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**Stories of a Nation:
Historical Narratives and Visions of the Future
in Sahrawi Refugee Camps**

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

With the exception of a few goats and camels, [the Saharawi] were totally dependant for survival on aid – even water and fuel (bottled gas), which had to be transported to them from outside the area. There were no humanitarian agencies present. When asked why, the response was, ‘We do not want “experts” in our camps. It would diminish our sense of responsibility for ourselves.’ They actively used their time in exile to build a twentieth-century democratic nation, women’s equality being one of the strongest features of their social organization.

Harrell-Bond 1999: 156

Saharawi is the name given to a group of people who traditionally inhabit a coastal area of northwestern Africa called Western Sahara. Descended from Arab traders, their predominantly nomadic society was colonized by Spain, undertook a successful liberation struggle, and was attacked by Morocco and Mauritania in 1975. At that time, tens of thousands of Saharawi, led by the Frente Popular para la Liberacion de Saguia el-Hamra y Rio de Oro (Polisario) fled to Algeria (Cozza 2003). In Algeria, they settled in 5 refugee camps around the trading outpost of Tindouf and founded the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). The Polisario inflicted a series of defeats on Mauritania, who in 1979 ceded the southern third of Western Sahara back to the Polisario, although it was then quickly occupied by Morocco. The Polisario continued fighting Morocco throughout the 1980s, while aligning itself with the socialist movement and seeking international recognition (Shelley 2004). It was more successful in the latter endeavor than the former. Militarily, the Moroccan government has successfully limited the capacity of the Polisario to conduct raids through the construction of the longest defensive fortification in the world. Politically, however, the SADR obtained a seat at the Organization of African Unity in 1984, and has been recognized by 76 countries worldwide.¹ In 1988 the Polisario entered into cease-fire negotiations. These were successful, and a UN monitored ceasefire began in 1991. Throughout the 1990s and up to the current day, negotiations concerning a referendum on the final status of Western Sahara have taken place. While agreements seem to have been made, the identification of voters has yet to be completed and no referendum appears likely to occur in the near future. The Saharawi refugees have lived in camps for 30 years, with no end in sight.

There is a great deal of analysis of the international dimensions of the Western Sahara conflict (see Shelley 2004), yet the domestic politics of the Saharawi² have also undergone significant changes since the 1970s. Throughout the Spanish colonial period, the Saharawi were a tribal confederation that lacked any strong central authority (see Cozza 2003: Ch. 2). While tribes could bind together in the face of a significant external threat, they did not have a Saharawi-wide domestic policy (from interview). However, in 1975 the council of tribal representatives convened by the

¹http://www.answers.com/main/ntquery?method=4&dsid=2222&dekey=Foreign+relations+of+Wester+n+Sahara&gwp=8&curtab=2222_1

² “Saharawi” in this thesis refers to the refugee community. Like most identities, the Saharawi one is contested. As well as the Saharawi that still live in Western Sahara (or Southern Morocco), there are people who identify themselves as Saharawi that live in Morocco and are aligned with the Moroccan government. Without going in to detail, the question of “who is Saharawi?” is a central issue in negotiations around the referendum.

colonial government voted to dissolve itself and pass political authority to the Polisario (Cozza 2003: 72). After fleeing to Algeria, the Polisario undertook a fundamental reorganization of Saharawi society. In the 30 years since the camps were founded, the Saharawi have developed democratic institutions, widespread literacy, and systems for public education, healthcare, justice, and entertainment. It is obvious to any observer that the Saharawi have a central bureaucratic authority. Yet is it true, as Harrell-Bond claims, that the Saharawi have “a twentieth-century democratic nation”? (Harrell-Bond 1999: 156). Leaving aside what differentiates a twentieth-century democratic nation from any other type, this question raises several important issues. What is a nation? How are nations created? Can a nation be created in a refugee camp? If so, how and why?

The thesis of this work is that the administration of refugee camps and humanitarian aid by refugees facilitates the creation of a national identity. This thesis proceeds out of three propositions. The first is that camps are loci for the creation of collective narratives about their residents. The second is that administrative authority and economic control enable a power elite to gain asymmetric authority in a relational field. The third is that nationalism meets the new elites’ need for legitimacy in the context of “traditional” narratives and provides a unifying “vision of the future”.

In order to demonstrate the validity of this thesis, the following organization will be employed. First, a working theory of nationalism, power, and camps will be constructed. This will require a review of the theoretical literature on nationalism and national identity; a discussion of the theories of power and society that inform the working theory; and an overview of some of the key works on refugee identity, administrative structures, and power relations. Second, the specific sources and manifestations of Saharawi nationalism will be explored, including the construction of nationalizing structures by the Polisario elite and the impact of those structures on the Saharawi population. The paper concludes with the implications of this work for research on nationalism, refugee camps, and the Sarahawi.

SECTION 2: NATIONALISM, POWER, AND CAMPS

Prior to assessing whether the Saharawi are a nation, and whether or not they became one in the Algerian refugee camps, it is necessary to determine what nations are and how they form. This step is critical, as the chosen theory of the nation will heavily influence the interpretation of evidence and the outcome of the thesis. Thus, it merits a review of major works in the field and an explication of the impact they have on the working theory created herein. Further, since nationhood presumes a certain relationship among people and between people and authority, it is important to make explicit the theories of belonging and power that underpin the theory of how nationalism is created. Finally, these theories of nationalism and power must be linked to refugee camps through an evaluation of the capacity of camps to function as centers for the creation of meaning and as resources that can be exploited by elites.

Theories of Nationalism

For a discipline that has been subject to serious academic inquiry for a short time, the study of nationalism has seen a remarkable proliferation of descriptive and ontological theories (Hutchison and Smith 1994, Intro). In fact, there are now so many attempts to categorize the nation that there are debates on the most appropriate way to categorize the categories. The most common dialectic for categorizing theories of nationalism is to divide them into “primordialist” and “instrumentalist” camps, where the primordialists believe that nations are extensions of previously existing human communities and instrumentalists believe nations are a creation of modern conditions and elites. This can become problematic, as this summary of the positions obscures many of the important distinctions between the instrumentalists (a majority of those writing today) and risks caricature of the “primordialists”.³ Because of the level of detail required and the contentions this paper makes, a different classificatory scheme will be used; theories of nationalism are broken into three categories: structural, ethnic, and political. While each will be examined closely in turn, it is worth summarizing them briefly here. Structuralist theories posit that nations and nationalism grew out of particular social or economic structures that are outside of the control of the actors enmeshed in them. Nations are not utilitarian creations; rather, they are the unavoidable outcome of historical circumstance. Ethnic theories emphasize the importance of pre-existing group beliefs and group affiliations in shaping the creation of nations. While nations have political functions, they are neither ordained by history nor driven by elites. Political theories posit that nations are creations of political elites. While these elites are constrained by both history and culture, they wield a disproportionate influence on the national project and thus nationalism is best understood in the context of elite interests. Like any scheme of classification, this one is imperfect – there are elements of each of these theoretical categories in each author’s work. However, since the goal here is neither to create a perfect typology of academic treatments of nationalism, nor to explore all the relevant

³ No one actually claims to be a primordialist, because the essentialist summary of the position is quite simplistic. It implies that primordialist authors believe that the genealogy of modern political organizations can be traced back to analogous organizations into the mists of prehistory. What the position actually tends to do (as will be demonstrated), is to put greater emphasis on the history and tradition of nationalized groups than do instrumentalists; however, this tends to make the distinction between instrumentalists and primordialists less than useful in practice.

works in detail, focusing on the strongest element in the authors' work should be sufficient.

Structural Theories

When they emerged in the 1980s, structural theories of nationalism marked a dramatic departure from previous ideas. Rather than treat a "nation" as an objective entity, which could be distinguished from non-nations through measurements of objective traits, the structuralists posit that nations are recent phenomena that grew out of modern technologies of communication, production, and administration. The specific causal chain that proceeds out of each of these antecedents will be considered in turn.

Anderson famously refers to nations as "imagined communities", which entails a set of important questions (Anderson 1983). If nations are imagined, who imagines them and why? What technologies must exist to transmit a particular national image? In Anderson's view, as vernacular languages replaced the sacred language of the church and as people began to read novels and newspapers in their vernacular it became possible to "'re-present' the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation"⁴ (Anderson, 1983: 22, 24, 33)

The slow, uneven decline of these interlinked certainties, first in Western Europe, later elsewhere, under the impact of economic change, 'discoveries' (social and scientific), and the development of increasingly rapid communications, drove a harsh wedge between cosmology and history. No surprise then that the search was on, so to speak, for a new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together. Nothing perhaps more precipitated this search, nor made it more fruitful, than print-capitalism, which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and relate to others, in profoundly new ways. (Anderson, 1983: 36)

This position is similar to Gellner's, which suggests that social changes driven by modernity spur the requirement for a system of horizontal identifications. However, he focuses on the systems of education and administration required by modern modes of production. In "the characteristic agro-literate polity, the ruling class forms a small minority of the population, rigidly separate from the great majority of direct agricultural producers, or peasants" who in turn are members of "laterally insulated communities of agricultural producers" (Gellner 1983: 9). However, industrialization requires a "complex ... perpetually, and often rapidly" changing division of labor and workers who are skilled and literate, thus dissolving the barriers that typify agrarian society (Gellner 1983: 24). "A society which is destined to a permanent game of musical chairs cannot erect deep barriers of rank, caste or estate, between the various sets of chairs which it possesses. That would hamper mobility, and, given the mobility, would indeed lead to intolerable tensions" (Gellner 1983: 25). It is this "cultural homogeneity ... imposed by objective, inescapable imperative [that] eventually appears on the surface in the form of nationalism" (Gellner 1983: 39). That nationalism should be the form of affiliation preferred by members of industrial society is unsurprising, given that "there is not much (certainly when compared with the preceding agrarian society) by way of genuine sub-structures ... The *nation* is now supremely important, thanks both to the erosion of sub-groupings and the vastly increased importance of a shared literary-

⁴ Emphasis in the original

dependant culture”⁵ (Gellner 1983: 63). Therefore, Gellner finds the source of nationalism in the technologies of production.

