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The Contribution of Critical Theory to New Thinking on Peacekeeping

Some Lessons from MINURSO

Andreu Solà Martín

July 2005

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Summary:

This paper sums up the findings from the first comprehensive study on the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara. This research project explores the possibilities of using a Foucualtian analysis to look at the links between peacekeeping practice and Western policies of conflict containment in the Western Sahara with a view to enhancing UN conflict resolution capabilities.

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1. Introduction to Peacekeeping Theory

During the Cold War period, UN Peacekeeping was largely seen as an outcome of power politics. Its main function was to avert conflict escalating between the greater powers. Moreover, peacekeeping was conceived mainly by Western powers as a means of promoting the stability of friendly regimes and securing their economic interests in their former colonies. Therefore, peacekeeping was initially a creation of power politics and a tool of conflict containment.

Nevertheless, peacekeeping was also a non-violent third party intervention by impartial, non-aligned as well as small states. Peacekeeping as an innovative non-coercive sort of military intervention had the potential to encourage and promote conflict resolution between the warring parties.

Ramsbotham and Woodhouse have summarised the two most general approaches in relation to the debate on the role of the United Nations in contemporary times:

> "As principal world legitimiser, the UN may be said to represent the International Community as a whole. Yet it is widely seen as the creation of great power politics, and in particular of United States national interest (Ramsbotham and Woodhouse 1996: 158)."

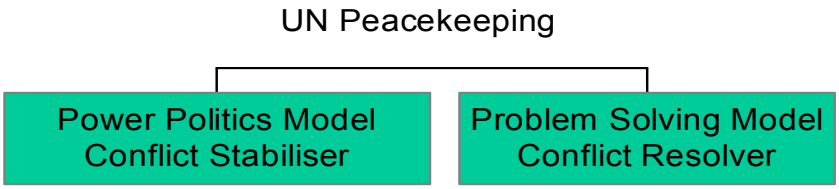
Some scholars have pointed out the influence of conflict theory on the enactment of the classical peacekeeping principles. Johan Galtung associated peacekeeping practice to the promotion of negative peace, or the absence of physical violence (Galtung 1976). On the other hand, John Burton related peacekeeping to the repressive mechanisms through which states protect their interests at an international level (Burton 1990).

At the end of the Cold War, the role of the UN as the main world legitimiser became more prominent. The UN embodies the willingness of the great powers to promote peace in those areas where Cold War rivalries had fuelled instability and violence. In this international framework, UN Peacekeeping has added the task of resolving conflicts to its function as a conflict stabiliser. Thus, peacekeeping is understood as a type of third party intervention which can promote transformative policies. In this context, the UN is linked to the problem solving model of intervention and, more specifically, to the Conflict Resolution field of knowledge. Peacekeeping within the problem solving paradigm addresses the peaceful transformation of conflict through societal accountability of power holders (processes of democratisation, self-determination, human rights monitoring, truth commissions) and reconciliation of divided communities.

Therefore, there are two approaches to peacekeeping practice: During the Cold War peacekeeping was used by the great powers to stabilise conflicts fuelled by superpower rivalries and to protect Western economic interests. Cold War de-escalation provided an opportunity for the problem solving model to be applied in many protracted conflicts throughout the 5 continents. However, in

some peacekeeping operations, the influence of power politics has remained substantial and the interests of the great world powers have hindered conflict resolution initiatives. In the context of the US led war against terrorism, Western powers conceived peacekeeping as a stabilisation[1] force rather than a conflict resolution tool.

Figure 1. Peacekeeping Models



2. Conflict Background

The United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity have been reviewing the situation of the Western Sahara Territory since 1963. The UN General Assembly (UNGA) have passed annual resolutions calling for the self-determination of the Spanish Sahara which is based on the UNGA Resolution 1514 (XV), "*Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Territories and Peoples*". This declaration stated that all non-self governing peoples had the right to self-determination and that immediate steps had to be taken to transfer all powers to them. The 'self' is an expression of the principle of *uti possidetis* by which colonial boundaries are to be retained after independence (Chopra 1997: 52). The General Assembly requested on advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice in 1975. The ICJ concluded that Morocco or Mauritania had no claims to territorial sovereignty within Western Sahara. Therefore, according to UNGA's 1514 resolution stated that de-colonisation doctrine and the right of self-determination of Western Sahara should be implemented.

After nine decades of Spanish domination, the territories of Western Sahara were ceded by Spain to Morocco and Mauritania without consulting the will of its inhabitants. This took place in 1975. Franco's regime promises to Saharawi people a Referendum which was to be held under UN auspices in the first half of 1975, but instead, the Western Sahara was given to Morocco and Mauritania in a tripartite agreement. This gave Spain a 35% stake in Fosbucraa (the company which exploits the important deposits of phosphate at Bou-Craa) and secured guarantees for Spanish fishing interests off the coast of Morocco and Western Sahara. The Madrid Accords signed on 14 November 1975 did not comply with International Law[2] (UN charters articles 1, 2, and 55; AGNU resolutions 1.514 (XV), 1.541 (XV) and 2.625 (XXV), etc.; OUA charter article 1, -d;…).

