurs, quelques noyaux de sédentaires se groupaient autour des trois ou quatre garnisons côtières. Jusqu'au bout, un paternalisme vigilant imprégna le colonialisme dans le désert des Espagnols, et la composante militaire ne fit que s'accroître après la visite sur place du général Franco, bien après la fin de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. On lui attribue également l'amorce du développement administratif, surtout après l'indépendance d'un

Maroc déjà menaçant pendant et après l'«invasion» du Sahara par l'Armée de libération en 1957-1958, repoussée de justesse avec l'aide des Français. Ni les débuts de l'implantation d'une main-d'œuvre civile canarienne, ni la guerre de 1957-1958 (gardée longtemps secrète en Espagne par les Franquistes) n'eurent de conséquences immédiates sur le plan éditorial. Même chose pour la découverte de gigantesques gisements de phosphates.

C'est la fin du franquisme, qui coïncide avec la «Marche verte», qui va débloquent progressivement un flot de livres sahariens en espagnol. Le premier motif de cette orientation inattendue est l'exploitation de la mémoire des anciens combattants de 1957-1958 et de ceux qui ont assisté à l'«invasion pacifique» de Hassan II, l'arme au pied. Cette double conjonction militaro-politique – qui tiendra lieu de «guerre coloniale» pour les soldats du *reemplazo* (contingent) espagnol et des *tercios de la Legión* – reste cependant secondaire par rapport à l'irruption des livres qui défendent en espagnol l'indépendance du Sahara occidental. Les remords d'avoir abandonné leurs Sahariens au profit du Maroc ont, pendant plus d'une génération, affecté une couche de lecteurs qui, faute de *retornados* locaux, tiennent lieu d'experts sahariens plutôt de membres d'ONG actifs dans de nombreuses villes d'Espagne, qui soutiennent financièrement et matériellement les réfugiés dans les camps du Polisario de la région de Tindouf (Algérie). Nous ne savons pas combien de ces livres ont été publiés depuis 1976 sur le Sahara, mais en 2018 les services de la culture annonçaient à Madrid que plus de 300 titres étaient encore disponibles en espagnol (et aussi en catalan, basque, etc.). Pour un pays où les éditeurs sont traditionnellement peu enclins à lancer des livres sur les récentes colonies africaines qui occupent une place insignifiante dans la mentalité et la galaxie onirique de l'Espagnol moyen, c'est un exploit. Nous ne savons pas s'ils se vendent bien. Mais ajoutons que de nombreuses fondations ou organismes universitaires subventionnent la publication de traités scientifiques, notamment historiographiques ou sociologiques, sur le Sahara, de préférence à la Guinée qui n'a pas bonne presse (sauf dans les cercles d'expatriés ou de réfugiés hostiles au clan au pouvoir à Malabo). On note également (et c'est un fait intéressant) la naissance d'une littérature rédigée par les Sahariens en espagnol.

Et dans les autres langues que se passe-t-il? En France, les livres ouest-sahariens trouvent un marché très restreint, sauf chez les membres de quelques associations de soutien au Polisario. Ces dernières semblent recruter dans les circuits habituels des intellectuels de gauche et les anticolonialistes, et subir les contrecoups de la vie intérieure du Polisario. Le Maroc ayant interdit l'importation des livres étrangers sur son Sahara, on ne peut pas miser sur des ventes mirobolantes. En Algérie, le marché du livre sur le Sahara occidental publié en France ne nous semble pas très prometteur, lui non plus. C'est encore en anglais que les travaux universitaires ou propagandistes – anti-marocains pour la plupart, mais avec parfois de fortes réserves à l'égard de la gestion du Polisario – sont les plus solides ou originaux. De temps à autre, on trouve des titres dont les auteurs constatent les progrès et les transformations sociales et économiques obtenus par les investissements marocains. Au profit de qui? Là est la question. Quelques politologues s'ingénient à trouver une solution viable qui conviendrait aux quatre seigneurs (Espagne, Maroc, Algérie, ONU) qui sont encore soucieux de venir en aide aux perpétuels assistés que sont devenus les Sahariens des camps depuis plus de 42 ans.

Nous ventilerons thématiquement et politiquement la présentation des quelques entrées citées ci-après. Le nombre de pages n'est indiqué que pour les volumes fondamentaux. Même chose pour le nom des éditeurs. Nous avons limité volontairement nos commentaires.

## Voyages

- Alonso, Fran (1998), **Territorio ocupado**, Vigo, Edicións Xerais de Galicia.
- Andradre (2003), **El territorio del silencio: un viaje por el Sáhara occidental**, Tegueste (Tenerife), Ediciones de Baile del Sol. Contre le Maroc et la MINURSO.
- Barbier, Maurice (1985), **Voyages et explorations au Sahara occidental au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle**, Paris.
- (1984), **Trois Français au Sahara occidental en 1784-1786**, Paris.
- Bonelli, P. Emilio (ca 2011), **El Sáhara. Descripción geográfica, comercial y agrícola desde Cabo Bojador à Cabo Blanco, viajes al interior, habitantes del desierto y consideraciones generales**, s.l., Kessinger. Reprint de l'édition officielle de 1887. Pour les premières explorations de 1885.
- Péllissier, René (1992), **Don Quichotte en Afrique. Voyages à la fin de l'Empire espagnol**, Orgeval (France), Editions Péllissier, pp. 176. Voyage sous surveillance de 1967 dans une colonie militaire.
- Rodríguez Esteban, José Antonio (ed.) (2008), **Conmemoración de la Expedición científica de Cervera-Quiroga-Rizzo al Sáhara occidental en 1886**, Madrid, Consejo superior de Investigaciones científicas.

## Histoire (incluant les bibliographies et la période espagnole jusqu'en 1976)

- Alonso del Barrio, José Henrique (2010), **Sáhara-Ifni ¿ Encrucijada o abandono ? 1956-1963**, Vol. I, Saragosse, Mira Editores, pp. 583. Vol. II, pp. 454. Surtout militaire.
- Bárbulo, Tomás (2002), **La historia prohibida del Sahara español**, Barcelona, Ediciones Destino, pp. 347.
- Bens (1947), **Mis memorias (veintidos años en el desierto)**, Madrid, Ediciones del Gobierno del África occidental española. Par le gouverneur inamovible des premiers postes militaires.
- Caro Baroja, Julio (1955), **Estudios Saharianos**, Madrid, pp. 502. Une somme.
- Casas de la Vega, Rafael (1985), **La última guerra de África (campana de Ifni-Sáhara)**, pp. 568. Une des études les plus complètes.
- Dalmases, Pablo-Ignacio de (2014), **El desierto imaginado. África occidental española en la literatura**, Barcelona, Ediciones Carena. Surtout les livres en espagnol.
- (2012), **La esclavitud en el Sáhara occidental**, Barcelona, Ediciones Carena. Sur la tolérance des militaires espagnols à l'égard de l'esclavage des Nègro-Africains par les nomades.
- (2010), **Huracán sobre el Sáhara. Memorias de un periodista en el último desastre español**, Barcelona, Editorial Base. Pour la fin de la colonisation en 1975-1976.
- Diego Aguirre, José Ramón (2004), **El oscuro pasado del desierto. Aproximación a la historia del Sáhara**, Madrid, Sial Ediciones, pp. 454. Travail pionnier.
- (1993), **La última guerra colonial de España. Ifni-Sáhara (1957-1958)**, Málaga. Une des meilleures synthèses.
- (1988), **Historia del Sáhara español [La verdad de una traición]**, Madrid, pp. 879. Capital sur la lente pénétration par un ancien officier-administrateur au Sahara.
- Fernández-Aceytuno, Mariano (2001), **Ifni y Sáhara. Una encrucijada en la historia de España**, Madrid, autoédition, pp. 775.
- Hodges, Tony (1982), **Historical Dictionary of Western Sahara**, Metuchen (New Jersey), London, The Scarecrow Press, pp. 470. Capital.
- López Bargados, Alberto (2003), **Arenas coloniales. Los Awlād Dalīm ante la colonización franco-española del Sáhara**, Barcelona, Edicions Bellaterra. Thèse.
- Mariñas Romero, Gerardo (1988), **El Sáhara y la Legión**, Madrid, pp. 629.
- Martínez Milán, Jesús M.<sup>a</sup> (2003), **España en el Sáhara occidental y en la zona sur del Protectorado en Marruecos, 1885-1945**, Madrid, UNED, pp. 400. Thèse capitale.
- Massimi, B. de (1949), **Vent debout. Histoire de la première ligne aérienne française**, Paris.



- Mayrata, Ramón (ed.) (2001), **Relatos del Sáhara. Literatura española del desierto**, Madrid, Libros Clan. Anthologie.
- Mercer, John (1976), **Spanish Sahara**, London.
- Mulero Clemente, Manuel (1945), **Los territorios españoles del Sáhara y sus grupos nómadas**, Sahara, pp. 444.
- Pélissier, René (2015), **Portugal-Afrique-Pacifique. Une bibliographie internationale critique**, Orgeval (France), Editions Pélissier, pp. 562. La suite de la production livresque saharianiste.
- (2006), **Angola-Guinées-Mozambique-Sahara-Timor, etc.** Une bibliographie internationale critique (1990-2005), Orgeval (France), Editions Pélissier, pp. 748. 63 nouveaux titres sur le Sahara.
- (2005), **Spanish Africa – Afrique espagnole. Etudes sur la fin d'un Empire (1957-1976)**, Orgeval (France), Editions Pélissier, pp. 224. Evolution politique. Bilingue.
- (1991), **Du Sahara à Timor. 700 livres analysés (1980-1990) sur l'Afrique et l'Insulinde ex-ibériques**, Orgeval (France), Editions Pélissier, pp. 350. Bibliographie.
- Rumeu de Armas, Antonio (1956, 1957), **España en el África Atlántica. Vol. I. Texto. Vol. II. Documentos**, Madrid, pp. 612 + 310.
- Santamaria Quesada, Ramiro (1984), **Ifni y Sáhara. La guerra ignorada**, Madrid.
- Segura Palomares, Juan (1976), **El Sáhara, razón de una sinrazón**, Barcelona.
- Sipe, Lynn F. (1984), **Western Sahara. A Comprehensive Bibliography**, New York-London, Garland Publishing, pp. 418. 3.345 entrées, certaines très commentées.

## Pro-Maroc

- Akhmisse, Mustapha (1987), **Hommes et choses de Smara**, Rabat, Edino.
- Alaoui, Hassan (2010), **Guerre secrète au Sahara occidental**, Paris, Encre d'Orient.
- Benmessaoud Tredano, Abdelmoughit (1991), **Le Sahara marocain: une décolonisation pas comme les autres**, Rabat.
- Gaudio, Attilio (1993), **Les populations du Sahara occidental. Histoire, vie et culture**.
- (1978), **Le dossier du Sahara occidental**, Paris, pp. 462.
- (1975), «Sahara espagnol». **Fin d'un mythe colonial?**, Rabat, pp. 516.
- Hernández, Angela (2001), **Sáhara: otras voces**, Málaga, Editorial Algazara.
- Lazrak, Rachid (1974), **Le contentieux territorial entre le Maroc et l'Espagne**, Casablanca, pp. 480.
- Maazouzi, Mohamed (1976), **Tindouf et les frontières méridionales du Maroc**, Casablanca.
- Moha, Edouard (1990), **Le Sahara occidental ou la sale guerre de Boumediene**, Paris.
- Mohsen-Finan, Khadija (1997), **Sahara occidental. Les enjeux d'un conflit régional**, Paris, CNRS Editions. Subtilement pro-marocain.
- Perray, Charles (2011), **Le Maroc saharien aujourd'hui**, Paris, Editions du Jaguar. Très nombreuses photos sur le développement.
- Rézette, Robert (1975), **Le Sahara occidental et les frontières marocaines**, Paris, 1975.
- Thobhani, Akbarali (2002), **Western Sahara Since 1975 Under Moroccan Administration. Social, Economic and Political Transformation**, Lewiston (New York), The Edwin Mellen Press. Bilan marocain très positif selon ce professeur aux USA. Détaillé.
- Yata, Ali (1982 et 1984), **Le Sahara occidental marocain à travers les textes**, Casablanca, Tome I, pp. 456 & Tome II, pp. 688.

## Pro-Polisario

- Abdelaziz, Benabdellah (1977), **Vérité sur le Sahara**, Roanne (France).
- Abjean, Annaïg & Julien, Zahra (2003), **Sahraouis. Exils. Identités**, Paris, L'Harmattan.

- Balguer, Soledad & Wirth, Rafael (1976), **Frente Polisario: la ultima guerrilla**, Barcelona, Editorial Laia.
- Barbier, Maurice (1982), **Le conflit du Sahara occidental**, Paris.
- Caratini, Sophie (2003), **La République des sables. Anthropologie d'une révolution**, Paris, L'Harmattan.
- Cruz, Carlos Benigno da (1977), **Guerra do Povo no Sahara Ocidental**, Coimbra.
- Diego Aguirre, José Ramón (1991), **Guerra en el Sáhara**, Madrid, Istmo, pp. 386. Sur la lutte du Polisario contre le Maroc et la Mauritanie.
- Hodges, Tony (1983), **Western Sahara. The Roots of a Desert War**, Westport (Ct), Lawrence Hill & Co. Capital.
- Malek, Boualem (1983), **La question du Sahara occidental et le droit international**, Alger, pp. 463.
- Miské, Ahmed-Baba (1978), **Front Polisario. L'âme d'un peuple**, Paris.
- Ould Ismail ould Es-Sweyih, Mohamed-Fadel (2001), **La République sahraouie**, Paris, L'Harmattan. Parfois critique.
- Pazzanita, Anthony G. (2006), **Historical Dictionary of Western Sahara**, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Lanham (Maryland), The Scarecrow Press, pp. LXV-523. Important pour connaître le personnel politique.
- (1996), **Western Sahara**, Oxford, etc., Clío Press, pp. XL-261. Bibliographie.
- Pazzanita, Anthony & Hodges, Tony (1994), **Historical Dictionary of Western Sahara**, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Metuchen (New Jersey), The Scarecrow Press, pp. LXXII-565. Important.
- Rössel, Karl (1991), **Wind, Sand und (Mercedes-) Sterne. WestSahara: Der vergessene Kampf für die Freiheit**, Unkel/Rhein; Bad Honnef, Horlemann, pp. 413.
- Saad, Zeïn (1987), **Les chemins sahraouis de l'espérance**, Paris.
- Sayem, Ismaïl (1998), **Les Sahraouis**, Paris, L'Harmattan.
- Shelley, Toby (2004), **Endgame in the Western Sahara. What Future for Africa's Last Colony?**, London, Zed Books.
- Thompson, Virginia & Adlof, Richard (1980), **The Western Saharans. Background to Conflict**, London, Croom Helm, pp. 348. Travail objectif, sans polémique analysant le conflit comme étant la suite de l'éternelle lutte des nomades contre les sédentaires. Capital.
- Villar, Francisco (1982), **El proceso de autodeterminación del Sáhara**, Valencia, pp. 410.
- Villemont, Régine (2010), **Avec les Sahraouis. Une histoire solidaire de 1975 à nos jours**, Paris, L'Harmattan, pp. 351.
- Yara, Ali Omar (2003), **L'insurrection sahraouie. De la guerre à l'Etat, 1973-2003**, Paris, L'Harmattan.
- (2001), **Genèse politique de la société sahraouie**, Paris, L'Harmattan.
- Zunes, Stephen & Mundy, Jacob (2010), **Western Sahara. War, Nationalism, and Conflict Irresolution**, Syracuse (New York), Syracuse University Press, pp. XXXVII-319. Partisans d'une alliance entre les autochtones et les centaines de milliers de «colons» marocains.