Both Anderson and Gellner make compelling cases, yet their analysis is best suited for explaining the emergence of national identities in pre-colonial Europe. It seems plausible that print-capitalism and industrial society led the English-speaking residents of the United Kingdom to become British, but why would these pressures result in the national boundaries and identities of colonized people? Moreover, if these causal antecedents are adequate to the task, why is South America split into several Spanish speaking nations instead of becoming a single pan-American state?⁶ Anderson addresses this issue, naming the progenitors of post-colonial nationalism “creole pioneers” (Anderson 1983: Ch. 4). The journey taken by these pioneers is instructive, especially in the Saharawi case. Post-colonial national boundaries evolved out of colonial administrative structures:

The original shaping of the American administrative units was to some extent arbitrary and fortuitous, marking the spatial limits of particular military conquests. But, over time, they developed a firmer reality under the influence of geographic, political, and economic factors. The very vastness of the Spanish American empire, the enormous variety of its soils and climates, and, above all, the immense difficulty of communication in the pre-industrial age, tended to give these units a self-contained character. (Anderson 1983: 52)

Yet, as Anderson notes, the same claims could be made about districts within the colonial states, so the question of why these particular administrative boundaries should form the basis of modern nations goes unanswered. It is here that Anderson posits a theory that foreshadows the centrality of a mobilizing elite that will be explicated later – it is not merely the “firmer reality” of these administrative units that emerged, but the lived experience of native elites that enabled them to “come to be conceived of as fatherlands” (Anderson 1983: 52-53). An elite in the colonial administration undertook a “pilgrimage” throughout his career wherein he met “as eager fellow pilgrims his functionary colleagues, from places and families he has scarcely heard of” (Anderson 1983: 56). Yet while these pilgrimages unify the colonial nation, they also inscribe colonial boundaries, as the “creole typically served only in the territories” of the colonial state and not the imperial center (Anderson 1983: 57). Thus, “the apex of his looping climb, the highest administrative center to which he could be assigned, was the capital of the imperial administrative unit in which he found himself” (Anderson 1983: 57). Educational “pilgrimages” also serve a role in “promoting colonial nationalisms” (Anderson 1983: 120):

From all over the vast colony, but from nowhere outside it, the tender pilgrims made their inward, upward way, meeting fellow pilgrims from different, perhaps once hostile, villages in primary school; from different ethnolinguistic groups in middle-school; and from every part of the realm in the tertiary institutions of the capital. (Anderson 1983: 121-122)

Educational systems are a valuable mechanism, not only for the development of a national identity in the colonial period, but also for the reinforcement of nationalism in post-colonial states.

⁵ Emphasis in the original

⁶ Excluding Brazil, obviously.

Structural theories place an important requirement on any working theory of nationalism. Since nationalisms are contingent events, if the thesis wishes to make the claim that a refugee camp can become a nationalizing environment, it must explain the technologies of communication, production, or education (or some combination thereof) that facilitate national identity as opposed to a more limited camp affiliation. Further, the empirical findings must explain the factors that facilitated the emergence of Saharawi nationalism within Western Sahara.

Ethnic Theories

Ethnic theories of nationalism posit that nations emerge primarily out of the social communities that precede them. These theories have an illustrious history – Renan delivered a lecture at the Sorbonne in 1882 that contained many of the elements of later theories. He finds the nation rests on two pillars: its history and the will of its people (Bhabha 1990: Ch. 2). Like most authors, Renan realizes that “[t]he nations are not eternal. They had their beginnings and they will end” (Bhabha 1990: 20). Nonetheless, the genesis of a nation is rooted in its “heroic past, great men, glory (by which I understand genuine glory)” that provides the “social capital upon which one bases a nation” (Bhabha 1990: 19). This “social capital” then supplies nationals with “the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage one has received in an undivided form” (Bhabha 1990: 19). Thus, “[m]ore valuable by far than customs posts or frontiers conforming to strategic ideas is the fact of sharing, in the past, a glorious heritage and regrets, and of having, in the future, [a shared] programme to put into effect, or the fact of having suffered, enjoyed, and hoped together.” (Bhabha 1990: 19).

Renan’s analysis presages many of the claims made in a work written over a century later and largely intended to respond to the structuralist arguments. A. D. Smith argues:

[w]hile we can no longer regard the nation as a given of social existence, a ‘primordial’ and natural unit of human association outside time, neither can we accept that it is a wholly modern phenomenon, be it a ‘nervous tic of capitalism’ or the necessary form and culture of an industrial society. While the revolutions of industrial capitalism, the bureaucratic state and secular mass-education represent a watershed in human history comparable to the Neolithic transition, they have not obliterated or rendered obsolete many of the cultures and identities formed in pre-modern eras ... [t]his is because the constituents of these identities and cultures – the myths, memories, symbols, and values – can often be adapted to new circumstances by being accorded new meanings and new functions. (A. D. Smith, 1986: 3)

Pre-modern cultures and identities are subsumed under the French term “*ethnie*” which “unites an emphasis on cultural difference with a sense of an historical community” (A. D. Smith, 1986: 22). The key features of an *ethnie* are a “collective name”, a “common myth of descent”, a “shared history”, a “distinctive shared culture”, an “association with a specific territory”, and a “sense of solidarity” (A. D. Smith, 1986: 22-29). Most importantly, “[a]t the centre of every *ethnie* and its peculiar ethnocentrism ... stands a distinctive complex of myths, memories, and symbols (or ‘myth-symbol complex’)” in which the most important is the “*mythomoteur*, or constitutive political myth” (A. D. Smith, 1986: 57-58).

This emphasis on the primacy of cultural identity over political exigency is extended to the colonial world by Chatterjee, who, in his analysis of the Indian struggle for independence finds:

Anticolonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with the imperial power. It does this by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains – the material and the spiritual. The material is the domain of the “outside,” of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed. In this domain, then, Western superiority had to be acknowledged and its accomplishments carefully studied and replicated. The spiritual, on the other hand, is an “inner” domain bearing the “essential” marks of cultural identity. The greater one’s success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one’s spiritual culture. This formula is, I think, a fundamental feature of anticolonial nationalisms in Asia and Africa.⁷ (Chatterjee 1993: 6)

Since the initial bases of the anti-colonial struggle are primarily “cultural” and “spiritual”, structuralist accounts of colonial and post-colonial nationalisms begin their analysis only after much of the anti-colonial struggle has taken place. Therefore, “[t]he difficulty ... arises because we have all taken the claims of nationalism to be a *political* movement much too literally and much too seriously.”⁸ (Chatterjee 1993: 5)

Ethnic theories of nationalism do not deny the importance of technology or political leadership. However, they do add an important dimension to theories of nationalism by requiring that modern nations be placed in their historical context.⁹ If nations are rooted in their *ethnie* and colonial nations turn first to their myth-symbol complexes before undertaking political struggle, it is necessary to show that refugee camps are a center for the inscription of ethnic as well as national identity.

Political Theories

Political theories of nationalism center their focus on elites who mobilize national sentiment in support of their own projects. Since the working theory of nationalism in this paper is primarily a political one, this section will go into detail about some of the significant works in the field. First, modern states’ requirement for a national ideology will be explicated. Second, two historical studies of the early origins of nationalism and the competing political explanations thereof will be reviewed. Third, explanations of the relationship between power and nationalism will be explored in detail. At the end of this section a working theory of nationalism will be sketched out.

⁷ Chatterjee explores the nature of this progression from spiritual consolidation to political challenge to political consolidation in much more detail in an earlier work: Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World. (Chatterjee 1986)

⁸ Emphasis in the original

⁹ This is not to overlook the reality that historical fact is, in itself, a source of contention and is often used for political purposes. In addition to this being acknowledged in Renan’s work, this is given an excellent treatment in Anderson Chapter 11 (1983) and in Hobsbawm’s The Invention of Tradition (1983). While both authors highlight the mutability of historical memory, neither would deny that there are limits and constraints imposed by reality to the extent that memory can be created or altered.

In “Nations and Nationalism Since 1780” Hobsbawm (1990) suggests that nationalism as it is presently understood emerged as concept in 19th century Europe. It did so not simply because of the confluence of technological imperative and cultural affinity,¹⁰ but because as state capacity increased “[g]overnment and subject or citizen were inevitably linked by daily bonds, as never before” (Hobsbawm, 1990: 81). However, it would be a mistake to assume that these bonds automatically resulted in affinity for state authority. In fact, this new level of contact “raised the politically sensitive issues of citizen loyalty to, and identification with the state and ruling system” (Hobsbawm 1990: 82). With the “traditional legitimations of state authority ... under permanent challenge” rulers found it “imperative to formulate and inculcate civic loyalty” (Hobsbawm 1990: 85). They did this by “reinforc[ing] state patriotism with the sentiments and symbols of ‘imagined community’, wherever and however they originated, and concentrat[ing] them upon themselves.” (Hobsbawm 1990: 91). A number of mechanisms were available to facilitate this process, and:

Naturally states would use the increasingly powerful machinery for communicating with their inhabitants, above all primary schools, to spread the image and heritage of the ‘nation’ and to inculcate attachment to it and attach all to country and flag, often ‘inventing traditions’ or even nations for this purpose. (Hobsbawm 1990: 92)

This is not to imply that only state elites could turn nationalism to their advantage and that there were no unsuccessful attempts to mobilize patriotic and nationalist sentiment. However, “in the states in which it developed, the political agenda of patriotism was formulated by government and ruling classes” (Hobsbawm 1990: 89). Thus, nationalism is a political creation that grafts a system of corporate identification onto state authority. It does this through co-opting myth-symbol complexes, utilizing technologies of communication and education, and creating official languages and systems of categorization. However, this diversity of means should not obscure the reality that they are employed in the service of an elite.

