

New World, New Hope: The Struggle For A Free Western Sahara Continues



*Western Sahara - Map:
en.wikipedia.org*

06-27-2024 ~ The Sahrawi freedom movement Polisario continues the armed struggle against Morocco, which uses Israeli spyware and lures the West with trade opportunities to turn a blind eye to the occupation of Western Sahara. Many Sahrawis see new hope in a new multipolar world order that is not dominated by the United States and the West.

Life under occupation is a constant struggle. This is continually expressed at the international media conference in a refugee camp in Western Sahara. The conference takes place from May 1-5 and is [organized](#) by the Sahrawi Union of Journalists and Writers (UPES).

Western Sahara is occupied by Morocco, a country where King Muhammad VI has [full control](#) over Morocco's armed forces, judiciary, and all foreign policy.

In Western Sahara, the Moroccan monarchy violates the human rights of the Sahrawi people. Children suffer from malnutrition, journalists are thrown in prison, and international observers are denied access to the occupied territories.

Morocco's colonization of Western Sahara has been going on since 1975;

however, the occupation receives little attention from the international community. Through the occupation, Morocco offers trade opportunities to Western companies while the Moroccan intelligence service uses Israeli spyware to monitor the Sahrawis.

But the revolutionary Sahrawi freedom movement—Polisario Front—is not giving up: In 2020, Polisario resumed its armed struggle against Morocco. The Sahrawis hope that a new world order, not dominated by the West, will open up new possibilities in the fight for a free and independent Western Sahara.

Occupied Land

The media conference takes place in Wilayah of Bojador, one of five Sahrawi refugee camps located in Algeria on the border with Western Sahara. Algeria has given the area to Polisario, which administers the refugee camps.

Thus, you could say that Western Sahara is divided into three areas. There are the occupied territories of Western Sahara, where Morocco is in power. There are the liberated areas of Western Sahara, where Polisario is in power. And then there are the refugee camps in Algeria, where Polisario is also in power.

People may have traveled from all over the world to attend the media conference. However, it is the participants from the occupied territories of Western Sahara who receive the most acclaim at the opening of the various debates. This is due to the harsh living conditions in the occupied territories.

“Today, many children suffer from malnutrition due to the occupation,” says Buhubeini Yahya, head of the non-governmental organization (NGO) Sahrawi Red Crescent (SRC), which operates in the occupied territories.

Problems with malnutrition are partly due to the fact that Morocco currently blocks Polisario’s access to the occupied territories, making the freedom movement unable to deliver humanitarian assistance to the local population.

Journalists and Activists

Sahrawi journalists—who want to cover malnutrition among children in the occupied territories, for example—are doing a job that can cost them dearly.

Bhakha*, who works as a journalist in the territories, knows this.

“My colleagues and I are trying to expose Morocco’s crimes. But several have

been arrested, some have received 27 years in prison,” Bhakha says from the stage.

“Moroccan police kidnap journalists and confiscate our phones and cameras. Media people are having their bank accounts blocked and our websites are being cyberattacked,” he continues.

Bhakha says that in the occupied territories, Morocco is cracking down on activists who organize demonstrations and speak out against the occupation. According to him, activists have been “thrown off tall buildings” as punishment for protesting.

“The Moroccan authorities have intensified their spate of violations against pro-independence Sahrawi activists through ill-treatment, arrests, detentions, and harassment in an attempt to silence or punish them,” the NGO [Amnesty International](#) wrote in 2021.

In eight months, Amnesty had recorded “seven cases of torture or other ill-treatment, three house raids, two de facto house arrests and nine cases of arrests, detentions and harassment of individuals in relation to their peaceful exercise of their freedom of expression and assembly.”

Tough Prisons

Sukina can’t hold back the tears. She is attending the media conference to talk about her brother Hussein, an activist from the occupied territories who has been thrown in prison for speaking out in favor of independence for Western Sahara.

“I find it very difficult to talk about how much my brother is suffering in prison,” says Sukina.

Next to Sukina is journalist Mustaffa, who himself was locked up in a Moroccan prison as a political prisoner because he reported on the Moroccan occupation. Mustaffa describes a harsh prison system where inmates live in “miserable conditions” with many diseases circulating.

According to [Prison Insider](#), a prison information platform, human rights organizations are concerned about Morocco’s “massive use of torture and ill-treatment of prisoners in Morocco and Western Sahara, where political prisoners are numerous and are particularly vulnerable.”

Sukina says that her family has to go through a lot to even see her brother

Hussein in the Moroccan prison where he is being held. Just getting to the prison can take more than a day.

“The prison is many kilometers away from my family’s home. We have been forced to walk so far that my mother is now suffering from a kidney disease. There is nowhere near the prison where we can stay overnight. We have to go back and forth on the same day,” she says.

Sukina continues, “Once we get there, it is not at all certain that the Moroccan prison guards will even let us see my brother. They have rejected us several times with mocking remarks.”

“And when they do let us meet with Hussein, it is always too short a meeting [and] under the supervision of the prison guards. My brother is not allowed to say a word about the conditions in the prison,” Sukina sighs.

Money Talks

At the media conference in the refugee camp, many local participants express frustration that the international community generally turns a blind eye to Morocco’s occupation of Western Sahara.

According to several experts on stage, the lack of focus is due to Morocco offering Western companies access to natural resources and other commercial opportunities in the occupied territories.

Here, European companies are [involved](#)—through imports, exports, or the provision of technical services—in phosphate mining, wind power projects, agriculture, and fishing.

The economic exploitation of Western Sahara without the consent of the Sahrawi people is in violation of international law. The Sahrawis have not accepted the economic activities in the occupied territories and do not receive a share of the profits.

In 2017, the Danish shipping companies Ultrabulk and Clipper were caught in a [political crossfire](#) when it emerged that the shipping companies were shipping cargo from occupied Western Sahara. Anders Samuelsen, then the Danish foreign minister from the neoliberal party Liberal Alliance, refused to intervene.

In this way, Western companies and governments are helping to maintain the Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara.