[1] New peacekeeping operations are named Stabilisation forces, i.e. NATO-led Stabilisation Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (SFOR) activated on 20 December 1996.
[2] For further information (Marino 1991:181)

Since 1966, the United Nations General Assembly had been requesting Spain to initiate a Referendum. In May 1975, a United Nations mission of inquiry claimed that "*an overwhelming consensus among Saharans within the territory in favour of independence and opposing integration with any neighbouring country*". They also reported the general support of the population for the Western Saharan pro-independence armed movement called the POLISARIO Front. On 27 February 1976 the Provisional Saharawi National Council proclaimed a new state, the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic, which, in the same year, was recognised by 10 African countries and North Korea (Balta 1994: 148). Up to 75 states recognised the new Saharan state but only the former Yugoslavia (1984) and Albania (1987) were not in the South. At that time, Algeria began to provide military supplies to the POLISARIO and they started a guerrilla campaign against the Mauritanian and Moroccan armies which lasted until 1989. Most Saharawi refugees flew to Tindouf (Algeria) and POLISARIO headquarters were based there up to present.

The conflict in Western Sahara quickly progressed to an internationalised war which involved countries fighting for the supremacy of Magreb, mainly Morocco, Algeria and Libya, and those who were involved in the cold war: the USSR and the USA and their respective allies. United States' support for Morocco dates back to the Second World War, when the American troops landed along Moroccan coasts and Roosevelt promised to help Mohammed V achieve independence for his country from France and, in return, the Americans acquired an important ally because of Moroccan strategic position at the entrance to the Mediterranean sea (Aguirre 1991: 209).

In 1988 the Cold War came to an end and Morocco and Algeria were reconciled,[3] so the UN's calls for the organisation of a self-determination referendum were finally headed by the Moroccan King Hassan II. In May 1988, the UN Secretary General and the OAU chairman initiated separate talks with the political leaders of Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and SADR and in July, secret talks were held between Saharawi and Moroccan representatives under the auspices of the Saudi Arabian government in Taef. In August 11 1988, the UN Secretary General Pérez de Cuéllar, presented the settlement proposals of a peace plan to Morocco and POLISARIO.

The 1988 UN-OAU settlement proposals foresaw the establishment of a UN peacekeeping force in the Sahara to supervise a ceasefire (establishing a buffer zone in the sand wall) and to organise a free and fair referendum for the self-determination of the Saharan people. The plan also included measures to support the return of Saharan refugees, the exchange of prisoners of war and the release of political prisoners.

[3] They formalised their reconciliation by creating the Arab Maghreb Union on the 17th of February 1989.

3. Evaluation of MINURSO

Peacekeeping operations have traditionally been assessed in relation to two variables (Diehl, Druckman and Wall 1998; Fetherston 2000). Firstly, the ability to limit armed conflict, this is the operation's capacity to achieve negative peace. Secondly, the promotion of conflict resolution, this is the operation's capacity to achieve positive peace (Galtung 1976). Most studies on peacekeeping point out its efficiency in terms of reducing the level of conflict and violence in missions which have some degree of operational consent. These studies also report that most operations fail to bring parties together in a negotiation process focused on resolving the underlying issues that led them to war.

MINURSO's outcomes so far follow this pattern. Its success has been, like most peacekeeping operations, limited to halting violent interactions between warring parties and it has failed to implement the other aspects of its mandate (reducing and lodging troops, exchange of POWs, the freeing of political detainees, returning refugees to their homes, de-mining activities, human rights' protection, confidence building measures, UN transitional administration, organisation of both the campaign for the referendum and the referendum itself).

Thus, MINURSO has been categorised within the group of the so-called frozen peacekeeping missions (the operations in Cyprus and Lebanon would also be included in this group). These missions have been totally unsuccessful at bringing parties together in a negotiation process.

The peacekeeping operations in Cyprus and Lebanon were initiated in the Cold War period to avoid conflict escalation. On the other hand, MINURSO was adopted at the onset of the post-Cold War period and was mandated to promote conflict resolution in the Western Sahara. MINURSO adopted a peacebuilding agenda which was to provide self-determination for the Saharan people, disarmament and withdrawal of troops and a repatriation programme.

Throughout 80's, OAU efforts to organise a free and fair referendum for self-determination of the Saharan people were jeopardised by Morocco's attempts to secure its position in the Sahara. This was accomplished through shifting diplomacy from the main forums dealing with decolonisation issues, namely the UN Fourth Committee and the OAU, to the UN Secretariat (Secretary General's good offices). The peace plan was the result of personal negotiations between King Hassan II and the UN Secretary General Pérez de Cuéllar. This diplomatic strategy was supported by the US and France in the Security Council.