The first author discussed in this paper who studies the political history of nationalism is Marx, he also finds the origins of nationalism in the needs of elites, albeit at different times and under different circumstances. Unlike other authors, Marx places the birth of nationalism in the 16th century, when nationalism was created as a result of the need for “cohesion” that would allow “rulers to project their authority to enforce law, wage war, or ensure stability needed for economic advance and revenue collection” (Marx 2003: 34). As central authority coalesced around progressively larger elements, it began “to reach down and engage local elites and the populace,” where “it found a fierceness of resistance there, reinforced by economic disputes” (Marx 2003: 36). “To solve this problem, an obvious solution was for state elites to look for some existing form of widespread mass sentiment that might be channeled toward a positive engagement with the state” (Marx 2003: 36). The rulers found their solution in the “one such form of collective sentiment that had widespread salience among the people, religion” (Marx 2003: 36). For it to be an effective tool, “religious linkages ... had to be reformulated into a basis of distinctive cultural identity” which “could then be embraced by states as a basis for loyalty or obedience” (Marx 2003: 37). This had the rather unfortunate consequence of resulting in a series of bloody religious wars that swept Europe, but, as a result of their exclusionary orientation, also

¹⁰ Not that these factors were unimportant. In fact, they receive a quite thorough treatment in his chapter titled “Popular proto-nationalism” (Hobsbawm 1990 :Ch. 2)

solidified a collective identity associated with a particular central authority. In the 16th century “elites had briefly sought to control or harness mass passions that had exploded from below, [and] after the interregnum of tolerance and state building elites now manipulated further religious exclusions from above to cohere loyalty” (Marx 2003: 144). Thus, “[r]eligious fanaticism was the basis for popular engagement with – for or against – centralizing state authority and, as such, the basis of emerging nationalism” (Marx 2003: 197). Once achieved:

[n]ational unity ... could be and was justified by elites with the ahistoric image of inclusion. Membership in the community was made more binding for its appearance of unthinking and unquestioned cohesion. Any image of mass solidarity is so bolstered or reinforced by purposeful forgetting of prior discord ... Forged on the basis of exclusion, it is then solidified by the false image of past inclusion and the later practices of such inclusion. (Marx 2003: 168)

In tethering the history of nationalism to the religious wars of pre-modern Europe, Marx highlights some important features of the phenomenon. First, nationalism is a result of decisions made on the basis of the needs of the elites in the context of expanding central authority. Second, nationalism has its roots in exclusion and differentiation. Third, nationalism requires a deliberate decision to gloss over certain historical events and highlight others.

The second author to analyze nationalism in terms of its historical roots is Greenfeld, who finds that nationalism is a “social order, born out of the efforts of elites in the society to escape its contradictions” (Greenfeld 1992: 490). To demonstrate this, she analyzes the emergence of nationalism in England, France, Russia, Germany, and the United States. In England in the mid-16th century, the old nobility was being replaced by a socially mobile official nobility that administered the functions of the state (Greenfeld 1992: 47).

The redefinition of nobility in the literature as a status based on merit, and not on birth, was a simple acknowledgment of this change, the transfer of authority from one elite to another, which was virtually happening before one’s eyes. A fundamental transformation of this kind, however, required a rationalization and a justification which were not to be found in the acknowledgement. *It is at this juncture, I believe, that nationalism was born.* The idea of the nation – of the people as an elite – appealed to the new aristocracy ...¹¹ (Greenfeld 1992: 47)

A similar situation occurred in France where

[t]he malaise of the French elite was the major factor in the development of the French national consciousness and the emergence of the French nation. It made the aristocracy sympathetic to the idea of the “people” as the bearer of sovereignty and a fundamentally positive entity. This revolution in attitudes was a logical outcome of the situation in which the nobility found itself by the end of the seventeenth century. Its privileges, the significance of which lay in their exclusiveness, were becoming less and less exclusive; of political influence it has little as any other group in the population; it perceived itself as “degraded” reduced to the “people.” There were basically two ways for the nobility to reclaim the status which it was losing: to disassociate itself unequivocally from the “people,” or to redefine the “people” in

¹¹ Emphasis in the original

such a way that being of it would become an honor rather than a disgrace. (Greenfeld 1992: 154)

Of course, unfortunately for them, “[o]nce advanced, [the nation] acquired a life of its own, and its very success was to doom its noble champions” (Greenfeld 1992: 154). This trend continues, leading Greenfeld to conclude:

[i]n all the five cases in this book ... the emergence of nationalism was related to preoccupation with status. The English aristocracy sought to justify it; the French and the Russian nobility – to protect it; the German intellectuals – to achieve it. Even for the materialistic Americans, taxation without representation was an insult to their pride ... They fought – and became a nation – over respect due to them, rather than anything else. (Greenfeld 1992: 488)

Greenfeld serves as a reminder to focus not only on state authorities, but also the subaltern elites, whose collective interests and influence may enable them to influence the development of widespread sentiments and ideologies beyond those promulgated by state authorities through official channels.

With this understanding of the necessity of national identification, its historical roots, its connection with the technology of modernity, and its links to ethnic identification, it is time to move to an examination of the two general theories of nationalism that provide the theoretical basis for this thesis: Smith’s system of constructing “political peoplehood” and Brubaker’s “category of practice” (Smith 2003: 19, Brubaker 1996: 7).

Smith presents a theory that is meant to explain the mechanisms employed for “making, maintaining, and transforming senses of political peoplehood” (Smith 2003: 19). According to Smith, “political projects of people-making are likely to be pursued by two general means: *coercive force* and *persuasive stories*”¹² (Smith 2003: 43). While the utility of force is widely studied and understood, stories are often overlooked. Yet:

[t]o succeed in their mission, doctrines, ideologies, visions of political peoplehood must make a certain sort of case to current and potential members. They must suggest to such constituents that, given their personal origins and history and the way the world is, if they do indeed adhere steadfastly to the community thus depicted, they are likely to experience certain sorts of good things, immediately or eventually. However well reasoned or well documented, those promises can never be more than a plausible conjecture, an imagined scenario of how the future will unfold, made credible by a certain account of the past and present that is usually selectively stylized if not mythical. Hence narratives of peoplehood work essentially as persuasive historical stories that prompt people to embrace valorized identities, play the stirring roles, and have the fulfilling experiences that political leaders strive to evoke for them, whether through arguments, rhetoric, symbols, or “stories” of a more obvious and familiar sort. (Smith 2003: 45)

These stories are broken into three categories: economic, political power, and ethically constitutive. Economic stories “promote trust by arguing that it is in the interests, usually the economic interests, of particular groups of leaders and their

¹² Emphasis in the original

constituents to advance each constituent's economic well-being" (Smith 2003: 60). Political power stories "promise that governors [the state], especially, and other members of a political community as well, will exercise their powers through institutions and policies that give significant power to each member, often via some system of alleged virtual or actual representation that can inspire trust." (Smith 2003: 62). Ethically constitutive stories are "accounts that present membership in a particular people as somehow intrinsic to who its members really are, because of traits that are imbued with ethically significance"¹³ (Smith 2003: 65).

In sum, I [Smith] contend that enduring successful accounts of peoplehood inspire senses of trust and worth among the members of a people by weaving together economic, political power, and ethically constitutive stories tailored to persuade a critical mass of constituents while also advancing partisan elite interests. (Smith 2003: 69-70)

Of equal importance in this account of the nation are the four premises on which it is based. The first is that "[n]o political people are *natural* or *primordial*", which is a belief so widely held that it merits no further discussion¹⁴ (Smith 2003: 32). The second is that "[p]olitical peoples are created via *constrained, asymmetrical* interactions between actual and would-be leaders of political communities and the potential constituents for whom they compete"¹⁵ (Smith 2003: 32). This premise fits well with the historical accounts of nationalism discussed above. The third is that "[b]oth leaders and constituents possess meaningful political agency", which constrains leaders in the type of stories that they can construct¹⁶ (Smith 2003: 36). This jibes with the ethnic theories of nationalism, in particular Renan's notion of a daily plebiscite, but also with the idea that leaders must operate within the bounds of existing collective understandings. The fourth is that "[a]rchitects of all forms of peoplehood are engaged in political projects that seek to create stable structures of power"¹⁷ (Smith 2003: 37). This last premise is, of course, what makes this theory political, and is important because it ascribes an intentionality and universalizability to actions that might otherwise come about entirely at random. By understanding why leaders create nations, it becomes possible to assess whether those conditions are present in an area under study; further, one can situate observed actions in the context of larger political projects.

Smith's contribution to this theory of nationalism created herein is significant, yet it may strike some readers as odd that the summary of his work focuses almost entirely on the process of creating "peoplehood" and the relationship between leaders and constituents and not on the characteristics of peoplehood *per se*. The rationale for this approach is contained in Brubaker, who claims:

Nationalism can and should be understood without invoking "nations" as substantial entities. Instead of focusing on nations as real groups, we should focus on nationhood and nationness, on "nation" as practical category, institutionalized form, and

¹³ Smith's ethically constitutive stories have an interesting conceptual link to A. D. Smith *mythomoteurs* – both find the engine that drives nationalism to be valorizing stories about collectivities. The difference is that Smith specifies a political rationale for the creation of these stories.

¹⁴ Emphasis in the original

¹⁵ Emphasis in the original

¹⁶ Original entirely italicized

¹⁷ Original entirely italicized

contingent event. “Nation” is a category of practice, not (in the first instance) a category of analysis. To understand nationalism, we have to understand the practical uses of the category “nation”, the ways it can come to structure perception, to inform thought and experience, to organize discourse and political action. (Brubaker 1996: 7)

To think of the nation as a “category of practice” means that:

Whether we are talking about perceived nationalizing stances or openly avowed nationalizing projects, there is a great deal of variation among such stances and projects, not only between states but within a given state. The notion of a field can be useful here too. It brings into analytical focus the wide range of nationalizing stances within a single state, the spectrum of related yet distinct and even mutually antagonistic stances adopted by differently positioned figures in and around the complex inter- and intra-organizational network that we call, for convenience, “the state.”

We can think of a nationalizing state not in terms of a fixed policy orientation of a univocal set of policies or practices but rather in terms of a dynamically changing field of different organizations, parties, movements, or individual figures within and around the state, competing to inflect state policy in a particular direction, and seeking, in various and often mutually antagonistic ways, to make the state a “real” nation-state, the state of and for a particular nation. (Brubaker 1996: 65-66)

“Institutionalized form” means that nationness is not only limited to emotional appeal, but actually has bearing on one’s ability to function within a state. Nationality has this effect because the state apparatus employs it to categorize and regulate its population, and because the international system recognizes and supports particular sorts of national claims (Brubaker 1996: 18). To say nationness is a “contingent event” is to say that it is “something that crystallizes rather than gradually develops, as a contingent, conjunctureally floating, and precarious frame of vision and basis for individual and collective action, rather than as a relatively stable product of deep developmental trends in economy, polity, or culture” (Brubaker 1996: 19).