## Bilan provisoire

Boulay, Sébastien & Correale, Francesco (coord.) (2018), **Sahara Occidental. Conflit oublié, population en mouvement**, Tours (France), Presses universitaires François-Rabelais, pp. 424 + 8 p. de planches photos et cartes noir et blanc et couleur. 24 auteurs dressent un état de la question en mettant l'accent sur l'Histoire, le droit, la politique, les réfugiés, les arts, l'anthropologie, la sociologie, la diaspora, etc. Bibliographie très incomplète mais ambitieuse (36 pages). Original et indispensable.



**Resumos**

**Abstracts**

**Resumés**

**ملخصات**





## Sahara Ocidental: conflito diplomático (1991-2010) e os presumíveis interesses de Marrocos

Pedro Ferreira

O principal objetivo deste estudo/artigo, é tentar compreender as razões e motivos, que ao longo destes últimos anos têm levado Marrocos a persistir intensamente na disputa pelo Sahara Ocidental. Veremos que na verdade existe algo de muito forte que faz com que a diplomacia marroquina não desista de lutar por este território, mesmo depois do parecer jurídico de 1974 do Tribunal Internacional de Justiça, que declarava explicitamente não existirem laços suficientes entre marroquinos e saarauís justificando uma anexação.

**Palavras-chave:** Marrocos, Sahara Ocidental, Tribunal Internacional de Justiça, recursos naturais.

### Western Sahara: Diplomatic conflict (1991-2010) and the presumptive Moroccan interests

The main purpose of this study/article is to try to understand what has pushed Morocco to persist in the struggle for Western Sahara territory. We shall see that in fact something strong related to Western Sahara prevents Moroccan diplomacy of giving up this territory, even after the 1974 International Court of Justice's advisory opinion which clearly states there are not enough links between the Moroccans and the Western Saharans justifying an annexation process.

**Keywords:** Morocco, Western Sahara, International Court of Justice, Natural Resources

### Le Sahara Occidental: Conflit Diplomatique (1991-2010) et les supposés Intérêts du Maroc

L'objectif principal de cette étude est d'essayer de comprendre les raisons qui ont mené le Maroc à persister dans sa dispute pour le Sahara Occidental. On verra qu'il existe vraiment quelque chose de très fort qui fait que la diplomatie marocaine ne renonce point à ce territoire-ci, même après l'avis juridique de 1974 de la Cour Internationale de

Justice qui mentionnait clairement qu'il n'y avait pas de liens suffisants entre marocains et sahraouis pour justifier une annexion.

**Mots-clés:** Maroc, Sahara Occidental, Cour Internationale de Justice, ressources naturelles.

الصحراء الغربية: الصراع الدبلوماسي (1991-2010) والمصالح المغربية المقترضة  
بيدرو فيريرا

الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة هو محاولة فهم الأسباب و/أو الدوافع التي جعلت المغرب خلال السنوات الأخيرة يسعى بشكل مكثف من أجل إقليم الصحراء الغربية. خلال هذه الدراسة/المقال، سنرى أن هناك شيء قوي متعلق بالصحراء الغربية، يجعل الدبلوماسية المغربية لا تتخلى عن الكفاح من أجل هذه الأرض، حتى بعد القرار الصادر عن محكمة العدل الدولية سنة 1974 والذي ينص صراحة على عدم وجود روابط كافية بين المغاربة والصحراويين يستوجب عملية الضم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المغرب، الصحراء الغربية، محكمة العدل الدولية، عملية الضم.

## Clarificação da política externa nacionalista da Argélia em relação ao conflito no Saara Ocidental

Abdelhak Elaggoune e Mourad Aty

Muitos analistas afirmam que o apoio da Argélia à Polisário e à sua determinação em se tornar independente de Marrocos se configura como uma política daquele país no sentido de se tornar a principal potência hegemónica ou ainda para obter outras vantagens estratégicas na zona. Contrariamente a esta perspectiva, este artigo argumenta que a postura argelina face ao problema do Saara Ocidental iniciado em 1975 é menos uma luta pela hegemonia do que a aplicação de um dos princípios ideológicos que demarcam a sua política revolucionária externa. É o princípio da autodeterminação e do apoio generalizado aos povos oprimidos do mundo inteiro, uma postura profundamente implantada na sua cultura política. Defende ainda que os valores estruturais que modelaram e continuam a modelar a política externa argelina em relação ao problema da Polisário emergiram sob administrações argelinas anteriores à atual e provavelmente subsistirão sob qualquer futuro governo.

**Palavras-chave:** Argélia, Marrocos, autodeterminação, Saara Ocidental.

## Explaining Algeria's Nationalist Foreign Policy on the Western Sahara Conflict

Many analysts assert that Algeria's support for the Polisario and their aim of independence from Morocco is a policy by Algeria to become either the important hegemon in the Maghreb or to get other strategic gains in the area. Contrary to this view, the present paper argues that the Algerian stance towards the Western Sahara problem since 1975 is less a struggle for hegemony than a practice of one of its ideological principles that distinguish its revolutionary foreign policy. It is the principle of self-determination and extensive support to oppressed peoples everywhere in the world, a trend deeply embedded in its political culture. It also argues that the underlying national and historical values which shaped and continue to shape Algeria's foreign policy towards the Polisario problem appeared under previous Algerian administrations and are likely to emerge under any future government.

**Keywords:** Algeria, Morocco, self-determination, Western Sahara.

## Clarifiant la politique étrangère nationaliste algérienne concernant le conflit du Sahara Occidental

De nombreux analystes affirment que le soutien de l'Algérie pour le Polisario et leur indépendance du Maroc vise une politique par l'Algérie pour devenir soit l'hégémon important au Maghreb ou pour obtenir d'autres gains stratégiques dans la région. Contrairement à cette opinion, le présent article fait valoir que la position algérienne vers le problème du Sahara occidental depuis 1975 est moins une lutte pour l'hégémonie qu'une pratique de l'un de ses principes idéologiques qui distinguent sa politique étrangère révolutionnaire. C'est le principe de l'autodétermination et le grand soutien aux peuples opprimés partout dans le monde, une tendance profondément ancrée dans sa culture politique. L'étude postule également que les valeurs fondamentales nationales et historiques qui ont façonné et continuent à façonner la politique étrangère de l'Algérie vers le problème du Polisario sont apparues sous les précédentes administrations algériennes et sont susceptibles d'émerger sous n'importe quel futur gouvernement.

**Mots-clés:** Algérie, Maroc, autodétermination, Sahara occidental.

شرح السياسة الخارجية الجزائرية ذات البعد الوطني في نزاع الصحراء الغربية  
عبد الحق العفون و مراد عاتق

العديد من المحللين يؤكدون أن دعم الجزائر لجبهة البوليساريو وهدفها المتمثل في الاستقلال من المغرب هي سياسة جزائرية الهدف منها أن تصبح إمبراطورية الهيمينة في المغرب العربي أو للحصول على مكاسب إستراتيجية أخرى في المنطقة. خلافا لهذا الرأي يرى هذا المقال أن الموقف الجزائري تجاه مشكلة الصحراء الغربية منذ عام 1975 لا يعتبر منافسة من أجل الهيمنة أكثر من كونه ممارسة لأحد مبادئها الأيديولوجية التي تميز سياساتها الخارجية الثورية. إنه مبدأ تقرير المصير والدعم الواسع النطاق للشعوب المضطهدة في كل مكان في العالم، وهو نزعة متأصلة في ثقافة الجزائر السياسية. ويؤكد المقال أيضا أن القيم الوطنية والتاريخية الأساسية التي شكلت ومازالت تشكل السياسة الخارجية الجزائرية تجاه مشكلة البوليساريو ظهرت مع الإدارات الجزائرية السابقة ومن المرجح أن تتواصل مع أي حكومة مستقبلية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الجزائر، المغرب، تقرير المصير، الصحراء الغربية.

## Sahara Ocidental e Estados Unidos: Clientelismo et excepcionalismo na última colônia africana

Jeffrey J. Smith

Este artigo avalia a relação histórica e política dos Estados Unidos com o que as Nações Unidas apelidam de «questão» do Sahara Ocidental. A análise inicia-se com a abordagem americana da descolonização e com as circunstâncias históricas do Sahara espanhol. Examinam-se as relações entre os Estados Unidos e os principais estados em apreciação, a par das suas reticências em se comprometerem com a Frente Polisário, o movimento de libertação nacional saharauí. Em seguida, a análise desloca-se para os períodos contemporâneos do envolvimento dos Estados Unidos com o território, designado por Sahara Ocidental em 1975. Também se consideram os telegramas diplomáticos desclassificados para o período até 1980 e as fugas de telegramas para os anos de 2003 a 2010. São discutidas a natureza e as perspetivas de um envolvimento americano continuado.

**Palavras-chave:** descolonização, diplomacia, Sahara Ocidental, Estados Unidos.

## Western Sahara and the United States: Clientelism and exceptionalism in Africa's last colony

This paper assesses the historical and political connection of the United States to what the United Nations calls the “question” of Western Sahara. The analysis begins with the American approach to decolonization and the historical circumstances

of the Spanish Sahara. America's relationship with the principal states involved is examined together with its reluctance to engage the Saharawi national liberation movement, the Polisario Front. The contemporary periods of United States involvement in Western Sahara, as the territory was styled after 1975, are identified. De-classified US diplomatic telegrams for the era until 1980 and leaked telegrams for the years 2003 to 2010 are considered. The nature and prospect of continuing US involvement is discussed.

**Keywords:** decolonization, diplomacy, United States, Western Sahara.

### Sahara occidental et les États-Unis: Clientélisme et exceptionalisme dans la dernière colonie africaine

Cet article évalue le lien historique et politique des États-Unis avec ce que les Nations Unies appellent la «question» du Sahara occidental. L'analyse commence par l'approche américaine de la décolonisation et par les circonstances historiques du Sahara espagnol. Les relations entre les États-Unis et les principaux États concernés sont examinées, de même que leur réticence à s'engager le Front Polisario, le mouvement de libération nationale sahraoui. L'analyse se déplace ensuite vers les périodes contemporaines d'implication des États-Unis au Sahara occidental, le territoire ainsi nommé après 1975. Les télégrammes diplomatiques américains déclassés pour la période jusqu'en 1980 et les fuites de télégrammes pour les années 2003 à 2010 sont pris en compte. La nature et les perspectives d'une implication américaine continue sont discutées.

**Mots-clés:** décolonisation, diplomatie, Sahara occidental, États-Unis.

الصحراء الغربية والولايات المتحدة: الزبائنية والاستثنائية في مستعمرة إفريقيا الأخيرة  
جيفري سميت

يقيم هذا المقال العلاقة التاريخية والسياسية للولايات المتحدة بما تسميه الأمم المتحدة "مسألة" الصحراء الغربية. يبدأ التحليل بالمقارنة الأمريكية لإنهاء الاستعمار والظروف التاريخية للصحراء الإسبانية. تم تحليل علاقة أمريكا بالنزول الرئيسية المعنية مع إحجامها عن إشراك حركة التحرير الوطني الصحراوي، جبهة البوليساريو. تم تحديد الفترات المعاصرة لتدخل الولايات المتحدة في الصحراء الغربية، كما تمت تسميت الإقليم بعد عام 1975. أخذ المقال بعين الاعتبار البرقيات الدبلوماسية الأمريكية التي تم رفع السرية عنها حتى عام 1980 والبرقيات المسربة للأعوام 2003 إلى 2010. كما يناقش المقال طبيعة واحتمال استمرار تدخل الولايات المتحدة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** إنهاء الاستعمار، الدبلوماسية، الولايات المتحدة، الصحراء الغربية.

### Os Estados Unidos e a questão do Sahara Ocidental: a baixa prioridade na política externa dos Estados Unidos

Yahia H. Zoubir

O conflito prolongado no Sahara Ocidental acolhe pouca atenção por parte dos Estados Unidos. Durante a guerra fria, os Estados Unidos tinham encarado o conflito, ainda que sendo de natureza regional, como parte do confronto este-oeste, razão pela qual faria parte dos conflitos com os movimentos nacionalistas e comunistas do mundo. Em teoria, os Estados Unidos são a favor do princípio de autodeterminação, direito legítimo dos Saharais, vítimas da colonização espanhola e, após 1975, da ocupação marroquina. No entanto, devido aos laços estreitos que ligam este país a Marrocos, aliado importante na região do Médio Oriente e do norte de África, os Estados Unidos apoiaram a ocupação ilegal do território por aquele país. Em 2007 os Estados Unidos apoiaram Marrocos na promoção da opção (ilegal) pela autonomia do Sahara Ocidental, com a qual se pretende dissimular a quase-anexação do território por aquele país. Este artigo analisa a evolução da política americana no que diz respeito ao Sahara Ocidental. O principal argumento centra-se no facto de que, apesar da sua ambivalência, e devido às contingências dos desenvolvimentos regionais e internacionais, os Estados Unidos não só continuaram a apoiar Marrocos; este conflito também não faz parte das prioridades da política externa americana.

