

**Title:**

Ambiguities of radicalism after insurgents become rulers: conflicting pressures on revolutionary state power in Western Sahara's liberation movement

**Abstract:**

Armed insurgents seeking to seize the state often aim to transform the nature of state power. Yet for insurgents who become ruling authorities, how do radical visions of state power influence governance after the urgency of war? This article examines state-building in the liberation movement for Western Sahara, a partially recognized state which has ruled an exiled civilian Sahrawi population in Algeria from wartime through to a prolonged cease-fire. Drawing on in-depth qualitative fieldwork, and engaging with theories of radicalism, post-war socio-political reconstruction and anomalous forms state power, the article traces how post-ceasefire international and domestic contexts created conflicting pressures and opportunities for both the moderation, and the continuation, of Sahrawi refugees' wartime radical governance. This case of insurgents-turned-rulers suggests how radicalism and moderation are overlapping processes, how moderation is not necessarily an 'undoing' of radicalism, and how radical ideas matter for leadership and grassroots militants in different ways.

**Keywords:**

Radicalism, post-war governance, liberation movements, revolutionary state power, exile, Western Sahara

Amongst the motivations for insurgents to take up arms in pursuit of capturing the state is, in many cases, a desire to transform the very idea of the state. Yet for insurgents who successfully capture state power, state-building may in practice reproduce forms of state power which resemble the very state which insurgents originally contested. This raises questions about how insurgents' ideological beliefs, especially radical visions of the state, influence governance once insurgents take power, the urgency of war passes, and pressures of regime survival materialize. Theories which posit that post Cold War insurgents have limited ideological commitment (Collier and Hoeffler 2004), and that radical political parties adopt more moderate positions once they integrate into mainstream political activities (Huntington 1991), seemingly suggest potential explanatory frameworks for the neglect of insurgents-turned-rulers of radical visions of state power.

Nevertheless, expectations of a straightforward diminishing importance of radical visions of state power for post Cold War insurgents-turned-rulers are problematic. First, there is a risk of dismissing too quickly the importance of ideology for insurgent militants (Curtis and Sindre under review). As the articles in this special issue address, scholars have too often neglected, rather than investigated, the influence of insurgents' ideological beliefs, including alternative visions of state power, on post-war politics. Second, just as theories which posit that political integration leads to the moderation of radicalism risk normalizing a westernized ideal of a transparent, democratic political party and a universalistic notion of progress (Selby 2013), an expectation that insurgents-turned-rulers will reproduce established power relations risks

normalizing a homogenized understanding of state power. Third, wider studies of post-war socio-political reconstruction have underscored the emergence of ambiguous windows of opportunity for contrasting trends e.g. for greater gender equality (Moran 2010) as well as increasing gender inequality (Abramowitz and Moran 2012).

Bearing in mind these imperatives – to investigate rather than dismiss the significance of radical ideas, to avoid a homogenizing vision of state power, and to recognize the ambiguity of post-war socio-political windows of opportunity – this article investigates the influence of ideologies (understood in the broad sense as a coherent set of beliefs) about state transformation by asking how insurgents' radical visions to transform state power fare during post-war rule.<sup>1</sup> The demands of regime survival and the consolidation of new elites may exert pressures for insurgents-turned-rulers to moderate their radical visions of state power. Yet at the same time other factors may exert pressures for continuing radical agendas which contest pre-war social and political orders. An investigation of how insurgents-turned-rulers meet with contradictory pressures and opportunities on international and domestic fronts for *both* diminishing *and* continuing radicalism promises insight into radicalism as well as post-war and post-insurgency politics. Radicalism and moderation – understood here as, respectively, the willingness to replace, or to work through, existing institutions (Whiting 2016: 571) but also, more broadly, existing practices and principles – can be overlapping even if partially contradictory processes. Moderation, then, does not necessarily entail an 'undoing' of radicalism in that some radical policies may enable and support subsequent moderation. Furthermore, radical ideas of insurgents-turned-rulers may matter for different constituencies, such as leadership and grassroots militants, in different ways.

To address these concerns, I investigate a case of insurgents-turned-rulers, the liberation movement Polisario Front (henceforth Polisario), which represents the people of Western Sahara (formerly Spanish Sahara) in north-west Africa. Falling within the category of Africa's anti-colonial liberation guerrillas (Clapham 1998b: 6), Polisario is also more than a liberation movement. The Front overlaps with the partially recognized state, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), founded by Polisario in 1976. In the eyes of the African Union and the fluctuating number of states which recognize it, SADR is a state. Partially resembling and partially contrasting with other exile governments such as Palestinians in Lebanon in the 1970s and Tibetans in India from 1959 to the present, SADR maintains relations with other states, controls about a quarter of the territory of Western Sahara, and has governed a Sahrawi refugee population on borrowed territory in Algeria since 1976. Although it runs a state authority, Polisario has never formally become a political party, nor has Sahrawi nationalism produced multiple political parties as is the case for Palestinians. Polisario's governance activities – including the organization of elections for both SADR and Polisario offices – nevertheless resemble the activities of not only a state but also a political party understood as 'a political movement that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office' (Sartori 1976: 57). Given the extent to which Polisario both overlaps with and challenges dominant models of the state and political parties, for simplicity in this article I discuss Polisario as a state power, and use Polisario as a shorthand for the conjunction of liberation movement and partially recognized state authority which operates in exile with echoes of a one-party state.