Connections to Israel

During the conference, there are repeated expressions of support for the Palestinians who are currently suffering from Israel's genocide. All participants stand up and observe a minute of silence in solidarity with Palestine.

In this way, one occupied people shows solidarity with another. The Sahrawis and the Palestinians are fighting against their respective occupying powers, who are collaborating with each other.

In December 2020, a month before his presidential term expired, Donald Trump [declared](#) that the United States now considered all of Western Sahara to be part of Moroccan territory. This is one of the decisions that current U.S. President Joe Biden has chosen not to change.

In exchange for the declaration, the United States demanded that Morocco [establish diplomatic relations](#) with Israel. Today, Morocco recognizes Israel as a state and Israel recognizes Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara.

It has also come to light that Morocco is using the Israeli spyware Pegasus to [spy on](#) Sahrawi human rights activists.

"Morocco uses Pegasus against all content related to Western Sahara," says Hamada Salma, Minister of Information of Western Sahara.

Armed Struggle Resumed

Although most of the world ignores Morocco's oppression of the Sahrawis, the Sahrawis have not given up.

In 2020, the revolutionary freedom movement Polisario decided to resume its armed struggle against Morocco.

This happened after Morocco broke a long-standing ceasefire dating back to 1991. The ceasefire between Polisario and Morocco was initiated by the UN.

The ceasefire was based on an agreement that the UN would organize a referendum where the Sahrawis would vote on whether they wanted an independent Western Sahara or a Western Sahara integrated into Morocco.

Twenty-nine years later, the referendum had not materialized. And when Morocco broke the ceasefire on November 13, 2020, by [launching a military mission](#) against peaceful protesters, Polisario decided to resume the armed struggle.

During the media conference, Polisario soldier Barak Mamir talks about the armed resistance against Morocco. In different regions, the Polisario is attacking Moroccan forces along the “Wall of Shame,” a 2,700-kilometer fortification built by Morocco across Western Sahara.

“Since November 13, 2020, we have carried out a total of 3,500 attacks,” says Barak Mamir.

Affecting the Economy

According to Barak Mamir, Polisario’s attacks against Morocco’s military have had a significant effect on the Moroccan economy.

“As a result of our attacks, Morocco has been forced to double its military budget. This means that the price of basic necessities for the average Moroccan has increased significantly,” he says.

In 2023, the pan-African news network Africanews reported that the price of vegetables in Moroccan markets was “almost as expensive as in some French supermarkets,” even though the minimum wage in France was five times higher than in Morocco.

“The Moroccan regime is doing everything it can to keep the cost of the conflict out of the public eye,” says Barak Mimir from the stage.

This also applies when Moroccan soldiers fall in battle.

Fighting for Freedom

“When a family in Morocco is informed that their son has been killed in action, they are told not to post anything about it on social media,” says Barak Mimir.

According to him, several Moroccan soldiers have also been prosecuted for choosing to flee instead of fighting the Polisario. Dozens of Moroccan soldiers have even [left the military](#) in opposition to the Moroccan monarchy.

This has happened even though the Moroccan military is armed with state-of-the-art military technology such as drones.

A Polisario soldier explains that there are significant differences between Moroccan and Sahrawi soldiers:

“The soldiers from Western Sahara know the country, and we fight for the freedom of our people. Moroccan soldiers, on the other hand, have not chosen to fight but have been forced to do so as part of their job.”

According to the soldier, this is one of the reasons why Polisario has managed to break through the Wall of Shame, which is divided into a series of lines: barbed wire, dogs, a moat, the wall itself, 150,000 soldiers and 8 million landmines.

In one of the refugee camps is the Museum of Resistance, where visitors can see several of the tanks, artillery systems, and other weapons that Polisario soldiers have managed to take from the Moroccan army after breaking through the wall.

New World, New Hope

But for a revolutionary freedom movement, fighting against a Moroccan military power armed with modern weapons that have primarily been produced in the West is no walk in the park. Many Sahrawis have fallen in battle.

It's not that the Sahrawis want war either. The goal is to be able to live in an independent and peaceful Western Sahara, it is repeated several times at the media conference.

The new multipolar world order, where non-Western powers have more and more say, is seen by several participants at the conference as a positive development that can open the door for the liberation of Western Sahara.

Morocco has historically benefited from the unipolar world order, which for decades after the end of the Cold War in 1991 was dominated by the United States. This allowed Morocco to occupy Western Sahara without consequences.

But now a new world order is emerging, and it is making its presence felt in Western Sahara's neighborhood. Countries like Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso have thrown out Western soldiers from the United States and France, respectively, to strengthen cooperation with Russia.

"New powers are emerging, more different countries are rising up. The multipolar world, where the U.S. does not dominate, will strengthen Western Sahara's struggle for liberation," says Syrian Mahmoud Al-Saleh, chairman of the Arab Committee of Solidarity with the Sahrawi People.

A Sahrawi journalist says that Polisario's struggle against the Moroccan occupation is receiving better coverage in non-Western media such as Russia Today, a state-owned Russian media that is also participating in this media conference.

“There is a long way to go before the international community becomes objective. If you only had access to Western media, the world would see us as terrorists,” says the journalist.

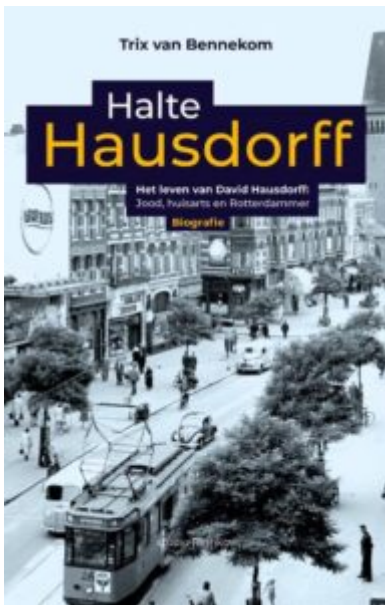
**Disclaimer: Some conference participants are referred to by first name only and names in the article may not be spelled correctly.*

By Marc B. Sanganee

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Source: Globetrotter

Trix van Bennekom ~ Halte Hausdorff



06-24-2024 ~ *Het leven van David Hausdorff. Jood, huisarts en Rotterdammer.*

‘Sint-Petersburg, zondagmiddag 13 maart 1881’. Dat Trix van Bennekom de biografie van David Hausdorff begint met deze regel, illustreert haar aanpak. Een aanpak die we kennen van haar boek Abraham. Kroniek van een politieke dynastie (2018). De combinatie van een persoonlijke geschiedenis en de grote geschiedenis

levert ook nu weer een bijzonder boek op.