**Palavras-chave:** Sahara Ocidental, Estados Unidos, descolonização, Marrocos.

### The United States and the question of Western Sahara: A low priority in US Foreign Policy

The protracted conflict in Western Sahara receives little attention from the United States. During the Cold War, although regional in nature, the United States had looked at the conflict as part of the East-West confrontation, which explains why the US perceived it as part of the confrontation against nationalist and communist movements worldwide. In principle, the United States is favorable to the principle of self-determination, a legitimate right of the Saharawis, victims of Spanish colonization and, since 1975, of Moroccan occupation. However, because of its strong ties to Morocco, an important ally in the Middle East and North Africa region, the

United States has provided considerable support to Morocco's illegal occupation of the disputed territory. In 2007, the US assisted Morocco in promoting the (illegal) notion of "autonomy" for Western Sahara, which serves as concealment for Morocco's quasi-annexation of Western Sahara. This article analyzes the evolution of US policy toward the Western Sahara conflict; the main argument is that, despite its ambivalence, due to the vicissitudes of regional and international developments, the United States has not only continued its backing of Morocco but also that the conflict ranks very low in US foreign policy priorities.

**Keywords:** Western Sahara, United States, decolonization, Morocco.

### Les États-Unis et la question du Sahara Occidental: la faible priorité dans la politique étrangère des États-Unis

Le conflit prolongé au Sahara Occidental reçoit peu d'attention de la part des États-Unis. Pendant la guerre froide, bien que de nature régionale, les États-Unis avaient considéré le conflit comme faisant partie de la confrontation Est-Ouest, ce qui explique pourquoi les États-Unis l'ont perçu comme faisant partie des conflits avec les mouvements nationalistes et communistes dans le monde. Théoriquement, les États-Unis sont favorables au principe de l'autodétermination, un droit légitime des Sahraouis, victimes de la colonisation espagnole et, depuis 1975, de l'occupation marocaine. Toutefois, en raison de ses liens étroits avec le Maroc, un allié important dans la région du Moyen-Orient et de l'Afrique du Nord, les États-Unis ont apporté un soutien considérable à l'occupation illégale par le Maroc du territoire contesté. En 2007, les États-Unis ont aidé le Maroc à promouvoir l'option (illégale) d'autonomie pour le Sahara Occidental, qui sert à dissimuler la quasi-annexion de ce territoire par le Maroc. Cet article analyse l'évolution de la politique américaine à l'égard du conflit du Sahara Occidental. Le principal argument est que, malgré son ambivalence, en raison des vicissitudes des développements régionaux et internationaux, les États-Unis ont non seulement continué à soutenir le Maroc; d'ailleurs ce conflit n'est pas une des priorités de la politique étrangère américaine.

**Mots-clés:** Sahara Occidental, États-Unis, décolonisation, Maroc.

### الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية والصحراء الغربية: قضية تمثل أولوية منخفضة في السياسة الخارجية يحي زوبير

لا يحظى النزاع الطويل في الصحراء الغربية باهتمام كبير من الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. بالرغم من طبيعة النزاع الإقليمية، فقد اعترفته الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية، خلال الحرب الباردة، كجزء من المواجهة بين الشرق والغرب، وهو ما يفسر نظرتها إليه كجانب من سياسة التصدي للحركات القومية والشيوعية في جميع أنحاء العالم. فمن حيث المبدأ تزيد الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية مبدأ تقرير المصير، وهو حق مشروع للصحراويين، ضد احتلال الاستعمار الإسباني سابقاً والاحتلال المغربي منذ عام 1975. ومع ذلك ونظراً لعلاقتها القوية مع المغرب، وهو حليف مهم في منطقة الشرق الأوسط وشمال إفريقيا، فقد قدمت الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية دعماً كبيراً لاحتلال المغرب غير القانوني للأراضي المتنازع عليها. وفي عام 2007، ساعدت الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية المغرب في الترويج (غير القانوني) لمفهوم "الحكم الذاتي" للصحراء الغربية، والذي يعد بمثابة شبه إخفاء لحزم الصحراء الغربية من طرف المغرب.

يحلل هذا المقال تطور سياسة الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية تجاه نزاع الصحراء الغربية، بالتركيز على الجانب الرئيسي والذي مفاده أنه على الرغم من تضارب الرؤى بسبب تقلبات التطورات الإقليمية والدولية، فإن الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية لم توصل دعماً للمغرب فحسب، بل أن النزاع يحتل مرتبة متدنية للغاية في أولويات سياستها الخارجية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الصحراء الغربية، الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية، إنهاء الاستعمار، المغرب.

### Que papel para a União Europeia no conflito no Sara Ocidental?

Carolina Jiménez Sánchez

Desenvolvimentos recentes no conflito do Saara Ocidental tocam vários elementos no processo de paz. Por esta razão, é necessário explorar qual é o papel atual e futuro da União Europeia (UE) em uma das controvérsias coloniais mais geograficamente fechadas deste século. Consciente da liderança da UE nos processos de paz de países terceiros, este documento incidirá sobre a sua prática neste conflito, com especial consideração de casos análogos, e sua relação comercial com a potência ocupante, Marrocos.

**Palavras-chave:** Conflito do Sara Ocidental, UE, Marrocos, autodeterminação.

### What role for the European Union in the Western Sahara Conflict?

Recent developments in the Western Sahara conflict touch various changing elements in the peace process. For this reason, it is necessary to explore what is the current and future role of the European Union ("EU") in one of the most geographically closed colonial controversies of this century. Being aware of the EU's leadership in third countries peace processes, this paper will focus on its

practice in this conflict, with special consideration of analogous cases, and its commercial relation with the Occupying power, Morocco.

**Keywords:** Western Sahara Conflict, EU, Morocco, Self-determination.

### Quel rôle pour l'Union européenne dans le conflit du Sahara occidental?

Les événements récents dans le conflit du Sahara occidental touchent plusieurs éléments du processus de paix. Pour cette raison, il devient nécessaire d'explorer le rôle actuel et futur de l'Union européenne (UE) dans l'une des controverses coloniales les plus fermées géographiquement de ce siècle. Conscient du rôle de premier plan que joue l'UE dans les processus de paix des pays tiers, le présent article se concentrera sur sa pratique dans ce conflit, en accordant une attention particulière aux cas similaires et à ses relations commerciales avec le Maroc, la puissance occupante.

**Mots-clés:** Conflit du Sahara occidental, UE, Maroc, Autodétermination.

هل للاتحاد الأوروبي دور في نزاع الصحراء الغربية؟  
كارولينا خيمينيز سانشيز

تمس التطورات الأخيرة في نزاع الصحراء الغربية مختلف العناصر المتغيرة في عملية السلام، لذلك، وجب التحليل و التقييم في الدور الحالي والمستقبلي للاتحاد الأوروبي في واحدة من أكثر الخلافات الاستعمارية المغلقة جغرافيا في هذا القرن. تركز هذه الورقة على ممارسات الاتحاد الأوروبي في هذا النزاع، مع النظر بشكل خاص في الحالات المماثلة، إضافة للعلاقات التجارية مع سلطة الاحتلال ممثلة في المغرب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نزاع الصحراء الغربية، الولايات المتحدة، المغرب، تقرير المصير.

### A história sem fim do Saara Ocidental: um caso de hipocrisia organizada

Rui Alexandre Novais

Este artigo aplica o conceito de 'hipocrisia organizada' ao processo de autodeterminação do Saara Ocidental. Uma análise tripartida da disfuncionalidade dos resultados organizacionais é reveladora, antes de mais, da falta de comprometimento e da vontade política de agir por parte da ONU. Para disfarçar tal realidade, a organização enceta constantes promessas de reformas que, no entanto, redundam em mera retórica institucional sem correspondência prática. Por fim, a subcontratação da

UA na tentativa de resolução do conflito possibilita à ONU um modo estratégico de gestão das pressões resultantes da inconsistência entre as lógicas das consequências e da adequação.

Neste contexto, o estudo conclui que a abordagem pragmática e eficiente de manutenção de paz por parte da ONU conforme evidenciada no caso do Saara Ocidental visa garantir a auto-sobrevivência da organização a todo o custo, ainda que em detrimento de congelar e ossificar o persistente impasse. Desse modo, corrobora o argumento que a probabilidade da ocorrência da 'hipocrisia organizada' em resposta a pretensões conflitantes tende a ser inversamente relacionada com a eficácia dos meios alternativos disponíveis na gestão de conflitos.

**Palavras-chave:** Hipocrisia organizada, manutenção da paz, ONU, auto-referendo do Saara Ocidental.

### The Western Sahara never ending story: A case of organized hypocrisy

This article applies the concept of 'organized hypocrisy' to the self-determination process in the Western Sahara. A threefold analysis of the dysfunctions in the organizational outputs gap and lack of political will to act. To disguise it, the UN constantly promises reforms which also prove to be but institutional rhetoric decoupled from action. Lastly, contracting out the AU to the ongoing dispute also offers the UN a strategic mean of managing the pressures resulting of the gap between inconsistent logics of consequences and appropriateness.

Against this background, the study concludes that UN's pragmatic peacekeeping approach in the Western Sahara aims at assuring the organization's survival at all cost, regardless of freezing and ossifying the far-reaching deadlock. This corroborates the argument that the likelihood of 'organized hypocrisy', as a response to conflicting demands, is inversely related to the efficacy of alternative means of managing conflicts.

**Keywords:** Organized hypocrisy, peacekeeping, UN, Western Sahara self-referendum.

### L'histoire sans fin du Sahara occidental: un cas d'hipocrisie organisée

Cet article applique le concept de "hipocrisie organisée" au processus d'autodétermination au Sahara occidental. Une analyse en trois volets de tous les dysfonctionnements révèle tout d'abord le



problème entre l'engagement de l'ONU et sa manque de volonté politique d'agir. Pour la dissimuler, l'ONU promet constamment des réformes qui se révèlent une rhétorique institutionnelle loin d'être mise en place. Enfin, la sous-traitance de l'affaire Sahraoui à l'UA offre également à l'ONU un moyen stratégique de gérer les pressions découlant de la différence entre les logiques incohérentes des conséquences et de la pertinence.

Dans ce contexte, l'étude conclut que l'approche pragmatique de l'ONU en matière de maintien de la paix au Sahara occidental vise à assurer la survie de l'organisation à tout prix, indépendamment du gel de l'affaire. Cela corrobore l'argument selon lequel la probabilité «d'hypocrisie organisée», en réponse à des demandes conflictuelles, est inversement liée à l'efficacité des moyens alternatifs dans la gestion des conflits.

**Mots-clés:** Hypocrisie organisée, maintien de la paix, ONU, référendum sur le Sahara occidental.

الصحراء الغربية، القصة التي لانهاية لها: النفاق المنظم  
روي توفيق

يطلق هذا المقال مفهوم "النفاق المنظم" على عملية تقرير المصير في الصحراء الغربية. إن عملية التحليل الثلاثي للاختلافات في المخرجات التنظيمية تكشف، أو لا قبل كل شيء، فشل الأمم المتحدة في الالتزام وعدم الإرادة السياسية للتصريف. لإخفاء ما سبق، تعد الأمم المتحدة باستمرار باصلاحات أثبتت أنها ليست سوى خطاب مؤسسي لا يمكن تنفيذه. وأخيراً، فإن اسناد قضية النزاع المستمر للاتحاد الأفريقي يوفر أيضاً للأمم المتحدة وسيلة إستراتيجية لإدارة الضغوطات. استناداً إلى هذه الخلفية، خلصت الدراسة إلى أن نهج الأمم المتحدة العملي في حفظ السلام في الصحراء الغربية يهدف إلى ضمان بقاء المنظمة بأي ثمن، بغض النظر عن تحجر المواقف والجمود بعيد المدى. وهذا يؤكد الحجة القائلة بأن احتمالية "النفاق المنظم"، كاستجابة للمطالب المتضاربة، ترتبط بصورة عكسية بفعالية الوسائل البديلة لإدارة الصراع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النفاق المنظم، حفظ السلام، الأمم المتحدة، الاستفتاء الذاتي للصحراء الغربية.

## As políticas da União Africana em relação ao Saara Ocidental

Sidi Omar

O artigo examina as políticas seguidas pela União Africana (UA), enquanto organização intergovernamental, no que diz respeito à questão do Saara Ocidental, geralmente designada como a última colónia africana. Descreve alguns momentos determinantes que marcaram as políticas da organização continental africana e que moldaram o seu envolvimento na questão do Saara Ocidental ao longo das últimas décadas. Globalmente, o artigo

demonstra que, ainda que esteja ativamente implicada na questão do Saara Ocidental, a UA ainda enfrenta alguns constrangimentos estruturais e políticos que a impediram até agora de desempenhar um papel determinante enquanto ator ativo na gestão e na resolução do conflito mais longo que o continente enfrenta atualmente.

**Palavras-chave:** União Africana, descolonização, Organização de Unidade Africana.

## The African Union policies towards the Western Sahara

The article will examine the policies pursued by the African Union (AU), as an intergovernmental organisation, with regard to the question of Western Sahara, commonly referred to as Africa's last colony. It will outline some defining moments that have shaped the policies of the African continental organisation and informed its engagement with the question of Western Sahara over the past decades. Overall, the article will demonstrate that, although it has been actively involved in the question of Western Sahara, the AU still faces certain structural and political constraints that have so far prevented it from having a major role as an active player in the management and resolution of the longest running conflict on the continent.

**Keywords:** African Union, Decolonisation, Organisation of African Unity, Western Sahara.

## Les politiques de l'Union Africaine envers le Sahara Occidental

L'article examinera les politiques suivies par l'Union africaine (UA), en tant qu'organisation intergouvernementale, en ce qui concerne la question du Sahara occidental, communément appelée la dernière colonie en Afrique. Il décrit quelques moments déterminants qui ont marqué les politiques de l'organisation continentale africaine et façonné son implication dans la question du Sahara occidental au cours des dernières décennies. Globalement, l'article montre que, bien qu'elle ait impliqué activement dans la question du Sahara occidental, l'UA doit encore faire face à certaines contraintes structurelles et politiques qui l'ont empêchée jusqu'à présent de jouer un rôle majeur en tant qu'acteur actif dans la gestion et la résolution du conflit le plus long que connaît le continent.