Polisario is a rich case through which to assess insurgents' radical agendas for the transformation of the state during war and its aftermath. Whilst waging a war against Morocco for sovereignty over Western Sahara (1976-1991), the Front introduced policies of participatory direct democracy, redistribution and social egalitarianism. These policies were radical in their transgression of colonial and tribal hierarchies – and constitute a reminder of the inadequacy of narrow definitions of 'radicalism' as the antithesis of (liberal) democracy. In 1991 Polisario transitioned to a cease-fire period of 'frozen conflict' – still current at the time of writing – where an end to war has not seen belligerents agree on peace. Refraining from active combat, the Front shifted from 'bullets to ballots' by pressing for a referendum on self-determination (which to date has not occurred). Although the situation of Polisario is strictly speaking post-ceasefire, it resembles post-war scenarios to the extent that the cessation of warfare has redistributed resources and people creating new governance opportunities and needs. Given that the Front combines party-like and state-like elements in an unusual context of exile, I draw on theoretical frameworks, spanning interdisciplinary conversations between comparative politics and social anthropology, which address each of these aspects: the moderation of radical political parties, which I take as a starting point for investigating how insurgents-turned-rulers (not necessarily in the form of a conventional political party) moderate, or not; the ambiguous potential of post-war socio-political reconstruction; and theories of how anomalous forms of state power provide opportunities as well as constraints for governance, which I explore here from the point of view of the exceptionality of exile as a favourable condition for continuing radicalism. Importantly, however, overlap of radicalism and moderation does not stem only from liminality as an environment favourable to ongoing radicalism, but also from wartime legacies and popular appetite.

Methodologically, I adopt an in-depth case study with a focus on ethnographic, immersive fieldwork. Comparative political scientists and ethnographers overlap in taking the in-depth study of a single case as a means of achieving necessary depth of analysis to elucidate wider patterns, the relevance of which to other comparable cases may then be explored (Bernard 1998; Gerring 2004).<sup>ii</sup> The strengths of ethnographic fieldwork include building up long-term experience and rapport with interlocutors to enrich analysis. Using participant observation the ethnographer becomes skilled in understanding experiences from local points of view, learns beyond the scope of interview questions and textual sources, and unpacks potential gaps between what people say and what they do. Ethnographic fieldwork is thus an enriching method for examining the influence of ideologies and policies. In cases such as Polisario where some policy changes are undocumented, intensive fieldwork is at times virtually the only means for a researcher to trace changing policies. My analysis draws on two years of fieldwork (January 2007 to January 2009) and additional short trips (between 2006 and 2014). Although Polisario makes claims on Sahrawis in multiple locations, from Polisario-controlled Western Sahara to Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara and diaspora communities in Spain, France and elsewhere, the refugee camps in Algeria host the highest concentration of persons for whom Polisario is the quotidian ruling state power. For this reason, I focus on the refugee camps. Having conducted most of my field research in the local Hassaniya dialect of Arabic which I learnt, I draw on refugees' accounts of wartime and cease-fire political life, my own observations, informal and formal interviews with lay refugees and Polisario officers, as well as Polisario official documents.

In what follows, I first examine how theories of the moderation of radicalism, post-war reconstruction and exceptional forms of state power illuminate the study of post-war governance by insurgents-turned-rulers. Next, I introduce Polisario and its early radical ideas and practices of state power. I then assess the international and domestic factors which pressured towards moderation in the cease-fire period. I go on to examine how exile as a space of potential experimentation, and local appetites formed by wartime legacies, facilitate ongoing radicalism. I conclude by reflecting on the overlap and values of radicalism and moderation.

### UNPACKING RADICALISM IN POST-WAR, ANOMALOUS TIMES

A programme to change the nature of the state is characteristic of political revolutionaries (Skocpol 1979). Yet when insurgents who have espoused agendas to change the state succeed in capturing state power, after the urgency of war new pressures arise for regime survival, the consolidation of the power of new elites, and the establishment of relations with other states. How do ambitions to transform the nature of state power fare in such post-war contexts? Since the 1990s wave of democratization, much analysis of organized political movements' moderation has focused on political parties (although see Berti 2013). Taking as a starting point an assumption that radicals are those who refuse to work through existing institutions and moderates are those who agree to work through existing institutions, since the twilight of the Cold War scholars have explored how integration into mainstream political processes, such as electoral competition with other parties, may encourage moderation (Huntington 1991; Przeworski 1991). Wide-ranging debates about the forms and relationships of radicalism and moderation – too broad to review fully here (see e.g. Schwedler 2006: 11-18; Brouck and Künkler 2013) – address an underlying expectation that exposure to new institutional constraint, or contact with new ideas and practices, can lead radicals to moderate and work within existing institutions. Whilst this 'moderation hypothesis' usually addresses political parties specifically, the premise that integration into mainstream political activities encourages working within existing institutions offers a suggestive framework for understanding why various insurgents-turned-rulers may neglect erstwhile projects for state transformation and 'tend to behave just like any post-war government' (Dudouet and Lundström 2016: 65).