This concept of nationness as an object of inquiry, properly understood as a political field rather than a single object, is embedded within a larger theory that links a nationalizing state, national minorities within that state, and external states that take an interest in those minorities. The links between these three entities form the “relational nexus” of nationness. This nexus has three important features for the study of nationality:

(1) the close interdependence of relations *within* and *between* fields; (2) the *responsive* and *interactive* character of the triadic relational interplay between the fields; and (3) the *mediated* character of this responsive interplay, the fact that responsive, interactive stance taking is mediated by representations of stances in an external field, representations that may be shaped by stances already provisionally held.¹⁸ (Brubaker 1996: 69)

Thus, according to Brubaker, to understand nationness one must appreciate it as a political field that has practical meaning in the context of state politics, whether that meaning supports or opposes the current state structure. Further, one must situate that appreciation in its international context, where the actions of the relevant actors

¹⁸ Emphasis in the original

are informed not only by domestic political considerations, but by the representations of external states and groups.

At this point it is appropriate to synthesize the research on nations and nationalism that has been reviewed so far into a working theory: a nation is a political field wherein elites compete for the support of potential constituents via the construction of a collective identity through the technologies of modernity and references to broadly accessible ethnic understandings.¹⁹ While incomplete in many respects, this definition synthesizes the important elements of the theories discussed so far into a manageable analytical tool.

In the study of nations, the definition of what a nation is is inextricably linked to theories of how a nation works. In that respect, this definition of nation has five important attributes. First, it acknowledges the contested nature of national identity and specifies who is doing the contesting and why. Second, it isolates the nation as a particularly political process, which distinguishes it from other sorts of collective identifications and processes.²⁰ Third, it specifies a relationship between elites, who have better access to the technologies of modernity, and those they seek to influence, whose numbers make them essential to the projects of the elites. Moreover, the use of “elites” without a modifier identifying them with state authority acknowledges the importance of subaltern elites and dissident entrepreneurs as well as heads of state. Fourth, it emphasizes the primacy of the technologies of modernity in the development of national identity. While it may be true that historically “nations” have been formed without access to “print-capitalism” or mass education, it seems equally true that instruments of mass communication have been incredibly important in the mobilization of collective identities in modernity.²¹ Fifth, it highlights the constraints imposed on elites by their potential constituents – any national story must fall within the parameters of what the constituents find plausible. Further, this story must have some emotional, ethnic element that makes the target population believe in their own exceptional merit.²²

This definition of the nation and the theory connected with it will be used for the remainder of this paper, both to assess the theoretical plausibility of a nation emerging in a system of refugee camps and to evaluate whether or not a nation has emerged in the Sarahawi camps.

¹⁹ This definition is based in large part on Brubaker’s work, so the term “nation” should be understood to represent the somewhat more unwieldy “nationness” and “nationhood”. It is not meant to connote the idea that nation is a fixed, singular, or unchanging category

²⁰ The idea that nations are defined by their political nature is given an excellent expression by Breuilly (1992).

²¹ In addition to the examples included in Anderson and Gellner, the importance of radio and newspaper in the creation of a Hutu Power identity in Rwanda (Gourevitch 1998), the use of taped messages in the Iranian revolution, and the importance ascribed to radio stations in Somalia (Zinni 2004) all spring immediately to mind. While these examples may seem a bit recent, the continually contested and eventful conception of nation used in this definition does not preclude the redefinition of a previously extant “nation” by a new set of elites or a new project.

²² The idea that national struggles must be ethnic is highly contentious, as it flies in the face of the common division of nations into “civic” and “ethnic” types. This thesis concurs with Dominique Schnapper who contends that civic nations are not really civic because systems of governance lack the inherent emotive appeal to bind the population to the state. Rather, so-called “civic” nations really have an underlying exceptionalism that inspires their members, and, in this author’s opinion, would be properly classified as ethnic. The theories of ethnicity that underpin this assertion are discussed below.

Identity and Power

The theory of nationalism created above is based not only on studies of nationalism, but also on the key texts that underpin those works. Specifically, the definition of the nation created herein operates with a specific understanding of what ethnicity is, the nature of “elites”, and the workings of social processes. Without going into the same level of detail as has been done so far, it is still worth taking the time to make clear the intellectual antecedents of the analysis that is to follow. To do so, this section will briefly discuss the work of Barth, Gramsci, and Bourdieu.

If, as Brass suggests, a “nation ... may be seen as a particular type of ethnic community, or rather, as an ethnic community politicized”, it is imperative to specify what theory of ethnicity underlies one’s theory about nations (Hutchison and Smith, 1996: 86). This thesis is underpinned by Barth’s concept of ethnicity as a category that distinguishes amongst groups. “By concentrating on what is *socially* effective, ethnic groups are seen as a form of social organization. The critical feature then becomes ... the characteristic of self-ascription and ascription by others.” (Barth 1969, 1998: 13). As a result of this understanding, “[t]he critical focus of investigation ... becomes the ethnic *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses” (Barth 1969, 1998: 15). This indicates that the nature of the collective identity that nationalizing elites seek to form must set itself in opposition to some group defined as a non-national other. It also locates an important area of empirical inquiry, in that how a group differentiates itself from others will provide valuable insight into the nature of the group’s identity.²³

The definition of nationalism used in this paper also relies on a particular conception of elites and constituents. This idea is largely informed by Gramsci’s observations on the “elements of politics”, the first of which is “there really do exist rulers and ruled, leaders and led” (Gramsci 1971: 144). Gramsci is not just making an observation about the nature of modern society, but about the requirements of human collective action. Thus, in his view, “parties [broadly understood as organizations with a variety of different monikers] have up till now been the most effective way of developing leaders and leadership” (Gramsci 1971: 146). Within a party there is a tripartite organization between “[a] mass element, composed of ordinary, average men, whose participation takes the form of discipline and loyalty, rather than any creative spirit or organizational ability”, a “principle cohesive element, which centralizes nationally and renders effective and powerful a complex of forces which left to themselves would count for little of nothing”, and an “intermediate element, which articulates the first element with the second and maintains contact between them, not only physically but also morally and intellectually” (Gramsci 1971: 152-153). In this system, the second element is most powerful, because while “[i]t is also true that neither could this element form the party alone; however, it could do more than could the first element considered” (Gramsci 1971: 152). This idea is the basis of the focus on elites, their projects, and the mechanisms by which they pursue them.

²³ This brief discussion is not intended to gloss over the significant debates in theories of ethnicity, but only to make clear what this thesis means by the term “ethnic”. While space limitations preclude a thorough discussion, a contrasting position can be found in Geertz, who finds ethnicity to be rooted in the projection of human biological affiliation onto larger communities, meaning that it is internally driven and not based on boundaries at all. (See Hutchison and Smith 1996)

Most critical to this thesis, however, is Bourdieu's notion of "the field":

In analytic terms, a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose on their occupants, agents, or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific projects that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.) ... As a space of potential and active forces, the field is also a *field of struggles* aimed at preserving or transforming the configuration of these forces. Furthermore, the field as a structure of objective relations between positions of force undergirds and guides the strategies whereby the occupants of these positions seek, individually or collectively, to safeguard or improve their position and to impose the principle of hierarchization most favorable to their own products. The strategies of agents depend on their position in the field, that is, in the distribution of specific capital, and on the perception that they have of the field depending on the point of view they take *on* the field as a view taken from a point *in* the field.²⁴ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 97, 101)

The implications this has for the study of nations are profound. It means that "a nation" is inseparable from "the nationalism" that creates it; rather than being two distinct phenomena, an object and its politics, a nation is defined by the struggles to define and mobilize it that one refers to as "nationalism". Further, it provides a warrant for distinguishing between elites and masses insofar as the position of the elites is based on an asymmetric ability to control the capital and power that typify the national field. Finally, by conceiving of "a nation" as a field, one removes the concept from its historicity in that it is being perpetually challenged and redefined by actors within the field. It is therefore no longer incredible to imagine "a nation" emerging out of the political dynamics of a refugee camp. The "nation" has finally been completely wrenched from the grip of "primordialists" and been allowed to be understood as a temporary, contingent, constantly fluctuating relationship of power between individuals.

Camps and Nationalism

With a theory of nationalism established and its intellectual underpinnings explored, it is time to determine whether that theory can be usefully applied to self-administered refugee camps. The goal of this section is to establish that the individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions contained in the earlier definition are discernable in the research on refugees. To demonstrate this, the section is divided into five parts which correspond to the components of the working theory and the condition of self-administration added by the thesis: camps as home to elites, the projects of camp elites, technologies of modernity, the creation of ethnic meaning, and the impact of self-administration. Showing that all of these factors are present in refugee camps and that self-administered camps place power in the hands of refugee elites will substantiate the assertion that the administration of aid and camps by refugees facilitates the creation of a national identity.

²⁴ Emphasis in the original

Common conceptions of refugees depict forced migrants as a helpless undifferentiated mass of humanity (Kibreab 1993, Harrell-Bond 1999). However, closer examination of the refugee community suggests that in displacement there are power structures, local elites, and political fields. In her critique of “Refugee Self-Management” programs, Hyndman notes “[t]he democratic election of leaders is likely to reproduce and reinscribe the power of those refugees already in positions of authority and relative privilege in the camps. The refugee elite in the camps do not see a need for elections” (Hyndman 2000: 143). Hyndman suggests that in her experience, the refugee elite and the political systems they relied on were the patriarchal structures that typified their former social organization. However, refugee elites can also be elevated by decisions made by the host state. In Tanzania:

Each village within the [Mishamo refugee] camp had been systematically formed as an *ujamaa* village in accordance with Tanzania’s Villages Act of 1975 ... Refugee villages therefore took on the political structure of other Tanzanian villages, with “ten-house cells” and “village councils” providing the basic formal organizational structures of governance. Village councils were comprised of elected Ten-cell Leaders and Road Chairmen as well as religious leaders, and it was from the ranks of the council that the Village Chairman and Village Secretary were elected. (Malkki 1995: 42-43)

Whether the elites are carried over from pre-migration political organizations or manufactured anew by camp administrators, it seems readily apparent that there are certain refugees that hold more power and authority than others, and that these can be reasonably characterized as elites.