Since MINURSO was put in place in 1991, the mission has been unable to provide space for transformative conflict resolution because UN peacemaking efforts have been constrained to a great extent by Morocco in connivance with the most powerful members of the Security Council. In this

sense, the mission has failed at developing a multitrack diplomatic approach (Diamond and McDonald 1996; Lederach 1997), i.e. involving local constituencies in the political decisions taken by party leaders and international diplomats in relation to peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes.

The UN Secretariat peacemaking strategy was inadequate as it was neither based on a realistic assessment of the political scenario in which the mission was set up nor on the means required in order to guide the operation towards successful completion. Moreover, the secretariat's authoritative approach to the implementation of the peace plan and, more specifically, to the criteria for the identification of voters limited the chances of the operation's success. In fact, international human rights organisations and former diplomats of MINURSO have claimed that the secretariat's policymaking was biased in favour of Morocco (Rudy: 1995).

The mission's success in its peacekeeping tasks has been to some extent partial. MINURSO has focused mainly on the effects of institutionalised, 'government sanctioned' violence i.e. maintaining the ceasefire between the warring parties. On one hand, it has successfully limited the number of casualties by monitoring and maintaining the ceasefire. However, on the other hand, the mission has not been able to take an active stance against political violence: preventing human rights violations, promoting the rule of law, ensuring the liberation of all POWs or clarifying the fate of Saharawi disappearances. In addition, the mission has not allocated resources for investigating the problem of land mine related casualties.

Progress made by MINURSO in implementing the post-settlement peacebuilding measures outlined in the UN settlement proposals (confidence-building measures for the return of refugees, land mine clearance, UNHCR repatriation operation planning, code of conduct for the referendum campaign, cantonment and reduction of troops) has been hindered mainly by Morocco's unwillingness to cooperate with the mission and also by the Security Council and the Secretariat's reluctance to use their leverage on Morocco.

The stalemate in the peace process has in turn aggravated the humanitarian situation of Saharan refugees. In addition, MINURSO lacks the mechanisms to put in place a comprehensive peacebuilding agenda so as to support the protection of the Saharawi people whose rights are not being sufficiently promoted in the current political framework.

The lessons learned from MINURSO shed light on the extent to which the implementation of peace operations' mandates needs to be linked with thorough clarification and integration of UN peacekeeping practice in conflict resolution processes. For instance, the transformative role of peace operations can be enhanced by strengthening the links between the UN agents and civil society

organisations. Progress in these reforms is highly dependent on the International Community's willingness to engage in a larger democratisation process of the UN decision making model.

In brief, the Western Sahara operation has only been able to function as a conflict stabiliser operation because contention has been its main function and power politics have hindered MINURSO's transformative role.

4. A Critical Approach to Peacekeeping

This section examines the analytical potential of using Foucault's concept of power in conflict resolution and peacekeeping theory. This approach draws on the ideas elaborated by Betts Fetherston in the section 'Conflict Resolution/Peacekeeping as Discursive Practice: Power' in her journal article *Theoretical Frameworks for Peacekeeping* (Fetherston 2000).

Foucault understood power as a force that "transverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse". Foucault also refers to power as a juridical concept "carrying the force of a prohibition" that is related to the notion of repression. Foucault rejects a purely negative nature of power: "if power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it?" (Foucault 1984: 51).

Nevertheless, some authors have argued that repression is also an integral element of the production of power/knowledge in contemporary societies.[4] From Foucault's assumption that "each society has its regime of truth…that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true" (Foucault 1984:73), some authors have asserted that these discourses are sustained by coercive mechanisms. In this context violence is understood as a deterrent through which power structures and dominant discourses (a regime of truth) are generated at a societal level. The fundamental question is whether the production of power/knowledge can function independently from coercive mechanisms. This is particularly relevant in war zones, where parties use violence against those who challenge their regime of truth.

Most peace research is based on Galtung's ideas on peace and violence. Galtung defines three different types of violence: direct, structural and cultural. Direct violence is visible physical and/or verbal behaviour, cultural violence is related to the promotion of heroic, patriotic, or patriarchal values, which seek to justify violence, and structural violence is caused by socio-economic structures which are repressive, exploitative or alienating (Galtung 1990). In turn, Galtung defines negative peace as the absence of direct violence and positive peace as the removal of cultural and structural violence.

[4] See further research on repressive power (Nordstrom and Martin 1992).

In this regard, repressive power aims at imposing a societal regime of truth through the use of direct violence. The Foucaultian concept of power as a positive force which produces knowledge (disciplines) and "normalises" (Foucault 1984: 193) social life can be related to Galtung's concept of cultural violence. In particular, the production of discourses of violence and militarism are inextricably linked to the process of disciplinarisation of society. The production of power/knowledge and regimes of truth can also be associated to the normalisation of structural violence. In this sense, positive forms of power are related to the production and socialisation of cultural practices and socio-economic structures. As Foucault puts it:

> "What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, its induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body… (Foucault 1984: 119)."