There are nevertheless tensions within the 'moderation hypothesis'. In addition to normalizing a Euro-centric view of 'desirable', 'moderate' political practices and institutions, sidelining alternative models and suggesting a teleology from radicalism to moderation, this hypothesis assumes a clear boundary of radicalism and moderation as a willingness/refusal to work within existing institutions. Yet the grounds for claiming such a distinction are subjective. Radical separatist political movements and parties often share with some of the states they contest a commitment to popular sovereignty (Whiting 2016) – thus some 'radicals' are willing to work within the institutions of liberal democracy while others favour alternative forms of democracy to achieve popular sovereignty. Other radicals follow institutions that are not part of liberal peace-building e.g. Hamas is committed to the Islamic institution of *shoura* (consultation) (Løvlie 2013). Anti-colonial liberation movements endorse not only some local institutions but also international institutions such as popular sovereignty, the right to self-determination, and decolonization. Indeed, Polisario militants

call for more faithful adherence to such institutions, and reprimand members of the UN Security Council for failing to work within these institutions.

Recognition of the potentially blurred conceptual and empirical distinctions between radicalism and moderation has led to nuanced accounts of moderation. Political integration has different outcomes according to context (Schwedler 2006); inclusion may be neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for moderation in some cases (Brocker and Künkler 2013: 171). Radicalism can operate as a multi-dimensional process in which it is necessary to differentiate between radical means and ends (Whiting 2016), and between radical behaviours and ideologies (Brocker and Künkler 2013: 177). Moderation may in practice concern only some but not all of these dimensions. As a result, external signs of moderation may have a contingent relationship to intra-party moderation (Løvlie 2013; Sprenkels under review). Given these blurred boundaries, it is not helpful to identify radicalism and moderation through criteria such as a willingness to use violence or conformity to specific institutions of liberal democracy. It is more helpful to think of radicalism and moderation as a process of change along a spectrum (Schwedler 2006: 352), and also as relative terms (Sprenkels under review). That is to say, what is radical in one context is not necessarily radical in another, yet within a particular context a distinction between the two may be meaningful. Here I take ideas and policies to be radical to the extent that they transgress existing institutions, practices and principles. A focus on practices and principles, as well as institutions, avoids conflating moderation with the institutions of liberal democracy. Further insight into the blurred boundaries between radicalism and moderation, and into specific conditions which might encourage overlap between them, emerges from a consideration of studies of post-war reconstruction and anomalous forms of state power.

Proponents of moderation through integration/contact are optimistic about the opportunities for moderation arising from political transition from war to the cessation of armed combat – the scenario most analogous to Polisario's transition from wartime to cease-fire and from bullets to (lobbying for) ballots and diplomacy. It has become commonplace for practitioners, and some scholars, to apprehend post-war reconstruction as a window of opportunity for reconfiguring social and political life and promoting liberal democracy. Various post-war social and political initiatives – ranging from civil society activism to Truth and Reconciliation commissions and (inter)national criminal tribunals – aim to create more tolerant social relations as well as more democratic and accountable forms of government in post-war societies.

Yet in practice, initiatives for post-war socio-political reconstruction can have opposite effects to those originally intended. Efforts to achieve accountability for past violence can reinforce exclusionary national discourses (R. Wilson 2001), silence dissent (Burnet 2012) and neglect urgent local concerns for economic survival (Mieth 2013). Meanwhile, oppressive power relations may thrive on the creation of truth regimes (Theidon 2013) or on local discourses of 'recovery' from war thanks to a 'return to tradition' (even when no such pre-war traditions actually existed) (Abramowitz and Moran 2012). The windows of opportunity that emerge with post-war socio-political reconstruction are profoundly ambiguous. This ambiguity within post-war socio-political transitions alerts us to the possibility of an ambiguous scenario of contrasting yet overlapping trends of moderation and ongoing radicalism.

Although Polisario does not correspond to the idealized model of an independent, sovereign state, a growing literature within political science, social anthropology, geography and related disciplines has shown the relevance of anomalous forms of state power – e.g. annexed territories, unrecognized or partially recognized states and governments-in-exile – for interrogating the state. Such spaces of anomalous sovereignty claims have shown that sovereignty is less helpfully understood through a binary model – as either present in full, or totally absent – than through degrees of statehood (Caspersen 2012; Clapham 1998a) or a spectrum encompassing ‘contested’ and ‘confirmed’ states (Geldenhuis 2009). Notably, predicaments of anomaly, such as exile, annexation and lack of (widespread) recognition, bring not only constraints but also opportunities for governance. For instance, the ‘siege’ mentality in which populations of such spaces often live can strengthen internal coherence (Caspersen 2012).<sup>iii</sup> Where a parent state is itself unstable, long-term liminality can end up providing (relatively) stable governance (Kolstø 2006; Pegg 1998).

