The Western Sahara never ending Story: A case of organized hypocrisy

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It has been argued that 'organized hypocrisy' is both a pervasive feature of the international system and the cause of dysfunction in international organizations (Brunsson, 2003; Lipson, 2007*)*. Two authors stand out in the original literature related to the discussion surrounding the concept of 'organized hypocrisy'. Perhaps the most well-known is Stephen Krasner (1999 and 2001), who posited that sovereignty norms tend to be symbolically affirmed but are often violated by powerful states subordinated to logics of consequences – political action as the product of rational calculation behaviour designed to maximize a set of unexplained preferences – something which amounts to 'organized hypocrisy'.

The concept, however, was originally formulated one decade before by Nils Brunsson (1989) with the emphasis on something of interest to the present study, which is the realm of organizations in particular. Indeed, Brunsson (2003) introduces two significant innovations worth of consideration. Firstly, he offers a distinction between the divergent internal aspects of an organization – 'the organization of hypocrisy' – and inconsistent organizational outputs – 'organized hypocrisy'. In fact, whereas the former relates to the incorporated inconsistencies of the environment which are reflected upon the organizational structures, processes, and ideologies, the latter refers to inconsistencies between the organizational outputs.

Secondly, Brunsson (2003) identifies three fundamental types of organizational outputs – "talk, decisions, and action". He also makes the case that, despite the fact that talk and decisions tend to be inconsistent with action, they are still causally related in both a "reverse" and "compensatory" coupling. More concretely, there is, on one hand, a mismatch between talk or decisions and the corresponding actions, and vice-versa, in the sense that actions in one direction decrease the likelihood of talk and decisions accordingly (Brunsson 2003: 205-206).

Talk and decisions, on the other hand, also 'compensate for' inconsistent action. This is so, to the extent that either talk and decisions can satisfy demands to address an issue without actually taking action, or action can be insulated from opposition by contrary formal decisions that diffuse pressure to change the action (Brunsson, 2002). What is more, and rather ironically, action is being protected, in that management satisfies by talk the demands which the action does not meet. It also facilitates action for not having to satisfy inconsistent norms (Brunsson, 1989: 172).

In order to complete the academic discussion surrounding the concept of 'organized hypocrisy', mention should be made that previous research has documented the impact of 'organized hypocrisy' in distinct international organizations such as the World

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Bank (Weaver, 2008), humanitarian NGOs (Cooley and Ron, 2002), the World Trade Organization (Steinberg, 2002) and the EU (Cusmano, 2018). Above all, and more to the point of this article, 'organized hypocrisy' has also been asserted in terms of the post-Cold War United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations (Lipson, 2007).

In fact, Lipson raises a number of issues worth of a more detailed consideration. To start with, 'organized hypocrisy' contributes to dysfunction in peacekeeping in, at least, three different ways. The first one regards the 'irresponsible divorce' between the Security Council and the field operation (Doyle, 2001: 537), also known as a 'commitment gap' (UN, 2000: 11). Such a gap, according to Lipson (2007), renders the Security Council resolutions merely 'symbolic talk' decoupled from action.

In addition, it eventually leads to the second dysfunctional tendency involved in 'organized hypocrisy' which consists of repeated reform talk (also) disconnected from action efforts (Brunsson and Olsen, 1993: 40; Lipson, 2007). Indeed, when involved in peacekeeping processes, international organizations tend to respond to external normative pressures by promising reform. But, once again, this is conducted in a disconnected way from the decision-making structures and processes that actually generate action. The critical factor that accounts for such disconnect is the political will. That being the case, (promises of) reforms either decoupled from or only loosely coupled to action only serve to compensate for a lack of political will to act. Not rarely, thus, this results in inaction which therefore amounts to 'organized hypocrisy' in peacekeeping.

Subcontracting is to be understood as the final form of 'organized hypocrisy'. By contracting out or 'separation by organizational unit', as Brunsson (1989: 37-8) calls it, different organizational units respond separately to conflicting normative and operational demands. More recently, this may also involve regional subcontracting. In these cases, whereas the UN holds the political role as authorizer of the mission, regional organizations tend to play the action role.

