Surely, they exist within a complex economy and society linked in multiple ways to people and institutions in cities. Mount Sinai Bedouin also form part of a nation-state society and are affected by the history and activities of two states that have been in hot and cold conflict with each other for more than half a century. Marx's data and analysis firmly put to rest persistent notions of Bedouin as primitive, backward, and timeless. This major achievement opens up trajectories for future comparative research on the transformation of communities formerly engaged in nomadic pastoralist production in areas once remote from nation-state power throughout the Middle East and beyond. Indeed, Marx's moniker of "urban" breaks a glass wall that has all too often served to idealize and isolate Bedouin from the wider polities in which they exist and should participate as citizens.

Yet, Bedouin have often shunned cities, expressed negative stereotypes about urban life, and praised their own life ways and identities in poetry and other media. State systems have been prejudiced against them or just ignored them. Marx mentions what he considers negative aspects of Israeli actions and colonization. He also points to inadequacies and negative dimensions of Egyptian policy and action in the area. A strong, explicit focus on nation-state attitudes, policies, and actions toward Bedouin should follow on the complex economy and society findings of this study.

For Sinai and its people, a new conceptualization is also needed to see the peninsula as something more than just a bridge between here and there. The imperial British government of Egypt administered Sinai (and other Egyptian Bedouin areas) separately from the Nile Valley. Following the end of colonial rule, Sinai has experienced warfare and military occupation and has passed back and forth between Egypt and Israel. And since the 1978 Camp David Accords, Sinai falls under Egyptian sovereignty but without the Egyptian army on its soil. Meanwhile, references to an Egyptian mainland that does not include Sinai stoke feelings of insurrection within Sinai and resentment within the rest of Egypt. Lessons learned from this book about economy and society—with the addition of a stronger focus on relevant nation-state identities and institutions—can contribute to a better world for the Mount Sinai Bedouin and beyond.

STEPHEN ZUNES and JACOB MUNDY, *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism and Conflict Irresolution* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2010). Pp. 356. $49.95 cloth.

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This is a worthy if not wholly successful contribution to the study of a shamefully neglected subject. The conflict over the Western Sahara has blighted the regional politics of the Maghrib since the mid-1970s much as the Arab-Israeli conflict has blighted that of the Mashriq since 1948. More than thirty-eight years since Morocco invaded and proceeded to annex the Western Sahara, the conflict thus triggered remains unresolved, Morocco's occupation still lacks legitimacy in the eyes of the world (although Rabat continues to enjoy the fruits of it without serious hindrance or penalty), and the people of the country, the Western Saharans, are still waiting for justice. The failure of the UN, which assumed responsibility for securing a resolution of the conflict following the Morocco-Polisario cease-fire in 1991, to accomplish its mission is evidence that what is widely touted as a system of international law presided over and upheld by the UN Security Council is nothing of the sort.

This book touches on this crucial point rather than addressing it head on. The authors set out three main aims: to explain the origins of the conflict; to offer an analysis of its evolution since 1975; and to account for what they variously call the "resilience" or "irresolution" of the dispute—that is, the failure of all and sundry to resolve it. If in this reviewer's opinion they fail to achieve the third aim, they do rather well with the first two.

The main merit of the book lies in its extremely informative accounts of the conflict's beginnings, the course of the hot war from 1975 to 1991, and the successive failures of UN-backed initiatives: the 1991 Settlement Plan, James Baker's impressive efforts to broker new agreements in 2000 and 2003, and the series of talks triggered in 2007 by Morocco's Autonomy Plan. These accounts draw on a wide range of sources, including previously classified American documents, as well as the authors' enterprising fieldwork in Western Sahara, southern Morocco, and Algeria. They are full of interesting information and little-known details, and the authors fully establish the extent of French and American complicity in Morocco's initial annexation of the territory. We learn, for instance, that President Gerald Ford was simply lied to by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger about the judgement of the International Court of Justice at The Hague, Kissinger blithely assuring him that this judgement endorsed Morocco's claim to the territory when it did the opposite. The authors also provide a careful and sympathetic discussion of Western Saharan nationalism and its evolution, informed in particular by the interviews they conducted in the Polisario Front's camps in Tindouf. All of this adds up to a valuable contribution to scholarly discussion of the Western Sahara dispute, which makes it all the more a pity that the same cannot be said of the authors' discussion of the persistent failure to resolve the conflict.