In cases where both a government and a population are exiled – governments-in-exile who also do ‘governance-in-exile’ (A. Wilson 2016) – exile generates not only constraints of resource shortages, geographic dispersion, existential liminality and intense needs for external support, but also opportunities for experimentation in governance. Such experiments include innovative forms of taxation, elections spanning a transterritorial population, and creative techniques of claiming governmental legitimacy (McConnell 2016; Orjuela 2008; Stokke 2006; A. Wilson and McConnell 2015; A. Wilson 2016). Building on these insights, I suggest that the ongoing liminality of exile creates continuing opportunities for experiments with radical policies which transgress existing institutions, practices and principles. As the following sections explore, exile has brought Sahrawi refugees both constraints and opportunities.

### RADICAL BEGINNINGS

Unlike other insurgents in the Arabic-speaking world, Polisario is often little known outside specialist circles. Sahrawi nationalism against Spain’s colonial rule over Spanish Sahara developed in the 1950s. Colonialism, the growing sedentarization of the nomadic population, and Sahrawis’ increasing access through radios and education to information about decolonization all fostered Sahrawi nationalism. After Spain crushed an early nationalist movement in 1970, in 1973 young Sahrawi intellectuals founded the liberation movement commonly known by the Spanish acronym Polisario. Seeking independence, Polisario militants began guerrilla attacks on the Spanish authorities.

Although by 1975 Spain had set about planning a referendum on self-determination for the people of Western Sahara, the neighbouring states of Morocco and Mauritania submitted claims over the territory in response to which the UN General Assembly requested an Advisory Opinion from the International Court of Justice. When in October 1975 the Advisory Opinion did not find in favour of their respective claims, Morocco and Mauritania partially annexed the territory. In response, in February 1976 Polisario founded the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). Meanwhile Polisario’s army, the Sahrawi Popular Liberation Army (SPLA), fought both Morocco and Mauritania until the latter’s withdrawal in 1979. Morocco and Polisario continued at war until 1991 when the UN brokered a ceasefire with a view to staging a referendum on self-determination. Morocco and Polisario

disagree over the terms of a potential referendum and the UN Security Council is unwilling to impose a solution. The conflict drags on (see Boukhars and Roussellier 2014; Ojeda-Garcia et al. 2016), pitting Sahrawis' post-ceasefire non-violent resistance against Moroccan repression of Sahrawi dissidence (Porges and Leuprecht 2016).

The dispute has geographically divided Sahrawis living under Moroccan rule, either in Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara or southern Morocco, from Sahrawis living under the rule of Polisario, the majority of whom are in exile in five refugee camps near Tindouf in south-west Algeria (although a small number live in Polisario-controlled Western Sahara). The respective Moroccan-controlled and Polisario-controlled Sahrawi populations, and portions of Western Sahara, are physically separated by a defensive wall built by Morocco from the early 1980s which crosses Western Sahara from north to south.

The deadlocked conflict has allowed Polisario to practise state power and govern a civilian Sahrawi population of disputed size – 165,000 by some estimates – in exile in Algeria.<sup>iv</sup> Although operating in the adverse circumstances of exile in a harsh desert landscape, heavily reliant on fluctuating international aid and, since the mid 1990s, remittances of Sahrawis working abroad, Polisario has survived – despite the failure to achieve either the goal of self-determination or that of independence. This survival has entailed a range of strategies, only one aspect of which is the focus of this article: the implementation of evolving visions of revolutionary state power.

In the years preceding the 1991 cease-fire, despite the Marxist leanings of several policies (discussed below) it is not straightforward to label Polisario as 'Marxist'. Beyond their acceptance of ethno-nationalism as an ideology underpinning self-determination, Polisario supporters held heterogeneous views – ranging from socially conservative proponents of tribal influence to Marxist adherents of democratic centralism (Paul et al. 1976: 20) – and leaders eschewed a partisan ideology. Where some insurgents' adoption of ideologies is allegedly a strategy for legitimization and recruitment (Duffield 2001), in the case of Polisario the avoidance of partisan ideologies was strategic. It facilitated potential relationships with states of varying ideological orientations, and helped accommodate militants of divergent views. Polisario's ongoing success in persuading militants that the shared goal of independence should trump internal differences helps explain why, despite challenges such as 'defections' to Morocco, pro-war versus anti-war factions, and pro-SADR versus pro-Polisario factions, to date the movement has not splintered into rival political parties.