Op die dertiende maart in 1881 kwam tsaar Alexander II bij een aanslag om het leven. Al kwamen de daders uit een revolutionaire groepering, de Nihilisten, de Joodse gemeenschap in Rusland kreeg de schuld. Drie jaar lang werden Russische Joden door volksmassa's mishandeld en vermoord. De eerste grote pogroms in de moderne tijd.

Vanuit Rusland en aangrenzende gebieden kwam een grote stroom vluchtelingen op gang. De meeste vluchtelingen wilden naar Amerika.

Rotterdam kreeg de bijnaam 'Warschau aan de Maas', zo veel mensen kwamen vanuit het Oosten in de hoop in te kunnen schepen naar het Gouden Land.

Tussen 1818 en 1914 verhuisden 2,5 miljoen Joden uit Oost-Europa naar de Verenigde Staten.

Ook een deel van de familie Hausdorff, woonachtig in Polen, dicht bij de Russische grens, besloot naar het Westen te gaan. Het geweld kwam steeds dichterbij.

Na eerst in Duitsland gewoond te hebben, gingen twee zonen Hausdorff in 1883 naar Rotterdam. Daar wordt op 2 november 1901 David Hausdorff geboren.

Het is verleidelijk om maar te blijven vertellen over geschiedenis die de achtergrond vormt voor het verhaal over deze huisarts. En dan moet je nog beginnen aan de verhalen over de Joodse gemeenschap in Rotterdam voor de oorlog, over de oorlogsjaren, over de onderduik van het gezin Hausdorff vanaf 1943, over de wederopbouw van diezelfde Joodse gemeenschap na de oorlog.

Wil je aan de hand van een citaat laten zien hoe Van Bennekom in één alinea de stemming in de Joodse gemeenschap vlak na de oorlog weet samen te vatten:

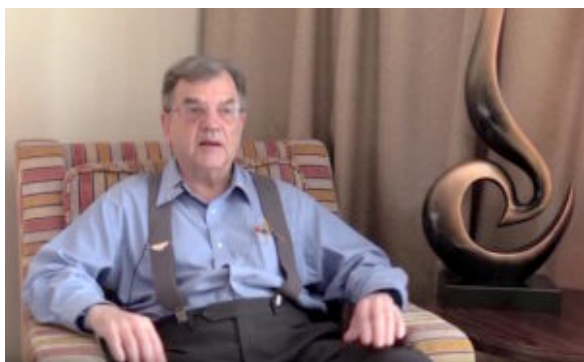
'De Duitse bezetter had in Nederland niet alleen meer dan 100.000 Joden de dood ingejaagd, ook het eeuwenoude Joodse leven was weggevaagd. Synagogen, ziekenhuizen, scholen, weeshuizen, bejaardenhuizen, bedrijven, woonhuizen, winkels; alles was in beslaggenomen en geplunderd, religieuze, sociale en culturele organisaties waren opgeheven. Waar te beginnen? En had het nog wel zin de Joodse gemeenschap opnieuw op te bouwen? De anti-Joodse stemming die in de eerste maanden na de bevrijding in Nederland heerste, deed het ergste vrezen voor de toekomst: zouden Joden niet altijd tweederangsburgers blijven?'

Maar verstandiger is het om nu maar gewoon te stoppen en te zeggen: lezen!

Studio Rashkov, Rotterdam, 2024

ISBN 9789083320434

Modern (Mis)interpretations Of Clean Slates



Michael Hudson

06-19-2024 ~ *Today's creditor-oriented ideology depicts the archaic past as much like our own world, as if civilization was developed by individuals thinking in terms of modern orthodoxy.*

Why were Clean Slates so important to Bronze Age societies? From the third millennium in Mesopotamia, people were aware that debt pressures, if left to accumulate unchecked, would distort normal fiscal and landholding patterns to the detriment of the community. They perceived that debts grow autonomously under their own dynamic by the exponential curves of compound interest rather than adjusting themselves to reflect the ability of debtors to pay. This idea never has been accepted by modern economic doctrine, which assumes that disturbances are cured by automatically self-correcting market mechanisms. That assumption blocks discussion of what governments can do to prevent the debt overhead from destabilizing economies.

The Cosmological Dimension of Clean Slates

Mesopotamia's concept of divine kingship was key to the practice of declaring

Clean Slates. The prefatory passages of Babylonian edicts cited the ruler's commitment to serve his city-god by promoting equity in the land. Myth and ritual were integrated with economic relations and were viewed as forming the natural order that rulers were charged with overseeing; in this context, canceling debts helped fulfill their sacred obligation to their city-gods. Commemorated by their year-names and often by foundation deposits in temples, these amnesties appear to have been proclaimed at a major festival, replete with rituals such as Babylon's ruler raising a sacred torch to signal the renewal of the social cosmos in good order—what the Romanian historian Mircea Eliade called “the eternal return,” the idea of circular time that formed the context in which rulers restored an idealized *status quo ante*. By integrating debt annulments with social cosmology, the image of rulers restoring economic order was central to the archaic idea of justice and equity.

(Mis)Interpreting the Meaning of 'Freedom'

The Hebrew word used for the Jubilee Year in Leviticus 25 is *dêror*, but not until cuneiform texts could be read was it recognized as cognate to Akkadian *andurarum*. Before the early meaning was clarified, the King James Version translated the relevant phrase as: “Proclaim *liberty* throughout all the land, and to all the inhabitants thereof.” But the root meaning of *andurarum* is to move freely, as running water—or (for humans) as bondservants liberated to rejoin their families of origin.

