

Panel 12: **The Sahara-Sahel region a context under conflict, with special reference to Western Sahara**

Thursday 17, 14-16, Aula A7

Convenors: **Raquel Ojeda García** (University of Granada); **Victoria Veguilla del Moral** (University Pablo de Olavide)

Discussant: **Francesco Correale** (CNRS/Univ. F. Rabelais, Tours)

This panel proposes to analyze the Sahara-Sahel region based on different approaches especially under the concept of conflict, borders and identity. From this framework, the proposal is focused on the Western Sahara conflict regarding four main objectives, firstly the respect of human rights (in a holistic meaning, therefore, including economic, social, ecologic and political rights). Secondly, related with the change of regarding human rights, the use and exploitation of natural resources of the non-autonomous territory by the population with guaranties of the fair distribution of them between the populations. The definition of identity will be fundamental for this question and for the delimitation of the international territorial division. Thirdly the consequences of the stalemated conflict on international relations and between the main countries affected by the conflict and the security questions promoted by the rise of the presence of some terrorist groups and finally, the articulation of Moroccan public action in the non-autonomous-territory in order to develop them and the public international aid to the refugee camps on Tinduf. Papers from policy analysis approach, international relations, political theory about identity questions as well as anthropological perspectives, will be well welcomed in order to achieve the main objectives proposed in the panel. The final results of this panel, the presentation of the different papers and the debate between the participants and the discussant, will be prepared for the publication in a special issue in the CIDOB affers journal for the beginning of 2017.

Paper givers:

- 1) **Miguel García Guindo** (University of Jaén), *The role of Sahrawis and the Polisario Front in the Maghreb-Sahel regional security*

This paper addresses, first of all, and from a theoretical perspective, the impact of economic and political factors in the germ of the organized violence to later on, analyze how the demographic changes occurred in Western Sahara since 1975 until today, coupled with the Moroccan welfare policy and privileges that certain groups obtain benefits from have destabilized the region. Moreover, this lack of opportunities and economic instability, together with the own incentives of organized criminal activities and the growing reach of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, can be the spur to encourage many Sahrawis to broaden the basis of those groups who embrace Islamic extremism and ultimately a security challenge of international dimensions.

- 2) **Juan Carlos Gimeno Martín** (Autonomous University of Madrid), *Sahara occidental y las fronteras de la justicia*

Western Sahara was a Spanish colony from 1884 to 1976. Western Sahara was invaded by Morocco and Mauritania in 1975. The Saharawi people, organized as “ Frente Polisario” , faced this occupation. The war lasted until 1991. In 1979 Mauritania, exhausted, retired from combat. The ceasefire of 1991 contemplated a referendum organized by MINURSO , where the Saharawi people could decide on their fate. To this day referendum has not been made. Sahrawi men and women live divided by a wall of 2700 Km. Some of them, in refugee camps in Algeria; others, in the territories occupied by Morocco. There is a third group in the diaspora. In all cases, Saharawi women and men see that their rights as individuals and as a people; Injustice has become a multifaceted border for this people. In a world (global and under the liberal hegemony) where human rights have been placed at the center of the struggles for emancipation, the struggle for justice, which incorporates a dialectical loop between justice , memory and identity, has become a central strategy for the aspirations to self-determination of the Saharawi people.

- 3) **Victoria Veguilla del Moral** (University Pablo de Olavide), *Gdeim Izik, Predictable scenario or authoritarian drift of the Moroccan regime?*

Nous proposons une étude de Gdeim Izik inscrite dans une trajectoire protestataire sahraouie inclusive des mobilisations non spécifiquement indépendantistes. Les hypothèses que nous formulons sont les suivantes : 1. Les protestations sociales sahraouies s'appuient sur une conception du bon gouvernement qui inclut une redistribution identitaire des ressources. Deux référentiels nourrissent la dite conception: le référentiel nationaliste ou "l'autonomiste" et les représentations sociales résultantes des modalités de gouvernement déployées au territoire. Dans ce sens, des changements dans les objectifs des politiques redistributives contribuent à expliquer l'articulation de telles protestations dans des processus décisionnels sectoriels. 2. Les protestations sociales font partie des expériences protestataires sahraouies et ont contribué de la même manière que les nationalistes à la construction des perceptions contextuelles des acteurs, et à la reconfiguration du champ de la proteste dans le Sahara occupé à travers la construction de causes légitimes et tolérées qui réduisent les coûts de l'action.

- 4) **Maria Angustias Parejo Fernández** (University of Granada), **Laura Feliu i Martínez** (Autonomous University of Barcelona), *The Western Sahara Members of the Moroccan Parliament: political perceptions and parliamentary diplomacy*

The objective of this article is twofold: first to offer a deep and detailed profile of parliamentarians of the Western Sahara at the Moroccan Parliament, and to present their views on identity issues, and on official policies in the region; and secondly, to analyse the Moroccan parliamentary diplomacy on Western Sahara issues, especially the developed by Western Sahara parliamentarians in multilateral interparliamentary assemblies, bilateral inter-parliamentary forums, intergroup and friendship groups and exchange visits. This research is the first one carried out specifically on Western Sahara deputies of the Moroccan parliament, which draws on primary sources and on the few studies on Moroccan parliamentary elites. The main aims are: a) to offer some key explanations of how this parliamentary elite perceive their role within the Moroccan system and how they value it;

and b) to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the parliamentary diplomacy as a political tool.

- 5) **Ángela Suárez Collado** (Universidad autonoma de Madrid), **Raquel Ojeda García** (University of Granada), *The Effects of the Moroccan Advanced Regionalisation Law in Western Sahara*

In January 2010 the king Mohammed VI set up a new phase on the Moroccan regional policy with the creation of the Consultative Commission on Regionalism (CCR), entrusted with the task of drawing up a new regionalisation model. The aim of reinforcing the Moroccan conflict-solution strategy of autonomy for the Western Sahara was one of the reasons behind the promotion of this regional reform. This paper aims to explore the potential impacts of the advanced regionalisation law in the current situation of the Western Sahara conflict. To that end, it will analyse the CCR's proposal in comparison with previous regional plans and reforms (1997 Regionalisation Law, the 2011 Constitution and the Plan for the Autonomy of Western Sahara) to evaluate to what extent the CCR gives autonomy to the territory in conflict; on the other side, it will examine the role played by the CCR in the broader frame of Morocco's policy toward Western Sahara, studying how regionalisation reform interacts and/or overlaps with other political measures adopted by the Moroccan state (the creation of specific councils, public policies, integration of elites).