Fetherston has underlined the possibilities of using Foucault's genealogical approach to power/knowledge for examining issues related to peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Foucault described the extent to which the introduction of a 'scientific' epistemology to study society in the Modern Era[5], which was based on the Natural Science model (the emergence of a Social Science), has subjugated a whole range of specific (a-scientific) 'knowledges' (Fetherston 2000). Foucault explained that this process of scientific normalisation of social life is related to the emergence of new technologies of power and the enactment of the discourse of modernity, which stands for a regime of scientific truths. This discourse is mainly enacted by a new flourishing socio-economic class, the bourgeoisie, which has grown alongside industrial development and the formation of the Nation/States since the 17th century. In short, the emergence of the Social Sciences and the production of objectified forms of knowledge have led to attempts to rationalise social life. In turn, this rationalisation has produced a hierarchy of forms of knowledge, marginalizing non-scientific forms of knowledge. As Barry Smart puts it:

> "One of the principal objectives of Foucault's analysis is to contest 'the scientific hierarchisation of knowledges and the effects intrinsic to their power' implied in the above – not by constructing a higher, more general and more powerful theory, but by developing critiques of both objectifying and subjectifying forms of knowledge, action, and their respective effects, in order to reveal and thereby help reactivate the various forms of subjugated knowledge and local criticism of 'an autonomous, non-centralised kind…whose validity is not dependent on the approval of the established regimes of thought' (Smart 1994: 215-216)."

In this regard, the production of power/knowledge by a third party - i.e. peacekeeping - is related to an attempt to normalise international social life. John Burton stressed that peacekeeping involves the institutionalisation of conflict (Burton 1990). Galtung related peacekeeping practice to his concept of negative peace (Galtung 1976). In this sense, most studies on peacekeeping point out its efficiency in

[5] From the end of the eighteenth century to the present day.

terms of reducing the level of conflict violence in missions which have some degree of operational consent. These studies also report that most operations fail to bring parties together in a negotiation process focused on resolving the underlying issues that led them to war. It can be argued that peacekeeping is very successful at promoting negative peace but fails at promoting positive peace. The aim of this critical assessment of peacekeeping practice is to look at whether peacekeeping can promote specific forms of power/knowledge which can, in turn, promote positive peace.

Some Scholars within the field of Conflict Resolution have found problems with the "scientific" assumptions underpinning Conflict Resolution theory (Fetherston 2000; Salem 1997). Fetherston draws her criticism of Conflict Resolution from Foucault's ideas on power and truth:

> "Delivering rational understandings and practices through conflict resolution methodologies – including peacekeeping - is part of rendering a social body ready to accept, for example, neo-liberal forms of social/economic/political organisation Fetherston (2000: 200)."

Alternatively, Paul Salem has based his critique of Western Conflict Resolution on Said's concept of 'Orientalism', which is based on a Foucaultian approach to power/knowledge. Salem has critically assessed Western Conflict Resolution theory and practices – i.e. peacekeeping - and claims that this discipline is embedded in a discourse which places the notion of peace at the centre of the Western value system. He stresses that each culture inherits local (specific) power/knowledge on conflict resolution skills. In this sense, he points out that Western Conflict Resolution practices are based on Christian values and the centrality of peace in this discourse is as fundamental as, for instance, the centrality of justice is in Islamic value systems (Salem 1993; 1997).

However, the idea of peace with justice is common in the political discourse of many populations targeted by cultural and structural violence. For instance, Anthony M. Clohesy has pointed out the central role of the concept of justice in the political discourse of the Irish Republican Movement (Clohesy 2000).

Alternatively, the production of discourses based on the centrality of peace can also be related to attempts to legitimise cultural and structural violence by state powers and International Organisations. In this regard, the US led 'war against terrorism' is presented, at a discursive level, as a struggle for peace. Nevertheless, this struggle omits the underlying cultural and structural roots of terror. As Paul Salem has stated:

> "All Successful 'empires' develop an inherent interest in peace. The ideology of peace reinforces a status quo that is favourable to the dominant power. The Romans, for example, preached a *Pax Romana*, the British favoured a Pax Britannica, and the Americans pursue – consciously or not - a *Pax Americana* (Salem 1997:12)."

I suggest using a genealogical approach to the concept of peace, in which negative and positive approaches to peace are accepted and hence, the discourse of modernity can incorporate local forms of power/knowledge. In the Western Sahara case, discourses of positive and negative peace are conflictingly embedded in the sources of power/knowledge of the conflict. The discourse of the Saharan liberation movement, the POLISARIO Front, is based on a spiritual concept of peace, which is exemplified by the slogan of the fifth POLISARIO Congress held in 1982, 'The Whole Country or Martyrdom' (Hodges 1984). However, the discourses underpinning western diplomacy in Western Sahara (i.e. UN peacemaking) focus on the promotion of negative peace through peacekeeping practice.