The wide variety of modern interpretations of such key terms as Sumerian *amargi*, Akkadian *andurarum* and *misharum*, and Hurrian *shudutu* serve as an ideological Rorschach test reflecting the translator's own beliefs. The earliest reading was by Francois Thureau-Dangin[1], who related the Sumerian term *amargi* to Akkadian *andurarum* and saw it as a debt cancellation. Ten years later Schorr (1915) related these acts to Solon's *seisachtheia*, the “shedding of burdens” that annulled the debts of rural Athens in 594 BC. The Canadian scholar George Barton[2] translated Urukagina's and Gudea's use of the term *amargi* as “release,” although the Jesuit Anton Deimel[3] rendered it rather obscurely as “security.”

Maurice Lambert[4] initially interpreted Urukagina's *amargi* act as an exemption from taxes, on the ground that most of the debts being annulled were owed to the palace. His subsequent 1972 discovery of Enmetena's kindred proclamation dating some fifty years earlier led him to see *amargi* as signifying a debt

cancellation. F. R. Kraus[5] had followed this view in 1954, and greatly elaborated his survey of Babylonian proclamations in his 1984 survey of rulers “raising the torch” to signal debt cancellations.[6]

In America, Samuel Kramer (*History Begins at Sumer* [New York, 1959]) interpreted these acts as tax reductions. In a letter to *The New York Times* the day President Reagan took office in 1981, he even urged the president-elect to emulate Urukagina and cut taxes! The term *amargi* became popular with U.S. libertarians seeking an archaic precedent for their tax protests.

Kramer[7] further belittled Urukagina’s reforms as soon “gone with the wind,” being “too little, too late,” as if they were failures for not solving the debt problem permanently. In a similar vein Stephen Lieberman[8], deemed Babylonian debt cancellations ineffective on the ground that they kept having to be repeated: “The need to repeat the enactment of identical provisions shows that the *misharum* provided relief, but did not eliminate the difficulties which made it necessary....What seems to have been needed was reform which would have eliminated all need for such adjustments.” He did not suggest just what could have created an economy free of credit cycles.

A Practical Solution

Mesopotamian rulers were not seeking a debt-free utopia but coped pragmatically with the most adverse consequences of rural debt when it became top-heavy. Usury was not banned, as it would be in Judaism’s Exodus Code, but its *effects* were reversed when the debt overhead exceeded the ability to pay on a widespread basis. These royal edicts retained the economy’s underlying structure. The palace did not deter new debts from being run up, and kept leasing out land to sharecroppers, who owed the usual proportion of crops and were obliged to pay the usual interest penalties for non-delivery.

Igor Diakonoff[9] emphasized that “the word *andurarum* does not mean ‘political liberation.’ It is a translation of Sumerian *amargi* ‘returning to mother,’ that is, ‘to the original situation.’ It does not mean liberation from some supreme authority but the canceling of debts, duties, and the like.

The Assyrian term “washing the tablets” (*hubullam masa’um*[10]; may refer to dissolving them in water, akin to breaking or pulverizing them. Likening it to the Babylonian term meaning “to kill the tablet,” Kemal Balkan[11] explained that the

idea was to cancel grain debts by physically destroying their records. Along more abstract lines, Raymond Westbrook[12] likens the idea of “washing” to a ritual cleansing of the population from inequities that would displease Sumerian and Babylonian patron deities. Urukagina’s edict thus was held to have cleansed Lagash from the moral blemish of inequity.

Some Anachronistic Creditor-Oriented Views of Clean Slates

Instead of enforcing debt contracts at the cost of social and military instability, Sumer and Babylonia preserved economic viability via Clean Slates. Today’s creditor-oriented ideology denies the success of Clean Slates overriding free-market relations. It depicts the archaic past as much like our own world, as if civilization was developed by individuals thinking in terms of modern orthodoxy, letting interest rates be determined simply by market supply and demand, duly adjusted for risk of non-payment.

Modern economic theory assumes that debts normally can be paid, with the interest rate reflecting the borrower’s profit. The implication is that the fall in interest rates from Mesopotamia to Greece and Rome resulted from falling profit rates and/or the greater security of investment. In this view, debt cancellations would only have aggravated debt problems, by increasing the creditor’s risk and hence the interest rate.

Modernist assumptions distract attention from what actually happened. No writer in antiquity is known to have related interest rates to profit rates or risk, or to the use of seeds or breeding cattle to produce offspring. We may well ask whether it was fortunate for the survival of Babylonian society that its rulers were not “advanced economic theoreticians” of the modern sort. If they had not proclaimed Clean Slates, creditors would have reduced debtors to bondage and taken their lands irreversibly. But in canceling crop debts, rulers acknowledged that the palace had taken all that it could without destroying the economy’s foundations. If they had demanded that debt arrears be made up by cultivators forfeiting their family members and land rights to royal collectors (who sought to keep debt charges on the crop yield for themselves), the palace would have lost the services of these debtors for *corvée* labor and in the armed forces to resist foreign attack.

Markets indeed became less stable as economies polarized in classical antiquity. Yet it was only at the end of antiquity that Diodorus of Sicily (I.79) explained the most practical rationale for Clean Slates. Describing how Egypt’s pharaoh

Bakenranef (720-715) abolished debt bondage and canceled undocumented debts, Diodorus wrote that the pharaoh's guiding logic was that:

“the bodies of citizens should belong to the state, to the end that it might avail itself of the services which its citizens owed it, in times of both war and peace. For he felt that it would be absurd for a soldier, perhaps at the moment when he was setting forth to fight for his fatherland, to be haled to prison by his creditor for an unpaid loan, and that the greed of private citizens should in this way endanger the safety of all.”

That would seem to be how early Mesopotamian rulers must have reasoned. Letting soldiers pledge their land to creditors and then lose this basic means of self-support through foreclosure would have expropriated the community's fighting force—or led to their flight or defection. By the 4th century BC, the Greek military writer known as *Tacticus* recommended that a general attacking a town might promise to cancel the debts owed by its inhabitants if they defected to his side. Likewise, defenders of towns could strengthen the resistance of their citizens by agreeing to annul their debts.