Against this backdrop, this article aims to make a contribution to the field of 'globalized hypocrisy' in peacekeeping by applying it to the specific case of the Western Sahara, for a number of reasons. To start with, and despite being one of the long-lasting unsettled issues in world affairs, the last African colony has been completely overlooked as a research topic in 'globalized hypocrisy', in particular.

In addition, the Mission for the Referendum in the Western Sahara (MINURSO) matches the conventional definition of a peacekeeping intervention involving a ceasefire agreement between the warring parties and the permission of the host country for a mission invested with the traditional dual role of mediating a conflict and preparing the referendum. Indeed, and for clarity sake, peacekeeping is understood in this article as 'any international effort involving an operational component to promote the termination of armed conflict or the resolution of longstanding disputes' (Diehl, 1993: 4).

Lastly, the Western Sahara is an interesting study case since evidences of 'organized hypocrisy' on the UN's positioning vis-à-vis the former Spanish colony can be found across the three dimensions of organizational outputs: the commitment gap, reforms disconnected from action and (regional) subcontrating.

Before dwelling upon those evidences, however, a brief contextual background of one of the oldest and most neglected conflicts of the world is needed.

From an unfinished decolonization to a far-reaching deadlock self-determination

The contemporary roots of the Western Sahara's dispute date back to the early 1970s. The decolonization of the former Spanish territory was neither a typical nor pacific process. Instead, it was marked by various disruptions and drawbacks, which help to explain why

the conflict within this territory remained unresolved for so many decades (Hodges, 1983; Lawless and Monahan, 1986; Jensen, 2004; Novais, 2009a, and 2009b). Up to the point that it is one of the last remaining non self-governed territories and a 'state-in-waiting' that challenges the traditional understanding of territorially bound nation-states.

By then, the UN exerted pressure on Spain to go ahead and speed up the decolonization process. This clashed with Rabat's expansionist territorial aspirations to see the emergence of the pre-colonial 'Great Morroco' which incorporated the Western Sahara.[1] Morocco's positioning regarding the former Spanish colony went against the idea of the territorial integrity of states, later converted or translated into the well-established principle of international law – the *uti possidetis juris* – which posited that the right to self-determination must not involve changes to existing frontiers at the time of independence, except upon the agreement of all the states concerned.

Indeed, in order to assure the promotion of peace and international stability while granting the self-determination right for colonial peoples, the principle of 'extancy' gained prominence (Novais, 2010). The latter encouraged the acceptance of the *status quo* or the continuity of colonial boundaries under African control, regardless of territorial realities. Territorial acquisition by the use of force, on the contrary, was prohibited by international law.

Besides those underlying historic territorial reasons, the conflict has also been fuelled by the 'culture of looting natural resources' factor (Schnabel, 2001: 18). Moroccan interest in the Western Sahara rested on the fact that this specific territory contained one of the largest areas of high quality phosphate which can be exploited by surface mining as well as considerable and reputedly rich fishing resources along its coast (Ruf, 1986: 71).[2] Additionally, fieldwork has been conducted confirming the existence of gas and oil reserves.

In 1974, Madrid announced its intention to organize a referendum in its colony (following the UN recommendation), and to this end it undertook a preliminary census in August of that year. Against this background, Rabat initiated a series of measures aimed at stalling and thwarting any development potentially conducive to the independence of the area, and eventually invaded the Western Sahara in the following year.

Facing a policy of *fait accompli* undertaken by Rabat, without consulting the indigenous inhabitants, Spain secretly divided up the Western Sahara between Morocco and Mauritania under the Madrid tripartite agreements of 1975.

In the meantime, the Polisario Front[3] was established and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) was created, with backing from Algeria in February 1976 – a development which led to the juridical existence to the Saharwi state. By founding the SADR while administering an émigré population, Polisário inaugurated a new scenario in Africa: a state in exile fighting against an African invader.

Since then, a two-fold effort has been made by Polisario towards keeping the file on the Sahrawi decolonization process open while convincing the international community to recognize the SADR. The long and difficult battle that was to proceed thereafter towards self-determination was, nevertheless, largely ignored during the Cold War period.