5. UN Peacemaking in the Sahara: The Stability Model

This section suggests looking at the MINURSO operation as a projection of Western power/knowledge drawing on a Foucaltian analysis of the relationship between systems of power and truth. The main argument is that MINURSO has not only failed to promote conflict resolution, but that it has on the contrary contributed to sustain the uneven balance of power between both parties which unleashed the violent struggle in the first.

France and the US' acquiescence of Moroccan policies in relation to the Saharan question have hindered the efforts made by international organisations (UN and OAU) to promote conflict resolution in Western Sahara. Since the end of the Cold War Western policies concerning North Africa have been based on conflict containment and the promotion of stability. This is the cornerstone of their policy in a region which is perceived as potentially highly unstable. This is due to the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism in North Africa and, in particular, to the dramatic proportions of the Algerian civil war (Zoubir 2002). In this context, the Alawite monarchy ruling Morocco is perceived as a strong ally of the West, not only for the regime's tough policies directed at containing fundamentalism but also for the country's geo-strategic assets. This country hosts military air bases which are a key strategic asset for the rapid deployment of North American forces in the Middle East and South East Asia (Mayer 1983).

Western support for Morocco has been expressed in practice by the abandonment of the process leading to the organisation of a referendum for the Saharan people, even though this process is still formally endorsed by the UN Security Council. Some analysts claim that the current relegation of the POLISARIO Front in the international arena (a liberation movement only partially supported by conflict ridden Algeria), is a step towards what has already been defined as the "Palestinisation" of the Western Sahara conflict and the formation of terrorist organisations fighting for the rights of the Western Saharans (Núñez Villaverde 2002). But as Wayne Madsen has pointed out this path is unlikely to remove the oppression and violence in the Sahara:

> "If the Saharawis, out of desperation, break the cease fire and go to war with Morocco, the anti-terrorism measures undertaken by the United States may seal their fate.
>
> All the State Department has to do is simply declare POLISARIO and the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic terrorist organizations. Their international assets would be frozen, their leaders would be arrested and could be tried by secret U.S. military tribunals… (*Counterpunch* 2003)."

The UN Secretariat authoritative approach to the implementation of the peace plan and, more specifically, to the criteria for the identification of voters limited the chances of the operation being successful because the UN sided with Morocco and was unable to report on this party's lack of consent in the operation. In fact, as described above, international human rights organisations and former diplomats of MINURSO have claimed that the secretariat's policymaking was biased in favour of Morocco (Rudy 1995).

Conflict Resolution theoretical approaches to third party intervention in asymmetric conflicts like the Saharan conflict (oppressor – top dog - versus oppressed – underdog) stress the need for the third party to join forces with the under dog in order to enable a transformation of power relations and in particular, a transformation of those structures and discourses which sustain violence and oppression (Miall, Ramsbotham and Woodhouse 1999).

In relation to the UN peacemaking and peacekeeping model of third party intervention, academics and practitioners agree there is a need for more robust mandates which will enable the organisation to implement peacekeeping and peacebuilding programs. In MINURSO's case, it can be argued that the top dog, Morocco, has taken full control over the operation and has even used a 'sticks and carrots' strategy towards MINURSO, managing their consent to the mission as a bargaining chip. The aim of this strategy has been to ensure that the referendum plan is not put into practice. In this case, third party intervention has not promoted a transformation of the power relations but rather it has been manipulated by Morocco and has served the top dog's purposes of maintaining the status quo.

This research project argues that in the Saharan conflict the UN secretariat peacemaking process has promoted a settlement which is favourable to the dominant power and its ally in the region (*Pax Americana*). Their approach is underpinned by unquestionable 'scientific knowledge' originating in the Conflict Management/Resolution theoretical discourse. The UN peacemaking discourse in the Sahara is based on the assumption that the peaceful transformation of conflictive relationships involves a change in the parties' perceptions and interests from win-lose to win-win outcomes. This discourse, for instance, explains MINURSO's failure to implement its mandate and to organise the referendum by pointing to the parties' problematic aspirations in the peace process: in brief, both

parties have a winner take all mentality. Elements of this discourse are visible in this fragment from one of Kofi Annan's reports on the Western Sahara (2001):

> "Because of the parties' unwillingness to work together to resolve the various problems, the United Nations started submitting proposals to them to bridge their differences. As a result, both sides became accustomed to receiving from the United Nations suggestions and technical solutions each time there was a problem, which the parties, in turn, would proceed to revise or dilute through long and arduous negotiations until they were satisfied that they had safeguarded their own best interests. The process thus became a zero-sum game, which each side felt it absolutely had to win since, owing to the nature of the agreement that the United Nations was trying to implement, the referendum would produce one winner and one loser and the stakes were therefore extremely high (UN Document S/2001/613)."