This emergency military tactic no longer reflected a royal duty to restore economic self-reliance as a guiding principle of overall order. What disappeared was the relief of debtors from their obligations and reversal of their land sales or forfeitures when natural disasters blocked their ability to pay or after a new ruler took the throne. The oligarchic epoch had arrived, abolishing any public power able to cancel the society-wide debt overgrowth.

[1] *Les inscriptions de Sumer et d'Akkad*, 1905, pp. 86-87

[2] *The Royal Inscriptions of Sumer and Akkad*, 1929.

[3] *Sumerische Tempelwirtschaft der Zeit Urukaginas und seiner Vorgänger*, 1930, p. 9.

[4] “Les ‘Reformes’ d’Urukagina,” *La Revue Archéologique* 60, 1956, pp. 169-184..

[5] Ein Edikt des Königs Ammisaduqa von Babylon (SD 5, [Leiden]).

[6] Fritz Rudolph Kraus, [Königliche Verfügungen in altbabylonischer Zeit](#), 1984.

[7] Samuel Noah Kramer *History Begins at Sumer* 1959, p. 49.

[8] Stephen J. Lieberman “Royal ‘Reforms’ of the Amurrite Dynasty,” *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 46, 1989, pp. 241-259.

[9] “The City-States of Sumer” and “Early Despotisms in Mesopotamia,” in *Early*

Antiquity 1991, pp. 67-97, p. 234.

[10] A. Kirk Grayson *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: From the beginning to Ashur-resha-ishi I*, Volume 1 of the Records of the Near East Harrassowitz, 1972, p. 7.

[11] "Cancellation of Debts in Cappadocian Tablets from Kultepe," *Anatolian Studies Presented to Hans C. Guterbock*, 1974, pp. 29-36, p. 33.

[12] Raymond Westbrook, "Social Justice in the Ancient Near East," in Morris Silver and K. D. Irani, eds., *Social Justice in the Ancient World*, 1995, pp. 149-163.

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Source: Human Bridges

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A Historical Case For Why The EU Could Endure For More Than 1,000 Years



06-18-2024 ~ Empires historically possessed a unique ability to organize diversity and successfully rule over people quite different from one another. The national states that succeeded them in Europe were organized on the basis of nationality (real or imagined) where diversity in language, ethnicity, or religion was deemed a barrier to national unity.

The negative consequences of celebrating unique national identities became clear after virulent nationalism led to the rise of Nazi Germany

and World War II left Europe in ruins.

The European Union seeks to prevent this from happening again by restoring the cosmopolitanism, size, and economic clout of a multinational empire but without creating a unitary state in the process.

The EU is designed as a supranational polity where member states retain their national sovereignty and parochial identities but agree to be bound by its laws. They maintain their own armies, independent foreign policies, national parliaments and are free to leave if they so choose. The creation of such a chimeric political beast might appear unprecedented but it is not. The Holy Roman Empire successfully managed the affairs of central Europe by creating a similar composite political structure beginning in 962 under Otto I. In a bid to create unity in the German lands, where the Romans never ruled, the Holy Roman Empire proclaimed itself the successor to the long-dead Roman Empire as the defender of a Catholic Christian Europe. Lacking a single capital and imperial army, it did not seem to be much of an empire. However, its court system resolved disputes between member states, protecting the empire's free cities and smaller estates (300+) against the more powerful ones. More unusually, it allowed individuals to seek redressals against local rulers who had violated their rights. Its *Reichstag* or *Diet*(legislature) met regularly to pass laws that were binding on all members and its emperorship was an elective position. That emperor's power was limited because the estates within the empire remained responsible for governing their own territories. They were free to make alliances with outside powers as long as they were not detrimental to the empire or posed a danger to public peace.

That the Holy Roman Empire survived for 900 years suggests that it was on to something, and that the EU can be viewed as a secular reincarnation of it—minus only an emperor's crown and Christian faith as symbols of its unity. However, other than making Charlemagne a symbol of European unity, it is a legacy that is largely unacknowledged and perhaps for good reason. Both the largely forgotten and derided Holy Roman Empire and the EU faced similar structural complexities and solved them in similar ways but the EU's project was far more substantial—creating a polity that is now the world's third-largest economy with a population of around 450 million people divided among 27 sovereign nations, which are spread across more than 4.2 million square kilometers.

Map of Post-Brexit European Union

The EU emerged as a post-World War II aspirational project designed to avoid the conflicts that had devastated the continent for centuries, first by integrating Western Europe into a single market and then creating a common political structure to administer it without eliminating the nationally sovereign governments of its member states. It then expanded into Central and Eastern Europe after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Intellectually, the EU rooted itself in the idea that there was a common European culture that transcended the continent's many different languages, national divisions, and religions. It would be a union with a formidable regulatory bureaucracy and court system but one without a military or single capital. Imaginary European-style buildings and bridges illustrated its euro banknotes to avoid having to choose among real ones.

Because a problem solved is a problem soon forgotten, it is barely remembered that the initial rationale for the nascent union was to end a Franco-German hostility that had led to three consecutive conflicts in 70 years: the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), World War I (1914-1918), and World War II (1939-1945). This union began with the integration of coal and steel industries in 1951 and took political shape in 1957 when the Treaty of Rome created a European Economic Community that was more formally merged in 1965. Its six founding members (Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Italy, the Netherlands, and West Germany) occupied the same territories as Charlemagne's Carolingian Empire had during the 8th and 9th centuries, the only previous time that the German and French worlds shared a single governing institution with common cultural aspirations.

The new entity had no single capital but instead split its institutions among the cities of Brussels, Strasbourg, and Luxembourg. They were all nondescript places located in borderlands that the French and Germans had long fought over and lacked any taint of invidious past glory that characterized Paris, Rome, or a then-divided Berlin. By the 1970s, both Germany and France had so thoroughly embraced the integration of the community's economies that any notion that it was designed to reduce hostility between them was relegated to a historical footnote. Their common vision now was to expand into other parts of Europe and create a peer European entity that could compete more equally with the U.S. and the Soviet Union, something no European state could hope to achieve alone.