However, the present theory of nationalism requires that elites be actively pursuing their own projects. Part of the literature of the “helpless masses” is the “myth of dependency”, which posits (albeit less bluntly) that regardless of authority structures, refugees will only sit around with glassy-eyed stares waiting for someone to help them (Kibreab 1993). This would obviously be a significant obstacle to this thesis, since refugees would be unable to engage in productive activity or be mobilized by elites. Fortunately, the “myth of dependency” is exactly that, and refugees engage in a variety of collective activities that indicate elite mobilization. For example, Kibreab finds:

Despite the severe limitations in the physical environment, there were cases where self-established farmers in the Gedo region demonstrated an indomitable determination and commitment to reinstate themselves and their families in their former independent lifestyle after having benefited from relief assistance during the critical period of recovery. In 1982 and 1983 a group of refugees left the refugee camp in Luuq district, Gedo region, and self-settled along the Juba river, establishing two villages, Finnikis and Mubaarak ... The villages were organized around common economic interests and *competent traditional leadership*.²⁵ (Kibreab 1993: 345)

Collective organization is not just found amongst those who leave. Those who are often the least powerful, “refugee women”, “often employ elaborate strategies to make ends meet” – “Credit schemes and labor-intensive entrepreneurial activities of various kinds” provide “evidence of a vital informal economy” (Hyndman 2000: 109). While Hyndman does not explicate the mechanisms for regulation and exchange,

²⁵ Emphasis mine

informal economies often develop their own structures of interests and power-holders (Roitman 2005, Nordstrom 2004). Refugee elites are not necessarily less powerful than the putative administrators of the camps. In the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, in the now-notorious Goma refugee camps “[p]resided over by this largely intact [Hutu] army, and by the *interhamwe*, the camps were rapidly organized into perfect replicas of the Hutu Power state – same community groups, same leaders, same rigid hierarchy, same propaganda, same violence” (Gourevitch 1998: 165-166). However, the militarization of the Rwandan camps is hardly unique. As Terry observes, camps offer three important advantages to elites who seek to mobilize from within them: “[f]irst, refugees have protected status under international law from which combatants illegally benefit by mixing among them”, “[s]econd, refugee camps attract humanitarian assistance that provides guerrillas with an economic resource independent of external patrons”, and “[t]hird, and most important, refugee camp structures provide mechanisms through which a guerrilla movement can control the population and legitimize its leadership” (Terry 2002: 9-10). Thus, elites not only exist in refugee camps, they seek to mobilize the residents of those camps to leave, to create mutually beneficially support systems, or to take control of the camps for their own purposes.

Yet why should a refugee elite want to take control of a camp? What “mechanisms” in a camp enable an elite to “control the population and legitimize its leadership?” (Terry 2002: 10). The answer is that the technologies of modern administration facilitate a centralization of authority.²⁶ Within the Tanzanian camps discussed above, the effect of creating a “village-level structure” was to create an “uncommon level of spatial and social order in the camp” (Malkki 1995: 43,42). At the top of this order was a “Tanzanian Settlement Commandant” who was “charged with administering rural development, cooperatives, health care, family planning, education, law enforcement, and other sectors” and “enforc[ing] a rule that required refugees to be granted a “Leave Pass” before being allowed to leave camp” (Malkki 1995: 43). Lest it be thought Mishamo is unique in this regard, note that the UNHCR is engaged in “[t]he production of maps, statistics, and assessments” that, while “performed with the welfare of the refugees in mind” are, nonetheless “acts of management, if not surveillance” (Hyndman 2000: 121). These procedures “enact controversial power relations between refugees and humanitarian agencies” that “represent the field of refugee camps as orderly and comparable to other fields managed in various parts of the globe” (Hyndman 2000: 121). These modern techniques form the basis of the unique power dynamics of refugee camps:

The social hierarchy can change in refugee camps as humanitarian aid becomes a source of patronage ... Information networks such as radio broadcasts, newspapers, and community meetings are also avenues through which to disseminate messages and propaganda, and the curricula at schools can indoctrinate the younger generation with a particular version of history and events. Refugee camps can also provide an environment conducive to recruiting combatants. (Terry 2002: 50)

Lack of exit options only compounds this effect: “[t]his power is particularly significant in closed refugee camps where the refugees are entirely dependant upon

²⁶ This parallels Marx’s thesis about the birth of nationalism in Europe – elites will seek some corporate identification which justifies their authority to the refugee masses.

international aid: the people who control the aid control the refugees” (Terry 2002: 10)

Control over resources does accrue authority to elites, but, as Smith notes, these types of political and economic narratives are unstable. To create a national identity as defined earlier, elites have to not only control the levers of power, they must create an ethnic identity that justifies control in terms of a broader historical narrative. Thus, camps must provide a useful venue for the creation of ethnic meaning. In Malkki’s seminal work, she finds that:

Mishamo [refugee camp] turned out to be a site that was enabling and nurturing an elaborate and self-conscious historicity among its refugee inhabitants. This, indeed, was perhaps the single most important socio-political effect of the Mishamo camp, considered as a technology of power. (Malkki 1995: 53)

The “mythico-history” that emerged from this process “represented an interlinked set of ordering stories which converged to make (or remake) a world” (Malkki 1995: 55). As such, it “constructed categorical schemata and thematic configurations that were relevant and meaningful in confronting both the past ... and the pragmatics of everyday life in the refugee camp” (Malkki 1995: 55). Most importantly, in light of the Barthian theory of ethnicity that underlies the present thesis:

In both cases, the mythico-historical world making was an oppositional process; it was constructed in opposition to other versions of what was ostensibly the same world, or the same past. The oppositional process of construction also implied the creation of the collective past in distinction to other pasts, thereby *heroizing* the past of the Hutu as “a people” categorically distinct from others. (Malkki 1995: 55)

Malkki is not the only author to find the camps as a center for the creation of collective memory. A similar phenomenon was observed by Powles in her study of Angolan refugees in Zambia. Unlike Malkki, Powles found that “the violence of war” was not the primary focus of mythico-history; rather “it is memories of catching and eating fish ... that are collectivized during the process of on-going social life in the settlement” (2004: 2). However, “the memory of fish [became] a form of political critique” which contrasted the “impoverished diet in Meheba [refugee camp]” with “how much better their [the refugees’] lives had been, and would be again when there were fish available” (Powles 2004: 15,16,17). “Fish are ... entangled with Luvale history, society, and cultural identity”, in no small part because “the Luvale ... identified themselves, and were identified by others, primarily as fishermen” (Powles 2004: 11-12). While less obvious than the earlier example, this too seems to meet Barth’s key “characteristic of self-ascription and ascription by others” (Barth 1969, 1998: 13). Thus, not only are camps useful in their ability to accrue political and economic power to those who control them, but that they also facilitate the creation of ethnic identities.

Since refugee camps have elites, collective projects, technologies of modernity, and an ethnicizing function, the requirement that they be self-administered in order to develop a nation may seem superfluous. Yet external control undermines social process key to the formulation of national identity. The obvious reason for this can be discerned in the practices of even the most well-intentioned external actors:

Headcounts in the camps provide a clear example of how one administrative practice contradicts another, namely, any sense of the camp as community. In civic societies, community leaders generally do not conduct a census of their population by coercing, containing, and then counting their members. (Hyndman 2000: 141)

Although, in order to eat, “[r]efugees may oblige those who organize them” there is no “relationship ... based on accepted leadership or participant-oriented decision making” (Hyndman 2000: 141). Put differently, the external actors rely entirely on political and economic narratives at their most crass: co-operate or starve. Even where refugees are invited to “consult” with aid agencies, the development of nationalism is stunted. This is because “[r]esponsibility for meaningful decision making cannot be separated from the resources necessary to carry out the decisions taken” (Hyndman 2000: 141). Therefore, “if CARE and UNHCR [and external authorities in general] are unwilling to relinquish any of the economic means that would enable refugee self-management to occur” they will “defeat the proposed objectives of refugee self-governance” but may also “potentially reproduce a neo-colonial power structure” (Hyndman 2000: 141). By contrast, where refugees seize control of the camps the result is development of the type of political field termed “national” in this thesis.²⁷ Thus, self-management is a necessary condition for the formation of nations in refugee camps.

Conclusion

This Section set out to demonstrate the theoretical plausibility of the thesis that administration of aid and camps by refugees facilitates the creation of a national identity. To do so, it undertook three essential tasks. It created a composite definition of nationalism based on a review of major works in the field, it specified the underlying ideas that inform key concepts in that definition, and then it applied that definition to refugee camps. In so doing, it demonstrated the validity of the propositions on which this paper is based. It showed that camps are a place of the creation of collective narratives. It showed that administrative authority and economic control enable a refugee power elite to gain asymmetric authority in a relational field. It also showed the instability of systems based on political and economic stories, and suggested that elites would use nationalism to espouse a vision of the future in the context of traditional narratives. This theoretical work is vital to the sections that follow, in that it informs the selection of data and its analysis that proceeds out of fieldwork done in the Saharawi camps. Moreover, it demonstrates the potential generalizability of the conclusions drawn from the empirical data gathered, and thereby greatly magnifies the importance of the findings.

²⁷ Harrell-Bond’s work in this respect is also quite informative, yet because it relies so heavily on the Saharawi example it is omitted in this section. The details of Saharawi nationalism will be explored below.

SECTION 3: SAHARAWI NATIONALISM

From the 11th of December, 2004, until the 1st of January, 2005, my partner and I conducted research in the Rabouni government administrative camp and the Smara refugee camp near Tindouf, Algeria. I did not go to Algeria looking for a Saharawi nation. My original idea was to explore how tribal affiliation and culture manifests itself in Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) politics. Yet as I asked people to tell me the history of the Saharawi, I was continually regaled with a narrative that began with Spanish colonialism and continued to the present day. As I investigated, I found that the narrative was propagated in two distinct ways: as a national identity deliberately cultivated by SADR elites through government structures, and as a collective cultural identity that incorporated the discourse of liberation into social activities. After a discussion of the methodology employed in this research, the Section examines each of these mechanisms in turn.

Methodology

While in the camps I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews, assisted by my partner. The interviews all began the same way, I identified myself as a researcher from Oxford University who was interested in writing about Saharawi history and culture, I then asked the interviewees to tell me the important events in Saharawi history, leaving it open for them to determine for themselves what era of history to bring their story with and what dates are worth identifying. This “single issue” technique was chosen for its ability to facilitate “investigation into a particular area of knowledge or experience” (Slim and Thompson 1993: 67). The semi-structured, free-flowing nature of the interviews after this point was extremely helpful, in that it highlighted different interpretations or areas of knowledge that would not have been accessible through a fixed questionnaire.²⁸

Elites and the Cultivation of Nationalism

The theory of nations herein posits that nationalism is an elite response to the expansion of state power and the implementation of modern technologies of communication, production, and administration. Thus, to analyze the elites of a particular nation empirically requires two lines of inquiry: the condition of the state and the tools of technology, and the message that is communicated.

