

Johan Galtung: **WESTERN SAHARA OCCIDENTAL: A VISION** 14-03-2016 Alfaz, Spain:

At the two ends of the Mediterranean very similar wars are fought against two Arab-Muslim peoples: Palestinians in Palestine-a former English colony-since 1948, and Sahrawis in Western Sahara-former Spanish colony and still is, since 1975; when Franco was dying.

The aggressors are Jewish Israel and Arab Morocco and Mauritania. The former colonies were handed to Israel by England and to Morocco by Spain (both invited to this seminar but did not answer); backed by USA and by USA-France, two UNSC veto powers. Israel claims millennia old rights to the land, Morocco claims centuries. The military conquests were followed by occupation-annexation; refugees in camps in Jordan and Algeria; violent and nonviolent resistance for independence; met by brutal warfare bordering on genocide, by torture, and by walls.

The Israel-Morocco goal is sovereignty, power, over conquered lands; with some internal autonomy; Jewish and Moroccan settlement; and economic exploitation of labor and resources. UN resolutions and World Court rulings have had no impact. No self-determination.

The European Union-11 of 28 states are former colonial powers-cannot be expected to exercise pressure on England, Spain and France to "do something", given the rule "I do not critique you, nor you me".

Talks have not led to basic change of the unacceptable situation. Also unacceptable is concern only with Israeli, not Moroccan violence, with Palestinian, not Sahrawi suffering. Ignorance, not anti-Semitism.

Thus, in the USA very many know about the Middle East, but only Stephen Zunes about "Hillary Clinton, phosphates, and Western Sahara".

History casts dark shadows over both. The Christian West lost the Crusades 1095-1291; were the Jews invited to reconquer Jerusalem? Christian Iberia became the Córdoba Caliphate 711, the reconquest was completed in 1492; are Moroccans used against anti-Spanish Sahrawis?

The legal cases against Spain for negligence of decolonization, and against Morocco for colonization, are very strong. But blocked.

Spain apologizing would be helpful, but unlikely; the country was lost in its concern for the post-Franco transition. Italy apologized in 2011 for genocidal 1911 state terrorism bombing of oases in Libya; a century later. The responsible were all dead: not the case in Spain. But England actually compensated Kenyans fighting colonial rule in the 1950s--claiming they had been beaten, tortured, raped, castrated--by "regretting that it took place", not apologizing ([IHT](#) 7 June 2013).

A new element has to be introduced to unblock the situation, some vision of a positive future that might be acceptable. At the Eastern end the Two-states solution; in the West independent Western Sahara, next to their bigger neighbor, are such visions. But in both cases there are more countries involved and the occupied countries are weak.

Classical independence given so many mutual dependencies makes no sense. The formula is confederation, community. In Africa--53 states, 500 nations--do not change borders, Morocco did against

international law, but open them for those wanting to be closer and make federations inside for those wanting to be apart and not dominated by one nation.

A West African Union, WAU, of the four countries concerned-West Sahara--Morocco-Mauritania-Algeria--with open borders and equitable economic-political cooperation, and much shared culture, might one day be attractive to all four. With UN membership for all, equal autonomy for all four inside WAO, much consensus for cooperation, coordination.

A model: the Nordic Union-NU-of five countries--Denmark-Finland-Iceland-Norway-Sweden (and four peripheries) works very well on a basis of consensus, after centuries of conquests and annexation. And hatred. Take from the European Union an architecture with Council of Ministers for the states, a Commission for the functions, a Court, a Parliament. That this will take time is obvious, but reflections can start right away. Learn from the ASEAN unity in diversity.

What can be done to accelerate history toward something positive like WAU--which would loom large, with new opportunities for all four?

The Sahrawis should learn from the Palestinians to think locally and act more globally. Western Sahara should be recognized by the UN. like Palestine and the Vatican, as a non-member observer state, one day with its flag over the UN building. They could also be recognized by the UNESCO. And by progressive countries like Sweden, and more. Like for Palestine, parliaments may be ahead of governments. Also in Spain if Podemos wins more in the national elections 26 June?

At the age of 70 there is a spirit of renewal in the United Nations. A basic aspect is more power to the General Assembly "uniting for peace" when Security Council vetoes block progress. Sahara membership, like in the African Union, should be possible before 2020. But, indispensable is more media presence, today meaning Internet.

Very useful would be Trump and Sanders mentioning the case, also arguing against Hillary Clinton receiving Moroccan money and praising Morocco as a part of her disastrous foreign policy. And that brings us to Russia and Putin: Trump has good contacts. And Cuba, a voice increasingly listened to, preferred over Spain for Sahrawi students.

BDS, boycott-divestment-sanctions, makes no sense only against Israel and not also against Morocco, starting with the boycott of goods from the occupied-annexed territories. And yet keeping lines of communication open for mutually searching dialogues, not necessarily with governments but with people and organizations from civil society, less tied by formal rules. Moroccans claim that opposition to Morocco is organized and financed by Algeria to destroy them; disprove that.

Sáhara Occidental as "the last colony" is an unacceptable shame for Spain, like flagrant corruption and halting democracy. Overcome it by adding to the concern for past misdeeds deeds leading to a positive future. And, look at the map: with a role for the Canary islands.