The Front's early policies and discourses nevertheless offer insight into leaders' visions of state power. These beliefs were radical by virtue of contrasting with aspects of existing forms of state power which Polisario resisted. Polisario opposed the colonial state, whether in the form of Spain, until 1976, or Morocco thereafter. The Front's dismissal of the colonial state is shared with many other liberation movements; in the case of Polisario, anti-colonialism also intersects with a discourse of tribal resistance to state power. In North Africa, a common term for state power, *makhzan* (meaning literally 'storehouse', and, in contemporary Arabic, 'Treasury'), emphasizes the tax-extracting activities of state power to take, store and eventually circulate resources. The extent to which, historically, tribes of the hinterlands of the Middle East and North Africa have resisted state power, including states' taxation, is the

subject of scholarly debate (see Tapper 1990; A. Wilson 2016: 38-46). With tribal resistance against the Moroccan Sultanate lying at the crux of the decolonization dispute between Polisario and Morocco, Polisario identifies with a discourse of longstanding Sahrawi resistance to a *makhzan*-like state. A common refrain amongst refugees was that 'we [Sahrawis] had no state [before Polisario]'. Refugees were not speaking in ignorance of the Spanish colonial state. Rather, they opined that, as Bedouin tribes, their experience of the state was limited to a colonial state which had failed to serve Sahrawis' interests. Fiercely critical, then, of colonial and *makhzan* tax-extracting state power, Polisario envisioned a radically different, allegedly emancipatory state power.

Polisario deployed (and continues to deploy) a vocabulary of leading a revolution (*thawrah*). If political revolution transforms the state while social revolution transforms both the state and the forms of social stratification which the state legitimizes (Skocpol 1979: 4-5), Polisario aimed at both kinds of transformation. The Front's attempted overthrowing of tribal and colonial political and social orders aimed to instigate new visions of the state and state-endorsed categories of social stratification. Three important features of that radical vision were participation, redistribution, and the promotion of social egalitarianism.

Taking inspiration from Muammar Gaddafi's Popular Revolution in Libya, Polisario sought to facilitate direct, participatory democracy (Wilson 2016: 73-79). Refugees took part in grassroots participatory forums, e.g. before elections and the General and municipal Congresses, in which 'the people' could, in theory, address cadres directly. In parallel, the Front introduced Gaddafi's system of Popular Committees so that committees of 'the people' would run public services in health care, education, rations distribution, small-scale production and dispute resolution. In the wartime period, when most men served in the SPLA, women staffed these Popular Committees.

In line with Polisario's rejection of the tax-extracting state (*makhzan*), the Front also envisaged state power as a vehicle for universal redistribution (Wilson 2016: 116-146). Thus, instead of there being a SADR Treasury responsible for raising income through taxes or other such means, the Sahrawi Red Crescent was responsible for distribution on a universal scale. Although rations are sourced from external funders such as the World Food Programme, all rations are distributed through Polisario organs such as Popular Committees. Thus during the wartime period when rations were the main means of sustenance, refugees' immediate experience was of dependence on Polisario for survival as well as for health and education services which the Front developed. In practice, Polisario did extract resources from the refugees, not in the form of taxes but in the form of refugees' labour through forums such as Popular Committees and the SPLA. Such extraction of labour was discursively naturalized, however, as being part of the revolutionary effort for national liberation.

Complementing the ideals of all citizens being able to take part in running the state, and the state providing for all citizens, was Polisario's aim to promote social egalitarianism – a goal shared with many liberation and revolutionary movements of the 1960s and 1970s. To this end, Polisario sought to emancipate 'women' and slaves as well as to undermine tribes, the internal hierarchies of the latter being perceived to threaten nationalist identification. Tactics – common to other other revolutionary states and movements – included standardizing bridewealth so that variation in marriage gifts could no longer signal the range of socially



acceptable marriages between hierarchically-ranked tribes (Wilson 2016: 156). Instead, a standardized bridewealth symbolized the radical idea that any Sahrawi could, in principle, marry any other Sahrawi. A further arena for social mixing was, for men, military service and, for women, communal labour in Popular Committees.

These radical policies led to some social reversals in the wartime years. A case in point concerns the administration of justice. In the pre-colonial context each politically dominant tribute-collecting tribe had its own tribal laws. Local legal specialists resolved disputes with reference to these tribal laws. These tribes had also convened a tribal council (*jamā'ah*) where senior males gathered to resolve disputes (Caro Baroja 1955: 23-4). In the altered context of the wartime refugee camps, where most men were at the battlefield, Polisario assigned the responsibility to resolve disputes to one of the Popular Committees. The women were assisted by only one man, a specialist in Islamic law tasked with ensuring that the committee's pronouncements conformed with *shariah*. Through measures such as this popularization, detribalization and feminization of the administration of justice, as well as the grassroots meetings and exchanges of rations for labour, Polisario created a participatory, redistributive and egalitarian-leaning state power that was radical in its reversal of pre-existing forms of state power and social order.