**Mots-clés:** Union africaine, Décolonisation, Organisation de l'unité africaine, Sahara occidental.

### سياسات الاتحاد الأفريقي تجاه الصحراء الغربية

سيدي عمل

يبحث المقال السياسات التي يتبناها الاتحاد الأفريقي، كمنظمة حكومية، فيما يتعلق بمسألة الصحراء الغربية التي يشار إليها عادة باسم "أخر مستعمرة في أفريقيا". يحدد المقال بعض المحطات الحاسمة التي شكلت سياسات المنظمة القارية الأفريقية والتزامها تجاه مسألة الصحراء الغربية خلال العقود الماضية. وبشكل عام، يوضح المقال أنه على الرغم من انخراطه التثبيطي في قضية الصحراء الغربية، لا يزال الاتحاد الأفريقي يواجه بعض القيود الهيكلية والسياسية التي منعت حتى الآن من أن يكون له دور رئيسي كفاعل حيوي في معالجة وحل أطول صراع في القارة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاتحاد الأفريقي، إنهاء الاستعمار، منظمة الوحدة الأفريقية، الصحراء الغربية.

### A Liga Árabe e o conflito no Sahara Ocidental: uma política de negligência total

Belkacem Iratni

A Liga Árabe consagrou uma atenção irrisória à questão do Sahara Ocidental. Esta negligência explica-se provavelmente pela vontade desta organização de preservar os laços de solidariedade entre os seus estados-membros e de evitar a fragmentação do mundo árabe.

A Liga não se pronunciou a favor do direito do povo saharauí à autodeterminação e colocou-se claramente do lado de Marrocos, em particular no que diz respeito ao seu plano de autonomia nas regiões do Sahara Ocidental ocupadas na sequência da demissão de Espanha em levar a cabo as suas prerrogativas de potência colonial, que incluíam a descolonização deste território.

As posições que os Estados-membros da Liga adotaram individualmente oscilaram entre o apoio à causa saharauí e a integração do Sahara Ocidental, de acordo com as suas convicções ideológicas, interesses geoestratégicos e alianças políticas dos seus membros. As atitudes da Liga Árabe em relação ao conflito podem evoluir em função das mudanças em curso a nível da dinâmica interna dos Estados que a compõem. Quanto mais as sociedades árabes avançarem em relação aos valores democráticos mais a Liga será compelida a respeitar a legalidade internacional e a promover os direitos dos povos.

**Palavras-chave:** Liga dos Estados Árabes, conflito do Sahara Ocidental, descolonização.

### The Arab League and the Western Sahara Conflict: The politics of a sheer neglect

The Arab League has paid little attention to the issue of Western Sahara. This neglect was supposedly due to the concern of this league to ensure the solidarity among its member States and avoid a further fragmentation of the Arab World.

This League did not favour the right of the Saharawi people for Self-determination and has provided a firm support to the autonomy plan which Morocco has tried to complete in the areas of the Western Sahara brought under its control after the demise of Spain to fulfill its mandate duties, which included the decolonization of this territory.

Individually, the positions of the member States have varied – according to their ideological beliefs, geostrategic interests and political alignments – between those supporting the Saharawi cause and those backing up the integration of the Western Sahara to Morocco.

The attitude of the Arab League towards the Western Sahara conflict may evolve with the changes that are occurring in the home policy of its member States. The more the Arab societies advance in the process of democratization, the more the Arab League will move to respect international legality and promote the rights of the peoples.

**Keywords:** The League of the Arab States, Western Sahara conflict, decolonization.

### La Ligue arabe et le conflit du Sahara Ocidental: une politique de négligence flagrante

La ligue des Etats Arabes a consacré une attention tout à fait minime à la question du Sahara Occidental. Cette négligence s'explique probablement par la volonté de cette organisation à préserver les liens de solidarité entre ses Etats membres et à éviter la fragmentation du Monde Arabe.

La Ligue n'a pas exprimé son soutien au droit du peuple Sahraoui à l'autodétermination et s'est résolument rangée du côté du Maroc, notamment en ce qui concerne son plan d'autonomie entrepris dans les régions du Sahara Occidental occupées à la suite de la défection de l'Espagne d'accomplir ses prérogatives de puissance coloniale, qui incluaient la décolonisation du territoire.

Les positions que les Etats membres de la Ligue Arabe ont adoptées individuellement ont fluctué selon leurs convictions idéologiques, intérêts géostratégiques et alliances politiques entre le soutien à la cause Sahraouie et l'intégration du Sahara Occidental.

Les attitudes de la Ligue Arabe à l'égard du conflit du Sahara Occidental évolueront d'accord avec les mutations en train de se dérouler au niveau de la dynamique interne des États qui la composent. Plus les sociétés arabes accompliront des avancées démocratiques, plus la Ligue Arabe sera amenée à respecter la légalité internationale et à promouvoir les droits des peuples.

**Mots-clés:** Ligue des États Arabes, Conflit du Sahara Occidental, Décolonisation.

جامعة الدول العربية والنزاع حول الصحراء الغربية: سياسات اللامبالاة  
بلقاسم إراتني

أولت جامعة الدول العربية القليل من الاهتمام لقضية الصحراء الغربية وذلك راجع إلى محاولة هذه الهيئة الحفاظ على التضامن بين الدول الأعضاء فيها وتجنب تجزئة العالم العربي. لم تعترف هذه الهيئة بحق الشعب الصحراوي في تقرير مصيره وقدمت دعماً قوياً لخطة الحكم الذاتي التي حاولت المملكة المغربية تطبيقها في أجزاء من الصحراء الغربية التي خضعت لسيطرتها بعد فشل إسبانيا في إكمال تصفية الاستعمار في الصحراء الغربية. اتسمت مواقف الدول الأعضاء في جامعة الدول العربية بين دعم القضية الصحراوية ومسانداتها لنهج الصحراء الغربية في المغرب، وذلك وفقاً لمعتقداتهم الإيديولوجية ومصالحهم الجيو-استراتيجية والتحالفات السياسية. إن تطور موقف جامعة الدول العربية تجاه نزاع الصحراء الغربية يتوقف أساساً على التغيرات التي تحدث في المنظومة السياسية لدول الأعضاء، حيث كلما حققت المجتمعات العربية قسطاً في عملية التحول الديمقراطي، كلما توجهت جامعة الدول العربية نحو احترام الشريعة الدولية وتعزيز حقوق الشعوب في العالم العربي.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** جامعة الدول العربية، نزاع الصحراء الغربية، إنهاء الاستعمار، أفريقيا.

## A posição da África do Sul sobre a questão do Sahara Ocidental e o direito à autodeterminação: uma análise afro-decolonial

Siphamandla Zondi

Numa carta de 2004 ao rei e ao governo do Marrocos, o segundo presidente democraticamente eleito da África do Sul, Thabo Mbeki, anunciou a decisão de reconhecer plenamente a República saharauí como estado, embora o processo das Nações Unidas para um final negociado para o desacordo entre Marrocos e o povo saharauí não esteja concluído. A carta sugeria que a esperança por uma solução negociada fôra frustrada. A África do Sul manteve as suas posições, alinhando-as com a posição oficial da UA, para decepção de Marrocos. Este artigo emprega uma lente de análise afro-descolonial para analisar criticamente

essa posição política, afetada pelo crescimento agressivo da influência marroquina numa África multilateral.

**Palavras-chave:** Saara Ocidental, África do Sul, Autodeterminação, Nações Unidas.

## South Africa's Position on the Western Sahara and the Right of Self-determination: An Afro-decolonial analysis

In a 2004 letter to the King and Government of Morocco, South Africa's second democratically-elected president, Thabo Mbeki, announced the decision to fully recognize the Saharawi Republic as a state though the United Nations process of facilitating a negotiated end to disagreement between Morocco and Saharawi people represented by the Polisario Front had not concluded. The letter suggested that the hope for a negotiated solution had been dashed. South Africa has maintained this position, aligning with the AU official position to Morocco's chagrin. This paper employs an Afro-decolonial lens of analysis to critically analyze this policy position and how this is impacted upon by the aggressive growth of Moroccan influence in multilateral Africa.

**Keywords:** Western Sahara, South Africa, Self-determination, United Nations.

## La politique sud-africaine face au Sahara Occidental et le droit à l'auto-détermination: une analyse afro-décoloniale

Dans sa lettre de 2004 adressée au roi du Maroc, le deuxième président démocratiquement élu de l'Afrique du Sud, Thabo Mbeki, annonçait sa décision de reconnaître la République sahraouie en tant qu'État, quoique que le processus des négociations entre le Maroc et le Front Polisario n'était pas conclu. La lettre rendait compte de la déception sud-africaine face à l'évanouissement d'une solution accordée. L'Afrique du Sud maintenait sa position alignée par celle de l'UA malgré le chagrin marocain. Cet article analyse d'une manière critique l'impact des politiques agressives du Maroc dans le multilatéralisme africain.

**Mots-clés:** Sahara Occidental, Afrique du Sud, auto-détermination, Nations Unies.

موقف جنوب أفريقيا من الصحراء الغربية وحق تقرير المصير: تحليل بمنظور إفريقي لإنهاء الاستعمار

سيفاماندلا زوندي

في رسالة عام 2004 إلى ملك وحكومة المغرب، أعلن ثابو مبيكي، رئيس جنوب إفريقيا الثاني المنتخب ديمقراطياً، قرار الاعتراف الكامل بالجمهورية الصحراوية كدولة على الرغم من أن عملية الأمم المتحدة لتسهيل إنهاء الخلاف عن طريق التفاوض بين المغرب والصحراويون الذين تمثلهم جبهة البوليساريو لم تنته بعد. تشير الرسالة إلى أن الأمل في حل تفاوضي قد تبديد. حافظت جنوب إفريقيا على هذا الموقف، متماشية مع الموقف الرسمي للاتحاد الإفريقي مع غضب المغرب. يقدم هذا البحث تحليل بنظرة أفريقية لموقف جنوب إفريقيا السياسي بشكل نقدي وكيف يتأثر ذلك بالنمو القوي للنفوذ المغربي في إفريقيا المتعددة الأطراف.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصحراء الغربية، جنوب إفريقيا، تقرير المصير، الأمم المتحدة.

### A política de não ingerência da China em relação ao conflito do Sahara Ocidental

Wu Wanjun e Pedro Sobral

O presente artigo procura servir de resumo das políticas chinesas face ao ainda ativo conflito no Sahara Ocidental, assim como das interações da China com os dois atores principais do conflito, Marrocos e Argélia. Enquanto presença crescente no continente africano, a China mantém uma postura neutra e pragmática face ao conflito no Sahara Ocidental, que não afeta as suas relações cada vez mais próximas com estes dois países do norte de África, assim como os seus interesses na região. Tal neutralidade encontra-se em concordância com os “Cinco Princípios de Coexistência Pacífica” da China, assim como com a sua política de não-intervenção. A China também aprova a postura de Marrocos relativamente à questão de Taiwan. No presente artigo, iremos analisar o porquê da manutenção desta política de não-intervenção da China neste e em outros conflitos regionais. Veremos também outras formas através das quais a China se envolve no conflito, nomeadamente através de instituições internacionais e missões de manutenção de paz.

**Palavras-chave:** China, Marrocos, Argélia, Sahara Ocidental.

### China's non-interference Policy towards Western Sahara Conflict

This article intends to present an overview of the Chinese stance and policies towards the still ongoing conflict in the Western Sahara region, as well as of its interaction with the players in the said conflict, Morocco and Algeria. A growing presence in the African continent, China has maintained a pragmatic neutrality towards the Western Sahara conflict, which is in line with China's longstanding “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence” and non-interference policy. China also shares common ground with Morocco on its position towards the Taiwan issue. China's neutrality towards the Western Sahara issue does not affect its ever-closer diplomatic and economic relations with the two Northern African countries and serves to protect its vested interests in the region. In this article, we will analyze more closely why China maintains a non-interference policy in this and in other regional issues, as well how China has nevertheless become involved in the conflict, namely through international institutions and peacekeeping missions.

**Keywords:** China, Morocco, Algeria, Western Sahara.

### La politique de non ingérence de la Chine par rapport au conflit du Sahara Occidental

Le présent article cherche à faire une sorte de résumé concernant les politiques chinoises face au toujours actif conflit au Sahara Occidental tout aussi bien qu'aux interactions de la Chine avec les deux protagonistes du conflit, le Maroc et l'Algérie. En tant que présence croissante au continent africain, la Chine adopte une position neutre et pragmatique face au conflit au Sahara Occidental qui n'atteint ni ses rapports, chaque fois plus proches avec ces deux pays du nord de l'Afrique, ni ses intérêts dans la région. Une telle neutralité se trouve en accord soit avec “Les Cinq Principes de Coexistence Pacifique” de la Chine soit avec sa politique de non intervention. La Chine approuve aussi la position du Maroc face à la question de Taiwan. Dans cet article on analyse les raisons du maintien de cette politique de non intervention de la Chine au sujet de ce conflit et d'autres conflits régionaux. On verra aussi d'autres formes au moyen desquelles la Chine se mêle au conflit, notamment par l'entremise d'institutions internationales et des missions de manutention de la paix.

**Mots-clés:** La Chine, le Maroc, l'Algérie, Sahara Occidental.

### سياسة الصين لعدم التدخل في نزاع الصحراء الغربية وو الجون و بيدرو سوبرال

يهدف هذا المقال إلى تقديم نظرة عامة على الموقف والسياسات الصينية تجاه الصراع المستمر في منطقة الصحراء الغربية، وكذلك تفاعلها مع اللاعبين في الصراع المذكور، أي المغرب والجزائر. مع تزايد وجودها في القارة الأفريقية، حافظت الصين على حيادها العلني تجاه نزاع الصحراء الغربية، وهو ما يتماشى مع سياستها "المبادئ الخمسة للعلاقات السلمية" و"عدم التدخل". تتقاسم الصين أرضية مشتركة مع المغرب حول موقفها من قضية تايوان. ومع ذلك، فإن حياد الصين تجاه قضية الصحراء الغربية لا يؤثر على علاقاتها الدبلوماسية والاقتصادية الأوثق مع البلدين الشمال إفريقيايي، ولكنه يعمل على حماية مصالحها الخاصة في المنطقة. في هذا المقال، سوف نحلل بشكل أوثق أسباب محافظة الصين على سياسة عدم التدخل في هذا الصراع وفي القضايا الإقليمية الأخرى، وكذلك الطرق التي أصبحت من خلالها الصين منخرطة في الصراع، أي من خلال المؤسسات الدولية وبعثات حفظ السلام.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصين، المغرب، الجزائر، الصحراء الغربية.