Enlargement began with the addition of Great Britain, Ireland, and Denmark (1973), Greece (1981), and then Spain and Portugal (1986). In 1993, it was reorganized into the European Union before adding Sweden, Finland, and Austria in 1995. The withdrawal of Soviet troops from central Europe allowed Germany to reunite in 1990 and the collapse of the Soviet Union itself led to a further wave of new members in 2004: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Malta, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia. These were followed by Romania and Bulgaria in 2007, and Croatia in 2013. (Great Britain, after an unexpected negative referendum vote in 2016, left the EU in 2020.) But the successful establishment of the EU also depended on a fortuitous alignment in world politics. The U.S., following its maritime empire alliance template, was supportive of the European unity and the creation of a new economic bloc as big as its own. It not only did not hinder its emergence but the U.S. also provided the EU with a security framework through the NATO military alliance that left it free to focus entirely on its economic affairs. The Soviet Union, by contrast, had ensured that not even a modicum of economic or political autonomy would emerge in the areas it occupied—the default position historically when large states were in a position to dominate smaller ones.

In his excoriating 1667 book, *De Statu Imperii Germanici*, which saw more than 100,000 copies printed, Samuel Pufendorf had declared the Holy Roman (or German) Empire a “misshaped monster” because it lacked sovereignty over its component states. It also lacked a capital city and an army that emerging national states (and all other types of empires) deemed foundational. It turns out that this structure, so ill-adapted to a world of emerging nation-states that drove it to extinction, was perfectly designed for a union of sovereign states that governed as a supranational polity largely through administrative regulation and a rules-enforcing judicial system. The EU had its own revenue stream that included customs receipts, required member contributions, and a percentage of nationally assessed value-added taxes. The EU Parliament resembled the representative *Diets* of the Holy Roman Empire in their multiple meeting places and the disconnection between that body and a weak executive. While the Holy Roman Emperor was faulted for his inability to command the obedience of member states, the EU refused even to create a single chief executive officer. Instead, it had three separate presidencies whose priority depended on the issues involved: a rotating council of ministers’ presidency filled by a different member country every six months, a president of the European Commission, and a president of the

EU Parliament.

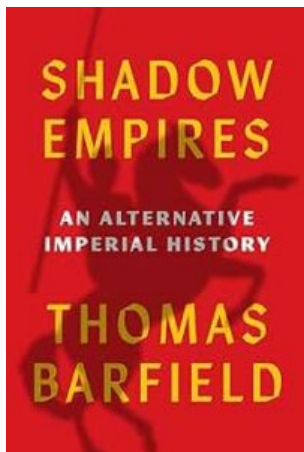
A similarly decentralized Holy Roman Empire lasted close to a millennium in the German world and northern Italy but stood in sharp contrast to the centralized systems of government that developed in countries such as France or Britain where the state's chief executive was the most important player. One reason for the lack of focus on an executive office in the EU was that it had no military forces to command. Defense responsibilities rested with national states themselves and with NATO on a Europe-wide basis. While the EU's major players were members of the NATO alliance during the Cold War, smaller states with nonaligned policies were not. And while NATO had its large headquarters in Brussels and defending Europe was its core mission, it was distinct from the EU because it had many non-EU partners, including the U.S.—its dominant member—Canada, Iceland, Norway, and Turkey. When the EU expanded eastward in 1994, all of its new member states sought to join the NATO alliance to protect themselves from possible Russian aggression.

There were of course significant differences between the EU and its Holy Roman predecessor, the most distinctive of which was that the EU was resolutely secular. Its concept of European unity was cultural and economic rather than religious, but resistance to accepting Muslim Turkey as European enough to join the union demonstrated the persisting legacy of Europe's long Christian history. Nor was the EU rooted in a nostalgia for a past that had most recently produced violent nationalism, which left scores of millions of people dead in World War II. Seeking to end such violence demanded new ways of thinking and future orientation. Appeals to nostalgia were left to anti-EU nationalist parties fighting a rearguard battle to dissolve it in order to make their own countries great again. It was an ambition that became ever more difficult to achieve as the majority of Europe's population could no longer imagine a world in which it did not exist.

Most of the EU's income was redistributed through subsidies and capital investments tilted toward its poorer members, giving it the power to curb uncooperative members if they refused to recognize the supremacy of EU law. If they needed any lessons on the consequences of breaking away, they had only to observe the ongoing turmoil that Britain endured leaving the EU that looked less likely to restore its former glory and more likely to lead to its own dissolution. In its wake, Scotland renewed its push for independence to rejoin, and the once-unthinkable prospect that the people of Northern Ireland might choose to reunify

with EU member Ireland rather than stick with Britain became a distinct possibility. But perhaps the greatest difference between the Holy Roman Empire and any other empire was that the EU was a product of voluntary alliance and treaty-making and not a result of wars of conquest. Empires may have improved the lives of those who lived in them as they evolved, but these benefits were appreciated only by the descendants of those who survived their violent formation. The EU's attempt to recreate the advantages of a multinational empire without its brutality or aggressiveness—a caffeine-free espresso if you will—sets it apart from the U.S., China, and Russia, which have not shaken off that habit. Whether it is a model that will have the longevity of the Holy Roman Empire remains to be seen.

By Thomas J. Barfield



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Source: Human Bridges

Credit Line: This article is distributed by [Human Bridges](#), first published in the [Sentinel Post](#).

Migrating Workers Provide Wealth For The World



Vijay Prashad

06-18-2024 ~ Each year, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) releases its *World Migration Report*. Most of these reports are anodyne, pointing to a secular rise in migration during the period of neoliberalism. As states in the poorer parts of the world found themselves under assault from the Washington Consensus (cuts, privatization, and austerity), and as employment became more and more precarious, larger and larger numbers of people took to the road to find a way to sustain their families. That is why the IOM published its first *World Migration Report* in 2000, when it [wrote](#) that “it is estimated that there are more migrants in the world than ever before,” it was between 1985 and 1990, the IOM calculated, that the rate of growth of world migration (2.59 percent) outstripped the rate of growth of the world population (1.7 percent).