#### UNDERMINING RADICALISM

In the wake of the 1991 cease-fire, Sahrawi refugees and the Polisario leadership hoped to return soon to an independent Western Sahara. This change in Sahrawis' expectations coincided with changes in international shifts away from Cold War divisions towards expected transitions to liberal democracy, including in sub-Saharan Africa. This changed international context pressured Polisario to adopt internal reforms: a 'Sahrawi perestroika' (Shelley 2004: 179).

Issuing a revised SADR constitution in 1991, the movement endorsed the principle of a market economy for a future independent Western Sahara (SADR 1991). The Front also made the state apparatus more legible within liberal democratic frameworks. A semi-presidential system replaced the now disbanded former executive Council for the Command of the Revolution. The President acquired powers to appoint the prime minister, to consult with the prime minister in appointing ministers, to dissolve the Parliament and the government, and to command the armed forces (Es-Sweyih 2001: 71-2). The legislative body, the Sahrawi National Council (SNC), which previously had had little effective power, attained from 1995 the power to suggest (rather than merely approve) legislation as well as the power to pass a vote of no confidence in the ministers of the government (exercised in 1999 when it led to the dissolution of the government). The SNC also acquired the mandate to scrutinize the work of ministers and hold them to account. Thus, in an echo of moderation theory, Polisario leaders' contact with a new post Cold War political order and their anticipation of imminent (so they hoped) integration into mainstream political activities (in this case independent sovereignty) pushed them to adopt a more 'moderate' state apparatus.

Internal factors, in particular refugees' reduced tolerance for authoritarian intervention and demographic shifts in the labour market, also pressured Polisario to undermine radical policies. In 1988 refugees protested against the Front's repression of internal dissidents

(Shelley 2004: 179). Finding itself both less willing (because of its attempts to introduce more accountable government) and less able (because of refugees' resistance) to control refugees' lives, Polisario abandoned some radical policies.

For example, over the 1990s the Front abandoned standardized bridewealth (Wilson 2016: 159-179). Gradually, expensive bridewealth funded by a groom and his family re-emerged. As in other post-colonial resource-poor contexts, in the Sahrawi refugee camps expensive bridewealth is criticized locally as a barrier to young people, especially young men, achieving adulthood. For Sahrawi refugees, the disappearance of Polisario-sponsored standardized bridewealth had further significance. With it the message that, in theory, any Sahrawi (of whatever background) could marry any other Sahrawi also receded from the public domain. In the 2000s refugees commonly discussed marriages in terms of the tribe(s) from which the bride and groom hailed. Without some of the Polisario's authoritarian interventionism, such as in the domain of marriages, radical projects for social levelling were undermined.

Changing labour force demographics likewise diminished some radical policies. The cessation of active combat increased the long-term presence of demobilized young and middle-aged men in the refugee camps. From the 1990s as Polisario professionalized and bureaucratized services, including the disbanding of the Popular Committees in 1995, the Front created (often poorly paid) jobs which could accommodate men returning from the battlefield (and men and women returning from education abroad). Women's opportunities to take on such jobs – here as in other societies – were constrained by their disproportionate responsibilities for reproductive labour. In practice, then, the post-war labour demographic, combined with Polisario's bureaucratization of the state apparatus, displaced women from their previous dominance in some areas of governance. The administration of justice is a case in point (Wilson 2016: 101-104). When the popular committees were dissolved, most became 'local councils', still run by women. But the exception was the justice system, which professionalized with the creation of four tiers of formal lawcourts. Both men and women could train as lawyers and judges, but it was more common that men completed higher education and went on to work full-time in such positions. The justice system depopularized and defeminized.

The bureaucratization which undermined the radical wartime feminization of dispute resolution was part of a broader process whereby, after the cease-fire, international and domestic changes led to the abandonment of some radical forms of state power in the Sahrawi refugee camps. The relationship of such instances of moderation to radicalism is complex. New institutions and policies 'undid' some earlier forms of radicalism by allowing manifestations of gendered and tribal distinction to re-emerge. Yet at the same time early radical participatory democracy opened the way for growing mandates of transparency and accountability such as increased parliamentary scrutiny of ministers. Moderation did not simply 'undo' radicalism, then – and by no means did all radical practices disappear.

## ONGOING RADICALISM

Post-war shifts away from radical policies in the refugee camps were partial. Grassroots participation and consultation continued in public meetings, such as before municipal, legislative and General Congress elections. Despite the collapse of universal conscription to

Popular Committees and to the SPLA, socially heterogeneous labour-pooling continued in the 2000s as refugees donated labour 'for free' in ad hoc 'campaigns' (*hamlah*) (Wilson 2016: 137-140). Yet it is not merely the case that some radical policies survived as if vestiges still awaiting reform. International and domestic factors created opportunity and demand for ongoing and sometimes new radical policies and practices.

Just as anomalous forms of state power bring opportunities as well as constraints for the practice of state power (Caspersen 2012), the liminality of exile and operation in the margins of international society brings challenges for governance and yet can also facilitate experimentation in techniques of governance (McConnell 2016; Stokke 2006; A. Wilson and McConnell 2015). A necessary strategy for managing the constraints of exile, such experimentation also creates opportunities for transgressing existing institutions, practices and principles. One such instance for Sahrawi refugees concerns the introduction in 2008 of an electoral quota aimed at boosting women's representation in the SNC.