Peace progress, though, was only visible in August 1988 when both Morocco and Polisario accepted a five-year negotiated Settlement Plan. The UN and the Organisation of African Unity (OUA) called for direct negotiations but Morocco resisted due to fears that it would

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[1]   The territorial ambition of a Great Morocco was promoted by the Istiqlal party and involved taking in not only the Western Sahara, but also present day Muritania, and much of Senegal, Mali and Algeria.

[2]   Besides the above mentioned factors there was also the geo-strategic location of the Western Sahara next to the Canary Islands where a US military base (and spy satellites) was based.

[3]   A truly representative movement of the different Sahrawi nationalist militant organizations was created on 10 May 1973, the Polisario Front (Frente Popular para la Liberación de Sanguia el Hamra y Río de Oro), an armed resistance movement against the Spanish colonizer and afterwards against Moroccan occupation.

signal further weakness within internal political circles. Hassan II was to change his attitude the following year when an unprecedented encounter took place in Marrakesh that prompted a unilateral declaration of a cease-fire which marked the beginning of a negotiating process. On 6 September 1991, a cease-fire agreement was eventually sealed between Polisario and the Moroccan authorities. After 15 years of war, MINURSO was established by security Council Resolution 690.

Since then, MINURSO has been trying to implement the self-determination and peace plan that has already known diverse strategies and approaches, as well as numerous deadlocks. For the moment, the Western Sahara is still among the organization's non-self-governing territories, having Spain as the administering power and its decolonization process is an open file converting it into the last African colony. In fact, it lies in a sort of limbo as a 'quasi-sovereign' state. While it has not succeeded in actually becoming a state because it lacks the external dimension of its right to self-determination, it has been able to exhibit reasons of state. Namely, it has until now retained its international personality, notably inside the AU, and was rather successful in implementing state-related practices in its refugee camps, as well as performing acts of stateness such as holding press conferences and producing a flag.

Against this background, the UN intervention in the Western Sahara constitutes an interesting example worth of consideration in order to make the case about 'organized hypocrisy', as the next section is about to show. This will be achieved by bringing into the light the different inconsistencies in terms of the UN's organizational outputs whether in the form of symbolic talk, reforms disconnected from action or the subcontrating of regional organizations.

Although assuming that those outputs are interrelated, for a blunt simplification of the analysis they will be considered separately. In addition, and taking for granted that 'organized hypocrisy is also the result of conflicting pressures emanating from the organizational environment, the examination will further take into account 'the organization of hypocrisy' factors, or the inconsistencies of the environment which are reflected upon the UN's structures, processes, and ideologies.

Shoot oneself in the foot… with symbolic talk

Right from the outset, the UN became the arena of the Western Sahara dispute. The UN General Assembly and Security Council's resolutions (whose content and spirit has been reproduced and translated into the OUA regarding Moroccan occupation as illegal and continuously acknowledging the Sahrawi self-determination, proved decisive for Western Sahara as well as to the organizations' own credit.

Although international law seems to have been of little use yet in the definitive resolution of the Western Sahara conflict, as the East Timor case has also demonstrated, managing to keep the unfinished issue on the agenda over the years and to set the legal boundaries may still prove to be critical in the future.

In fact, the recognition of the non-self-governing territory status of the former Spanish colony has been of great importance. It allowed, initially, the Sahrawi authorities and Polisario to pursue their lonely campaign for their common cause and it could legitimize an eventual intervention by the international community ahead.

Having said this, the Security Council resolutions have been merely 'symbolic talk' decoupled from action in terms of the original purpose. Indeed, regardless of the fact that UN Resolution 690 (1991) established the MINURSO and expressed support for the organization and the supervision (in cooperation with the OUA) of a self-determination referendum, that intention is yet to be fulfilled.

Not that the UN has not attempted to achieve it, at least in theory. Indeed, UN's overall approach to solve the Western Sahara affair evolved from the original free and fair referendum on self-determination, to a far more recent political option consisting of a transitional formula of self-government for a limited period, before the final status referendum would be held.