## O exercício de equilíbrio da China no conflito do Sahara Ocidental

Hang Zhou

Apesar do crescente interesse da China na paz e segurança em África, o seu papel no conflito do Sahara Ocidental é de distanciamento e algum desprendimento, estando estritamente confinado à sua participação nos debates do Conselho de Segurança das Nações Unidas e da MINURSO. Esta atitude deve-se em parte à limitada presença de interesses da China nesta região. Na ausência de uma escalada significativa do conflito, o *statu quo* no Sahara Ocidental permite a Pequim prosseguir na sua cooperação económica tanto com a Argélia como com Marrocos. Sobretudo sob um prisma de *realpolitik*, Pequim não encara a atual não resolução do conflito como colocando riscos significativos à sua economia, interesses geopolíticos e de segurança na região mais ampla do noroeste africano, tornando assim improváveis quaisquer mudanças significativas na posição de Pequim em relação ao Sahara Ocidental num futuro imediato.

**Palavras-chave:** China, Sahara Ocidental, MINURSO, política externa e de segurança.

## China's Balancing Act in the Western Sahara Conflict

Despite China's growing interests in African peace and security, its role in the Western Sahara conflict remains detached, distanced, and largely confined to its participation in UNSC debates and MINURSO. This is partly explained by the limited China's overseas interests in Western Sahara.

In the absence of significant conflict escalation, the status quo in Western Sahara allows Beijing's continued pursuit of economic cooperation with both Algeria and Morocco. Primarily through a *realpolitik* lens, Beijing does not see the current conflict irresolution posing significant risks to its economic, geopolitical and security interests in the wider North-western African region. Therefore any significant changes in Beijing's position on West Sahara remains unlikely in the near future.

**Keywords:** China, Western Sahara, MINURSO, foreign and security policy.

## L'Exercice d'Équilibre de la Chine dans le conflit du Sahara Occidental

Malgré l'intérêt grandissant de la part de la Chine dans la paix et la sécurité en Afrique son rôle dans le conflit au Sahara Occidental est celui de la distance et d'un certain détachement, strictement confiné à sa participation aux débats du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies et de la MINURSO. Cette attitude est due, en grande partie, à la présence assez modeste des intérêts de la Chine dans cette région-ci. Dans l'absence d'une montée nette du conflit, le statu quo au Sahara Occidental permet à Pékin de poursuivre dans sa coopération économique soit avec l'Algérie soit avec le Maroc. D'après une optique de *realpolitik*, Pékin n'envisage pas la présente non résolution du conflit comme posant des risques significatifs pour son économie, ses intérêts géopolitiques et de sécurité dans la région la plus large du nord-ouest africain, ce qui rend improbables toutes sortes de changements importants par rapport à la position de Pékin face au Sahara Occidental dans un avenir immédiat.

**Mots-clés:** La Chine, le Sahara Occidental, MINURSO, politique extérieure et de sécurité.

الصين وعملية موازنة المواقف في قضية الصحراء الغربية  
هانغ زهو

على الرغم من المصالح المتنامية للصين في السلام والأمن الإفريقيين، فإنها ما زالت تتأني بنفسها عن لعب أي دور في نزاع الصحراء الغربية، حيث قصرت دورها إلى حد كبير على المشاركة في مناقشات مجلس الأمن وبعثة الأمم المتحدة للاستفتاء في الصحراء الغربية، ويرجع ذلك جزئياً إلى الوجود المحدود لمصالح الصين الخارجية في الصحراء الغربية. في ظل عدم وجود تصعيد كبير للنزاع، فإن الوضع الراهن في الصحراء الغربية يسمح باستمرار التعاون الاقتصادي مع كل من الجزائر والمغرب. في المقام الأول من خلال الواقعية السياسية، حيث لا ترى بكين أن حل النزاع الحالي يشكل مخاطر كبيرة على مصالحها الاقتصادية، الجيوسياسية والأمنية في منطقة شمال غرب إفريقيا ككل، وبالتالي فإن أي تغييرات مهمة في موقف بكين من الصحراء الغربية تبقى غير مرجحة في المستقبل القريب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصين، الصحراء الغربية، بعثة الأمم المتحدة للاستفتاء في الصحراء الغربية، السياسة الخارجية والأمنية.



## As dinâmicas da política externa da Turquia face ao continente africano e a sua postura em relação ao Saara Ocidental

Abdurrahim Sıradag

Este estudo analisa os fatores e as dinâmicas que moldam a política externa da Turquia no continente africano. O artigo salienta o facto de que há cinco fatores importantes: o primeiro refere-se ao legado histórico otomano ter preparado o terreno para o fortalecimento das relações com o continente; o segundo, de as dinâmicas internas turcas em mutação se constituírem como uma força motriz para o envolvimento no continente africano; o terceiro, de após 2011 ter emergido, na região do Médio Oriente e Norte de África (MENA), uma nova relação de forças que pressionou a Turquia na busca de novos aliados económicos e políticos em África. Finalmente o último representa o impacto da globalização. Devido a este processo, as ONGs, *thinktanks* e associações económicas turcas transformaram-se em intervenientes mais ativos na determinação da sua política externa em África. Este estudo clarifica ainda a abordagem da política externa turca no que se refere ao conflito do Saara Ocidental. A forte relação económica e política do país com Marrocos limitou o envolvimento ativo da Turquia no conflito. Para além disso, o facto de haver de muitos atores envolvidos nesta contenda tem vindo a enfraquecer a intervenção turca naquele conflito.

**Palavras-chave:** Turquia, África, política externa, conflito do Saara Ocidental.

### The dynamics shaping Turkish Foreign Policy African and Turkey's Approach towards the Western Sahara Conflict

This research examines the factors and the dynamics that shape Turkish Foreign Policy (TFP) towards Africa. The study highlights the five important factors affecting TFP in Africa. The first factor is that Turkey's historical legacy has paved the way for strengthening relations with Africa. The second factor is that the changing domestic dynamics in Turkey have been significant driving

forces to engage with the African continent. The third dynamic is a new geopolitical balance of power emerged in the region of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) after 2011 that forced Turkey to look for new economic and political allies in Africa. The last factor is the impact of globalization. Due to the process of globalization, Turkish NGOs, think tanks, and economic associations have become more active players in shaping TFP towards Africa.

This research also explains Turkish foreign policy approach towards the Western Sahara conflict. Turkey's strong economic and political relations with Morocco has limited Turkey's active involvement towards the Western Sahara conflict. Furthermore, the many actors' involvement in the conflict undermines Turkey's engagement in the Western Sahara.

**Keywords:** Turkey, Africa, Turkish foreign policy, Western Sahara conflict.

### Les lignes de force de la politique étrangère Turque à l'égard de l'Afrique et son approche dans le conflit du Sahara Occidental

Ce travail examine les facteurs et les lignes de force qui déterminent la politique extérieure Turque face à l'Afrique. Le legs ottoman est le premier facteur puisqu'il a permis un renforcement des liaisons avec l'Afrique. Le second, c'est l'ensemble de bouleversements de la politique interne Turque. Le troisième c'est le changement dans la corrélation de forces au Moyen Orient et en Afrique du Nord depuis 2011, ce qui a poussé la Turquie à chercher de nouvelles alliances politiques et économiques. Enfin, il y'a aussi la globalisation dont un des effets est l'émergence des ONG, *think tanks* et associations économiques Turques comme véhicules de la politique de la Turquie en Afrique.

La recherche explique aussi la politique turque face au conflit du Sahara Occidental. Les forts rapports turques et la pluralité des acteurs avec le Maroc ont conditionné sa politique dans le conflit Saharien.

**Mots-clés:** Turquie, Afrique, Politique étrangère Turque, conflit du Sahara Occidental.

ديناميات تشكيل السياسة الخارجية التركية تجاه إفريقيا ونهج تركيا تجاه نزاع الصحراء الغربية  
عبد الرحيم سيردادك

يتناول هذا البحث العوامل والديناميات التي تشكل السياسة الخارجية التركية تجاه إفريقيا. وتبرز الدراسة الحالية أن هناك خمسة عوامل مهمة تؤثر على السياسة الخارجية التركية في إفريقيا. العامل الأول هو أن إرث تركيا التاريخي قد مهد الطريق لتعزيز العلاقات مع إفريقيا. العامل الثاني هو الديناميات المحلية المتغيرة في تركيا كانت قوة دافعة هامة للتخراط مع القارة الأفريقية. الدينامية الثالثة هي توازن القوى الجغرافي السياسي الجديد الذي ظهر في منطقة الشرق الأوسط وشمال إفريقيا في عام 2011، والذي أجبر تركيا على البحث عن حلفاء اقتصاديين وسياسيين جدد في إفريقيا. العامل الأخير هو تأثير العولمة. نظراً لعملية العولمة، أصبحت المنظمات غير الحكومية التركية ومراكز البحوث والجمعيات الاقتصادية أطرافاً أكثر فاعلية في تشكيل السياسة الخارجية التركية تجاه إفريقيا.

كما يتناول هذا البحث أيضاً نهج السياسة الخارجية التركية تجاه نزاع الصحراء الغربية. لقد أدت علاقات تركيا الاقتصادية والسياسية القوية مع المغرب إلى التقليل من مشاركة تركيا النشطة في نزاع الصحراء الغربية. علاوة على ذلك، فإن مشاركة العديد من الجهات الفاعلة في الصراع تفضي مشاركة تركيا في الصحراء الغربية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تركيا، إفريقيا، السياسة الخارجية التركية، الصراع في الصحراء الغربية.

## O México e os limites da política estrangeira dos grandes princípios através do caso da RASD

Mohamed Badine El Yattoui

A questão do Sahara espanhol tem dividido a comunidade internacional ao longo de mais de quatro décadas. Marrocos considera-o parte do seu território, em nome dos direitos históricos. Por sua vez, a Polisário pretende administrá-lo, invocando o direito à autodeterminação dos povos. O México fez a sua opção em 1979, ao reconhecer a RASD, emanação da Polisário, em nome do mesmo princípio da autodeterminação. Neste artigo procuramos compreender as razões históricas e ideológicas que pressionaram o México a fazer esta opção e que o compelem a mantê-la mesmo tendo o seu papel internacional e a sua ideologia dominante mudado ao longo dos últimos trinta anos.

**Palavras-chave:** autodeterminação, não-intervenção, doutrina Estrada, política estrangeira.

## Mexico and the limits of the foreign policy of the great principles through the case of the SADR

The question of the former Spanish Sahara has divided the international community for more than four decades. Morocco, in the name of historical rights, considers it a part of its territory. The

Polisario, in the name of the self-determination of peoples, wishes to administer it. Mexico chose its side in 1979 by recognizing the SADR, an emanation of the Polisario, in the name of this same principle of self-determination. Through this article, we want to understand the historical and ideological reasons that push Mexico to this choice and force it to maintain it while its international role and its dominant ideology have changed for more than thirty years.

**Keywords:** self-determination, non-intervention, Estrada doctrine, foreign policy.

## Le Mexique et les limites de la politique étrangère des grands principes à travers le cas de la RASD

La question de l'ex Sahara espagnol divise la communauté internationale depuis plus de quatre décennies. Le Maroc, au nom des droits historiques, le considère comme une partie de son territoire. Le Polisario, au nom de l'autodétermination des peuples, souhaite l'administrer. Le Mexique a choisi son camp en 1979 en reconnaissant la RASD, émanation du Polisario, au nom de ce même principe d'autodétermination. A travers cet article nous souhaitons comprendre les raisons historiques et idéologiques qui ont poussé le Mexique à ce choix et qui le contraignent à la maintenir alors que son rôle international et son idéologie dominante ont changé depuis plus de trente ans.

**Mots-clés:** autodétermination, non-intervention, doctrine Estrada, politique étrangère.

المكسيك وسياسة المبادئ الرئيسية الخارجية من خلال قضية الجمهورية الصحراوية  
محمد بادين البطوي

أدت قضية الصحراء الإسبانية سابقاً إلى تقسيم المجتمع الدولي لأكثر من أربعة عقود. المغرب، باسم الحقوق التاريخية، يعتبرها جزءاً من أرضه. أما البوليساريو، فبإسم تقرير مصير الشعوب، ترغب في إدارتها. اختارت المكسيك جانبها في عام 1979 من خلال الاعتراف بالجمهورية الصحراوية. المنتقة عن البوليساريو، باسم نفس مبدأ تقرير المصير. من خلال هذا المقال نريد أن نفهم الأسباب التاريخية والأيدولوجية التي دفعت المكسيك إلى هذا الاختيار وإجبارها على الحفاظ عليه بينما تغير دورها الدولي وأيدولوجيتها المهيمنة لأكثر من ثلاثين عاماً.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تقرير المصير، عدم التدخل، مبدأ إسترداد، السياسة الخارجية.

## Portugal e o conflito do Saara Ocidental – contributo para o estudo da 1.ª década

Maciel Santos

A descolonização do Saara ocidental surgiu em plena recessão mundial e no quadro de um novo reposicionamento imperialista, especialmente quanto ao petróleo do Médio Oriente. Apesar da internacionalização do conflito, entre 1976-80 a Frente Polisário conseguiu vantagens no terreno militar, que depois não conseguiu manter graças ao apoio ocidental (militar e diplomático) a Marrocos. Mas com o desfazimento que geralmente ocorre entre guerra e diplomacia, a RASD melhorou o seu estatuto internacional entre as cimeiras OUA de Nairobi (1981) e de Adis-Abeba (1983). A diplomacia portuguesa, que acompanhava a política externa africana com regularidade, adaptou os seus interesses em Marrocos à nova conjuntura, na qual o tempo corria agora favoravelmente para Rabat.