The neoliberal attack on government expenditure in poorer countries was a key driver of international migration. Even by 1990, it had become clear that the migrants had become an essential force in providing foreign exchange to their countries through increasing remittance payments to their families. By 2015, remittances—mostly by the international working class—[outstripped](#) the volume of Official Development Assistance (ODA) by three times and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). ODA is the aid money provided by states, whereas FDI is the investment money provided by private companies. For some countries, such as Mexico and the Philippines, remittance payments from working-class migrants prevented state bankruptcy.

This year’s [report](#) notes that there are “roughly 281 million people worldwide”

who are on the move. This is 3.6 percent of the global population. It is triple the 84 million people on the move in 1970, and much higher than the 153 million people in 1990. “Global trends point to more migration in the future,” notes the IOM. Based on detailed studies, the IOM finds that the rise in migration can be attributed to three factors: war, economic precarity, and climate change.

First, people flee war, and with the increase in warfare, this has become a leading cause of displacement. Wars are not the result of human disagreement alone, since many of these problems can be resolved if calm heads are allowed to prevail; conflicts are exacerbated into war due to the immense scale of the arms trade and the pressures of the merchants of death to forgo peace initiatives and to use increasingly expensive weaponry to solve disputes. Global military spending is now [nearly](#) \$3 trillion, three-quarters of it by the Global North countries. Meanwhile, arms companies [made](#) a whopping \$600 billion in profits in 2022. Tens of millions of people are permanently displaced due to this profiteering by the merchants of death.

Second, the International Labor Organization (ILO) [calculates](#) that about 58 percent of the global workforce—or 2 billion people—are in the informal sector. They work with minimal social protection and almost no rights in the workplace. The data on youth unemployment and youth precarity is stunning, with the Indian numbers horrifying. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy [shows](#) that India’s youth—between the ages of 15 and 24—are “faced by a double whammy of low and falling labor participation rates and shockingly high unemployment rates. The unemployment rate among youth stood at 45.4 percent in 2022-23. This is an alarming six times higher than India’s unemployment rate of 7.5 percent.” Many of the migrants from West Africa who attempt the dangerous crossing of the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea flee the high rates of precarity, underemployment, and unemployment in the region. A 2018 [report](#) from the African Development Bank Group shows that due to the attack on global agriculture, peasants have moved from rural areas to cities into low-productivity informal services, from where they decide to leave for the lure of higher incomes in the West.

Third, more and more people are faced with the adverse impacts of the climate catastrophe. In 2015, at the Paris meeting on the climate, government leaders agreed to set up a Task Force on Climate Migration; three years later, in 2018, the UN Global Compact agreed that those on the move for reasons of climate

degradation must be protected. However, the concept of “climate refugees” is not yet established. In 2021, a World Bank [report](#) calculated that by 2050 there will be at least 216 million climate refugees.

Wealth

The IOM’s new report points out that these migrants—many of whom lead extremely precarious lives—send home larger and larger amounts of money to help their increasingly desperate families. “The money they send home,” the IOM report notes, “increased by a staggering 650 [percent] during the period from 2000 to 2022, rising from \$128 billion to \$831 billion.” Most of these remittances in the recent period, analysts show go to low-income and middle-income countries. Of the \$831 billion, for instance, \$647 billion goes to poorer nations. For most of these countries, the remittances sent home by working-class migrants far outstrips FDI and ODA put together and forms a significant portion of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

A number of [studies](#) conducted by the World Bank show two important things about remittance payments. First, these are more evenly distributed amongst the poorer nations. FDI transactions typically favor the largest economies in the Global South, and they go toward sectors that are not always going to provide employment or income for the poorest sections of the population. Second, household surveys show that these remittances help to considerably lower poverty in middle-income and low-income countries. For example, remittance payments by working-class migrants reduced the rate of poverty in Ghana (by 5 percent), in Bangladesh (by 6 percent), and in Uganda (by 11 percent). Countries such as Mexico and the Philippines see their poverty rates rise drastically when remittances drop.

The treatment of these migrants, who are crucial for poverty reduction and for building wealth in society, is outrageous. They are treated as criminals, abandoned by their own countries who would rather spend vulgar amounts of money to attract much less impactful investment through multinational corporations. The data shows that there needs to be a shift in class perspective regarding investment. Migrant remittances are greater by volume and more impactful for society than the “hot money” that goes in and out of countries and does not “trickle down” into society.

If the migrants of the world—all 281 million of them—lived in one country, then

they would form the fourth largest country in the world after India (1.4 billion), China (1.4 billion), and the United States (339 million). Yet, migrants receive few social protections and little respect (a new [publication](#) from the Zetkin Forum for Social Research shows, for instance, how Europe criminalizes migrants). In many cases, their wages are suppressed due to their lack of documentation, and their remittances are taxed heavily by international wire services (PayPal, Western Union, and Moneygram) which charge high fees to both the sender and the recipient. As yet, there are only small political initiatives that stand with the migrants, but no platform that unites their numbers into a powerful political force.

By Vijay Prashad

Author Bio: This article was produced by [Globetrotter](#). Vijay Prashad is an Indian historian, editor, and journalist. He is a writing fellow and chief correspondent at Globetrotter. He is an editor of [LeftWord Books](#) and the director of [Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research](#). He has written more than 20 books, including [The Darker Nations](#) and [The Poorer Nations](#). His latest books are [Struggle Makes Us Human: Learning from Movements for Socialism](#) and (with Noam Chomsky) [The Withdrawal: Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, and the Fragility of U.S. Power](#).

Source: Globetrotter

Can Teething Predict How Fast You Will Grow?



*Brenna Hassett - Photo:
en.wikipedia.org*

06-17-2024 ~ We know that humans live relatively long lives, and we certainly know that we spend a larger proportion of those lives as children than other species. The question remains: how did we manage to extend this critical period of our growth? When and where did our ancestors start to stretch out the limits of physiology and build that long childhood? And where can we find evidence of this evolutionary process?