Moreover, the Security Council passed distinct resolutions throughout the years supporting different plans as well as renewed MINURSO's mandates on more than 40 occasions.[4] As a last resort, it even turned to high profile intervention of the different International negotiators and high-profile UN special Envoys to look for a breakthrough. However, albeit the appointment of highly prestigious figures such as James Baker, Peter van Walsun, Christopher Ross or Horst Kohler as personal envoys, the UN was unable to invert the stalemate situation in the Western Sahara.

True that UN internal dysfunctions were sided with external factors such as the lack of cooperation, and hostility at times, on the part of host governments, something which constitutes a test to the Council's will and capacity to support the operations in the field (SC, 2016). But the lack of success by the UN to uphold the principle of self-determination in the last African colony has been, in practice, a failure of political will at the highest level.[5] By continually allowing the Moroccan government to evade the obligation to submit the issue to the decision of the people of Western Sahara through a referendum, the Security Council has compromised MINURSO's efforts by shooting its own foot and has been complicit in the endless postponing of the conflict resolution.

Indeed, unable to reconcile the conflicting demands of the parties involved, the UN opted for managing the Western Saharan affair by decoupling politics and action (Brunsson, 1989: 33) – a pragmatic approach to peacekeeping based upon a political logic of consequences (Lipson, 2007). Symbolic talk by the UN, thus, served but a dual reverse and compensatory purpose in the Western Sahara: to give one the appearance of attempting to do something about it while hiding its reluctance to act.

A similar point could be made regarding a second dysfunctional tendency involved in 'organized hypocrisy' by the UN, which consists of repeated reform talk also disconnected from action (Brunsson and Olsen, 1993: 40; Lipson, 2007).

Dysfunctional promises of reform

To disguise such commitment gap and to compensate for the lack of political will to act, the UN promised reforms in its peacekeeping procedures throughout the years. Three moments stand out in this respect during MINURSO's life span.

The first landmark document about UN peacekeeping was launched in a tough time for conflict prevention and peace consolidation. In truth, it emerged in a period of turbulence in the international system marked by crisis and change at the end of the Cold War (Rosenau, 1990). Penned by the UN's Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali, in 1992, the Agenda For Peace aimed to strengthen and make the preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping more efficient. A special emphasis was put upon the importance of building democratic institutions and, above all, the concept of post-conflict peacebuilding (Boutros-Ghali, 1992) was introduced.

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[4] The most recent one dated from November 2018, when the UN Security Council adopted resolution 2440 which extended the MINURSO mandate in the Western Sahara for a further six months until 30 April 2019, on the grounds of a need to achieve a realistic, practicable and enduring political solution.
[5] James Baker interview "Wide Angle", 19 August 2004.

Another significant reform effort and review of peacekeeping operation took place in 2000. At the time, Secretary General Kofi Anan triggered a thorough review of the UN peace and security activities looking for improvement. The recommendations known as Brahimi Report placed the emphasis on peacebuilding and the rule of law, inadequate strategic analysis, gap between the goals identified by the Council and the resources available to meet them, as well as the need for clear, credible and achievable mandates (SC, 2016). Many of the Brahimi report's recommendations, however, were not implemented and remained unsolved in the Western Sahara.

More recently, in 2015, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon appointed a High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) to undertake another comprehensive assessment of the UN peace operations. Its report raised the need for reforms. Indeed, it called for four major changes: ensuring the primacy of politics, a flexible use of the full spectrum of peace operations, the need for stronger partnerships and a field-focused UN Secretariat and people-centred peace operations.

As a result, Ban Ki-moon assumed as the priorities of his mandate to focus on prevention and mediation, to strength the regional-global partnerships as well as conceiving faster and more responsive peace operations. Accordingly, the Council shifted the focus to deliver on the ground and put forward suggestions on how to be more strategic and realistic in deciding mandates (sequenced and prioritized) as well as more timely and effective supporting the peace operations.

Taken together, those realizations, besides being far from new, were not translated into the MINURSO field actions. Quite the opposite, such repeated reform talks were conducted in a disconnected way from the decision-making structures and processes that generate action efforts (Brunsson and Olsen, 1993: 40; Lipson, 2007).