The Saharawi State

Throughout most of their history, the Saharawi have been a collection of tribes, each of which was administered individually. As a tribal representative described it, the tribes only came together to make externally oriented decisions: decisions about war and peace, arms and soldiers, and the appropriate response to outside governments (Mohamed Lamine interview). By contrast, the SADR exerts a more far-reaching influence on the lives of camp residents. Saharawi now go to public schools, are treated by a system of public clinics and a central hospital, vote in state-wide elections, are entertained by state media, have disputes adjudicated by state courts, and are taxed on imports by state border guards (Prime Minister’s remarks, notes). This entire system is administered by literate public employees, who are in

²⁸ Additional detail on methodology is included in Annex A. For a table of interviews see Annex B.

turn monitored by elected officials holding ministerial portfolios, and is run out of the state administrative camp at Rabuni. Rabuni itself is a monument to state power – a sand-brick panopticon that, remote from the camps, oversees the entire state bureaucracy and is home to the largest state facilities. It houses the central hospital, the pharmaceutical manufacturing facility, the broadcast tower for the ministry of information, the presidential offices, an open-air military museum and the reception point for foreign visitors to the camps. The expansion of the Saharawi state is predicated on centralized control of aid resources. “Virtually all humanitarian resources for the camp refugees have been handed to the SADR”, meaning that “humanitarian intervention aimed at improving the refugees’ living conditions has taken place almost exclusively through the bureaucratic structure of the Polisario’s republic” (Cozza 2003: 150).

Beyond the state bureaucracy is the inscription of state authority contained in the geographic organization of the camps. The camps themselves are named after cities in the Western Sahara, and are all organized along roughly the same lines (see Cozza 2003: 122-125). Smara is one such camp. In the center of Smara is a reception center, a gift shop for foreign visitors, and an internet and telephone café, all of which are owned and administered by the SADR. Adjacent to the reception building is a large irrigated garden and the local primary school. Also nearby are the offices of various projects: a women’s education center; a center for the blind; and the UNHCR. On the west side of the center is the local clinic, where residents are either treated or sent on to the central hospital in Rabuni. Running from the center of the camp east towards the periphery is a broad road that contains Smara’s largest market. There one can buy gas, get a car repaired, or visit the camp’s only restaurant. Half a kilometer further down this road there is a large community center, a kindergarten, and a new administrative center for the local sub-district within the camp, which is also used for the distribution of government food rations. This area also contains a smaller market, where one can buy produce, livestock, clothing, and small consumer goods imported from Mauritania. About another kilometer onwards at the edge of the camps families keep their goat pens. The goats are released during the day to forage throughout the camp and return at night to be fed. This is also the location of the camp’s herd, which provides frothy, strong milk for those who can no longer eat solid food (Salik Bobih, Chief Camel Herder, interview and taste test). All along the road, one notices large metal boxes. These are the family water points, which are regularly filled by government trucks. From this description, one can see how a resident of Smara comes into contact with the state repeatedly throughout the day’s activities. The SADR flag flies proudly from an antenna visible throughout the camp. The government supplies water. Government buildings and facilities are a fixture along the main economic routes throughout the camp. Government programs that cater to the needs of a wide variety of groups are clearly visible throughout Smara.

Thus, it is readily apparent that the state is a prominent part of daily existence in Saharawi life, both through programmatic interventions and through geographical prominence. For a traditionally nomadic and pastoral people, this represents a significant increase in the intrusion of central authority. The challenge facing the state then, is to justify this intrusion using the modern technologies at its disposal.

Messages of Modernity

By its very existence, the state is closely connected to both political and economic stories. Politically, the process of elections and the oversight of the bureaucracy by elected officials ostensibly gives every resident of the camp a share of the state's political power. Economically, state provision of a variety of social goods allows every Saharawi to share in the benefits of international aid. Further, these two stories undermine potential critics who would prefer aid to be administered through different methods of political organization:

In the case of the SADR, the leadership has constantly sustained the primacy of its state model of social justice over its most elusive national enemy: the Saharawi tribes. The Polisario's humanitarian state has constantly tried to show that, through its national egalitarianism, it can guarantee to each citizen more than what each tribe could ensure to its members. Indeed, as a state the SADR has had access to economic, political, military, and spatial resources and has been able to provide goods, services and weapons (along with new valuable opportunities ...) well beyond what any Saharawi tribe could ever do. (Cozza 2003: 160)

Yet as Smith suggests, political and economic stories are precarious legitimizing narratives government, especially a when government that has so recently displaced other powerful political systems. The state is compelled to justify its existence on normative rather than strictly practical grounds by creating an ethically constitutive story that connects the state to its constituents. In the Saharawi camps, this is a formalized story that begins in the colonial era, neatly leaving off the tribal conflicts of the past, and continues through a heroized version of the anti-colonial struggle, the Moroccan invasion, the flight to the camps, and the subsequent war to reclaim the "occupied territory". This story is transmitted through a variety of mechanisms: holidays, the names of government facilities, and education, for example. This section will examine the Saharawi story, followed by a consideration of the methods of transmission.

In the Saharawi *mythomoteur* the time before colonialism was apolitical, and the Saharawi were a predominantly nomadic society that focused on managing their herds of goats and camels (Salik Bobih). The arrival of the Spanish changed this, as they split the Saharawi along tribal lines and ignored the education and development of the Saharawi people (Ahmedou Souelem, poet and historian, interview). However, they infiltrated the society insidiously, coming not as conquerors, but as merchants that established just a few coastal outposts (Mohamed Lamine). With the discovery of phosphates, the Spanish pushed inland and began exercising much broader control over the Western Sahara, and, in response, a Saharawi national liberation movement emerged (Mohamed Lamine). This movement began with peaceful protest and demonstrations, which continued throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s (Bashir Ali Abdu Rhaman). These peaceful measures were met with severe repression (Mohamed Lamine), including the arrest and execution of the Saharawi nationalist leader, Mohammed Bashir (Ahmedou Souelem) and the brutal dispersal of a demonstration on the 17th of June, 1970 (Babiya Chiia's 5th grade class, interview). So from 1970 to 1973 the Polisario formed and began gather weapons, and on May 10th, 1973 the movement held its first congress (Ahmedou Souelem). Ten days later, on the 20th of May, the Polisario conducted their first attack, which resulted in the successful

capture of a Spanish garrison and the weapons it contained (Ahmedou Souelem). Two years later, the liberation struggle achieved its aims, and Spain negotiated a withdrawal (Ahmedou Souelem); treacherously, the Spanish simultaneously created an agreement with Morocco and Mauritania to partition the Western Sahara, giving the northern 2/3 to Morocco and the southern 1/3 to Mauritania (Mohamed Lamine). Threatened by an imminent Moroccan invasion, on the 12th of October, 1975 the Saharawi tribal council voted to give the authority to lead the Saharawi people to the Polisario, a date known as “The Day of Unification” (Mohamed Lamine). The Saharawi were unable to directly confront the Moroccan army, and so fled to Algeria; during their exodus they were attacked by aircraft employing napalm against their convoys (Ahmedou Souelem). The Mauritanian forces were defeated in 1978 by successful Polisario attacks into Mauritanian territory, but Morocco quickly annexed the territory Morocco ceded (Ahmedou Souelem). After years of struggle, the Polisario entered into negotiations with Morocco that have continued until the present day – these negotiations will either result in the return of the Western Sahara to the Saharawi, or armed struggle will resume. (Salik Bobih)

The retelling of the historical narrative has several important features that merit comment. First, while the Spanish are portrayed as tricksters who duped the Saharawi for a period before their expulsion, they are not vilified in the same way that Morocco is. The events that are highlighted during the Spanish colonial period are those that unify and nationalize the Saharawi; by contrast, the Moroccans are invaders, not colonizers, and their actions highlight their perfidy (backroom treachery, napalm, etc.). Second, the history is one in which the Polisario is constructed as the natural outgrowth of the needs and desires of the Saharawi people. Thus, in this story, the elites do not mobilize the people, it is the people who mobilize the elites. Third, the Day of Unification is not retold as a story of tribal authority, but as the Saharawi people themselves unifying behind the Polisario. As Mohamed Lamine, a participant in the tribal council, put it:

Throughout this time people craved a leader who could deliver liberation. So there wasn't a lot of discussion, they just wanted someone who could say “I can do this, I can lead you to liberation.” At that time there was a guy, named El Wali Mustafa, he was very young (25), who was very clever, well-educated, articulate, multi-lingual. TR [the tribal representatives] found him a model example of S [Saharawi]. So they all agreed he should be leader, and they should provide him with anything he needs. He also had a staff just like him. Young guys that look like him – maybe not the same capacity but close.²⁹

Additionally, the story of the defeat of Mauritania valorizes the martial capacity of the Saharawi, and the death of Mustafa during the assault of the Mauritanian capital creates the perfect liberation martyr: selfless, heroic, perfectly Saharawi, and also perfectly revolutionary. All of these elements combine to create the ethically constitutive story that legitimizes the Saharawi in the manner described by A. D. Smith, R. Smith, and Renan.

This story is transmitted through a variety of official channels. One of the most effective is the establishment of official holidays. In an interview with Babiya

²⁹ This excerpt is transcribed directly from my notes. While filtered by both the translation from Arabic to English and my transcription of the translation, the underlying sentiment is clear.

Chiia's 5th grade class, the children were asked to name the important days for the Saharawi. Their answers read like a Polisario historical timeline: 20th of May, 27th of February (the proclamation of the SADR), 10th of May, 12th of October, 9th of June (martyrdom of the first President), 17th of June, and the 8th of March (the first Polisario martyr). These children do not receive formal classroom instruction on the history of the Polisario until the 6th grade, (Gauth Mammon, Inspector, Ministry of Education, interview), so the knowledge of these dates is an indication of the state successfully creating an educational atmosphere where the history is as omnipresent as the buildings. In addition to holidays, this is also done through naming conventions. While the large residential camps are named after cities in the Western Sahara, the national schools are named "the 27th of February", "the 9 of June" and "the 12 of October" (Cozza 2003: 129). Thus, even the discourse of educational opportunity references three key dates in Saharawi history: the creation of a shared state, the death of a shared hero, and the passing of the mantle of shared legitimacy. Polisario history is incorporated throughout the educational curricula. Saharawi preschoolers color the national flag, grade school children translate sentences such as "The planes bomb the people", and children are told stories and shown films that valorize the struggle against Morocco. This is done intentionally, using annual celebrations as a key pedagogical method, as well as history embedded in other lessons (Gauth Mammon). These formal lessons about politics are an important method for binding the population to Polisario authority. Equally important, though, is the connection between the Polisario political program and the reconceptualization of Saharawi culture.