In itself, their narrative of these matters is accurate and reliable. They describe in depth the ins and outs of the attempts to organize a referendum on self-determination; the extended haggling over who might be eligible to vote in it; how the referendum project was eventually sabotaged; James Baker's subsequent attempts to find another way forward; and how his admirable efforts were ultimately defeated. They point to the "deceptiveness" and repeated pro-Moroccan manoeuvres of UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar in 1991, and recount how his equally pro-Moroccan successor, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, ignored Morocco's violations of the 1991 Settlement Plan and then pushed for the Settlement Plan's abandonment: how, in short, the UN in effect sabotaged MINURSO, its own mission to the Western Sahara. They go on to show how the UN secretariat allowed Morocco to get away with smearing MINURSO's Voter Identification Commission and not only ignored the advice of the UN Secretary General's Special Representative on Western Sahara, Charles Dunbar, in 1998–99, but even went behind his back, provoking him to refuse to renew his contract in frustration with the UN's lack of real commitment to resolving the conflict; how Boutros-Ghali's successor, Kofi Annan, refused to defend the revived 1991 Settlement Plan as renegotiated in the 1997 Houston Accords to which his special envoy, James Baker, had managed to secure general agreement through intensive diplomacy; and how the Security Council, at France's insistence, capitulated to Morocco's objections to the second of Baker's subsequent proposals based on the autonomy idea, the 2003 Peace Plan. Zunes and Mundy tell this dismal and arguably scandalous story as well as anybody has done to date. What they fail to do is to draw the natural conclusion from it.

This conclusion was drawn by the International Crisis Group in a report published in June 2007 and titled *Western Sahara: Out of the Impasse*. (As the author of the report, I declare an interest.) ICG argued that the main source of the impasse was the UN's contradictory position on the conflict. On the one hand, the UN insisted that the issue was solely one of self-determination, which meant that other aspects of the dispute would be completely ignored (notably Algeria's objection to Morocco's flouting of *uti possidetis*, the principle that frontiers

inherited from the colonial era might be altered only by negotiated agreement), and that the conflict could therefore be resolved only by a referendum in which independence was an option available to voters. On the other hand, the Security Council has treated the question under Chapter VI of the UN Charter, which requires conflicts to be settled consensually (instead of under Chapter VII, which authorizes the imposition of binding arbitration or even coercion), thereby giving Morocco a veto that it has repeatedly used with total impunity to frustrate every attempt to hold a referendum in which independence was an option. ICG argued that it was unrealistic to expect the Security Council to change its attitude, that the UN was accordingly incapable of resolving the Western Saharan conflict, and that it therefore should allow the parties to the conflict to resolve it themselves via bilateral negotiations without UN oversight or preconditions.

Zunes and Mundy mention this report but not its conclusions and fail to engage with its argument. But the alternative position they propose, in rather scattered fashion, is fraught with numerous difficulties. They argue that the issue is exclusively one of self-determination (thus echoing the UN's formal but not substantive position) and that the UN should enforce this (p. 259) but will not do so, in part because it is dominated by the pro-Moroccan "Franco-American consensus" (p. 170) on the question. Zunes and Mundy therefore conclude that it is up to what they call "transnational civil society" (pp. 89, 159–60, 260) to see to it that what they posit as "the international consensus on self-determination" (p. 169) is vindicated in this instance. We may well wonder whether this vision of "transnational civil society" to the rescue is realistic given that the only country in which elements of civil society have been truly mobilized in support of self-determination for Western Sahara is Spain, the former colonial power, and this mobilization has been insufficient to determine the policy of the Spanish government, let alone anyone else.

At the root of this shortcoming is the authors' own political bias. As they (commendably) admit, they support Western Saharan nationalism and its claims. This is not a problem in itself, but it turns into one when it inclines them to wishful thinking. For example, they characterize the outcome of the hot war up to 1991, which saw Morocco in control of 80 percent of the territory (including all of the useful parts), as a "military stalemate" (pp. 3, 70). They then use this thesis to explain the subsequent stalemate in the diplomatic game after 1991—as if the UN's handling of the matter has made no difference—before finally admitting that "in truth, the war ended with Morocco holding the dominant military position" (p. 189), a remark that leads nowhere when it should be the point of departure for a lucid political analysis. They also claim that "Algeria has become more, not less, strident in its support for Western Saharan nationalism" (p. 43) and that the latter, despite all setbacks, has been steadily getting stronger over time (p. 255), claims for which there is no serious evidence. Moreover, they fail to distance themselves from particular elements of Polisario's formal position, instead simply relaying them. A crucial instance is their insistence that Morocco and the Polisario Front are the sole parties to the conflict and that everyone else is secondary (p. 256), a claim that follows logically from the definition of the conflict in terms of self-determination. But to dismiss Algeria's position in this way (the authors never mention the *uti possidetis* issue) is to fail to comprehend Algeria's concerns in this matter and Morocco's attitude toward Algeria, which are hardly insignificant dimensions of the situation. Above all, dismissing Paris' and Washington's support for Morocco as a secondary feature of the conflict is misguided, since this support has been a fundamental premise of the Security Council's attitude throughout the history of the issue and thus absolutely central to the UN's failure to resolve the conflict.

This book is worth reading for its well-researched account of the history of the conflict, but when it comes to grasping the political logic of the impasse and suggesting a feasible way out, its authors fall well short of the mark.