Indeed, while the UN has produced voluminous quantities of talk and decisions relating to peacekeeping reform from 1992 to present, the end result to the Western Sahara is but institutional rhetoric decoupled from or only loosely coupled to action and only to satisfy external political pressure. To prove it, more than two decades elapsed since the establishment of MINURSO, the referendum is yet to be accomplished and the settlement of this territorial conflict still lies in a sort of limbo. To a great degree, this is due to UN's failing and lack of political will to act definitively in moments of deadlock, regardless of its numerous reform promises.

Subcontracting is to be understood as the final form of 'organized hypocrisy' by the UN. In the present case of the Western Sahara, it involved contracting out the regional organization of the AU to play an action role.

Contracting out and u-turning

The role of regional organizations in (local and international) security issues both in Africa and the rest of the world would eventually gain *kudos* in more recent times, with implications for the Western Sahara case. It was not until the simultaneous occurrence of particular conditions that the possibility of regional states and organizations taking part in conflict prevention and resolution was brought to the upper end.

Among the factors that facilitated the change were the limitations of the UN – politically and budget overstretched – along with the states' disinclination to get involved and entangled in distant conflicts (i.e. US in Somalia) as well as the demands of globalization and regional bloc-formation. Such post-Cold War contextual circumstances were to produce two significant inter-related changes within the UN.

On the one hand, there was the UN's tendency to widen its security intervention so as to champion peacekeeping and conflict prevention, something that both the 1992 Agenda for Peace and the 2000 Brahimi report aptly confirm. This was only possible due to the UN's overruling of the relative sanctity of state sovereignty under certain conditions, namely genocide, humanitarian intervention or peace processes. On the other hand, such refocusing by the UN prompted the organization to increasingly intersect with other role-players while dealing with disputes and conflict resolution.

The end result of this change was that different actors other than the global UN, such as regional organizations (European Union, African Union, OSCE, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Organisation of American States and Association of South East Asian Nations to name a few), states (like Australia in East Timor), groups of states, NGOs and individuals (i.e. Nelson Mandela in Burundi, Abdelaziz Bouteflika between Ethiopia and Eritrea, or more recently Martti Ahtisaari in Kosovo), provided alternatives and assumed new roles in conflict prevention and resolution (Wedgwood, 1997). More concretely, external input was particularly required in two distinct recurrent scenarios: when the parties implicated in the dispute are not able or willing to reach an agreement; or when holding a plebiscite or referendum in the disputed territory is also not attainable (Miall, 1992).

Against this backdrop, the newcomer AU proposed reformed institutions and offered a credible strategy of conflict prevention by assuming to be willing to interfere, without consent, in the affairs of states to preserve peace and the rule of law. Indeed, by legally curtailing the sovereign prerogatives of African states, the UA assumed a disposition to move from the 'culture of non-intervention' of its predecessor (OUA) to a 'culture of non-indifference' (Williams, 2007).[6]

However, its strict adherence to the principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty and national independence served more as an argument for non-intervention than for involvement in conflicts. This is visible, for instance, in the fact that by favouring harmony and states over groups, the UA did not prevent its governing *uti possidetis* principle to be ignored and violated right at the outset in the case of Morocco over Western Sahara (Shelley, 2004: 27).

Thus, only in theory did the African organization endeavour to foster best practice in this respect. An analysis of the Western Sahrawi dispute in particular is revealing of a continuity line in terms of the regional organization's approach and the durableness of the difficulties faced by the AU in the resolution of the conflict in the last African colony.

Following years of being contracted out by the UN to play an action role on the affair, and shortly after calling for a joint AU and UN facilitated talks for a free and fair referendum for the people of Western Sahara (January 2018), the AU surprisingly announced, in September 2018, that it opted for limiting its peace efforts in order to support the UN process in the region (Ani, 2018). The more restricted role by the AU implies that the issue will not be discussed by its Peace and Security Council – where conflict situations are usually addressed – but rather by a troika of heads of state (the outgoing, current and incoming AU chairpersons) alongside the AU Commission chairperson, and without any binding effect.