Therefore, the UN Secretariat's discourse was based on the assumption that the plan could not be implemented because its outcome would be a "zero-sum game" (UN Document S/2001/613). Elements of this discourse can also be identified in the ideas expressed by the UN Personal Envoy for the Sahara, former US Secretary of State, James Baker:

> "In addition, my Personal Envoy expressed concern that the parties had so far failed to negotiate these problems because of the high level of animosity existing between them. In his view, neither party had shown any disposition to depart from the 'winner-take all' mentality or appeared willing to discuss any possible political solutions in which each could get some, but not all, of what it wanted and would allow the other side to do the same (UN Document S/2002/178)."

James Baker has been one of the main promoters of the so-called third way for the Sahara, involving autonomy for the Sahara within Morocco. Baker conceives the third way as a positive sum game approach to conflict resolution in Western Sahara:

> "It represents a fair and balanced approach, providing each side some, but perhaps not all, of what it wants. The peace plan, therefore, represents a compromise (UN Document S/2003/565)."

This shows the link between the UN peacemaking strategy in the Sahara and a particular Western discourse on the settlement of disputes, which examines conflicts as objectified units of study and at the discursive level, claims to be based on scientific knowledge. That is, a resolution of the conflict, which is based on the 'positivist faith' in science to resolve social problems and accommodate all parties through positive sum games and 'cake sharing' processes (Burton 1990). As Salem has pointed out, "a neutral, 'objective' approach to conflict assumes a certain neutral and 'objective' view of the world (Salem 1997: 18)."

Foucault stressed that the emergence of the so-called discourse of modernity, with the proliferation of scientific knowledge in the social sphere, is related to maintaining a certain social order and class structure. Therefore, the production of power and knowledge are inextricably interrelated. From this perspective, Conflict Resolution can only lead to social transformation if it addresses the potential

harms of using discourses which can be used by dominant groups to maintain the status quo. As Fetherston emphasizes:

> "The extent to which conflict resolution and peacekeeping in both theory and practice are fundamentally mis-directed is the extent to which they are unable to make visible the political framework within which they are formed… (Fetherston 2000:198)."

In this sense, this thesis argues that the mission has been biased in favour of Morocco mainly because the UN's production of power/knowledge was constrained by the power dynamics within the international system. In this way, the mission was used to promote *Pax Americana*. In particular, the mission only reported those human rights violations which did not involve holding the top dog accountable. Since the mission was set up in 1991, MINURSO has focused on reporting those actions which are related to containing the violence against the Moroccan regime (for instance, the situation of Moroccan POWS in the POLISARIO camps). Moreover, it omitted or misreported the acts that obstructed the peace plan and human rights abuses perpetrated by Morocco.[6]

In this context, MINURSO's peacekeeping can be seen as a way of promoting the status-quo and legitimising the same order of power relations which was actually at the root of the conflict. MINURSO did not try to change the rationale oppressor vs. oppressed but rather its purpose was to contain the conflict and promote *Pax Americana* in an area perceived as potentially highly unstable.

On the other hand, the parties' production of power/knowledge in the conflict is associated to some extent with the legitimisation of current socio-political structures both in Morocco and in the SADR. In Morocco, the Saharan provinces have been integrated in the mechanisms of legitimisation of the regime, which are based on the symbolic power of the king as a Commander of the Faithful.

The Saharan policy of the Moroccan State was embedded in the French protectorate discourse and political practices i.e. a projection of Morocco expanding its empire towards the west and south. The leader of *Istiqlal*, Allal El Fasi, put the doctrine of the Greater Morocco in writing in 1956.[7] Allal el Fasi set the agenda to regain the Moroccan empire which included the Spanish Sahara, Mauritania, the North of Mali and parts of bordering areas with Algeria. The Greater Moroccan map reproduced the borders of the Almoravide dynasty empire (11th to 12th century). Adopting this nationalistic agenda was a way for the King of Morocco Mohammed V to ensure *Istiqal*'s support for his leadership. The monarchy also aimed to legitimise the royal power in the "re-construction" of Greater Morocco (Hodges 1984).

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[6] See Solà (2004) Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

[7] Since Moroccan independence (1956), the consolidation of the Alawite family as the rulers of Morocco has been very much supported by the rural elites and counts on the cooperation of the largest political party, the Istiqal. The Istiqal is the nationalist party of the "Young Moroccans" and they have been in charge of several ministries since the formation of the first independent government of Morocco. In 1958, a member of Istiqal, Muhammad Ahmed Balafrej, was appointed as the Moroccan primer minister.

Morocco's system of regime legitimisation is not permeable to transformative policies in the Western Sahara conflict. Western liberal democratic values impinged on the principles of MINURSO's mandate. In particular, the principle of the people's sovereignty is at odds with the Moroccan monarchy's production of power/knowledge. This relevant issue might have been overlooked by the drafters of the 1988 UN settlement proposals for the Western Sahara. The political expression of this principle, namely the organisation of a free and fair referendum process through which the Saharan people can decide by themselves whether they want to be ruled by the Moroccan king or have an independent state has no room in the dominant Moroccan political culture based on the sacredness of the king as the Commander of the Faithful and guarantor of the territorial integrity of the kingdom.