The very surprising answer is: in the mouths of babes—specifically, their teeth. But to understand how the timing of teeth tells us the story of, well, us, we need to first put teeth in context: as important milestones on the path to growth.

Different species grow at different rates. How fast you grow is determined by a complicated set of interlocking mechanisms that factor in everything from the mass of the animal to the stability of their environment and has led to the development of a branch of evolutionary biological theory that attempts to disentangle the factors that propel a species from one developmental milestone to the next: 'life history.' Understanding a species' life history has major implications for biology: comparing the rate of growth between two species, for instance, gives us insight into different evolutionary strategies. For *Homo sapiens*, who have some of the slowest growth on the planet, looking at life history becomes a critical way to address why our species has moved our milestones so far from those of our nearest relatives.

Teeth are one of the foremost tools in understanding how animals grow because they arrive in the mouth—erupt—at a very predictable time. This regular schedule reflects the critical importance of having the right teeth at the right time. Animals need different sizes and numbers of teeth at different ages. If you think about

trying to fit an entire adult set of teeth into the mouth of a baby, you will rapidly understand why it is that humans come with two sets. Of course, having multiple sets is not the only option—some animals have endless sets, like sharks, and some have sets with some teeth that grow continuously, like hamsters. But for primates like us, there are two sets to worry about: our ‘milk’ or ‘baby’ teeth, and our adult, permanent set. The schedule of which teeth emerge when gives us a clear evolutionary signal of which teeth are needed when, and all teeth have very specific jobs to do.

From about five months in utero, human teeth start to develop. We are born with some of our baby teeth already partially formed, but still inside our jaws. The process of ‘teething,’ which parents, in particular, are acutely aware of, is actually [a long and drawn-out period](#) over the first few years of life as the deciduous—the formal name for baby teeth, which after all shed just like the leaves of deciduous trees—teeth erupt out of the jaw and into the mouth. First, the incisors in the front, which have the job of nibbling and biting, erupt around 4.5 months; then the lateral incisors to the sides of them around 7.5 months, then the first big bumpy chewing teeth, molars, around 10.5 months followed by the ripping and tearing canine teeth until the last big baby teeth, the chunky second molars, emerge at about 1.5–2.5 years old. That’s it for teeth until about 5 years old, when the very first permanent tooth comes into the mouth: the first adult molar, or, as it is known by biologists: M1.

Molars have been seen as key to explaining the timing of our life histories. Evolutionary biologists looking to explain patterns of growth and development in primates have observed that the timing of the eruption of M1 [is linked very well](#) with the end of dependence on mother’s milk, or the end of infancy. The eruption of M2 has been linked with a stage of childhood usually referred to as the juvenile period, and [the ability to forage independently](#) in primates like chimpanzees. Finally, the eruption of the third of our big chewing teeth (M3—the wisdom tooth in humans) has been associated with reaching adulthood, the end of growth, and possibly the start of reproduction.

Careful [reconstruction of fossil teeth](#) has shown that earlier probable ancestors, like *Australopithecus africanus* and *Homo erectus*, erupted their teeth into their mouths much faster than we do today. The timing of the eruption of molars particularly probably was very similar to that of our common ancestor with today’s chimpanzees, and modern-day chimpanzees erupt their first permanent

molar (M1) at 2 to 4 years old, M2 at around 6 to 8 years, and finish the last (M3) at 12 years, a few years before they are ready to behave as full adults. Humans, by contrast, have molars that appear around age 5, 10-11, and about 18 years of age.

However, even though we have many similarities with our nearest primate relatives, we have somehow become untethered from the biological milestones that signal different life history events. The eruption of our teeth is not timed quite right for when we wean and move our babies onto solid foods. Even in societies where the pressure to end breastfeeding early does not exist, humans simply do not spend as long as infants on the breast as a primate our size should; we are done before M1 is ready. A [large-scale study of forager children](#) around the world found that by 10 years old when M2 isn't quite erupted, children were still only half as competent at getting food as they would be at 20. Meanwhile, age at eruption at M3 is highly variable and not as clearly linked to reproductive age, with things like adolescent growth spurts confusing the picture.

This suggests that perhaps milestones like the timing of teeth are not all that matters in calculating how we got our unique human life histories. Perhaps our drive to grow long and slow means we have untethered our teeth from the behavioral milestones that our closest relatives still display, or perhaps we have just drawn out the time between these milestones in such a way that it is no longer clear how they fit in the primate pattern.

This does not mean that the timing of our teeth doesn't matter, however. The factors that push our species out to the extreme ends of life-history schedules are not, of course, ours alone. Our costly investment in big brains has long been [theorized to be behind our extensive lifespans](#), but the same links between long lives and big brains have been seen in many other mammals. As a matter of fact, if you map the size of the brain against the timing of teeth, you get a very neat line right across all of the primates, and we fit that line perfectly.

Our first molars emerge at exactly the right time for a primate trying to build an enormous brain the size of ours. If you consider the function of teeth, it makes sense that the emergence of molars would coincide with important points for growth in our species—points at which we need to be able to take in and process more calories, using our molar teeth. New research shows that learning complex skills such as the foraging skills that humans need to exploit their ecological [niche](#)

[may also be an important part of what humans do with their long childhoods](#)—getting the right mix of nutrients for an energy-burning brain is a complicated business, requiring group communication, the invention of tools, and complex mental processes. Perhaps our teeth are right on track, after all.

By Brenna R. Hassett

Author Bio: Brenna R. Hassett, PhD, is a biological anthropologist and archaeologist at the University of Central Lancashire and a scientific associate at the Natural History Museum, London. In addition to researching the effects of changing human lifestyles on the human skeleton and teeth in the past, she writes for a more general audience about evolution and archaeology, including the Times (UK) top 10 science book of 2016 [Built on Bones: 15,000 Years of Urban Life and Death](#), and her most recent book, [Growing Up Human: The Evolution of Childhood](#). She is also a co-founder of [TrowelBlazers](#), an activist archive celebrating the achievements of women in the “digging” sciences.

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