Such unexpected and unprecedented decision by the AU followed Morocco's return to the organization in 2017 as its 55th member and constituted a big win for Rabat's contentious of the UA biased stance on the former Spanish colony. By attempting to move it from the UN to the AU and then freeze the issue by returning it once again to the UN, Morocco

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6 More concretely, Article 4(h) of the AU's Charter states that it has the right to intervene in a member state to 'restore peace and stability', to 'prevent war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity'; and in response to 'a serious threat to legitimate order'.

believed that the idle time works in favour of its pretensions in the hope that the passing of time will convert the Western Sahara takeover into a *fait accompli*.

A number of diverse environmental or 'organization of hypocrisy' factors account for the UA's partial failure in question: non-cooperative neighbours, the lack of political will of the Western powers, Moroccan suffering from the 'strong hubris syndrome' – believing it has the power to implement its will regardless of Sahrawi opposition – and not acknowledging full legitimacy to the AU. Besides, the AU also had to deal with the crucial internal issue of funding shortage (Schnabel, 2001: 19) due to its continual struggle to ensure that its members pay their dues at all let alone on time (Williams, 2006).

Admitting that both the relative dependence on local and external actors and the half-hearted support of those same actors, as well as its fund shortage, may beset AU's intervention, still the brunt of responsibility also lies on the regional organization's apparent incapacity or disinclination to utilize its potential to the fullest, notably in the case of the Western Sahara dispute.

Taken into consideration that no state has yet acknowledged the Moroccan *de facto* ruling over the Western Sahara, there is no tension between the principles of sovereignty or internal affairs and the humanitarian intervention. Morocco is the occupying force of Western Sahara preventing a waiting-state to enter functions and the Sahrawi people to exercise their self-determination right.

Thus, despite teaming up with the AU in cooperating to reach a peace settlement to the Western Sahara dispute, the UN has been unable to achieve the referendum for self-determination. Eventually, as a way to avoid confrontation between the allies of the contending parties to the dispute, the UN had to reassume the solo role to try once again to resolve the crisis through MINURSO. This is revealing of the organizations' uneasiness to move from the 'culture of non-intervention' to the 'culture of non-indifference'.

Furthermore, the case of the Western Sahara is illustrative of the strategic means of managing the pressures of inconsistent logics of consequences and appropriateness that the possibility of contracting out offers (Lipson, 2007), as a remaining compelling evidence of 'organized hypocrisy' by the UN. Finally, it also corroborates the contradictory nature of the organizations' mediation role in conflict resolution: it can be both ameliorative of the situation and counter-productive.

Conclusion

As a rule, the existence of 'organized hypocrisy' in international organizations involved in conflict resolution dynamics has been more asserted than demonstrated and it tends to escape empirical verification. Against this backdrop, the purpose of this paper is to illustrate the existence of ' organized hypocrisy' by the UN in the Western Saharan conflict. The latter was a creation and legacy of post-colonialism and constitutes an evocative example of the most conflict-ridden continent in the world region. It is basically a territorial dispute also involving competition over resources and regional political power which has prevented for more than 40-years both Maghrebi integration and the African unity. Moreover, its long-tailed stalemate constitutes a pebble in the shoe of the international community and a source of permanent latent security threat in the Mediterranean Basin. Based upon the tailor-made analysis of the UN intervention in the protracted dispute of the Western Sahara, the article examined the prospects and challenges of peacekeeping intervention faced by international organizations. It concludes that despite the meritorious attempts of peacekeeping (or conflict management more than resolution), the considerable inherent limitations and extrinsic obstacles faced by the UN in the last African colony are illustrative of the organizations' dysfunctional impediments to put an end to a conflict.

True that it has performed the pivotal role in collectively legitimising the self-determination right of the Sahrawi people, achieving a peace accord which amounted to a ceasefire and the preparation of a self-determination referendum (without no reference to any enforcement mechanism). However, and above all, it represents a partial failure and the Achilles' heel in the curriculum of the UN. Indeed, it proved incapable of abating the conflict by reaching a definitive solution for the Western Sahara and displayed throughout the years distinct evidences of 'globalized hypocrisy'.