Sahrawi refugees vote in electoral constituencies according to their role in the liberation struggle. For many mothers, sisters and grandmothers, their reproductive labour to raise new generations of Sahrawis designates them to vote in 'home front' constituencies composed of mostly female voters. In 2008, the Front introduced a quota in these home front constituencies aimed at increasing women's representation in the SNC (Wilson 2016: 227-230). Various quotas intended to achieve greater gender parity in political representation are used across the world (Dahlerup 2006). It is not Polisario's interest in a quota per se that is radical – rather it is the design of the quota first introduced. Instead of adopting a conventional system of either reserved seats or of giving female candidates priority in candidate lists, the Front required each voter in newly-formed (as of 2008) multi-member constituencies to name at least two women candidates on the ballot paper. This rule applied in two six-member and two seven-member 'home-front' constituencies. The idea of any kind of quota was controversial in the eyes of some refugees. Many women, including in the Women's Union, opposed a quota, saying that they did not want a 'gift' from the state. After the quota proposition failed to gain approval at the General Congress of December 2007, the President imposed the quota by decree. In constituencies where the quota applied, some women complained that the quota constrained their right to vote with a 'free choice'. Refugees were thus aware of the radical character of the quota as a transgression of the principle of voters being free to choose any candidate they wished.

Although this quota design did not guarantee the election of a minimum number of women (since votes for women candidates could in theory be sufficiently split amongst rival women candidates so as not to produce winning female candidates), the quota succeeded in increasing the number of women elected in home front constituencies. The total number of seats for these constituencies increased in 2008 from 24 to 26, and the number of women elected here rose from nine to 13. The wider picture was an increase of 12 to 18 women in the now 53-member SNC, although this included three extra seats reserved for the Women's Union.

Following the controversies surrounding the introduction of the 2008 quota, in 2012 Polisario adopted a 'moderate' quota design for reserved seats: if two women did not feature amongst the six or seven winning candidates in the home front constituencies, then the first and (if

necessary) second highest-ranking women from the electoral list would take the place of the last elected man or two men. The obligation for voters to choose the names of at least two women – the radical element which transgressed the principle of the freedom to choose amongst candidates – was dropped. The result also turned out to be less radical: nine women were elected in the home front constituencies instead of 13 (the same number as had been elected in these constituencies before any quota was introduced). The 2008 quota design was a novel introduction of radicalism which stood out to refugees, and eventually to Polisario, as a transgression of liberal and direct democratic principles of voting. The fact that Polisario operates in the liminal condition of exile, away from the international electoral scrutiny often accorded to conventional states, created the opportunity for experimentation and the introduction of such a radical quota design. But the radical experiment prepared the ground for the moderate 2012 quota, and the 2015 Congress' subsequent vote to accept quotas to encourage women's representation in government. The moderate quota design did not so much 'undo' earlier radicalism but was facilitated by it.

Not only liminality creates opportunity for ongoing radicalism; domestic pressures push for continuing radicalism too. A history of insurgent rulers having implemented radical policies can create an ideological heritage favouring ongoing radicalism (Mampilly 2011). If 'starting conditions matter' (LeBas 2011: 35), then the fact that Sahrawi state power began with some 15 years of radical policies matters to refugees. This legacy has created popular appetite amongst some refugees for radical redistribution and participation at times surpassing the offerings of the state. Radicalism continues to matter – but for different constituencies in different ways.

One leger of continuing popular sympathy for radical policies is cross-generational nostalgia amongst refugees for the wartime years. Some young refugees talked fondly of the perceived egalitarianism of wartime standardized bridewealth, while older refugees regretted the alleged effectiveness of participatory meetings in the 1980s for holding political officers to account compared to the post-war scrutiny of the SNC. In the words of one man who had been an adult during the 1980s: 'that was when there was real holding to account'. A second indication of popular appetite for radical policies is refugees' moral approval of instances, shared as stories retold again and again, when refugees enforce radical redistribution on sometimes reluctant political officers. A typical example is a case, which I heard recounted amongst refugees in approving terms, of an elderly grandmother who once obtained a lift in a high-ranking officer's government car. She refused to get out of the car until he took her right to her home, on the grounds that she had 'as much right as him' to transport in a government-owned car. This lady enforced a radical redistribution of resources, and refugees recalled the incident approvingly. A third sign of popular appetite for continuing radical policies emerges in some refugees' anxieties that the achievements in the extraordinary circumstances of exile may be threatened once exile no longer pertains (and, these militants hope, independence has been achieved). It has become a refrain of activists in the exile Sahrawi women's movement that they will 'not accept' for the advances of extraordinary times to be lost in a post-independence future. Refugees' nostalgia, informal radical actions and anxieties about the future exert pressures for ongoing radical governance, indicating how radicalism continues to matter to those to whom it has brought tangible benefits.

