

## **POLITICS, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, AND GLOBALIZATION**

**Stephen Zunes and Jacob Mundy.** *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism, and Conflict Irresolution.* Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2010. With a forward by George McGovern. xxxvii + 424 pp. Maps. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$49.95. Cloth.

Zunes and Mundy have written the definitive book on the Western Sahara. Long neglected by Anglo-American social science, the disputed territory in northwest Africa provides the terrain on which one can explore it all: colonialism, decolonization, sovereignty, territoriality, self-determination, nationalism, security, justice, the Global War on Terror, great power ambitions, negotiations and diplomacy, local kinship ties, natural resource exploitation, and forced displacement. In 1983 Tony Hodges and John Damis each published respected monographs on the Western Sahara. Since then, a few scholars such as Pablo San Martín, Toby Shelley, and Yahia Zoubir have devoted their energies to examining the conflict. Nevertheless, the Western Sahara has been relatively understudied and even ignored in recent decades. Unlike other contexts of decolonization or disputed territories—e.g., East Timor, Eritrea, South Sudan, and Israel/Palestine—the Western Sahara has attracted neither international media attention nor extensive scholarship.

Zunes and Mundy's *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism, and Conflict Irresolution* has come to fruition after a long period of gestation, and the wait was well worth it. Theirs is a contribution that prompts a wide array of adjectives: provocative, insightful, exhaustive, encyclopedic. The collaboration brings together their respective strengths as scholars, and their work displays a robust interdisciplinarity in its use of methods and insights from geography, cartography, diplomatic history, political science, anthropology, and postcolonial studies. In many ways the book is an act of translation in that it provides etymological and definitional examinations of key concepts, places, and names. Indeed, the glossary is worthwhile in its own right. As in other cases of "conflict irresolution," a full understanding demands an appreciation of contexts, transliterations, and dynamic definitions. *Sahrawi*, for example, is ultimately defined as "the Hassaniyyah-speaking peoples who claim membership among at least one of the social groupings found in and around the area now known as Western Sahara" (93). Yet this is only part of a smart treatment of the term, its myriad transliterations and contexts, and its dynamism over the years.

The authors' fundamental argument is that the intractability of the dispute over the Western Sahara requires a full appreciation of different interests working at different levels. First and foremost, the Moroccan state's claims to the Sahara in the 1970s emerged from two sources: (1) a Moroccan nationalist belief in the recovery of *terra irredenta*—land that had been lost for centuries to European machinations and ambitions; combined with

(2) the unstable political standing of a regime that had experienced at least two coup attempts. In turn, a second dimension is Sahrawi indigenous nationalism, a movement that has evolved and even deepened as the conflict has persisted. The entire middle portion of the volume is given over to unpacking Sahrawi nationalism at different levels, from the grass roots to transnational linkages. A third factor is the role of international actors, namely American and French support for Morocco and, to a lesser extent, Algerian support for the Polisario. Zunes and Mundy direct their most withering criticism for the persistence and intractability of the conflict at Washington. In their view, every U.S. administration since President Ford's has made possible the Moroccan occupation of the Western Sahara. The book also examines Algeria's fundamental role in the conflict, although the authors make it clear that, in their view, Algeria's position is often over-emphasized. Indeed, if Algeria withdrew its support from the Polisario, the authors argue, the Sahrawi nationalist movement would not expire. In fact, Morocco and the U.S. would not be able to "use Algeria as a scapegoat to deny the existence of Western Saharan nationalism" (258).

One of the most valuable aspects of the volume is the light it sheds on independent Morocco. In focusing on Western Sahara, the authors end up telling Morocco's modern story in a decidedly different and refreshing way. Most scholarship on Morocco either ignores or elides the question of the Western Sahara; at best, it treats the Western Sahara as merely an important aspect of Moroccan politics and society. For Zunes and Mundy, however, contemporary Morocco cannot be understood without focusing directly on the Western Sahara. Thus, while the subject of the book is the Western Sahara, the story in many ways is really about Morocco.

The book makes arguments with which others may disagree, but it is not a polemic. The authors' lines of reasoning are posed in a careful, rigorous fashion. *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism, and Conflict Irresolution* will prove invaluable to students, scholars and, one hopes, decision-makers for years to come.

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**Séverine Autesserre. *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding*.** New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010. xvii + 311 pp. Maps. Figures. Tables. Notes. Appendix. Bibliography. Index. \$90.00. Cloth. \$28.99. Paper.

Séverine Autesserre is one of the most promising contemporary scholars focusing on the topic of international interventions in civil war. In her internationally acclaimed monograph (winner of the 2011 ISA Chadwick Alger