Moroccan political constitutional culture is based on the reinvention of traditional forms of legitimisation and the religious authority of the king. For instance, political institutional forms like the *baia* and the *shura* regulate that the people's political participation is subordinated to the king's rule (Tozy 2000).

On the other hand, since the beginning of the war in the Sahara, the POLISARIO Front has been committed to a process of modernising traditional Saharan society, which involved a drastic attempt to overcome tribalism as a form of social organisation. The POLISARIO Front was formed by a group of Saharan students from the University of Rabat in 1972. Their families had migrated to Southern Morocco during the Franco-Spanish Operation *Ouragan* in 1958 against the Liberation Front Army who fought for the independence of Morocco and the Sahara in the 50's. The spiritual father of the Front was El Uali Mustafa Sayed. His father was an ex-combatant of the Liberation Front (Garcia 2002).

Historically, the family or *cabila* was the main socio-political unit of Saharan society. For members of the *cabila*, the *asabyia* or tribal loyalty system organised social relations and helped the most vulnerable within the group. Saharan traditional society was highly stratified and hierarchical. In each *cabila* or family some elders, the *sheiks* or tribal chiefs, were the main source of power/knowledge. Their role was to transmit Saharawi traditions, their ancestral laws and the history of their families to the younger members of their community. The *sheiks* also mediated in conflicts between the members of the family (Caro Baroja 1990).

Paradoxically, the end of the war and the peace process has taken place at the same time that the struggle for power and contradictions within the POLISARIO have boosted tribalism. The ceasefire opened up a process of rediscovering their Saharawi people's identity at a time when a power struggle within the POLISARIO front had generated a serious internal crisis. The lack of progress in the peace process, i.e. the frustrated identification process, has aggravated the tensions among the

Saharawi families and *cabilas.* For many, the resumption of hostilities is now the only way to achieve self-determination and inner peace, as the war was also an element of cohesion among all the tribal groupings of Saharawi society.

MINURSO has been instrumental in the process of 'returning' to the traditional society. The historian Hodges explains how in the 60's the emergence of Saharawi national awareness was fed to some extent by hearing UN resolutions on the self-determination rights of the Saharan people, which were broadcasted by international radio stations (Hodges 1984). During the UN identification process the Saharawi National Radio publicised those individuals and tribal groupings who were to be identified. As the tribal identity had been taboo in the 80's, public information on the UN process led to a process of 'rediscovering' family roots, especially for some young people who had been educated abroad (Caratini 2003).

Nevertheless, the Saharawi people conceive the UN as a conflict resolution tool to protect their rights. The Saharan people endorsed Pérez de Cuéllar's settlement proposals in 1988 hoping that a UN monitored peace plan would lead to the referendum and full independence for SADR. However, the protracted impasse in the process leading to the organisation of the referendum has also led to growing support for the resumption of hostilities: "we were better off when the fight was on" is a recurrent opinion among Saharawi refugees and expatriates. The ceasefire and the peace process are perceived in negative terms by most people. Their expectations about the role of the UN as a conflict resolver have been frustrated. The war is perceived now as the best way to pursue their communal interests and needs. In the last few years the POLISARIO elite have made intense efforts to convince their constituencies to keep to the diplomatic channel. However, many young Saharans feel attracted to the martyr culture (Caratini 2003).

The production of power/knowledge in the conflict is a key element in the political survival of both parties' elites. This is also reflected in the high degree of militarization and societal control that has been maintained. For instance, both parties maintain movement restrictions over their population. Military checkpoints can be found on the roads of the main Saharan cities (Mazuré 1998) and the refugee camps of Tindouf. Saharawis and Moroccans responsible for human rights abuses against the Saharawi population in the past still hold governmental positions in Tindouf and in the Moroccan held Western Sahara. This shows the extent to which power holders use social coercion and intimidation to achieve their political goals.[8]

For instance, the control both parties' have over public information also shows the prevalence of cultures of violence in Western Sahara. The parties wage a propaganda war through the radio

[8] See literature on cultures of violence (Nordstrom 1994).

emissions. According to Salek Muftah, a journalist of the Sahara Press Service (SPS), "MINURSO is a dirty war".[9] In Tindouf the radio broadcasts programmes on the struggle against the Moroccan invader and the UN efforts to achieve self-determination for the Saharan People. Moroccan Radio emphasises POLISARIO's internal problems and hardships suffered by the Moroccan population kidnapped in Algeria.[10]

Researchers, and journalist are banned from entering Western Sahara or their movements are constrained and under high surveillance. Both parties are fearful that foreign reports may weaken their position. In particular, human rights organisations have denounced the lack of accountability mechanisms to prosecute human rights offenders on both sides.[11]

6. The Conflict Resolution Model versus the Stability Model

As this research project highlights, Conflict Resolution as an academic field can have a larger impact on peacekeeping research by exploring in more detail the parties' production of power/knowledge. Efforts made by academics to link Conflict Resolution theory and post-Cold War peacekeeping need to explore in what ways power politics influence peacekeeping as an institution, and to what extent peacekeeping and its projection of power/knowledge in some cases, i.e. MINURSO, serve the interests of politico-military elites.