More concretely, the paper proposed an examination of the continuous inconsistency between the rhetoric and action by the UN. In fact, notwithstanding the considerable amount of talk and decisions produced over the last 40 years, it only served to satisfy the demands to address the ongoing issue, without actually reversing into action. Indeed, the Western Sahara example unveils the huge gap between rhetoric and policy of international organizations. In a similar way, UN's rhetoric (talk and decisions) about peacekeeping reform throughout the years also did but compensate for the inaction regarding the Western Sahara self-referendum.

Lastly, another evidence of 'organized hypocrisy' underlying UN's record towards the last African colony consisted of subcontracting a regional organization (the AU) – right from the outset of MINURSO and until quite recently, before re-assuming a solo role – to vie for the resolution of the conflict. Contracting out the AU, however, only served as a strategic mean of managing the pressures of the contradictory logics of consequences and appropriateness, since it proved unable to achieve a plebiscite or referendum in the disputed territory.

It could be argued at this point that MINURSO's efforts to organize a referendum to decide the dispute have been continuously frustrated by 'organization of hypocrisy' factors or conflicting pressures and inconsistencies emanating from the UN's environment. Namely, it can be pointed out the Moroccan government's refusal, at critical junctures, to cooperate in practice in the implementation of the agreed procedures as the sole responsible for MINURSO lack of success. Not risking any significant international opprobrium, Morocco has been reluctant to accept both the UN and the UA terms, and has been blocking with impunity the resolution of the Western Saharan dispute.

Nevertheless, Rabat has been able to behave in this way only because of the attitude of the UN's Security Council, which has repeatedly refused to impose its binding arbitration at Morocco's expense. It seems therefore to be the case of the global system of law and order being pushed aside by Rabat, with the condoning of the UN, out of fear of the undesirable prospect of the unstable and unfriendly Morocco. UN member states, perhaps over-identified with Morocco, appear to lack the political will to act decisively, choosing instead to continue delaying the resolution of the protracted Saharwi conflict.

In reality, and despite being a straightforward case in terms of international legality, the Western Sahara state-to-be has been 'let down' by the incapacity or unwillingness of the global community to find an acceptable formula which puts in place the Sahrawi right to self-determination. That is the case of both the UN and the major Western powers.

In short, the lack of vital support by the UN accounts for the failure of many attempts to find a resolution for this stalemate. Far from dissolving the conflict, these previous and currently missed opportunities have done nothing but perpetuate the status quo in the former Spanish colony.

Originally purposed to fulfill the task of granting self-determination, MINURSO has been unable to provide for its namesake. What is worst, considering the historic incapacity by the UN to reform MINURSO and in view of the difficulties involved in achieving more decisive steps towards the referendum process by the traditional means – either increasing

troops, equipment or funding – the case has been made for the UN to consider to begin planning an exit strategy by introducing a series of progressive pre-exit benchmarks (Dyer, 2015).

In sum, assessing the role of the UN in the failed MINURSO and the unrelenting continuity of the Western Saharan affair, sheds light to the organization's pragmatic peacekeeping approach which aims at assuring its survival at all cost, regardless of freezing and ossifying the far-reaching deadlock. Such contention – on MINURSO being the lesser devil – serves to corroborate the argument that the likelihood of 'organized hypocrisy', as a response to conflicting demands, is inversely related to the efficacy of alternative means of managing conflicts (Brunsson 2003: 12).

Meanwhile, the peace accord and plans for the self-determination referendum in the Western Sahara are becoming almost moribund which makes the collaboration of international and regional organizations even more pressing. Despite the hypothetical commitment fatigue of the international community, and the past record of 'organyzed hypocrisy', it is rather ironic that the UN may still be pivotal in a conflict which is difficult to settle and hard to resolve.

Acrónimos

AU – African Union
EU – European Union
MINURSO – Mission for the Referendum in the Western Sahara
NGO – Non-governmental organization
OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OUA – Organisation of African Unity
SC – Security Council
UN – United Nations

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