**Palavras-chave:** O.U.A., Marrocos, Frente Polisário, Portugal.

## Portugal and the Western Sahara Conflict – a contribution for the study of the 1<sup>st</sup> decade

The Western Sahara decolonisation started amidst a world recession and under a new imperialist framework, mainly as regards the Middle East oil. In spite of the internationalisation of the conflict, the Polisario Front managed during the years 1976-80 to get the upper hand in the military field but was starting to lose it due to the Western support given to the Moroccan government. However, the SADR could still benefit from the time gap between war and diplomacy: her international recognition improved between the OAU summits of Nairobi (1981) and Adis-Abeba (1983). Portuguese diplomacy, used to watch carefully African foreign policies, fit in its own interests in Morocco accordingly to the on-going international trends.

**Keywords:** OAU, Morocco, Polisario Front, Portugal.

## Le Portugal et le conflit du Sahara Occidental – une contribution à l'étude de la 1<sup>ère</sup> décennie

La décolonisation du Sahara Occidental a commencé en pleine récession mondiale et dans le cadre

d'un repositionnement impérialiste sur le pétrole du Moyen Orient. Malgré l'internationalisation du conflit, le Front Polisario a réussi à obtenir des victoires militaires dans les années 1976-80 mais pas à les maintenir à cause de l'aide occidentale reçue par le Maroc. Le décalage entre guerre et diplomatie a néanmoins permis à la RASD d'améliorer son statut international entre les sommets OUA de Nairobi (1981) et Adis-Abeba (1983). La diplomatie portugaise, d'habitude bien renseignée sur la politique africaine, a conduit ses intérêts marocains face à ces changements et à l'impasse que favorisait maintenant le Maroc.

**Mots-clés:** O.U.A., Maroc, Front Polisario, Portugal.

البرتغال والصراع في الصحراء الغربية - مساهمة في دراسة الطيرية الأولى من النزاع  
ماسييل سانتوس

بدأت عملية إنهاء الاستعمار في الصحراء الغربية وسطر كود عالمي وإطار إمبريالي جديد ، لا سيما فيما يتعلق بفضيحة البترول في الشرق الأوسط على الرغم من تدويل النزاع ، تمكنت جبهة البوليساريو خلال الأعوام 1976-1980 من التفوق عسكرياً ، على الرغم من خسارتها بعد فترة قصيرة بسبب الدعم الخارجي الذي تلقتة الحكومة المغربية. ومع ذلك ، كان بإمكان الصحراويين الاستفادة من فترة ما بين الحرب والديبلوماسية والاعتراف الدولي بالجمهورية العربية الصحراوية بين القمتين الأفريقيتين في نيروبي (1981) وأديس أبابا (1983). إن الديبلوماسية البرتغالية، التي اعتادت على مراقبة السياسات الخارجية الأفريقية، توائم سياساتها الخاصة بالمغرب مع هذا النمط.

الكلمات المفتاحية: منظمة الوحدة الأفريقية، المغرب، جبهة البوليساريو، البرتغال.

## O longo sequestro de pescadores portugueses em 1980 – Lisboa negocia de má-fé e engana a Frente Polisário

Jorge Ribeiro

Em pleno Oceano Atlântico a Frente Polisário desencadeou um assalto a um barco de pesca portugueses, capturando toda a sua tripulação. Os pescadores foram trazidos para terra e colocados numa base militar no deserto. Os guerrilheiros chamavam assim a atenção do mundo para a República Árabe Sarauí Democrática – RASD, recém-criada. Ao mesmo tempo, pressionavam o país de origem dos sequestrados, Portugal, a declarar apoio à independência do povo sarauí, reconhecendo a Frente e condenando a ocupação militar do país por Marrocos.

**Palavras-chave:** Polisário, RASD, guerrilha (sarauí), ocupação (por Marrocos).

## The long kidnapping of Portuguese fishermen in 1980 – Lisbon deals dishonestly and deceits the Polisario Front

In the middle of the Atlantic Ocean the Polisario Front unleashed an assault on a Portuguese fishing boat, capturing all its crew. The fishermen were brought ashore and placed on a military base in the desert. The guerrillas thus drew the world's attention to the newly created Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic – RASD. At the same time, they pressed the country of origin of the abductees, Portugal, to declare support for the independence of the Sahrawi people, recognizing the Front and condemning the military occupation of the country by Morocco.

**Keywords:** Polisario, SADR / RASD, guerrilla (sahrawi), occupation (by Morocco).

## La Longue Sèquestration des Pêcheurs Portugais en 1980 – Lisbonne négocie de mauvaise foi et trompe le Front Polisario

Le Front Polisario a déclenché, en plein Atlantique, un assaut à un bateau de pêche portugais, ayant capturé toute l'équipage. Les pêcheurs ont été conduits sur terre et mis dans une base militaire en plein désert. Les membres du groupe guérillero attireraient de cette façon l'attention du monde vers la nouvelle créée République Arabe Démocratique de Sahraoui – RADS. En même temps, ils faisaient de la pression sur le pays d'origine des enlevés, le Portugal, pour que celui-ci déclare son appui à l'indépendance du peuple sahraoui, tout en reconnaissant le Front et en condamnant l'occupation militaire du pays par le Maroc.

**Mots-clés:** Polisario, RADS, guérilla (sahraouie), occupation (par le Maroc).

الاختطاف والاحتجاز طويل المدى للصيادين البرتغاليين عام 1980  
جورج ريبيرو

في عرض المحيط الأطلسي، أطلقت جبهة البوليساريو هجوماً على قارب صيد برتغالي، واحتجزت جميع أفراد طاقمه. تم جلب الصيادين إلى الشاطئ ووضعهم في قاعدة عسكرية في الصحراء. لفت الملبثيات انتباه العالم إلى الجمهورية العربية الصحراوية الديمقراطية التي تم إنشاؤها حديثاً. في الوقت نفسه، ضغطوا على البلد الأصلي للصيادين المختطفين، البرتغال، للإعلان عن دعمهم لاستقلال الشعب الصحراوي، والاعتراف بالجيبة وإدانة الاحتلال العسكري للبلاد من قبل المغرب.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** البوليساريو، الجمهورية العربية الصحراوية، حرب العصابات (الصحراوية)، الاحتلال (من قبل المغرب).

## O dia-a-dia da Polisário há 40 anos pelo primeiro repórter português na RASD

**Luís Alberto Ferreira**

Quando a Frente Polisário surge no espaço mediático internacional, Luís Alberto Ferreira já se encontra na fronteira da Argélia. O seu avanço decidido no deserto mostrou-nos, pela primeira vez, o pulsar de uma nova nação. Ora esquadrihando o Saara, seguindo caminhos da guerrilha, conferindo as suas estratégias. Ou descobrindo escolas, com crianças dentro. E conversando com o povo sarauí e o seu líder. A *Africana Studia* evoca esse trabalho no interior da RASD, publicando um trabalho jornalístico sobre uma das páginas marcantes da História de África.

**Palavras-chave:** Saara, Polisário, RASD, guerrilha (sarauí).

## Polisario's daily life 40 years ago by the first Portuguese reporter in RASD

When the Polisario Front emerges in the international media space, Luís Alberto Ferreira is already on the border of Algeria. His determined advance in the desert showed us, for the first time, the pulse of a new nation. Searching the Sahara, following the paths of the guerrilla, checking their strategies. Or discovering schools, with children inside. And talking to the Sahrawi people and their leader. *Africana Studia* evokes this work within RASD by publishing a journalistic work on one of the landmark pages of the History of Africa.

**Keywords:** Sahara, Polisario, SADR / RASD, guerrilla (sahrawi).

## Le Quotidien du Front Polisario il y a 40 ans d'après le premier journaliste portugais à la RADS

Au moment où le Front Polisario surgit dans la scène médiatique internationale, Luís Alberto Ferreira se trouve déjà à la frontière de l'Algérie. Son avancé hardie dans le désert nous a montré, pour la première fois, le pouls d'une nation nouvelle. Soit en scrutant le Sahara, à la poursuite des chemins de la guérilla tout en conférant ses stratégies, soit en découvrant des écoles abritant des enfants, ou bien en parlant avec le peuple sahraoui et avec son leader. La revue *Africana Studia* évoque ce travail à l'intérieur de la RADS en publiant une pièce

journalistique concernant une des pages remarquables de l'Histoire de l'Afrique.

**Mots-clés:** Sahara, Polisario, RADS, guérilla (sahraoui).

حياة البوليساريو اليومية قبل 40 عامًا بقلم أول مراسل برتغالي في الجمهورية العربية

الصحراوية

لؤيس البرتو فيريرا

عندما تبرز جبهة البوليساريو في الفضاء الإعلامي الدولي، فإن لؤيس البرتو فيريرا موجود بالفعل على الحدود الجزائرية. تقدمه الثابت في الصحراء أظهر لنا، لأول مرة، نبض أمة جديدة. البحث في الصحراء، والتباح مسارات حرب العصابات، والتحقق من استراتيجياتها. أو اكتشاف المدارس، مع الأطفال في الداخل، والتحدث إلى الصحراويين وقائدهم. تقدم المجلة الأكاديمية أفريكانا ستوديا بكل هذا داخل أراضي الجمهورية العربية الصحراوية، من خلال نشر عمل صحفي على إحدى الصفحات التاريخية من تاريخ إفريقيا.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الصحراء، البوليساريو، الجمهورية العربية الصحراوية، حرب العصابات (الصحراوية).

## Sahara Ocidental, entre a ambiguidade internacional e o idealismo angolano

Issau Agostinho

O conflito em curso entre o Reino de Marrocos e a Frente Popular de Libertação de Saguia el Hamra e Rio d'Oro – vulgarmente designado por Frente Polisário – pode ser considerado como a última fronteira do colonialismo em uma região africana, ocupada não por um país europeu mas por um outro estado africano: Marrocos. Na sequência da Resolução 34/37 da ONU, adoptada em 21 de Novembro de 1979, que reconhece a Frente Polisário como legítimo representante do povo saharauí, a mesma apelou também ao Marrocos para pôr fim a sua ocupação, incluindo a região abandonada pela Mauritânia através do Acordo de Argel de 1979, que assinou com a Polisário. A condenação internacional da ocupação marroquina do Sahara Ocidental foi sempre particularmente forte em África, resultando no seu auto-afastamento como membro da Organização de Unidade Africana em 1984. A posição da República de Angola sobre esta questão é muito clara: ela tem sido em conformidade com as Resoluções da ONU e da UA, sendo um dos mais fortes apoiantes da Polisário entre os países africanos e mantendo laços diplomáticos com a RASD – proclamada pela Polisário – que tem a sua própria embaixada em Luanda. No entanto, com a alternância do governo em Angola, estaremos a assistir a uma mudança de posição de Luanda

em relação à Frente Polisário para favorecer uma aproximação com Marrocos, que se juntou à União Africana em 2017?

**Palavras-chave:** Marrocos, Polisário, União Africana, Angola.

## Western Sahara, between international ambiguity and Angolan idealism

The ongoing conflict between the Moroccan Kingdom and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el Hamra and Rio d'Oro – commonly referred to as Front Polisario – is the last frontier of colonialism in an African region, occupied not by a European country but rather by another African state: Morocco. In the wake of 34/37 UN Resolution, adopted on 21 November 1979, which recognizes the Front Polisario as the legitimate representative of the Sahrawi people, Morocco is called upon to end its occupation, including the region abandoned by Mauritania after the 1979 Algiers Agreement. The international condemnation of Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara has always been particularly strong in Africa and resulted in its departure from the African Union Organization membership in 1984. The Republic of Angola's position over this issue is very clear: it has been accordingly consistent with the UN and AU resolutions, being one of the strongest supporters of Polisario among the African countries and maintaining diplomatic ties with the SADR, which has its own embassy in Luanda. However, with the ongoing changes in the Angolan government, will we be witnessing a major shift in Luanda's standings towards Front Polisario to favor a rapprochement with Morocco, which has meanwhile rejoined the AU in 2017?

**Keywords:** Morocco, Polisario, African Union, Angola.

## Sahara occidental, entre l'ambiguïté internationale et l'idéalisme angolais

Le conflit en cours entre le Royaume du Maroc et le Front Populaire de Libération de la Saguia el Hamra et du Rio de Oro – communément appelé le Front Polisario – peut être considéré comme la dernière frontière du colonialisme et de l'occupation contestée d'une région africaine, non pas par un pays européen, mais par un autre État africain: le Maroc. À la suite de la résolution 34/37, adoptée le 21 novembre 1979, reconnaissant le Front Polisario comme légitime représentant du peuple sahraoui, les Nations Unies ont demandé



au Maroc de cesser son occupation y compris celle de la région abandonnée par la Mauritanie à travers l'accord d'Alger de 1979. La condamnation internationale de l'occupation du Sahara occidental par le gouvernement de Rabat a toujours été particulièrement forte en Afrique, conduisant le Maroc à sortir de l'Organisation de l'Unité Africaine en 1984. La position de la République d'Angola sur cette question est très claire: elle s'aligne sur les résolutions de l'ONU et de l'UA, soutenant le Polisario (un des plus actifs parmi les pays africains) et maintenant des relations diplomatiques avec la RASD qui a sa propre ambassade à Luanda. Cependant, avec l'alternance dans le gouvernement à Luanda, verrons-nous un changement de position de l'Angola par rapport au Front Polisario afin de favoriser un rapprochement avec le Maroc, qui a rejoint l'Union Africaine en 2017?