National Culture and the Culture of Nationalism

The theory of nationalism used in this paper requires the use of both the technologies of modernity and references to broadly understood ethnic beliefs – beliefs which both inform the discourse of the national project and are, in turn, transformed by the national elites who reference them. Saharawi culture is rich enough to provide material for a paper of its own, but a few examples illustrate the relationship between the Saharawi political elites and the culture. These will be divided into three broad categories: tradition, liberation, and the Other.

Tradition

Saharawi social conventions regarding hospitality, habitation, and the celebration of major life events have not been altogether transformed by their exodus in Algeria, although accommodations have been made for the new circumstances. For example, while in the camps I went to a baby naming ceremony in nearby Dahkla. The host provided an abundance of food for the ceremony, including a goat slaughtered for the occasion (an expensive local delicacy). The men socialized in one room while the women and young children socialized in another. I was fortunate enough to be allowed to move between both areas, and thus had the opportunity to have a ready-made focus group for the evolution of tradition. The women chose to highlight the difference in marriage ceremonies. Whereas in the past, marriage ceremonies are remembered to have been week-long affairs with the sacrifice of many camels, they are now about a day long (Ahmed Batal's naming ceremony). However, the ceremony still occurs at the bride's mother's house (Mohamed Sidati, sociology instructor, Local Women's Center). There are more than just chronological changes to

the ceremony – the institution of arranged marriage has also fallen by the wayside, in accordance with the Polisario’s gender-equality program (Naming ceremony).

The changes in gender roles are cited by many outside researchers (Harrell-Bond for example). Women participate in the Saharawi government, are responsible for the conduct of elections, are given full educational and employment opportunities, and SADR law requires that there be an even ratio of male and female candidates for public office. Nonetheless, these changes are placed in the broader context of Saharawi cultural history. As observed by the women at the naming ceremony, prior to 1970 women were heavily involved in nomadic trading – they were responsible for the production of food and canteens, making tents, carpets, and mattresses, and constructing and maintaining all the goods within the tents.³⁰ So when the camps were originally established, the women saw themselves as naturally assuming the roles of nurses, teachers, armed sentries, logisticians, and industrialists (Naming ceremony). It is the legitimacy earned in the performance of these roles, rooted in history, that is the foundation for the modern Saharawi equality regime. This is an excellent illustration of the interwoven nature of Polisario social engineering and Saharawi memory – decisions made by an educated elite are incorporated into the story of a society as a part of a seamless historical narrative.

One social practice that seems to have gone unchanged is the tea ceremony, which is itself embedded in a larger story of Saharawi hospitality. In keeping with the mythology of a peaceful, apolitical pre-colonial society, Saharawi in their natural state are said to be a peaceful, democratic community, in which a person could travel across the Western Sahara relying solely on the hospitality of strangers (Ahmedou Souelem). This is because the Saharawi are a very open and social society where strangers act as friends around tea (Ahmedou Souelem). The tea ceremony is quite social because the production of the tea itself is very ritualized and time-consuming. First, the coals of locally harvested wood (a desert scrub that is strictly regulated – only dead or fallen trees may be burned for charcoal) are heated up with a bellows. The water is boiled and the green tea leaves are rinsed. After rinsing, the production of the first glasses begins by pouring tea from glass to glass in order to build up a significant layer of foam in each. At the tea-maker’s discretion the first glass is poured, and, as it lacks any sugar and is not particularly watered down, is quite bitter. Then begins production of the second glass, where more water is added to the leaves along with a healthy dose of sugar. The foam and pour procedure repeats itself, and then the third and final glass is readied, this time with both sugar and mint leaves. As the saying goes, the first glass is bitter like life, the second is sweet like love, and the third is soft like death. This ceremony is important because its reproduction enables the Saharawi to retell a story about themselves; namely, that they are a single culture unified by a set of beliefs (openness, hospitality) and practices (tea ceremonies). It is this belief in ethno-cultural unity that creates the space for the field of nationalism to emerge under the guidance of Polisario elites.

Liberation

The struggle for national liberation is tied to Saharawi cultural life in a number of ways. The Polisario elite use both ethnic understandings and the state apparatus for

³⁰ A history which prompted my partner Kristen to ask: “So do the men do *anything?*”; a query that led to a laugh of sisterly solidarity that seems to be able to transcend space, language, and culture.

tying together Saharawi custom and collective identity, the political history of the state, and the capacity of modern technologies to inculcate particular meanings. For example, the national holidays mentioned earlier are celebrated using both old and new paradigms. As with the naming ceremony, national holidays are opportunities to host many guests and prepare lavish feasts in celebration (Ahmedou Souelem). At the same time, the Ministry of Culture and Sport also puts on a culture festival on the Day of Unification that features traditional sports, food, music and camel races (Maria Salek, Minister of Culture and Sport, interview). On the 20th of May there is a folklore celebration that serves much the same function: people celebrate the state history as a national history, and do so in such a way that state ministries are re-inscribing a pantheon of cultural practices as a form of celebration. A similar phenomenon occurs in the context of the fine arts. Poets in the past have traditionally written about the beauty of nature, women, camels, etc.; since the revolution, the Polisario encouraged people to think progressively and write poems about it, or to write poems about the battles of the Polisario against the invader (Ahmedou Souelem). This is also the case in Saharawi theater, which is dominated thematically by dramatizations of the national history (from the colonial period onwards) and the suffering of the Saharawi in the 1975 period (Ali Yahdi Mohammed, playwright, Ministry of Culture and Sport). This official production of history has its effect, because when Babiya Chiia's class was asked to name their favorite films, they began by mentioning a series of documentaries about the history of the Saharawi.

The Other

As was discussed above, the theory of ethnicity in this paper relies on the intentional differentiation of one group from another. In this case, the cultural practices of the Saharawi are implicitly and explicitly contrasted with those of the Moroccans. The Ministry of Information produces two types of material for consumption in the camps and broadcast into Morocco: stories about Morocco's actions and stories about the unique Saharawi culture (Sidi Ahmed Batal, Minister of Information, interview). The cultural programming is based on the differentiation between Moroccan and Saharawi culture, and the Minister noted in particular the linguistic differences, differences in dress and food, and the tea ceremony. This material is then used by the Ministry of Occupied Territory to "remind" the Saharawi in the portions of the Western Sahara held by Morocco who they "really are". It is also accompanied by political programming that includes histories of the Polisario movement, Saharawi actions within the occupied territory, stories of life in the camps, and the continued underhandedness of Morocco (Sidi Ahmed Batal). As a result, many aspects of everyday Saharawi existence become cultural markers: the bright, flowing attire of the women, maintenance of the herds, the production of tea. Moreover, by ethnicizing these activities one also subtly politicizes them and enlists them in the struggle against Morocco. By extension, and in tandem with the other programming, this also legitimizes the SADR's role as an embodiment and defender of Saharawi culture.

Conclusion

The elements in this Section illustrate this paper's theory of nationalism in practice. Because the Polisario administer the camps, they are able to construct political and economic stories through the judicious allocation of resources. However,

these stories are insufficient to ensure a stable political system, and thus a national ethnically constitutive story is produced using the power of the state. Importantly, this is a national story, so the policies of the Polisario are projected onto the Saharawi people as a whole. For example, gender equality as a Polisario social program is understood as a natural outgrowth of Saharawi history and culture. This understanding is nurtured by various state interventions, and by the incorporation of women into the valorized history of the Saharawi people in exile. The end result is that a very progressive form of politics is perceived as entirely normal and natural in Saharawi society. This expansion of opportunity is then positively contrasted with life in Morocco by Saharawi women's media programming. The most important thing, though, is that the history of the Polisario as a movement is intimately connected to the history of the Saharawi as a people.

There is a temptation to understand this all in a very deterministic fashion, but to do so would ignore one of the most important parts of the definition of nationalism – that it is a political field. This means that the ambitions of the Polisario elites occur in an arena where the rules and actors are continually changing and being renegotiated. The Saharawi nation was not “created by” the Polisario, rather, the Polisario were ideally positioned to mobilize Saharawi society as it existed in the early 70s and then were able to limit and redefine the scope of political discourse through the technologies of modernity. And equally importantly, the “nationalization” of the Polisario's history places an additional constraint on the political field, as it broadens the “ownership” of these stories beyond the elites who would utilize them. Thus, the Polisario elites must continue to meet the needs of the Saharawi nation as it conceives itself currently, or be replaced by other elites who either claim to better represent the nation or mobilize some non-national (e.g. tribal) affiliation.³¹

The empirical support for the theory of nationalism in this thesis is compelling. With the theory, it becomes possible to understand the production of the Saharawi past, why the camps as they are presently administered seem so different from other, similar, institutions, and how the processes of nationalism both legitimize and constrain the Saharawi political elites. As a case study, it provides the necessary evidence to warrant further study of camps as a source of nationalism in the field.

³¹ Elites can either do a better job competing in the field as it exists or scrap it entirely and replace it with a different field with different sorts of capital.

SECTION 4: IMPLICATIONS

This paper represents an interesting approach to the study of nationalism. Its theoretical innovation and its empirical data both indicate that self-administered refugee camps are an ideal location to study emerging national identities. As a result, it has important implications for the study of nationalism, the study of refugees, and the study of the Saharawi.

Theories of nationalism tend to concentrate on “a nation” that, while a constructed entity, was constructed in the heyday of the rise of nationalism, and is being phased out by different forms of collective identification (see Hobsbawm 1990). This paper argues against that interpretation, positing that nations can be formed and dissolved on a much shorter timescale than previously considered, and, indeed are in the process of being formed in the present day. This type of study is made possible by adopting Brubaker’s (1996) reconceptualization of the nation as a contingent, fluid political field. As such, it is much easier to believe that a nation can be formed in under three decades, as even “old” nations are themselves undergoing a constant process of redefinition and reformulation, so that they may become “new” on similar timescales. This paper also describes the causal antecedents in the formation of a new nation, and the actors, mechanisms, and rationale that are key in its formulation. Finally, it locates all these in self-administered refugee camps. The implication of this is that students of nationalism can pursue their craft through contemporary fieldwork as well as through archival research. This also means that considerable attention can be devoted to the development of new methods of data-gathering about national identity, resulting in the production of quantitative analyses as well as in-depth qualitative studies.