## CONCLUSION: VALUES OF RADICALISM

The attempts of revolutionaries across different historical contexts both to seize and to transform state power raise questions about how the radical ideas of insurgents-turned-rulers for transforming state power fare once the urgency of war fades. Through the in-depth study of one case of insurgents-turned-rulers, the exiled liberation movement for Western Sahara, Polisario, this article has brought into conversation debates within comparative politics and social anthropology – about the moderation of radical politics, the ambiguity of post-conflict socio-political reconstruction, and anomalous forms of state power – in order to foreground broader insights about radicalism, moderation, and revolutionary state power.

Moderation theory, which has focused on how radical political parties moderate following contact and/or integration with moderate institutions, is partially helpful for understanding insurgents-turned-rulers' changing visions of state power. For Polisario, contact with a new post Cold War political order and anticipated integration into international society pushed the Front towards moderation in the shape of reforming the apparatus of the state in emulation of liberal democratic norms. But the shortcomings of moderation theory are equally highlighted in a fine-grained study of a 'radical' political movement such as Polisario. Polisario's early policies of participatory democracy, redistribution and social egalitarianism which were radical in their transgression of colonial and tribal hierarchies were both compatible with and indeed facilitated the adoption of liberal democratic institutions and practices (such as greater parliamentary scrutiny of ministers). The radical quota design of 2008 led the way to later wider acceptance of the principle of (moderate) quotas to strengthen women's representation in government. Moderation is not necessarily an undoing of radicalism, then, but can build on and develop institutions, practices and principles originating in radicalism. Given that a political movement may question some existing institutions whilst accepting others (Whiting 2016), and can incorporate and maintain radical practices during moderation, as we see in the case of Polisario, radicalism and moderation emerge not as inherent opposites but as relative terms (Sprenkels under review). By tracing Polisario's fluctuating transgressions of multiple registers of institutions, practices and principles, I have additionally highlighted how, in what conditions, and why, radicalism and moderation may overlap.

Moderation – already observed to be a contingent (Schwedler 2006), multi-dimensional process (Brocker and Künkler 2013; Whiting 2016) in which moderation for external audiences may run alongside internal radicalism (Sprenkels under review) or radical ends can persist alongside increasingly moderate means (Løvlie 2013) – can overlap and take place concurrently with parallel, even if apparently contradictory, ongoing radicalism. In the post-war period, Polisario introduced a reformed state apparatus with some liberal democratic institutions and abandoned some radical policies, whilst it continued with other radical policies and introduced new radical experiments. Meanwhile, some refugees demanded, and on occasions created, opportunities for radical participation, redistribution and egalitarianism. The experiences of Polisario suggest which conditions lend themselves to such overlap of radicalism and moderation. The confluence of international and domestic factors arising from post-war transition, and which push simultaneously in contrasting directions of both diminishing and ongoing radicalism, is key. Here, the post Cold War liberal peace-building consensus and the influx of demobilized male combatants pushed for diminishing radicalism, whilst the ongoing liminality of exile and the recent history of radical wartime governance

pressured for continuing and even new radicalism. As for why international and domestic factors could push in contradictory directions, both radical and moderate, the wider tensions of post-war transition and socio-political reconstruction suggest that the ambiguities of radicalism for insurgents-turned-rulers are characteristic of post-war windows of opportunity which are inherently ambiguous.

Insurgents-turned-rulers at times reproduce forms of state power that they set out to contest, even as they may simultaneously continue, in practice and in discourse, to promote an alternative vision of the state. These contradictions within the practice of state power, explored here from the point of view of diminishing and continuing radicalism in the case of Polisario, suggest that radical visions of the state matter for insurgents-turned-rulers but matter to different constituencies, such as leaders and grassroots militants, in different ways. For leadership militants, radical visions may help explain how and why these militants came to be rulers (in the pursuit of such visions) but become one of several competing concerns for how they remain in power. Grassroots militants for whom wartime radical governance brought tangible benefits may find that ongoing radical visions of state power help give meaning to these militants' understandings of their past and present, as well as their aspirations for, and fears about, uncertain futures.

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<sup>i</sup> Here I define insurgents as 'armed factions that use violence to challenge the state' (Mampilly 2011: 3n3).

<sup>ii</sup> On the use of ethnographic methods in political science, see Wedeen 2010.

<sup>iii</sup> I address Caspersen's (2012) argument about the concomitant constraints and opportunities of anomalous state power. Regarding her category of 'unrecognized states', Caspersen (2012: 8) excludes SADR on the grounds of lack of de facto independence and territorial control.

<sup>iv</sup> The size of all Sahrawi populations is disputed. Between 1995 and 2004, the UNHCR estimated that there were 165,000 refugees from Western Sahara in Algeria (UNHCR 2005). The UN list of potential referendum voters in 2000 contained 41,150 annexed and 33,998 exiled Sahrawis (Zunes and Mundy 2010: 214).