At first glance, Morocco's lack of cooperation with MINURSO appears to support the arguments put forward by authors such as Huntington (Huntington 1993) who have diagnosed our times as a clash of civilisations between the West and its projection of Western type values and non-Western civilisations such as Islamic societies. However, this opposition between the West and the rest oversimplifies the role played by the UN in the post-Cold War period. In some cases, the promotion of the stability model, in detriment to the conflict resolution model, has responded to Western policies of containing violence associated with Islamic radicalism. According to the US State Department, MINURSO has proven to be an effective safety net for the stability of the current political regimes in North Africa.

These policies of opposition to Islamic radicalism have brought the West to seek alliances with conservative elites in the Arab world. Authoritarianism, poor human rights records and high levels of corruption are common features among the political practices of Arab state elites. In turn, these elites protect Western economic interests. However, unemployment, poverty, and political repression

[9] Personal interview with Salek Muftah, Saharan Press Service (February 2004).
[10] Personal interview Mohamed Salem Brahim, the Coordinator of the Spanish Edition of the Saharawi National Radio (January 2004).
[11] France Liberte Foundation, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Canadian Lawyers Association for International Human Rights CLAIHR. The U.S. Department of State has also released reports on human rights practices in Western Sahara.

trigger the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in these countries. Others have criticised peacekeeping as being a tool for the promotion of Western liberal democratic values (Duffield 1997). But as argued above, the UN has not only promoted Western values in North Africa but has also promoted the stability of current political regimes.

Since 2003, Morocco has arrested more than 2,000 suspected terrorists. International human rights organisations have accused the Moroccan security services of severe abuses against suspected terrorists in the Royal Gendarmerie detention centres (*Amnesty International* 2003). Repressive policies boost the cycle of violence, terrorism and counter-terrorism. The Algerian regime's antiterrorist policies have not stopped the bloodshed and the country is still submerged in a war between the state security forces and some Islamic fundamentalist groups. The Saharan desert is perceived by the West as a hiding place for Salafist armed groups and the US administration is developing the so-called Pan-Sahel Initiative to train the African armies in the bordering areas between the Sahel and the Sahara in counter-insurgency tactics (Keenan 2004). Aware of this development, the pro-regime Moroccan press has denounced links between the POLISARIO Front and some of these groups (*Libération* 2004). In turn, the POLISARIO leadership is worried about being labelled a terrorist organisation and they have ceased to threaten to resume hostilities as a means of putting pressure on Morocco and the UN.

The war against terrorism has led to a rapid increase in the militarization of international social life, which has led to widespread violence and the broadening of inequalities. In the long term, the negative effects of this securitisation could be more costly for richer countries than providing some policies aimed at promoting democracy, civil society's political participation and the rule-of-law. In this context, Conflict Resolution has the potential to look for alternatives to the use of coercion and power politics.

Since the downfall of the Soviet Union, the main concern of Western powers for North Africa has been the promotion of stability (Soudan in *L'intelligent* 2003). This policy has led them to collaborate with corrupt and repressive regimes with a view to containing the threat of a 'talibanisation' in North African countries in which fundamentalist parties have the widespread support of the people. In June 1990, The Islamic Salvation Front's (FIS) victory in the Algerian local elections led to the army intervening, putting an end to democratic reforms. Political turmoil led the country to a brutal civil war which has caused at least 100,000 victims. The army intervention has proven to be detrimental to their aim to contain the terrorist threat, as many young people joined the terrorist organisations (Hanune 1996; Impagliazzo and Giro 1999; Yous 2001).

Nevertheless, some Islamist parties are willing to play a part in democratic processes, for instance, the Justice and Development Party or AKP has ruled Turkey since it obtained 34.3% of the votes in

the elections held on 3 November 2002. In Algeria, efforts at conflict resolution promoted by the *Community of Saint Egidio* resulted in the creation of the Rome platform in 1999. The promotion of peace and dialogue between all the political parties of Algeria includes the leadership of the FIS.

Conflict resolvers and UN peacekeeping can contribute to these efforts by enhancing the local capacity for conflict resolution and by cooperating with organisations working for human rights accountability. The UN conflict resolution capabilities can only be strengthened by enhancing International Law and the rights of minority groups as a basis of peaceful coexistence between communal groups and states. Conflict resolution in Western Sahara, as an exercise in promoting the people's right to self-determination, is related to this framework.

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