**Mots-clés:** Maroc, Polisário, Union Africaine, Angola.

الصحراء الغربية ، بين الغموض الدولي والمثالية الأنغولية  
عيسوا أغسطسينو

يختبر الصراع المستمر بين المملكة المغربية والجهة الشعبية لتحرير الساقية الحمراء وريو دورو - المعروف باسم جبهة البوليساريو - واحدا من أطول المعارك للسيطرة على الصحراء الغربية وشريعته، والتي يمكن اعتبارها آخر حدود الاستعمار والاحتلال المتنازع عليها لأرض أفريقية، لكن ليس من قبل دولة أوروبية، بل بلد أفريقي هو المغرب. في أعقاب قرار الأمم المتحدة 37/34 ، الذي تم تنبيهه في 21 نوفمبر / تشرين الثاني 1979 ، والذي يعترف بجبهة البوليساريو ممثلا لقونيا للشعب الصحراوي ، دعا المغرب أيضاً إلى إنهاء احتلاله ، بما في ذلك السيطرة على المنطقة التي تحتلها جبهة موريتانيا بعد اتفاق الجزائر سنة 1979 بين موريتانيا و جبهة البوليساريو. كانت الإدانة الدولية للاحتلال المغربي للصحراء الغربية قوية على السواء في أفريقيا ، مما أدى إلى خروجها من عضوية منظمة الاتحاد الأفريقي في عام 1984 . إن موقف جمهورية أنغولا بشأن هذه القضية واضح للغاية: فقد كان متسقاً مع الأمم المتحدة وقرارات الاتحاد الأفريقي ، كونها واحدة من أقوى المؤيدين لجهة البوليساريو في البلدان الأفريقية ، والحفاظ على العلاقات الدبلوماسية مع الجمهورية الصحراوية الديمقراطية ، التي لها سفارتها الخاصة في العاصمة الأنغولية لواندا. لكن ، مع التغيير في القيادة الحكومية في لواندا ، هل سنشهد تحولاً كبيراً في موقف أنغولا تجاه جبهة البوليساريو لمسالح التقارب مع المغرب الذي انضم إلى الاتحاد الأفريقي في عام 2017؟

الكلمات المفتاحية: المغرب، البوليساريو، الاتحاد الأفريقي، المثالية السياسية، أنغولا.

## À margem da margem: a retórica brasileira para não reconhecer a República Árabe Saaraui Democrática (RASD)

Renatho Costa e Rodrigo Duque Estrada

O Brasil é reconhecido internacionalmente pelo altruísmo de sua diplomacia e, devido a isso, o seu não reconhecimento do Saara Ocidental acaba gerando grande estranhamento. Nesse sentido, este artigo procura analisar quais seriam as intenções para o Brasil não reconhecer o Saara Ocidental, tendo em vista ser um nítido caso de descolonização, fundamentado no direito à autodeterminação dos povos. Para tanto, analisa documentos oficiais, pronunciamentos de políticos e diplomatas, além da atuação da Frente Polisário no país.

**Palavras-chave:** Saara Ocidental, diplomacia brasileira, autodeterminação, Frente Polisário.

## On the shores of the riverside: Brazilian rhetoric not to recognise the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR)

Brazil is internationally acknowledged for the altruism of its diplomacy. Therefore, the Brazilian standing of not recognizing Western Sahara's independence ends up generating a considerable weirdness. This paper seeks to analyse the intentions behind Brazil's position as it concerns clearly a decolonization case to decolonization grounded in the principle of self-determination. In this sense, it analyses official documents, politicians and diplomat's discourses and the Frente Polisario's actions in search of recognition.

**Keywords:** Western Sahara, Brazilian Diplomacy, Self-determination, Polisario Front.

## En Marge de la Marge: La Rhétorique Brésilienne pour ne pas reconnaître La République Démocratique Arabe Sahaoui (RDAS)

Le Brésil est reconnu au niveau international par l'altruisme de sa diplomatie et, par conséquent, la non reconnaissance du Sahara Occidental finit par provoquer un considérable étonnement. Le présent article cherche à faire l'analyse des raisons par lesquelles le Brésil ne reconnaît pas le Sahara

Occidental, puisqu'il s'agit d'un cas évident de décolonisation justifiée par le droit des peuples à l'autodétermination. Ainsi on y examine des documents officiels, des déclarations de politiciens et de diplomates et l'action du Front Polisario dans ce pays.

**Mots-clés:** Sahara Occidental, diplomatie brésilienne, Autodétermination, Front Polisario.

على هامش الهامش: الخطاب الرسمي البرازيلي لدعم الاعتراف بالجمهورية العربية الصحراوية

ريناتو كوستا و رودريغو دوكي إسترادا

البرازيل معروفة دولياً بدبلوماسيتها المتوازنة، وبالتالي فإن عدم الاعتراف باستقلال الصحراء الغربية يعتبر فطرية كبيرة. تسعى المقالة إلى تحليل النوايا وراء موقف البرازيل، لأنها تتعلق بوضوح بحالة إنهاء الاستعمار القائم على مبدأ تقرير المصير. تقوم هذه المقالة بالتحليل والتحصين في الوثائق الرسمية وخطابات السياسيين والدبلوماسيين، إلى جانب الإجراءات التي اتخذتها جبهة البوليساريو بحثاً عن الاعتراف الدولي.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الصحراء الغربية، الدبلوماسية البرازيلية، تقرير المصير، جبهة البوليساريو.

### Para Timor-Leste, a independência do Sahara Ocidental é fundamental

Dionísio Babo Soares

O ano de 1975 marcou dois territórios distantes entre si – Timor-Leste e o Sahara Ocidental, duas colónias da mesma Península (respectivamente, Portugal e Espanha) – e iniciou uma longa história similar com um segundo período colonial.

Decorridos 17 anos após a restauração da independência, Timor-Leste assume como uma das prioridades da sua política externa o apoio aos povos que lutam pela sua autodeterminação, entre os quais se destaca o do Sahara Ocidental. Neste contexto de solidariedade entre os povos, Timor-Leste apela à Organização das Nações Unidas (ONU) para transferir para a Missão de Paz estabelecida no território do Sahara Ocidental, as competências de assistência humanitária, proteção da população civil, e outras atividades relativas à garantia dos direitos universais.

**Palavras-chave:** Autodeterminação, referendo, Timor-Leste, Saara Ocidental.

### For East-Timor, the Western Sahara independence is a priority

During the year of 1975 a long and similar history of a second colonial period started for two distant

territories – Timor-Leste and Western Sahara, both colonies of the same Iberian Peninsula (respectively of Portugal and Spain).

17 years after the restoration of its independence, Timor-Leste assumes as main priority of its foreign policy the support for peoples fighting for their self-determination, namely the Western Saharawis. Under the principles of solidarity among peoples, Timor-Leste appeals to the United Nations (UN) to transfer competencies to the Peace Mission established in the territory of Western Sahara such as humanitarian assistance, protection of civil population and other activities related to the protection of universal rights.

**Keywords:** Self-determination, referendum, East-Timor, Western Sahara.

### Pour le Timor Oriental, la indépendence du Sahara Occidental est une priorité

Pendant l'année 1975 une longue et pareille histoire d'un deuxième période colonial a commencé pour deux territoires fort éloignés entre eux – le Timor Oriental et le Sahara Occidental, colonies de la même Péninsule Ibérique (respectivement du Portugal et l'Espagne).

17 années après l'Indépendence, le Timor Oriental prend comme priorité de sa politique étrangère le soutien aux peuples en lutte pour l'auto-détermination, notamment les Sahraouis. Dans le cadre des principes de solidarité, le Timor Oriental plaide aux Nations Unies pour le transfert à Mission de Paix établi au Sahara Occidental de compétences concernant l'assistance humanitaire, la protection de la population civil et de tout ce qui concerne l'assurance des droits universels.

**Mots-clés:** L'auto-détermination, referendum, Timor Oriental; Sahara Occidental.

بالنسبة لتيمور الشرقية، يمثل استقلال الصحراء الغربية أولوية ديونيزيو بابو سواريز

أثناء عام 1975، بدأ تاريخ طويل ومتشابه من فترة الاستعمار الثانية للأقاليم بعينين تيمور الشرقية والصحراء الغربية، و المفارقة أن كلا القوتين المستعمرتين من شبه الجزيرة الأيبيرية البرتغال وإسبانيا على التوالي. بعد 17 سنة من استعادة استقلالها، تولي تيمور الشرقية الأولوية في سياستها الخارجية لدعم الشعوب التي تقاوم من أجل تقرير المصير، وخاصة الشعب الصحراويين. بموجب مبادئ التضامن بين الشعوب، تتأشد تيمور الشرقية الأمم المتحدة نقل الصلاحيات إلى بعثة السلام المنشأة في إقليم الصحراء الغربية مثل المساعدة الإنسانية وحماية السكان المدنيين وغير ذلك من الأنشطة المتعلقة بحماية الحقوق الأساسية للشعب الصحراوي.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** تقرير المصير، الاستفتاء، تيمور الشرقية، الصحراء الغربية.

## Modernização e tradição no Sahara Ocidental, a Constituição saharauí

Claudia Barona Castañeda e Jorge Gamaliel Arenas Basurto

Os países do Médio Oriente e do Norte de África sofreram, como muitas outras antigas colónias, uma imposição do conceito ocidental de modernização que chocava com as suas tradições e que pôs em causa os seus aparelhos políticos. A experiência saharauí não é diferente. Embora apresente particularidades específicas no que diz respeito ao exílio, às carências humanitárias e à sua localização geográfica, este conflito entre tradição e modernidade é ainda mais evidente num estado que procura o reconhecimento internacional, tendo conduzido à criação abrupta de um sistema político.

Com o objetivo de analisar o desenvolvimento e a tentativa de constituição do Estado saharauí, partindo das suas cinco constituições e da constituição provisória de 1976, este artigo demonstra que o processo de modernização levado a cabo se revela uma tentativa infrutífera de se demarcar das suas tradições de raiz tribal. Estas contradições sobressaem nos documentos legais, bem como na criação de um estado que se pode revelar fraco e propenso a uma corrupção endémica. Este artigo faz parte do Laboratório de Estudos Islâmicos da Universidad de las Americas Puebla no México.

**Palavras-chave:** Saharauí, Constituição, Islão, Estado.

### Modernization and tradition in the Western Sahara, the Sahrawi Constitution

Countries in the Middle East and North Africa experienced, like many other former colonies, an imposition of a Western concept of Modernization that clashed with their traditions and produced complex networks of discrepancies in their political apparatus. The Sahrawi experience is no different from the abovementioned. With particular characteristics such as its historical background of exile, a humanitarian need for relief, and its position in the region, this dispute between tradition and modernity is all the more evident in a State that seeks international recognition. Due to

these factors, the Sahrawi state was driven to build its political system abruptly.

A literature review will trace the structural changes where tradition and modernization appear in the implementation of a legal framework. With the goal to understand the development of the Sahrawi State political machinery, core texts such as the Five Constitution Acts and the Provisional Constitution Act of 1976 ought to be considered. At the same time, this paper argues that the process of modernization carried out by the Sahrawi State comes out as an unsuccessful attempt to separate itself from its rooted tribal traditions. This has raised numerous contradictions in the law together with the creation of a State that may come off as weak and corruption-prone.

This paper is part of the Laboratory of Islamic Studies at Universidad de las Americas Puebla in Mexico.

**Keywords:** Sahrawi, Constitution, Islam, State.

### Modernisation et tradition au Sahara Occidental, la Constitution sahraouie

Les pays du Moyen-Orient et d'Afrique du Nord ont vécu, comme beaucoup d'anciennes colonies, une imposition des concepts occidentaux de Modernisation qui s'entrechoquent avec leurs traditions et posent des problèmes à leurs appareils politiques. L'expérience sahraouie n'y échappe pas. Avec des particularités historiques liées à l'exil, aux besoins humanitaires et sa position régionale, cette bataille entre tradition et modernité est évidente dans un État en quête de reconnaissance internationale. Cela lui a fait construire son système politique de manière abrupte. Avec une littérature qui vise à analyser le développement et la tentative de constitution de l'État sahraouie à travers ses cinq constitutions et la constitution provisoire de 1976, cet article démontre que la volonté d'établir un État n'a pas pu se défaire de ses traditions tribales. Les nombreuses contradictions législatives le prouvent, tout comme la corruption endémique et la faiblesse de cet État.

**Mots-clés:** Sahraouie, Constitution, Islam, État.

الأصالة والمعاصرة في الصحراء الغربية، الدستور أتمونجا  
كلوديا بارونا كاستانيدا و خورخي غاماليل أريناس باسورتو

شيدت بلدان الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا ، مثل العديد من المستعمرات السابقة الأخرى ، فرض مفهوم غربي للتحديث الذي اشتبك مع تقاليدها وصنع من أجهزتها السياسية شبكات معقدة من التناقضات. تجربة الشعب الصحراوي لا تختلف عن ما سبق ذكره، بخلفيته التاريخية في المنفى، حاجته الإنسانية للإغاثة وموقعه في المنطقة، فإن هذا الخلاف بين التقليد والحداثة يتجلى بشكل أكبر في دولة تسعى إلى الاعتراف الدولي، لذلك سابق الزمن لبناء نظامه السياسي. الخوض في الأعمال السابقة التي عنتت بهذا الموضوع يساعد على تحليل جميع التغييرات الهيكلية، حيث يظهر التقليد والتحديث في وضع إطار قانوني. لفهم تطور الآلية السياسية في الدولة الصحراوية ، يجب النظر في النصوص الأساسية مثل قرانين الدستور الخمسة وقانون الدستور المؤقت لعام 1976. في الوقت نفسه ، يسعى البحث لإثبات أن عملية التحديث التي تقوم بها الدولة الصحراوية مصيرها الفشل وذلك لفصل نفسها عن تقاليدها القبلية الجذور ، والتي تنشأ في التناقضات العديدة في القانون ، جنبا إلى جنب مع إنشاء الدولة التي قد تصبح ضعيفة ومعرضة للفساد.

هذه الورقة جزء من أعمال مختبر الدراسات الإسلامية بجامعة لاس أمريكاس بوبالفا في المكسيك.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصحراوي، الدستور، الإسلام، الدولة.

## Can public opinion about Western Sahara's cause be revealed by Social Media data analysis?

This study intends to test the use of Big Data sources, in this case Twitter data, as a reliable source for tracking opinions related to Western Sahara self-determination. These data provide indicators of national trends of public opinion, which can be compared with the respective government policies regarding the Western Sahara conflict.

**Keywords:** Social Networks, Twitter, sentiment analysis, Western Sahara.

## L'opinion publique sur la cause du Sahara Occidental: peut-elle être révélée à travers l'analyse de données de réseaux sociaux?

Cette étude a pour objectif de tester l'utilisation de sources Big Data, en l'occurrence les données Twitter, en tant que source fiable de suivi d'opinions relatives à l'autodétermination du Sahara Occidental. Ces données fournissent des indicateurs des tendances nationales de l'opinion publique, qui peuvent être comparés aux politiques gouvernementales respectives concernant le conflit du Sahara occidental.