The processes of nationalism also have important implications for those who study refugees. Most importantly, the administration of aid is once again firmly connected to the development of certain types of indigenous power structures; however, in this case, it is demonstrated that self-administration in no way de-politicizes a refugee camp, it merely facilitates a different sort of politics. Moreover, this politics may be quite different from the politics of the home community. The technologies of power inherent in the administration of aid in such concentrated settlements necessarily require a different sort of rationalization from elites than do more diffuse power arrangements typical of population sparse regions. As Terry (2000) and Gourevitch (1998) so vividly demonstrate, these politics do not have to be as progressive as those found in the Saharawi camps. Self-administration may be a precondition to nationalism, but nationalism certainly is not a precondition to an ideal human situation either in the camps or in neighboring communities. What appears to be required on both the practical and academic levels is a thorough research program that includes an analysis of local power structures. This analysis should seek to understand the current political field and its mode of capital and competition and the likely outcomes of changing that field through the introduction of different resource rules and availability. This data should then allow significant insight into the implications of self-administration, refugee self-management, or traditional humanitarianism.

Finally, this paper has implications for the study of the Saharawi. Perhaps it is the stark atmosphere, with the endless expanse of blue sky and tan sands in every

direction, but those who write about the Saharawi seem to develop very strong feelings about the Polisario one way or another: they are either Machiavellian schemers or desert Progressives. This study seems to indicate that they are a bit of both. The Polisario elites were responding to conditions as they found them, and were also intent on transforming Saharawi society in accordance with their particular vision of social justice. Judging whether they have been successful in that effort, and the normative implications of any particular policy, is best left to others. This piece attempts to moderate the discussion of the Western Sahara by offering an explanation of Saharawi politics in the context of a broader theory of nationalism.

Harrell-Bond was right. As improbable as it may sound, a group of 170,000 refugees living in tents in the middle of Sahara, sustained by international aid, have formed a nation in every sense of the word. This paper has provided a theoretical framework for explaining why and how this can occur, and, just as important, has obtained and highlighted empirical data to support it. As a result, it better enables one to hear, and to truly understand, the stories of a nation.

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ANNEX A: METHODOLOGY DETAIL

In their critique of contemporary refugee research, Jacobsen and Landau lambaste what they perceive as lax methodology and reporting (2003). This annex is created to respond to that criticism, to make clear the procedures, protections, and compromises that were a part of the fieldwork for this paper, and to facilitate replication of the study.

In order to conduct research in the Saharawi camps, one must obtain permission from the Polisario, in this case, through their representative in London, Limam. In order to obtain permission, a letter describing the intended research program and a letter of endorsement from a member of faculty was sent to the Polisario office, which in turn sent a letter to the Algerian consulate. The consulate then issued gratis visas for me and my partner, Kristen. After picking up our visas the day before we were to depart, we hopped on a plane and began our journey to Algiers. In Algiers, we took a domestic Air Algerie flight to Tindouf, where we caught the head of the Protocol office. He arranged transport to the government reception center in Rabuni.

Our stay in Rabuni took a little longer than expected, as the Protocol office was focused on preparations for the visit of the President of Mozambique the following day. After three days in Rabuni, we were introduced to our translator and host, Zorgan. We left for his house in Smara that evening, where we stayed for the next two weeks. While living with Zorgan, his wife Oom, and their infant son, Saleh we assisted with household chores and paid for the additional cost in food that our stay imposed (Devereux and Hoddinott 1992:11-13, 20-21). While with Zorgan, we also participated in buying food, joined him at a baby-naming ceremony, and accompanied him to his brother's shop in the market (Devereux and Hoddinott 1992:19). After our stay in Smara, we returned to Rabuni and conducted interviews with government officials using the same model. On the 31st of December we flew to Algiers, and spent New Year's in the Algiers Hilton with our filthy hair and equipment among the glitterati of Algeria.

There are two very important limitations to this research that require mentioning. The first is the language barrier. Because I only speak English and a bit of German, I was able to talk to only a tiny fraction of the Saharawi. As a result, I used a translator and then transcribed the conversations as they were occurring. Transcription was feasible due to the time it took to translate questions and answers, but is still an error-prone technique. As a result, direct quotes are not used in this paper; rather, information is cited based on the interview from which it came. Where possible, the notes are adhered to verbatim, and the notes are available on request through the Refugee Studies Centre. The second potential issue is the political sensitivity of certain issues in contemporary Saharawi politics, namely those surrounding tribes and "the '88" (see Cozza 2003). I asked Zorgan about these issues, and when he seemed uncomfortable, I dropped the subject. Since the Saharawi survival is dependant on foreign aid, and I was certainly not a trusted member of the community, I did not have access to this information. Some read this reticence as "secretiveness"; this seems to be a remarkably colonial stance, as most communities have certain aspects of their existence that are not readily offered to strangers.¹ While the omitted information would doubtless have been helpful, it is covered in other materials and I certainly do not believe that it would dramatically change the findings.

¹ It is colonial insofar as it implies that when anyone balks at revealing their innermost thoughts and feelings to a Western researcher it is they, and not the researcher, who is acting inappropriately. This approach renders knowledge and experience as a resource that must be mined and properly utilized by Westerners using modern techniques, as it can not be left in the hands of the indigenous population.

Consent and confidentiality for my informants was a concern throughout the process. Since Saharawi culture and story-telling is based on an oral tradition, I did not employ written consent forms. In this cultural context, they would have seemed foreign and inappropriate. Informed consent was best obtained by verbally explaining who I was, why I was there, and what I intended to do with the research. There were no objections, although I was frequently asked why I was interested in Saharawi history. I explained that I wanted to learn about how people remembered the past and see what impact it had on the current society. This approach best achieved the aims of informed consent without attempting to impose a Western model of legal transaction and discourse from the outset of the conversation. Confidentiality is unlikely to be an issue, as Zorgan, a government translator, accompanied me for all my interviews. Nonetheless, in order to ensure the privacy and safety of my informants, culturally appropriate pseudonyms are used for all non-government interviewees. I retain a master key that will be destroyed in July, 2008.

ANNEX B: TABLE OF FORMAL INTERVIEWS

Name	Position
Mohamed Lamine*	Tribal Representative
Abdelkader Taleb Oumar	Prime Minister
Fadel Mouktar	Director of Rabuni Hospital
Ahmed Souelem*	Poet
Salik Bobih*	Camel herder
Akeil Ahmed*	Organization of Masked Unity
Babiya Chiaa*	Teacher
Gauth Mammon	Inspector for the Ministry of Education
Mohamed Sidati*	Sociology instructor
Ahmed Batal*	Father at baby-naming
Fatima Musaf*	Psychology instructor
Fati Jaboori*	Law instructor
Sidi Ahmed Batal	Minister of Information
Maria Salek	Minister of Culture and Sport
Ali Yahdi Mohammed	Official playwright

* denotes pseudonym used

ANNEX C: VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF STATE, NATION, AND CULTURE

Presidential Facility at Rabuni



This complex houses the presidential offices at the administrative camp at Rabuni. It is the largest building in the area, and is the only one with painted exterior walls. The two block houses are used for security purposes. Within sight of this complex are the broadcast towers of the Ministry of Information, the military museum, the offices of the Ministry of Culture and Sport, and the reception center for foreign visitors.

Bottling ibuprofen at the pharmaceutical manufacturing facility



The medical facilities in Rabuni highlight connection between the state, aid, and education. The medical professionals at the hospital are largely Saharawi, with some specialists who volunteer to come from Italy and Spain. The Saharawi doctors are educated in universities across the world, but most attend school in Cuba. The hospital itself and the facility depicted here were all built and equipped through foreign aid, and aid provides the raw materials necessary to make these drugs. The end result is that the Saharawi population receives a high standard of medical care due to the aid projects and educational opportunities administered by the state.

Waving the Saharawi flag



The Saharawi flag is a potent symbol. It exerts a unifying influence as a physical manifestation of nationhood, it enables the state to denote the services that it provides to the population, and it retells the Saharawi national story visually. The red on the flag represents the blood of the Saharawi martyrs, the black represents colonialism, the white represents peace and purity, the green represents liberation, and the crescent and star represent Islam and its five pillars. The occasion for this display is a parade in honor of the visiting President of Mozambique.

Casting a ballot



Here, Saharawi woman casts her vote for national representative. The woman in the chair is monitoring the locked ballot box to prevent fraud, and the women in the far right of the picture are checking names off the voter registration roles. This electoral process highlights the importance of women in Saharawi political culture, the political story told by the Saharawi state, and the ubiquity of Saharawi nation symbols. Note also the three flags in the picture: one on the ballot box, one on the wall, and one in a picture hanging from the ceiling.

A Saharawi Classroom



Education is extremely important to the Saharawi and school attendance is compulsory. As discussed in the paper, education binds people to the state in a number of ways. It brings the entire population together into centralized, non-sectarian environment, it enables the state to identify a critical resource (knowledge) and then provide it, it provides a venue for the inculcation of national identity, and it creates the literate workforce necessary to administer the complex organizations of the SADR.

Smara Camel Project



The Smara camel herd combines both old and new elements of Saharawi society. The men in the picture grew up as nomadic camel herders in Western Sahara. Yet the camel they are milking is part of a government-owned herd that provides nutritious, easily-digestible camel milk to the old and infirm. As each camel is milked, the contents of the bowl seen under the udder are transferred to a large tank, bottled, and then transported by truck throughout the camp. The entire project is funded by an Italian NGO.

Women's Tent at the Baby-naming Ceremony



The role of women in the SADR as captured the imagination of many commentators. Yet according to the women interviewed, recent changes in gender policy are seen as part of a natural progression for the Saharawi culture. Increased educational, political, and professional opportunities for women do seem to co-exist quite comfortably with traditional modes of existence, including attire, ceremonial events, community celebrations, and child-rearing. The tent walls are vibrantly colored: tents continue to be a part of Saharawi culture, and families use them in the hot summer months to escape the heat of their tin-roofed homes.