**Mots-clés:** Analyse de Données, opinion publique, Twitter, Sahara Occidental.

هل يمكن رصد الرأي العام حول قضية الصحراء الغربية من خلال تحليل بيانات مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي؟  
أنا مارييا جيديس

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى اختبار استخدام مصادر البيانات الضخمة، في هذه الحالة بيانات موقع التواصل الاجتماعي تويتر، كمصدر موثوق لتتبع الآراء المتعلقة بتقرير مصير الصحراء الغربية. توفر هذه البيانات مؤشرات للتوجهات الوطنية للرأي العام، والتي يمكن مقارنتها بالسياسات الحكومية ذات الصلة بصراع الصحراء الغربية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل البيانات، الرأي العام، تويتر، الصحراء الغربية.

## A opinião pública sobre a causa do Saara Ocidental poderá ser revelada através da análise de dados das redes sociais?

Ana Maria Guedes

Este estudo pretende testar o uso de fontes de *Big Data*, neste caso dados do Twitter, para rastrear opiniões sobre a independência do Saara Ocidental. Este tipo de dados permite estabelecer tendências da opinião pública nacional, que podem ser confrontadas com as respectivas políticas governamentais relativas ao conflito do Saara Ocidental.

**Palavras-chave:** Redes Sociais, Twitter, análise do sentimento, Saara Ocidental.

## Legendas das ilustrações

1. Mapa didático do Saara Ocidental. Francesc Verdugo Ibarz. Ano 2015.
2. Muro marroquino no Sahara Ocidental. 2017. Arquivo RASD.
3. Destroços de Mirage abatido. Museu Nacional da Resistência Saharai – RASD. 2018. Foto de Carmo Matos.
4. Aldeia de Houari Boumediene. Mural. 2019. Foto de Mohammed Aty.
5. Mohamed Abdelaziz, Secretário-geral da F. Polisário, é recebido à chegada à capital do Benim pelo presidente Kerekou. R.A.S.D. – *Uma realidade irreversível*, 1981, p. 19
6. Contentores abandonados. Campo de Boujdour – RASD. 2018. Foto de Carmo Matos.
7. Paineis dos Estados reconhecendo a RASD. Museu Nacional da Resistência Saharai – RASD. 2018. Foto de Carmo Matos.
8. Armamento NATO apreendido. Museu Nacional da Resistência Saharai – RASD. 2018. Foto de Carmo Matos.
9. Contentores abandonados. Campo de Boujdour – RASD. 2018. Foto de Carmo Matos.
10. Contentores abandonados. Campo de Boujdour – RASD. 2018. Foto de Carmo Matos.
11. Camião português. Campo de Boujdour – RASD. 2018. Foto de Carmo Matos.
12. Marinha da Frente Polisario. Museu Nacional da Resistência Saharai – RASD. 2018. Foto de Carmo Matos.
13. Milícia de mulheres Saharais. Novembro de 1975. Arquivo RASD.
14. Munições capturadas no sul marroquino pelas forças do E.L.P.S. (F. Polisário) – R.A.S.D. – *Uma realidade irreversível*, 1981, p. 9.
15. Grafitis na sede da União Nacional da Mulheres Saharais – RASD. 2018. Foto de Carmo Matos.
16. Mural. Museu Nacional da Resistência Saharai – RASD. 2018. Foto de Carmo Matos.
17. Campo de Boujdour – RASD. 2018. Foto de Carmo Matos.
18. Manifestos da Frente Polisário. Museu Nacional da Resistência Saharai – RASD. 2018. Foto de Carmo Matos.
19. Mural. Escola de Artes. Campo de Boujdour – RASD. 2018. Foto de Carmo Matos.
20. Sala do Parlamento da RASD. Campo de Boujdour – RASD. 2018. Foto de Carmo Matos.
21. Jatri Aduh. 2018. Foto de Carmo Matos.
22. Salama Brahim El-Bachir. 2018. Foto de Carmo Matos.
23. M. Fadel Sweyah (esq.) e Salama Brahim El-Bachir.



## Critérios para publicação

- A *Africana Studia* só publica trabalhos inéditos.
- A *Africana Studia* aceita trabalhos científicos de qualquer área de investigação cuja temática seja África e sociedades africanas.
- Os trabalhos só poderão ser aceites em português, inglês ou francês.
- A publicação de trabalhos está sujeita à apreciação dos Conselhos Científico e Editorial, bem como, de um painel de árbitros constituídos por membros internos e externos ao CEAUP.

## Normas para apresentação de originais

- Os originais devem chegar no programa WORD para Windows ao seguinte endereço eletrónico: *africanastudia@letras.up.pt*.
- Os originais devem vir acompanhados pela identificação do autor (nome, instituição e contactos).
- O corpo de letra deverá ser em fonte Arial ou Times New Roman. Tamanho: 12 pontos para o corpo do texto e 10 pontos para as notas. Espaço entre linhas: 1,5.
- As imagens (mapas, quadros, figuras, fotografias, etc.) devem ser numeradas de 01 em diante. A localização de cada imagem no texto deve ser indicada pelo autor. As imagens devem ser entregues em ficheiros individuais (com a extensão XLS para ficheiros Excel ou JPEG, TIFF ou EPS). As imagens devem ter no mínimo 10 x 6 cm com 1200 x 800 pixel (300 dpi).
- Os artigos terão no máximo 70 000 caracteres, incluindo espaços, notas e bibliografia (não serão contadas as imagens).
- Cada artigo será acompanhado de resumos em duas línguas escolhidas do seguinte conjunto: português e/ou inglês e/ou francês e/ou árabe. Cada resumo não poderá ultrapassar um máximo de 1000 caracteres do alfabeto latino. O resumo deverá incluir um conjunto de palavras-chave (máximo de quatro).
- As resenhas não poderão exceder os 25 000 caracteres.

## Normas de revisão e citação bibliográfica

- Os autores terão a possibilidade de rever provas dos seus trabalhos.
- Os autores comprometem-se a devolver as provas uma semana após o seu envio. Em caso de indisponibilidade, deverão declarar por escrito que prescindem dessa revisão de autor.
- As referências a autores, no texto, seguem a norma (autor, ano: página).  
Exemplo: (Rodrigues, 2000: 15)
- Se houver uma referência a um mesmo autor no mesmo ano, este deve ser acrescido de uma letra minúscula.  
Ex: (Rodrigues, 2000a: 15).
- Se a referência citada for de vários autores ficará:  
(Rodrigues *et al.*, 2000: 15).
- As transcrições deverão ser em itálico, assim como quaisquer vocábulos em língua estrangeira.
- As notas de rodapé e outras deverão limitar-se a informações complementares de interesse substantivo, não ultrapassando cinco linhas em corpo 10.
- A lista das Referências bibliográficas será colocada no fim do artigo e deverá conter apenas as referências introduzidas no texto, listando-as por ordem alfabética e por ordem cronológica crescente quando forem do mesmo autor.
- A bibliografia deve seguir os seguintes exemplos:
  - Livros: Rodrigues, Carlos (2001), *Os novos poderes em África*, Porto: Campo das Letras.
  - Coletâneas: Rodrigues, Carlos, Matos, A. e Silva, António (orgs.), (2002), *Os novos poderes em África*, Porto: Campo das Letras.
  - Artigos em revistas: Rodrigues, Carlos (2001), *Os novos poderes em África*, *Africana Studia*, n.º 8 (ou vol.), pp. 12-35.
  - Artigos/capítulos em coletâneas: Matos, A. (2002), “Os novos políticos africanos”. In: Rodrigues, Carlos, Matos, A. e Silva, António (orgs.), *Os novos poderes em África*, Porto: Campo das Letras.
- As traduções deverão indicar sempre que possível o ano da primeira publicação.
- Nas Referências bibliográficas eletrónicas deverá indicar-se sempre o site/path, a data do artigo e a data da consulta.  
Ex. Portal da Língua Portuguesa, 2011. Vocabulário ortográfico do português [Em linha]. [Consult. 21.Mar.2012]. Disponível em: <http://portaldainguaportuguesa.org>.

- As referências das fontes primárias deverão vir em notas de rodapé e começar pelo acrónimo do arquivo/instituição, seguindo-se as unidades de arquivo numa ordem do geral ao particular. Exemplo: AHU, maço 1665.1 – Governo de Angola, SNI, Nota n.º 136, 02-01-1935.
- Os acrónimos deverão ser desdobrados na lista das Referências bibliográficas.
- Após a publicação, os direitos de autor passam a ser pertença da *Africana Studia*.
- As imagens, no caso de serem originais e enviadas por via postal, serão devolvidas se assim for explicitado pelos autores.

## **Estatuto editorial e normas éticas**

Ver o seguinte link: <http://www.africanos.eu/index.php/pt/africana-studia/estatuto-editorial-e-normas-%C3%A9ticas>.

## Editorial Criteria

- *Africana Studia* publishes only original articles.
- *Africana Studia* accepts papers from every scientific field whose main object regards Africa and African societies.
- Papers are only accepted in Portuguese, English or French.
- Acceptance for publication depends on the validation of the Scientific and Editorial Boards of *Africana Studia* as well as on the validation of peer-reviewers.

## Editorial Norms

- Articles should be sent in Windows-Word files to the following e-mail address: [africanastudia@letras.up.pt](mailto:africanastudia@letras.up.pt).
- Articles must include the author's identification (name, institution, contacts).
- Characters should preferentially be Arial or Times New Roman font. Size: 12 for body text and 10 for footnotes. Spacing: 1,5.
- If the article includes images of any sort they should be numbered from 01 onwards. In the original the location of each image should be indicated by the author. The images should have the extension XLS – Excel and/or JPEG, TIFF or EPS. Images should have at least 10x6 cm with 1200x800 pixels (300 dpi)
- Articles should not exceed 70 000 characters, including spaces, references and bibliography (images excluded).
- Each article should include abstracts (maximum 1000 characters of the Latin alphabet) in two languages chosen out from Portuguese, English, French and/or Arabic. Abstracts must come with a set of key-words (maximum of four).
- Book reviews should not exceed 25 000 characters.

## Revision and reference norms

- Authors can review their proof-readings.
- Authors are asked to send the proofs back within the next 10 days after their reception. In case of unavailability for doing so, they should inform the *Africana Studia* Editorial Board by written statement.
- References within the text should follow the norm (author, year: page).  
Example: (Rodrigues, 2000: 15)
- If there is more than one reference to the same author a minor character should be added to the name.  
Example: (Rodrigues, 2000a: 15)
- If there is more than one author in the quotation, the reference should be:  
Example: (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2000: 15)
- Quotations and foreign words should come in italic.
- Footnotes will only be used only for complementary information, preferentially not longer than five lines in size 10.
- A list of Bibliographic references should come at the end of the article and must only quote the books, articles and manuscripts mentioned in the footnotes. The order of appearance is by ascending chronological when there is more than one reference of the same author.
- The bibliographical list should come as follows:
  - Books: Rodrigues, Carlos (2001), *Os novos poderes em África*, Porto: Campo das Letras.
  - Colective books: Rodrigues, Carlos, Matos, A. e Silva, António (org.), (2002), *Os novos poderes em África*, Porto: Campo das Letras.
  - Articles in Journals : Rodrigues, Carlos (2001), *Os novos poderes em África*, *Africana Studia*, n.º 8 (or vol.), pp. 12-35.
  - Articles/chapters in collective books: Matos, A. (2002), *Os novos políticos africanos*, in, Rodrigues, Carlos, Matos, A. e Silva, António (orgs.), *Os novos poderes em África*, Porto: Campo das Letras.
- Translated books should include, if possible, the year of the first printing.
- Quotations from online databases must always show the site/path, date of publishing and date of reading.  
Ex: Portal da Língua Portuguesa, 2011. Vocabulário ortográfico do português [Online]. [Consult. 21.Mar.2012]. Available at: <http://portaldalinguaportuguesa.org>.



- References to archival sources should come in footnotes and start by the acronym of the institution, followed by the archival units in descending order. Example: AHU, maço 1665.1 – Government of Angola, SNI, minute n.º 136, 02-01-1935.
- Acronyms should be written out in full and be included in the bibliographical list.
- Copyrights of all published material belong to *Africana Studia*.
- Original images supplied by authors will be returned to them if requested.

## Editorial statute and ethical norms

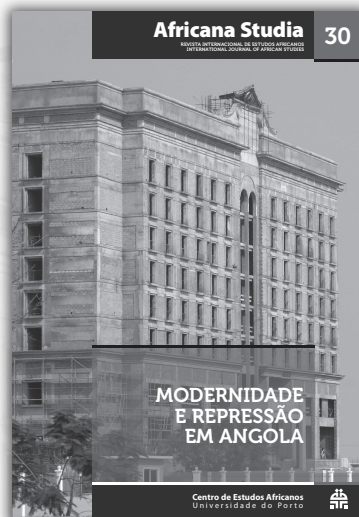
See: <http://www.africanos.eu/index.php/en/africana-studia-2/estatuto-editorial-2>.

# Africana Studia

REVISTA INTERNACIONAL DE ESTUDOS AFRICANOS  
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF AFRICAN STUDIES

N.º 30 – 2.º semestre – 2018

## MODERNIDADE E REPRESSÃO EM ANGOLA



### Assinatura Anual (Annual Subscription)

CENTRO DE ESTUDOS AFRICANOS U.P. – FLUP

Africana Studia – Via Panorâmica, s/n – 4150-564 PORTO – Portugal

Telefone / Fax (00-351-226077141)

#### Dois números semestrais (Two issues/year)

Portugal .....	22 €
U.E. (European Union).....	28 €
PALOP's .....	32 €
Resto do Mundo (Rest of the world).....	32 €

Desconto para estudantes (Student's discount) — 20 % (\*)

(\*) Add copy of student's card

Nome (Name) \_\_\_\_\_

Morada (Address) \_\_\_\_\_

Telefone / Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Endereço electrónico (E-mail) \_\_\_\_\_

#### Modalidade de Pagamento (Payment by)

Transferência Bancária para: (Bank Transfer) \_\_\_\_\_ 

CENTRO DE ESTUDOS AFRICANOS U.P.

IBAN: PT50 0035 0194 0000 2032 53053 – BIC/WIFT: CGDIPTPL

Cheque Bancário N.º (Bank Cheque Nr.) \_\_\_\_\_ 

Necessário juntar comprovativo (add copy of bank transfer)

(Assinatura / Signature)

Centro de Estudos Africanos  
Universidade do Porto





